Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint

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Art By Black Box 검넴 (@1L9l2Aa8UCL0IGJ)

EPUB Version: 2024-10-28

In this version there are CANONICAL and NON-CANONICAL artworks. **Black Box 검넴** (@1L9l2Aa8UCL0IGJ) is an artist who has created both official novel illustrations and fan art.

Chapters with art are marked with * in table of contents. All art is marked with:

- Official novel illustration (canonical)
- Promotional illustration (semi-canonical)
- Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)
- Official novel cover (canonical)

Fan edit by an ORV Fandom Discord with all of the second translator's name changes reverted (along with a handful of other non-name changes) and many style, consistency and grammar fixes.

Majority of grammar issues are still present.

All included art by Black Box 검넴, added by another person.

The EPUB was tested on and the following readers are recommended:

- Lithium Reader App
- Apple Books
- Kindle (Paperwhite 4, Firmware 5.12.3)
- KOReader - HTML5 style needs to be enabled!

There is a box with text saying "[Main Scenario #1]" below this text, please make sure you can see it.

If you do not see either the text, the box outline, or both, use one of the recommended readers or a reader that supports HTML5.

[Main Scenario #1]

A box should be above this line.

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MUNPIA

전지적 독자 시점

싱숑 현대 판타지 소설

1부

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Chapter 1: Prologue - Three Ways to Survive in a Ruined World.

「There are three ways to survive in a ruined world. I have forgotten some of them now. However, one thing is certain: you who are currently reading these words will survive.

–Three Ways to Survive in a Ruined World [Complete]」

A web novel platform filled the screen of my old smartphone. I scrolled down and then up again. How many times have I been doing this?

"Really? This is the end?"

I looked again, and the 'complete' was unmistakable. The story was over.

[Three Ways to Survive in a Ruined World]

Author: tls123

3,149 chapters.

'Three Ways to Survive in a Ruined World' was a feature-length fantasy novel with 3,149 chapters. Its shortened name was 'Ways of Survival'.

I have been steadily reading this novel since the third year of middle school. Even when I was bullied by the delinquents at my school, even when I had to enter a third-rate, local university since I screwed up my entrance exams, even when I was assigned to a military unit at the frontlines since the damn military draft lottery went wrong, and even now, working as a contractor for a large subsidiary, still without a full-time job... damn it, let's stop thinking about this. Anyway.

｢Author's words: Thank you so much for reading 'Ways of Survival' up to here. I will come back to you with an epilogue!]

"Ah… The epilogue still remains. Then the next chapter is really the last one."

From the end of my childhood all the way to adulthood—a long journey spanning over ten years. I felt a mixture of desolation that a world was coming to an end along with a sense of fulfillment from finally being able to reach the conclusion of that world. I opened the comment box for the last chapter and re-wrote a sentence several times.

–Kim Dokja: Writer, thank you for everything in the meantime. I am looking forward to the epilogue.

They were sincere sentences. Ways of Survival was my life's novel. It wasn't the most popular, but it was the best novel for me. There were many words I wanted to say but I couldn't write them. I was afraid that my careless words would hurt the writer.

–An average of 1.9 hits per chapter.

–An average of 1.08 comments.

This was the average popularity index of 'Ways of Survival'. The number of views for the first chapter was 1,2000, but it fell to 120 for the 10th chapter, and then 12 for the 50th chapter. By the time it was the 100th chapter, it was only 1.

Hits= 1.

I was overwhelmed by the feeling I got when I saw the numerous '1' that appeared next to the list of chapters. In some cases, there was a '2', but it was likely someone pressing the wrong button.

'Thank you'.

The author published a novel with more than 3,000 chapters with just 1 hit per chapter over a period of 10 years. It was truly a story just for me. I pressed on the 'Recommendation Board' and immediately started tapping on the keyboard,

–I have a dope novel to recommend

The author wrote me a free completed novel, so I should give him a recommendation. I clicked on the completed button, and comments quickly appeared.

–It looks like a new anti. I searched for this person's ID, and they recommended the same novel several times.

–Isn't his recommendation banned? The author shouldn't do this here.

Belatedly, it occurred to me that I wrote a recommendation a few months ago. In an instant, dozens of comments were covered with rhetoric such as "attention seeker" or "dumbass." My face became flushed.

I was sure the author would also read this. So, I hurriedly tried to delete my post, but I only got a message saying that it couldn't be deleted because it had already been reported.

"This…"

There was a bitter taste in my mouth at the thought that the sincerely written recommendation ended up becoming a stain on the novel's reputation. If they even looked a little bit, why didn't anyone try reading the interesting novel? I wanted to give a donation to the writer, but I couldn't afford it because I was a salary worker barely able to make a living. Then I received a notification that a 'message has arrived'.

–tls123: Thank you.

A message flew in from out of nowhere. It took me a while to grasp the situation.

–Kim Dokja: The author?

tls123—it was the author of 'Ways of Survival'.

–tls123: I was able to complete it to the end thanks to you. I also won the competition.

I couldn't believe it. Ways of Survival won a competition?

–Kim Dokja: Congratulations! What is the competition?

tls123: You won't know it because it is an unknown competition.

I wondered if he lied because he was ashamed, but I wanted it to be true. Perhaps I really didn't know. It might be a bit hit on other platforms. I was a little sad, but it was good to have an excellent story spreading.

–tls123: I would like to send a special gift to you as a thank you.

–Kim Dokja: Gift?

–tls123: It is thanks to my dear reader that this story has come into the world.

I gave the writer my email address as he asked.

–tls123: Ah, right. I got the monetization schedule.

–Kim Dokja: Wow, really? When will it start? This masterpiece should've been paid from the beginning…

It was a lie. The Ways of Survival was a daily series, so I would've had to spend 3,000 won a month. 3,000 won was one convenience-store lunch for me.

–tls123: The monetization starts tomorrow.

–Kim Dokja: Then the epilogue coming tomorrow will be paid?

–tls123: Yes, I'm afraid you need to pay for it.

–Kim Dokja: Of course, I have to pay! I will buy the last one!

After that, there was no reply from the author. It looked like they logged out of the site. A sense of despondency settled in. Were they leaving without even replying now that they were successful? My admiration turned into petty jealousy. What was I so excited about? It wasn't like I had written the novel anyway.

"Will they give me a gift certificate? It'd be nice if it has around 50,000 won."

Those were the naive thoughts I had back then.

I knew nothing about what would happen to the world the next day.

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* 1st original webnovel cover (canonical)

싱숑 장편소설

전지적 독자 시점

Omniscient
Reader's
Viewpoint

PART 1

01

비채

*

Chapter 2: Ep. 1 – Starting the Paid Service, I

"I'm Dokja[1]."

I usually introduced myself to people like this, then the following misunderstanding would occur.

"Oh, are you an only child?"

"I am, but that isn't what I mean."

"Huh? Then?"

"My name is Dokja. Kim Dokja."

My father gave me that name so that I'd become a strong man even if I was on my own. However, thanks to this name that my father gave me, I was simply living as a single man, unremarkable in my loneliness.

In short, my life was like this: Kim Dokja, 28 years old, single.

*

My hobby was reading web novels on the subway while going to and from work.

"At this rate, you'll get sucked into your smartphone."

In a noisy subway, I raised my head reflexively. A pair of curious eyes were staring straight at me. They belonged to an employee from the human resources team, Yoo Sangah.

"Ah, hello." I greeted her.

"Are you going home from work?"

"Yes. What about Yoo Sangah-ssi[2]?"

"I was lucky. The manager went on a business trip today." Yoo Sangah sat down soon as the seat next to me became vacant. A subtle scent came from her shoulders, making me nervous.

"Do you normally take the subway?"

"That…" Yoo Sangah made a dark expression. Come to think of it, this was the first time I'd met Yoo Sangah on a subway train. Starting with Personnel Manager Kang to Finance Manager Han… There were rumors that Yoo Sangah had men from the company driving her home every workday. Yet unexpected words came from Yoo Sangah's mouth, "Someone stole my bicycle."

Bicycle.

"You commute by bike?"

"Yes! It's because I felt like I've been getting less and less exercise since I've been working overtime a lot lately. And because there was also a bit of an annoying matter… Things like that were why."

Aha, so that's how it was.

*

Yoo Sangah smiled brightly. Seeing her this close, I could kind of understand why men found her attractive, but, ultimately, it didn't matter to me. The genre of every person's life was already determined, and Yoo Sangah was someone who lived in a genre different from mine. After the awkward conversation, we looked at our phones. I opened up the novel app I was reading on before while Yoo Sangah… What was this?

"Puede prestarme dinero."

"Huh?"

"Spanish."

"…I see. What does it mean?"

"Please give me some money," Yoo Sangah replied proudly. Studying on the subway while going home… She truly had a genre different from me. But where was she planning to use a phrase like that after learning it?

"You're working hard."

"By the way, what is Dokja-ssi looking at?"

"Ah, I…"

In the moment it took me to think, 'Oh, shoot,' Yoo Sangah's gaze landed on the LCD screen of my smartphone. "Is it a novel?"

"Yes, well… You could say that I'm studying Korean."

"Wow, I also like novels. I haven't been able to read lately because I don't have time…" It was surprising. Yoo Sangah liked reading novels…? "Novels like Murakami Haruki, Raymond Carver, Han Kang…"

Ah, of course.

Yoo Sangah asked, "Dokja-ssi, what writers do you like?"

"You won't know even if I say their names."

"I've read a lot of novels. Who are the authors?"

At this time, it was really hard to say that I read web novels as a hobby. I glanced at the title of the novel in the app.

[The World after the Fall]

Author: Sing Shangshong.

I couldn't say that I was reading 'The World after the Fall by Sing Shangshong'.

"It's just a fantasy novel. It's… What was it again? Right, Lord of the Rings, it's kind of like that…"

Yoo Sangah's eyes widened. "Aha. The Lord of the Rings. I've also seen the movies."

"Yes, the movies are good."

Silence followed. Yoo Sangah was still looking in my direction and seemed to be waiting for me to say something. It was getting awkward. So, I decided to change the topic. "It's already been one year since we joined the company, hasn't it? It was around this time last year, I think. Time really flies."

"Yes, you're right. Back then, the two of us had no idea what was going on, didn't we?"

"That's right. It seems like just yesterday, but the contract period is already over." I realized that I'd said something wrong when I saw Yoo Sangah's expression.

"Ah, I…" Yoo Sangah trailed off.

I had forgotten. Yoo Sangah received credit for a foreign buyer last month and was already promoted to a full-time employee.

"Ah, that's right, that happened. My congratulations are late. Sorry about that. Haha, maybe I should've worked hard to study a foreign language too."

"N-no, not at all, Dokja-ssi! There's still the performance review, and…"

I didn't want to admit it, but the sight of Yoo Sangah speaking—it was pretty cool. Her face seemed to glow with a brilliant light, as though the world's spotlight was shining down on only one person.

If this world were a novel, the protagonist would likely be someone like her. In fact, it was an inevitable outcome.

While I hadn't worked hard…

Yoo Sangah had.

While I read webnovels on the Internet…

Yoo Sangah studied diligently.

So, it was inevitable that Yoo Sangah would become a full-time employee and that my contract would be terminated.

"Um… Dokja-ssi."

"Yes?"

"If you don't mind… Should I let you know the app I'm using?" All of the sudden, Yoo Sangah's voice sounded distant.

It felt as though I was getting infinitely farther away from the world. To rein in my mind which felt as though it would drift away, I forced my eyes open and focused my gaze straight ahead.

A boy was sitting in the seat opposite mine on the train.

He looked a little over 10 years old.

The boy who held an insect collecting net in one hand was smiling brightly as he sat next to his mother.

"…Dokja-ssi?"

What would it be like, if I had a life different from the one I had now? In other words, what if the genre of my life had been different?

"Kim Dok…"

If the genre of my life weren't 'realism' but 'fantasy'…

Would I have been able to become the protagonist?

Who knows.

That was probably something I would never find out. However, if there was one I did know, it was this:

"It's fine, Yoo Sangah-ssi."

"Pardon?"

"Even if you tell me the app, it won't be any use."

The genre of my life was plainly 'realism.'

"It's because a Dokja has a Dokja's[1] life, you see."

"Hm? What do you …"

"It's just that some people are like that in life."

And in this genre, I wasn't a protagonist but a 'Reader'.

"A Dokja's life…"

Yoo Sangah was wearing a grave expression, so I waved my hand a bit to show that I was really alright. I didn't really know why, but this person seemed sincerely worried about me. Well, she was from HR… so she was probably aware of my work performance already.

"Dokja-ssi says truly great things."

"What?"

"Then, I suppose I have my own life as well—a Sangah's life."

Yoo Sangah seemed to have decided something as she turned back to studying Spanish. I gazed at her for a while before returning to the novel. Everything had returned to normal, but strangely, my scrolling of the novel didn't go well. Maybe it was because I realized the weight of reality that I couldn't scroll down.

At that time, a notification appeared at the top of my smartphone. [You have one new mail.]

It was from the author of 'Ways of Survival'. I opened the mail.

–Reader-nim[3], my novel will become paid from 7 p.m. This will be helpful. Good luck.

[1 attachment.]

The author said he would give me a gift. What was the gift?

…Like my name, I was also a reader by nature. So, I was excited to receive the mail. Yes, it wasn't bad living as a reader. I checked the time. It was 6:55 p.m. I had exactly five minutes before the novel became monetized at 7 p.m. Then I opened up my list of preferred novels in the app. Since I was the only reader, I should leave a congratulatory comment and give strength to the author. However…

–The work doesn't exist.

I tried typing 'ruined' several times in the search box, but the result was the same. The bulletin board for 'Ways of Survival' had disappeared without a trace. It was strange. Had there ever been a case of a novel being deleted without notification when it was going to be monetized?

At that moment, the subway lights turned off, and the inside of the train became dark.

Kiiiiiiiik-! The subway train shook loudly and let out a metallic sound. It caused Yoo Sangah to scream and grab my arm. Then I heard the sound of other people getting stirred up. Yoo Sangah gripped my arm so tightly that I paid more attention to the pain in my left arm than the sudden stop. It took a dozen seconds for the train to stop fully.

Then I heard confused voices coming from everywhere.

"Uh, what?"

"W-What is this?"

In the dark, one or two smartphone lights turned on. Yoo Sangah still held my left arm tightly as she asked, "W-What is going on?"

I pretended to be unconcerned. "Don't worry. It isn't a big deal."

"Is that so?"

"Yes, it is probably a disturbance from a suicide. The engineer will soon make an announcement."

As I finished speaking, I heard the engineer's announcement, -Telling all passengers on the train. Telling all passengers on the train.

The loud surroundings became calm. I sighed and opened my mouth, "See, it isn't a big deal. Now an apology will air, and the power will come back on…"

–E-Everyone run away… Run…!

'What?'

There was a beeping sound, and the broadcast turned off. The inside of the train became a mess.

"D-Dokja-ssi? What is this…?"

A bright light flashed from the front of the subway train. There was a loud drumming sound followed by a pop. Something was heading this way in the darkness. It was just a coincidence that I saw the clock at this moment—7:00 p.m.

Tick, it felt like the world was stopping. Then I heard a voice:

[The free service of planetary system 8612 has been terminated.]

[The main scenario has started.]

This was the moment the genre of my life changed.

---

[1] **Dokja** can mean 'only child', 'reader' or 'individualist' in Korean.
[2] **ssi** is a Korean honorific. It is the formal way of addressing someone when you are talking to or about them.
[3] **nim** is a high-level honorific used to show respect.

* Official novel cover (canonical)
* Official novel illustration (canonical)
* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)

Chapter 3: Ep. 1 – Starting the Paid Service, II

「 Dokkaebi[1]. The first time he appeared, someone said so. 」

I didn't know why but that sentence suddenly popped up in my head. The stopped subway train, the dark room… These details gave me a sense of deja vu. The subway had stopped before, but it was rare. Even so, why? I remembered the familiar words from a novel… but it was ridiculous. Wasn't it impossible?

At this moment, the door of car 3807 opened wide, and the electricity returned. Yoo Sangah muttered by my side, "…Dokkaebi?"

My head was ringing. I trembled uneasily as the novel I knew and the reality before me overlapped.

「With two small horns and wearing a small straw mat, the strange and fluffy creature was floating in the air. 」

「 It was too strange to call it a fairy, too evil to call it an angel, and too tranquil to call it a demon. 」

「Thus, it was called a 'dokkaebi'.」

And I already knew the first thing the dokkaebi would say.

「&아#@!&아#@! …」

[&아#@!&아#@!…]

Fiction and reality overlapped precisely.

"What is this?"

"Augmented reality?"

Amidst the chattering people, I was thrown into another world alone. This was unmistakably a dokkaebi—the very dokkaebi that opened the door to tragedy for thousands of lives in Ways of Survival. It was Yoo Sangah's voice that broke me out of my thoughts. "It sounds vaguely like Spanish. Should I talk to it?"

I was a bit taken aback and asked, "…Do you know what that is? Will you ask it for money?"

"No but…"

It was at this time that I heard the correct pronunciation of Korean. [Ah. Ah. Does this sound good? Ah, I had a hard time because the Korean patch didn't work. Everyone, can you hear my words?]

As a familiar language was being spoken, I could see people's expressions relax. The first one to step up was a big man in a suit. "Hey, what are you doing right now?"

[…Huh?]

"Are you filming? I have to go because I have to quickly get to an audition." He seemed to be an obscure actor since his face was unfamiliar. If I were a casting director, I would've picked him out for his brimming ambition. Unfortunately, the presence before him right now wasn't a director.

[Ah, auditions. That's right. This is also an audition. Haha, there was a shortage of data. I just entered when it was monetized at 7 p.m.]

"What? What are you talking about?"

[Now, now. All of you, relax in your seats and listen to me. From now on, I will tell you something very important!]

My chest was becoming stuffy.

"What? Quickly get off the train!"

"Somebody call the captain!"

"What are they doing without the cooperation of the citizens?"

"Mother, what is that? A cartoon?"

There was no doubt about it. This was the development I knew. I didn't want to be mixed up in this… but there was no way. The people present wouldn't listen to the small and cute-looking CG creature. The only thing I could do was stop Yoo Sangah who was trying to get up from her seat.

"Yoo Sangah-ssi, it is dangerous, so stay here."

"Huh?" Yoo Sangah's eyes widened. I spoke during a moment of bewilderment, but there was no way to explain what I understood. To be exact, I didn't have to explain.

[Haha, you are really loud.]

There was a presence with a stronger persuasive power than anyone else right now.

[I told you to be quiet.]

I closed my eyes slowly as the dokkaebi's eyes turned red. Something burst, and the subway became silent.

"Uh, uh. Uh…" There was a big hole in the forehead of the unknown actor who had to go to the audition. The man who had spoken several times collapsed on the spot.

[This isn't a movie shoot.]

There was a cracking sound once again. This time, it was the person talking about the captain.

[It isn't a dream. It isn't a novel either.]

One, two… Blood sprayed into the air as the heads of some people started to burst. They were all the people who had protested against the dokkaebi, as well as the ones who screamed or went wild. Those who caused the slightest fuss had a hole in their heads. Suddenly, the subway became a bloodbath.

[This isn't the 'reality' that you know. Do you understand? So everyone shut up and listen to me.]

More than half the people present here died. Blood and body pieces filled the subway. Now, the people didn't scream. Like primitive apes in front of a powerful predator, everyone just watched the dokkaebi with terror. I was surprised and held tightly onto the shoulder of Yoo Sangah who was hiccuping.

This was real. The strange message which entered my ears, the dokkaebi had appeared in front of me, and the train car that had become a bloodbath…

[Everyone, your lives have been nice so far. Isn't that right?]

In the special needs seating area, an elderly grandmother met the eyes of the dokkaebi.

[You have been living too long for free. Isn't life too generous? You were born and paid no price for breathing, eating, pooping and breeding! Ha! You really live in a good world!]

Free? No one in the subway lived for free. The people strived to make money in order to survive, and they rode the subway on the way home from work. Yet at this moment, no one disputed the dokkaebi's words.

[But now the good days are over. How long can you continue living for free? If you want to enjoy happiness, it is common sense to pay a price. Isn't that right?]

The gasping people couldn't answer. Then at that time, someone carefully raised their hand. "D-Do you want money?"

I wondered what type of person could speak in the middle of this situation, but surprisingly, I knew his face.

"Yoo Sangah-ssi. Isn't that Department Head Han of the finance team?"

"…Right."

There was no doubt. He had friends up top in the company and was the number one person newcomers avoided. It was Han Myungoh, department head of the finance team. Why was this man riding the subway?

"I will give you money. Take it. Please note that I am a person like this." Department Head Han pulled out his business card as people cheered him on. It was the atmosphere of a savior fighting against terrorists. "How much do you want? A big one? Or two?"

He was offering a sum that was overly large for a department head of a subsidiary company. There was a rumor that Han Myungoh was the youngest son of the leader of the affiliate company and now I thought it might be true. I couldn't carry that many cheques in my wallet.

[Hrmm, you are giving me money?]

"T-That's right! The cash I have right now isn't much but… I can give you anything if you let me out of here."

[Money, good. A plant fibre that many humans mutually agree on.]

The department head's expression brightened. It was an 'Indeed, money is everything' expression. How pitiful.

"Now, this is all I have—"

[It only applies in your time and space.]

"Huh?"

At the next moment, flames appeared in the air, and the cheques in the department head's hands burned up. Department Head Han let out a scream.

[That paper has no value in the macrocosm world. If you do this one more time, I will blow away your head.]

"U-Uhhh…" Fear once again spread on the faces of the people present. It was easy to read what they were thinking because it was just like the novel.

「 What the hell will happen now? 」

Only I knew what was going to happen in the future.

[Phew, the debt is piling up during the time when you are noisy. Well, yes. Rather than explain it a hundred times, isn't it quicker for you to make money yourself?]

The dokkaebi's horns rose like they were antennas, and its body floated to the ceiling of the train.

A moment later, a message rang out.

[#BI-7623 channel is open.]

[Constellations have entered.]

A small window emerged in front of everyone's blank eyes.

[The main scenario has arrived!]

[Main Scenario #1 – Proof of Value]

Category: Main

Difficulty: F

Clear Conditions: Kill one or more creatures.

Time Limit: 30 minutes

Compensation: 300 coins

Failure: Death

The dokkaebi smiled faintly as it became transparent and disappeared into the next space.

[Then, good luck everyone. Please show me an interesting story.]

---

[1] **Dokkaebi** are legendary creatures from Korean folklore, also known as Korean goblins.

Chapter 4: Ep. 1 – Starting the Paid Service, III

People reacted differently after the dokkaebi disappeared. Some people tried to get out of the train while others called the police. Yoo Sangah belonged to the latter group. "Police, the police aren't answering! What, what should I…"

"Calm down, Yoo Sangah-ssi," I said, staring straight into Yoo Sangah's unfocused eyes. "Yoo Sangah-ssi. Have you ever played the game that the development team made? A game where the world is destroyed and only a few people survive."

"Huh? What are you say-…"

"Think about it. We are in a game right now."

Yoo Sangah silently licked her lips. "Game…"

"It is simple. Don't hesitate to do as I tell you. Understood?"

"U-Understood. What should I do?"

"Stay still."

Finally, I slowly controlled my breathing. I too needed time to properly accept all of this.

[Three Ways to Survive in a Ruined World]

The descriptions that existed only in the novel were now unfolding right before my eyes.

「The dokkaebi stretched out its antenna.」

「 The bodies scattered like trash in the carriage.」

「 The bloodied office worker shaking.」

「An old lady groaning in her seat.」

I watched every scene intently. It was like Neo in the Matrix, who suspected reality. Observing, questioning, and then eventually being convinced… I had to admit it. I didn't know the reason why, but there were no doubts about it. 'Ways of Survival' had become a reality.

Let me think… How should I survive in this new world?

"Come on, everybody! Everybody calm down. Start breathing calmly." Someone stepped forward exactly five minutes after the dokkaebi disappeared. He was a sturdy man with short cut hair, one head taller than the average height.

"Are you calm yet? Please stop your actions and pay attention to me for a moment."

The people sobbing or making calls stopped. Once everyone's eyes were gathered on him, the big man opened his mouth again, "As you know, in the event of a national disaster, small disturbances can cause large human casualties. That's why I will now control the situation."

"What, who are you?"

"A national disaster situation? What are you saying?"

Some people belatedly recovered and strongly resisted the world 'control'. Then the young man pulled a government official card out of his wallet. "I am currently an army lieutenant serving in the 6502 unit."

Some people's faces became relieved. "A soldier, he is a soldier."

However, it was too early to be relieved.

"I just received a message from my unit."

People gathered in front of the soldier's smartphone. I was able to read the contents without difficulty because I was near it.

–A level 1 national disaster situation has occurred. All troops gather quickly.

I could hear gulps all around me. It was a national disaster situation. I wasn't surprised because I had already expected this. In fact, I was surprised because of something else. Army lieutenant Lee Hyunsung… That 'Lee Hyunsung' was this man. I knew who he was. It was the first time actually seeing his face, but his name was clear in my head. He was one of the main supporting actors of Ways of Survival.

「Steel Sword Lee Hyunsung.」

A character from the novel had appeared. Now I really had to acknowledge the situation.

"Soldier-nim! What is happening?"

"I have been trying to contact my unit, but…"

"The Blue House! What is the Blue House doing? Please contact the president quickly!"

"I'm sorry. I am just an ordinary soldier and don't have a hotline to the Blue House." Lee Hyunsung explained.

"Then why are you taking control?"

"For the sake of the safety of all citizens…" As Lee Hyunsung calmly responded to the absurd questions, I realized that the descriptions in the novel weren't wrong. However, did Lee Hyunsung originally appear like this? While thinking about these complicated questions, I had a strange hunch. As the only reader of Ways of Survival, I could assure you that Lee Hyunsung's first appearance wasn't like this. The point at which he appeared in the novel was at the end of the first scenario.

…Then what was this situation? My mind became confused. I would know more clearly if I could read Ways of Survival once again.

"The prime minister is making a speech! It is really a level one disaster!"

Everyone turned on their smartphones at someone's cry. Yoo Sangah turned her screen toward me. "…Dokja-ssi, look at this."

There was no need to enter a search term. It was because the first result for all portal sites was 'Prime Minister's Speech'. Of course, I already knew the content of the video.

–To all my fellow citizens, unidentified terrorists are currently active in an unspecified number of areas, including Seoul.

The contents of the speech were simple. The current government would mobilize all means and methods to fight the terrorists, and there would never be any negotiations. Thus, everyone should confidently continue with their lives…

I hadn't thought much of it when I read the novel, but now I was a bit shocked when hearing those words. Terrorism… Yes, that would be more comfortable.

"But where it the president? Why is the prime minister making the speech?"

"The president has already been hit."

"What? Really?"

"I'm not sure. A Naver comment—"

"Shit, then it is fake!"

Of course, I knew it wasn't a fake comment.

"Uwaaaaack! What?"

People dropped their phones as gunshots were heard from all over. It originated from their smartphones. Chiiiik, there was a loud sound, and blood filled the screen. After a moment, people held their breaths as they realized what had happened.

"P-Prime Minister…"

The prime minister had died. His head had exploded in real-time. There were several more sounds like gunfire before the screen became silent. The next thing that appeared on the screen was a dokkaebi.

[Everyone, I've told you already. This isn't a game like 'terrorism'.]

People were at a loss for words as their mouths gaped open like dumb goldfish.

[Do you still not understand? This won't do. Do you still feel like this is a game?]

It felt so ominous because his tone was so relaxed. Subconsciously, I made a fist using all my strength.

[Haha, according to the data, the people of this country are very good at games. So, why don't I try raising the difficulty?]

Beeep. A huge timer appeared in the air. At the same time, it started decreasing rapidly.

[The remaining time has been decreased by 10 minutes.]

[There are 10 minutes remaining.]

[If the first killing doesn't occur within the next five minutes, all lives in that carriage will be wiped out.]

"W-What is this? Is it a joke?"

"Didn't you hear the message just now? Hey, didn't you hear it?"

"Soldier-nim! What do we do now? Why isn't the police coming?"

"Everyone, calm down and listen to me—"

The words of the dokkaebi caused the situation in the carriage to become so severe that Lee Hyunsung couldn't fix it. I could feel Yoo Sangah gripping my collar tightly. Still, I couldn't shake off the incongruity of this situation. Lee Hyunsung, a supporting character, had already appeared. So, why hadn't 'he' emerged? According to what I knew, I should've seen him by now.

"T-There is a murder back there!"

A scene from the 3907 train car could be seen through the aisle window. The complexion of the killer in that carriage was white.

"We have to keep them out! Don't let anyone in!"

People held tightly to the iron door, but it wasn't necessary. The enemy wasn't there in the first place.

[All types of access to the carriage will be restricted until the scenario is complete.]

Along with this message, people were thrown back from the iron door like they had hit a transparent barrier.

"W-What is this?"

Once again, the voice of the dokkaebi rang out, [Haha, there are some places that are quite fun while other places haven't started yet. Okay, this is a special service. I will show you what will happen if nothing occurs in the next five minutes.]

A giant screen appeared in the subway. The place that appeared on the screen was a classroom. Girls in their navy blue school uniform were shaking. A boy bit his fingernails and muttered, "…Is that the school uniform of Daepong?"

Beep beep beep beep— An ominous beeping sound was heard. Then the high school girls started to scream.

[The given time has run out.]

[Paid settlement will begin.]

Once the announcement ended, the heads of the high school girls sitting in the front row exploded. One by one, one by one again… More and more heads exploded. The high school girls screamed and ran toward the classroom doors or windows.

"Ahh, uh, how—"

Cleaning tools broke and nails were torn out, but the doors didn't open. No one could get out. The heads of the high school girls continued to burst. Then a high school girl strangled her friend, who died with a groan. After a while, the only thing that remained on the screen was the last schoolgirl looking around.

[#Bay23515 channel. Daepong Girls' High School, Year 2 Class B survivor: Lee Jihye.]

The figure of the girl on the screen disappeared. Then the dokkaebi said, [How is it? Interesting?]

The dokkaebi spoke with a smile, but people weren't looking at the screen anymore. The people who made eye contact were gradually moving away from each other.

"Shit! What is this?"

Even Yoo Sangah released her hold on me. However, she didn't move away from me. Both my hands were freed, and I turned on my smartphone. Why was 'that guy' still not showing up? There was a mixture of information that I knew from the novel and information that I didn't know. The only way to break through this situation was to read Laws of Survival again.

However, where else could I find the novel? The novel wasn't popular enough to be shared illegally… No, wait a minute.

[1 attachment.]

I was stunned for a moment as I saw the notification on my smartphone. Perhaps… No?

I was confused the moment I opened the mail attachment. The name of the attachment sent by the author was:

[Three Ways to Survive in a Ruined World.TXT]

Chapter 5: Ep. 1 – Starting the Paid Service, IV

Laughter emerged. I had to clear my eyes and look again to see if it was a lie. The file extension was TXT. Then this meant that this person… The gift he sent me was a copy of his novel?

[You have obtained an exclusive attribute.]

[The exclusive skill slot has been activated.]

I heard a message in my ear after running the file. It wasn't surprising if the world had changed into 'Ways of Survival'. All survivors of Ways of Survival had exclusive attribute and skills. I quietly said 'Attribute Window' in my mind. After all, I needed to know the attribute that I received.

[You can't activate the Attribute Window.]

What? I once again tried to call out 'Attribute Window', but the result was the same. It was absurd. To think there was something like this? If I couldn't use the Attributes Window, then I couldn't know what attributes or skills I had. Knowing oneself and one's enemy allowed one to be invincible. However, this was a situation where I didn't even know myself, let alone the enemy.

After staring into space for a while, I gave up and decided to read the text the author had given me.

[Your reading speed has increased due to the effect of your exclusive attribute.]

I didn't know what the attribute as, but it took me less than a minute to read the first act of Ways of Survival thanks to the attribute effect. Then I found it. The place where my finger had stopped was at the beginning part of the work, where the main character was doing some 'action' in the train scene.

「He saw people gathered at the back door of the 3707 carriage. The wheel of the lighter he held tightly in his hand was cold. In this life, he absolutely couldn't make a mistake. He would use any means for his purpose.

The expression of fear on the people's faces…

He didn't feel any guilt. Everything was fleeting. He looked at the people with merciless eyes. After a while, his fingertips moved, and fire rose. Then it all started.」

A chill went down my spine, and I had to read the passage again and again. The reason for my discomfort was soon revealed.

"…3707."

I reflexively checked the number of the carriage I was riding—[3807]. The carriage I was in right now was behind the carriage that the protagonist was riding. My hands shook slightly.

…Wait a minute. How many people originally survived this carriage?

「He looked through the blurred window at the 3807 carriage. It was already too late. It was inevitable. Anyway, only two people survived in that carriage.」

Only two survived. It meant that everyone had died except for two people. And I already knew who those two people were. I raised my head and looked blankly at Yoo Sangah. Maybe this woman would die.

…Me as well.

"Dokja-ssi, shouldn't we stop this?" Something was starting in the place where Yoo Sangah pointed. There was the sound of groaning.

A young man was crouching down in front of the elderly woman. "Shit. I'm in a bad mood, and this old lady keeps whining and groaning! Won't you shut up?"

The young man was a male student who had been leaning against the entrance. He was thin and had dyed white hair. His name was written on the badge attached to his uniform—Kim Namwoon. It was a name that I knew.

「Only Lee Hyunsung and Kim Namwoon survived in that carriage. It doesn't matter. They are the only two I need anyway.」

"Didn't I tell you to shut up?" The agitated Kim Namwoon grabbed the grandmother's collar. The grandmother's powerless legs staggered, and Kim Namwoon's palm moved through the air.

Slap. Slap.

In normal times, somebody would run to stop this, but now nobody was moving. It wasn't long before the slaps changed to punches.

"S-Save me. Save me…!"

I could hear the sound of a hard fist hitting flesh. Some of the men around Kim Namwoon hesitated, but none of them wanted to go forward. Surprisingly, the first person to act was Han Myungoh. "Young man, for you to be treating an elder like this…!"

However, all he got in reply was a voice mixed with scorn, "Mister, do you want to die?"

"…What?"

"You still don't understand the situation?"

"What bullshit is this brat saying?"

Kim Namwoon only laughed at the cursing Han Myungoh. He pointed to the ceiling of the subway carriage with his finger. "Can't you see that?"

On the ceiling, a holographic screen was playing.

[S-Spare me!]

[Aaaack!]

[Die! Die!]

It wasn't just the train carriages or Daepong High School. This was a live video of people dying all over the country. Kim Namwoon continued speaking, "You still don't understand? The army isn't coming to rescue us, and somebody must die."

"W-What are you saying…?"

"We have to choose a person to die." Han Myungoh wasn't able to answer. The hairs of his exposed wrist were standing up. "Of course, I know what you are thinking. You have to kill your fellow countrymen to live. It is something only sons of bitches will do. But you know, it is a situation beyond our control. Beyond our control. We will die if we don't kill. Who will blame us? Are you going to die in the end because of your morals?"

"T-That…"

"Think carefully. The world you have known so far has just ended."

Han Myungoh's shoulders trembled. It wasn't only Han Myungoh. Cracks were showing in the eyes of the other people present. It was a scene where their vague sense of morality was collapsing. Kim Namwoon put a wedge in that crack.

"A new world requires new laws."

Kim Namwoon was the young man who adapted to the world of Ways of Survival the fastest. He turned around and resumed punching the grandmother. This time, nobody stopped him—not Han Myungoh, the other men… or even Lee Hyunsung. The soldier's fists were trembling as he stared into the air with a lost expression. Maybe he had also made a decision.

"Sigh… It is hard to kill. Are you doing to just watch? Do you want to fall behind?"

People trembled at Kim Namwoon's words. Their facial expressions were as easy to read as the sentences in a cheap novel.

「If there is no killing in five minutes, everyone in this carriage will die.」

The emotions in the eyes of the people were changing.

「If the grandmother doesn't die, we will die in five minutes…」

They now held the most primitive emotion that a living creature could have.

"Yes… This bastard is right. If we don't do this, everyone will die." The first man rushed toward Kim Namwoon. He kicked at the old lady who had collapsed and was curled up.

"Have you forgotten? Someone must die! So we can live!"

"Ah, fuck… I don't know."

The second and third, the people standing at an aloof distance away from the grandmother, the cowardly men who had been lingering, the university student filming this with their phone, the mother of the child, and Han Myungoh… They all lynched the grandmother, aiming for her death.

"Die! Die quickly!"

They were like guards cooperating for the death penalty. Like guards pulling the lever at the same time so they couldn't tell who killed the prisoner, these people passively kicked and punched the grandmother.

…And I was watching all of this. I was standing by, like someone watching something happening in another world. The grandmother whose name I didn't know was someone who wasn't meant to live. In the original scenario, the grandmother died. So… it wasn't a sin to observe that death.

At that moment, Yoo Sangah got up.

"You will be killed." I grabbed her reflexively. "I told you not to move."

The arm I was holding was shaking. Yoo Sangah made tight fists in an attempt to hide her trembling. "I know, I know…!"

"Yoo Sangah-ssi will die if you go now."

Yoo Sangah's eyes were shaking with fear. Even so… I realized it. Despite the genre of the story changing, some people still shone brightly.

"Yoo Sangah-ssi, sit down."

However, the person who could change this story wasn't Yoo Sangah. Yoo Sangah wasn't the protagonist of this world.

"Huh? But—"

"Do as I say, just this once. I won't interfere after that."

After forcibly putting Yoo Sangah back in her seat, I took a deep breath and turned around. I straightened my back and shook as I exhaled, slowly loosening my ankles and wrists. In fact, it was a little early to come forward. This wasn't my plan originally.

"…Dokja-ssi?"

I didn't answer her call as I looked at the people, the ones who were intent on assaulting the grandmother. I wasn't staying still because I was afraid or Kim Namwoon and the people, nor did I consent to their inhumanity. I was just waiting. It was for this moment that I had to move. Thus…

Kwaang!

Right now.

"Ack! What?"

An explosion filled my ears, and the train shook. People cried out as smoke rose from the front right corner of this carriage. It had started. So, I moved. I kicked off from the ground as hard as I could with my right foot, passing by the people screaming and sitting down toward the grandmother.

"What? Eeeeok!" Kim Namwoon collided with me and fell to the ground with a scream. At first glance, it seemed like I was saving the grandmother, but that wasn't what I was aiming for.

Where was it? I looked around quickly. Somebody had fallen toward the grandmother due to the explosion. It was a kid crying in the middle of this hell… the kid who was holding the insect collecting net before.

"Excuse me a moment."

I took the net from the child. Once I put my hand into the net, the chitin of a grasshopper reached my fingertips. I took one out and placed it in the kid's hands. Then I turned toward the people.

"Everybody, stop. You can't live if you kill the grandmother." My voice was surprisingly clear due to the temporary silence after the explosion. One by one, people started looking at me. "Let's say you kill the grandmother. What next?" Their surprised faces looked good. Then let me tell them a bit more. "The grandmother's death will be recognized for what the dokkaebi calls the 'first murder', and some time will be bought. Then what next?"

"Ah…"

"If what the dokkaebi says is true, you each have to kill one thing. So, who will you kill after the grandmother? Will you kill the person next to you?"

The people who thought about something retreated from each other. Horror filled their eyes. In fact, everyone knew… The grandmother was just the beginning. Kim Namwoon noticed the shaky atmosphere. "Haha, what are you all worried about? Then kill him next! Cowards. Don't worry about your turn in advance! The odds are equal!"

I figured that Kim Namwoon would say something like this. With a slight wave of my hand, I cut him off. "There is no need to gamble like that. There is a way for you to survive, even if you don't become a killer."

"What?"

"W-What is it?"

The people became greatly agitated, and Kim Namwoon's expression distorted.

"Have you forgotten? The scenario clear condition wasn't to 'kill a person'."

Most of them were still puzzled, but a few people noticed something.

[Kill one or more living things.]

That's right. From the beginning, the word 'person' had never been specified in the contents of the scenario. Kill one or more living things…

In other words, any life was possible. A quick-witted person shouted at the collection net in my hand, "Insect! Insects!"

The locusts and grasshoppers were jumping around in the collection net. Looking at them, the eyes of the people shone. I nodded. "That's right, the insects."

Then I put my hand into the net and took out a grasshopper. It was a chubby one that I had seen earlier.

"G-Give that to me! Quickly!"

"One only! I just need one!"

I stepped back slowly as I looked at the approaching people. Right now, I was facing the explosive madness that tried to kill the grandmother yet a smile emerged on my face. Why? Even in this breathtaking tension, why was my heart beating with joy?

"Would you like it?" I waved the net like a trainer provoking an animal. Several impatient people leaped toward me.

"Then keep it!" I smashed the grasshopper in my hand.

[You have achieved the 'First Kill' achievement!]

[100 coins have been earned as additional compensation.]

At the same time, I threw the net in my other hand as hard as possible toward the opposite side of the area where the grandmother and the crowd were gathered.

"This is crazy!"

The insects were released and jumped as hard as they could for freedom.

Chapter 6: Ep. 1 – Starting the Paid Service, V

People panicked as they saw the insects running around the carriage.

"H-Hey! Why would you do such a thi—"

While some people were staring blankly, the quick-witted pushed toward me.

"You son of a bitch."

"…You better find them soon. There are only three minutes left."

These words were a signal as people started to look everywhere among the subway seats like beasts who had lost their minds.

"I got it! Aaack!"

The joy of those fortunate enough to obtain an insect, as well as the malicious attacks on them, caused the carriage to become chaotic.

"Hey, why did you do that? Couldn't you have just given them the insects?" Looking back, I saw Kim Namwoon raising his body.

I responded cautiously to Kim Namwoon, who was stretching his neck, "There are 12 people remaining."

"…Huh?"

"There were three insects left in the collecting net."

Kim Namwoon frowned for a moment before smiling broadly. "12 to 3? Hahahaha! Yes. Not all of them can survive anyway? So you threw that thing?"

"Yes."

"Don't make me laugh."

"…?"

"A person with common sense wouldn't do such a thing for that reason." Kim Namwoon's smile widened. "Tell me honestly. You just wanted to see this scene, didn't you?"

I recalled the Kim Namwoon that I knew from Ways of Survival. At this moment, I heard a message in my ears, [Exclusive skill, 'Character List' is activated.]

Next, a window opened in front of my eyes. I still didn't know exactly what my attribute was, but I looked at the window in front of me.

[Character Summary]

Name: Kim Namwoon.

Age: 19.

Sponsor: None (Two constellations are currently showing interest in this person).

Exclusive Attributes: Chuunibyou (General)

Exclusive Skills: Unusual Adaptability Lv. 3, Knife Fighting Lv. 1, Blackening Lv. 1

Overall Stats: Physique Lv. 3, Strength Lv. 4, Agility Lv. 6, Magic Power Lv. 4

Overall Evaluation: A chuunibyou who was blackened by a special occasion. It is recommended that you don't get involved with him.

Most of the chuunibyou that appeared in Ways of Survival committed suicide because they couldn't endure the nightmare that had become real. However, the chuunibyou before me, Kim Namwoon, was different. He was the Delusion Demon, Kim Namwoon. The young man, who later became known by this nickname, wasn't an ordinary chuuni. This young man had been waiting for the destruction of the world for a long time and adapted to this world at an 'unusual speed'.

"Team up with me. How about it?" That young man was now making an offer to me.

[The character 'Kim Namwoon' has a favourable impression of you.]

[Your understanding of the character 'Kim Namwoon' has increased.]

My immediate survival was guaranteed if I held hands with Kim Namwoon. If I hadn't read Ways of Survival, my choice might've been a little different.

"I'm sorry but I like to be alone."

"Really? Hmm, it is regrettable." Kim Namwoon licked his lips lightly and stood close to me. "Then can you step aside? I have something to do with that old lady behind you."

Hearing his words, I looked back to see that the bleeding and collapsed grandmother was barely breathing. "What do you want?"

"Do you have to ask?"

"You aren't catching the insects?"

"Insects? Why would I catch that?" Kim Namwoon laughed. "I already have a caught insect in front of me."

I could feel Kim Namwoon's murderous spirit. The character that had only existed in the novel was facing me with vivid madness. Therefore, I felt a little bit in awe. Kim Namwoon was really the person I had imagined.

[The character 'Kim Namwoon' has a slight decrease in favourability.]

"What are you looking at? Aren't you going to move aside quickly?"

"It is tough."

"What?"

"I won't move aside."

"Haha, are you now going to imitate the apostle of justice? Do you have multiple personalities?" I didn't answer. A dark shadow slowly crept onto Kim Namwoon's face, and his shining eyes were becoming cold. "No, wait a minute. Did you throw the net over there to do this from the beginning? Really?"

"…"

"You want to save the grandmother? Hahaha! Amazing! Really amazing! No? Yes?"

I still didn't answer. As I looked closely at this guy, old memories resurfaced.

"Ah, it turns out that you are the type of person I hate the most. All old bastards are the same."

They were memories of all the times I had been frustrated by this brat during Ways of Survival.

[The character 'Kim Namwoon' despises you.]

"What did you say?"

I considered the timing and lowered my head, avoiding the fist that flew before the words were even over.

"Oh, not bad?" Kim Namwoon muttered.

Despite knowing it was coming, I felt a sense of heat from above my head. It wasn't an ordinary punch.

[Blackening Lv.1]

A dark aura rose from Kim Namwoon's whole body. This was the exclusive skill of the 'chuunibyou' attribute. It was rare to release a skill before the end of the first scenario, but Kim Namwoon was already showing a skill. There was a reason why the main character had recruited him, despite his psychopath nature.

Peeok!

After he hit it, my right shoulder spasmed. There was no way to win if I kept fighting this way.

…Should I use 'that' now? I was calculating the time when I heard a message.

[Your understanding of the character 'Kim Namwoon' has increased.]

[You are close to the conditions of use for the exclusive skill 'Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint Lv. 1.]

Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint? What was this?

[The conditions of use for the exclusive skill 'Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint' Lv. 1 have been reached!]

Kim Namwoon's fist missed me and struck the ground.

"Haha, what? Haven't I become stronger?

A faint fist mark was left on the ground. Kim Namwoon was realizing his current strength little by little. The fist that could break a bone with a single blow kept hitting the ground. Kim Namwoon was frustrated and couldn't control his temper. "Ah, why can't I hit you?"

Of course, he couldn't hit me. It was all thanks to my second skill.

[Exclusive skill, Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint Lv. 1 has been activated!]

As soon as this skill was activated, I was able to observe Kim Namwoon's attack direction like I was reading his inner thoughts. For example, like this…

「 Right side. 」

I quickly moved away from the direction of the attack.

「Right eye. 」

Then I quickly bent down and avoided the flying fist.

"You really are good at not being hit!"

It was unreasonable to counterattack because I was poor at sports, but I could at least avoid most of the attacks.

「 Left thigh. 」

This was enough to endure it. The important thing was to buy time. I avoided Kim Namwoon's first and pointed at the clock in the air. "There are two minutes left, Kid."

The distressed Kim Namwoon alternated looking between me and the grandmother. "Dammit!"

At the moment of choice, Kim Namwoon's gaze was fixed on the grandmother's side. I was forced to grab the grandmother and roll away. If the grandmother died, Kim Namwoon would clear the scenario. No matter what, I absolutely couldn't send this guy onto the next scenario.

"Haha, I knew you would move like that." As Kim Namwoon took something out of his bag, I had an ominous feeling. A blade shone in the fluorescent light. It was a portable MacGyver Knife. I had forgotten. This person was a diehard military otaku.

There was a link between the technical skill 'Knife Fighting' and the strengthening skill 'Blackening'. The direction that the blade was pointing was obvious.

「Heart. 」

It was an attack that couldn't be avoided even if I knew the direction. So, I made a quick judgment. If I couldn't avoid the attack, it was better to be hit somewhere with minimal damage, if possible. Chiiiik! The blade narrowly missed my heart and made a deep cut on my shoulder.

It hurt. It really hurt. There was a searing pain in my skin. My vision shook, and it felt like death was approaching.

"Haha, now die!"

The time remaining to the end of the scenario was 1 minute and 30 seconds. I glanced toward the grandmother. I was sorry for the grandmother, but now I really had to use 'that'.

"Chungil High School, 2nd year, Kim Namwoon. I have one question for you."

"…What?"

"Do you think an insect egg is a living thing?"

I took out the body of the grasshopper I had killed earlier from my pocket. The plump egg-sac was clearly abundant. There was the sound of something popping, and something fluid spilled out. The disgusting feeling spread over my hand as I heard a message.

…

[You have killed a living thing.]

[100 coins have been earned as additional compensation.]

[You have killed a living thing.]

[100 coins have been earned as additional compensation.]

…

Multiple messages bombarded my ears. Kim Namwoon frowned. "Insect egg? What the hell do you mean? Are you trying to waste time?"

"I guess so."

"How would I know something like that? I was always sleeping in Biology class." Kim Namwoon looked at my bloody shoulder and laughed happily. "But there is one thing I know for sure. Do you know what it is?"

"What is it?"

"You will die right now!" Kim Namwoon moved his Swiss Army knife before I could answer. It was an attack that was hard to avoid.

[A large number of coins has been acquired! Do you want to check the coin usage tips?]

I omitted the explanation that entered my ears. There was no need to listen when I already knew the contents.

"No, it is you who will die," I spat out while inwardly muttering something else.

[2,700 coins have been invested into 'physique'.]

[Physique Lv. 1 -> Physique Lv. 10]

[Your physique level has increased dramatically!]

[The durability of your body has greatly increased!]

Kim Namwoon's knife penetrated toward my heart. To be exact, it looked like it was penetrating. My skin was like solid rock, and the only thing that remained on it was a scratch. Kim Namwoon's eyes showed that he was astonished. "How?"

"I'll tell you the correct answer to my question. The answer is: an egg is a living thing."

"W-What?"

"And in spawning season, grasshoppers lay more than 100 eggs at a time."

Egg, living thing, 100…

Unfortunately, the time left to understand the meaning of the information was too short for the schoolboy with a bad brain.

"What are you saying?"

"It doesn't matter if you don't understand. There is one minute left."

Now fear appeared on Kim Namwoon's face. "Aaaah! Die! Die!"

The knife moved toward my neck. I didn't even bother defending against the attack.

Kakakang!

Was it because the area was more vulnerable than the chest? The wound was a little deeper than before, but it still didn't hurt much.

"Kim Namwoon." Behind Kim Namwoon, there were people who were still crawling and looking for insects, as well as those who were willing to hurt each other for their own survival. "You are right. I am the same type of human as you."

Maybe I could've saved some of those people.

"Shit! Why won't you die! Why won't you just die!"

55 seconds… 50 seconds… 45 seconds…

The knife kept leaving only scratches. Blood flowed but the blade couldn't reach under the skin. There were 30 seconds left when Kim Namwoon opened his mouth. He dropped the knife and knelt before me.

"S-Save me."

25 seconds.

"Save me! Please! Help me!"

"Why should I?"

20 seconds.

"P-People's lives are important! That's obvious!"

"That is the rule of the old world. It is just as you said. A new world requires new laws."

10 seconds.

"I don't want to, I don't want to! I don't want to die! Aaaaaaack!"

5 seconds. Kim Namwoon ran at me with a loud scream and aimed for my eye. The moment that the knife tried to dig at my retina…

[The given time has run out.]

There was a loud sound, and Kim Namwoon's head exploded.

[Paid settlement will begin.]

Beginning with Kim Namwoon, people's heads started exploding everywhere.

One, two, three, four…

The bursting heads were like fireworks announcing a new era. I watched the scene with a bit of joy, a bit of guilt, and a mysterious feeling. Why? Why was

I so calm at the sight in front of me? It was like I was looking at a novel.

[You have killed 124 living things.]

[Kill History: One grasshopper, 123 grasshopper eggs.]

[You have killed non-resistance living things, so the number of coins you have acquired is reduced by half.]

[6,200 coins have been acquired!]

[The number of coins used for the stats level up is automatically subtracted.]

[You have a total of 3,500 coins.]

[The 'Mass Murderer' achievement has been gained through excessive killing.]

My face could be seen on the darkened window of the carriage.

It was a face I had never seen before, despite looking into the mirror countless times in my life. I wiped at the blood on my cheeks. The bloodwasn't erased. It turned out to be blood on the window.

[*]

Kkiiik.

There was a lurching feeling, and the train started to move again. It made the familiar train noise. Soon, light flooded in, and darkness was lifted from the windows. We had arrived at the surface ground section of Line 3 between Apgujeong and Oksu.

Outside the window, the Han River and Seoul were revealed. Ahh. Someone let out a moan. It was a moan which contained deep relief that they survived.

However, it didn't take long for the meaning of that moan to change. Ah, ah…

The landscape outside the window was no longer the Seoul that they knew. Smoke and dust rose from the ruined city.

The Han River bridges had collapsed. The Han River itself was red with the bodies of soldiers, while among the fallen buildings, a monster was trampling on a K1 tank like it was a toy.

[Main Scenario #1 – Proof of Value has ended.]

[300 coins have been acquired as a basic clearance reward.]

[100 coins have been reduced for the channel usage fee.]

[Additional compensation settlement will begin.]

One world was destroyed, and a new world was born.

…And I was the only reader who knew the ending of this world.

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[*] Official novel illustration (canonical)

Chapter 7: Ep. 2 – Protagonist, I

The subway train stopped around halfway past Dongho Bridge.

"Oh my god…"

Several survivors stood up and looked at the scene taking place outside—the ruined Seoul and the collapsed buildings. Monsters reminiscent of a giant snake were eating the wreckage of a fighter jet that had crashed into the Han River.

"W-What the hell…!"

I recognized their identity at once. An ichthyosaur. A monster that was commonly called a sea serpent, it would later be classified as a 7th grade monster in the world of Ways of Survival. One of the ichthyosaurs looked in this direction.

"U-Uwaaah! It is coming!"

People screamed with fright. However, I just looked apathetically at the approaching ichthyosaur. These guys couldn't be a threat. The ichthyosaur circled around the bottom of Dongho Bridge and vanished into an air bubble. In the world of Ways of Survival, 'scenarios' took precedence over anything else. As long as we were protected by the scenario, we wouldn't have to deal with such monsters straight away. At least for now.

[Compensation settlement is delayed due to an unexpected scenario check. Please wait.]

The compensation settlement should've started right now but only an error message floated in the air. It was probably due to me. I looked down at Kim Namwoon's body which only had the torso remaining. According to the original Ways of Survival, Kim Namwoon killed most of the people in this carriage and moved on to the next scenario.

However, I stopped it. If my thoughts were right, those who would be angry at Kim Namwoon's death would appear. Here? Not here. They were in the sky above.

[Due to the death of character 'Kim Namwoon', two constellations show a faint hostility towards you.]

Constellations. They were mysterious beings in Ways of Survival. They sat watching from the distant nebulas and were the masterminds of this tragedy. Once the constellation's preferences notification appeared, I realized that it was now starting in earnest.

It was funny. A day ago, our positions were opposite. Now they were the ones watching me.

[A handful of constellations admire your scenario.]

[Constellations have sponsored you 500 coins.]

If there were some constellations who disliked me, there would also be some who liked me. Either way, it was an uncomfortable situation. However, I couldn't do anything about them right now. It was my turn to be a clown. I picked up Kim Namwoon's Swiss Army knife on the ground and thought—feel free to watch. They will end up paying the admission fee with their lives.

"…Dokja-ssi? Are you okay?"

I looked up and saw Yoo Sangah's face. Her shoulders were sagging. Blood covered her white blouse and there was a run in her stockings. The Yoo Sangah I knew was gone. I held Yoo Sangah's hand and said, "I'm sorry. I couldn't save the grandmother."

I looked down at the body of the grandmother that was missing its head. I didn't know the name of the grandmother. In the future, many people would die in a similar manner. Yoo Sangah looked at me with a complicated gaze.

"How is Dokja-ssi so…"

"Yes?"

"Ah, it is nothing. Rather… Thank you."

"What do you mean?"

"That, I…"

I belatedly thought back to the previous scene. I had thrown the net in Yoo Sangah's direction. I knew what she was thinking and said, "It was just a coincidence. It won't happen twice."

"Ah…" Yoo Sangah nodded silently. She didn't know the truth but she was smart. She knew what I meant. Someone lived because of my choice and someone else died. No matter how she survived, I didn't deserve a thank you.

[Wow, amazing.]

The dokkaebi appeared in the air.

[What on earth happened here? I was just watching the other carriages…]

There was a mixture of delight and surprise on the dokkaebi's face. Twinkling stars floated over the dokkaebi's head. I counted the number of stars. One, two, three… Twenty, twenty one. Twenty one in total. He would be happy.

[For 21 people to be connected to my channel… Haha, isn't this quite good? Gosh, thank you for your sponsorship. Constellations. Haha, everyone! Did you properly show off your value?]

The number of stars meant the number of constellations connected to the channel. 21 wasn't a lot, but it was a strange number for a beginner dokkaebi.

[The number of survivors is quite high? The fellow in the next carriage was a nutter as well… It seems that things are quite interesting today.]

The dokkaebi manipulated something in the air. A moment later, a list of survivors came up.

[Survivors from the 3434 Train to Bulgwang, Carriage 3807: Kim Dokja, Lee Hyunsung, Yoo Sangah, Han Myungoh and Lee Gilyoung. A total of five survivors.]

Five people. There were more survivors than I thought. I looked at the faces of the survivors one by one.

Lee Hyunsung had a good physique and excellent motor skills, so it was expected that he would survive. I even expected Yoo Sangah to survive—to a certain extent. Additionally, there was Lee Gilyoung. If my guess was right, 'Lee Gilyoung' was the name of the boy standing next to me. The fluid of the crushed grasshopper was still on the boy's hands. He squeezed the grasshopper I had given him.

The boy was looking at his mother, who lost her head. The boy's mother had abandoned him to join in on killing the grandmother. The boy had just watched the whole thing from beginning to end. I hesitated for a moment before touching the boy's shoulder. It wasn't foolish sympathy. To put it simply, this was…

That's right. Hypocrisy.

"Kid." The boy slowly turned his head and in his eyes, I could see the fear of death that he experienced for the first time in his life. It was an unavoidable instinct. This boy wasn't grieving his mother's death. He was just afraid of his own death. It was natural. He was human. "Do you want to live?"

The boy's eyes shook anxiously. His body trembled with a force that couldn't be resisted. Then little by little, the boy's head moved.

"Then let's go together."

Lee Gilyoung moved slowly and came close to my legs. Yoo Sangah was watching me with an impressed expression. I unintentionally caused another misunderstanding. In fact, it was meant to be seen. However, the target wasn't Yoo Sangah.

[A few constellations are impressed with your good deed.]

[Constellations have sponsored you 200 coins.]

I couldn't help thinking that it was a low move, but I also wanted to live. Given the upcoming major events, it was essential to draw the attention of the constellations right now.

"W-Will you release us now? Didn't you get what you wanted?" Han Myungoh, whose shirt was torn, shouted from half a dozen steps away.

Department Head Han Myungoh. He was a lucky human. I couldn't help wondering: Why was Han Myungoh riding the subway when he had so much money? This was the man who had shown off a new Mercedes-Benz S-Class not long ago.

[Hrmm, release? Haven't you looked outside? Do you really want to go out there?] The dokkaebi chuckled. [It is somehow admirable. In fact, I didn't expect much from this carriage but you managed to pass the first scenario. This proves that even bugs deserve to survive.]

His words made us realize our position. Maybe we were like grasshoppers in his eyes.

[Now now, shouldn't there be a reward for overcoming the hardships? As a reward for the first scenario, you are entitled to the sponsorship of the 'constellations'. Waahhh! How about it? Aren't you looking forward to it? Hmm, you are all unenthusiastic. This is really a big deal.]

The reaction was natural—I was the only one here who knew what 'constellation' or 'sponsorship' was. The sponsorship of the constellations. The meaning was obvious. One of the key events of Ways of Survival, 'Sponsor Selection' was about to begin.

[Hmm, everybody has confused expressions. I can easily tell you. Right now, you are incredibly weak. If you are thrown into the scenarios that will take place, you will be killed when you meet a weak ground rat, let alone a 'kruk'. Benevolently, there are some great people in the universe who pity you and would like to sponsor you. Do you understand what I am saying?]

Lee Hyunsung finally couldn't stand it anymore and opened his mouth, "What are you saying? Who is sponsoring whom…"

[Hmm, my words are just entering dirty ears. Isn't there an old saying in South Korea? It is better to see it once than listen a hundred times. So experience it directly. Well, the less fortunate ones might not get the chance. Hahaha!]

I was tense. From now on—a good choice here would make my survival in the future easier.

"Dokja-ssi? Two strange choices suddenly appeared in front of me…"

"I don't know even if you ask me."

This was naturally a lie to avoid suspicions. By the way, there were two choices. Yoo Sangah was quite lucky.

"Do it comfortably. Think of it as an aptitude test."

"Aptitude test…"

"Nobody knows what the situation is anyway. Why not do it comfortably?"

"Ah… I understand."

Yoo Sangah closed her mouth and started staring into space. It was a profound expression, as if she had encountered something curious. The others suddenly became silent. Everyone was reading the options in front of them. I also had my own choices to look at.

[Sponsor Selection]

– Please select your sponsor

– Your chosen sponsor will be your strong supporter.

1. Abyssal Black Flame Dragon

2. Demon-like Judge of Fire

3. Secretive Plotter

4. Prisoner of the Golden Headband.

There were four choices like a riddle. It meant there were four constellations that wanted to turn me into their incarnation. Four choices wasn't small considering that the protagonist of Ways of Survival received five options the first time.

The constellations never revealed their true name. Therefore, all contractors must infer the identity of the constellations by words such as 'abyssal', 'demonic' and 'garden'. Of course, this puzzle was nothing to me, the sole reader of Ways of Survival.

Let's see.

First, the 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon'. According to my memory, this constellation was a powerful entity that led the group of constellations called the Black Cloud. I forgot his real name but I remember it was a very long name. The advantage of this constellation was that the contractor could receive a very strong attack power. In the early days when physique and strength were in urgent need, there was no constellation as strong as the Abyssal Black Flame Dragon.

Of course, that was limited to the beginning. As the power of this constellation was more frequently used, the mind became corrupted and the contractor would become a mad murderer. This constellation usually sponsored the people with the 'chuuni' attribute… I didn't know why the constellation picked me.

I felt uncomfortable and excluded this guy.

The second one, the Demon-like Judge of Fire. I couldn't believe I was actually seeing this option. Somehow, the strong emotions I felt were enormous. At first glance, the name was overflowing with evil. However, this was actually a trap for the wicked. The 'Demon-like' actually meant 'not a demon'. Then the words 'fire' and 'judge' were added.

A being who wasn't a demon and who made judgments through fire. Paradoxically, the identity of this constellation was an angel. If I recalled corrected, it was Archangel Uriel… In fact, I remembered this because someone in the novel picked this constellation as a sponsor.

It was a pretty decent choice. This was pending. The constellations of 'absolute good' imposed ridiculous constraints if you wanted to use their enormous power.

The third, Secretive Plotter. It was the first time that I, the sole reader of Ways of Survival, had seen this choice. This name might've been mentioned in passing but… I didn't know it right now. If I could read Ways of Survival more thoroughly then I might get a feel of the constellation.

However, I was certain that the owner of this constellation wasn't a very strong entity. Apart from the obvious modifier, there wasn't one 'proper noun'. Secretive Plotter, it was too simple for a constellation. This one was also pending.

Finally, there was Prisoner of the Golden Headband. My heart jumped the moment I saw the fourth option. I didn't expect this constellation to appear so early. I doubted my eyes several times. Yet it was unmistakably 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband'. At first glance, this name gave off a negative image due to the word 'prisoner'. However, you had to pay attention to 'Golden Headband'.

Golden Headband. The smallest prison in the world. It was a hint that anyone would recognize if they enjoyed reading Journey to the West as a child. There was only one prisoner who was held captive by the golden headband in the journey from east to west.

The master of the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit, who lived in suffering due to the shackle on his head. The Handsome Monkey King with the 'golden-gaze, fiery-eyes'. The Great Sage, Heaven's Equal, Sun Wukong.

Among the characters that appeared in the novel, there was one supported by Sun Wukong. A wondrous power that could sweep through hundreds of incarnations and to kill thousands with one lightning strike. The author had described this part with a lot of energy so my memory of it was clear.

I didn't know why such a powerful constellation was showing me interest but if I became the incarnation of the Great Sage, Heaven's Equal, I would be able to survive in this new world more easily than anyone else. However…

I quickly looked at the door connected to the carriage in front. Beyond that door, 'he' was looking at the selection screen like me. If I chose The Great Sage, Heaven's Equal… Could I win against him?

[There is one minute left to complete the Sponsor Selection.]

Time was running out. I breathed lightly and looked through my options. My worries didn't last long.

Chapter 8: Ep. 2 – Protagonist, II

[Sponsor Selection has ended.]

I took a deep breath as I watched the messages floating in the air.

[Some constellations are greatly affected by your choice.]

Yes, it was starting now.

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is greatly displeased at your choice.]

[Constellations belonging to Black Cloud are shaken by the anger of the Abyssal Black Flame Dragon. You won't be sponsored by any of the Black Cloud constellations for a while.]

I wasn't surprised because it was an expected message. To make every member of his group turn away because he was rejected…it seemed that this guy was Kim Namwoon's sponsor in the original work. As expected of the incarnation of this constellation.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is disappointed in you.]

[She will persistently monitor your justice in the future.]

In the case of Archangel Uriel, it was just disappointment. In the first place, the constellations of absolute good would rarely hate someone unless they committed a great injustice.

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' is interested in your choice.]

[200 coins have been sponsored.]

The Secretive Plotter's case was unexpected. Given the characteristics of the name, maybe he valued my caution.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is interested in your choice.]

As for the Great Sage, Heaven's Equal…

I was concerned. Did I make the right choice? I didn't know. Maybe I had lost the tremendous opportunity right in front of me.

[You haven't selected a sponsor.]

However, choosing a certain constellation meant being limited by that possibility. The sponsor contract was never a fair deal. I would survive, but I would've survived by being their toy. If my expectations were right, there was a way to become strong without a constellation. Maybe it was a way to become stronger than the incarnation of the strongest sponsor.

[Haha, is this true…isn't there one interesting choice? Well, yes. There will be another chance.] The dokkaebi's crescent moon eyes stayed on me for a moment. [Now now, everyone has finished the selection. Rest here for a while. I have to go prepare the next scenario. I'll see you in 10 minutes!]

After the Sponsor Selection finished, the dokkaebi disappeared. He told us to rest, but these 10 minutes were really crucial. In 10 minutes, I needed to sort out this situation and prepare for the following scenarios. I tried to recall my abilities in my head.

[Character List] and [Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint]. I didn't know the precise use yet but I had a general sense of these skills. This would work somehow.

"Let's all gather together." The survivors gathered at my words. The first one to reach out a hand was Lee Hyunsung.

"Hello, I am Lee Hyunsung."

"Kim Dokja."

"Nice to meet you…although I don't know if these words suit the situation. As I said earlier, I am a soldier…well, I should say that I was a soldier."

"You can't contact your unit?"

"…Yes."

The grip around my hand was considerable. As expected from the tanker that appeared in the early stages of Ways of Survival. I must take Lee Hyunsung with me. He might not look like much now but Lee Hyunsung was an increasingly important figure in the latter parts of Ways of Survival.

"Ah, Dokja-ssi."

"Yes?"

"I wanted to thank you. If it wasn't for Dokja-ssi, we would all be dead."

"No, that isn't the case."

"Even if I had lived, I wouldn't have been able to live as a person. Thank you very much. And…I am ashamed." Lee Hyunsung bowed deeply.

My mind was a bit complicated. In fact, Lee Hyunsung would've survived even if I didn't do anything. Then somebody grabbed my shoulder.

"Haha, our contractor did one big thing. Dokja-ssi, do you know my name?"

I could tell who it was without looking back. I took the hand off my shoulder and said, "I know, Han Myungoh-ssi."

"Huh, Han Myungoh-ssi? Shouldn't you call me Department Head?"

Han Myungoh was still trying to use his position in this situation. He really was the king of authoritarianism in Mino Soft.

"This isn't the company."

"Hah, look at this. Are you planning to not go work now? Where did you learn your basic etiquette?"

Once I saw Han Myungoh's angry face, I once again realized that the world I knew was over. The man in front of me was a 'predator' of the world before the scenario began and I was merely a prey to the predator. It had certainly been like that.

"No matter how I think about it, your actions were too much. Yes? If you had the insects then you should've tipped me off. Why would you throw them like that?"

"…"

"Dokja-ssi, you have to be good to me. How much time do you have left on your contract?"

All of a sudden, it became ridiculous. In the world I previously lived in, I was too fragile. "Han Myungoh-ssi."

"Eh?"

"Shut up."

"W-What?"

"You still don't understand the situation? Weren't you hit by that bastard earlier? Mino Soft? Do you think the company still exists when the end has come?"

Han Myungoh's face was white and stricken. I turned my eyes towards the other people. Since I was already saying it, I should make it stick. "Han Myungoh-ssi isn't the only problem. Everyone, you need to wake up. As the dokkaebi said, this isn't a joke."

"…"

"I think you should've all roughly noticed the situation. Exclusive skills in the attributes window. A game-like interface. Is there anyone who still hasn't caught onto facts?"

Indeed, no one raised their hand. It was easy to understand for a South Korean. Due to the high penetration rate of smartphones, there wasn't one person who hadn't played a RPG game. Even if they hadn't played a game, they would've read a fantasy novel at least once.

Lee Hyunsung sighed, "This is like a novel I was reading while standing on duty, but I still can't feel it. This really isn't a dream?"

"This is reality."

My stern answer caused Lee Hyunsung's eyes to slightly change.

[The character 'Lee Hyunsung' feels a faint trust in you.]

[Your understanding of the character 'Lee Hyunsung' has increased.]

Lee Hyunsung nodded. "It is good that you are certain. Then what do we do now? Dokja-ssi, do you have an opinion?"

"We have to go." I answered without hesitation.

"G-Go? Are you insane?"

"Dokja-ssi, I don't think…" This time, Yoo Sangah joined in. It seemed everyone still hadn't woken up.

"Then how long we will stay here?" In fact, my argument didn't make much sense. Outside was a haven of monsters. However, I knew. Right now, we have to get out of here. "Have you thought about your parents? Do you think your parents are safe in this mess?"

"T-The line has been dead for some time. No Kakaotalk…" Yoo Sangah cried out desperately. Indeed, Confucianism was still strong in South Korea. Even Lee Hyunsung and Han Myungoh's expressions darkened at the word 'parents'.

I grasped Lee Gilyoung's shoulder, whose head was bowed. The first person to get up was Yoo Sangah.

"Go. I will go out."

"N-No! Didn't you hear what that thing said? Take a break here! If we move then our heads might explode!" Han Myungoh cried out desperately.

"Let's take a majority vote."

Yoo Sangah raised her hand first, followed by me and Lee Gilyoung. However, it was up to there.

Lee Hyunsung said, "…I have to go to my base but it seems dangerous to move in this situation. There was also the warning."

"Shit, you all go by yourselves! I'm not going! I'm not going outside!"

I didn't care about Han Myungoh but the problem was Lee Hyunsung. I had to take Lee Hyunsung with me no matter what…

Kuuong!

The thick iron plate made a loud sound. The iron door to carriage 3707 was slightly distorted.

"W-What?" Han Myungoh's cry was ignored as the iron door made a deafening sound again.

Kuuong!

Someone was trying to break the door from beyond it. This was an unexpected situation so I had to think. Was it the next scenario? No. The dokkaebi hadn't come back yet. Then…

My brain moved quickly. Small hairs stood up and a short shiver struck my body. It was that guy.

"W-What? Everybody stop it!" Han Myungoh shouted and moved towards the door. Lee Hyunsung moved towards it as well but I stopped him.

"You can't stop it."

"Huh?"

"We have to go."

I looked at the iron door with heavy eyes.

"Huh? But…"

"If we don't go now—"

The only survivor of carriage 3707. I was well aware of who was beyond the iron door.

"We will all die before the next scenario arrives."

Yes, that guy was finally coming. The 'real' protagonist of this story.

Chapter 9: Ep. 2 – Protagonist, III

I stared straight into Lee Hyunsung and Han Myungoh's eyes and said, "Do you want to die from that guy beyond the iron door or do you want to try your luck outside the train? Which one will you choose?"

"U-Uh…"

"Dokja-ssi, is there any guarantee that the person beyond the iron door is an enemy?"

The Steel Sword appeared at the crucial moment. There was a reason why Lee Hyunsung couldn't be leader of a party.

"Since they are coming from another carriage, it is likely to be a survivor. If we meet…" I looked at the bloody room instead of continuing.

Lee Hyunsung followed my gaze and quietly spoke, "…I was too careless. Let's find a way out."

"G-Go! Go quickly!"

At this moment, Han Myungoh and Lee Hyunsung were aware. The other survivors of the carriages would've gone through the same thing as them. They wouldn't have had the good luck of finding 'insects'.

"This is broken!"

"Damn, we can't go this way!"

While listening to Lee Hyunsung and Han Myungoh's cries, I also checked the doors. There were no more barriers so the doors could now be touched. Apart from the doors connecting the passageways, there were a total of eight access doors on the subway. There were three exits that hadn't been confirmed yet.

The iron door seemed like it could barely hold on for one minute. Despite being the main character, I didn't think he would have such high strength in the beginning. I was honestly surprised that he could break such a thick iron door.

"Dokja-ssi! Here—"

I found a working manual switchgear.

"No!" The opening and closing device worked smoothly but the door didn't open at once. They door opened around one fifth before stopping like it was jammed. "…It seems to be broken here as well."

"How about other places?"

"This seems to be the only place where we can escape."

It was unknown for a child. But the gap was too narrow for men and women to escape. Han Myungoh and Lee Hyunsung tried to pull the doors open but they didn't move a bit.

[Coins Possessed: 4700 C]

One of the uses of the coins was to raise overall stats. I had already used 2,700 coins to make my physique level 10. This problem could be resolved if I used the remaining coins to enhance my strength. But it wasn't wise to use the coins when the situation was unknown. In the end, there was only one way.

"Lee Hyunsung-ssi. Use a skill."

"Huh? "Skill…"

I quietly activated Character List.

[The exclusive skill, Character List is activated.]

[Character Summary]

Name: Lee Hyunsung

Age: 28 years old.

Sponsor: Master of Steel.

Exclusive Attributes: Soldier who Turned a Blind Eye to Injustice (General)

Exclusive Skills: Bayonet Skills Lv. 2, Camouflage Lv. 2, Patience Lv. 2.

Stigma: Great Mountain Push Lv. 1

Overall Stats: Physique Lv. 8, Strength Lv. 8, Agility Lv. 7, Magic Power Lv. 5.

Overall Evaluation: The overall stats are very good. Despite turning away from injustice, he received the choice of a constellation. This is another opportunity for him.

Lee Hyunsung's information came to my mind without any restrictions. Fortunately, the sponsor was the same as what I read in Ways of Survival.

"You should've checked it when you opened the attributes window. Lee Hyunsung is a soldier so there must be a skill you can use in this situation."

"Well…I have one but how do I use it—"

"Just think about using the skill."

"…Will that work?"

"It will. I did it earlier."

Lee Hyunsung didn't say anything else as he took a deep breath of determination.

*

"Haaap!" Lee Hyunsung's biceps swelled as he grabbed the door. It was the appearance of Great Mountain Push. In fact, Great Mountain Push wasn't a skill but a 'stigma'. And a stigma was a power from the constellation. I used the word 'skill' in order to avoid suspicions.

Dudududu.

There was a sound like a huge spring turning and the door started to move.

"What? This guy has real strength!"

"That's it! It is really great!"

[The character 'Lee Hyunsung' has started to trust you.]

[Your understanding of the character 'Lee Hyunsung' has increased.]

Rather than doubts, my reliability had risen. Lee Hyunsung was a simpler person than I thought.

"Come on, get off!"

I felt relieved and handed Lee Gilyoung to Lee Hyunsung. "Lee Hyunsung-ssi. Carry the child on your back."

"I understand."

Now the iron door was almost broken. But if my prediction was right, the problem right now wasn't that iron door.

[…Ah, this is really. I knew this would happen. Didn't I saw it earlier? I told you not to go anywhere, Damn! The scenario isn't ready yet-]

The dokkaebi seemed to be angry as it floated over Dongho Bridge.

"Wahh! I knew this would happen! I told you not to come out!" Han Myungoh wrapped a hand around his head, like he thought it would explode. But there was no need to worry.

[Sigh…it can't be helped. You are really lucky humans.]

It was because the second scenario started the moment the train door was opened.

[The second scenario has arrived!]

[Second Scenario – Escape]

Category: Sub

Difficulty: E

Clear Conditions: Cross the broken bridge and enter Oksu Station.

Time Limit: 20 minutes.

Compensation: 200 coins.

Failure: ???

"Dokja-ssi, something is strange. It says the 'broken bridge' but the bridge is still…"

"Don't worry and just run! Quickly!"

"U-Understood!"

In fact, Yoo Sangah was right. The bridge hadn't been broken yet. In other words, the 'bridge was going to be broken'.

"Dokja-ssi, come quickly!"

"I'm coming."

It hadn't been broken yet because we got off the train 'too soon'. The dokkaebi said the preparation time was 10 minutes. But we escaped three minutes earlier. Some people might call it cowardly but this scenario couldn't be cleared without such a shortcut. Especially if I was stuck with burdens such as Yoo Sangah and Lee Gilyoung.

"Pant, pant. Indeed, Lee Hyunsung-ssi is a soldier and has high stamina."

"Don't open your mouth. You will lose strength."

Lee Hyunsung was running first with the kid. He was a natural monster who didn't invest any coins in his stats, yet the sum of his strength, physique, and agility exceeded 23. The next one was Han Myungoh and then Yoo Sangah with me in the rear. It would be close but I thought we could make it in time.

"Ah, what is that?" At this time, Han Myungoh's scream was heard. There was a huge whirlpool in the centre of Han River, letting out splashes of water. A giant monster was at the centre of the splashes. It was an ichthyosaur. The problem was that the ichthyosaur seemed to be twice the size of the one I saw through the window.

This wasn't a sea serpent…it was a sea commander. A general sea serpent was only a 7th grade monster. Given that a 9th grade monster, the ground rat was difficult for normal humans to cope with, an average human would be torn apart by a 7th grade monster.

In other words, the guy coming now wasn't a monster that could be caught in the early stages. Of course, there was no need to catch it. It wasn't created to be caught. The Han River surged like there was a tsunami and the ichthyosaur moved. It was chewing on the legs of the bridge.

"The bridge is breaking!"

"Run! If we run then we can cross it!"

The remaining distance was around 200 metres. If my calculations were correct, we could cross before the bridge collapsed at our current speed.

[There is no fun if the game is too easy.]

Of course, this was a story for when there were no variables.

[The scenario difficulty has been adjusted.]

[Scenario difficulty: E -> D]

The sound of the dokkaebi's laughter was heard.

[Is there any fun if you just run away? Let's create a bit of atmosphere!]

[The evil thoughts of the dead have returned.]

[The surrounding earth is filled with black ether.]

[The demonic people have woken up!]

There was the sound of something chasing us from behind. Yoo Sangah muttered to herself.

"Z-Zombies?"

Zombie-like bodies were coming in huge waves. Some of them were people from the same carriage as us.

"We just need to go a little further! Quickly!"

The distance to the ichthyosaur was now less than a hundred metres. Fortunately, Lee Hyunsung carried Lee Gilyoung and had crossed the safety line. The problem was the rest of us, including me. Han Myungoh shrieked, "Y-You bastards!"

There were too many demonic people. If there were only corpses from the subway, we might've gotten away. The problem was…

"Kuweeeoooh!"

The drivers who died on the bridge became demonic people. The path that Lee Hyunsung broke through was covered with demonic people. I looked between the demonic people on the road and the approaching ichthyosaur.

"…Everybody get down."

It was too late.

Kwaaaaang!

The legs of the bridge shook tremendously as the ichthyosaur's huge mouth bit it. The scales of the ichthyosaur shone through the dust that poured down onto Han River like rain. A fishy smell of blood and water filled the area. I staggered and raised my body. Once the dust went away, the scenery around me was clear. Piles of shattered concrete and cut steel. The carcasses of the demonic people which the ichthyosaur had cleanly bitten through. The legs of the bridge were broken.

"…Dok…ssi…kay?"

Yoo Sangah and Han Myungoh raised their bodies from a little further away. One of Han Myungoh's legs seemed injured and uncomfortable from the previous quake. Lee Hyunsung and Lee Gilyoung cried out from across the bridge but their voices seemed blocked by the safety zone.

What should I do? I made plans on the basis of the bridge breaking. But I hadn't expected Han Myungoh and Yoo Sangah to be with me. At that moment, a voice was heard in the air.

[Someone has received the favour of a constellation.]

[The constellation's scenario 'Deus Ex Machina' has been activated.]

Along with the voice, a brilliant bridge made of light was created among the remnants of the broken Dongho Bridge. Then a message floated in front of me.

[Deus Ex Machina – Even Bridge]

Description: A bridge of light made by a constellation. Only an 'even' number of people can cross the bridge. The bridge will disappear as soon as an 'odd' number of people tries to cross it.

"Dokja-ssi. This, in my head, suddenly—"

I met the eyes of Yoo Sangah, who was talking nonsense. I could roughly guess the situation. Deus Ex Machina. Constellations risked a huge loss by intervening in a scenario.

"…It is Yoo Sangah-ssi's sponsor."

I didn't know what constellation it was but somebody had chosen Yoo Sangah as their incarnation and wanted her to live. Deus Ex Machina was a rare phenomenon in Ways of Survival. In addition, Yoo Sangah was a person who should've already died.

I had a moment of doubt. What type of constellation was behind Yoo Sangah?

[The information of this person can't be read in 'Character List'.]

[This person isn't registered in 'Character List'.]

I was a bit surprised. I couldn't see her with my skill? Why? Did she have a special background? Or did she have a mental barrier? But if she had something like that from the beginning…no, wait a minute. Perhaps this was…

"Dokja-ssi, what do we do now?" I heard Yoo Sangah's bewildered voice. I didn't have much time to think. The Han River was swirling. The ichthyosaur had eaten one bridge leg and was turning its huge body around on the other side of Han River. I bit my lips and once again read the explanation of the bridge.

Only an 'even' number of people could cross the bridge. In the end, 'Deus Ex Machina' was a toy made by the damn constellations who loved tragedies. There was no way for everyone to survive. Han Myungoh's body was shaking as his eyes met mine. In the end, somebody must die.

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* Official novel illustration (canonical)

Chapter 10: Ep. 2 – Protagonist, IV

At this moment, Yoo Sangah shouted, "Dokja-ssi! Behind you!"

I reflexively leaned forward as a bloody fist came flying through the air. It was a familiar fist covered with energy. I felt something falling towards me and instinctively kicked out. I didn't need to look back to know what was behind me.

A 9th grade human type, demonic person. Human mutants infected with black ether. That's why demonic people were classified as a high-risk species, despite being 9th grade. Demonic people made from a normal human base were no different from zombies, but it was particularly dangerous if their hosts were different.

I saw the badge of the school student with a damaged head.

"…Kim Namwoon."

The guy whose head burst a few minutes ago was now aiming for me as a demonic person. Kim Namwoon's vocal cords that burst out were in a bizarre shape.

"Kuweeeoooh."

[Exclusive skill, Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint Lv. 1 has been activated!]

[This person doesn't have any consciousness. The skill Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint will be cancelled.]

Damn, it was as expected. My thigh was scratched by Kim Namwoon's overgrown black fingernails. A pain that felt like a burn spread through my leg. The skin which hadn't been cut by a knife was now torn by fingernails. This was the main reason why demonic people were dangerous. The demonic people became several times stronger than when they were human.

"Yoo Sangah-ssi, immediately—" I felt something as I spoke. Without looking back, I could see what was going on.

"Let me go! Let go! Dokja-ssi! Dokja-ssi!"

Han Myungoh, who had just been limping, was carrying Yoo Sangah over one shoulder and moving across the bridge at an astonishing rate.

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' admires how easy you are to trick.]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is impressed with your sacrifice.]

[100 coins have been sponsored.]

…Indeed. Planning to leave me? By the way, the way he was running was a little strange. Despite being on one leg, he was running as fast as an Olympic athlete. This couldn't be the exclusive skill of Han Myungoh, who had a big belly. Therefore, it must be the stigma of his sponsor.

I already knew the constellation who provided that stigma. It was the One-legged Swift Horse. I used Character List on the distant Han Myungoh.

[The information of this person can't be read in 'Character List'.]

Once again, Character List didn't work properly. If I remembered correctly, the stigma of 'One-legged Swift Horse' came from the constellation Lame Trickster. Lame Trickster didn't give any stigmas in the mental barrier system. In addition, Han Myungoh couldn't possess such a skill from the beginning. In other words, my skill failed not because of Han Myungoh's ability.

…I was stupid. I looked at the message window floating in front of me and laughed.

[This person isn't registered in 'Character List'.]

I was thinking too hard when it meant literally that. Character List literally read the information of characters. Yoo Sangah and Han Myungoh were characters who didn't originally appear in Ways of Survival. They were people who would've died if I hadn't saved them. It was natural that I couldn't confirm their information with Character List.

"Gruk! Gruk! Gruk!"

On one side, the incoming Kim Namwoon and demonic people were jabbering nonsense at me. On the other side, Han Myungoh was already halfway across the bridge. Lee Hyunsung and Lee Gilyoung had already entered the safety zone across the bridge so I couldn't ask for help from them.

This was truly a predicament. I couldn't cross the bridge alone. My brain moved quickly. Should I capture one of the demonic people and cross the bridge? It was worth trying, but the success rate was too low. Unlike the name, the demonic people were categorized as non-human, meaning they didn't count as a person.

"Kuaaaack!"

Several demonic people lost their balance and fell down the bridge. The fallen demonic people became the food of the ichthyosaur. Like a piranha, the ichthyosaur broke the demonic people into dozens of pieces in an instant. Distant fear came flooding back in.

If the number of people on the bridge became 'odd' for even a moment, I would be like them. It was impossible to cross alone. Then?

"…Let's take it slow." I muttered as I attempted to control myself. Right now, I needed to remain calm. There were still a few usable methods, but the important thing was to handle matters in front of me. I controlled my breathing and walked to the demonic people.

"Kuweeok?"

Fortunately, it wasn't difficult to make them fall down the bridge using inertia. I reduced their numbers by making them fall steadily. The dokkaebi's stopwatch floating in the air was blinking. The time remaining before the scenario ended was 15 minutes.

"Sigh…"

Nails flew from a blind spot and pierced my shoulder bone. No matter how calm my mind, no matter how much information I knew, I couldn't help my untrained body.

"Kuwoooook!" The wild Kim Namwoon's attacks were becoming increasingly faster.

Left shoulder.

The right thigh.

The top of the head.

I had to break the flow. I barely avoided the flying fingernails and kicked his legs.

"Kyah?"

This person lost all senses and wasn't hurt at all. I stepped back, hitting a broken steel frame. I could hear the raging sound of the ichthyosaur at the bottom of the pillars.

[A few constellations are rejoicing in your adversity.]

[Constellations have sponsored you 200 coins.]

It was a steady accumulation of coins. Now I held 5,000 coins. It was a significant number of coins for the beginning.

[Wow, you are quite good at surviving. Now now! Will any constellations help this poor friend?] It was the dokkaebi's merchant-like voice.

I wanted to tear it apart.

[Geez, there is really nobody?]

Of course. It would be strange for a constellation to support me after what happened during the Sponsor Selection.

[What did I say? You should've chosen well when you had the chance. How pitiful.]

Kim Namwoon attacked me again and again, resulting in damage to my waist. Of course, I also injured Kim Namwoon's left side with the knife. Thanks to that, his stomach was hanging out like a skipping rope. In order to kill a demonic person, I had to completely destroy the heart. However, the skin of a demonic person was hardest near the heart. The Swiss Army knife wasn't able to pierce it with sharpness alone.

Dammit, it wouldn't be so hard if I had just one combat skill.

[The exclusive skill 'Bookmark' is activated.]

…Bookmark?

['Character Bookmarks' is activated.]

[Available Bookmark Slots: 3]

[Bringing up the list of available bookmarks.]

[People Listed in the Bookmark Slots]

1. The Delusion Demon Kim Namwoon (Understanding 25).

2. Steel Sword Lee Hyunsung (Understanding 35).

3. Empty slot.

Bookmark. I've read over 3,000 chapters of Ways of Survival and I never saw this skill name before. Still, I intuitively knew how to use it.

"Activate bookmark number one."

There was the feelings of pages turning in my head. It was the scenes of Kim Namwoon in Ways of Survival.

「Hahahaha! I'm full of strength! 」

「Die! Die! Die! Die!」

「A new world requires new laws.」

Kim Namwoon's memories crowded in and all of my muscle nerves started to tense up. The power of another person was spiking within me.

[The number one bookmark has been activated.]

[The level of the Bookmark skill is low, shortening the activation time.]

[Activation Time: One minute.]

One minute. That was enough.

[Your understanding of the character is low, so only a part of the character's skill is activated.]

[Blackening Lv.1 has been activated.]

Kim Namwoon was breathing roughly as he rushed towards me. His body was covered with a black energy that was threatening me. I firmly placed strength on the heels of my feet and rushed towards Kim Namwoon. If we had the same skill, I absolutely wouldn't lose.

At this moment, I really was Kim Namwoon. I was the crazy killer who ruled the world of 'Ways of Survival' with the protagonist. In a situation where Blackening was properly played, the Delusion Demon of the battlefield couldn't be easily beaten.

"Kyaaack!"

The Swiss Army knife cut through uncomfortable sensations. It tore through muscles and flesh. From the upper left arm to the heart. There was the sound of a whole human being cut up as Kim Namwoon staggered. If he still had eyes, he would be glaring at me right now.

"Kuoh, kill. Ohhh. D.i.e" The young man who felt pessimistic towards the world and dreamt of breaking away from it. If Ways of Survival hadn't started, he might've gone to university after sitting his CSAT[1] and enjoyed campus life. "…Don't, want…to…die"

I watched Kim Namwoon falling down the bridge without saying farewell. Despite him being a hated figure, I couldn't help feeling strange emotions.

[Your understanding of the character 'Kim Namwoon' has increased.]

[The number one bookmark has been disabled.]

A surge of fatigue overcame me as the power went away. It was hard, really hard.

"Kuwoooook!"

There was 10 minutes remaining. There were still many demonic people moving about. It was unreasonable to take on so many even with Lv. 10 physique. However, from the beginning, I had no intention of taking care of them alone. It was a little late but he should appear around now.

Kwajik! Kwajijijik!

There was a crackling sound like he had been waiting. I knew it. I thought he would do reckless things in order to gain achievements and donations.

Kwajijik! Crunch.

It was obviously the sound of a person's flesh colliding with another body, but it sounded more like a mace crushing flesh. In fact, I had collected this many coins and thought it would be worth challenging the protagonist. Now I realized how mistaken I was. From the stationary train, the demonic people were thrown away in a straight line, as if a tank had rushed through. Was this really a scene caused by a 'human'?

"Kyaack?"

The headless demonic people realized that something was strange and started turning around. However, it was too late. The man destroyed all the demonic people threatening me and appeared in front of me. An overwhelming force without any weapons. He beat the demonic people with only two fists.

I had prepared my mind in advance but sweat still flowed down my back. Dealing with this guy? It was absolutely impossible. I couldn't win even if my overall stats rose by more than double what they were now.

"You, who are you?"

The man's cool gaze turned to me. I reflexively turned on Character List in order to overcome the fear.

[The exclusive skill, Character List is activated.]

[There is too much information about this person. Character List is converted to Character Summary.]

[Character Summary]

Name: Yoo Joonghyuk.

Exclusive Attributes: Regressor (3rd turn) (Myth), Pro Gamer (Rare)

Exclusive Skills: Sage's Eye Lv. 8, Hand to Hand Combat Lv. 8, Weapons Training Lv. 8, Mental Barrier Lv. 5, Crowd Control Lv. 5,

> Reasoning Lv. 5, Lie Detection Lv. 4…

The list of exclusive skills continued endlessly. Before I could get to the end of the list, a rugged hand appeared and grabbed my neck.

"You, how the hell are you alive?"

The 'first way' to survive in a ruined world. The one who proved that method was right in front of me. Regressor Yoo Joonghyuk. The grand tragedy of this world began with this person.

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[1] **CSAT** – a South Korean standardized university exam.

Chapter 11: Ep. 2 – Protagonist, V

It would be quite a ludicrous sight if anyone else saw it. A large adult man was being grabbed by the neck and hung like a monkey. I could see Lee Hyunsung looking this way from across the bridge. His expression was anxious but he couldn't actually see what was going on here. It was due to the safety ward. I could see over there but they couldn't see here.

"Name." Yoo Joonghyuk demanded.

"What?"

"What is your name?"

Look at this indifferent way of talking, just like a main character. But it wasn't good to provoke him here.

"Kim Dokja."

"A strange name."

"I've heard that a lot."

At this moment, my stomach sank in and felt turned inside out as Yoo Joonghyuk's fist hit it.

"…Ugh."

Despite having skin that a knife bounced off, the attack was very painful.

"You have a solid body. Have you already mastered the use of coins?"

"It is the same with you…"

Bam. There was a hit to my stomach again. I barely managed to swallow back a groan. This guy, the level of his strength was at least 15. It was at this scale despite only one main and one sub scenario occurring. Indeed, natural born monsters were different.

"Stop the unnecessary answers. Only answer what I ask from now on. Understood?"

I didn't answer. I thought maybe this might happen. However, this was the worst situation that I desperately hoped would never happen. In the beginning, Yoo Joonghyuk was more intimidating than any other figure. His personality had worn out after going through regression three times. His principles were cut away in order to maintain his sense of self. The current Yoo Joonghyuk would never hesitate for the sake of his purpose.

"Your answer?"

"…I will."

"Use honorifics."

"What if I don't want to?"

This time, I raised both hands to block the fist. The pain felt like my bones had broken but the shock was dissipated. Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes widened like he was a bit surprised.

[The character 'Yoo Joonghyuk' is on guard against you.]

Then it didn't matter. I wasn't going to be a punching bag just because he was the main character.

"I'm sorry but you are younger than me, pro gamer Yoo Joonghyuk-ssi. Therefore, you should be the one using honorifics."

"…You know me?"

"I know. I am the employee of a game company." It was a lie. Even if I worked for a game company, it was impossible to memorize the names of all professional gamers. In addition, until recently, 'Yoo Joonghyuk' was just a character in a novel. "You are famous. At one time, I was a fan."

Being famous was just a setting of the plot. Still, it wasn't a lie that I was a 'fan'. I liked, hated, grumbled, and cheered Yoo Joonghyuk on. That's why I stuck with Yoo Joonghyuk for over 3,000 chapters.

"Fan. I haven't heard that in a long time." Yoo Joonghyuk had a look of nostalgia in his eyes, like he was locked in his memories. However, it was only for a moment. "I'll forgive your impudence this time, but your situation hasn't changed."

"I can see that."

I looked down at my two legs swaying over a blank space.

Yoo Joonghyuk said, "I have only one thing I want to ask."

"Ask."

"How did you survive on the subway?"

It was the question I expected.

"Will you spare me if I answer?"

"I'll see."

It was a lie. I could tell just by looking at his face. I was the only reader of Ways of Survival. Numerous possible repertoires were simulated in my head. What could I say to convince this damn regressor?

[Your understanding of the character 'Yoo Joonghyuk' is increasing.]

[Your understanding of this person is already very high.]

…Huh?

[The conditions of use for the exclusive skill 'Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint' stage 2 has been reached!]

[Do you want to activate the exclusive skill?]

Then after a moment, I was able to read someone's thoughts like a waterfall in my head.

「Only Lee Hyunsung and Kim Namwoon should've survived in that carriage.」

「Yet Kim Namwoon died and the others survived.」

「How did you survive?」

「Who the hell is this guy?」

「Dig up information. Then if I find any disturbing elements… Kill.」

A dense flicker of thoughts. It was obviously a crisis situation but I couldn't prevent the corners of my mouth from going up. The time remaining until the scenario ended was 5 minutes.

I started telling the story. I told the story using as much concise, short, and accurate vocabulary as possible. It was from the first moment the 'dokkaebi' appeared in the subway to the end of the first scenario. Of course, I excluded the skills I got and any important issues.

"…You cleared the scenario by killing insects?"

"We were lucky."

Yoo Joonghyuk was so surprised he seemed to have forgotten that his mouth was open.

「 The future has completely changed. 」

He was shocked. Originally, the people in carriage 3807 would kill each other in a battle royale, with only Lee Hyunsung and Kim Namwoon surviving.

"You have keen eyes. How did you know there were insects in the carriage?"

Killing Intent filled Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes as his thoughts brushed through my head.

「 Is this guy also a regressor? 」

「If so, I have to kill him right now. 」

A person who commits a fault thinks that everyone speaks of it. I wasn't surprised that he misunderstood me. I quickly opened my mouth, "An explosion."

"Explosion?"

"I was able to find the insects due to an explosion from the carriage in front."

Yoo Joonghyuk's body stopped at these words. "Explain it in a simpler manner."

"When the explosion occurred, a kid fell and dropped his insect collecting net. I picked it up by chance."

"…It is a suspicious coincidence."

"Coincidences are always suspicious. If you don't believe me, ask the people beyond the ward. The boy standing there dropped the net."

Beyond the safety barrier on the way to Oksu Station, people were looking over at this side. The scenario wasn't over yet so they couldn't approach or talk to us. Yoo Joonghyuk looked over but showed no signs of moving. His eyes changed and memories that seemed to belong to Yoo Joonghyuk crossed my mind.

「 I see. 」

「 Explosion. 」

「This guy isn't a regressor. 」

「He isn't the one who changed the future. Rather, the future changed…」

「 Because of me. 」

I saw people dying painfully in a powerful explosion and Yoo Joonghyuk blankly watching it.

「 It is because I started killing them, unlike the other turns. 」

Due to the impact of Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint, I could feel Yoo Joonghyuk's mental pain and suffering.

"Are your questions over?" I asked.

"…Yes."

"Then can you let me go? In addition, let's move to Oksu together. There isn't much time remaining to clear the scenario."

"It is difficult." However, a protagonist was a protagonist for a reason. "Everything you said makes perfect sense."

I have never seen a protagonist as careful as Yoo Joonghyuk.

「 A beginner can't be so calm. 」

「He is abnormally well-adjusted to this changed world. 」

「He probably killed Kim Namwoon.」

「 He has gone beyond being useful to being dangerous.」

Yoo Joonghyuk's right eye started shining with a gold colour. I quickly realized what he was doing. In fact, it would be weird if this guy didn't use 'that'. Sage's Eye. Yoo Joonghyuk's strongest detection skill. Sage's Eye was the SS-grade skill that showed the target's attributes window as well as hidden information.

As long as he used it, I couldn't avoid revealing my identity. On the other hand, I thought it was a good thing. I still didn't know my 'attribute' and 'skills'. If Yoo Joonghyuk discovered my information, I would also be able to know about myself. Then hopefully, I would be able to use the information I learned to escape this situation.

[The exclusive skill, 'Fourth Wall' is activated!]

[Fourth Wall has detected the use of the detection skill Sage's Eye!]

Sparks flew in the air and Yoo Joonghyuk's body staggered.

「…Kuk, what?」

Yoo Joonghyuk covered his right eye and watched me with confusion. "You… what is your identity?"

I'm sorry but I was wondering the same thing.

[The exclusive skill Fourth Wall has blocked Sage's Eye!]

I didn't know that I had a skill that would defend against Sage's Eye. After Bookmark, it was Fourth Wall. This complicated things. Yoo Joonghyuk wouldn't believe me now.

「 I must kill him here.」

He was a person who didn't trust what he didn't know.

"Yoo Joonghyuk." Then I also need to change plans. "You need a reliable companion."

"…What do you mean?"

"You can't break through the 46th scenario alone. Shouldn't you be well aware of it?"

Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes narrowed. "How do you know this? Perhaps you—"

"It doesn't matter how I know or who I am." I stared straight into Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes and said, "The important thing is that I can help you."

「 He isn't a regressor. If he was a regressor, I wouldn't be unaware of him. 」

「 Then who is this person? 」

「 …Perhaps? 」

If I couldn't hide my hand and if I didn't possess the best hand, then there was only one way out. It was to show a hand that would make the other person misunderstand.

"Yoo Joonghyuk, I know the future that you don't know."

[The character 'Yoo Joonghyuk' has used the 'Lie Detection' skill.

[Lie Detection has confirmed that your words are the truth.]

Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes slowly widened. "…How?"

"How else?"

「 No way. There was a prophet other than Anna Croft? It is also in South Korea? 」

Prophet. In Ways of Survival, it was the only attribute that could see the future and had the passive of 'nullifying all detection skills'. In fact, only one person had the attribute of 'prophet' in the world of Ways of Survival.

「Only a prophet can defend against my Sage's Eye.」

I didn't answer and Yoo Joonghyuk bit his lips.

"Can you perhaps use 'Future Sight'?"

"It is something similar."

"You knew I would come here."

"Yes."

「I see. If this man is a prophet, all his actions are convincing.」

The flow was changing. Yoo Joonghyuk's fluctuation was conveyed straight away. This was the only chance.

"I know that Yoo Joonghyuk has special powers. You also know things about the future. Isn't that right?"

"…"

"But that knowledge is never perfect." The only weakness of a regressor was that the future changed when they used their information of the future. In other words, all those who regressed would eventually live in a 'world they don't know'. "Make me your companion. I can fill in the parts you are missing."

There was no companion as good as a 'prophet' to the present Yoo Joonghyuk. In fact, my present self could play a role similar to a prophet. It was because I was the only reader of this story.

[There is one minute to the end of the scenario.]

Yoo Joonghyuk lowered his head and started to think.

「A prophet will certainly be helpful.」

[There are 50 seconds left to complete the scenario.]

｢Not just the 46th scenario, but later when fighting the 'Zarathustra'. But… can I really believe him? ｣

[There are 40 seconds left to the end of the scenario.]

｢ Companion. ｣

Finally, Yoo Joonghyuk raised his head as I stared at the clock with an irritated heart. "I have decided. I will make you my companion."

[Excessive immersion has severely worn out your mental strength.]

[Exclusive skill, Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint has been turned off.]

I wasn't sure if it was due to fatigue or relief but the exclusive skill was released. Now Yoo Joonghyuk's face was as difficult as a philosophy book with no commentary written. Yoo Joonghyuk started to take me across the 'Even Bridge'. Of course, I was still held by the collar but…I thought things would be all right now. I persuaded this damn regressor and was in a good position. We had almost crossed the Even Bridge and were right in front of the safe area when Yoo Joonghyuk suddenly stopped.

"I will ask you one last thing."

"What?"

"If you are really a prophet, you should know your future. Isn't that right?"

The moment I saw Yoo Joonghyuk's serene eyes, goosebumps broke out. His test wasn't over yet. The grip holding my collar tightened.

"Keok."

His hand raised me up a little bit and a gentle wind passed by my feet. Underneath me was completely empty. The smell of blood mixed in with the smell of Han River as the ichthyosaurs jumped towards their prey with open mouths.

"Will I let go of this hand or won't I?"

For the first time, I started sweating. Let me think. Even without his thoughts, I knew this guy more than anyone else. I closed my eyes and thought about Yoo Joonghyuk.

[There are 20 seconds left to the end of the scenario.]

Then I came to a conclusion.

"Yoo Joonghyuk."

I was certain about what he would do. No matter how I thought about it, there was no other ending when it came to Yoo Joonghyuk. I talked as I watched a sea commander approaching in the water. "I will tell you two things first."

"…What?"

"One, I'm not your subordinate. So I hope you will treat me fairly from now on."

"…"

"Two, I will cooperate with you but you also have to promise to cooperate with me."

Yoo Joonghyuk looked at me with interest and nodded. "Well, what is your answer?"

I replied with a smile, "Release your hand and get lost, you damn son of a bitch."

Then the power holding me disappeared. I was grabbed by the force of gravity. I saw Yoo Joonghyuk's face as I was falling. Yoo Joonghyuk was smiling brightly like something made him happy.

Son of a bitch.

"I believe you. You are definitely a prophet."

Waiting for me at my crash point was the mouth of the giant sea commander. I closed my eyes from the shock of the impact along with the cold water of Han River. As I sucked in a breath, a warm and enormous darkness swallowed me up.

[You have failed to clear the scenario.]

…Damn, I have to use that method after all.

Chapter 12: Ep. 3 – Contract, I

My body suddenly became heavy as I felt water entering my lungs. Then I was sucked in somewhere. I wasn't torn apart because I fell with perfect timing. However, I couldn't lose consciousness here. I had to stay awake. I needed to wait for a while. Somehow, I managed to curl up and hold my breath. 10 seconds, 20 seconds, 30 seconds… I was barely breathing when my hands hit a tangible wall in the darkness.

"U-Uwek." I could barely breathe even after coughing up the river water several times. My level 10 physique saved me from being killed by hitting the water surface, but the large and small bruises all over my body were very painful. In order not to fall into a panic, I controlled my breathing and then turned on my smartphone. I was worried it might've broken in the fall, but fortunately, it powered on just fine. It was good that I'd spent a lot and bought a smartphone with waterproof capabilities.

The flashlight turned on, and the surrounding scenery entered my eyes. There were huge walls with concrete by-products floating by. The insides of an ichthyosaur's stomach were more disgusting than I'd imagined.

"Dammit."

Yoo Joonghyuk's expression as he released his grip on me without hesitation and then got off the bridge was vivid in my mind. I'd expected it, but it was still more shocking than I thought it'd be.

…If I wanted to be his companion, I had to survive. It wasn't that I didn't understand. The weight of this word, 'companion', was too great for Yoo Joonghyuk. Since his failure in the first round of regression, Yoo Joonghyuk had never made a real 'companion'. It was rare for humans to easily follow the growth of a regressor. As a result, he had solved everything alone, was revered as a savior, and was naturally lonely. To Yoo Joonghyuk, 'humans' were only subordinates or enemies.

Thus, this was a test. If I wanted to be in an equal position with him, I had to solve this much alone.

…Well, this was when I looked at it from Yoo Joonghyuk's viewpoint.

"A companion like you… Crazy psychopath."

I barely doggy paddled to a floating styrofoam panel and raised my body onto it. Thanks to the warmth of the stomach, I wasn't cold. However, the problem was what was to happen from now on. I closed my eyes and played the message log I'd heard.

[You have failed to clear the scenario.]

[Paid settlement will begin.]

[100 coins have been reduced for the channel usage fee.]

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' has nodded at your exciting remarks.]

[100 coins have been sponsored.]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' nods at your choice.]

[100 coins have been sponsored.]

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' is disappointed in your rash remarks.]

There were quite a few messages. Additionally, a few exposed constellations sponsored me. Maybe it was due to the final conversation I had with Yoo Joonghyuk. I felt a little down as I read through the messages of the constellations one by one and collected the coins. If I had picked one of these constellations in the first Sponsor Selection, this might not have happened. However, I had no regret in my choice.

After encountering Yoo Joonghyuk directly, I was certain. The Great Sage, Heaven's Equal might be a sponsor of the highest quality but he wasn't enough. I needed more than just 'sponsorship' if I wanted to confront Yoo Joonghyuk. That was what I would gain from here.

The walls of the stomach growled, and small waves rose inside. The sea commander seemed to be moving somewhere. I turned on my smartphone and calculated the time. According to Ways of Survival, the ichthyosaur started to secrete stomach acid around three hours after ingesting food. In other words, I didn't have much time left.

[Haha, it is sad that things turned out like this. It was very interesting.] There was a sound effect before the dokkaebi's voice rang out.

"…Dokkaebi?"

[Yes, that's right. You don't seem panicked at all?]

"I knew you would come."

[Hrmm. It sounds like you were waiting for me?]

"Of course, I have been waiting."

A light turned on, and the dokkaebi appeared. I couldn't tell for sure from his expression alone, but this guy was clearly interested. If I was pushed here, I wouldn't be able to eat my meal. So, I deliberately spoke calmly, "Are you doing to take coins from me?"

[…Coins?]

"You have to take coins in exchange for me failing the scenario."

[Hmm, not your life?]

"If it was my life, you would have written 'death' in the failure results column, not three question marks. Doesn't this mean there is room to negotiate?"

[…Hahaha. How interesting.]

In fact, there was a loophole in my words. The scenario message was 'Failure: ???'. This literally meant that the penalty of failure was unknown. It was just my assumption that it was in exchange for coins. Nevertheless, there was a reason why I was so certain.

"Am I wrong?"

It was because I already knew about this scenario.

The dokkaebi hesitated for a moment before nodding. [You are right. It's amazing that you could determine this point with such a clue… As expected from someone who is attraction the constellations' attention.] The dokkaebi's tone was filled with sincere admiration. [As you said, you can survive this sub-scenario if you pay coins, even if you fail.]

"How much?"

[Pay 5,100 coins. Then I will let you live.]

I looked at how many coins I currently possessed.

[Coins Possessed: 5,100 C]

I couldn't help smiling. This brat was messing around right now.

"That is too much."

[Haha, then won't you die? It is up to me to accept the coins or not. If you do something wrong, I can just end it here.]

"Then kill me."

[…Huh?]

"Kill me."

[…….]

"You can't kill me?"

The dokkaebi didn't move. This was a natural reaction. After all, he was having a lot of fun with me right now. Furthermore, he wouldn't have come down here to see me if he had been planning to kill me. For this guy, I had to survive here or at least to die miserably.

[Haha. You are really making me angry. Look, now…] The dokkaebi's flat-shaped eyebrows wriggled furiously. It was time to stop the taunts and get to the main point.

"Low-grade dokkaebi, Bihyung. How are the activities of a streamer?"

If there was a crack in the face, it would look exactly like this. Dokkaebi Bihyung showed confusion for the first time.

[H-How do you know my name?]

"You haven't been enjoying broadcasting lately, right? The constellations are too stingy."

[W-Who the hell are you? How does a human…] Bihyung's horns shook. It was a natural reaction. After all, an ordinary human couldn't know about the Star Stream system. However, I wasn't an ordinary human.

[A few constellations have doubts about your existence.]

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter''s eyes are shining at your plan.]

From now on, it wasn't a story for the constellations. I mouthed to Bihyung, "How about we talk after you close the channel?"

Bihyung was worried and closed the channel.

[#BI-7623 channel is closed.]

Once the constellations left the channel, Bihyung showed his true colors.

[Feel free to speak. You… How can an ordinary human know about the Star Stream broadcasting?]

"That isn't important."

[Huh?]

"Bihyung, do you want to be 'king of the dokkaebis'?"

[What now—]

"Don't you wish to be the best streamer in the network, surpassing Dokgak and Gildal?" Bihyung's complexion was changing. "Dokkaebi Bihyung, sign a contract with me. Then I will make you the king of the dokkaebis."

Chapter 13: Ep. 3 – Contract, II

Star Stream system—the star stream broadcasting was designed to relay its contents to the entire universe. The subscribers were constellations at the top of the distant galaxies, the actors were humans like me, and the storyteller that connected the two sides was the dokkaebi before me.

[Ha, hahahaha! You are crazy! A crazy human! I should've known it when you refused the sponsoring of the other constellations!] Bihyung laughed for a long time before opening his mouth again. [I don't know how you know about Star Stream Broadcasting but I can't accept the offer. I'm a dokkaebi, not a constellation. I can't be your sponsor.]

"You seem to have misunderstood. I never told you to sponsor me."

[Huh?]

"I am well aware that you are a weak dokkaebi. I don't need your strength. I need your channel."

[My channel?]

"Since you can't seem to understand me, is there a problem with your Korean language patch?"

[No, what is this?]

"I will explain it simply. I want to sign an exclusive contract with your channel."

Bihyung made a blank expression before belatedly regained his spirit. [Wait a minute. Do you want to make a 'stream contract' with me now?]

"Yes."

A stream contract was originally a contract between dokkaebi and constellations. The constellation's incarnation would appear on a particular channel, and the dokkaebi would receive a portion of the coins earned by the incarnation of the constellation as a commission. Originally, the person who was the incarnation wouldn't be able to intervene in this contract. It was called sponsorship, but the contracted incarnation was nothing but a slave.

[Haha, this is a hit.] Bihyung laughed behind his small fingers. The surrounding atmosphere was changing. [I don't know how you know about such things, but to think that some human dares to mention the stream contract? Moreover, it is a trivial bug with no sponsor?] As his tone changed, the surrounding air was filled with killing intent. Indeed, even a low-level dokkaebi was strong compared to humans. However, it wasn't enough to make me back off.

"It is worth signing a contract because I have no sponsor."

[…What?]

"What do you think the purpose of a constellation is to enter a channel?" At the sudden question, Bihyung looked like a bad student. From now on, it was a special lecture time for the low-level dokkaebi. "You don't have to be so nervous. You already know this information. But let's review it again to see what it means."

Bihyung was caught in my pace and nodded despite himself.

"The Star Stream subscribers can be largely divided into two groups. One group is the 'fun seekers' who seek to relieve their boredom with the channel. The other group consist of the 'incarnation searchers' who want to find an incarnation to contract with them. Isn't that right?"

[Yes. That's right.]

"For this reason, you must be able to satisfy one of the two groups in order to become a famous channel in Star Stream. In other words, either stick to the fun seekers or the incarnation seekers. You have to attract one of them properly."

[You are moderately well informed. But so what? What does this contract have to do with why constellations subscribe?]

"I don't know how many more hints I have to give you. This is why your number of subscribers still isn't over three digits."

[…Shut up. Say it quickly.]

Seeing Bihyung thrust his small horns at me cutely, it was hard to believe the dokkaebi had blown up people's head a while ago. Now it was time to stop making fun of him and take a chance.

"What if there is a channel that can satisfy both the fun seekers and the incarnation searchers?"

[What are you saying? Such a thing is impossible. Even if it is possible, it is only for a while.]

Bihyung's words were correct. The reason why it was impossible to satisfy all the constellations was due to the characteristics of the 'incarnation searchers' group. The purpose of these constellations was to 'discover an incarnation'. They changed channels as soon as the Sponsor Selection was over. Due to this, the incarnation searchers group were just temporary customers. However…

"That is a story for when the Sponsor Selection proceeds normally."

[What?]

"What if there is an incarnation who doesn't sign a contract with any constellation? In addition, what if that incarnation shows an ability that transcends all over incarnations with sponsors?"

The existence of a strong incarnation would attract the eyes of the constellations. If this incarnation continued to reject selecting a sponsor, the 'incarnation searchers' group would also continue to subscribe without leaving the channel.

[W-Wait a minute! You— Is this why you didn't select a sponsor…?]

"Yes, that's right."

[Ha… This is interesting.] Bihyung grinned at me. [Becoming the strongest incarnation without a sponsor… If there is such a thing, it certainly wouldn't be a dream to become the best Star Stream channel. But such an incarnation can't exist.]

"Do you really think so?"

[…I admit that you aren't normal. You have attracted the attention of constellations from the beginning, and thanks to it, I have also been having fun. However, there is a limit to your delusions. Haven't you noticed it after going through that? An ordinary human can never beat an incarnation. That is the law of the world.]

"I don't know that."

[You have already missed the opportunity. Look around you. This isn't a main scenario. You failed a sub-scenario, and now your life is at risk. There are no constellations watching you—]

"Really?"

[…?]

"By now, the constellations must be in an uproar. Aren't they? Isn't everybody clamoring for the channel to quickly be opened?" Bihyung was silent. "Aren't they all going crazy with curiosity right now? Who is that crazy person who went against the regressor? Is he really a prophet? Can he really see the future? If he can see the future, why did he get eaten by the ichthyosaur?"

[S-Stop! You are…]

"From now on, I'm going to show it. So shut up and do what I tell you. Do you want to become the king of dokkaebis?"

The gaze with which Bihyung was using to look at me was changing, and I could hear the sound of him gulping. Bihyung was worried. However, in any case, there was nothing to lose if he believed me here. In that case…? Bihyung's pupils moved quickly. [Then let's settle the scenario failure first. Give me 5,100 coins…]

"What are you saying? I didn't fail."

[…Eh?]

"Maybe I've met the conditions by now…" I loosened my body and got up from my seat. My cold body was stiff. Bihyung still had a stupid expression on his face. "Open the channel. It will start soon."

[Start, what will—]

Then a message rang out in the air.

[The hidden scenario has arrived!]

[Hidden Scenario – Commander Slayer]

Category: Hidden

Difficulty: A+

Clear Conditions: Kill the ichthyosaur 'sea commander' and escape from its stomach.

Time Limit: 10 days

Compensation: 9,000 coins

Failure: Death

"Look, didn't I tell you to be prepared?"

There were three types of scenarios in Ways of Survival. The main scenario was in charge of progressing the main story, the sub-scenarios were responsible for minor events, and the hidden scenarios were only opened through special conditions.

[How on earth…?] Bihyung's lips were shaking with shock. Unlike the main scenarios and sub-scenarios that a dokkaebi was in charge of, the hidden scenarios were characterized by their automatic appearance when certain conditions were met.

"You didn't even know. You low-grade dokkaebi."

[You… What on earth?]

"Anyway, if I can clear this, I will prove that I have the ability for the contract, right?"

Bihyung watched the scenario screen with gloomy eyes. He looked at me with a careful gaze and asked, [This scenario, the difficulty is A+. Do you really believe you can clear it?]

"Yes."

There was a small wave as the Han River water crashed against the wall of the ichthyosaur's stomach. Bihyung was silent for a moment before opening his mouth, […Okay. If you succeed in clearing this scenario then I will accept the contract.]

"The terms of the contract will be negotiated after the scenario is cleared."

[So arrogant… Then I will open the channel again. Please try hard.]

"Ah, wait a minute." It would be difficult if he left so soon. I had something to check. "You have something left to do."

[…What is it now?] Bihyung's mocking tone was somewhat annoying.

"Fix a system error for me."

[System error?]

"My attributes window isn't opening."

[No way. The system can't have an error. The scenario system is perfect.]

"Take a look yourself."

Bihyung looked at me with suspicious eyes and started to mutter something.

[The dokkaebi 'Bihyung' has used 'System Interference' on you.]

System interference—it was an absolute interference skill that could only be used by dokkaebis with the right to interfere in the scenario. In fact, it was unclear if the reason why I couldn't see the attributes window was an error or not. However, at least the dokkaebi would be able to find out something. That said, if he couldn't figure it out, that was also a profit for me.

[The exclusive skill, 'Fourth Wall' is activated!]

In the next moment, sparks flew in the air and struck Bihyung.

Chapter 14: Ep. 3 – Contract, III

Looking at the situation, I got a sense of what happened. "What is it? Is something wrong?"

[This isn't possible. How can there be a firewall preventing the system interference…?]

It seemed Fourth Wall blocked not just the skills of an incarnation but the dokkaebi's interference as well. If this was true, it meant nobody in Ways of Survival could see my attributes window, including myself. How interesting. It was the perfect condition to become a scammer.

"Forget about it."

[P-Please wait! I can do it. U-Uh. What if I do this?]

"You can't do it."

[Kuaaack!] Bihyung screamed like he had received an electric shock. The white fluffy hair on his skin was burned black. [T-This! This!]

"It's okay. If you can't do it then stop. I will ask for another favour."

[This can't be! I am Dokkaebi Bihyung. If I can't solve this situation, the honor of the dokkaebi—]

I looked at the clock. It had been an hour since the ichthyosaur ate. There was no time to waste time like this.

"The Dokkaebi Bag."

Bihyung stopped his useless action of digging at the air. [What?]

"Open the Dokkaebi Bag."

[…How do you know about that?]

"Are you going to open it?"

[Only an incarnation with a sponsor can use the Dokkaebi Bag…]

"It is true that all incarnations that use the Dokkaebi Bag have a sponsor, but there is no rule that an incarnation without a sponsor can't use the Dokkaebi Bag."

[…Wait a minute.] Bihyung pulled out a manual and confirmed it. [At this point, I don't know if I am a dokkaebi or you are. Are you actually a dokkaebi?]

The smiling Bihyung raised both hands. […Okay, there is no problem if you use it. However, the Dokkaebi Bag can only be used when the channel is open for streaming purposes. Is that okay?]

"It's fine."

[#BI-7623 channel is open.]

[Constellations have entered.]

Then an electric current appeared in the air, and a transparent screen emerged in front of me.

[Welcome to the coin shop, the 'Dokkaebi Bag'.]

The Dokkaebi Bag…

It was the moment when this damn world's 'cash store' was opened.

There were two ways to use coins in Ways of Survival. One of them was to raise the level of the stats such as physique and strength. The other was to use it as a common form of currency that could be used in various stores, including the Dokkaebi Bag.

[Buy it now! A starter pack for your incarnation for 2,500 coins!]

[A today only special! A 300% growth package, grow faster than others!]

[Did you accidentally pick an incarnation with a bad attribute? Don't worry! The 'Random Attribute Box' that can randomly change the attribute has been released!]

There were numerous coin items, including various packages. All of the advertisements in the Dokkaebi Bag were aimed at the constellations raising incarnations. This was natural since the original customers of the Dokkaebi Bag were constellations. I got rid of the pop-up advertising windows one by one.

Although it was nothing compared to the 'disasters' that emerged in the fifth main scenario, a sea commander ichthyosaur was no different from a disaster for the early stage incarnations. To defeat the ichthyosaur, I needed some items sold in the Dokkaebi Bag.

'Let's see…'

I looked at the catalog before glancing over at Bihyung. "Hey, are these the only items I can buy right now? Is there a search function?"

[At that… Shit. Wait. Constellations. Please. Please calm down.] From the moment the channel opened, Bihyung had been repeating explanations with comic-like sweat drops on his face. [It was just a server error that shut the broadcast off for a while! I didn't turn it off on purpose.]

There were a total of 20 stars above Bihyung's head. Since not too many of them had left the channel, it seemed that quite a few constellations still wanted to see what had happened to me. Of course, not all of the constellations were friendly.

[A few constellations are questioning the fairness of the broadcast!]

[A few constellations are suspicious of the privileges you have received!]

It wasn't unexpected. While the broadcast was off, a hidden scenario had started, and the Dokkaebi Bag had been opened. It was no wonder that the constellations were surprised.

[No, preferences? Look at this, Constellations. I am a dokkaebi. Don't you know that I will be extinguished if I do that? Don't you know that the storyteller vow is never light?]

"Will you help me?"

[…There is a product search button in the lower right corner.]

"Thank you."

I ignored Bihyung and pressed the magnifying glass icon at the bottom of the package window.

[The product search function is activated.]

[The product search function is limited to 5 times a day. Any additional searches will cost 100 coins per search.]

In any case, it was the same for humans and dokkaebi. The total number of free searches given was five. Two searches were enough to buy the materials I needed, so I had three searches left.

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' is wondering about your plan.]

'Yes, be curious. If you are curious, keep watching'.

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is looking angrily at your actions.]

'Don't watch if you are going to get all twisted up'.

I opened my mouth to use the search function, "Search for the 'Ancient Dragon' item."

[There are three search results.]

A small pop-up window soon emerged.

[* Ancient Dragon's Heart – Stock: ?

* Ancient Dragon's Bone – Stock: 1

* Ancient Dragon's Horn – Stock: 1]

I chose the Ancient Dragon's Heart.

[Item Information]

[Name: Ancient Dragon's Heart

Rating: SS

Description: A heart containing the magic power of the ancient dragon 'Ignitus'. It possesses near-infinite magic power, and the attribute 'Hellfire' will be acquired if a heart transplant is successful.

Price: 1,500,000 C

Stock: Just sold out.]

As expected, it was out of stock. From beyond the catalog, Bihyung, who was dealing with the constellations, looked at me with his jaw dropped open.

[Crazy. How do you know the information about the ancient dragon?]

"I just called out a nice name."

[…It seems like a lie.]

I shrugged. In the original Ways of Survival, the owner of the Ancient Dragon's Heart was already determined. If I remembered correctly, the owner of the heart was currently in Italy. They were a person with good luck, getting such a diamond of a sponsor. I called out several more product names.

[The related product search is completed.]

[* Great Demon's Eyes – Stock: 0

* Purest Sword Force – Stock: 1]

The Great Demon's Eyes were sold out… It seemed the hands of the constellations were really quick. Well, I couldn't buy the item anyway since the selling price was 1 million coins. At any rate, it was good to have a sponsor. Now the incarnation with the Great Demon's Eyes would grow and destroy the beginner scenarios.

[What are you really? What type of cheat are you using? How do you know about items that can only be found in the search?]

"I just said plausible names."

Among the three items that I searched for, only the Purest Sword Force was in stock. Furthermore, the price was 10,000 coins, so I couldn't buy it now. I put it in the shopping cart for now.

[What, are you buying it?]

"Not right now. I am just window shopping."

[Sheesh, what a waste of time.]

"I am going to buy something else, so bring up the items I call out from now on."

I called out several item names. After a moment, a list of items emerged in front of me.

[* Mucus of the Hammer Seahorse – Stock: 124

* Stone Hog's Pointed Thorn – Stock: 17]

I compared it to the list in my memories. The hammer seahorse, which was the food of the ichthyosaur, and the stone hog, which was the nemesis of sea species… There was no doubt. This combination was the best when it came to attacking an ichthyosaur.

"Four mucus, four thorns. It is 800 coins?"

[Yes, but… where are you going to use these miscellaneous items?]

"You don't need to know."

[…I don't want to be nosy but why don't you buy something else? For example, this Woryeong Sword Technique. It is originally 8,000 coins but I will now sell it for 4,000 coins. Wouldn't buying this be more helpful to clear the scenario?]

"Thank you but I will just buy this."

Bihyung wasn't satisfied but received the payment anyway.

[800 coins have been consumed.]

In the darkness, a sparkling powder gathered, and the four elongated thorns and four pockets of black mucus appeared.

[I can't give a refund if you regret it now. Do you understand?]

"I know." I nodded briefly and started working. I took off my top, tied it around my waist, and stuck the thorns in the gap between my top and my waist, while the pockets were hung from my waist. The stone hog's thorn was stumpy but became sharp at the end. It was approximately one meter in length. It was a reasonable size to pierce something.

[Hrmm… Then I'll be going. I can't stay with you. There is something fun going on in another place.]

"Do it."

[Huhu, then hang in there. I hope the story will bless you.]

Bihyung disappeared in a flash of light, and the surroundings became dark again. I could use the light from my smartphone, but I wanted to save the battery as much as possible. In the darkness, the stone hog thorn was emitting a bluish light. It was a feeble light, but it would be sufficient for the moment.

I pulled out a thorn and swung it. Maybe it was because I didn't have a skill such as Weapons Training or Incarnation of All Soldiers, but I couldn't get used to holding the thorn.

[A few constellations are bored.]

The impatient constellations left the channel. I couldn't see it, but Bihyung was probably fretting right now. Then an hour passed.

Right, left, up, and down. I didn't like it, but I no longer had a problem handling the thorn. The surface finish was rough and didn't seem like it would slip easily from my hand. It was time to begin. I used the proper force and stabbed at the ichthyosaur wall above me.

Tiing!

It was like poking a rubber elastic wall as the thorn bounced off. My current strength wasn't high enough to tear at the stomach of the ichthyosaur. It would probably be the same if I used a skill. At that moment, the small holes at the top of the stomach wall opened simultaneously. Then an absolutely disgusting liquid poured out.

"Kuweek!" One of the demonic people floating on something in the stomach started shrieking. The demonic person's skin started burning. The digestion of the ichthyosaur had begun. The ichthyosaur's digestive juices quickly mixed into the river water and started to melt away the concrete and other floating products.

There was no time. However, it was going as planned. I jumped from the floating object and gripped a bump on the wall of the stomach. Then I started climbing up the wall like I was rock climbing.

Gurgle gurgle gurgle.

The outlet of the digestive juices was right above. I put the thorn in my mouth and grabbed a pocket of the hammer seahorse's mucus. Pouring the mysterious dark blue liquid onto my hand, I then applied the mucus carefully onto the thorn, from the tip down to the end. I did it with precision and care, like applying shaving cream to an area to be shaved. If the shaving cream protected the skin from the razor, then the mucus protected the thorn from the digestive juices.

'Go'.

I swung the thorn toward where the digestive juices were coming from. The angle was correct, and I used my maximum strength. The digestive juices flowed down the thorn and dissolved the skin on my forearm. I experienced a terrible pain but didn't stop. If I made a mistake here, everything would be over.

[The exclusive skill 'Fourth Wall' has relieved some of the pain.]

Gurgle, gurgle. Chururuk…

Before long, the thorn jammed up the emission point.

"Just one."

After a deep sigh, I pulled out another thorn from my waist. I applied the mucus of the hammer seahorse onto another thorn, found another opening, and blocked it.

[A few constellations admire your calmness.]

[Constellations have sponsored you 200 coins.]

I used this method to block three opening points. There were some left, but the small openings didn't release large amounts of digestive fluids. There was one thorn left in the top tightly tied around me. All that was left was one thorn and two pockets of mucus.

I used the remaining mucus on my skin and clothes, and then poured the remainder down my throat.

"Kup."

The fishy taste on my tongue was sickening but it was better than dying. The bitterness was nothing compared to the disaster that would occur starting from this moment. It was around five minutes afterward that the entire stomach started trembling.

…It had started.

Kieeeeeeek-!

The ichthyosaur let out a painful scream. The blood vessels on the wall of the stomach were squirming, and the thorns were visibly expanding into the blood vessels. The thorns in the openings had started their aggressive growth activity. This was because the stone hog's thorns grew in response to the body fluids of seawater species.

The thorns, which had become immune to the digestive juices due to the applied mucus, absorbed the surrounding fluids and started to take root in the body of the ichthyosaur. The stone hog's thorns wouldn't stop expanding until the ichthyosaur was completely dead.

As I watched the liquid swirl under my feet, I grabbed a thorn tightly. I had done everything I could. From now on, it was a mental fight. Either I would die or this guy would die. Only one of us would survive.

Chapter 15: Ep. 3 – Contract, IV

I didn't know how much time passed by. My breathing was often interrupted, and all my muscles were so stiff that I could barely move them.

[A few constellations admire your will to survive!]

[Constellations have sponsored you 100 coins.]

However, I persisted. I persisted because I believed I could hold on. The light emitted from the thorn in the darkness confirmed that I was alive. After confirming the falling temperature of the stomach wall, I was convinced that the ichthyosaur was dying.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' admires your spirit.]

[The constellation has sponsored you 100 coins.]

When I was hungry, I placed my tongue to the end of the thorn. The condensed fluid that flowed out contained the life force absorbed from the ichthyosaur. The reason I drank the mucus in advance had been to absorb this concentrate.

[Your physique has slightly increased due to absorbing the power of the ichthyosaur.]

There wasn't an immediate effect of my stats levels increasing, but by the time I escaped from the ichthyosaur, I would gain at least two levels in physique. It wouldn't work at a higher level, but this was one of the few tricks I could use to raise my physique without using coins.

Indeed, this wasn't a dream. This was all I could do. I was just an ordinary reader, not a protagonist. It felt like I would wake up screaming in bed at any moment, but no such miracle happened no matter how much I blinked.

…Mother would be fine. She was okay. This wasn't anybody else, it was 'Mother'.

I fell asleep whenever the liquid on the floor drained away and woke up every time the cold river water entered my mouth. Then finally, the ichthyosaur's digestion stopped. The warmth of the viscera suddenly cooled down and the elastic stomach lining gradually solidified. Thus, I could be certain of it.

The ichthyosaur had died.

[…You are really great.] There was a bright light in the darkness, and Bihyung's dim figure was floating in the air. [Using the stone hog's thorn like this. I never even thought about it. Constellations, isn't it the same for you?]

Bihyung looked at the stone hog's thorn emitting a faint light.

[The stone hog is a guy who mainly lives on the coast and feeds on small sea species. They insert the thorn into the skin of the prey, but I didn't think it would be used to plug up the openings for the digestive juices…]

Bihyung's shining eyes weren't looking at me. The words weren't an explanation for me either.

[A few constellations are smiling as if they already know.]

[Constellations have sponsored you 100 coins.]

[A few constellations belatedly understand your judgment.]

[Constellations complain that you should tell them by talking to yourself from now on.]

I ignored the messages from the constellations and drank the last of the condensed fluid.

[Your physique has slightly increased due to absorbing the power of the ichthyosaur.]

[Your physique level has risen!]

[Physique Lv. 11 -> Physique Lv. 12]

I accomplished my intended purpose. Bihyung came down to me and touched my burned arm. [Furthermore, the mucus… I didn't know the mucus of the hammer seahorse was so potent.]

Originally, my skin should've melted from the ichthyosaur's digestive juices. I opened my mouth to stop Bihyung's nonsense. "The mucus of the hammer seahorse is immune to digestive fluids. They evolved in this way after often being eaten by the ichthyosaurs."

[A few constellations admire your knowledge.]

Then Bihyung looked at me with a betrayed expression. [Excuse me, I should be the one explaining…]

"I did it because you don't know. Now is the explanation over?"

[…Yes.]

"Then give me the reward."

[Cheeky bastard,] Bihyung grumbled while a reward message appeared in front of my eyes.

[The hidden scenario has ended.]

[You have obtained 9,000 coins in compensation.]

[You are the first to have successfully hunted a 7th grade species.]

[You have earned 1,000 coins as an achievement reward.]

9,000 coins plus an additional 1,000 coins. It was a very huge income.

[Coins Possessed: 14,800 C]

If I added the 500 donated coins from filming my survival, the total income was 10,500 coins. It was over my target.

[Haha, Constellations. Did you enjoy this? Let's quickly watch an advertisement before going straight to the next scenario!]

I could hear the faint sounds of an ad somewhere. New scenario opening featured package, 8,800 coins…

Once the eyes of the constellations disappeared, Bihyung started speaking to me in a friendly manner, [Sigh… It was a great survival. The response from the constellations was amazing.]

"How much time passed?"

[Four days. I was in suspense the whole time I was watching. Were you unaware of the time?]

"My smartphone died."

It had taken more time than I'd thought it would. The original goal had been two days… Well, Yoo Joonghyuk took four days in the fourth round to catch an ichthyosaur, so the speed wasn't slow.

'Anyway, I did it'.

A pleasant feeling of fulfillment covered my whole body and made me confident. I was an ordinary person with ordinary skills, but even so, this didn't mean I could only do ordinary things.

"…How funny."

It was strange. A novel that hadn't been helpful for 28 years was now making me extraordinary.

[Oh, are you talking to yourself already?]

"…"

[Isn't it good? For an incarnation, talking to yourself is essential. Of course, there are constellations who dislike it, but usually…]

"Shut up and open the Dokkaebi Bag."

[Why? Are you going to buy something?]

"I'm not buying but selling."

[Damn, I'll have to cut the ad short. Constellations, hold on a second. I'll adjust the volume.]

As Bihyung opened the Dokkaebi Bag, I looked at the thorns embedded in the wall. The upper barrier was hardened, and deep cracks formed around the thorns. So, I could now smash through the upper barrier with my strength. I broke the wall little by little with the one remaining thorn. Shortly afterward, I encountered the core of the ichthyosaur that was glowing blue.

[Ichthyosaur's Core]

It was an ether core found in monster species 7th grade or higher. I could raise my magic power level without coins if I ingested them. It was good quality because it was a sea commander-grade ichthyosaur. I carefully cut at the flesh around the core while Bihyung looked at me with a dumbfounded expression.

"I'll sell this."

[You really…]

"Of course, I don't mean to sell it to you. I'll put it on the dokkaebi auction."

Bihyung accepted it like he was tired of asking me anything. [Sigh… Do what you want. How much are you going to charge?]

"I won't sell it for coins. I'll sell it by barter."

[Damn, you know all sorts of things,] Bihyung grumbled while uploading the item to the dokkaebi auction. His desires were simple. This guy might listen better than I thought.

"Someone will show up to buy it. The item exchanged must be 'Broken Faith'."

[Broken Faith? There is a person with it… In any case, it is registered.]

"Yes. And I will buy…"

I saw Purest Sword Force in the shopping cart. Indeed, nobody had bought it yet. Most constellations weren't well aware of the value of coin items. The expensive items in the Dokkaebi Bag weren't unconditionally good.

[Wait a minute, can I talk to you for a moment?]

At Bihyung's words, the advertising volume increased again.

[Constellations are complaining about the long advertisement.]

Once I saw that one more advertisement had appeared, I had a hunch about what Bihyung wanted to say.

"Is it the contract?"

Advertising was the only way to hide the eyes and ears of the constellations without turning off the broadcast. From now on, it wasn't a story for the constellations.

[Yes. I wasn't certain but I became convinced after this scenario. Well… let's try it once. I can help you a little bit.]

"Won't this violate the streamer's pledge?"

[Ah, of course, I can't really help you. I'm just saying that. Will you sign the contract?]

"What are the conditions?"

[Take a look.]

The dokkaebi pulled out an extravagant contract that had been prepared. I read the contract that emerged as a transparent window in the air.

___

[Stream Contract Agreement]

1. Incarnation Kim Dojka (Gap)[1] will sign an exclusive contract with Bihyung (Eul)[1] until all scenarios are completed or until his death.

___

"… I am the gap?"

[Haha, don't humans like this? It doesn't mean anything. Keep reading.]

___

2. Incarnation Kim Dokja (Gap) will never choose a sponsor until all scenarios have ended or until his death.

___

This was also as expected.

___

3. Incarnation Kim Dokja (Gap) should only be active on the channel of Dokkaebi Bihyung (Eul).

4. Incarnation Kim Dokja (Gap) and Dokkaebi Bihyung (Eul) will distribute the revenue from stream contracts, and this ratio will be determined through mutual consultation.

…….

10. Incarnation Kim Dokja (Gap) and Dokkaebi Bihyung (Eul) will be subject to destruction in accordance with the laws of Star Stream if they break this contract.

—

I read the contract carefully down to the last item. Although I thought he might play some trick on me, I didn't see that part. Except for one thing…

"There is the most important part."

[What do you mean? You can just say that you agree. The stream contract is a soul pledge—]

"I'm talking about the pay ratio."

[A-Ahh. Haha. Right.]

As if this bastard didn't know this was the most important part.

[How about 5:5? Instead, I'll get rid of my channel fee. Ah, do you know how to calculate it? I will accurately divide your future donations in this ratio. For example, if you get 100 coins, you will receive 50 coins and I will receive 50 coins.]

All stream contracts were like this. The constellations had incarnations appear on the dokkaebi's channel, and the contributions received from other constellations would be divided by a percentage. This was normal.

"Are you taking me for a pushover? I won't accept."

[What? B-But this is the industry's default settlement ratio…]

"I'm an incarnation without a sponsor. When donating to an incarnation without a sponsor, the constellations must pay a huge fee to the dokkaebi. Haven't you already enjoyed a lot thanks to me?"

Bihyung's jaw slowly dropped open, but there was no point making that expression.

"10:0. You will only get the commission. I won't pay you a single penny."

[What?! That is ridiculous… H-How about 7:3?]

The ratio changed greatly, but I wasn't going to concede.

"10:0."

[What is this fucking bullshit? It is a ridiculous rate—]

"Then don't accept. I will just go to another channel. 'Gildal' is doing well these days. I should ask him."

[…8:2. I can't concede any more.]

"10:0."

[······.] Bihyung's expression changed to a threatening one. He looked at my head like it would explode at any minute. However, I knew that he would never give up the contract. My existence was his last chance.

"The advertisement is coming to an end. Don't you see the constellations complaining?"

In the end, Bihyung gave up. [Shit, I understand. Then will you sign the contract?]

He surrendered easier than I'd thought he would. In fact, I was going to give up at 9:1.

…Maybe he earned more money than I'd expected. It was a bit disgusting.

"Yes. And one more thing."

[What? What now?]

"You have to give a separate down payment. Give me 5,000 coins."

Bihyung's expression tightened. [Y-You really…]

I laughed. Why a 'gap' was a 'gap' and why did humans dwell on it… I would let that damn dokkaebi know.

[The stream contract has concluded.]

[You have received 5,000 coins as a down payment.]

The advertisement finished, and the constellations came back. Then I patted the dokkaebi on the shoulder and said, "Let's get out of here."

Now was the real start.

---

[1] **Gap** and **Eul** are used to denote the larger and smaller contractor (respectively) in a legal contract.

Chapter 16: Ep. 4 – Line of Hypocrisy, I

A meteor shower was pouring down in the starry sky. It was a sight that anyone would admire, but not Yoo Joonghyuk.

「It is starting.」

The meteor shower was the precursor to the start of the third main scenario. Now Seoul would be destroyed part by part according to the scenario. Yoo Joonghyuk looked up at the sky before he lowered his head and looked at the Han River. The landscape around Dongho Bridge was quite desolate since the large group of ichthyosaurs had recently moved downstream.

「It was too much.」

It had already been three days since Kim Dokja entered the Han River. It might've been too much to demand that he catch the ichthyosaur just after the first scenario.

「Indeed, it would be hard for me to catch an ichthyosaur in three days.」

However, it would be impossible to take him if he couldn't do this much. If he couldn't even do this much, he would only hinder Yoo Joonghyuk.

「 A prophet isn't a big deal. 」

Yoo Joonghyuk closed his eyes with disappointment. He would go on his own again, without any companions. It wasn't a big deal—he had been alone all this time.

「 This time I will definitely change it. 」

Yoo Joonghyuk turned around—but maybe he had turned away too soon.

"Wait…!"

[W-What?]

I blinked several times but could only see a grey-white ceiling. I was still inside the ichthyosaur. I turned my head and saw the surprised Bihyung.

"…I had a dream."

[Ohu, are you trying to raise curiosity? It isn't bad?]

I didn't mean to do such a thing but I didn't mind the misunderstanding.

[A few constellations want you to move to a new place quickly.]

I used 500 coins to buy the Ellain Forest's Vital Force to help me sleep. I thought it was too dangerous to move while exhausted. The Ellain Forest's Vital Force quickly relieved fatigue and healed wounds in exchange for two hours of sleep. In other words, it was an expensive item.

"…I really want to go out."

I talked to myself while stretching my body. The dream I just had was still clear. Maybe it wasn't a dream.

Kwajijijik!

I heard the sound of an electric current scattering and Bihyung disappeared without a word. Maybe he went to do his job. I sighed with relief. The stream contract with the dokkaebi. It was a gamble that I never would've attempted if I hadn't known about Bihyung from Ways of Survival.

Still, I did it with surprising calm. I never succeeded in any contracts in 'real life'.

[The exclusive skill, 'Fourth Wall' is in use.]

…It was real. I inserted strength to my right hand holding the thorn. I really thought this world was reality.

[A few constellations want you to act.]

Well, there was no time to worry about it. I swung the thorn as hard as I could at the stomach wall that lost its elasticity. At the same time, there was the sound of something collapsing and water poured out. I plunged into the Han River.

*

"Puah!"

Fortunately, I didn't see any other ichthyosaurs. Small seawater species approached with curiosity but no hostility was felt. Not all creatures would attack humans. Dongho Bridge was over there. I used a piece of the ichthyosaur corpse as a floatation device and made my way towards dry land. My skin was cold from the cold water but I couldn't worry about it. After 30 minutes of swimming, my hand reached land.

[A few constellations are nervously looking at you.]

Normally, danger would immediately come after this message popped up.

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is making an insidious smile.]

It was a pity for the constellations but something bad wouldn't happen to me. It was because I already knew the dangers.

[You have entered the region of the second main scenario.]

[The land in the scenario area is deeply polluted.]

[Be careful about your breathing and move underground as quickly as possible.]

The message said this but in fact, I shouldn't be above ground from the moment this scenario started. Why? Look at my skin now.

[You have been exposed to a poisonous fog.]

The skin touched by the violet fog turned black. Once I followed the source of the fog with my eyes, I saw a monster making terrible cries. It was a massive monster over 30 metres big. This fog was the fart of the 7th grade monster, 'great poisonous rhinoceros'.

The rhino snorted and confronted a monster in the fog, which seemed to be an insect king species based on the shadow. The struggle in this new world wasn't just for humans. The monsters were also fighting for their homes. I moved while holding my breath as much as possible.

They were 7th grade monsters like the ichthyosaur but I couldn't deal with them right now. In the first place, I could kill the sea commander because I was prepared.

[You have used the Ellain Monkey's Lungs.]

The monkey's lungs was an item I bought in advance that could be used as a substitute for an air purifier for 20 minutes.

[A few constellations admire your readiness!]

The above ground station, Oksu Station, had already been destroyed. The nearest underground station from here was 'Geumho Station'. Maybe the others had moved there. I moved quickly while avoiding the small species that were eating the corpses. I only had 20 minutes, so I needed to move as quickly as possible while securing supplies.

The first thing I needed was clothes. My outerwear was melted by the ichthyosaur's fluids so it was necessary. Of course, there were many of them all around but… I felt uncomfortable.

…It couldn't be helped. I searched some bodies and grabbed clothes that roughly fit. Then I headed to a nearby convenience store. I grabbed a few plastic bags and swept in food randomly. Food would be a valuable trading item after going underground.

I filled three or four bags like this. It seemed that the colour of the monkey's lungs was becoming increasingly darker. There wasn't much time left. Then I heard someone's voice.

"Help…help me."

There was someone still alive? A young woman was lying down in a corner. The poisoning was progressing on the surface of the skin, but the toxic condition wasn't severe due to the mask she was wearing. Her jacket was half removed and a bit of her skirt was torn.

"Are you okay? Can you stand?"

"Uhhhh…"

Was there such an extra in Ways of Survival? I wanted to take a closer look but I didn't have enough time. I picked up the woman and ran to Geumho Station. I turned and a side street appeared. Now the distance to Geumho Station was 100 metres in a straight line.

I breathed in and started to run with all my strength. I could see the Exit 3 sign in the distance.

…Closed. Then on the other side? There was a fire shutter down at every exit due to the disaster situation. I could break the shutter with the thorn but if I did it wrong, the people inside might be harmed.

"E-Exit 4…"

Unexpectedly, the woman I was carrying was helpful. I ran towards Exit 4. Then I found a fire shutter that was rolling down. I placed the thorn in the gap of the shutter that was trying to close. Somebody yelled out, "Shit, what is this?"

"Open the door."

"N-No! You can't come in! Go away!"

"There is a wounded person."

"We are already in a full state! We don't need any more people!"

It was full of people? Strange. Was there such a development?

"I don't care about that."

I used the thorn as a lever and lifted the shutter as hard as possible. Since I used the coins to increase my strength to level 10, I now had the strength of half a dozen adult males.

"Uwaaaaack!"

There was a loud sound and the people on the other side of the shutter became nervous.

"R-Run away!"

The scared men escaped into the darkness of the underground passage. I entered the station safely, lowered the shutter and put the girl down on the floor.

[You have entered the safety zone.]

The poisonous fog didn't come down to the underground area. There was no possible scientific explanation. It was just because of the 'scenario'.

"Put this in your mouth."

I took off the woman's mask and handed over the monkey's lungs. It wouldn't completely cure her but it would have a neutralizing effect.

"Umm…" A faint groan emerged from the mouth of the woman. The woman who was abandoned. I suddenly wondered about her information. This woman, it was likely that she had died in the original development. A voice was heard as I was about to use Character List.

"There he is!"

Light from a flashlight approached in the darkness. My eyes narrowed as I saw men holding metal pipes.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' frowns at the appearance of the uninvited people.]

A big man in the middle opened his mouth. His body was well balanced so he must be a strong person.

"Who are you?"

At this moment, I was strangely struck dumb. What should I say when this happened? I thought for a moment before speaking like Yoo Joonghyuk.

"Kim Dokja."

"…Kim Dokja? That is your name?"

"Yes."

"Who asked that? What is this bastard?"

It was a more difficult question.

"U-Uh! That woman…" One of the men spotted the woman beside me and shone the flashlight on her. "What, isn't that woman from the marginalized group? Didn't you come back with her?"

"T-That is…"

The man's flashlight moved in a harassing manner near the woman's waist.

"…Ha, so it was like that. Cute guys. Why did you do that without hyung-nim's[1] permission?"

"Hehe. I'm sorry."

"No, of course Cheolsoo hyung-nim should be first…hehe, I was going to do that."

Cheolsoo? Cheolsoo. Was there a character by that name? I couldn't remember. He must be insignificant, as opposed to how he looked.

"Hey, hand that woman over to us…huh? What is that?"

The flashlight shone on the convenience store bags on the floor. It was okay to escape the crisis but the flow was turning out bad.

"Leave that as well. Then you can live."

To be exact, it wasn't good for these guys, not me.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is annoyed at these people.]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is angry with the injustice occurring.]

[A bounty scenario has occurred at the request of the constellations!]

[Bounty Scenario – Remove the Interference]

Category: Sub

Difficulty: F

Clear Conditions: The constellations feel great anger at the disruptors who are obstructing your rapid movements. Neutralize them within the time limit.

Time Limit: 5 minutes.

Compensation: ???

Failure: ???

I thought it would be like this. Poor bastards. I got up while holding the thorn. There weren't any minors in the constellations right? I hoped so. It was because it was now the adult broadcasting time.

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[1] **Hyung** is a Korean honorific used by a male to address an older male.

* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)

Chapter 17: Ep. 4 – Line of Hypocrisy, II

I often thought about it. Why did so many 'predictable villains' appear in post-apocalyptic stories? It must be the laziness of the authors to think that crimes such as rape or theft would occur indiscriminately in such a situation. If the real 'destruction' came, wouldn't humans act more rationally than they thought?

"It looks like he won't give it. Hey, go ahead and kill him!"

The answer was now right in front of me. I observed the men coming towards me, as well as the man watching from the rear.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' expects a fair judgment.]

I once again realized it. The human imagination was cliché, yet real humans were more cliché than the imagination.

Hwiiik!

The trajectory of the iron pipe moved in a funny manner through the air. It wasn't a strike with the intent to kill. In fact, it didn't hurt that much.

"I-If you don't run away then you really will die. Get lost!"

The four men surrounded me. One was trembling but the others looked more relaxed than before. It was probably due to the advantage in numbers.

"What are these brats doing?" Along with the shout, one man rushed forward. It was clearly a defenseless posture. I moved the thorn.

Puok!

"Aaaaack! My leg! My leg!"

"You bastard!"

"Hit him together!"

The agitated men rushed simultaneously but I wasn't afraid. Their strength levels were just about 5. I endured the incoming attacks and silently stabbed the thorn. The men had their thighs successively pierced and fell to their knees with a scream. Nevertheless, I didn't kill them. It was because the scenario clear condition was to 'neutralize' them.

[Constellations of the absolute good system nod at your judgment.]

[A few constellations laugh at your humanity.]

[Constellations have sponsored you 100 coins.]

If I became a murderer, I might be able to attract the attention of the constellations but it was only for a while. Instantly raising the threshold of stimulation wasn't good in the long run.

[There are three minutes to the end of the scenario.]

Two minutes had passed. Time calculation was important in time attack scenarios.

"W-What the hell is this bastard? Why won't you die?"

At this time, their leader who was watching the situation from the back came forward. "You are a fairly tough guy. Everyone back off. I will deal with him."

"Cheolsoo hyung-nim! This guy seems to have a pretty strong sponsor!"

"Good. It looks like he has a lot of coins."

Knuckles shining with a black gloss—they weren't ordinary iron knuckles. Did he receive it from his sponsor?

Crunch.

There was the relaxed sound of bones cracking from the knuckled hands.

[The character 'Cheolsoo' has used Threaten.]

[Threaten doesn't work because the overall capabilities gap is too big.]

"Hoh, aren't you quite good? You aren't getting scared at all." The man's fist moved before he finished talking. The attack was aimed exactly at my jaw. I quickly stepped back. That guy smiled. "Aren't you quite good? Do you exercise?"

Even if I didn't have a footwork skill, anyone could do this if their agility exceeded level 10. Since I previously invested most of my remaining coins after buying items, the total sum of my body stats now reached 33. Should I look at this guy?

[The exclusive skill, Character List is activated.]

[Character Summary]

Name: Bang Cheolsoo.

Age: 34 years old.

Sponsor: Monarch of the Small Fries.

Exclusive Attributes: Assault Force Captain (General)

Exclusive Skills: Dogfight Lv. 2, Bluff Lv. 2.

Stigma: Threaten Lv.1

Overall Stats: Physique Lv. 6, Strength Lv. 7, Agility Lv. 6, Magic Power Lv. 2.

Overall Evaluation: A common small fry who was lucky to obtain a sponsor. He has a tendency to overstate his abilities compared to his actual combat strength.

Ah…right. Now I remembered.

"Bang Cheolsoo of the Cheoldoo Group."

"What, you know me?"

"Let's see?"

My memory was dim because he disappeared like the wind at the beginning of the work, but I fuzzily recalled there was a character called Bang Cheolsoo. He was the stupidest guy in the group at Geumho Station. As far as I knew, these guys should've been killed by Yoo Joonghyuk. Why were they still alive?

"Ohu, perhaps you are of 'that' category? You must've killed people. Isn't that right? Yes, I feel that we are somewhat alike."

[The character 'Bang Cheolsoo' has used Bluff.]

Bluff. It was a skill that anyone who was a thug possessed. It was a good debuff that could weaken the opponent's attack power, but this case was different.

[Fourth Wall has blocked the bluff of the character Bang Cheolsoo.]

[The confidence of the character Bang Cheolsoo is rapidly falling.]

"Are you ignoring me? You really want to die." Bang Cheolsoo took a threatening Greco-Roman wrestling posture and rushed towards me, but that was only a bluff. It was because he didn't have the 'wrestling' skill.

"Stop beating around the bush and come on."

"Son of a bitch!"

The key skill that Bang Cheolsoo had was Dogfight Lv. 2. His combat power was insignificant unless he got into a melee.

"Die!"

The agility difference was so high that his attacks rarely hit me. I looked at him with a bit of sympathy. Not all constellations had a desire to raise their incarnations as the 'protagonist' of the scenario. For example, his constellation 'Monarch of the Small Fries' was famous for being thrifty with his incarnations. A masochist who enjoyed using idiots as his incarnation and watching them be crushed by other incarnations. That was the 'Monarch of the Small Fries'.

[The constellation 'Monarch of the Small Fries' is delighted.]

[The constellation 'Monarch of the Small Fries' has sponsored you 100 coins.]

Despite his incarnation being smashed, he was supporting the enemy. Originally, I was thinking about ending the time attack in one blow but now the story was a bit different.

[There are two minutes to the end of the sub scenario.]

Then I should make the most of the remaining time.

"You rat bastard!" All of his lines were in the style of the Monarch of the Small Fries. How pitiful. "Haha! I hit you!"

His attack luckily hit but there was little damage. The spot where I was hit just stung a bit.

"How?"

How? My physique was Lv. 12. His strength was only Lv. 7. The disparity in the overall stats created a huge combat power gap.

"Is it my turn now?"

I touched the cheek of the stupefied Bang Cheolsoo before hitting it as hard as I could. A few teeth flew out as Bang Cheolsoo screamed. I didn't hesitate and pierced his arm with the thorn.

"Aaaagh!"

I pinned one of his arms to the wall with the thorn and started the indiscriminate assault. I chose the areas that were the most painful without knocking him out, such as the back, thighs and sides.

[The constellation 'Monarch of the Small Fries' is delighted.]

[The constellation 'Monarch of the Small Fries' has requested an extension of the sub scenario time.]

[The sub scenario is extended by one minute.]

I also paid attention to the parts where the woman had been injured.

"Cough! Kuheok! Kuheeok!"

Blood and flesh were scattered. Broken teeth fell to the ground and the broken bones twisted abnormally. However, I didn't stop kicking.

"S-Stop! Please! Let hyung-nim go!"

The men standing to the side exclaimed with panic. I looked over at them once in a while. Then I looked at the half naked woman lying on the ground. Humans were weak. How could such weak humans do such cruel things? They used the excuse of the world being destroyed. They killed, raped women and stole from others.

Was it because of instincts? I was suddenly curious as I saw Bang Cheolsoo's eyes stained with fear in front of a stronger violence?

"Why did you do it?" It was a question out of nowhere. In fact, I didn't expect an answer to this question but at the moment I was about to kick him again, Bang Cheolsoo opened his eyes.

"Fuck…just kill me you son of a bitch."

The moment I saw his eyes, I knew he had answered my question in his own way. A look that didn't show any lingering attachment to life. Yes. It wasn't because of instincts. Bang Cheolsoo talked in a voice that was subsiding.

"Dog, this dog-like world…"

This guy was a human who had been despairing long before this world was destroyed. Just like me.

[There are 10 seconds left to the end of the sub scenario.]

I didn't delay any further and gave a strong kick to his neck. The breath was knocked out of him and Bang Cheolsoo finally fainted.

[You have met the conditions to clear the sub scenario.]

[You have earned 300 coins.]

I hope all of you are happy.

[The constellation 'Monarch of the Small Fries' is satisfied and has sponsored you 100 coins.]

The other men crawled and approached me one by one.

"H-How cruel…"

They looked at Bang Cheolsoo, who had been turned into a rag, and then up at me with fear. It was like they were dogs waiting to be disposed of at a slaughterhouse. I picked up the collapsed woman and the convenience store bags. In any case, the world had been destroyed and I had to live a new life.

"Take me to where the group is."

Geumho Station was originally a place that would grow into the region's base after it was organized by Yoo Joonghyuk. In his first regression, Yoo Joonghyuk broke through the second main scenario with the Geumho Station group, allowing the people of the group to occupy a place in the new era. Even so, that was the first round. By the third round of regression, Yoo Joonghyuk was different. The 3rd turn Yoo Joonghyuk was a monster who monopolized everything.

"…Even so, he was someone who would do the basic clean up."

"Huh?" The man guiding me was surprised.

"I'm just talking to myself. It is a habit."

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' likes your monologues.]

"Yes…anyway, this way."

The men of the Cheoldoo Group, who were supporting each other, stopped moving. We descended to the bottom of the dark platform and found a place where there was still light. I heard the buzzing sound of people as we went down the stairs.

"The Cheoldoo Group! People are hurt!"

Some people rushed over to support Bang Cheolsoo's group. There was more of a system then I thought since people were moving in an orderly fashion. In the meantime, I saw familiar faces run over.

"Oh my god. Dokja-ssi! Dokja-ssi!"

Fortunately, it looks like nothing happened. I greeted the person, "Yoo Sangah-ssi."

"I'm glad. Really, I'm really glad!" Yoo Sangah stood in front of me with a happy expression. I was startled and offered an awkward handshake. There were a lot of scrapes on the back of Yoo Sangah's hand, showing she had suffered quite a hard time in the past four days. I heard a sound and something became attached to my leg.

"You're alive." It was Lee Gilyoung.

I stroked the boy's head and asked, "Have you been well?"

Lee Gilyoung nodded. He must be hungry since his cheeks were really thin. I pulled out a chocolate bar from the bag and placed it in Lee Gilyoung's hand.

"I knew you were alive, Dokja-ssi. Hah…" Finally, I looked at Lee Hyunsung. The muscles of his upper half seemed to have become more solid. Maybe Lee Hyunsung had protected these two. "I'm really sorry. At that time, I left Dojka-ssi…"

"It was an unavoidable situation."

"Phew, I'm glad that Yoo Joonghyuk-ssi was right."

…Yoo Joonghyuk? Why was that name heard here? Lee Hyunsung noticed after a moment and said, "That, Yoo Joonghyuk said that Dokja-ssi was probably alive…"

"…Where is Yoo Joonghyuk now?"

"He isn't here now."

Not here?

"Yoo Joonghyuk-ssi left the station yesterday. So…"

I could determine many things before Lee Hyunsung finished speaking. I see. It was truly like that. He was a person in a rush.

"That reminds me, there is one more person."

"Ah, the department head."

Yoo Sangah didn't finish speaking because a group of men suddenly intruded. Nonetheless, it was a good thing.

"Everybody, out of the way!"

I didn't have to hear the explanation to see what happened straight away. Three or four men armed with a hammer or pipe started to surround me. There was a familiar face among them.

"Y-You…!" Han Myungoh abandoned me on the Even Bridge and now he looked like he had seen a ghost. Han Myungoh must've joined this group. "G-Get rid of that guy! He is a very bad person! He shouldn't be here!"

A thief was always the one who felt pins and needles. Han Myungoh started exclaiming wildly. However, I noticed that the other men looked at each other and didn't easily move. There was something weird. Han Myungoh was placed in the centre yet they didn't listen to him?

"Haha, Han hyung. Everyone should get along so why don't you stop?"

"Ah, t-that…"

"You are a new person."

The man split apart to the sides and a path was formed. A slim man appeared among them. I could tell just by looking in his eyes. This guy had a sponsor.

"Nice to meet you. Can I ask what your name is?"

"Kim Dokja."

"Dokja-ssi. I see. I am Cheon Inho."

Cheon Inho? It felt like a name I should remember. I inserted strength to the hand holding the thorn. It looked like this guy was the leader of the Cheoldoo Group. He lost half of his men to me so he came here to make trouble.

"I heard the story from those you came with. You fought a monster and saved my group members."

…What?

"Everyone, please gather! We have a brave new group member!"

At Cheon Inho's words, people started to turn this way one by one. It was at this time that I knew. It was impossible for the charisma of Han Myungoh to gather this much power. Cheon Inho was the real leader of this bunch.

"Wah! It is food!"

Hungry eyes fell on the convenience store bags. Then Cheon Inho spoke as if he had been waiting, "He delivered it exactly to us. He is a rare good person."

The words made all the eyes look at me like I was a savior. The mother holding the child and the elderly man who hurt his leg were looking at me earnestly.

Cheon Inho…I seemed to remember. Yes, there was this guy in the Geumho station group.

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' is excited.]

In this ruined world, the real danger wasn't people like Bang Cheolsoo. Humans moving while feeling despair weren't the least bit dangerous to me. The really dangerous people were those who used the despair of others as a fertilizer for power. Just like this guy.

"Welcome to Geumho Station, Kim Dokja-ssi."

Cheon Inho was laughing on the inside while gazing at me. He chuckled while shaking my hand. Cheon Inho would never know. At this moment, his future had been decided.

Chapter 18: Ep. 4 – Line of Hypocrisy, III

Despite the interference of Cheon Inho, the constellations didn't ask for a bounty scenario. In other words, it wasn't the best time to deal with him.

For around half a day, I focused on grasping the situation of Geumho Station. It was Lee Hyunsung who mainly gave information. "Currently, there are 86 people in Geumho Station. Ah, I guess it is 87 people now with Dokja-ssi."

"It is less than I thought."

"Yes. When the scenario broke out, only those near the station and those on the train survived. Everyone didn't say it but perhaps in the first scenario…"

I didn't need to be told the next words. I could see it from the expressions of the people. Those who survived had trampled on someone's life. All the humans here were murderers.

"Currently, Geumho Station is divided into two groups. Strictly speaking, it is one group and the rest."

Lee Hyunsung looked at the people with a dark expression. There were men armed with iron pipes or other instruments. It was clear which was the faction in power.

"Believe in me! The group president is working hard and everyone will soon be rescued." The youngest son of Hankyung Group, Han Myungoh cried out.

"Hyung-nim is right, everyone. Don't lose hope. We will be able to led." The one who embraced Han Myungoh and practically led the group was Cheon Inho. They were the 'mainstream group'.

"Mother, I'm bored…can't I play a game on the phone?"

"Hold on for a moment. The rescue team will come soon."

"The government will act. It isn't that easy to collapse a country."

Then the people who were protected by the mainstream group and wanted to get on with their lives were the 'marginalized group'. Their will was too weak to be killers. Even if 100 murderers were gathered together, they would be divided between the weak and the strong. Maybe they were thinking that they weren't murderers. They all believed it was unavoidable.

Lee Hyunsung watched the mainstream group inciting the people and said, "Food distribution is determined by the mainstream group. Convenience stores and restaurants in the region have already been robbed…the foods that can be eaten right now are almost gone."

"I see."

"It is the reason why some people from the mainstream group were sent above ground for food collection. Heewon-ssi, who you brought in, went with them."

"Heewon-ssi…?"

"Ah, it is the name of the woman who Dokja-ssi saved."

I looked at the woman who lay on the subway bench. Under the bright light, her beauty could be seen. Her raised cheeks and gentle features meant she must've often heard she was attractive. Thanks to the monkey's lungs, her colour was much brighter than it was this morning.

"Is Heewon-ssi the only one who didn't come back?"

"No. In fact, a few more people went out this morning but only those from the marginalized group didn't return."

"They didn't come back?"

"Yes." Lee Hyunsung's expression became sad again. He thought he roughly knew what happened. I grabbed Lee Hyunsung's shoulder. I knew for sure after actually touching him. He truly was the steel sword. His strength would soon exceed level 10.

"W-Why are you…?"

"Lee Hyunsung-ssi should've received a love call but you didn't accept."

"Ah, that…" Objectively, Lee Hyunsung's combat power was higher than Bang Cheolsoo. There was no way Cheon Inho wouldn't aim for him. "I can't explain it but I thought I shouldn't accept. I don't know much about morals or ethics but…" Lee Hyunsung scratched his head like he was embarrassed. "I felt that something wasn't right."

Not right…

It wasn't an answer but I felt it was true. Indeed, Lee Hyunsung was Lee Hyunsung.

"Don't forget this heart."

That way, I could continue to believe in him. I heard a cute sound from somewhere and looked back, seeing Yoo Sangah and Lee Gilyoung looking up at me. Their faces were like baby birds waiting for the mother bird, making me laugh.

"That reminds me, it is already evening. Aren't you hungry? Take this one by one." I handed over the food from the convenience store one by one.

"Ah. Really? Can I?"

"This time is free. But next time, you should pay for it."

"Huh? H-How much…?"

"Don't you all have coins? It is 10 coins for one."

"T-That…"

Confusion filled the faces of Yoo Sangah and Lee Hyunsung. They looked like they hadn't expected my words.

"Of course. I will pay right now. I don't need freebies." Surprisingly, the one who spoke was the woman who had been lying on the bench. She had regained consciousness. "I am Jung Heewon. Thank you for your help this morning."

"It is nothing." I thought it was just a cute mask but I could see that it was a prejudice.

"Yoo Sangah-ssi, Lee Hyunsung-ssi. Everyone, please wake up. It isn't the time to be making this look. This food, he obtained it by risking his life. Do you expect to get it for free?" There was almost no expression on the face that spoke without hesitation.

"Ah…" Yoo Sangah turned red like she had woken up. "I was too short-sighted, I'm sorry. Of course we should pay…it is right. I don't like freebies either. I hate depending on other people."

"I also agree with Yoo Sangah-ssi. I will pay coins from now on."

I was a little surprised by the unexpected reaction. Indeed, just because it was an apocalypse didn't mean there was only one type of person. I replied, "If you insist…I understand. Does everyone know how to exchange coins?"

"Yes. I learned a few days ago. Touch each other's index finger, um, and…"

"Just state how many coins you want to exchange."

Starting from Jung Heewon, Yoo Sangah and Lee Hyunsung paid 10 coins in exchange for food. It was fortunate that their resistance wasn't bigger than what I thought. I didn't do this in order to get a few coins. At first, this judgment might seem harsh but people would soon realize this choice was right.

['Lee Gilyoung' has paid you 20 coins.]

"Huh? You gave me more than 10 coins?"

"It is the price for the chocolate bar during the day."

Lee Gilyoung's expression while speaking was quite good. Maybe the fastest to adapt to a new world wasn't an adult but a child. It was easier for children to break common sense.

"Will Dokja-ssi keep staying with us?"

"Ah, that…"

"Dokja-ssi." It wasn't Lee Hyunsung who called out to me. I looked back and saw Cheon Inho from the mainstream group. Yes, I thought he would be back soon.

"Can I talk with you for a while?"

Bang Cheolsoo was missing some teeth and glaring at me from behind Cheon Inho. He stared at me before turning his head away. A foolish fellow.

"Okay, let's talk."

I nodded and Cheon Inho spoke with a satisfied expression, "Then can the rest of you vacate this place for a moment? I want to talk to Dokja-ssi alone."

"Ah, that…"

"No, you don't have to go. You can listen."

Cheon Inho's eyes twitched at my words. Lee Hyunsung stopped as he was about to retreat.

"Hmmm, is that so? Well…I don't care."

He acted like they were free to listen. Cheon Inho wiped the bench and sat down. Men from the Cheoldoo Group appeared on both sides of him and handed him a cigarette and lighter. He had seen too many movies. "You seem to have a nature that dislikes cumbersome things, so I will get to the point."

"Yes."

"Join our group." It was an expected offer. "I can offer Dokja-ssi a high position in our group. I want to lead the group together with you."

"Why me?"

"Shouldn't you know why?" Cheon Inho glanced towards the injured Cheoldoo Group members. "Dokja-ssi is a hero who saved people from monsters. A hero needs such a place."

It was an interesting way of thinking. He would take advantage of my presence.

"And if I refuse?"

"Refuse? How interesting. I never thought about that." Cheon Inho blew out cigarette smoke towards me. "Dokja-ssi, this isn't a favour. You have a duty to do this. Can't you see the poor people here?"

People were looking this way with scruffy faces. There were crying children and tired elderly people.

"It isn't a big story. I am asking you to work together for survival. Dokja-ssi, don't you have the strength?"

"What exactly do you want?"

"I need someone to be a hitman." Hitman? "Until a few days ago, there was someone else doing the job. He procured food alone and hunted in the tunnels. To be exact, we took it one-sidedly."

I didn't need to ask. This was the story of Yoo Joonghyuk.

"Then he suddenly left last night."

"So you need someone to replace him?"

"I think your strength is proven with Cheolsoo-ssi."

Lee Hyunsung and Jung Heewon's eyes widened. Now they noticed what was going on.

"It isn't bad for Dokja-ssi. You are the hero of the people and will be the leader of the group with us. Everyone will like you and also…"

I interrupted, "I'm sorry but I can't be responsible for anyone. I don't want to join your group."

"Hrmm. Is that so?"

"Above all, the way you run the group doesn't fit me."

I looked at the healthy members of the Cheoldoo Group and the sickly-looking members of the marginalized group. In particular, Jung Heewon was looking at the Cheon Inho as if he was her mortal enemy.

"Is that so? It is fine. However, if you change your mind, come back anytime."

"That will not happen."

"Haha, it remains to be seen."

It didn't take long to find out what Cheon Inho's words meant. As the members of the Cheoldoo Group retreated, the other group members approached as if they had been waiting. It was the people of the marginalized group. They grabbed me and raised their voices.

"Hey, is the rumour true?"

"Are you really monopolizing the food?"

"Are you going to eat it all when there is enough to share with everyone?"

"We are all staying here! Why are you the only one to have it?"

"Leave the food to Inho-ssi! He will distribute it fairly!"

I knew what was going on. I could see the smiling face of Cheon Inho in the rear of the people. His lips were moving.

'Choose'.

Will I give food and become the hero? Or would I be the villain and monopolize it alone? If I chose to be the hero, I would fall into Cheon Inho's game. After the food was distributed, I would have to hunt for food with the group members and would someday get stabbed in the back. On the other hand, I would be isolated in a group in a moment if I monopolized the food alone.

[The eyes of a few constellations are shining.]

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' has snorted.]

As the people became heated up, Cheon Inho came forward.

"Ahh, everyone. Calm down. There seems to be a misunderstanding. Kim Dokja-ssi isn't such a person." What was this? A decoy? "Kim Dokja-ssi decided to work with us. The food he brought today will be left to the mainstream group and will be shared fairly. He also promised to continue to work with us—"

Of course, he believed I would choose him. It was hard to listen anymore.

"Stop."

I worried about it for a short moment. What would Yoo Joonghyuk do? Ah, that's it. The answer was that he wasn't here right now. However, I wasn't Yoo Joonghyuk.

"Of course I will give out food." I saw Cheon Inho's lips curve upwards. But people should listen to the end. "However, it isn't for free."

Unlike Yoo Joonghyuk, I wouldn't throw everything away to move forward. But I wouldn't be responsible for everyone. Food was given but it wouldn't be for free. People were puzzled as if they didn't understand the words.

"W-Wait a minute! It isn't free?"

"I'll tell you. I don't intend to monopolize the food. But I won't give food to Cheon Inho's group. I'm not UNICEF and I don't trust them." I smiled at Cheon Inho. "I will make a deal with you. I will sell you the food for a fair price."

"S-Sell?"

"What…?"

"Uh, how much…money?"

In the distance, I could see Cheon Inho's face stiffening. I laughed as I faced him.

"No, I only accept coins."

After a while, only the people in the marginalized group with a relationship with me returned.

"That…D-Dokja-ssi. Is this a good choice?"

"Sheesh, is there anything free in life? Dokja-ssi, you said it well. I feel refreshed." Jung Heewon dismissed Lee Hyunsung's concern. After I made the 'trade' declaration, many citizens turned away from me. Maybe they were disappointed.

"I agree with Heewon-ssi. The people here are too tame to the mainstream group."

"That's right. The sons of bitches…Geumho Station is currently in their palms. People are treated as cattle and are sometimes taken to a slaughterhouse. Just like myself this morning."

Jung Heewon's body trembled. In fact, it wasn't me but the mainstream group monopolizing the food. They monopolized the food on the pretext of 'fair distribution' and fed it to the tamed people. Humans were the weakest when they believed someone protected them. Once authority was established in a one-sided relationship, people started to depend on them.

"I agree. That's why I believe that Dokja-ssi's declaration today was very meaningful. People need to have the will to do something on their own. However…" Lee Hyunsung looked towards the food. "Not even one was sold. 50 coins for one, isn't this price too expensive? Why don't you make it 10 coins like you did with us…?"

It wasn't unreasonable to think so. People only paid attention to the mainstream group and showed no signs of looking this way. People still needed time. I responded calmly, "Let's wait a little longer."

Then night came. The sound of huge monsters was heard intermittently from the ground and people often had nightmares. Lee Gilyoung and Yoo Sangah fell asleep first while Jung Heewon was dozing off.

Lee Hyunsung said, "Dokja-ssi should sleep as well. I will stand vigil."

"Nope. It is okay. Lee Hyunsung-ssi can sleep first."

"But you will be tired."

"I have work to do."

"Work to do?"

I pointed behind Lee Hyunsung. Surprisingly, there were the shadows of people. It wasn't just one.

"That…are you still trading the food?"

Finally, the people started to move.

Chapter 19: Ep. 4 – Line of Hypocrisy, IV

The next morning, I was almost out of supplies. Jung Heewon stared at the convenience store bags as if she couldn't believe it. "Oh my god, it is sold out?"

"Yes."

"Ha, really funny. Everyone was just watching and now…"

"Nope, it wasn't just the marginalized group."

The guests who came in the middle of the night weren't just members of the marginalized group.

"Kim Dokja-ssi, you are making the worst choice." Among them was Cheon Inho. "You will regret it."

More than half the food I had was taken by the mainstream group. Of course, they paid the exact amount. Jung Heewon was enraged after hearing the story. "Wait a minute. Then the mainstream group will just monopolize the food again?"

"Something like that."

"No, what is this? Weren't you going to weaken the power of the mainstream group by promoting transactions among the people?"

It was an unexpected insight. I responded with a bit of admiration, "That's correct. That was the intent. I wanted people to move voluntarily."

"Then why did you sell food to the mainstream group? The situation won't change!"

"It has changed. I have obtained coins."

"Huh?" It was 1,450 coins, a huge income for one night. "No…what is Dokja-ssi thinking? Sangah-ssi, can we really trust this man?"

Yoo Sangah flinched as attention suddenly turned to her but then she smiled brightly. "I believe in him."

It was burdensome.

"Dokja-ssi, did you leave enough food for yourself?"

"Nope, I sold it."

Jung Heewon's mouth fell open as if she was dumbfounded. At that time, someone poked my cheek. I turned my head and found a biscuit.

"Huh? You want me to eat it?"

Nod nod. The head moved cutely. I smiled, took the biscuit and put it in Lee Gilyoung's mouth.

"I'm okay. You eat it. Ah, I should tell you something… everyone, do you still have the food you ate yesterday?"

"Yes, I have it."

"I have a bit left."

"Why? Do you want to buy it back? I will sell it." Jung Heewon waved the biscuit in a playful manner.

"No, you should eat it now."

"Huh?"

"Eat it all by today. You should do it now." I repeatedly stressed. "Or you will regret it."

Jung Heewon cried out, "Why…no, wait a minute. Sangah-ssi, what are you doing now? Why are you listening to him?"

"There is a reason why Dokja-ssi would say this." Yoo Sangah smiled sweetly and opened a bag of biscuits. Lee Hyunsung was confused but ate the food. Meanwhile, Lee Gilyoung had eaten it the moment I spoke. He was a good listener.

"Ah well…I will leave one."

"I won't stop you."

I shrugged at Jung Heewon's words. It was up to her to regret it. At lunch time, there was a major announcement from the mainstream group. Cheon Inho stood on a platform surrounded by people and said, "We will limit the food ration from today. The allocation is three biscuits per person. And—"

People became irritated before the speech was over.

"What? Three biscuits? How can we live on that?"

"That's right! Don't the scouts get more food? Do you think we don't know?"

Despite being cursed at, Cheon Inho just laughed calmly. "Your words are correct. Yes, the scouts receive more rations. If you want more food, please apply to be a scout."

"Very few people have come back after applying to be a scout! The Cheoldoo Group members are the ones who always come back!"

"Do you want us to die now?"

Cheon Inho was nonchalant despite the violent reactions of the citizens. "Those people were just unlucky. You know that it is terribly dangerous outside. Why don't you obtain food yourself if you are dissatisfied?"

"T-That…"

The people closed their mouths dumbly. If they went out now, they would die. Everyone knew this. Cheon Inho wasn't finished. "Ah, there is a way to get food without being a scout."

"What is it?"

"A deal. We will be happy to exchange food for anything we determine to be of value. Every person can give something different. Isn't that right?"

Cheon Inho's cold gaze caused the people to tremble. It was mostly the people who came to me yesterday and bought food.

[The character 'Cheon Inho' has activated the 'Incite Lv. 2' skill.]

"Originally, I wasn't going to do this, but yesterday, Kim Dokja-ssi told me something nice. That's right, everyone. Is there anything free in the world? If you want food, you have to prove your worth. This is the way it is. Haha, thank you for telling me something good, Kim Dokja-ssi."

…Look at this? At this moment, everyone's attention was focused on me. Their eyes were mostly filled with resentment.

"Because of that bastard…"

People wanted to be stupid and Cheon Inho had the 'Incite' skill. It was a skill that most good group leaders would have. But this way, the hostility would turn towards me again…

I looked at the back of Cheon Inho. It was a cute level, at least compared to the people at Chungmuro and Seoul Station. The people gathered in front of the podium were already trying to bargain.

"I-I will buy it with coins. How much do you want?"

"200 coins."

"Huh? But I don't have that many coins."

"Then go away."

200 coins for one piece of food, even the dokkaebi was likely to pass out. One of the Cheoldoo Group member selling food saw my look and trembled. He had a bandage around his thigh and seemed to be one of the guys I beat up yesterday.

"Did I ever say thank you for yesterday?" A voice was heard. I suddenly turned my head and saw Jung Heewon standing nearby.

"I think I heard it."

"Still, I want to thank you again." I wanted to say something but Jung Heewon's eyes were fixed on the injured Cheoldoo Group member. "The one with the injured leg, he was the one who tried to rape me yesterday."

"…I see."

"Don't touch him because I will kill him myself. Understood?"

Her killing intent was impressive. Was she chosen by a sponsor or was it a late blooming attribute?

[The exclusive skill, Character List is activated.]

I was a little worried about using this skill. This woman would've died if I hadn't saved her. Would she be registered as a character?

[Character Summary]

Name: Jung Heewon

Age: 27 years old.

Sponsor: None (Three constellations are currently showing interest in this person).

Exclusive Attributes: Crouching Figure (General)

Exclusive Skills: Demon Slaying Lv. 1, Kendo Lv. 1.

Stigma: None

Overall Stats: Physique Lv. 4, Strength Lv. 4, Agility Lv. 7, Magic Power Lv. 4.

Overall Evaluation: She is a 'Crouching Figure' with enormous potential. The attribute information isn't verified yet because the attribute hadn't blossomed.

Fortunately, her information appeared. It was different from Yoo Sangah, Lee Gilyoung and Han Myungoh. Was she originally not abandoned? By the way, she had a very interesting exclusive attribute.

'Crouching Figure'.

It didn't seem big based on the name, but it was one of the few 'super evolutionary' attributes in Ways of Survival. 'Crouching Figure' was a general rated attribute, but it could reach a rare or legendary rating depending on the occasion. One of the 100 strongest people in Ways of Survival, the Crazy Butcher, evolved from 'Crouching Figure'.

Jung Heewon. I thought she was just a passing person but I might have to consider taking her as a colleague. It would take a while to grow her 'Demon Slaying' skill but this woman could become a powerful hitman if she was raised well.

"By the way, Dokja-ssi is very calm."

Calm… It might seem like that. I stated, "I am familiar with situations like this in the novel."

"Huh? Does that make sense… Wait a minute. Where are you going?"

I didn't answer and descended from the platform. Jung Heewon wanted to come with me but I reached out a hand to stop her.

"It's okay."

Jung Heewon landed lightly below the platform. I walked along the railway tracks and looked at the tunnel to Yaksu Station. It was pitch-dark and the inside wasn't visible, but it smelt terrible. It was a bloody smell.

"You aren't going inside are you?" Jung Heewon asked. "Everyone who went that way has died. The thugs or anyone else. Everyone who goes inside will unconditionally die."

Her words were wrong. Not everyone died. At least one person had already gone down this tunnel and moved on to the next station. We climbed onto the platform again. We had been gone for quite some time but the line of people queuing to trade food was still long. Some people who protested against the mainstream group were beaten up and other paid unusual prices for the food.

Shortly afterwards, Jung Heewon saw a few young women from the marginalized group sneak into the back of a tarp and she became furious. "Ah, really annoying. Did you see that?"

"I saw it."

Cheon Inho had said it. 'Anything' could be exchanged for food, but the girls who just entered weren't carrying anything. Jung Heewon sprang to her feet. "I can't just watch this."

"What will you do?"

"Stop it. I have to tell them not to do it, no matter the circumstances!"

"Then those women will starve."

"Are you just going to watch?"

"Yes, I think you should just watch this time."

"What do you mean by that?"

I received Jung Heewon's contemptuous gaze before saying, "Jung Heewon-ssi, stopping those women won't solve the current problem. Even if you stop them now, something similar will occur late at night."

"…Then I will stop them again. I will stop it and stop it."

"Then what about their food? Among those who just entered the tarp, there is a mother with a child. If that child starves to death, will Jung Heewon-ssi be responsible for the child's death?"

Jung Heewon's eyes shook. She lowered her head as if to hide her expression. "Then what can I do? The alternative…"

I looked at Jung Heewon. With this, Jung Heewon wouldn't do anything unexpected. She was a 'Crouching Figure' with 'Demon Slaying'. Depending on how she acted, Jung Heewon might evolve into an indiscriminate murderer.

"Jung Heewon-ssi, the key to this problem is food. Isn't that right?"

"…That's right."

"Then we need to remove the cause of the problem."

"Huh…?"

I looked at my watch instead of answering. It was time.

Kwajijijik!

Yes, he showed up. The air split apart and a familiar figure was revealed. Screams came from everywhere. The nightmare of humanity that opened up this tragedy.

[H-How are you all doing? Haven't you been free for a while?]

The dokkaebi.

"A-Aaaagh!"

The people panicked at the appearance of the dokkaebi. It was never a good thing when this guy showed up. Even Jung Heewon, who was full of energy, flinched momentarily. By the way, it wasn't Bihyung. Originally, Bihyung was the dokkaebi responsible for all nearby channels, but this was a different guy. Unlike the pure white fur of Bihyung, this dokkaebi had black fur.

[M-My friend who was originally in charge of this channel is undergoing disciplinary action… S-So, I am responsible for this scenario.]

The dokkaebi's timid tone was very memorable.

[T-Then everyone. D-Don't you look very peaceful? T-That Bihyung, he pretended to be pretentious only to set this level of scenario difficulty…]

"W-What are you saying? Tell us what you want!"

[H-Hik. Don't be angry. Everyone. A-Anyway, I came for you guys…]

"For us?"

"T-Then give us food!"

[F-Food? Aha…if you want food…]

After his words ended, the dokkaebi moved his hand.

[A scenario penalty has been added.]

[From now on, food stockpiling is limited.]

[All existing stockpiled food has disappeared.]

"U-Uhh! What?"

The people with emergency food screamed. Whether it was from the mainstream group or the marginalized group, everything that was called 'food' floated in the air.

[He, hehe. Then everyone. You can't. Y-You have to think about how to break the scenario.]

Susuk.

The canned food, biscuits, calorie bars, etc. The emergency food gathered by the people were destroyed with one gesture from the dokkaebi. The people's expressions became grim when they saw the food disappearing.

[Y-You want to eat? In any case, Earth trash…]

His tone suddenly changed. I seemed to remember his name. According to the original setting, there was one dokkaebi like this. His tone was timid but he was more cruel than any other dokkaebi. In the distance, Cheon Inho was watching me with confused eyes.

[Everyone, let's have fun from now on. Hehe…]

It was followed by system messages.

[A scenario penalty has been added.]

[The 'survival cost' clause has been added.]

[From now on, 100 coins will be deducted every night for the 'survival cost'. If you can't pay the 'survival cost,' you will die.]

[The 'survival cost' penalty will be maintained until the second main scenario is cleared.]

I laughed as I read the rising messages. Yes, now it was like Ways of Survival.

Chapter 20: Ep. 5 – Dark Keeper, I

[T-Then I will let everyone take care of it! Yihihihit!] The dokkaebi said these words and disappeared.

A food penalty and survival penalty. I already knew about the former penalty. However, the latter wasn't in the original Ways of Survival. Maybe my contract with Bihyung caused this development. Jung Heewon confirmed that the biscuit in her pocket had disappeared and asked in a soft voice, "Dokja-ssi, did you perhaps know something like this would hap—"

"I did expect it. I thought about what the dokkaebis would do first to harass humans."

"…Aren't you really good at making predictions?"

I called Lee Hyunsung and the others over. The situation was created and now it was time to move.

"Give back our food!"

"How, how did this happen?"

The people of the marginalized group were crying. Cheon Inho and the mainstream group were also devastated by the sudden food shortage. My eyes met Cheon Inho's, who then bit his lip.

[Perhaps…were you aware of it? No, that's impossible.] If I could read his thoughts then that's what he would be thinking.

[You have accurately read the thoughts of character 'Cheon Inho'.]

[Your understanding of the character 'Cheon Inho' has increased.]

…My understanding rose from this sort of thing? I looked at other people's expressions and tried to guess what they were thinking. However, the previous messages didn't pop up again. Meanwhile, Cheon Inho quickly gathered the people together in order to organize the chaos.

"Everyone, gather together. I will give you an emergency notice."

The contents of the notice were simple: The situation had become worse so more 'scouts' from the marginalized group were needed. They had to hurry. Now there was no food underground.

"We won't distribute food to people who don't participate as scouts."

Despite the hardline declaration, there was no backlash from the citizens. No, they couldn't. It was an inevitable result in this situation. The people noticed it and volunteered to be scouts one by one. The food had disappeared but hope remained on Cheon Inho's face. As the situation became worse, more control was passed onto the mainstream group.

Lee Hyunsung became anxious when he saw this and opened his mouth, "Dokja-ssi, what now?"

"Of course, we have to go and get food."

The expressions of the party members became tense at these words. Obtain food. This meant only one thing.

"Then we have to be scouts? There is still food remaining aboveground."

"Nope, we won't go aboveground. If we go there, we will unconditionally die." I looked at a gas mask on the floor. This tattered gas mask couldn't stop the poisonous fog.

Lee Hyunsung muttered, "We need to obtain food aboveground…"

"Lee Hyunsung-ssi. The world has changed. Then the food needs to change."

I looked at the tunnel to Yaksu Station.

"Wait a minute. Dokja-ssi…don't tell me?"

"That's right."

In this world, humans were no longer the top predators. Even if we weren't predators, we didn't necessarily have to be prey.

"We will hunt monsters."

* * *

After a while, several people from the marginalized group, including myself, were standing in front of the tunnel towards Yaksu Station.

"I see. You are going to enter the railway track?" I thought Cheon Inho would challenge us when we refused to join the scouting group, but he seemed relieved that I was out of the group. He might think I was a threat to his own power. "Well, looking at it in the long run, a team dedicated to attacking the scenario is required. Come back safely."

He was a funny guy. He spoke like he was the captain but the time for him to be finished wasn't far off.

[Your understanding of the character 'Cheon Inho' has increased.]

[Your understanding of the character 'Cheon Inho' has reached a certain level.]

I see…I got it now. There were two major cases of character 'understanding' rising. One was when I got the liking or trust of the character. The second was when I accurately guessed what the character was thinking. Maybe now was the latter case.

[The character 'Cheon Inho' is suspicious of you.]

According to the accumulated understanding value, a vague idea of the person's emotions could be obtained.

"Oh, can one of my group members join? I'd like to get some information on the attack."

Indeed, Cheon Inho wouldn't let us go so easily. I stared at the man behind him. It was the person who would go with us and an unlucky fellow.

"I-I have to go with them?"

"Eh, why else are you here, Han hyung? Didn't you want to reconcile with Dokja-ssi last night?"

"T-That…"

Cheon Inho's party member who joined us was Department Head Han Myungoh.

"D-Dokja-ssi." If you don't mind, I will go…"

"I understand. Let's go together."

Han Myungoh was surprised when I responded readily. He thought I would refuse. Lee Hyunsung had a worried face but I had an idea. In any case, the survivors party of five people from Carriage 3807, consisting of me, Lee Hyunsung, Lee Gilyoung, Yoo Sangah and Han Myungoh was reformed.

"Can I come as well?"

"…Is it okay even if your body isn't fully healed?"

"This much is fine."

There was one more. Including Jung Heewon, there were a total of six people in the party. It was a lot for a small party. Of course, the number of people wasn't much in front of the upcoming crisis.

[A new sub-scenario has arrived!]

[Second Scenario – Food Acquisition]

Category: Sub

Difficulty: E

Clear Conditions: Directly hunt the monsters that can be used as food and cook them.

Time Limit: None

Compensation: 500 coins

Failure: ???

As soon as they stepped foot in the tunnel, a sub-scenario flew in. Food acquisition. It was a sub-scenario we had to go through before entering the second main scenario.

[A few constellations are anticipating your performance.]

The darkness of the tunnel became apparent before we even moved 10 steps. I lit up the tunnel with a flashlight but the outline of the surrounding area wasn't visible at all. It was proof of a curtain that was blocking the light. The real thing would be beyond this curtain.

"Dokja-ssi, wait a minute. It is really dangerous from here on." Jung Heewon, who walked beside me, stopped first. "Are we really going this way? No matter how I look, it seems like suicide. There is also Gilyoung."

"In fact, I was concerned from the beginning. It isn't too late so how about we leave Gilyoung behind? And if possible, the women…"

"Lee Hyunsung-ssi, I'm not as good as you but I know how to fight. I took some kendo lessons." Jung Heewon replied.

"But…"

An unnecessary controversy was about to heat up the atmosphere so I interrupted, "Lee Hyunsung-ssi. I told you before. The world has changed. It is biased that a woman is physically weak. Right now, everyone can become stronger by raising their stats. But Jung Heewon-ssi, there is also a problem with your words."

"…What is it?"

"Just as a woman isn't weak, a child also isn't weak. Gilyoung, show them."

Lee Gilyoung came forward. He looked around for a while before sitting on the tunnel floor and reaching out his hand. Jung Heewon's eyes widened. "Oh my god, what is that?"

"S-Shit! Cockroaches!" Han Myungoh cried out with fear.

The cockroach that appeared in the distance was connected to Lee Gilyoung's fingertips with a faint solid line. The cockroach listened to Lee Gilyoung's words like a well-behaved dog and disappeared into the darkness.

"My attribute is Insect Collector."

Insect Collector. Lee Gilyoung possessed the rare ability to communicate simply with insects through his 'Diverse Communication' skill.

"There is nothing in front of us. It is safe for 100 steps forward." Lee Gilyoung showed an overwhelming scouting power and the other people made a stunned expression. Lee Gilyoung spoke to them with a bold expression, "Thank you for your concern. But I didn't follow all of you for you to take care of me."

"Ah, yes." Jung Heewon nodded with a sour expression. Lee Gilyoung came to my side and I stroked his hair. Lee Gilyoung's attribute hadn't been seen in the original Ways of Survival. It wasn't a wrong choice to save Lee Gilyoung in the beginning. We passed a clear barrier and entered the full-fledged darkness.

[You have entered a dangerous area.]

"Y-Yoo Sangah-ssi. It is dangerous to hold my hand while walking."

"…Aren't you more afraid than I am?"

"N-No!"

The air inside the curtain was sticky from the humidity.

"Reduce the light." I ordered.

Yoo Sangah immediate covered the flashlight. Since this model didn't have a light control function, she had to adjust the light with her hand.

"Eew. Don't shine it downwards." Jung Heewon felt nauseous when she checked the ground. There were torn bodies. The bodies of those who tried to move through here were scattered at their feet. Yoo Sangah closed her eyes tightly, Han Myungoh shook and even the bold Lee Hyunsung started sweating. Lee Gilyoung was surprisingly calm, with not the slightest bit of fear on his face. I felt a bit worried. This boy, did he think it was all a game?

"There is something that isn't human." As Lee Gilyoung said, it wasn't only the bodies of humans on the ground. There was something the size of a fully-grown wolf. The bodies of mole-like creatures were scattered all over the place.

The 9th grade underground species, the ground rat. It was a name reminiscent of bug on Earth, but a name was just a name. They were underground piranhas. The ground rats were persistent hunters who burrowed through the ground in groups and aimed at their prey. However, the ground rats collapsed like they had received a bombardment. Jung Heewon sighed, "…Who the hell did this?"

Obviously, there was only one human who could turn the ground rats into this. It was Yoo Joonghyuk. He proceeded to the next station through this path alone. I couldn't help wondering. Originally, it was supposed to be tonight or tomorrow when the third turn Yoo Joonghyuk moved to the next station.

Why was he so hasty? Did he become impatient? What was the reason?

"Dokja-ssi, can we use this for food?"

"The scenario said that we have to 'hunt' it ourselves so maybe it isn't possible."

"…Well, it is kind of uncomfortable. What about cooking? Do you want to roast it on a fire?"

It could be roasted. The problem was that it must be a special fire.

"Heewon-ssi, you said you were good at kendo?"

"Uh, it is a bit much to say I am good…but what are you doing now?"

I stabbed the body of the ground rat and started to cut it with a knife. I didn't know when I read it in the novel but it didn't go as well as I thought. After somehow getting rid of the tough skin, I managed to remove the spine bones. This was the first time so I left many scratches, but it was usable.

"Why are you taking that?"

"You need a weapon for kendo."

The stone hog's thorn wasn't enough for everyone and the spine of the ground rat consisted of a single bone, making it a pretty good weapon at the beginning of the scenario. After cutting the cartilage leading to the leg and shaping it, the bone actually took the shape of a knife. I gave it to Jung Heewon.

"Thank you. Suddenly I feel like I'm back in the Paleolithic age."

"You need to grind it a bit more for it to be useful. There are rocks around so skillfully grind the blade."

"Huhu, understood. Captain." Jung Heewon started to grind the blade with a slightly excited voice. I looked up and saw Lee Hyunsung watching the scene with a bit of envy.

"Do you want one?"

"Eh, you will make me one?"

"All of you come closer. It is better if you learn how to do it. Let's make it together."

In fact, this was also my first time trying it. I wouldn't have been able to do it if the details hadn't been included in Ways of Survival. Why wasn't Ways of Survival popular? It was simple. The author wrote too much of the setting.

"…Dokja-ssi, you are a beginner but you are good at it."

We sat down and made weapons together. This time it was a spear, not a sword. They didn't have the Kendo skill so I decided it was more stable to make a long spear. Lee Hyunsung's spear was made with the spine of the largest ground rat while Yoo Sangah and Han Myungoh's weapons were made with the spine of average sized ground rats. Finally, Lee Gilyoung's weapon was made with the head bone of a young ground rat.

[You have succeeded in acquiring weapons by yourself.]

[A very small number of constellations are interested in the primitive nature of humanity.]

[Constellations have sponsored you 100 coins.]

Everyone received these messages.

"We receive coins even for this type of thing."

I asked, "I don't want you to die. You have your own coins?"

"Yes, we do."

"Whenever possible, leave enough coins for the survival cost and invest the rest in your strength, physique and agility. Otherwise, you won't survive."

"Ah, I'll keep that in mind."

We finished the preparations and started to move forward again. The 100 steps that Lee Gilyoung mentioned ended right in front of us.

[The sub-scenario – Food Acquisition has begun!]

The ground rats crawled out from the ground. I quickly counted their numbers. One, two, three…there were exactly 13. It was more than I thought. The group of ground rats drew a line and started threatening us. The moment we crossed the line, the fight would begin.

I said, "There is no plan. We are beginners. It might sound cruel but honestly, I don't expect you to survive."

"T-That…"

"Still, all of you survive. Please."

Han Myungoh was the only upset one in the party. Everyone else was nervous but looked determined. In particular, Jung Heewon's eyes were very impressive.

"Okay, let's try it. Everybody, please live!"

Just as Yoo Joonghyuk tested me, I also had expectations for them. No matter how good a mentor, a person who wasn't determined couldn't survive in this world. In the end, it was up to each person to save themselves. Everyone should use this opportunity to realize it clearly.

"Then let's go."

I also knew who I must take among these people. As we took one more step, the ground rats moved. The battle began.

Chapter 21: Ep. 5 – Dark Keeper, II

The party fought well. It was actually a little bit surprising. In particular, Lee Hyunsung and Jung Heewon who stepped forward with me were very influential. The battle composition naturally became the three of us in front with the other three in the rear. Less than a minute after the battle began, a few ground rats were struck to the ground with their necks pierced.

Lee Hyunsung overpowered another ground rat, wiped the sweat on his forehead and said, "…I think I can live."

Once they raised their overall stats, the human race wasn't that weak. Even so, Lee Hyunsung's mentality was very special in this world. A normal human couldn't be so nonchalant when encountering monsters. There was a reason why he got the name of Steel Sword in the future. However, the more amazing person was Jung Heewon. She said, "The pattern is simpler than I thought?"

Maybe it was due to the Kendo skill but every time her sword stretched out, the target ground rat was cut somewhere on their legs or tail.

"Hap!"

It was a case where Jung Heewon invested most of her coins into strength. Her endurance declined due to it but the power of one blow was better than I thought. Her sword moved in a terrifying manner through the air.

"Damn, I lost one! Please!"

Her voice trembled as she spoke. Her only weakness was that her physique was low so her endurance fell short. The ground rats who moved between the party members were moderately smart. After succeeding in scattering the ranks, they ran towards the opponent who seemed the weakest using a hunter's instincts.

"Leave it to me."

However, the ground rats didn't know that they had picked the wrong opponent. A blunt instrument thrown by Lee Gilyoung's hands struck the head of a ground rat. The impact was lacking because he was a child but it was enough. The others could help him finish it.

Yoo Sangah's spear pierced the body of the ground rat. The ground rat twisted several times. Yoo Sangah made a confused expression but she didn't remove her hand from the spear. The ground rat lost its energy and fell down. I honestly thought it would be difficult for Yoo Sangah to adapt but I was really surprised. Usually, it was normal to panic like Han Myungoh standing over here.

"U-Uhhhh…" As the people were struggling, one person was hiding in the rear. He couldn't even hide properly and was bleeding near the shins.

I pierced the last ground rat with the thorn and the surroundings became quiet. I shook the blood off the thorn and looked at everyone. Everyone suffered from minor abrasions except for Han Myungoh, but there were no major injuries. It was a great first victory.

Yoo Sangah and Lee Gilyoung relaxed and sat down, while Lee Hyunsung stabbed his spear into the ground and wiped at the sweat on his forehead. Jung Heewon lamented as she counted the number of ground rats in the vicinity. "… Dokja-ssi, how many did you take care of?"

"Four of them."

"Tsk, I killed two."

"I got three." My pride was somehow hurt when I heard Lee Hyunsung's proud declaration. There was only one difference despite my stats. I used a skill and looked at Lee Hyunsung's attributes window.

[Character Summary]

Name: Lee Hyunsung

Age: 28 years old.

Sponsor: Master of Steel.

Exclusive Attributes: Soldier who Turned a Blind Eye to Injustice (General)

Exclusive Skills: Bayonet Skills Lv. 2, Camouflage Lv. 1, Patience Lv. 1, Sense of Justice Lv. 1, Weapons Training Lv. 2.

Stigma: Great Mountain Push Lv. 1

Overall Stats: Physique Lv. 12, Strength Lv. 9, Agility Lv. 9, Magic Power Lv. 6.

Overall Evaluation: The moment of the attribute evolution is gradually approaching. The person's trust in you is considerable. The sponsor behind him is wary towards you.

* 'Starter Pack' is currently applied.

Hah, the starter pack. This was why he was strong. The Master of Steel seemed to quite like Lee Hyunsung. The Starter Pack was a coin package that could be used when the average overall stats of the incarnation was less than level 10. It was a good item that allowed you to learn Weapons Training, a useful skill in the beginning, while raising the level of the overall stats by one. Considering the fact that most incarnations were being exploited for nothing, Lee Hyunsung was lucky to receive the Starter Pack.

"Dokja-ssi, your complexion doesn't look good…"

"Ah, no. I was just thinking for a moment."

Now I was a little bit envious… well, I had the money to buy it, but I didn't buy it. My average stats exceeded level 10 so buying it would only damage me. Damn, I opened the Dokkaebi Bag a bit early.

"Let's gather up the ground rats. We need to prepare today's food."

"Ummm…by the way, how will we cook it? We can't eat it like this."

"We can't eat it now but there will be a way." I guessed I answered too calmly. There was silence among my party members. Lee Hyunsung was the first one to open his mouth, "Excuse me, I would like to ask you one thing."

"Yes?"

"Dokja-ssi, perhaps…do you know something about this situation?"

Whoops, I made a mistake.

"That…"

Suddenly, I remembered the regressors in the novel I read, followed by Yoo Joonghyuk's words. It was like this. The feeling of a regressor. Usually, these types of things happened to a regressor. Some replies came to mind. I could shamelessly say that it was a hunch or I could lie like Yoo Joonghyuk.

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' is anticipating your choice.]

[A few constellations are anticipating your answer.]

But from a reader's point of view, the best answer was…

"A-Aaaack!"

It was to create a situation where I didn't need to say anything.

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' nods at your choice.]

"There is still one left!" Jung Heewon shouted and Lee Hyunsung ran. However, the action of the hidden ground rat was faster than anyone else. It was much bigger than the other creatures.

"S-Save me…!"

It dragged Han Myungoh into a tunnel by one of his legs. The nearest, Yoo Sangah, swung her spear but the situation got worse because Han Myungoh held onto her.

"Grab this!" Lee Hyunsung stretched out the handle of his spear but it only hit the ground. The ground rat and the two people had already disappeared into the ground.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' resents this frustrating person.]

Jung Heewon burst out, "Ah…I knew I was going to get cancer because of that uncle."

"…I'm sorry. I was too late." Lee Hyunsung spoke in a sad voice. I tapped his shoulder to show it was okay.

"No one could've done anything."

"Should we chase after them?"

I looked at the hole where they had disappeared. It wasn't an ordinary hole. There was a touch of energy around it. The darkness gave off a gloomy feeling. I retreated to the back and turned on my smartphone. There was only 5% battery remaining. At dawn, I exchanged one battery charger for food with a person from the marginalized group.

[Your reading speed has increased due to the effect of the exclusive attribute.]

Shortly afterwards, I was able to find the desired passage.

「…The 'Edge of Darkness' is the habitat of the ground rats and is a type of subspace emitted from the 'Dark Root'. The ground rats that breath in black ether instead of oxygen don't grow naturally unless they are near the 'Edge of Darkness'…」

It was a fact that I knew roughly but it was meaningful to review it. That's right, this was the entrance to the Edge of Darkness. I read about it and put the smartphone in my pocket.

"Dokja-ssi?" Lee Hyunsung was looking at me with a frustrated expression. I nodded.

"We will enter."

"Ah, then…"

"Still, it's very dangerous to enter with a lot of people. Lee Hyunsung-ssi and Jung Heewon-ssi will wait here at the boundary. If something happens, I will give you a signal."

The startled Jung Heewon asked, "Surely…you don't intend to go with only Gilyoung?"

"Gilyoung's ability will be helpful in pursuing them."

The moment she tried to strongly resist, I raised a hand and called to Lee Hyunsung, "Lee Hyunsung-ssi. Jung Heewon-ssi isn't in a good condition so please take care of her."

Lee Hyunsung seemed to realize something. "I understand."

"Wait a minute. I am fine!"

"Jung Heewon, confidence is good but don't be reckless."

"…"

Jung Heewon's breathing was uneven. She wasn't completely healed from the poisonous fog. I left the two people and entered the hole with Lee Gilyoung. It was obviously a hole that was dug down in a vertical slope. However, as soon as we entered, we could stand as if gravity was in effect perpendicular to the ground.

It was due to the magic power emitted by the Edge of Darkness.

"This way."

The darkness was so deep that I couldn't see anything, so I could only move forward with Lee Gilyoung. Black ether had the property of absorbing light, making a flashlight meaningless. If Lee Gilyoung's ability Diverse Communication wasn't available, I might have to use coins again.

"Excuse me hyung." Lee Gilyoung called out to me. "Did you do it on purpose?"

"…What?"

"When that uncle grabbed noona[1] and ahjussi[2], you let it go."

I had a moment of hesitation. In the darkness, Lee Gilyoung's fingertips were strange. Before I could ask how he knew, Lee Gilyoung spoke, "At that time, I was looking at hyung's face."

He was watching me even in those short moments. A very scary kid. It was no good hiding from a person who was so quick.

"Yes, that's right."

The answer was terrible and a message bomb was set off in my head. Indeed, this was a spectacle for the constellations.

[Constellations of absolute good frown at your cruelty.]

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' is pressing you with shining eyes.]

"Why did you do that?"

"It is because of the habit of the ground rats." I decided to answer honestly. "The ground rats have a habit of keeping their catches in the same place as their treasure. It isn't just food. Many things that seem rare are gathered. For example, an item. However, the paths are so complicated that it can't be found unless I follow them directly."

Lee Gilyoung was silent for a moment. I continued speaking, "I expected him to take Han Myungoh. I didn't expect him to grab onto Yoo Sangah."

"Then your purpose isn't to save noona or ahjussi, it is the items?"

"Yes. Are you disappointed?"

"Nope." Lee Gilyoung's small hand gripped my finger tightly. "Hyung shouldn't lie."

"…"

"If hyung was such a person, you wouldn't have saved me on the subway. I believe in you."

Lee Gilyoung didn't act like a child but he was still a child. Lee Gilyoung didn't know. To be mature and to be an adult were completely different things.

[Some constellations are touched to tears.]

[200 coins have been sponsored.]

In this world, there were mean adults who would take advantage of such maturity. The hole was longer than I thought and we had to go downwards for quite a long time.

"Hyung."

"Yes."

"Hyung, are you a god?"

"…What?"

"Or the main character?"

Children sometimes asked sharp questions. It was because they lived in a world where stories and reality weren't clearly distinguished. Lee Gilyoung didn't know exactly what his question meant.

"I'm not a main character. Rather, I always envy the main character."

"But you still know something about this world?"

I thought for a moment before replying, "That's right."

"Then I'll ask you one thing."

"I will answer it if I can."

"Once we clear all these scenarios…can we make a wish?"

"Wish?" I was a bit confused.

"Usually there is a reward at the end of these stories. At the end of this story, is there something like that?"

In the darkness, Lee Gilyoung's breath was trembling. Lee Gilyoung's expression when he saw his dead mother suddenly came to mind. Those who adapted to this world suffered from it in different ways. Some were crazy, some were fanatics and some had irrational optimism.

"Yes, there is."

I was grateful that this place was dark. It was because Lee Gilyoung couldn't see my face right now.

"We are almost there hyung."

The surrounding black ether was shrinking rapidly. It was evidence that Dark Root was nearby. I tensed up and gripped the thorn.

[A few constellations are holding their breaths.]

I heard the sound of the ground rats somewhere in the ground. As the sound got closer, the sense of space expanded rapidly. I saw a light in the darkness, as if someone had lit a fire. Then I saw a tattered box beyond that light. The moment I was convinced that I had come to the right place, messages rang in my ears.

[The sub scenario has been updated.]

[You have entered the 'Ground Rat's Treasure Trove'.]

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[1] **Noona** – term used by a male to refer to an older female.
[2] **Ahjussi** – uncle, middle aged man/stranger.

Chapter 22: Ep. 5 – Dark Keeper, III

"Hyung! This…"

Right after Lee Gilyoung discovered the treasure box, I blocked his little mouth. "Shh, wait."

The world of Ways of Survival was relentless. The constellations enjoyed the adversity of the characters and added obstacles in the scenarios just to fuck with humans. Things saying 'Catch me!' usually contained traps and even system messages couldn't be trusted.

"The treasure trove doesn't just contain treasures."

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is disappointed.]

Abyssal Black Flame Dragon… He wanted me to die for a while.

Anyway, I waited. Shortly afterwards, shadows started to emerge around the treasure chest.

It was the ground rats. They brought something through the tunnel, threw it and exchanged information. Once a certain number of ground rats had gathered, the number of lights illuminating the surroundings increased. It was black fire, flames made with black ether. It was said that this place was the core of Dark Root, which was why it had so much black ether to burn. At that time, someone's voice was heard, "It is all because of Yoo Sangah-ssi!"

There was no need to say who he was. It was a voice I would know at once. I gripped the shoulder of the surprised Lee Gilyoung tightly. It wasn't time yet.

"Because of me, what do you mean by that?"

In the dim light, there were two people captured by the ground rats. They were tied up tightly by branches that came up from the ground.

"I-If Yoo Sangah hadn't taken the subway, the situation wouldn't be like this!"

"Why does the subway matter now?"

How could she accept all this nonsense? Maybe Yoo Sangah was a saintly person. Or maybe the sponsor behind her was a saintly person.

"T-That…That, Yoo Sangah-ssi, you ride a bicycle all the time…" Han Myungoh's voice shook as he wrote gibberish.

Yoo Sangah's tone was cold. "Wait a minute. Were you the one who stole my bike?"

"W-What is this person? I clearly told you that I would drive you in my car! You should know how to accept favours!"

"Answer me. Did you steal my bike?"

All of a sudden, the situation made sense. This was it. It was why a person who drove a Mercedes-Benz S-Class took the subway line 3. Well, it wasn't strange. There were quite a few men who had their eyes on Yoo Sangah, not just at the company but at Geumho Station as well. In fact, Yoo Sangah was a worthy person. Her atmosphere was warm and she knew how to flatter people.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' hates the character 'Han Myungoh'.]

Han Myungoh's face was so red that it could clearly be seen in the dim lighting. It looked dangerous. "Yes, shit! I did it! So what?"

"Why are you talking like it isn't a big deal? You took someone else's things, it is theft."

"Theft? Shit, don't talk bullshit! You should've just got in my car from the beginning!"

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' hates this trivial argument.]

I didn't mean to do this but there was no other way now. I quietly gripped the thorn.

"I didn't ask you just once. I continuously asked to take you home but you kept fucking rejecting me…"

I threw the thorn as hard as I could. The thorn scratched the corner of Han Myungoh's mouth and continued into the darkness.

"Uwaaaaack! What?"

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is pleased.]

[100 coins have been sponsored.]

"Dokja-ssi!" Yoo Sangah called out to me. However, I wasn't looking at them.

Across the habitat of the ground rats, the darkness was split apart by the thorn. Then that damned guy came. There was no way it wouldn't be in Dark Root.

['Dark Keeper' has appeared!]

[The sub scenario has been updated!]

[Sub scenario 'Kill the Guard' has begun!]

Like slaves surrendering to a king, the terrified ground rats fell to the ground. A dark figure appeared in the dim light. A tentacled monster that was like a grim reaper. Lee Gilyoung's complexion deteriorated sharply.

"Oof, hyung, that…"

"It is okay."

Eventually, Lee Gilyoung fell to the ground and started retching. It wasn't strange. A lot of pressure was felt just looking at it from afar. The cockroaches scattered around the area had their stomachs exploded. Lee Gilyoung, who was connected to the cockroaches, would've suffered considerable mental damage.

"Gilyoung. How many more times can you use Diverse Communication?"

"…I think I can do it one or two more times."

"I understand. Then rest here for a while."

I left Gilyoung leaning against the side and approached Yoo Sangah and Han Myungoh. The panicked Han Myungoh was struggling.

"O-Ohuk! What is this…?"

I took the Swiss Army knife and cut the branches binding the two of them. I only moved the knife a few times. Then the part of the branch that it touched abruptly corroded and the blade melted away. Yes, this was the power of a demonic species.

"Stay back."

I said while raising a weapon made of the spine of a ground rat. The 7th grade demon type species, dark keeper. Among the many monsters that appeared since the start of the destruction, the demon species were toxic. In fact, the treasures of the ground rats were close to 'tributes' to the demon. Even if it was the same grade, the demon species were different from other monster species.

[The 'Dark Keeper' has received the favour of the demon king it follows.]

"Kamyun. Der. Yitur."

The demon species had their own language, worshipped different demon kings and inherited some of the power of the demon king through Dark Root.

[The 'Dark Keeper' has emitted 'Fear'.]

[The exclusive skill 'Fourth Wall' has neutralized most of the 'Fear' effect.]

Therefore, killing one demon meant becoming the adversary of their demon king.

"Yitur!"

I didn't know what it was saying but the situation didn't look good. I didn't want to fight if possible.

"M-Mother?" Yoo Sangah was the one who spoke. She still hadn't left?

"I told you to stay back."

"That monster just said 'Mother'…"

I thought for a moment about what this meant. No, wait a minute.

"Uhh, I think…K-Karud, yemiren? Ah, this is the pronunciation? Aketu?"

For a moment, I thought I was mistaken. But I didn't hear wrong.

"Kallitu!"

Surprisingly, the dark keeper nodded at the end.

[The character 'Yoo Sangah' has activated the 'Interpreter Lv. 3 skill.]

…Oh my god, she wasn't only good at Spanish. Let's see what would happen. I asked, "What is he saying?"

"That…it keeps saying 'become Mother'…"

…Become mother? The dark keeper cried out again and pointed to Yoo Sangah.

"Kallitu!"

Yoo Sangah had a tearful face. "Uh, Mother? I'm not married yet!"

The dark keeper pointed at Han Myungoh this time. "Kallitu!"

Han Myungoh turned pale as he wiped his lip. "W-Why am I the mother? Father!"

The dark keeper's tentacles rose.

"Ooooof!"

One of the tentacles entered his mouth and Han Myungoh turned black. There was the sound of something moving down Han Myungoh's throat. That's right. This was what it meant to become the mother. I belatedly recalled that the demon species conceived their young in the body of other species.

"Yoo Sangah-ssi, you don't plan to have a child yet, right?"

"Of course!"

Yoo Sangah immediately understood the words and stepped back quickly. I swung the ground rat spear and tore at the tentacles attached to Han Myungoh.

The dark keeper roared angrily, "Kallituo!"

The tentacles of the demon species were gradually breaking the ground rat spear. Even the stone hog thorn, which broke through the stomach of an ichthyosaur, would've been destroyed the moment it was stuck in a demon's body. Before I knew it, Han Myungoh was far away while Yoo Sangah looked at me.

「 Is there a chance? 」

Her eyes seemed to be asking me. To tell the truth, I didn't have a chance.

Pushu! Pushuu! Teong!

After a few strikes, the ground rat spear was almost destroyed. The hand holding the spear was in pain. The monster guarding the treasure chest couldn't be caught, just like the ichthyosaur of Dongho Bridge. That's why the original plan wasn't to deal with this monster but to obtain the treasure chest after it disappeared. As always, plans existed for things to go wrong.

"Dokkaebi. Are you watching?"

[U-Uh. You knew?]

The dokkaebi showed up in the darkness. I didn't know his name but he seemed to be a cousin of Bihyung.

"There should be some mail for me by now. I want you to hand it over quickly."

[Hihit. It isn't my responsibility. I-It is Bihyung's thing.]

"Right now, you are taking Bihyung's place. Don't you see the constellations complaining?"

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband wants to scold the dokkaebi 'Biryu'.]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' threatens the dokkaebi 'Biryu'.]

The dokkaebi Biryu gulped. […O-Okay. Instead, it is just this once. I think it will be interesting!]

The dokkaebi muttered something and the summoning began.

[The item has arrived from the exchange.]

[The item 'Broken Faith' has been acquired.]

[The brokerage fee was exempted due to the effect of the contract.]

Broken Faith. The item bartered for the 'ichthyosaur core', which was registered on the Dokkaebi Bag' exchange, had finally arrived.

"Kik."

The dark keeper saw the item coming out of thin air and laughed. No wonder it was laughing. All I received was a D-grade item. It was a knife broken in half.

[The item is too old to use. The durability will be poor and it will be difficult to achieve any performance.]

Even the dokkaebi who gave him the item was giggling. [H-How can you fight with that old thing? And it can't be used if you don't have a special skill…]

I knew that much. I wouldn't have bought it if I didn't know.

"Sigh…" I sucked in a breath and concentrated my mind.

Kiiing!

The hilt started trembling greatly. Biryu shouted with shock.

[Uh? How?]

It was natural to be surprised. It was because this was a skill I bought from his friend for a huge 10,000 coins. Blue ether started to settle slowly on the surface of the broken blade.

[Purest Sword Force]

After killing the ichthyosaur, I bought this skill from Bihyung. There were a few flaws compared to other superior energy techniques, but they weren't something that could be obtained for the time being.

[Broken Faith has responded to your star energy!]

[Blade of Faith is activated!]

Shortly afterwards, a brilliant white virtual blade sprang up from the edge of the broken blade. Broken Faith, its real performance was revealed when star energy was injected into it.

The number of tentacles increased by dozens and covered my field of view. I wouldn't be safe from these attacks with my current stamina level. It was scary. But now there was a chance. It was because the Blade of Faith was the best quality weapon when it came to demon species.

The tentacles touched by the blade were oxidized and cut off. The dark keeper let out a terrible scream as its tentacles were destroyed. I felt magic power draining out but I wasn't in a hurry. I calmly moved the blade. I missed the tentacles many times because I didn't have the 'Fighting Senses' skill or the 'Swordsmanship Training' skill, so the way I wielded the blade was terrible. It was natural. I was a reader, not a swordsman. And a reader fought in the manner of a reader.

[The attribute effect has improved your memories of the pages already read.]

The pages of Ways of Survival flashed in my head.

「…The dark keeper's attack pattern is simple. Unconditionally, the tentacle on the upper right will first… 」

「 …After the attack, a single tentacle at the bottom… 」

「 …Its tentacles regenerate but it will take a few minutes… 」

I read diligently and used what I had read.

"Kuaaah!" The dark keeper shrieked as its tentacles were cut.

On the other side of my field of view was Lee Gilyoung. The young boy looked at me with awed eyes. Unfortunately, unlike his wishes, I wasn't the main character in this world. Still, I was confident of at least one thing.

"Kar. Mien. Der." The dark keeper muttered as it barely managed to pull itself together from its shock. I didn't ask but Yoo Sangah muttered from behind me in a quivering voice, "How do you know all my weaknesses…?"

This was what it meant. I gave an answer in a light manner.

"I usually read a lot of books."

I knew more about this world than anyone else.

Chapter 23: Ep. 5 – Dark Keeper, IV

Maybe we would've fought for a long time.

[The exclusive skill 'Bookmark' can now be activated.]

[The number two bookmark has been activated.]

[The level of the Bookmark skill is low, shortening the activation time.]

[Activation Time: One minute.]

Well, I had this. My bones might be torn out of my body or my blood might be spilt.

[Your understanding of the character is low, so only a part of the character's skill is activated.]

['Weapons Training Lv.1' has been activated.]

But I didn't. To be exact, I couldn't afford it. I used all the powers I had. I squeezed out all of my strength and ran through the tentacles. The landscape around me flashed by. The only thing left was the afterimage of a sharp white light and the sense of cutting something.

[Your understanding of the character 'Lee Hyunsung' has increased.]

[The number two bookmark has been disabled.]

I felt like I had lost strength. I had poured everything out in one blow. Then after a while, I heard a trembling voice in the air.

[…C-Constellations. Did you all see it? I-I didn't see wrong…?] It was the appearance of Dokkaebi Biryu, who had forgotten his duties. In fact, it wasn't strange to be surprised.

[A few constellations are doubting their eyes.]

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is flaring fiercely.]

It was a powerful grade 7 demon lying down with damaged tentacles in front of me.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' pulls his hair as if he is pleased.]

[500 coins have been sponsored.]

The severed tentacles lay on the ground and the surrounding ground rats had long been killed or fled in the aftermath of the fight. Only the dark keeper lay breathing roughly on the ground, its lips twitching.

"…Ki. Kii. Ki."

Originally, the 7th grade demon was an enemy that I couldn't cope with. Thus, I was prepared. I wasn't as strong as Yoo Joonghyuk and I didn't have a good sponsor like Lee Hyunsung.

[The obsessive-compulsive constellations praise your readiness.]

[200 coins have been sponsored.]

It was just that the 'information' I had was more advantageous than others. Sometimes, 'information' was more powerful than anything in the world. The very result of that information was the white light sword now in my hand.

[A-An 'ether blade' in the beginning scenarios…C-Constellations. Is this a true story?]

Fortunately, I didn't have to explain it as the dokkaebi was in full swing.

Ether Blade. It was the flagship technique of the incarnations supported by the highest level sponsor. The technique was often called 'energy blade' in Murim novels.

"To be exact, it isn't a real ether blade. The real one is much stronger than this."

[T-That's right! Strictly speaking, it is Broken Faith that has absorbed the Purest Sword Force and made the blade…] Looking at the dokkaebi, he wasn't a complete idiot. [Amazing… There is this guy in that brat Bihyung's channel…]

As if waiting for this, the Blade of Faith turned off.

[Broken Faith's durability has run out. This item is no longer available.]

It was a pity but it did its part.

"Give me the compensation for finishing the sub-scenario."

[Uhh, that's right. W-Wait!]

Biryu hurriedly entered something in the air and a message soon popped up.

[You have met the conditions to clear the sub scenario!]

[You have earned 500 coins.]

[A handful of constellations admire your scenario.]

The reward was smaller than I thought. It was natural because I haven't killed the dark keeper.

[By the way, are you not going to kill that guy?] Biryu looked at me with expectant eyes.

I let out an exhausted breath and glanced at the dark keeper on the ground. Then I kindly said, "I have a non-killing ideology."

[N-Non-killing…?]

"I'm not someone who kills easily."

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' admires it!]

[100 coins have been sponsored.]

Of course, it was a lie.

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' is giving you a sly smile.]

[100 coins have been sponsored.]

The bewildered Biryu stammered. [B-But won't the reward be great if you kill this guy? You will be the first to kill a grade 7 demon and I will give you 7,000 coins! Do you know how big 7,000 coins is?]

"I won't kill it. I need to open the compensation box so please step aside."

I removed the irritating Biryu from in front of me. The dark keeper wasn't the real reason I came here. So…

Puok!

[The 7th grade demon, 'Dark Keeper' was killed.]

…What? The dokkaebi who looked like it was so funny he would die and the dark keeper who died with a knife in his chest. Then.

"Haha, hahahaha! N-Now I can be strong! Kim Dokja, you son of a bitch! You didn't know this!" Han Myungoh was the one holding the knife. I had a rough idea of what happened. Then explosive messages were heard in my ears.

[A 7th grade demon has been hunted for the first time!]

[An impossible feat has been accomplished.]

[You have earned 8,000 coins.]

[Contribution: Kim Dokja, Han Myungoh]

Perhaps these messages were also shared with Han Myungoh. I only received a few coins because I didn't deal the finishing blow but…

I could see Han Myungoh dying with happiness at the messages. "Non-killing ideology? Stupid guy! What is killing in this burning world? There can't be a person like you! You know—"

Then Han Myungoh stopped. Now he knew what he had done.

[The 7th grade demon 'Dark Keeper' has been killed and the demon king 'Asmodeus' has noticed the murderer's presence.]

[The demon king 'Asmodeus' will chase the one who dealt the finishing blow until they are dead.]

[The demon king 'Asmodeus' has put a terrible curse on the person who dealt the final blow!]

[Final Blow: Han Myungoh]

"W-What? What is this message?" Han Myungoh cried out fearfully.

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' admires your wickedness.]

"Ah…didn't I tell you? I intentionally didn't kill it."

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' has recommended your scenario to Star Stream.]

Han Myungoh stared into the air like he had lost his soul. The curse of the demon king Asmodeus was the most terrible thing for a killer. I didn't know what it was but it was surely terrible. I looked back and saw Lee Gilyoung and Yoo Sangah looking this way with bemused expressions. I smiled as if nothing had happened.

"We'll open the rewards together."

After a while, we searched through the treasures and pulled out one each.

"I got this."

"I have this…"

Yoo Sangah and Lee Gilyoung found a small bracelet and old shield respectively.

[Magic Power Recovery Bracelet]

[Old Iron Shield]

They were both D-grade items but it was better than nothing. The Magic Power Recovery Bracelet was a useful item for everyone and the Old Iron Shield would be good for Lee Hyunsung. It was difficult to ignore the 'iron' in the name. This iron was much harder than Earth's iron.

Yoo Sangah spoke with slight disappointment. "It is less than I thought."

Less. Her words weren't wrong. It was too shameful to call this a 'treasure trove'. Yoo Joonghyuk. The guy who left yesterday had probably gone through this place. He knew he would be tired fighting the demon so he took a chance and stole the treasures. In the end, we were robbing a place that was already robbed.

"it is okay because the main thing is still left."

I looked at a black box in the centre of the warehouse. We didn't waste any more time and opened the box. The thing in the box was a stove. It was small enough to fit into a pocket and it was shameful to call it a stove.

[Magic Power Stove].

As expected, it was still here. This item was in fact the key item in this sub-scenario.

[Magic Power Stove can only be obtained once per person.]

Obviously, Yoo Joonghyuk had taken one so there were two Magic Power Stoves in total.

"…What is that thing?"

"Well, I think I know a bit about its purpose."

I purposely trembled, activated the stove with magic power and raised a dead ground rat's leg. It was funny since it didn't fit the size of a plate of food, but in five seconds, a remarkable change happened to the leg of the ground rat.

"Wow! A delicious smell!"

There was a sweet smell and the leg of the ground rat changed to a golden colour.

"Meat!" Lee Gilyoung cried out excitedly. Yoo Sangah asked urgently, "C-Can we eat this?"

"I'll try it first."

I grabbed the greasy hind leg and dug into the flesh. The juices ran from the flesh…I forgot to chew and closed my eyes. Tasting it was different from reading it in the book.

[A few constellations are drooling.]

[Constellations have sponsored you 100 coins.]

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' has swallowed his saliva.]

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is biting his nails.]

…….

The messages continuously popped up. Indeed, eating broadcasts were the best. Everyone was united in front of food.

"Eat it. I think it is okay."

The two people rushed towards the meat as soon as I spoke. They hadn't had a proper meal for three days so they would be quite hungry. Han Myungoh recovered and came over hesitantly, "D-Dokja-ssi…I-I went crazy for a second…"

"Eat. Don't worry about the other thing."

"T-Thank you!"

"You will become a ghost after eating."

"W-What…?"

Han Myungoh's complexion turned as white as death. I said it like a joke but Han Myungoh really would die. Asmodeus' pursuit was hard for even Yoo Joonghyuk to overcome.

We each took one leg and started to eat. We were eating meat together because we were hungry after everything that started. Humans couldn't help it. Everyone ate the meal in silence. Was it due to the light spreading gently from the Magic Power Stove? I was feeling a bit sentimental.

Killing something and eating it in order to live. This was the life of a human. It had been like this so far but I wondered why it felt so fresh. Suddenly, I looked up and met Yoo Sangah's eyes. Ha, Yoo Sangah came to her senses and suddenly cried out, "I'm pathetic."

"…Huh?"

"Dokja-ssi worked so hard and I am just eating like a pig… I was no help at all…"

"No, Yoo Sangah-ssi. That…"

"By the way, how does Dokja-ssi know all this? You know how to cook a beast and…"

"Ah, that…"

"Indeed! It must be because you read fantasy novels, right? Really, I didn't know the world was going to be like this. My silly self was just memorizing Spanish."

I felt somewhat strange when I heard Yoo Sangah say this. I opened my mouth to comfort her. "It is because Yoo Sangah-ssi studied foreign languages that you learned the language of the demon species."

Of course, it wasn't very helpful.

"I see… Thank you, Dokja-ssi…"

I smiled at Yoo Sangah and got up from where I was sitting. The party was immersed in eating again. I took a break and headed for the back of the party. In fact, the Magic Power Stove was important but my real purpose was a separate item. I looked closely at the 'black box' that contained the Magic Power Stove.

It was this. There was no doubt about it. Yoo Joonghyuk, who took the Magic Power Stove, probably didn't know about it. The real treasure of the warehouse was this 'black box'. In the original story, Yoo Joonghyuk only knew about this after the 6th round of regression.

Who was the first to discover this. Was it 'Heavenly Maid Hori?' Well, it was hard to remember. It wasn't accurate but it was probably something like this:

「"Over there. There are strange boxes in the early areas. If you put something in there…"」

At this time, I met Yoo Sangah's eyes and asked, "What is the box for?"

"Huh? Ah, this…" Yoo Sangah said as she looked at the box. There were unknown characters written on the box.

…Could she read them?

"Random…item box?"

Damn. This was why foreign language proficiency was important.

"Uh…that…um. So that is what it means."

I was a bit embarrassed. Yoo Sangah cried out, "Quickly use it, Dojka-ssi!"

"…Is it okay?"

Nod nod. Lee Gilyoung nodded vigorously.

"You don't need to worry about us. All the items obtained here are yours. That is obvious."

Yes, I was caught so let's do it quickly.

"Then I will use it well."

[A few constellations are nodding at your decision.]

I took the nucleus of the 7th grade demon from my pocket. I had cut it from the dead body of the dark keeper. In addition, I took out Broken Faith which had run out of durability. According to the original plot, the use of this box was simple.

「"Who knew? There would be a limited edition coin item."」

I placed the demon core and Broken Faith into the box.

「"Ha, you can't believe my words? Is it real? Put sub items in there and close the box!"」

In fact, I didn't know what would happen when I put in these two items. But I was certain that something huge would come out.

「"A top item will unconditionally come out!"」

A moment later, a dazzling light burst out from the closed box.

Chapter 24: Ep. 6 – Judgment Time, I

The limited random items box… According to the setting of Ways of Survival, this was a coin item which had been sold as a limited edition in a past 'scenario'.

[Ah, no, why is this thing here?] The alarmed Biryu shouted belatedly. [I-I-It was banned immediately after release!]

According to the original Ways of Survival, the setting of this item was quite complicated. This coin item had been released long before the 8612 Planetary scenarios began. It was a product which had been forcefully banned by the Star Stream Administration Bureau.

If sub-items were put in, it would 'unconditionally' spit out a top item. This would have a tremendous impact on the balance of the scenarios. Additionally, the price of one item box was a huge one million coins. The constellations had been angered by this ridiculous billing policy, so the stupid dokkaebi who invented this item got fired from the Administration Bureau.

[C-Constellations. It is like this… I don't know why it is here… H-Hihihit! Broadcast end!]

[#BI-7623 channel has closed temporarily.]

The delirious sounding Biryu closed the channel, and the voices of the constellations disappeared. I regretted not being able to see the reactions of the constellations, but it couldn't be helped. I looked down at the vibrating box. The random draw was about to start in earnest.

[A sword type item will be awarded for putting in the same type of items!]

[The random draw has started!]

The limited edition random item box randomly spat out items of a higher rank related to the item you put in. There was a chance for anything from a C-grade to an SSS-grade item to emerge. In the end, it was all up to chance.

[The offered items are related to a certain constellation!]

[The probability that an item associated with this constellation will appear is greatly increased.]

'…Eh?'

It was an unexpected message, but it didn't seem to be a disadvantage for me. Both my hands were sweating. I hadn't been so nervous when I bought a random chance item in an online game.

'Please let it be an A-rating'.

[A top-rated item has appeared!]

[The number of available random item boxes is 0.]

The box soon stopped trembling, and the faint light subsided. Then I looked around at Yoo Sangah and Lee Gilyoung, whose eyes were shining.

"Shall we open it?"

"Yes!"

We opened the box.

"W-Wow!" Lee Gilyoung was so surprised that he screamed.

By the way, it really was amazing. With a luxurious silver guard and a white blade… Its shape was somewhat similar to Broken Faith? I immediately checked the item information.

[Item Information]

Name: Unbroken Faith

Rating: Star Relic

Description: In the past, it was the sword of the hero 'Kaizenix', who led the Grusiad during the Great Demon Age. The great ether dominance of Kaizenix allowed him to create a 'Blade of Faith' that contained fire, darkness and divine power respectively.

As an additional option, it increases strength and physique level by 2.

I was speechless. No… was this real? It wasn't a simple alphabet rating but a star relic item?

"D-Dokja-ssi! Doesn't it look like a huge item?"

It really was a huge item.

In the world of Ways of Survival, the 'star relics' were the only items excluded from the ratings table. It wasn't just because they had a strong performance but because these items were special.

Every star relic contained the power of a living constellation. The difference in performance varied depending on whether the constellation was the hero of a certain world and how much awareness they had. Regardless, they contained the power of a constellation, so the relics had tremendous value.

Furthermore, it raised the level of my strength and physique by 2. When taking into account that A-grade items increased the total stats value by 1, this must be at least an S-grade item. Yoo Joonghyuk had yet to obtain an item like this.

I looked around at Yoo Sangah and Lee Gilyoung. "…Can I really have it?"

"Of course. It naturally belongs to Dokja-ssi," Yoo Sangah responded in advance to his repeated question. Lee Gilyoung also nodded eagerly. I looked at Han Myungoh, but he was just eating the leg of a ground rat with a stupid expression while muttering unknown things to himself. I thought he would insist on having the item… It was strange.

[You have acquired a star relic.]

[The owner of the star relic is curious about you.]

The message showed that the constellation existed somewhere. Later, I would open up Ways of Survival and look for it.

"Then we should go back. There are plenty of ground rats out there, so we can go back with just the Magic Power Stove."

"By the way, how do we get back?"

"It won't be a problem to leave with Gilyoung's power. Use Diverse Communication and…"

However, Lee Gilyoung's expression wasn't bright. "Hyung, I…"

"Huh?"

"There aren't any insects nearby."

Come to think of it, the insects around here had burst from the pressure when I was fighting the dark keeper. It was a problem I hadn't thought about. "There really isn't one? Some of them should still be alive. If we move for a bit and use the ability…"

There were so many insects in the world that I didn't have any sympathy for the few who died, but Lee Gilyoung still had a dark expression.

"Well, there is one I can actually call…" Lee Gilyoung closed his eyes and started concentrating.

"Dokja-ssi, isn't this a bit strange?"

Lee Gilyoung's eyes were gradually losing focus. Then blood flowed down from his nose.

"Gilyoung?"

All of a sudden, there was a loud vibration from above them. Dust started falling down. The vibration was coming from aboveground…

At this moment, goosebumps appeared on my skin.

"Gilyoung! Lee Gilyoung! Wake up!"

"Yeah… hyung?" Lee Gilyoung's eyes returned to normal.

"Gilyoung, stop the skill! Quickly!"

The surprised Lee Gilyoung stopped the skill, and the vibration subsided. I sighed with relief.

There were incredibly dangerous monsters running around aboveground. There were numerous high-rated monsters, including the 7th grade rhinoceros. Among these monsters was the insect king. It was obviously a type of insect just based on the name.

"You really…" I placed my hand on Lee Gilyoung's head and didn't say anything. Gilyoung was about to call an insect king from aboveground… Was he Fabre? We almost got buried here.

"For the time being, seal this skill. Don't use it unless I tell you to. Understood?"

"Yes…" Lee Gilyoung replied in a sad manner. Now there was no choice but to wait.

"We will get lost in the darkness. Let's wait a bit longer and move when small insects appear in the vicinity."

It was easy to enter but the Edge of Darkness was a very dangerous place. This was a place where someone could disappear for a day or two if a little mistake was made. Then Yoo Sangah raised her hand. "If it is just going back, I think I can fill in for Gilyoung."

"…How?" I was going to ask if she would converse with the Edge of Darkness but stopped because it seemed sarcastic. Yoo Sangah replied in a slightly uncertain tone, "I have a similar skill."

When I thought about it, I still didn't know Yoo Sangah's attribute and sponsor.

"What is the skill?"

"That, it is a complicated skill to untangle…"

Untangle?

"…Excuse me, can I ask what Yoo Sangah-ssi's attribute is?"

Yoo Sangah wasn't a character in the novel, so I didn't know her attribute. It was like with Lee Gilyoung and Han Myungoh.

"Uh, that…"

Yoo Sangah made a difficult expression. It wouldn't have been so frustrating if I could use Character List on Yoo Sangah. I tried to use Character List once again as a test.

[The exclusive skill, Character List is activated.]

[This person isn't registered in 'Character List'.]

Indeed… but there was one more message.

[Currently collecting information about the corresponding figure.]

'…Eh?'

It was a message that never existed before. Come to think of it, I heard a system message when Yoo Sangah used the 'Interpreter' skill. It wasn't something that was originally heard. Was it possible for the Character List to be updated after some time? Perhaps…

I organized my thoughts and decided to let Yoo Sangah go. "Forget that I asked. By the way, nice work. In the future, don't let other people know about your personal attribute."

"That's not it! I trust Dojka-ssi…!" Well, Yoo Sangah's appearance said otherwise.

At the moment, I got an idea. "Can Yoo Sangah tell me about the nature of your sponsor?"

Yoo Sangah bowed her head. "I'm sorry."

The words barely escaped from her trembling lips. Based on this level, it was possible that she made some type of promise in the contract with her sponsor. Perhaps there was a life constraint in respect with the spilling of information. I didn't know what sponsor they were, but it seemed they had decided to raise Yoo Sangah in earnest.

"It is okay. I understand."

"Thank you, really…"

There was no need to thank me. The fact that she couldn't tell me about her sponsor… made my heart tense. It was the desire of a reader who wanted to fill the space between empty lines.

"Then try using your skill."

Soon, a faintly shining thread emerged from Yoo Sangah's fingertips and started to stretch out. "In fact, I tied up a 'thread' when I got kidnapped."

One branch of the thread was connected to me and the other one was connected outside. Maybe it was bound to Lee Hyunsung or Jung Heewon.

"Let's go."

There was no reason for Yoo Sangah to have such a skill from the beginning. This was definitely the stigma provided by her sponsor. By the way, it was a 'thread' to escape the labyrinth. This… Somehow, I thought it was a constellation I knew.

[#BI-7623 channel is open.]

I started hearing messages from the constellations again.

[A number of constellations have put a claim on the channel's transmission system!]

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is curious about what came out of the random item box.]

Ah, they haven't seen it? What a pity.

[Damn! That bastard messed with my channel… Hahaha! Did you stay well while I was away?]

The nice… No, a familiar voice was heard.

Bihyung.

[…You did such great things while I was gone?]

'Was it because of me that you couldn't come back?'

[It… Yes, it isn't unrelated. I got a warning from the Administration Bureau because the advertisement went on for too long.]

Currently, Bihyung's voice was only audible to me. It was the 'dokkaebi communication' that only the dokkaebi could use. Of course, it was an obvious violation of the rules to allow me to use it.

[I have decided not to care about small things now. And I can go back and forth to the Administration Bureau. Rather… how do you know about the 'Random Box'?]

'Just, I found it by chance'.

[Dammit. There are still remnants of the black history left. Why is that box there…]

'Black history?'

[······.]

'…Wait. Surely that absurd coin item wasn't planned by you?'

As a reader of Ways of Survival, I didn't know this.

[Damn! If I wasn't greedy at that time…]

Bihyung's grumbling was cut off by Jung Heewon's cry of admiration, "Wow, it really is delicious! What a surprise."

10 minutes ago, we safely returned to the rest of the party thanks to Yoo Sangah's guidance. Fortunately, Jung Heewon and Lee Hyunsung had maintained the boundary until we came back.

"You will recover a bit after eating."

"Well, I really think that my body is getting better." Jung Heewon seemed much better as she swung her shoulders in a test. The meat of the underground species actually contained detoxification components.

"Did you get a lot of things in there? In addition to the Magic Power Stove…"

I looked at Lee Hyunsung and said, "I got a few things."

Lee Hyunsung put on and removed the Old Steel Shield, which he received from me, repeatedly several times. Now, he was polishing the surface again and again. It was like someone with a new car.

[The character 'Lee Hyunsung' feels a faint loyalty to you.]

Jung Heewon seemed envious of the scene and asked, "Is there anything I can use?"

"No."

"What is that blade?"

"It is mine."

"…Will you distribute the meat to the people?"

"If they have coins."

"But… you are really stingy. Kim Dokja."

"Let's just say that I have a strong sense of survival."

As we were passing around a piece of cooked ground rat, the tunnel ended. The surroundings suddenly brightened, and people started to be seen. However, the atmosphere was weird. What was this urgent and bustling mood?

[There are 20 minutes left until the paid settlement.]

[Prepare the survival fee.]

I belatedly noticed the time. That's right. It was already that time. It was amazing that the word 'paid' could sound so scary.

"Coins, coins, please!"

"I don't have enough coins! Please, a few coins…"

100 coins wouldn't be a problem if they faithfully participated in the scenario, but such humans were rare.

"I'll give you one million won—no, ten million won! Who will sell 100 coins?"

The price of the coins was soaring. It was funny. There was a ridiculous premium on money that had no value until the beginning of the destruction. There were people who smiled as they watched from afar. These guys already had enough coins. It was Cheon Inho and the Cheoldoo Group. A few women flocked toward the gang members and cried out, "Y-You said you would give me 100 coins before!"

"Hrmm, is that so? I don't remember."

"What…?"

"I will think again if you will let me put it in one more time. How about it?"

Jung Heewon pulled out her blade and stared at them. "Those sons of bitches…"

[The attribute of character 'Jung Heewon' is about to blossom.]

The time had come for Jung Heewon. It wasn't bad if her attribute blossomed now… Yet she needed some patience in order to get the 'attribute' I was thinking about. Then a system message emerged.

[After a while, the survival settlement will begin.]

"S-Save me! Please, help!"

The expressions of the party changed. Lee Hyunsung bowed his head sadly, and Jung Heewon bit her lip while holding her blade. Everyone knew what the price of the 'paid settlement' was. There was no one here who hadn't experienced it. Then Yoo Sangah looked at me. "…Dokja-ssi."

"Yes."

In this world, coins were power. A person with coins could obtain good items or good stats. Coins were everything.

[Several constellations with scenario recommendations have been added to the channel.]

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' is watching your choice.]

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is watching your choice.]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is watching your choice.]

…And I was currently the person with the highest number of coins in the station.

Chapter 25: Ep. 6 – Judgment Time, II

Just as I was about to open my mouth to speak, I heard Cheon Inho's voice.

"Oh, Dokja-ssi! You came just in time." Cheon Inho smiled as he found us. I had a foreboding feeling as Cheon Inho spoke in a loud voice, "Dokja-ssi has a lot of coins! How much? You are probably the richest one among us, right?"

[The character 'Cheon Inho' has activated the 'Incite Lv. 2' skill.

The crowd looked my way.

"C-Coins?"

"Who has a lot of coins?"

It didn't take long for all eyes to turn to me. Cheon Inho… He was a really great guy.

"A-are you Dokja-ssi?"

"Please save me!"

People panted heavily as they approached and grabbed my legs. The number of people flocking toward me was estimated to be at least 20. If I gave all these people coins, I would lose 2,000 coins. Yet if I didn't give them coins, I would become a big villain of Geumho Station.

[Your understanding of the character 'Cheon Inho' has increased.]

"Haha, Dokja-ssi. I don't have the coins to help all these poor people, but… isn't Dokja-ssi different? Will you just wait and watch?"

I sighed quietly, having seen this trick once or twice before.

[Constellations of the absolute good system have defined Cheon Inho as 'wicked'.]

I had enough of putting up with him.

"S-Save me!"

"Please save me!"

The people burst into tears with the most pitiful expression in the world.

[Hahaha! This story is becoming fun. For reference, there are 10 minutes left!] Bihyung spoke in a voice that was full of joy, and the party looked at me with strange expressions.

I let out a short sigh and slowly closed my eyes before opening them again. "I see. You want coins?"

Then I laughed. "Why should I?"

I looked around at the people. The first scenario was original sin. Thus, none of the people here were innocent. That made it more disgusting. Those who trampled on someone else to survive couldn't even bear responsibility for their own lives.

"W-Why?"

"You have a lot of coins! Can't you give us a few?"

In the midst of the confusion, Cheon Inho burst out laughing. "I expected this from Dokja-ssi."

"…"

"From the very first moment Dokja-ssi showed up here. Didn't you sell food for coins? If you didn't make them buy food at that time, do you know how many people can survive now?"

"Yes! He is right!"

"Shit! Give me back my coins!"

Suddenly the atmosphere was flowing against me. Maybe this was what Cheon Inho wanted.

"Just a minute everyone! Your actions right now…!"

"Dokja-ssi isn't such a person!"

Yoo Sangah and Lee Hyunsung tried to diffuse the crowd, but the people had already lost their sense of reason. Then Cheon Inho drove in the last wedge. "Dokja-ssi. I will give you one last chance. Give the coins back to the people."

"What if I don't want to?"

"Then the worst will happen."

The crowd of 20 people started to approach step by step.

"T-This…come! Give me your coins!"

Nevertheless, no one attacked first. Eventually, a member of the Cheoldoo Group came forward. "You scum! What are you doing? Kill him! Why are you hesitating when you can snatch the coins after killing him?"

The man who shouted had a very sturdy physique. I triggered Character List and confirmed his information.

[Character Summary]

Name: Han Minsung

Exclusive Attributes: Bully (General)

Overall Stats: Physique Lv. 8, Strength Lv. 8, Agility Lv. 8, Magic Power Lv. 2.

His abilities made sense for a bully, but the level of his stats was not natural… This guy had done 'it'. Yes, he acted rashly because he believed in his stats.

"Kill that bastard!"

The metal pipe in his hand moved. It was a steel pipe containing Lv. 8 strength. The former 'Kim Dokja' might be scared by this threat but… For the current me, it was just ridiculous. I cut off the man's arm, and it rolled across the ground with the iron pipe.

"Kuaaack!"

The blood covered Unbroken Faith emitted a white light as I swept a glance over the quiet people.

"U-Uh…" Everyone turned pale when they saw a Cheoldoo Group member being overwhelmed with one blow. Now that I had shown off a bit, it was time to start.

"Pathetic… Do you really believe this situation is because of me?" I looked left and right at each face in the crowd. On the other side, Cheon Inho was looking confused. "In fact, you know very well that it isn't me."

Like sick goldfish, the mouths of the crowd dropped open. I spoke like I was disseminating food to them, "You guys are doing this because you are scared. In fact, even though you knew what was wrong and are in a crisis, you are trembling in fear because of them."

Cheon Inho laughed, "Haha, look at this, Dokja-ssi! What are you saying…?"

"It is because they are stronger than you! Their overall stats are higher than you and they have a lot of coins! But everyone, you know what?" I asked as I took a step toward the crowd. The entire crowd retreated like surprised goldfish. However, they were already in my fish tank. "Why are they stronger than you?" I took one more step. "More than anything, why do they have more coins than you? Is it because they are gangsters? Perhaps."

[The characters around you are shaken.]

Even in fear, there were some emotions that could be conveyed with certainty. Questions passed over their faces.

"C-Cheon Inho-ssi, how many coins do you have…?"

"Haha, don't you know? Well, I have sold a few and—"

"Do you think it is possible to get that many stats with just that? Really?"

Cheon Inho closed his mouth. I turned from left to right, looking at the crowd's faces one by one.

"When I came to Geumho Station a few days ago, there were 87 people here."

"…"

"How many people are left now? I don't think there is more than 50 people. Do you know why?"

"T-They went out as scouts and the monsters—"

"Monsters? Do you still believe that?"

"T-Then…"

"You fools. Think about it with your brains. Did those people really die because of the monsters? Then why haven't any of the Cheoldoo Group bastards died?" The area became quiet in an instant. "Why is it that they come back stronger?"

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' nods at your reasoning.]

"D-Don't tell me—" The people turned to look at Cheon Inho. The Cheoldoo Group members hesitated. Now it was my turn to drive in the wedge. "They said it before. If you kill me, you will get coins."

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' pulls his hair in excitement.]

"How do they know that killing a person will give coins?"

"Y-You… Inho-ssi! Don't tell me?"

"Shut up! I'm being framed!" As Cheon Inho moved back, the men of the Cheoldoo Group pulled out their weapons. The frightened people were weeping.

[Hahaha! There are 7 minutes left!]

I stepped forward toward the people. "If you have any last self-respect left, fight with your own hands."

The Blade of Faith cried out violently as anger filled the eyes of the people.

"At least get back what was taken from you."

As I waited, the people of the Cheoldoo Group rushed toward me simultaneously. I also ran toward them.

"Now this world is such a place."

The white light moved, and people screamed. Then someone shouted, "Yes, shit!"

"Sons of a bitches!"

The people started to move. All in all, they were people who had already killed.

"M-Mother!"

"Dayoung, come here! Do this! Just like what you did on the subway with Mother!"

There were children and mothers.

"This fuckin' bastards!"

There was also a middle-aged Indian man.

"These scum!"

Alas, they weren't a match for those in the Cheoldoo Group. There were a lot of people left in the Cheoldoo Group, and their fighting power was overwhelming due to all the coins they had obtained through human hunting. Or at least, this would be the case if it wasn't for me.

The arms and legs of the Cheoldoo Group members, who charged at me, flew off. The eerie sensation of cutting off a person's limbs filled my hands. The incapacitated Cheoldoo Group members looked up at me.

"S-Spare me…"

At that moment, someone moved ahead of me and stuck their blade into the fallen Cheoldoo Group members.

*

"I said I would kill him."

[All evolution conditions of the attribute 'Crouching Figure' have been met.]

[The attribute of character 'Jung Heewon' is blossoming.]

A dazzling brilliance was rising from her body. I nodded. It was now time.

[The attribute of 'Jung Heewon' has blossomed to 'Judge of Destruction (Hero).]

A judge to wipe out evil—the best of the three 'judge' attributes woke up from a crouching figure.

[You have contributed greatly to the attribute of 'Crouching Figure!']

[The character 'Jung Heewon' won't hesitate to be your sword in the future.]

"Rest for now," Jung Heewon said. Her eyes were pale blue as she declared, "These guys are my share."

[The character 'Jung Heewon' has activated the exclusive skill 'Judgment Time'.]

[The Absolute Good constellations have agreed to the use of this skill.]

['Judgment Time' has been activated.]

Jung Heewon had a bloody aura around her body as her blade painted an eerie trail. It was a light and precise kendo that moved between the Cheoldoo Group members. Blood spurted everywhere.

"Kuaaaak!"

It was a scene of a complete massacre. Of course, Jung Heewon wasn't the only one fighting. Yoo Sangah, Lee Hyunsung, and even Lee Gilyoung were protecting their respective positions, but no one was as active as Jung

Heewon. Like a person who was born for murder, Jung Heewon killed and killed. If I cut off a man's arm, Jung Heewon stabbed his heart. If I cut off his leg, Jung Heewon cut his throat. She took care of all those I left behind. Jung Heewon moved without hesitation, like a person who had been longing for this moment.

"…"

The area was filled with blood. The only person left from the Cheoldoo Group was Cheon Inho. However, many parts of his body had been injured by the citizens. Jung Heewon looked at me, and I nodded.

Cheon Inho laughed as he looked at me. "Hu, huhu… Y-You…"

He never stopped speaking, but Jung Heewon appeared behind Cheon Inho and sliced through him from top to bottom.

[All constellations in the channel feel intense joy.]

Finally, everyone stopped moving. The fight was over. However, they couldn't feel it. The times when they ate grilled meat, felt the meaning of life, joked while walking, and enjoyed moments of peace all seemed like a lie. This damn scenario…

Yoo Sangah was crying. Lee Gilyoung closed his eyes. Lee Hyunsung bit his lips so hard he was bleeding. Jung Heewon exhausted her physical strength and was sitting in a pool of blood.

Yes, this was the truth of the world.

[The survival value will be settled.]

There was the sound of popping all around us. Those who had coins survived, while those who failed to get coins were now dead. No one was able to save each other. I said to the people, "Wake up, everybody."

Even if I raised my head, the sky couldn't be seen. I stared at the unseen sky for a while, resisting some great fate. The noisy constellations had no answer this time.

"This scenario has just begun."

While everyone was in deep thought, I was thinking about the next scenario alone. My mind was calm as the pages flipped one after another. I had obtained everything I needed from Geumho Station. The next stage was Chungmuro.

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* Official novel illustration (canonical)

싱숑 장편소설

전지적 독자 시점

Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint

PART 1

02

비채

*

Chapter 26: Ep. 6 – Judgment Time, III

The following morning, there were a few changes to Geumho Station. First of all, Han Myungoh had disappeared. He hid once the fighting started and disappeared after it ended. I didn't know if he was hiding somewhere in the station or was moving to the next station.

"Let's not worry about him now. I didn't like him from the beginning. In addition, he isn't the only one who disappeared." It was as Jung Heewon said. After the fight yesterday, the number of people remaining in Geumho Station was almost nonexistent. It wasn't that there were few survivors. Rather, more people survived compared to the original plot. However, most of those who survived left the station last night. Perhaps they had their own reasons.

"…Will the remaining people be okay?" Yoo Sangah asked as she looked at the survivors. Me, Yoo Sangah, Lee Hyunsung, Lee Gilyoung and Jung Heewon. Apart from us five, there were only five people left in this station.

Jung Heewon spoke first, "Hey everyone. Are you coming with us?"

The casual words caused a stir among the people. The representative was a young woman holding a child's hand. "…We will go separately. We have some coins left."

I honestly admired that the mother and child survived the bloody fight. If she had that much strength, they might be able to survive without going with us. Jung Heewon nodded, "Yes. I wish you luck."

Once Jung Heewon turned around, relief appeared on the people's faces. In fact, this response wasn't strange. Certainly, yesterday's situation was a bit shocking. It was understandable. One refused to give out charity while another one brutally killed people, even if there was a reason. To them, Jung Heewon might not be much different from the Cheoldoo Group. I touched Lee Hyunsung, who was making a stupefied expression next to me.

"Lee Hyunsung-ssi?"

"Ah, yes!"

Lee Hyunsung, who was staring at Jung Heewon with a blank expression, looked at me with surprise. I think I knew what he was thinking. He wondered if she was the woman struck by madness yesterday and killed all the Cheoldoo Group.

"Are the preparations finished?"

Lee Hyunsung replied, "Yep! It is a bit rough but it is finished. There are plastic bottles to be used as water containers, goods to protect from the cold and emergency supplies…"

Indeed, a soldier was useful in situations like this.

"…This is all we have. If you need anything else…"

There was nothing else I needed…I wanted to say but I suddenly thought about something. "Oh, can you find me any portable charger?"

"You are talking about a powerbank? Why…?"

It was natural to wonder. A smartphone was useless because no signal was available. I replied roughly, "I have a place to use it."

Lee Hyunsung said he would look for it and started to search through the things left behind by the Cheoldoo Group. Lee Gilyoung and Yoo Sangah also said they would help. Jung Heewon looked at me and asked, "Are we going now?"

"We're going."

She asked naturally, as if there was no question that we would go together. This was Jung Heewon. It was welcome from my viewpoint. The 'Judge of Destruction' was a talented person who even Yoo Joonghyuk would pay attention to.

"I have many questions."

"Not now."

"Ah really, you are an iron wall." Jung Heewon lightly punched me and laughed.

[You have received 1,500 coins from the character 'Jung Heewon'.]

"This…?"

"I am dividing it. I feel too sorry to eat it all alone. I will share it with other people."

I understood what she was saying. Yesterday, Jung Heewon alone killed most of the Cheoldoo Group members. In other words, she obtained most of their coins. By the way… I was a bit nervous about this.

"You don't need to do this."

Jung Heewon didn't know. In fact, I had a lot more coins.

"I'm not Dokja-ssi, you know?" She punched my arms a few more times before walking towards the tunnel with her backpack. "Finish this off. I'll go ahead and make some arrangements."

"Don't go too far ahead. There are sections too dangerous to go alone."

Jung Heewon waved her hands as if not to worry while wandering away.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' likes your companionship.]

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' smiles slyly.]

I watched the messages in the air blankly and said, 'Did you make a lot yesterday? It must be good'.

There was no answer. I spoke once again, 'Don't keep pretending and tell me. I know you are watching'.

[Ah, hahaha… you caught me?]

It was Bihyung's voice.

'How much did you earn?'

[…T-That. Um.]

I stared silently.

[Sigh, right. How did you know again…? I just can't get over it. Take this.]

[Dokkaebi 'Bihyung' has given you 4,500 coins.]

I thought so. This damn dokkaebi.

[…The constellations didn't use the sponsorship system but sent it directly to me instead. I don't know why. I'll give it to you later. Ah, there are these messages as well.]

Messages suddenly popped up.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is satisfied with your scenario.]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is convinced of your judgment.]

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' is satisfied with your plan.]

…….

This was why I didn't get the support messages yesterday. I had been curious because such a great thing happened and I received less income than I thought.

[Coins Possessed: 23,050 C]

I invested a lot of the coins I obtained last time into stats and now I had a lot of coins again. It was once again time to improve my stats. Then let's do it moderately. I couldn't open the attributes window so I had to remember the exact level of my stats.

First…physique was important.

[1,200 coins have been invested in physique.]

[Physique Lv. 12 -> Physique Lv. 15]

[The durability of your body has greatly increased!]

I had no separate passive attack skill so I also raised my strength.

[1,600 coins have been invested in strength.]

[Strength Lv. 11 -> Strength Lv. 15]

[A stronger force will come from your muscles!]

For agility, it was enough to be able to evade.

[400 coins have been invested in agility.]

[Agility Lv. 10 -> Agility Lv. 11]

[Now you can move a bit faster.]

I needed to maintain Purest Sword Force, so magic power had to be at least level 10.

[1,200 coins have been invested in magic power.]

[Magic Power Lv. 6 -> Magic Power Lv. 10]

[A mysterious energy lives in your soul.]

I could invest more than this but I purposefully didn't. Once I arrived in Chungmuro, there was another place where I would have to use a lot of coins.

Besides, I had spent 4,400 coins just now. It was both easy and difficult to use. If I had started with decent stats, I wouldn't have had to spend so many coins. Someone starting with level 1 physique… in Ways of Survival, even Lee Gilyoung's stamina would be higher than that.

[By the way, I forgot…two more scenarios are recommended. You are really great. It seems that I will soon be able to upgrade my channel level.]

'I see'.

I couldn't get the support of a sponsor like other incarnations, so I needed to collect more coins. The reason why I have yet to see the effect of contracting with Bihyung was because his channel was small. The 'minor' constellations weren't enough. In order to gather more coins, it would take more constellations to configure the channel.

Once I went to Chungmuro, the environment would soon be ready.

"If everybody is ready, we will leave. You aren't missing anything?"

My companions gathered together and nodded. Looking at their nervous faces, all of them seemed to have been enlightened by yesterday. Finally, the journey to Chungmuro began.

We had crossed half the railroad lines when the system message popped up.

[The second main scenario is enabled.]

[Main Scenario #2 – Meeting]

Category: Main

Difficulty: E

Clear Conditions: Cross the tunnel and meet the survivors in the first main base.

Time Limit: None

Compensation: 500 coins

Failure: ???

The message made me realize that it was really starting. Unlike the first main scenario, the second main scenario had a 'main base'. Jung Heewon asked, "The main base? Where is that?"

An answer wasn't required. Another message immediately appeared.

[The next main base is 'Chungmuro'.]

"Is it Chungmuro? It is only three more stops…"

It was originally like that. Then ground rats appeared. There were around 30 ground rats. Jung Heewon stiffened and muttered, "…We have to go three stops through this."

It was Lee Hyunsung who came forward. "I'll take the vanguard."

Thanks to the support of his sponsor, Lee Hyunsung's total stats were now 37. He had earned less coins than me but he was chasing me…this was the advantage of starting with high stats. If I knew this, I would've done regular push-ups.

"I'll take the rear, hyung."

Lee Gilyoung's total stats were still low but he was able to use Diverse Communication more flexibly through steady skill training.

"Please leave it to me."

Yoo Sangah made a thread with magic power to block the movements of the ground rats. Her attack ability was low but her overall stats were similar to Jung Heewon.

"…Isn't it just a lot of numbers?"

Finally, there was no need to talk about Jung Heewon. Compared to Lee Hyunsung, her total stats were low but her skills were sufficient. There was the exclusive skill 'Judgment Time' that belonged to the 'Judge of Destruction'. As long as the opponent in front of her was 'wicked' according to the Absolute Good constellations, Jung Heewon wouldn't lose.

The last ground rat fell down. Lee Hyunsung held the shield by his side and started sweating.

"Sigh…this seems to be enough."

In fact, this shouldn't have been cleared so easily. No matter how simple the pattern of the ground rats was, fighting 30 of them was tough. I wouldn't be able to annihilate them myself without activating Bookmark. The party had become stronger.

We advanced further through the tunnel. Finally, a new platform appeared in front of me.

"Yaksu Station. By the way…there is nobody? No, that's not it."

Yaksu Station was filled with dead bodies and ground rat corpses. Based on the injuries, some of the people were killed by Yoo Joonghyuk, not the ground rats.

"Keep going. There are two stops left."

We continued to advance. Anyway, the distance from Yaksu to Dongguk University was less than 1 km in a straight line. Once we arrived at the entrance of Dongguk University Station, we encountered another group of ground rats and repelled them. We only moved a total of 2 km along a simple path, but the fighting was so tough that the party was exhausted.

"We will take a break here."

"Sigh…there is one stop left. We should just go there and relax…"

"Nobody knows if we can rest or not once we arrive there."

Everyone was silent at my words. Certainly, monsters weren't the only dangers things in this world. I looked around for a moment and said, "It seems that the people in this station moved quickly. Some basic necessities might remain."

"Ah right. Then…"

After hearing 'basic necessities,' Yoo Sangah gently raised her hand. Yoo Sangah looked at Jung Heewon and their eyes met. No words were exchanged but both of them nodded at the same time. Jung Heewon saw my look and asked me, "What is it? Does Dokja-ssi want to know?"

Yoo Sangah paled. "…Heewon-ssi?"

"Ahaha, I'm just joking. Of course, I won't tell anyone."

…A secret only between women. It would be strange if I didn't know what they were talking about. Human physiology didn't stop even in a world like this. Lee Hyunsung also opened his mouth, "Ah, then I will go to the bathroom."

I was surprised for a moment but there was no reason not to use well-built facilities. This was why the subway was convenient.

"I'll go with you." It was Lee Gilyoung. The two people walked side by side. I looked at their rear view and thought they looked like affectionate brothers with a large age difference.

Yoo Sangah asked me, "Will Dokja-ssi be alone?"

"I will go above ground for a bit."

"Huh? There will be poisonous fog if you go out…will it be okay?"

"I'm only going for a bit."

Jung Heewon narrowed her eyes at my words. "…Something is suspicious. Dokja-ssi, are you going to eat something good alone?"

I looked at Jung Heewon for a moment. "It is a man's secret."

After a while, I stood in front of Exit 6 of Dongdae Station. According to the information I read beforehand, this place was surely…

[You have been exposed to a poisonous fog.]

The effect of the poisonous rhinos was still visible. This time I didn't buy the Ellain Monkey's Lungs so I had to work quickly. I jumped up the escalator to the east while holding my breath. Not long after that, a bronze coloured shining statue appeared.

[A constellation wearing a straw mat is filled with expectations at your actions.]

The statue was based on the appearance of a monk who lived in the mid-Joseon Dynasty. I felt an unknown nobility coming from the face of the monk holding a bamboo stick. I confirmed the name written vertically under the statue.

Yujeong Samyeongdang[1]

Okay, good. There were no signs of anyone… I stood in front of the statue, holding my hands together.

[A constellation wearing a straw mat is delighted with your actions.]

[100 coins have been sponsored.]

I didn't hesitate to use Purest Sword Force to activate the Blade of Faith.

[A constellation wearing a straw mat is puzzled by your actions.]

Then I struck the statue of Samyeongdang.

[A constellation wearing a straw mat is appalled by your actions.]

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[1] **Yujeong Samyeongdang** is a Korean Buddhist monk, sometimes identified by his pen name, Song-un. A leader of Seosan's army of monks in 1592 – 1598. Wiki.

* Official novel cover (canonical)

Chapter 27: Ep. 6 – Judgment Time, IV

A few minutes later, I once again entered Dongguk University Station and ate a ground rat. It was in order to heal the skin contaminated by the poisonous fog. It took a little time but the contamination could be recovered by eating the meat of an underground species.

[…Hey! Are you crazy? What did you do just now?] I was eating when I heard Bihyung's voice furiously berating me.

'Shut up'.

[No, this isn't an issue you can dismiss. You destroyed a constellation's idol! Do you want to see my channel fail? Once the 'Bald General of Justice' begins to talk…]

The idol of a constellation. Every world had their own constellations, South Korea as well. By the way, Bihyung said it was the 'Bald General of Justice'. He was a great person in South Korea but…

Actually, I wasn't the type of person to say that.

[A constellation wearing a straw mat is furious at your atrocious actions.]

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is laughing.]

There was a difference in the degree of all idols, but they had the power of a constellation sealed in them. If I released the seal of the idol in the right way, I could gain a certain amount of power, such as an item or a skill that the constellation used in their lifetime. However, 'unlocking the seal' took a long time and I wasn't sure if I could get the skill I wanted.

I looked at Ways of Survival on my smartphone.

「"But if it is sealed in the bronze statue of Samyeongdang, how did you get the skill?"

"There is a saying that if you meet Buddha, kill Buddha."

"What? Don't tell me…"

"Haha, I was just trying it out… but it is true. All the statues aren't just for worship."

"Hey! This jerk, you should watch your mouth. You might be cursed by the constellation."」

At the last gateway to enter Chungmuro, the 'skill' of Samyeongdang was essential and the most surefire way to get the skill was to destroy the idol. Of course, I could buy something similar from the Dokkaebi Bag but… the more coins I saved, the better.

"Then did you resolve the 'man's secret' well?"

I quickly turned off my smartphone screen. My companions, including Jung Heewon, had gathered.

"Yes. And I have something for you."

I pulled out the items I gained from the idol. As luck would have it, the Samyeongdang idol contained items and skills.

[Samyeongdang's Beads]

[Samyeongdang's Straw Mat]

Rags and old beads. There were questions in the eyes of everyone present. I knew what they were thinking. However, I also knew this: In this world, 'old' was more likely to be 'good'.

"They seem like good items because they are souvenirs of a great person."

"Great person?"

"Do you know Samyeongdang?"

[A constellation wearing a straw mat has paused at your actions.]

Jung Heewon asked with a blank expression, "…Who is that?"

[A constellation wearing a straw mat wishes to appear before character 'Jung Heewon'.]

"Ah! I know!" Fortunately, someone knew. Needless to say, it was Yoo Sangah. "I remember seeing it when I was studying Korean history! Isn't he a monk from the Joseon Dynasty?"

"Yes, that's right."

"When the Korean military was struggling to defend against the Japanese invasion…he fought in the Nowongpyeong battle and Wukwandong battle!"

As expected from Yoo Sangah. I also studied Korean history but I didn't know this.

[A constellation wearing a straw mat is touched by character 'Yoo Sangah'.]

I nodded and said, "Anyway, these items have his strength."

"…Really?"

"Wow, it is real!"

Jung Heewon and Lee Hyunsung were surprised when they confirmed the item information.

"Still, how did Dokja-ssi know to get this?"

"Just, I put my hands together in front of the Samyeongdang statue and…they fell from the sky."

"Huh? No way…"

I thought it was ridiculous but there was a reason people said such ridiculous words. I put on a mock solemn expression as I watched the party. "I think… it was sent by Samyeongdang for South Korea."

"Ah…"

Their 'ah' were filled with many meanings. I ignored them and kept talking. It wasn't like I was asking for them to listen.

"He might've left his belongings to save the country, just like during the Japanese invasion of South Korea. Anyway, now South Korea is a country undergoing turmoil."

[A constellation wearing a straw mat is moved by your words.]

In times of turmoil, scammers always gained power.

"…In this strange world, it isn't weird if something like this happens. Maybe Samyeongdang is one of the 'constellations'. Isn't that right?"

Surprisingly, Yoo Sangah was the first to be convinced. Maybe she didn't want me to be embarrassed. The funny thing was that once Yoo Sangah agreed, Lee Hyunsung was immediately convinced.

"Indeed, Samyeongdang…"

Lee Hyunsung grew up with patriotism for a long time and looked like he was reminiscing on the principle of military service. Lee Gilyoung also seemed convinced. It was only Jung Heewon who was staring at me like it was nonsense.

[A constellation wearing a straw mat likes your revealing words.]

[The constellation 'Bald General of Justice' forgives your sins.]

Bihyung looked at the sky with an 'Is this okay?' expression before looking dumbfounded. The power of a constellation was directly linked to their fame. Thus, the constellations loved it when their stories were spread this way. Where was a constellation that hated being praised?

"I will give Samyeongdang's Beads to Yoo Sangah since you know him well."

"Really? Can I accept it?"

"I think Samyeongdang will be delighted if Yoo Sangah uses it."

In fact, the performance of Samyeongdang's Beads wasn't good compared to what the sponsor used it for. It wasn't a sponsor's star relic so maybe the fact that Samyeongdang wasn't a world-recognized figure had an effect. It was still a B class item so it had a secondary option of boosting magic power to increase magic power recovery.

Jung Heewon watched Yoo Sangah like she was envious and said, "Yoo Sangah knows a lot of things. I didn't know about Samyeongdang because I didn't do very well at school."

"Ah…that…that."

"I'm joking, joking. Don't make such an expression."

I spoke to the sulky Jung Heewon, "I also have something for Jung Heewon-ssi."

"For me? Is it that straw mat?"

"Yes."

"It's okay. No matter how urgent, I don't want to wear such a thing."

"…Just try it. You won't regret it."

Jung Heewon hesitated for a moment before throwing on the straw mat. She was trying to be fashionable but she just looked like a beggar.

[A constellation who likes companionship condemns your actions.]

[A constellation who praises friendship likes your actions.]

It would be different if the star relic 'Samyeongdang's Bamboo Stick and Straw Sandals' came out, but the other two items weren't necessary for me right now. Jung Heewon saw her reflection on the screen door of the subway and made a slightly complicated expression.

"It is hard to explain but…I suddenly feel like I can harness the power of justice."

Samyeongdang's Straw Mat was an item that enhances the justice and willpower of the wearer. I didn't need it but it was a pretty good item for Jung Heewon.

"You said Samyeongdang? I feel sorry for some reason. I should study harder."

[The constellation 'Bald General of Justice' is happy at this situation.]

[100 coins have been sponsored.]

I jokingly said, "Then let's put our hands together and pray."

* * *

It was a joke but Jung Heewon really went to pray.

Jung Heewon was contaminated by the poisonous fog and spoke while eating a ground rat. "By the way, who broke it? Surely it wasn't Dokja-ssi?"

"…"

"…Dokja-ssi?"

"Be prepared. We will be at Chungmuro soon."

I looked at the dark tunnel. It had been 20 minutes since Lee Gilyoung used Diverse Communication, allowing us to safely move forward. Considering the fact that Dongguk University to Chungmuro was 1 km in a straight line, it was time for 'that' to appear.

[A new sub-scenario has arrived!]

Indeed, as soon as I thought about it.

"Everybody step back."

[Sub Scenario – Phantom Prison]

Category: Sub

Difficulty: D~F

Clear Conditions: Escape from Phantom Prison within the time limit.

Time Limit: 1 hour

Compensation: 300 coins

Failure: ???

[Sub-scenario – Phantom Prison has begun!]

Perhaps Yoo Joonghyuk had suffered quite a bit in this scenario. This scenario was one of the most painful traps for a regressor. Yoo Sangah asked, "Phantom Prison? What is this?"

She would know without asking.

"It is coming. Everyone, please keep your mind straight."

Before my words were over, a haze overcame me. The fog that instantly occupied the tunnel blocked my field of view. The party members in the immediate vicinity couldn't be seen. When I looked around, I could only see a distorted scenery, as if I was on drugs.

"Uwah…I feel bad!" Jung Heewon screamed. Maybe Jung Heewon was seeing something different from what I saw now.

「Dokja.」

The voice I didn't want to hear. That forgotten voice was heard in a drug-like landscape. If I was this way, my other party members would be worse.

"…Something feels strange. Dokja-ssi! Are you there?"

"Dokja-ssi! Dokja-ssi!"

In this distorted vision, the voices of my party members were gradually fading.

[Phantom Prison].

A space that led to madness by touching a person's trauma.

「 Dokja, you didn't see anything. Understood? 」

The landscape disappeared and the face of a person popped up. I smiled bitterly as I stared into the air. I wanted to deny reality.

[The exclusive skill, 'Fourth Wall' is activated!]

[Due to the skill effect, immunity to Phantom Prison has occurred.]

The moment my mind relaxed, the uncomfortable feeling diminished.

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' admires your spirit.]

[100 coins have been sponsored.]

[The curious constellations are sorry that they can't peek at your memories.]

As the power of Phantom Prison weakened, I felt a sense of alarm.

"Everyone, calm down and take deep breaths."

Those trapped in Phantom Prison would lose their minds and unleash their madness around them. Thus, the most dangerous thing in Phantom Prison was the companions around you. Yoo Joonghyuk's solo behaviour might be because he was worried about this prison.

"S-Soldier Lee Hyunsung. Did you hear wrong?"

"I was wrong. I was wrong, Mother!"

"T-This dog bastard!"

…I was too late. I heard the screams of people filled with madness, but it wasn't everyone.

"…Dokja-ssi?" At this moment, Yoo Sangah's appearance was revealed in Phantom Prison. Samyeongdang's Beads around her wrist was glowing brightly. Fortunately, it worked. I approached Yoo Sangah and said, "Cover the surroundings. From now on, I will destroy this space."

Yoo Sangah nodded with a nervous expression.

[The exclusive skill 'Destroy Evil Lv. 1' is activated.]

Destroy Evil. It was one level higher than the Repel Evil skill that could be bought with coins. It was a skill that I obtained after breaking the bronze statue of Samyeongdang.

[The exclusive skill 'Destroy Evil Lv. 1' has turned off 'Phantom Prison'.]

Indeed, it was a skill used by Samyeongdang. If I had bought Repel Evil, it would've taken a minute to release it. As the fog retreated and Phantom Prison disappeared, my companions started to appear one by one.

"O-Our resolve! We are the South Korean army, loyal to the nation and the people!"

"Uh…Uh…Mother."

The trauma could be seen with one glance. Lee Hyunsung was bowing with his head on the ground, while Lee Gilyoung had his head on his knees and was shaking. Yoo Sangah came forward first. "Lee Hyunsung-ssi? Gilyoung! Please wake up!"

At this moment, a blade flew from the rear. Fortunately, the blade wasn't fast and it wasn't difficult to avoid.

"…I will kill all of you."

Jung Heewon was waving her sword through the air like a madman. My heart ached as I watched Jung Heewon's eyes became gradually redder. This was dangerous. It was a sign of 'Demon Slaying'. I stunned Jung Heewon by strongly hitting her in the back of the neck. Luckily, Jung Heewon was unharmed. I thought it wouldn't be like this with Samyeongdang's Straw Mat but Jung Heewon's mental state was more fragile than I expected.

"Yoo Sangah, please look after Jung Heewon-ssi."

"…Yes, yes!"

"It isn't over yet."

[You have met the conditions to clear the sub-scenario!]

[You have earned 300 coins.]

Monsters appeared as soon as the clear message showed up. They were a mass of liquid, reminiscent of ectoplasm. The 8th grade specter. It was the specters who made Phantom Prison. I used Purest Sword Force to invoke Blade of Faith. Fortunately, the battle itself wasn't difficult. In the first place, the specters weren't difficult if Phantom Prison was destroyed. The creepy and weird specters were destroyed.

[Specter's Stone.]

I put the fallen stones into my pocket. This needed to be picked up. Thanks to Yoo Sangah, the others were recovering quickly.

"A-Are you okay?"

The one who recovered the fastest was Lee Hyunsung. Lee Hyunsung heard the story and bowed his head with surprise. "…Thank you. I almost got into big trouble. I also want to thank Dokja-ssi."

"It is nothing."

"I have a headache…" Lee Gilyoung's head was pounding. I stroked Lee Gilyoung's hair. He pretended to be okay but perhaps the one with the most terrible trauma in this place was this child. I saw a pale light in the distance.

Yoo Sangah said, "Dokja-ssi, I think it is over."

I worried about it for a short moment. Jung Heewon was stunned and it was difficult for the others to exercise their power. Would we be okay to enter Chungmuro at this rate? My concerns were resolved by another person. A blade loomed in the darkness, but it was a pure threat, without the intent to harm.

"Who are you? Don't you know that this area is our hunting ground?" In the faint light of the entrance, a girl holding a long sword stood. She looked to be 17 and was wearing a school uniform. She was wearing a hood like she was trying to hide her name tag, but her appearance was noticeable.

"Ah, this girl…!" Yoo Sangah had keen eyes and recognized her first. I also knew her. It was because she was one of the main characters of Ways of

Survival. The only survivor of Daepong Girls High School, Lee Jihye. She was one of the reasons why Yoo Joonghyuk went straight to Chungmuro in the shortest time.

"…Did you guys beat the specters?" Lee Jihye discovered the stone in my hand and was surprised. "How did you…only Master could catch them?"

I immediately used a skill.

[The exclusive skill, Character List is activated.]

[Character Summary]

Name: Lee Jihye

Age: 17 years old

Sponsor: Maritime War God

Exclusive Attributes: Scarred Sword Demon (Rare)

Exclusive Skills: Sword Training Lv. 3, Demon Slaying Lv. 1, Absolute Sense Lv. 2, Ghost Walk Lv. 1.

Stigma: Sea Battle Lv. 1, Large Army Command Lv. 1.

Overall Stats: Physique Lv. 13, Strength Lv. 12, Agility Lv. 13, Magic Power Lv. 9.

Overall Evaluation: A person who evolved into a 'Scarred Sword Demon' after killing her closest friend. The sponsor behind her has an affinity for you and your colleagues.

* 'Starter Pack' is currently applied.

There was nothing unusual. Maritime War God. As scheduled, it was the sponsor behind Lee Jihye. She was a must in future maritime wars.

*

[The constellation 'Bald General of Justice' is touched at meeting an old companion.]

[Lee Jihye's sponsor welcomes the 'Bald General of Justice'.]

I felt a faint breeze in the subway tunnel where no trains were running. Looking at Lee Jihye's hair fluttering in the wind, I realized again.

[Main Scenario #2 – Meeting has ended.]

[The compensation will be settled.]

Yes, we finally arrived. This was Chungmuro.

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[*] Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)

Chapter 28: Ep. 7 – Landlord, I

We followed Lee Jihye and entered Chungmuro. Yoo Sangah saw the shattered screen door of the platform and said, "…It is a chaotic atmosphere."

As we climbed up from the tracks of railway line 3, we saw some people sitting down.

[You have entered Chungmuro.]

[The third scenario is currently in progress.]

[#GIR-8761 channel is active.]

[#BIR-3642 channel is active.]

From Chungmuro onward, the size of the scenario grew and the dokkaebi channels increased. That naive Bihyung would have a hard time from now on. Some middle-aged people saw us and waved their hands. "Oh, little samurai. You brought new people?"

"Yes." 'A samurai'. I guess Lee Jihye could be called that if the sponsor behind her wasn't known. Sooner or later, they would be punished. Lee Jihye frowned at the middle-aged people. "Are you drunk again?"

"Hahaha! What is there to do other than drink when the world has become like this?"

The middle-aged people seemed relaxed, unlike those who were experiencing a disaster. It was natural since they were wearing the uniform of soldiers. This was definitely different from Gumho Station. It was truly beginning now.

"But did your friends come through the tunnel? How great… Won't they have a lot of coins?"

Then one of the middle-aged men turned to Yoo Sangah. "Young lady over there, what is your name? Would you like to rent a room for cheap?"

"…Room?"

"Haha, you don't know the system here yet? This place—"

Lee Jihye cut off the middle-aged man's words. "Ahjussis. Don't try to trick the newcomers."

"Uhuh, they must know anyway. This is what everyone is doing to live…"

"If you don't want to be injured, then get lost."

The middle-aged man paled at Lee Jihye's words. "This… young child has already learned bad things."

"Hey, Kang-ssi. Stop it."

The middle-aged people turned away. They disappeared into transit line 4, and Lee Jihye put away her sword.

"I brought you here, so take care from now on. I'm not a babysitter," this child spoke so indifferently.

I looked around. Chungmuro—this was the stage of the third scenario, where completely different rules were in play.

"S-Shit! I'll kill you if you come close…" A man was in the middle of the platform for subway line 3, waving a knife around and threatening people. At his feet was a tile that was 1 pyeong (3.306 m2) in size. It emitted a green light that stretched into the air.

Yoo Sangah asked, "…Why is he doing that?"

"I don't know." I could guess but there was no need to scare her just now. There were many people sitting down with a knife on subway line 3. Unlike the previous middle-aged men, the faces of the people here were filled with despair. I glanced at them and asked Lee Jihye, "Is Yoo Joonghyuk here?"

Lee Jihye, who was about to leave, turned her head at 'Yoo Joonghyuk'. There was vigilance in her eyes. "…Who are you?"

Yoo Joonghyuk had already ruined this child. Well, I could understand. It was difficult to find a constellation on the level of Maritime War God, even if he searched through all of South Korea. If I were in Yoo Joonghyuk's position, I wouldn't have found her so soon after coming to Chungmuro.

"I am a companion of Yoo Joonghyuk who came back alive."

"…Companion? How is that possible?" Lee Jihye stared at me with suspicious eyes.

I shrugged shamelessly. "That guy will understand if you tell him. Where is Yoo Joonghyuk now?"

"…Master isn't here right now."

"Really? This is difficult. I have something I need to say."

Lee Jihye's expression distorted as she stared at me with something like feelings of betrayal. Ah, I knew very well what she thought of Yoo Joonghyuk. Moreover, she was already addressing him as 'Master'… It will be difficult to get her this way. Lee Jihye called out to a boy squatting in the corner, "Hey, over there!"

"Eh? Yes, yes!"

"Watch over these people right here! I'm going to find Master."

The boy looked at us with puzzled eyes. "…Who are they?"

"I don't know. Master's friends?"

At Lee Jihye's words, the eyes of the people on the platform became bigger. They looked at us with amazement and awe.

"…Yoo Joonghyuk-ssi's friends?!" The boy ran up to us and exclaimed. It was a boy who looked roughly around Lee Jihye's age. "Are you really Yoo Joonghyuk-ssi's friends?"

I couldn't lie when I saw the boy's clear eyes. At least, that would be the case if I were an ordinary person.

"He is a good friend."

Recently, I didn't seem to be an 'ordinary' person. At least, that was the case here.

* * *

While taking care of the unconscious Jung Heewon, I heard about Chungmuro from the boy. Along with Lee Jihye, this boy was one of Yoo Joonghyuk's followers.

"…Thus, we followed Yoo Joonghyuk-ssi. Are you listening to me?"

"Yes."

Of course, I wasn't listening properly. The story of psychopath Yoo Joonghyuk's heroism wasn't interesting. The short summary was something like this.

"Three days ago, Yoo Joonghyuk appeared and saved some of you, including Lee Jihye, from the monsters. Isn't that the story?"

The boy frowned at his story being summarized so simply. "Uh, the story isn't that simple…"

He was surely spellbound by Yoo Joonghyuk. A presence with overwhelming force had rescued them suddenly. It would be strange if they didn't follow him. Yet the boy didn't know that he had survived not because Yoo Joonghyuk was a good guy but because he had been lucky to be with Lee Jihye.

"Now can I ask you a few things I am curious about?" Lee Hyunsung started asking politely while I was locked in my thoughts.

"Yes. Just ask."

"How is the food supply here?"

"That… It is a bit embarrassing to say… Some people, including me, are dependent on Jihye. Jihye hunts and asks Yoo Joonghyuk-ssi to cook…"

It was unknown when he made a checklist but Lee Hyunsung took out his notes and started to write something. He really was a soldier.

"Then how is your drinking water?"

"We give food or coins to the 'Landlord Alliance' upstairs in exchange."

"…Landlord Alliance?" I sat straight up. Now the story was becoming interesting.

The boy hesitantly opened his mouth, "They are the landlords in charge of the Chungmuro area. They occupy the upper floors, and we call them the Landlord Alliance."

Chungmuro's Landlord Alliance—it was a name that appeared in Ways of Survival.

"What type of people are they?"

"Well, what should I say…" In fact, there was no need for me to ask. Perhaps, according to my expectations, one of the '10 Evils' was in Chungmuro right now. "They are just landlords."

This answer was the correct answer in a sense. They were landlords, building owners who received fixed taxes. At this moment, the quiet Lee Gilyoung opened his mouth, "Excuse me, hyung."

"Yes?"

"I want to go to the toilet."

"Is it urgent?"

"Yes."

The timing was a bit unexpected. It was even more puzzling because Lee Gilyoung normally didn't say something like this. Then I noticed that Lee Gilyoung was standing next to a blushing Yoo Sangah.

"…Excuse me, can I also go with you?"

At the moment, the image of Yoo Sangah and Jung Heewon securing secret necessities at Yaksu Station came to mind. I thought I knew what was going on, but that kid, Lee Gilyoung, quickly noticed it first. The boy overheard the conversation and said, "You need to go up to the second underground floor for the toilet, but it won't be easy to enter."

"…Has something happened?"

"Yes. I think it is better to see directly… I'm going up to, would you like to go with me?'

"Let's go." I was the one who said it. Of course, it wasn't to go to the bathroom. I had to go up and check a few things. Recently, Yoo Joonghyuk's movements were different from the 'third regression' that I knew. If so, I needed to be clear about the gap. I went up to the third underground level with my friends while carrying Jung Heewon who was still unconscious.

"Oh, I heard that there were new faces. Have you come to see the rooms?" A middle-aged man standing near the escalator for line 4 whistled.

The boy shook his head and replied, "Ah, I'm sorry. We are going upstairs…"

"Eh, too bad. Be careful." The middle-aged man waved his hands without hesitation.

Yoo Sangah watched the middle-aged man moving away and asked, "That… By the way… what exactly is the 'room'? I don't think it is the same as the room that I know."

"It is easy." The boy pointed to a square tile. The tiles were also present on the platform of line 3. They were green tiles that were 1 pyeong in size. Looking at the details, I saw something written in the air above the tile.

[Green Zone 0/1]

"The scenario name is 'green zone,' and these tiles are called rooms."

Near the tile, two men were fighting each other over the tile. It was Lee Hyunsung who asked this time, "What is that? Why are those people fighting over it?"

The boy looked a bit reluctant to answer, as if talking to us would be a threat to his survival. "You will know once you arrive at the second underground floor."

As we climbed up to the higher floors, there were more fights over rooms. The room numbers were different. There were small rooms labelled (0/1) and large rooms labelled (0/7). The latter number was probably the capacity of the room. I looked around carefully and asked, "The third underground floor to the first underground floor is all the area of the Landlord Association?"

"…Yes. They are small forces, but the Landlord Association has obtained most of it."

All the infrastructure of Chungmuro was located on the second and first underground floors, yet a single alliance occupied all of it.

"Yoo Joonghyuk didn't take any action? Didn't he save you?"

"That…" The boy's face became noticeably darker at my question. The boy looked sullen for a while before barely being able to speak. "He told us to stand on our own…"

I knew it. Of course, Yoo Joonghyuk would say something like this. Perhaps Yoo Joonghyuk never told them to follow him. Fascinated by the overwhelming force he displayed, they went on to have hopeful dreams. How pitiful.

Not long after, we arrived at the second underground floor. There was tension on the boy's face. "We have to be careful from here onward."

There were many more rooms on B2 than the lower levels, and there were no groups of people fighting. Instead, there were people guarding the green zones with scary eyes.

[Green Zone 7/7]

We passed by the people and headed toward the bathrooms.

"Uh… Why stop here?"

Our pace came to a stop as we approached the last passage to the bathroom. Like a bottleneck, dozens of people were gathered in the passage.

"Let's go forward," I said while pushing people out of the way.

"Pildu-ssi! Please accept it! I won't do it again! Please, please! Please let me stay one more day. I'll go into debt to get the coins!" The leader at the head of the line was facing the agitated people.

"Now now, back off. Back off." On the opposite side, people who seemed to be from the Landlord Association were gathered there. I could feel it instinctively. One of the 10 Evils was here. I tried to find the '10 Evils' member through the novel's description, but it wasn't easy since all of them seemed to fit. Did their impressions become similar after becoming landlords?

I was shaking my head when someone grabbed my leg. It was Lee Gilyoung. I sensed some danger and was about to grab his shoulder when someone pushed Lee Gilyoung.

"Ah." Lee Gilyoung lost his balance and fell down.

[The character 'Lee Gilyoung' has invaded private property!]

Suddenly, the atmosphere became cold, and some of the 'Landlord Association' members in the front looked at Lee Gilyoung.

"What is with this child?"

At almost the same time, the crowd of people screamed and withdrew.

"Crazy!"

"B-Back! Quickly!"

As if they were never there, the crowd of people rushed back like a tide. The people disappeared, and red lines shone where they used to be standing. One man looked between the boundary and Lee Gilyoung in turn. "Hrmm. You seem lost. Do you know where this is?"

"The way to the bathroom?"

"The bathroom? Haha, at one time. By the way, that kid… Where are your parents?"

"…Huh?"

"Didn't you learn that you shouldn't intrude on other people's land?"

Other people's land…

Oh, it must be true. The man stroked Lee Gilyoung's head with an unknown look.

"Since you don't know, I will teach you from now on."

[The character 'Gong Pildu' has activated 'Armed Zone Lv. 3!]

There was a whirring sound, and mini turrets resembling gatling guns rose from the ground.

[The character 'Gong Pildu' demands 500 coins for invading his private land.]

[If you don't follow the recommendations, all nearby turrets will fire immediately.]

The man said, "Give me money."

The loaded turrets were all aiming at the same point. The confused Lee Gilyoung stood up and moved to my side. The man saw me and laughed. "Ah, so you are his guardian. Then shouldn't the guardian pay 500 coins instead?"

I smiled at the hand that the man brazenly stretched out.

…How funny, Yoo Joonghyuk. You let these jerks go?

Chapter 29: Ep. 7 – Landlord, II

The 10 Evils—the list and rankings were often changed according to Yoo Joonghyuk's regression cycle, but they were the 10 people in charge of being the main villains in this world of Ways of Survival. Chungmuro's armed fortress master, Gong Pildu, was one of the 10 Evils. Thus, a person wouldn't be aware of Gong Pildu unless they had read to the end of Ways of Survival (like me).

[Green Zone 56/70]

Indeed, the size of his room was different. It couldn't be measured easily. This whole green zone was Gong Pildu's area.

'Let's do the standard procedure'.

I hid Lee Gilyoung behind me and opened my mouth, "Why should we pay you coins? Chungmuro Station is a public place."

"Haha, it was until eight days ago. But not anymore."

For ordinary humans, 500 coins wasn't a small sum. Making people pay 500 coins just for stepping on his land… What a crook.

"Okay, I'll give it, but I'll give it to the person directly."

"What?"

"You aren't Gong Pildu."

Gong Pildu might be a villain, but right now, the person in front of me was just Extra '1' of the Landlord Alliance.

'Where are you, Gong Pildu?'

I quickly looked around. Not him, not him… I wondered where Gong Pildu was.

"Haha, you are a funny guy. Hey, you're playing with me now…"

"Gong Pildu-ssi. Where are you? Take the fine."

I ignored them and kept walking.

[You have invaded private property!]

The turrets aimed straight at me but I didn't stop. Honestly, there was no guarantee that I would be safe if the turrets started shooting. Nonetheless, there was a need to show off my combat power here. That way Gong Pildu wouldn't underestimate me.

"That's how far you'll get. I will shoot if you come closer." Finally, Gong Pildu moved. There was a bench covered with various supplies. A middle-aged man was sitting on top of it and reading a magazine was staring at me. Indeed, this was how he was described in the novel. His belly was half revealed, and I could see the hair on it. This was Gong Pildu, the representative of the Landlord Alliance.

"This is a face I've never seen before but you are great."

"Isn't it unfair that I need to pay to see you?"

[The character 'Gong Pildu' is interested in you.]

In any case, I seemed to be the type that was popular with the bad guys. It was the same with Kim Namwoon.

"You are fairly good at talking. But it isn't good to be too cocky."

Tadak. I heard magic bullets being loaded in the turrets. 'Damn bastard'.

Gong Pildu smiled like an ordinary neighborhood ahjussi, but I knew… Gong Pildu could never be an ordinary neighborhood ahjussi.

[The exclusive skill, Character List is activated.]

[Character Summary]

Name: Gong Pildu

Age: 48 years old

Sponsor: Defense Master

Exclusive Attributes: Landlord (Rare), Great Landowner (Rare)

Exclusive Skills: Private Property Lv. 3, Patience Lv. 1, Profit Calculation Lv. 2, Leadership Lv. 2, Incite Lv. 1, Weapons Training Lv. 1.

Stigma: Armed Zone Lv. 3.

Overall Stats: Physique Lv. 9, Strength Lv. 11, Agility Lv. 10, Magic Power Lv. 19.

Overall Evaluation: Gong Pildu, the representative of the Chungmuro Landlord Alliance. His skill 'Private Property' and stigma 'Armed Zone' has the best effect in a battle against many. It is advisable not to make him an enemy.

* 'Starter Pack' is currently applied.

* A growth package is currently applied.

There were numerous 'gap' in this world, but few of them were as stable as a landowner or landlord. However, there were those who boasted both characteristics, and the 'Armed Fortress Master' Gong Pildu in front of me was one of them. I realized it when I saw this explanation. His magic power was already at level 19. Indeed, this would be enough for him to be one of the 10 Evils in the future.

"By the way, what did you come here for? I don't think your goal is paying the fine."

He was also very sensitive. I pondered over it for a while. Should I negotiate here or overpower Gong Pildu? It might be possible if I used all my power, but it wouldn't be easy to break through Gong Pildu's Armed Zone. I needed to prepare to receive a big injury if I wanted to defeat the turrets.

What should I do? There was a separate place where I had to use coins, so it was impossible to increase my stats.

"I'm warning you that you shouldn't think of anything." Gong Pildu smiled at me. His troops were surrounding Lee Hyunsung. He really moved quickly.

I laughed and raised both hands. "Please calm down. Isn't it obvious for a tenant to come to the landlord?"

"Is it for a room?"

"Yes. Please let my companions and I sit in your green zone"

This was a must. In order to clear the third scenario safely, we had to stay in Gong Pildu's green zone. However, Gong Pildu's answer was as expected.

"No. The alliance doesn't accept outsiders. I'll think about it if every person pays 500 coins a day."

500 coins a day? It was like selling coins. This was more expensive than the Dokkaebi Bag.

"It is a bit tough, so I will give you information instead."

"What information?"

"Information about Yoo Joonghyuk."

'Yoo Joonghyuk'. The complexions of the landlords changed with that one name.

"Yoo Joonghyuk? Yoo Joonghyuk caused such an uproar not long ago…"

"You bastard! What is your relationship with that guy?"

"Pildu-ssi! Isn't this bastard suspicious?"

There was a reaction. I thought that Yoo Joonghyuk would've already caused a problem with the Landlord Alliance. In fact, I was a bit unsure about this point. According to the original story, Yoo Joonghyuk of the third regression should be fighting against the Landlord Alliance by now. What was he doing? Gong Pildu stared at me with suspicious eyes. "What is your relationship with Yoo Joonghyuk?"

"We are companions separated by life and death."

"…I don't think it is like that?"

"Anyway, we're friendly."

"How can I believe that?"

"Don't believe me. Don't you have nothing to lose?" I threw out the bait.

Perhaps Gong Pildu would have to accept my suggestion. It was because right now, Yoo Joonghyuk was the only person who could threaten the power balance in Chungmuro.

[The character 'Gong Pildu' has activated 'Profit Calculation Lv. 2!]

"Why won't I receive any loss?"

"…?"

"There is no guarantee that you aren't a scammer. I can't ignore my years of experience. In my experience, people like you run away to avoid paying the rent at the end of the month."

It was so accurate that I felt wronged. Still, it was difficult to push it here. "If you don't believe me, it can't be helped. Maybe there will be damages."

Gong Pildu's expression became complicated. I turned around without hesitation. It was important not to show any regret. That way, he would regret it even more.

"Wait a minute." Indeed. "You have to pay the fine for intruding. Where are you trying to flee to?"

It was another regret. Dammit. I turned around and smiled awkwardly. "How much? 100 coins?"

"No, you and that kid are 1,000 coins."

The vein on my head bulged. Did this bastard think that 1,000 coins were 1,000 won…?

"That is too much."

The dokkaebi still hadn't given me my cut of the coins, but I couldn't give 1,000 coins to a jerk like Gong Pildu. Gong Pildu grinned. "Then you are disqualified as tenants. Die."

I instinctively pushed through the men around me and ran to where my party members were. There was the first sound of firing, and Lee Hyunsung held up a metal shield, blocking my back. He was really reliable. Lee Hyunsung's strength and physique were level 14, but he spoke very nervously, "…Dokja-ssi."

I could clearly see his trembling arm muscles. Lee Hyunsung had yet to obtain his second stigma, which meant he couldn't hold on against the turrets. Moreover, there was no Jung Heewon. If I started a head to head fight, someone in this party would surely die.

"Gong Pildu-ssi, wait a moment. If we fight then you won't escape any damages."

"What?"

"It is better not to fight us now."

"Why?"

The damage had to be shown.

"If we fight now, you will die here."

Gong Pildu's expression hardened. Even if I didn't add anything, Gong Pildu would've noticed the presence of the guy coming down the escalator from B1. It would be strange if he didn't know considering the guy was giving off such a huge momentum.

"My best companion is coming."

It was Yoo Joonghyuk. I didn't expect that damn regressor to be happy.

"Master, it's that person. He pretended to be Master's companion," Lee Jihye cried out shrilly as she pointed at me. The main character, the lone hero of a drama, was walking by her side. He looked at me with impressively fierce eyes.

[The character 'Yoo Joonghyuk' is greatly disturbed.]

[Exclusive skill, Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint stage 2 has been activated!]

There was a brief moment of dizziness, and I started to hear his thoughts.

「How… Already?」

I waved to him and said casually, "Hi Joonghyuk."

「…….」

"Have you been well? Your face looks good?"

「…….」

Lee Jihye and Gong Pildu looked at us like they couldn't believe it. They never expected that I would be a companion of Yoo Joonghyuk. There was a tight tension in the air.

"These people don't believe I am your companion. Can you tell them?"

Nevertheless, I knew Yoo Joonghyuk. This bastard killed easily but he kept his promises.

[A few constellations are paying attention to character Yoo Joonghyuk's answer.]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is observing Yoo Joonghyuk's loyalty.]

Moreover, the constellations were paying a lot of attention.

「…….」

Yoo Joonghyuk watched me and slowly opened his mouth. However, my words were faster. "Ah, right. It would be better if you let me use the bathroom!"

Finally, Yoo Joonghyuk pulled out a blade.

After a while, we safely used the bathroom and came down to the platform of line 3. It was thanks to this fellow regressor companion. I smiled widely. "It's nice to see you, you rascal."

"…You're alive."

In conclusion, Yoo Joonghyuk didn't call me his companion. He just pointed his blade at Gong Pildu as his answer. Fortunately, Gong Pildu didn't want to clash with us and let us go.

I asked, "Were you hoping I would be killed?"

"I thought it would be good."

This rotten companion…

I became angrier when I saw that cheeky face. It made me want to run over and strike him in the jaw, but I couldn't do it.

[The exclusive skill, Character List is activated.]

[There is too much information about this person. Character List is converted to Character Summary.]

Full version.

[Converting the character information of 'Yoo Joonghyuk' into the 'full version'.]

[Character Summary]

Name: Yoo Joonghyuk.

Age: 28 years old.

Sponsor: ???

Exclusive Attributes: Regressor (3rd turn) (Myth), Pro Gamer (Rare)

Exclusive Skills: Sage's Eye Lv. 8, Hand to Hand Combat Lv. 8, Advanced Weapons Training Lv. 5, Strong Self-Defense Lv. 5, Mental Barrier Lv. 5, Crowd Control Lv. 5, Reasoning Lv. 5, Lie Detection Lv. 4…(Omitted)…

Stigma: Regression Lv. 3

Overall Stats: Physique Lv. 24, Strength Lv. 24, Agility Lv. 25, Magic Power Lv. 23.

Comprehensive Evaluation: The comprehensive evaluation of this person is too long to load.

It hadn't seemed that great in the novel. Yet, having seen it in person now, I knew how extraordinary it was. We were about to enter the third scenario, and Yoo Joonghyuk's total physical related stats were around 70.

'This crazy bastard'.

Dammit, this was the main character buff.

"Do you have anything to say?" Yoo Joonghyuk asked.

Yoo Joonghyuk's growth rate was steeper than it had been in the original three regressions. The fact that his growth was so fast meant he was taking great risks… What the hell was this person, who had only returned three times, doing? Something was making me uneasy. I would have to dig it out sooner or later…

"I asked if you had anything to say."

"No, I was just looking."

「…He is more tenacious than I thought.」

What tenacity? He had a serious chuuni disease.

「 However, being cheeky isn't good. Should I just kill him now? 」

"I'm joking." I laughed hurriedly. Yoo Joonghyuk turned his head like he wasn't interested.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is disappointed in you.]

Anyway, I didn't want to alienate Yoo Joonghyuk right now. In order to clear the multiple scenarios, Yoo Joonghyuk was a necessary person. Even if we weren't real companions, it was worth using him thoroughly.

…Why did it sound like I was making excuses?

"It looks like you've obtained companions." Yoo Joonghyuk looked at the people behind me with emotionless eyes.

[The character 'Yoo Joonghyuk' is a bit disappointed in you.]

'…What? Why?'

The answer was very clear.

[The character 'Yoo Joonghyuk' has used Sage's Eye Lv. 8!]

「 He picked up Lee Hyunsung but was only able to raise him to this level. 」

I was at a loss for a moment because it was true. Certainly, Lee Hyunsung's growth would be better if he had moved with Yoo Joonghyuk.

'Still… this bastard'.

I was just an ordinary reader who had luckily gotten to know the future.

「 It is below expectations. 」

It seemed worse because I was hearing his words in my mind. At that moment, Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes stopped as he was looking around. For the first time, confusion could be seen in his eyes.

「…What is that? 」

Chapter 30: Ep. 7 – Landlord, III

Yoo Joonghyuk was looking at everyone except for Lee Hyunsung. The three remaining people were standing together and I couldn't figure out exactly who Yoo Joonghyuk was looking at.

「…How is this possible? 」

Who was he looking at? I wanted to ask but I was afraid that my skill would be exposed. Yoo Joonghyuk still didn't know that I knew his thoughts. However, I guessed that he might've seen the information of Jung Heewon. Jung Heewon saw Yoo Joonghyuk's gaze and confronted him. "What are you looking at?"

「…….」

Good job, Jung Heewon.

「 Kill… 」

"Yoo Joonghyuk."

I quickly opened my mouth, "I was wondering about one thing." He turned to look at me. His eyes were questioning. "Why are you leaving Gong Pildu alone?"

"If you are a prophet, you should know."

"I don't know everything."

To be exact, I didn't remember everything.

[The character 'Yoo Joonghyuk' has used the 'Lie Detection' skill.]

[The character Yoo Joonghyuk has confirmed that your words are true.]

He was thorough.

"…Indeed, I see. A prophet whose level of 'future sight' is low."

Think what you want. Yoo Joonghyuk continued speaking, "I need Gong Pildu alive."

"Is it because of a future scenario?"

Yoo Joonghyuk didn't answer. It was like he was trying to gauge the information I knew.

"I know that you need Gong Pildu for future scenarios. But you only need Gong Pildu. You don't need the entire group that follows him."

「…….」

"Isn't it your style to remove what you don't need? Why are you just leaving them?"

「…How annoying. 」

What?

"I have a lot to do." Yoo Joonghyuk stared at me quietly and said, "You will never understand."

"Wait! That isn't the problem. If you don't move now, most of the humans in Chungmuro will…!"

Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes were cold. "It doesn't matter."

I wasn't a humanist. I didn't believe that everyone in this world was worth keeping alive. The thing that was making me angry right now was Yoo Joonghyuk.

"Yoo Joonghyuk. Can I hit you?"

"If you have confidence."

I angrily formed a fist as I heard a message.

[The character Yoo Joonghyuk has used 'Strong Self-Defense Lv. 5'.]

I dropped my fist. Cowardly bastard.

"Are you finished?" Yoo Joonghyuk asked.

"…"

"Let's go."

Lee Jihye flinched at Yoo Joonghyuk's call. Lee Jihye, who belated following Yoo Joonghyuk, looked at me with confused eyes.

[The constellation 'Bald General of Justice' is impressed by your chivalrous spirit.]

[100 coins have been sponsored.]

Of course, it was completely misleading.

[There are 1 hour and 30 minutes before the third scenario is activated.]

There wasn't much time left and my mind was complicated.

[The constellation 'Bald General of Justice' is angry that people's lives must be risked.]

[The constellation 'Bald General of Justice' wants an uprising.]

Samyeongdang's message rang loudly in my head but he didn't think of a good way to resolve it. The third scenario lasted exactly one week. Maybe Yoo Joonghyuk was planning to gain some other advantage during the third scenario. Of course, I couldn't let it go. I couldn't let it go…

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is wondering what you are thinking.]

"That jerk Yoo Joonghyuk."

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is satisfied.]

[100 coins have been sponsored.]

In fact, the problem in front of me wasn't Yoo Joonghyuk but Gong Pildu. In order to break through the third scenario, Gong Pildu's help was absolutely necessary. If I couldn't get his help…

Suddenly, Jung Heewon looked up and smiled, "Who is it?"

"…Huh?"

"You know, that person. The one you were talking to Yoo Joonghyuk about."

I immediately explained about Gong Pildu. Jung Heewon was unconscious so she hadn't been able to see Gong Pildu. I didn't mean to change the subject. Jung Heewon immediately reacted. "…What are these scum? Taking the public facilities and making people pay to use them?"

"Those scum are upstairs."

"I'll go and throw them out." Jung Heewon picked up the ground rat blade. That reminded me, I should change their weapons. There was a lot to be done.

"Your actions are absurd."

"We can win if we join forces. Don't you remember Gumho Station?" Jung Heewon's expression was confident. It was natural. Jung Heewon had the Judgment Time skill as a trump card. She had good senses and was quick to adapt, so she would've already figured out her attribute and skills.

"Don't dawdle! Let's go and kill them!"

As long as her opponents were 'wicked', her Judgment Time boasted the highest power.

[The character 'Jung Heewon' has activated the exclusive skill 'Judgment Time'.]

[Constellations of the Absolute Good system are silent at Jung Heewon's request.]

[The skill has been cancelled.]

Jung Heewon's face filled with confusion. "No, this…what? Is it broken?" Jung Heewon tried to activate the skill again. However, the skill wasn't triggered. "No…why isn't it activating? Aren't they obviously wicked?"

I laughed at Jung Heewon's question. "That is what we humans think."

"…What are you talking about?"

"The constellations might be different. There is no guarantee that the good and evil they know is like what we know."

"Ah…"

"Justice is always decided by the majority."

Right now, the majority of constellations have decided that they are 'good'. Humans no longer had the right to decide on justice. Humans were just the puppets of their sponsors.

"That…"

I looked at the party members. Everyone didn't say anything but they thought in a similar way to Jung Heewon. Lee Hyunsung wiped the iron shield that was scratched by the magic bullets, while Yoo Sangah and Lee Gilyoung sat next to each other on the ground, looking at cockroaches.

This sense of despair, I could understand. They thought they understood after getting rid of the gang at Gumho Station. However, there was an incomparable monster just three stations away. It was time to start the torture known as hope.

"That doesn't mean there is no way."

"Huh?"

"It might be difficult but there is a way to defeat them."

They simultaneously looked at me. Lee Hyunsung asked, "…Do you really have a way?"

"What is it?"

I looked around and lowered my voice. "Get Gong Pildu out of the Armed Zone."

"What is the Armed Zone?"

"His stigma. It is optimized to defend an area."

Armed Zone. The reason why it was difficult to go against Gong Pildu was this stigma. It was a fraudulent ability that could build 'turrets' in an area. Right now, it was just Armed Zone. Once the stigma evolved in the future, it would become 'Armed Fortress' and a siege needed to be prepared to catch him. However, Gong Pildu had an obvious weakness.

"His Armed Zone will be released as soon as he leaves his designated area. His mini-turrets will also become useless. Usually, there are many restrictions on such a wide defense skill."

At the same time, Lee Hyunsung and Jung Heewon looked at me with admiration.

"Ah…I see."

"You figured this out after seeing it once? Is this Dokja-ssi's attribute?"

The same thing was repeated but I saw that the people had adapted to me to some extent. Yoo Sangah asked, "Then how will you make him move?"

"We have to think about that for now."

"Ah, I hate thinking." Jung Heewon complained.

Then everyone was silent for a while. It was Lee Hyunsung who gave his idea first. "Attack when he goes to the bathroom…"

"Didn't you see the things next to the bench?"

Gong Pildu never moved out of his Armed Zone. His bench had everything he needed. There were all the basics to eat and sleep: a sleeping bag, blanket, food, water, and even a place to piss. Of course, the tenants provided him with all of it.

"Crazy. He is a complete shut in. No, is he not moving because he is hiding something good on the land?"

"It is the biggest 'room' in Chungmuro."

"…Room?"

That reminds me, Jung Heewon still didn't know about the rooms. But there was no need for me to explain.

[There is 1 hour before the third scenario is activated.]

She would son find out.

"We also need to find a room."

The moment our party got up, the people around us flinched.

"D-D-Don't come closer!"

In particular, the man with a knife who was protecting a single person room on the No. 3 line platform showed high vigilance. However, other people rushed towards him before we could approach.

"Get out, your fucker!"

They attacked indiscriminately. As soon as the man was pushed out, the mark on the green zone changed. The owner had changed.

[Green Zone 1/1-> Green Zone 0/1].

The people were engaging in a bloody fight over the room. Someone was stabbed in the thigh while someone had their nose broken. Jung Heewon frowned. "Shouldn't we stop that?"

"Even if we intervene, the result will be the same. In the end, somebody will die."

"Why does someone have to die?"

"It isn't possible to avoid in this scenario."

I had just finished speaking when Bihyung emerged in the air.

[Now now, shall we start the third day of the main scenario? New faces have arrived today so won't it be fun? Hahaha!]

Bihyung glanced my way. There were three dokkaebis in charge of the Chungmuro scenario. It seemed that Bihyung was temporarily the representative. It was a natural consequence of being the smallest of the three channels. Then the third scenario arrived in front of us.

[Main Scenario #3 – Green Zone (Day 3)]

Category: Main

Difficulty: C

Clear Conditions: Occupy the 'green zone' in the station and survive the monsters that emerge every night at midnight. This scenario will last 7 days.

Duration: 8 hours.

Compensation: 1,000 coins

Failure: —

Lee Hyunsung's eyes widened.

"T-This…!"

[It is simple. Occupy the green zone before other people. Of course, you can take away the green zone of others. By the way, you should hurry. If you don't have a green zone after the scenario starts, you will have a terrible experience. Haha, then everyone should try it!]

People's expressions hardened as they heard Bihyung's words. In the meantime, the screams of the people continued.

"Die! Die!"

"I-I'm not doing this because I have a grudge! I must survive…"

Maybe this was what everyone realized. The struggle in front of us was no longer a story. Yoo Sangah asked in a trembling voice, "Surely we don't have to fight like these people?"

"We don't need to fight. Just find a room that can accommodate a large number of people."

"The size of the green zones vary by type. It ranged from fitting only one person to fitting 70 people like Gong Pildu's area."

"Of course, if there are any rooms left."

Jung Heewon opened her mouth at my words. "Dokja-ssi is really talented at making people uneasy… then let's move right away. Maybe there are some rooms left."

"It might be faster to split up. Divide the team. Hyunsung-ssi will move with Sangah-ssi, while Heewon-ssi should take Gilyoung."

"Dokja-ssi?"

"I'm fine on my own."

I didn't have to say anything else. Everyone trusted me. Lee Gilyoung spoke first, "Hyung, that…what if we can't find one?"

"If we can't find a room, then 20 minutes before the scenario starts, we will gather here again."

"I understand. Then I'm going."

The team scattered in an orderly fashion. Jung Heewon and Lee Gilyoung went to B2 while Yoo Sangah and Lee Hyunsung went to B3. I watched my companions leave before turning on my smartphone. As soon as I opened Ways of Survival, a sentence immediately popped up.

「 There were no rooms left in Chungmuro. 」

This fact was written clearly. It was likely that they wouldn't be able to find any rooms. Then they could only choose one way. In order to survive, kill someone else and take their room. But could Lee Hyunsung and Jung Heewon do it? Not everyone here was 'wicked'. There were some who exploited others, like Gong Pildu. But in fact, most of them bared their teeth in order to protect themselves.

Could Yoo Sangah and Lee Gilyoung bare their teeth at people like that? I would know the answer very soon.

Chapter 31: Ep. 7 – Landlord, IV

After the dokkaebi disappeared, dozens of casualties appeared on the platform of line 3.

Currently, there was only one room on the line 3 platform.

There was no one strong here, so the weak didn't back down and attacked each other.

"Die! Die!"

[There are 30 minutes before the third scenario is activated.]

As pandemonium occurred around me, I was quietly reading Ways of Survival. Perhaps today's scenario would flow as I thought. In order to survive, I couldn't miss a single word.

[What are you doing now?]

Along with Bihyung's words, I could hear the messages of the constellations.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is wondering what you are doing.]

I reflexively turned off my smartphone. There was something I hadn't thought of until now. Why didn't the constellations respond when I read Ways of Survival?

In the original Ways of Survival, the constellations discovered that Yoo Joonghyuk was a regressor and raised questions about fairness. It was normal for them to say something about the text I was reading.

[What are you doing right now with a blank notepad? All the constellations are going crazy with frustration because of you!]

…Blank notepad?

I turned on the smartphone again. Ways of Survival appeared on the screen.

"Is this what you are referring to?"

[Yes! What are you going to do with that notepad? You will die if you stay still! Ha, I believed in a guy like this and sighed a contract…]

I got goosebumps.

The dokkaebi couldn't read this 'text'. If even the dokkaebis, which managed the system, couldn't read it then the constellations were the same.

Then the writer who gave me the text…what type of existence was he?

"Kuaack!"

The last scream rang out. Finally, the owner of the room on platform line 3 was determined.

[Green Zone 1/1]

"…Don't come any closer."

A boy was pointing a knife at me. Surprisingly, the winner was the boy who guided us earlier. I still didn't know his name.

"Don't worry, I won't take your room."

I spoke in order to reassure the boy. The moment I had this thought.

"Really? You are quite relaxed ahjussi. Do you want to die?"

I didn't need to look back to see who was talking.

"It looks like you are quite free."

"Nobody touches my room. I will send everyone who touches it to hell."

Lee Jihye twirled a deep blue blade round and round. In regards to specs, there was no one who could match Lee Jihye apart from Yoo Joonghyuk or people from the Landlord Alliance. Lee Jihye watched me carefully and opened her mouth.

"I don't want ahjussi to die. You were quite impressive against Master earlier."

"Don't worry, I won't die. It won't die even if I don't find a room."

It was true. I wouldn't necessarily die if I couldn't find a room. There was an impossible man in this station who proved this. It was only three days ago.

Lee Jihye's eyes narrowed.

"Ahjussi, do you know what you are saying right now?"

"Yes."

"Ahjussi, are you strong? As strong as Master?"

Then Yoo Joonghyuk appeared behind Lee Jihye.

"Stop and go back to your room."

"Ah…yup. Master."

Lee Jihye obediently left and Yoo Joonghyuk turned towards me.

"Are you going to fight the monsters?"

I shrugged.

"You will die. Your four companions as well."

"That remains to be seen."

There was an unknown emotion in Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes as he glanced at me and left. I didn't use Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint. It wasn't always possible to expression emotions with words.

[There are 20 minutes before the third scenario is activated.]

There was the sound of people coming down the stairs. Lee Hyunsung, Lee Gilyoung and Yoo Sangah… looking at their dark expressions, the result was as I expected. Yoo Sangah opened her mouth with a gloomy expression.

"Room…there were non.:

"It is okay. Rather, where is Heewon-ssi?"

"She is trying to negotiate upstairs."

At these words, Jung Heewon jumped down with a terrible scream.

"One night is 2,000 coins? Are they joking right now? I am really going to hit them."

The agitated Jung Heewon snorted and said.

"Dokja-ssi. Do you know what is happening upstairs? No—"

"They suddenly raised the taxes right?"

"Eh…you already know?"

It was predictable. The tenants would die if they couldn't get a room in 20 minutes. It was no wonder that the owners would take the initiative to raise the taxes.

"Did Dokja-ssi find anything?"

"No, I didn't."

"Ah…"

I examined their faces one by one. In the end, the time to choose had come.

"I have two ways."

The eyes of the party members shone at these words. But my methods would probably betray their expectations.

"The first way is easy for all of us to live."

Jung Heewon's eyes narrowed.

"Usually it is the second method… what is the other one?"

"The second method is very difficult. It is likely that some of us will die."

"Eh…that can't happen. Then I will choose the first way."

"What do the others think?"

Lee Hyunsung responded first.

"The first method will be good if everyone can live."

Lee Gilyoung nodded. Only Yoo Sangah hesitated.

"…Can I hear what it is?"

I nodded and lead them up the stairs to transit line 4.

"This is the first method."

The party members looked at where I pointed. There was a group of five men and women shaking.

[Green Zone 5/5]

"They room they occupy has exactly five spaces. But their individual abilities isn't that high. Honestly, if the five of us…"

"Wait, Dokja-ssi—"

"Yes, kill them and take their room."

Their trembling increased at my calm voice. Jung Heewon made a deeply wounded expression.

"…Who doesn't know about this method?"

"If hyung says so, I can do it."

Lee Gilyoung spoke first.

"I'm not afraid. I will do it."

"No Gilyoung!"

Yoo Sangah grabbed Lee Gilyoung's shoulder. I deliberately looked uncaring.

"They would've also killed someone to take that room. Honestly, we can't overcome future scenarios if we can't do this."

"Dokja-ssi." Jung Heewon interrupted. "I killed people at Gumho Station. I killed because I wanted to and I don't regret it. But."

Jung Heewon had a pained expression on her face.

"Just because I am a murderer doesn't mean I want to keep killing. I don't want to be a monster.

"…"

"…Dokja-ssi, I would like to know about the second method."

I closed my eyes for a moment at Lee Hyunsung's words.

"I understand your thoughts."

Yes, this was enough.

"Let's go the second way."

The expressions of the party members seemed to brighten. In fact, I was going to use the second method from the beginning.

Killing was an easy way to survive, but I could never attract the attention of the constellations if I chose the easy method.

However, the second method required considerable determination. It wasn't just me but everyone. Thus, I needed to check their determination. I had to know what these people were really thinking.

Jung Heewon laughed.

"…I thought so. Why are you talking when you were going to go with the second way?"

"I wasn't trying to test you. Whatever choice you made, I would've respected it."

I stroked Lee Gilyoung's head, who was looking up at me with uneasy eyes. Yoo Sangah sighed and opened her mouth.

"Dokja-ssi is really spiteful."

"I'm sorry I'm not a good person."

"What is the second method?"

"There is no need to kill anybody with this method. But it is very difficult."

At my heavy tone, the expressions of the party members became determined.

"If you choose the second method, please unconditionally follow my instructions. Please trust me, even if it doesn't make sense. If one person doesn't trust me—"

"…"

"We will all die."

Someone gulped. The party members nodded almost simultaneously. Lee Hyunsung said.

"I believe in Dokja-ssi. I have survived up to here because of Dokja-ssi."

[There are 5 minutes before the third scenario is activated.]

"Then follow me."

I moved with the party members along railway line 3. We passed through the broken screen door and stood at the entrance of the tunnel leading to Euljiro-3.

Inside the dark tunnel, I saw a glowing 'red zone'. Perhaps the monsters would be created over there. They would sweep over line 3 and go up each floor towards the ground.

Lee Hyunsung asked nervously.

"…Then are we fighting the monsters here?"

"No, we aren't fighting. If we fight here then we will die."

It wasn't possible to fight against the terrifying monsters and survive until dawn without the green zone.

This time, Jung Heewon asked.

"…Then will we run towards the Dongdae area?"

"That won't work. Once the scenario is activated, we will automatically die if we leave Chungmuro."

"Then…"

"This operation needs to be shared. Lee Hyunsung-ssi, Yoo Sangah-ssi and Jung Heewon-ssi. Once the monsters appear, run straight in the direction they are coming from."

"…Huh?"

"Understood? Just run towards them. Just before you encounter them, be sure to look at the left wall. Then you will know that I mean."

The people didn't understand my words but there was no time to explain to them.

"Just trust me or you will die. Don't forget to look at the left wall."

"I understand Dokja-ssi." Yoo Sangah seemed to understand what I meant and answered first.

"I am telling you in person. You must run after the monster appears."

I picked up a stone and threw it towards the tunnel. Then stone sparked as it hit something and fell. Lee Hyunsung and Jung Heewon nodded as if they understood.

"What about Dokja-ssi?"

"I'll find another way with Gilyoung."

This method couldn't be used unless my party members believed in me. Who would go against common sense and commit a suicide attack by rushing towards the monsters?

The only thing left was their determination.

[The third main scenario is enabled.]

The barrier that was blocking the tunnel to Euljiro-3 disappeared.

"Run!"

The three people started running the moment I called out.

Grrr!

The monsters started to be created in the red zone. It was mainly the grade 9 ground rats. Then the middle ranks were filled with the intermediate grade 9 underground species, the 'groll'.

Kuooooh!

A monster with a black mane that was in the shape of a bear. The sharp horns on their foreheads was threatening.

One was relatively easy to deal with. The problem was the number. The crowded columns was already not suitable to be called a 'group'. We would die if we hit that wave.

The moment Lee Hyunsung encountered the first groll, I shouted.

"Now!"

Yoo Sangah found it first. Green tiles shimmering on the wall.

"Ah—!"

The enlightenment was instant The moment Yoo Sangah's hand touched the wall, it emitted a bright light.

[Green Zone 1/3]

The agile Jung Heewon immediately touched the wall behind her.

[Green Zone 2/3]

However, Lee Hyunsung missed the timing. It was because the ground rats clung to Lee Hyunsung's shield.

"Hyunsung-ssi! Catch it!"

Lee Hyunsung grabbed the 'thread' that Yoo Sangah threw him. Thanks to the strength of the two women, Lee Hyunsung flew through the air and reached the wall.

[Green Zone 3/3]

Good.

Grrrrrrr!

The monsters stared at them but once they entered the green zones, the monsters couldn't attack.

"Dokja-ssi!"

Yoo Sangah called out to me but there was no time to look back. I was already running with Lee Gilyoung on my back.

「…In the third main scenario, there are several hidden green zones. This is activated on a specific wall and the green zones on the wall won't appear until after the scenario starts… if you think about it, humans were the ones who thought of it as the concept of a 'room'. 」

In Ways of Survival, Yoo Joonghyuk went through numerous regressions and found some secret green zones in Chungmuro.

On the platform of line 3, there were two such green zones.

Kiiiiit!

A few ground rats chasing after me bit me in the thigh. The blow wasn't big because of my high strength, but these small things could accumulate.

Kwack!

Lee Gilyoung hit a few ground rats with a blunt weapon from his position on my back. But there were too many of them. In addition, the groll were fast.

A dozen metres away, the boy was looking at me with terrified eyes.

[Green Zone 1/1]

It was cowardly but I was tempted to take the easy road for a second.

[Hahahaha! This situation is fun. Then like yesterday, should there be a penalty?]

A dokkaebi spoke followed by the system messages.

[A scenario penalty has been added!]

[Some existing green zones will be disabled.]

"N-No! Uack, aaaaack!"

Screams rang through Chungmuro Station. The closest scream came from the boy.

Kwajijijik!

"Aaaaack!"

As soon as the green zone disappeared, the boy's small body was shredded by the ground rats.

Thanks to the boy's body buying time, I was able to run into the passage. However, the monsters that came from beyond the broken screen door blocked the path.

I hid Lee Gilyoung behind me and pulled out Unbroken Faith. The blade of Purest Sword Force quickly pushed back the incoming monsters.

But the numbers didn't go down at all. The person who fought with these monsters until sunrise, Yoo Joonghyuk was a monster. I wasn't sure it was possible for me, even if I changed all my coins to stats.

At this moment, Lee Gilyoung spoke.

"Hyung, you know."

"Don't talk now. I'm busy."

"You can just leave me here."

"…What?"

"I really don't understand it. Why are you helping me, Hyunsung hyung and the noonas? If you are alone… you would be able to survive better."

He could calmly speak such words before his death. Maybe this kid's mind was already dead.

"Yes, you are right." Another ground rat fell to the ground with its head cut off. "It is comfortable to live alone, eat alone and survive alone. But…"

Why was I acting this way? If anyone asked me, I couldn't exactly explain. But I could say one thing with certainty.

"I know one novel that developed in such a way and was ruined."

"Huh?"

I thought it every time but I wasn't a protagonist. I wouldn't be a hero or a savior. But…

Lee Gilyoung's eyes were shaking. I lifted him onto my back again and said.

"Hold on tight."

I wouldn't let Lee Gilyoung die. At least, not today.

Chapter 32: Ep. 7 – Landlord, V

As I watched the surging wave of monsters, I gave strength to my thighs. The level 15 strength condensed at once and my feet developed a strong propulsion force.

The ground rats ran from all directions and the hard horns of the grolls flew from unexpected places.

My skin, which was tempered by the level 15 physique, became bruised and bloody from the grolls' horns.

[The number one bookmark has been activated.]

Bookmark was activated and Kim Namwoon's Blackening wrapped around my body. I pushed away all the monsters coming from the front.

Fangs burrowed into my body and a few ground rats bit my thighs. However, I didn't stop. Run and run again.

Over here. Finally, the original wall was visible. I jumped over the ground rats. There was a green zone for two people shining.

By the way…shit.

[Green Zone 1/2]

There was already someone inside.

"…"

I forgot about the monsters coming from behind and stared at him. There was a guy who should never be there.

"Hey."

He turned to me.

"Can't you get out? You don't even need to stay in here."

"It is difficult. I am tired today."

I pushed to punch this asshole's face. I didn't understand. This wasn't the 'third regression' Yoo Joonghyuk that I knew.

In Ways of Survival, it was written that Yoo Joonghyuk only found the first hidden green zone in the fourth regression… damn, did he know about this place since the second regression and it just wasn't described? Then why didn't he originally use it in the third regression?

Grrrr!

There were the cries of the ground rats chasing me from behind. It was too late to blame the writer. I could feel Lee Gilyoung's breathing. I stared into Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes. We spoke at almost the same time.

"Take the kid."

"Give me the child."

Still, it was lucky. The constellations would hear my words.

[Green Zone 2/2]

I moved Lee Gilyoung and the mark of the green zone changed. Now Lee Gilyoung was safe.

"Hyung! Wait a minute! Hyung!"

Lee Gilyoung urgently tried to rush towards me but Yoo Joonghyuk's hand restrained him. I swung my sword towards the ground rats.

[The constellation 'Bald General of Justice' has closed his eyes.]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is watching you with uncomfortable eyes.]

At the last minute, Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes seemed to move.

｢ I told you that you would die. ｣

The waves of monsters headed towards me. Now there were no more green zones remaining.

"I won't die."

I ignored the monsters and put a hand in my pocket. In fact, I really didn't want to use this. I couldn't be assured that there would be no aftereffects. Now I had to believe in the Fourth Wall.

｢ That…? ｣

Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes shook with surprise. This bastard, did he find out? Well, I wouldn't have known this method without him.

I looked down at the white stone shining in the palm of my hand.

[Specter's Stone.]

It was an item I gained by hunting specters on the way to Chungmuro.

Hundreds of ground rats started biting at my body.

I was bleeding from minor wounds and the shoulders struck by the grolls' horns were red with blood. As the durability of my body rapidly diminished, I put the stone into my mouth.

Then something like water vapor started to emerge from my mouth. The water vapor formed a fog that covered me.

[The Welcome Prison is activated.]

The ground rats and grolls stopped attacking me at once.

Everything around me started to distort. The platform, Yoo Joonghyuk and Lee Gilyoung calling out to me.

I became a 'ghost'.

「 Dokja. 」

I noticed as soon as I heard my mother's voice. This was a dream.

I tried not to get caught up in it but it wasn't easy this time. The floor sank like a quagmire and swallowed me.

[Due to excessive immersion, the influence of Fourth Wall has temporarily weakened.]

Scenes started to weave in front of me, no matter what I wanted.

A living room covered with blood. The cold body of a man. The back of a woman looking down at the body. No. This memory was difficult to remember. I couldn't remember it.

I shook my head furiously and the scene in front of me scattered. This damn trauma…

It was a memory I didn't want to see.

This was why I was reluctant to eat the Specter's Stone. The Specter's Stone temporarily made the user a 'ghost' and turned them invisible to monsters. But it has a side effect of causing the user's trauma to peak.

That's why I didn't give it to the other party members. If it had been used by someone other than myself, they might've turned into a madman.

…….

I had to endure, even if my head was hurting like crazy.

Certainly, the Fourth Wall was a scam. The skill would even be able to eat away at this stone. I wouldn't see this effect even with the superior 'Mental Barrier'. Where was it? If my guess was correct, this skill…

「Yoo Joonghyuk? Are you Yoo Joonghyuk?」

I thought a trauma had started again but it wasn't my voice. It wasn't a voice created by my memories. I looked back and saw a strange woman.

「…You aren't Yoo Joonghyuk. I think you are Korean but who are you?」

A dazzling blonde foreigner. She was a little girl with a short height. The girl looked at me for a long time with an incomprehensible expression.

「That…I don't understand. I've seen the future a number of times but I've never seen you before…」

In the girl's left eye, an ominous red swirl could be seen. The pages flashed in my head. I knew this person. No, there was absolutely no way I couldn't know her. In this case…

[The exclusive skill, Character List is activated.]

[The character 'Anna Croft' is using 'Mental Barrier Lv. 6'.]

[Character List ignores Mental Barrier Lv. 6.]

[There is too much information about this person. Character List is converted to Character Summary.]

[Character Summary]

Name: Anna Croft

Exclusive Attributes: Prophet (Legend), Savior (Legend)

Exclusive Skills: Future Sight Lv. 5, Past Sight Lv. 4, Insight Lv. 8, Clairvoyance Lv. 4, Advanced Magic Training Lv. 4, Mental Barrier Lv. 6, Lie Detection Lv. 7, Great Demon's Eyes Lv. 1…

A woman who could ignore space constraints and freely enter the consciousness of other people. A woman who saw the future and tried to design the future of the world. There was only one 'woman' with such a way of thinking in Ways of Survival.

"Anna Croft."

「…How do you know me?」

Her eyes widened and she glared at me.

I replied quietly, "I'm a prophet."

[The character Anna Croft has triggered Lie Detection Lv. 7.]

[Lie Detection has confirmed that your words are false.]

Indeed, I couldn't lie to a true prophet.

「…Reveal your true identity. Who are you?」

Her small lips were tightly closed. It looked as though she was protesting.

I anticipated how the situation would roughly occur. The woman noticed my presence, perhaps because the influence of Fourth Wall temporarily weakened. If Fourth Wall was really the skill I thought it was…

By the way… it was disappointing.

"Do you really not know who I am?"

「…Huh?」

"Didn't I send you the ichthyosaur's core?"

Anna's lips slowly widened.

"You must've implanted the 'great demon's eyes' with the power of the core. Right?"

「T-Then you? You asked for Broken Faith…?」

[Great Demon's Eyes.] It was a huge one million coin item that was taken by this woman with a damn diamond sponsor. I felt envious.

「You! What is your name? How…」

[The influence of the exclusive skill 'Fourth Wall' is slowly returning.]

「Why… why can't I see anything…?」

Her eyes became blurred. The influence of the Great Demon's Eyes, which could interfere with the consciousness of others, weakened and her figured gradually faded. I waved my hands.

"Someday we will meet. Wait across the continent."

[The exclusive skill Fourth Wall has been completely restored.]

Anna completely disappeared.

I sighed with relief. In fact, my spirit had been fluctuating back and forth when talking to Anna Croft. It wasn't very good.

[Due to the skill effect, immunity to Welcome Prison has occurred.]

…Dammit, the effect took place too late.

I felt my consciousness clear up.

The discomfort still remained but it was much better than before. I took a deep breath and slowly exhaled. I looked at the distinct facts one by one in order to regain my rationality.

I am Kim Dokja. The world was destroyed. Ways of Survival had become reality. This was…Welcome Prison. I ate the Specter's Stone and was a ghost for a while. If I was a ghost, I wouldn't be attacked by the underground species.

Yes, that's right. So… the world looked like this.

In the midst of the landscape that seemed like I had eaten drugs, the flow of time was hardly noticeable. I became a bit uneasy.

What happened to Yoo Sangah, Lee Hyunsung and Jung Heewon? That Joonghyuk bastard, did he kill Gilyoung? Was the third scenario still in progress? What if there were still ground rats around? Were the grolls circling in order to eat me?

If so…

…Hyung.

…Please.

…Dokja-ssi!

Voices flashed through my head.

[The exclusive skill 'Evil Destroying Skill Lv. 1' is activated.]

Yes, it was time to go back.

I breathed out roughly. There was a soft texture touching my cheek.

"Dokja-ssi!"

The fog faded and my vision became clear. The first thing that I saw was Yoo Sangah's face. Lee Hyunsung and Jung Heewon's worried faces also appeared.

"…The scenario?"

"It ended Dokja-ssi. We did it. We did it!"

…I see. We did it.

I looked at the agitated party members and tried to move my body. I had remained stiff for a long time and my muscles barely listened to me.

"Don't be…pleased."

"Huh?"

"Only one day has passed. Yesterday was the third day…"

Lee Hyunsung caught me as I tried to get up.

"Dokja-ssi! It isn't possible. You haven't slept at all."

"What time is it now?"

"It is 8:30 a.m. 30 minutes have passed since the scenario ended."

8:30… fortunately, not too much time passed. By the way, there was a face missing.

"Where is Gilyoung?"

"Ah, Gilyoung…"

Before Jung Heewon spoke, I already discovered where Jung Heewon was. Lee Jihye and Yoo Joonghyuk were looking down at Lee Gilyoung a few steps away.

…No, what was that bastard Yoo Joonghyuk doing?

At this moment, I remembered how Yoo Joonghyuk was surprised when he saw my party. Don't tell me, when Yoo Joonghyuk used Sage's Eye…?

"When… you have chosen? Obvious never…before."

Due to the aftereffects of using the stone, Yoo Joonghyuk's voice wasn't heard properly. Then Lee Gilyoung started talking.

"It is okay."

"…You really won't go with me?"

"Yes."

"You can become much stronger with me than with him. You still won't go?"

"Yes. I won't."

"…Stupid kid."

Yoo Joonghyuk frowned and looked my way.

[Exclusive skill, Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint stage 2 has been activated!]

「…Lucky guy. He will be helpful so let's keep him a little longer.」

I wanted to say something but I had no energy in my body.

"Dokja hyung!"

Once he discovered that I woke up, Lee Gilyoung rushed towards me with swollen eyes. Yoo Joonghyuk's thoughts still rang in my head.

「 There is no time to delay. I have to finish the attack today. Otherwise… 」

…Attack? What was he talking about?

I had to think… Damn, I'm too tired. As I relaxed my body, the softness of the thigh I was lying on touched my cheek again.

"Yoo Sangah-ssi…"

"Y-Yes!"

"Sorry, I'm going to sleep a bit…"

Then I fell sleep. It was a sweet sleep without any dreams.

I woke up two hours later.

[Hey, how long are you going to sleep?]

I opened my eyes at the loud and unpleasant voice. This time, the texture against my cheek was much thicker and harder than before.

"…Ah, Dokja-ssi woke up."

Smiling lips. Jung Heewon was looking down at me.

"Yoo Sangah-ssi took a break. We didn't sleep well last night."

I turned my head and saw Yoo Sangah sleeping against a wall. Jung Heewon smiled.

"By the way, is Lee Hyunsung's thigh comfortable?"

I turned and saw Lee Hyunsung drooling.

"Today in the morning… the on-call officer will conduct the duties…"

…I thought the height of the pillow wasn't right. It turned out to be Lee Hyunsung's thigh. It was an army pillow with a bloody smell.

"Dokja hyung…"

I felt a heavy feeling on my stomach and looked down to see Lee Gilyoung leaning against me and sleeping.

The moment I carefully raised my body, I heard Bihyung's voice.

[Haha, you are awake? Then take this.]

Messages poured into my ears.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is sad about your trauma.]

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is interested in your past.]

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' is wondering about your mother.]

[Constellations have sponsored you 1,800 coins.]

…Sons of a bitches. They were trying to steal a peek at my past.

This wasn't the end.

[You have endured Chungmuro's night without the green zone.]

[You have accomplished the 'Never-ending Dawn' achievement at Chungmuro Station!]

[You have earned 1,000 coins as an achievement reward.]

[Coins Possessed: 22,650 C]

I had achieved the target amount. I didn't experience a hard night for nothing.

This time Jung Heewon asked. "What should we do today? Like yesterday…"

"No, not today. That only works for one day."

Of course, if we were lucky then we might be able to find the randomly generated green zone. Unfortunately, there was no detailed description of the location of the green zones on day four in Ways of Survival.

"Then…"

Jung Heewon's expression became dark. But it was unnecessary worry.

"Today we will completely end the third scenario."

"Huh?"

I carefully laid Lee Gilyoung and got up.

It wasn't originally planned but I couldn't wait after hearing Yoo Joonghyuk's thoughts. Yesterday, he had no choice but to buy time. However, the story was different today.

"I will drag out the land owners.

"…How?"

Jung Heewon asked and I looked at Lee Hyunsung, who was sleeping deeply.

"I have to use the secret weapon that I saved."

Now it was time to change the owner of Chungmuro.

Chapter 33: Ep. 8 – Emergency Defense, I

「 Lee Hyunsung was dozing like an officer on duty, 」

Perhaps there would be such a description in Ways of Survival. And maybe there was this sentence.

「 Maybe Lee Hyunsung didn't know. What would happen to him today. 」

"Hyunsung-ssi?"

"…Ah, hmm, I fell asleep for a moment. Dokja-ssi, are you well rested?"

"Yes, I'm fine. By the way, you were talking. Officer on duty…"

"Eh, really?"

"Something about Second Class Soldier Lee Hyunsung…"

Lee Hyunsung's face turned red.

"T-That… Just a trauma from my days as a soldier."

"Days as a soldier? Isn't Lee Hyunsung an officer?"

"That…I was transferred to the third unit when I was a corporal."

"I heard these cases are rare. You must've been well-suited for the army."

Lee Hyunsung laughed. It was a laugh that I could understand. There were few people well-suited for the army. The people who remained didn't fit elsewhere.

Then it was time to throw a small stone.

"Still, I'm glad that Lee Hyunsung-ssi is here.

"Huh?"

"I'm relieved when Lee Hyunsung-ssi blocks in front. It feels like someone is protecting me."

"…Is that so?"

Lee Hyunsung smiled slightly. It was a weak smile, but it was certainly a comforting smile. After exchanging brief greetings, I separated from Lee Hyunsung.

In the original third round development of Ways of Survival, Lee Hyunsung experienced a character evolution by protecting the people at Gumho Station from the Cheoldoo Group. But Jung Heewon took that chance.

Now Yoo Sangah, Jung Heewon and Lee Gilyoung were approaching me. I faced them.

"Did you see the demonstration? Just do what I did."

"Yes. Well…pretty much. But why do we have to do this?"

There was a reason for it.

[The character 'Lee Hyunsung' has started to feel responsible.]

Lee Hyunsung was currently wiping his shield with an innocent expression.

Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint was a scam. At least, as far as 'characters' went.

"I want to help Hyunsung-ssi. He looks a bit down these days. Won't he feel better if you cheer him up?"

I said this for Lee Hyunsung's sake. The innocent Yoo Sangah nodded her head.

"Is it the saying 'dance like a while at praise?'"

"It is similar."

"I understand. I'll give it a try!"

Unlike Yoo Sangah, Jung Heewon had an uncertain expression.

"Dokja-ssi."

"Yes."

"Dokja-ssi's sponsor isn't something like 'One-Eyed Fortuneteller', right?"

"…What is that?"

"You don't know?"

Well, there was something like this. For a moment, I thought that Jung Heewon might be the writer of Ways of Survival. For example, Gung Ye was the 'One-Eyed Maitreya'.

"It isn't that. I have a special skill. It is a skill that understands people well."

"…I don't know if I want to ask, so I won't."

"Thank you."

"But have you ever used it on me?"

I almost showed emotions on my face. It was fortunate that Jung Heewon didn't have Lie Detection. I looked at Lee Gilyoung and said.

"I only use it on men."

"Oh my."

It wasn't a lie. I haven't read Jung Heewon's heart. So far.

"Anyway, I am asking everyone to do this. First is Jung Heewon-ssi, then Yoo Sangah and Gilyoung is last. Please take it in turns to speak to him."

"'Oh my, I really believe in Hyunsung-ssi!' That type of feeling?"

"Please don't go so far."

"Sigh, I am really going to die."

Still, she needed to do it. In order for this plan to succeed, Lee Hyunsung's 'attribute evolution' was absolutely necessary. I would've planned a bit sooner if I knew Yoo Joonghyuk would act like this… but if we tried hard, I should be able to see the result today.

In fact, they seemed to be doing well.

"Hyunsung-ssi is really dependable. You are like a pine tree."

"Haha, thank you Heewon-ssi. My favourite song is Green Pine."

[The character 'Lee Hyunsung' feels proud.]

"I didn't ask."

[The character 'Lee Hyunsung' feels a bit sullen.]

"I don't think I've seen a righteous person like Hyunsung-ssi."

"Ah… that isn't the case. Still, thank you. Yoo Sangah-ssi."

[The character 'Lee Hyunsung' has started to worry about justice.]

"Hyunsung hyung has the best muscles."

"Thank you, everyone."

[The character 'Lee Hyunsung' has increased his self-esteem.]

It was fortunate that Lee Hyunsung was a simple person and such empty praises worked well. After repeating the same conversation several times like this, the system messages started to change.

[The character 'Lee Hyunsung' is waiting for a chance to evolve his attribute.]

Okay. It went smoothly.

Yoo Sangah asked in a slightly worried tone. "But I think Hyunsung-ssi is a bit burdened…"

Yoo Sangah was really nice. Even in this situation, she was concerned about someone else's heart. I didn't have that ability.

"Maybe a bit. But It is necessary. There are some people in the world who become stronger as they carry more burdens."

"Ah…"

"Don't worry. And…Gilyoung, did you do what I asked?"

"Yes, hyung."

Lee Gilyoung replied from next to Yoo Sangah. On his head, there was a pair of small cockroaches like they were antennae.

"That noona, she is on B1."

"Thank you."

Lee Hyunsung was good. Now it was time to steal the power of others.

I walked up the stairs alone. The people of the Landlord Alliance welcomed me as I went up.

"Haha, who is this? If it isn't the illegal tenant."

"…"

"You are coming up here after doing well. Did you really survive yesterday without a room? Did Yoo Joonghyuk help you?"

I ignored them and kept walking. The Landlord Alliance members kept talking, as if they thought I was scared.

"Isn't it hard to live with Yoo Joonghyuk? Enter our alliance. Pildu-ssi said he would let you."

I didn't care and counted the remaining green zones on every floor. One, two, three… in order for this plan to succeed, I couldn't miss a single one.

"Of course, under the condition that you bring both women."

Now there were 11 green zones remaining. The number had reduced a lot after yesterday's scenario. It was a close number to carry out the plan.

"Hey, are you ignoring me now?"

"I'm listening. Tell him I'm thinking about it."

The alliance members looked at each other and chuckled at my words. They could laugh like that now.

I was walking up the escalator when a blade suddenly reached my neck. I felt very few signs it was coming… there was only one skill that boasted this type of concealed movements in the beginning.

[Ghost Walk.]

"I'm disappointed, ahjussi."

Lee Jihye. A proud girl with outstanding fighting skills. She wasn't chosen by the Duke of Loyalty and Warfare for nothing.

"Ahjussi, don't you know what will happen to those women if you make a deal with them?"

"I know."

"Do you really know? Yesterday, wouldn't you rather die?"

I shrugged.

"Put away the sword. Let's talk."

"Talk? You came to find me on purpose."

"Yes."

Lee Jihye put away the sword. I followed behind Lee Jihye. Lee Jihye walked from B1 to the ticket barrier at the entrance. We seemed to walk for a while.

"What did you want to talk about?"

"But why are you standing there?"

"Master told me to defend this place."

"…Defend?"

"That's why I can't let you pass."

Lee Jihye touched the ticket gate and drew her hand across her neck. I looked at the passage beyond the ticket gate. There were exit numbers leading to the ground. But not all numbers led to the ground. At that moment, I had an ominous feeling.

…That Yoo Joonghyuk, surely he wasn't trying that route?

If Yoo Joonghyuk wanted to protect this place, there was only one reason.

As the scenario was in progress, he was secretly trying to attack the 'hidden dungeon' of Chungmuro. Hidden dungeon attack. It sounded good. In fact, it wasn't bad if the main character became stronger.

The problem was that this dungeon was a place that Yoo Joonghyuk couldn't clear until the end of the third regression. It looked like I should finish this quickly.

"I need your help."

"My help?"

"Today, I will shatter Gong Pildu's party."

"…Are you serious?"

Lee Jihye looked at me like she was trying to see my heart.

[Your understanding of the character 'Lee Jihye' has increased.]

"Ahjussi isn't strong enough. You won't be able to get rid of them."

"Even if you help me?'

Lee Jihye's head jerked like her pride was damaged.

It was natural. Lee Jihye had already challenged Gong Pildu the first day she came to this station. Then she ran away. If Yoo Joonghyuk hadn't appeared to rescue her, she would be dead.

"I have a way. I can do it if you help me."

"…Master told me to stay here."

"If you don't help, most of the people here will die."

"People will die anyway."

"Did Yoo Joonghyuk say that?"

Lee Jihye's eyes shook.

"The boy we talked to yesterday is dead. Do you understand?"

"…I know."

"Maybe he could've lived. Then today, he would be rushing at us to tell us about Yoo Joonghyuk."

"That…"

"Yoo Joonghyuk killed him. He could've saved him."

I felt complicated while talking. I noticed that I wasn't much different from Yoo Joonghyuk. The subway, Gumho Station… I ignored people I might've been able to save because my safety was being threatened.

But hypocrites could speak plausible words.

"I saw the video of your scenario when I was on the subway."

Lee Jihye's small shoulders shook.

"It was a video where you killed your friend to survive."

"…Stop."

"In fact, you didn't want to do that."

[The character 'Lee Jihye' is greatly disturbed.]

"What do you know?"

"I know what I know. Of course I don't know. I'm just talking to myself."

"…"

"But since I am talking, I wanted to say this. If you turn away today, you will regret it for the rest of your life. Definitely."

[The character 'Lee Jihye' has fallen into deep agony.]

I didn't know the 'human' Lee Jihye but I knew the 'character' Lee Jihye. This girl was a loyal subordinate of Yoo Joonghyuk. But that was a story for the future, not now. She admired Yoo Joonghyuk's strength but she was essentially different from Yoo Joonghyuk.

Lee Jihye opened her mouth a few minutes later.

"If I help, people can live?"

"Not everyone, but some will survive."

"…What should I do?"

"I will start at 7 o'clock this evening."

I told her the plan. In order to implement this plan, Lee Jihye needed to do the things I told her.

Lee Jihye stared blankly and opened her mouth.

"Are you sane? You will really do this?"

"Yes."

"…Honestly, I don't think it will work. I'll tell you in advance. I don't think I can help."

"The choice is yours."

She said this but Lee Jihye would surely move. She was the person who was chosen by the Duke of Loyalty and Warfare.

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' likes your impudence.]

[100 coins have been sponsored.]

[Lee Jihye's sponsor likes you.]

[100 coins have been sponsored.]

Now all the preparations were finished.

Chapter 34: Ep. 8 – Emergency Defense, II

It was finally the promised time.

I gathered on the line 3 platform with the party. Every member was checking their weapons. Lee Hyunsung seemed to have handled it properly.

"I did as Dokja-ssi asked."

Since the weapons they had used so far were very old, I asked Lee Hyunsung to produce new weapons. The materials were from the grade 8 underground species, the groll that were killed in the struggle last night. The blades and spears were made by cutting the horns of the groll. They weren't long enough but they were appropriate as a temporary measure.

Jung Heewon smiled like she was satisfied.

"Isn't this much lighter and durable?"

"Ah… Dokja-ssi, Hyunsung-ssi. Thank you very much."

Yoo Sangah bowed. The groll's horn couldn't be used to make a blunt weapon so only Lee Gilyoung was still carrying a weapon from a ground rat. Lee Gilyoung was silently gazing at the ground. This sulking child… I stroked his head and said.

"It won't be easy. This situation can be more dangerous than yesterday. Are you all ready?"

The party members nodded.

"Then we will start."

From now on, it was a fight against time. We had to work as quickly as possible before the Landlord Alliance noticed the situation. Jung Heewon, Yoo Sangah and Lee Gilyoung disappeared to their respective floors for their missions, while I started climbing the stairs with Lee Hyunsung.

Lee Hyunsung spoke in a voice without any confidence.

"Dokja-ssi, I am unsure."

…He was the core of this operation. He shouldn't be talking like this. I deliberately answered in a strong voice.

"It will be fine."

However, Lee Hyunsung's face was still timid.

"I think that people are relying on me more than they should. I'm not sure I can do well."

"Hyunsung-ssi is a dependable person."

"…Thank you for saying so. In fact, this is my first experience. When I was in the army, I never got someone's trust like this."

It was the first time I've heard this story. That reminded me, I didn't really know about Lee Hyunsung's army life. Ways of Survival only mentioned it in passing.

"Once this is over, I want to hear Hyunsung-ssi's story."

I said it casually but Lee Hyunsung was more shaken than I thought.

[The character 'Lee Hyunsung' has started to open his heart to you.]

[Your understanding of the character 'Lee Hyunsung' has greatly increased.]

"Sometimes I feel strange when talking to Dokja-ssi."

"Huh? Why…?"

"It seems like you knew me from a long time ago… I can't explain it well…" Lee Hyunsung scratched his head and trailed off. "Ah, I don't mean anything strange. I just…"

"I know what you mean."

"Thank you. I'm also curious about Dokja-ssi's story."

"My story?"

"Yes. I have never seen a person like Dokja-ssi before. I'm curious about what you did before this happened."

Somehow, I felt a bit strange. The 'supporting cast' of the novel I read was curious about me. I had a bit uncomfortable and had an itchy feeling.

"It isn't very interesting."

"I still want to hear it."

Suddenly, a question popped into my head.

If Ways of Survival hadn't become reality, would Lee Hyunsung be living in the same world as me? Or did the novel suddenly emerge as a reality? I didn't know. One thing was for sure. Lee Hyunsung was now a 'living person' in front of me.

"Oh, Yoo Joonghyuk's friend. Did you come to negotiate?"

At this time, a number of middle-aged men came forward. Chungmuro's Landlord Alliance.

"Hmm…but where are the women?"

The middle-aged man who spoke was holding a woman by her hair. She was part of the group that had been in the five spaces green zone just yesterday. The man laughed at my gaze.

"Ahh, this friend didn't see her land… This matter doesn't concern you."

"S-Save me. Help me!"

The woman was gazing at me pitifully. In my head, the constellations of the 'absolute good' started clamoring. But I waited. It was because I had someone who would act instead of me.

"Let her go."

It was Lee Hyunsung.

"Who are you?"

Lee Hyunsung looked at me after the middle-aged man's question. It was like he was asking for permission. I nodded.

[The character 'Lee Hyunsung' wants to practice justice of his own will.]

[The character 'Lee Hyunsung' is about to evolve.]

The allied members pulled out their weapons and exerted a tremendous momentum. I checked the time. It was time to begin. I raised my stats with my coins.

[1,200 coins have been invested into 'physique'.]

[Physique Lv. 15 -> Physique Lv. 18]

[Your physique level has increased dramatically!]

[1,200 coins have been invested into 'strength'.]

[Strength Lv. 15 -> Strength Lv. 18]

[Your strength level has increased dramatically!]

This was the maximum efficiency with minimal investment.

[Coins Possessed: 20,450 C]

I had another place to spend the remaining coins.

Kwaaaang!

Small blasts were heard all over the subway. A big and small uproar followed. It was the signal.

"Hyunsung-ssi!"

Lee Hyunsung nodded. We ran forward towards the men in the front row. The confused alliance members shouted.

"What, you bastards!"

[The exclusive skill 'Purest Sword Force' has been activated.]

Sukakak!

"Kyaaak!"

The arm of the middle-aged man holding the woman's head flew away. The middle-aged men froze at the blood that emerged. Lee Hyunsung and I ignored them and kept running. The middle-aged men belatedly chased after us.

"These crazy guys! Stop them!"

A corridor on B2. It was the private land of Gong Pildu.

[You have invaded private property!]

"Surround them!"

The alliance members waiting in front discovered us. Some of the alliance members were missing, so there were less than expected. 20 in the back, 12 in the back. However, it was still a lot of people.

Well, I had no intention of dealing with all of them.

The moment I was about to clash with the alliance members, Lee Hyunsung moved ahead of me with a steel shield.

[The character 'Lee Hyunsung' has used the stigma 'Great Mountain Push Lv. 1'.]

Kwakakakak!

Lee Hyunsung used his tremendous muscle strength and they fell like dominoes.

[The character 'Gong Pildu' has activated 'Armed Zone Lv. 4!]

Turrets started to rise from all over the territory. The turrets were charged with red magic bullets and were prepared to fire. There were five mini-turrets. The level of Armed Zone had rised again.

"Dokja-ssi!"

I overtook Lee Hyunsung and at the same time, I received his shield. As soon as the solid shield entered my hand, a stunning shock from a bullet pushed me away.

Kwang! Kwaang! Kwaang!

It was heavy, as if I was hit by a cannon. The arm holding the shield was in pain. The level 19 magic power was strong. But I had to hold on.

[The compensation effect of Unbroken Faith has increased physique to level 20.]

[A toughness that is one step higher has protected your body.]

"A cheeky tenant is here."

Beyond the voice, I heard Gong Pildu's gruff voice.

Our feet were tied up by the powerful magic bullets while the alliance members were still chasing us. The durability of the iron shield was falling. Now it could only block a dozen magic bullets in the future.

Gong Pildu spoke like it was interesting.

"I don't think you came here to pay a fine. What is going on?"

"Now I will quit being a tenant."

"How interesting. Are you coveting my land?"

"We'll see. More than that…"

[Some of the trespassers' stats are reduced by the effect of Gong Pildu's private land.]

…It had started. This was why Gong Pildu's power was scary. The special effect of Armed Zone was a 'private land debuff'.

Red magic power started condensing on the turrets.

[The character 'Gong Pildu' is preparing the 'strengthened magic bullets'.

As long as the combo of 'private land' and 'armed zone' wasn't broken, there were very few incarnations who could deal with Gong Pildu.

"Die."

The moment that the enhanced magic bullets were about to be launched, I heard the screams of people from far away. The wounded landlord alliance members were rushing to this side.

"P-Pildu-ssi! The land…!"

There were signs they were injured by something sharp. Lee Jihye had moved. Now was the time. I looked at Lee Hyunsung.

"Hyunsung-ssi, now."

Lee Hyunsung's eyes were shaking.

"Smash it."

Lee Hyunsung raised his fists up high. He looked uneasy and irritated, but there was also a firm determination not to retreat.

[The character 'Lee Hyunsung' has evolved.]

There was a blinding light and silver aura started to appear around Lee Hyunsung's bdoy.

I was a bit emotional at the sight. Lee Hyunsung's 'character evolution' was one of the scenes I liked most in Ways of Survival. It was the reason why Steel Sword Lee Hyunsung was called one of the strongest supporting characters. That is—

[Due to the character evolution, a new stigma has been opened.]

When it came to 'one blow', Lee Hyunsung was considered one of the strongest in Ways of Survival.

[The character 'Lee Hyunsung' has used the stigma 'Great Mountain Smash Lv. 1'.]

Pale magic power gathered around Lee Hyunsung's fist and within seconds, Lee Hyunsung's arms became big enough to transcend common sense.

"Haaaat!"

Lee Hyunsung's fists flammed down onto the ground.

Kwaaaaang!

There was a loud sound and the fragments of the broken floor scattered in the air. The alliance members screamed.

"W-What?"

Jjejejejeok!

Dangerous cracks spread across the ground and the positions of the turrets started to twist. The magic bullets were fired towards the wrong place. An explosion spread and dust clouds rose. Then after a while.

Ku ku ku ku!

There was a great vibration and the ground of B2 started to collapse.

[The green zone has been destroyed.]

[The character Gong Pildu's private land has been destroyed.]

I looked at the collapsing ground and grinned towards Gong Pildu.

"Let's go back to the days when we didn't have our own land."

Chapter 35: Ep. 8 – Emergency Defense, III

I couldn't kill Gong Pildu because he was useful in future scenarios, but I needed Gong Pildu to leave his land.

This was a difficult dilemma so I focused on the premise of the dilemma. For example if he was on 'private land' then I had to destroy the private land.

"Uhh… h-he is out."

"This dog…"

However, using this method required strong force. An overwhelming force that could destroy a 'huge' private land in one blow. That's why I hastened to evolve Lee Hyunsung.

"Eeeeok…!"

The people who fell down to the third underground floor groaned with pain.

The operation was a success.

The green zones disappeared and the landlords lost their 'rooms'. Gong Pildu's face was covered with dust and looking this way. As he was about to open his mouth, Bihyung's voice entered their ears.

[What are you doing now? Waaah!]

'Be quiet'.

[Crazy bastard! The dokkaebis of Chungmuro are freaking out because of you!]

I had a headache from the messages of the constellations that rang in my head.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' likes your recklessness.]

[The constellation 'Bald General of Justice' likes your revolution.]

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' likes the destruction and chaos.]

[300 coins have been sponsored.]

"Y-You bastard!"

"Kill them!"

The alliance members shouted at us. I started running down to the platform with Lee Hyunsung.

[The exclusive skill, Character List is activated.]

[Character Summary]

Name: Lee Hyunsung

Exclusive Attributes: Person who has Regained Justice (Rare)

Stigma: Great Mountain Smash Lv. 1, Great Mountain Push Lv. 2.

Exclusive Skills: Bayonet Skills Lv. 2, Camouflage Lv. 2, Patience Lv. 1, Sense of Justice Lv. 2, Weapons Training Lv. 3.

The evolution of Lee Hyunsung was successful. Strictly speaking, it was just the start. But the fact that Lee Hyunsung could use Great Mountain Smash would quickly enhance the power of the party.

"Hyunsung-ssi, how many more times can you use it?"

"…Probably once or twice more."

Lee Hyunsung was gasping for breath and obviously quite worn out.

It was natural. The Great Mountain Smash stigma was an ultimate skill that consumed a tremendous amount of stamina and magic power. There weren't many skills that exceeded Great Mountain Smash when it came to pure physical force among the physical reinforcement type skills.

The group of people scattered all over the place seemed to be running in this direction. I asked Yoo Sangah who was running in the front.

"Was there anywhere you couldn't break?"

"I broke both of them!"

"I didn't realize the rooms could be broken like this. We banged hard on the ground together and it smashed…"

Jung Heewon followed.

Yoo Sangah, Jung Heewon and Lee Gilyoung took out the small green zones. Most of the green zones fit three or fewer people, apart from Gong Pildu's green zone. There was some was an ambiguous scale but there was a separate person handling those.

[Hey! Can't you hear me? What are you going to do now?]

On the other hand, Bihyung was still shouting across the 'dokkaebi communication'.

'What are you worried about?'

[Have you forgotten? I'm don't have the only channel in Chungmuro. Do you really not know what will happen if you do this?]

Of course I knew. Maybe the constellations in the channel with Gong Pildu would be in a frenzy right now.

'What channel is Gong Pildu in?'

[…Biryu's channel. BIR-3642.]

'Biryu is the one who came while you were busy for a bit?'

[That's right. That asshole.]

'How is his subscription configured?'

[It is the flagship channel for the 'finding amusement' group.]

The dokkaebis whose main purpose was to find amusement. That's why their broadcasts were radical. Great. Then the response within the channel would be much hotter than expected. Everyone would've eaten the sweet potatoes properly.

I headed down the stairs of the transfer corridor to line 4 and saw a welcome face. The blade was moving through the air.

"You broke them?"

"Yes. It was easy."

Lee Jihye's role was to take out the green zones that contained five to eight people. It was a task that Jung Heewon would find hard to do alone. Indeed, she was Yoo Joonghyuk's disciple and was the incarnation of the sage hero. Now there were no more green zones left in Chungmuro.

"Now what? Those jerks will come running wildly. Ah, there they are."

Lee Jihye's expression twisted as she looked behind me.

"I'm not going to help you this time."

"I don't need it."

Jung Heewon scowled as she watched Lee Jihye retreating.

"What is with her?"

Come to think of it, Jung Heewon didn't know about Lee Jihye. But there was no time to tell her.

[Haha… you are fucked now.]

A message was heard along with Bihyung's words.

[A bounty scenario has occurred!]

[Bounty Scenario – Assassination Commission]

Category: Sub

Difficulty: C

Clear Conditions: The constellations of Channel #BIR-3642 have requested to kill a certain person. Please kill 'Kim Dokja' of Chungmuro Station.

Time Limit: 10 minutes.

Compensation: 2,000 coins.

Failure: None

I thought this situation would unfold. It was going to be a lot of fun. Now all the incarnations in the region would gather on the platform of line 3 to catch me. Jung Heewon asked by his side.

"I will receive 2,000 coins if I kill Dokja-ssi right now?"

"Why, are you going to kill me?"

"Aye, perhaps. If you give me 200,000 coins then I don't know."

Does this girl know how much 200,000 coins were worth?

"Dokja-ssi. Go behind me."

Lee Hyunsung stepped out ahead of me. Jung Heewon stayed beside me while Yoo Sangah and Lee Gilyoung moved to block any access. It was a defense formed around me. Jung Heewon smiled.

"Now I can pay back my debt."

"Dokja-ssi, we'll try to block it somehow."

There were people showing hostility around us. The angry landowners and the tenants were blinded by the bounty quest. I watched Lee Gilyoung holding the weapon and opened my mouth.

"Don't be nervous."

I lightly stroked Lee Gilyoung's shoulder and moved towards the railway tracks.

"We don't have to fight them."

It was a few turns. I had read about such a scene. I didn't have time to check which regression it was but Yoo Joonghyuk had destroyed the green zones as soon as he arrived at Chungmuro.

Even then, it was like the current situation.

[All green zones in this region have been destroyed and the main scenario has collapsed.]

[The difficulty is automatically adjusted according to the remaining schedule of the scenario.]

[The scenario content is updated!]

[Main Scenario #3 – Emergency Defense]

Category: Main

Difficulty: B-

Clear Conditions: All the green zones in the region are destroyed and the monsters that were going to be created in the remaining days have suddenly run wild. Survive against the flood of monsters for the remaining time.

Duration: 8 hours.

Compensation: 1,000 coins.

Failure: —

Originally, there were three days remaining in the scenario.

Now the monsters supposed to be created during the remaining time of the green zone scenario would emerge all at once. In other words, it was simple.

[The emergency defense has begun!]

The defense game had started.

"W-What?"

The people approaching me started screaming. The cries of monsters were heard from outside the screen door. The feast of monsters moved like an angry wave.

"Crazy! What the hell is this?"

The platform of line 3 quickly became a mess. The faces of the people became speculative as they watched the monsters coming from all sides. The bounty scenario was completely forgotten about.

Grrrr!

A few grolls ran and bit some of the alliance members. The upset people were shouting.

Now was the only chance. I shouted to my party.

"Go to the transfer route!"

I started jumping up the transit stairs with my friends. By the time we reached the upper level, people were blocking the path.

"What? Get out of the way!"

"Do you want to fall?"

I kicked some of the followers and pulled out a blade. The people were surprised by the Purest Sword Force blade and backed away.

"You haven't grasped the situation yet."

"W-What?"

"Even if you come up, you won't be able to survive."

There was a sense of despair in the expressions of the people. There were no more rooms. Now there were no more safe zones from the monsters in Chungmuro.

"What should we do?"

"What else? Fight."

"Don't speak crazy words! This is all because of you! If you hadn't broken our rooms…!"

I triggered the Blade of Faith and used it on the transfer stairs.

Kwarurung!

"Uwaaaaack!"

The centre of the staircase fell with a large sound, along with the people. It was cruel but necessary.

"Crazy! Quickly find another staircase! Quickly!"

Well, I don't think it would happen.

Lee Hyunsung was already running. I smashed the transit stairs we came up on and there was only one staircase remaining. Subsequently, the sound of arguing and something breaking was heard on the other side.

"Shit! Waaah!"

The cries of the people trapped on the platform of line 3 were heard. Lee Jihye approached me and asked.

"Ahjussi. This isn't what you told me. If you leave it like this…"

"I know."

I looked at the lower floor that was becoming pandemonium. If I left it like this, they would all be killed. Whether it was from the monsters or using each other's bodies as a stepping stone to come upstairs.

This wasn't what I wanted.

[The exclusive skill 'Bookmark' can now be activated.]

['Character Bookmarks' is activated.]

[Available Bookmark Slots: 3]

[Bringing up the list of available bookmarks.]

[People Listed in the Bookmark Slots]

The Delusion Demon Kim Namwoon (Understanding 35).

Steel Sword Lee Hyunsung (Understanding 65).

Demagogue Cheon Inho (Understanding 20).

I activated the third bookmark.

[The number three bookmark has been activated.]

[The level of the Bookmark skill is low, shortening the activation time.]

[Activation Time: 5 minutes.]

[Your understanding of the character is low, so only a part of the character's skill is activated.]

[Incite Lv.2 has been activated.]

Suddenly, it felt like my tongue was coming alive on its own. This was how Cheon Inho felt. I looked downstairs. In the middle of the mess, I could see a middle-aged man.

"Hey Gong Pildu. How long are you going to stand there?"

Gong Pildu glared at me.

"This dog…!"

"Don't you have to act in order to live? If you move, everyone else can live."

The power of Incite permeated the ears of all the frightened people.

"P-Pildu-ssi!"

"P-Pildu-ssi, please save us!"

Gong Pildu's expression distorted. I felt good. This was what Cheon Inho would've felt at Gumho Station.

"The third scenario isn't as hard as you think. Once everyone gives up on the rooms and participates in the defense, there are enough people to handle the monsters."

My words were half true. If Chungmuro had united before I arrived here, there would be far less victims. After all, the biggest pitfall of this scenario was the green zone.

"If Gong Pildu fights with the people, you can survive."

Those who fight together would survive, those who ran away would die.

[The sponsor behind Lee Jihye agrees with your wisdom.]

[The constellation 'Maritime War God' nods his head.]

"Now there are no rooms for you to run away to. Forget about whether you are a landlord or tenant and fight. Or you will all die."

The more urgent the situation was, the more the effect of Incite would increase.

"Damn, this fucking guy…!"

"Pildu-ssi! Please help us!"

The alliance members gathered around Gong Pildu. If he ran away here alone, Gong Pildu's Landlord Alliance would collapse. In the end Gong Pildu made his decision.

"Dammit… Everybody gather here!"

The people downstairs started gathering around Gong Pildu.

"I need time to install a new Armed Zone. Everybody just hang on!"

The key was Gong Pildu's Armed Zone. However, the weak point was that Armed Zone took time to install every time it moved.

Blood splattered everywhere and people screamed as their limbs were torn off.

"Aaaagh!"

As expected, the first ones who abandoned the formation were the tenants, not the alliance members.

"Yoo Sangah-ssi."

"Yes. Please leave it to me."

I didn't need to explain it. Yoo Sangah already understood what she needed to do.

Her Binding Thread stretched out and started to rescue the people who couldn't fight anymore. In any case, their mission was to buy time for Gong Pildu to deploy Armed Zone.

"U-Uhh… t-thank you."

The tenants hung from the threat and were pulled upstairs.

The rescued tenants were shaking as they wrapped up their injured area. In the meantime, some of the people with weapons carefully looked at me. I smiled at them and said.

"Oh, do you want the bounty?"

[The time limit for the bounty scenario has expired.]

[The bounty hanging on Kim Dokja has been destroyed.]

"Sorry, it is too late."

"I-I'm sorry."

The tenants seemed ashamed as they put away their weapons. I heard Gong Pildu's voice roaring from the bottom.

"Out of the way!"

[The character 'Gong Pildu' has used Private Land Lv. 3!]

[The character 'Gong Pildu' has activated 'Armed Zone Lv. 4!]

There was a mechanical sound as five turrets rose from the ground. The red magic bullets condensed in a short time and started firing.

Dudududududu!

Kwang! Kwaang! Kwaang!

The ground rats screamed as they were hit by the bombardment of magic bullets while the grolls came to a halt. The group of people cried out.

"As expected of Pildu-ssi!"

"Wahhhh!"

It was truly Gong Pildu. In a defense type scenario, there was no incarnation that surpassed a player's combat effectiveness.

The 10 Evils weren't called that for nothing.

"All of you damn scum disappear!"

The agitated Gong Pildu randomly fired. Lee Hyunsung spoke with admiration.

"It is a really tremendous stigma. Is it okay when the magic power consumption is so big?"

"It is a good stigma so it will be okay for a while."

"Should we help…?"

"Gong Pildu alone is sufficient. If we do down then he will be distracted and stop shooting."

The Defense Master sponsor behind Gong Pildu was completely suited for this type of scenario. As long as he supported Gong Pildu, Gong Pildu wouldn't die here. As long as the sponsorship continued.

I sat down and stretched out my legs.

"We will be sucking honey for a while."

"…Is it time for personal maintenance already?"

Lee Hyunsung sat down with me and the party members started to relax one by one. Jung Heewon asked.

"Thank you. I didn't get enough sleep… can I sleep now?"

"Yes."

10 minutes later, Jung Heewon was lying on the ground and snoring. I said yes but I really didn't know how she could sleep so easily.

"A-Aren't we too easygoing?"

Yoo Sangah sounded concerned. Indeed, it would be confusing. There wasn't a 'scenario' like this so far. In fact, all we did was survive the brink of a crisis.

"Think of it as standing on the right line."

"Then over there…"

"They got the wrong line."

The confusion on the lower level had almost died down because of Gong Pildu.

Dudududududu!

"Uwaaaaah!"

He should've lived a better life.

"Fuck! Fuuuuuckers!"

In the midst of the endless procession of monsters, Gong Pildu's screams echoed.

Chapter 36: Ep. 8 – Emergency Defense, IV

One hour after the battle began, Gong Pildu fought and fought. The number of monsters had barely decreased but it was still great. Gong Pildu was considered to have the strongest defense among the 10 Evils for a reason.

"You scum!"

[The character Gong Pildu's Armed Zone has levelled up.

[The character Gong Pildu's Private Land has levelled up!]

[The character Gong Pildu has acquired the Protective Wall skill.]

The level up speed of Armed Zone was fast. The sponsor behind Gong Pildu was rushing to support his growth. If he could survive here, Gong Pildu's growth would be enormous.

As long as he could survive here.

"Uhweeeh…!"

According to the scenario, Gong Pildu had to hold on for seven more hours. It would've been nice if I had popcorn. Too bad.

Lee Jihye was giggling next to me as she watched the bottom floor. She told me earlier that I should save them… it was truly a transformation in the disposition of Yoo Joonghyuk's disciple.

"By the way, why isn't Yoo Joonghyuk here?

"How should I know? Master is always busy."

Busy… yes, he might be busy. The person trying to be all alone was the busiest.

I looked down at the dying Gong Pildu as I asked, "What time did Yoo Joonghyuk enter the dungeon?"

"It is roughly 9 a.m. today…" Lee Jihye stopped speaking and stared at me. "…Wait a minute, how do you know that Master entered a dungeon?"

I ignored Lee Jihye and calculated the time. Now it was 8 p.m. Using simple calculations, it had already been over 11 hours since Yoo Joonghyuk entered. Yet he still hadn't come out…

Damn, I had to move. Yoo Joonghyuk was the main character and it would be difficult if something happened to him.

I opened the dokkaebi communication.

'Bihyung'.

Bihyung floating in the air turned to look at me.

[What is it? Calling me so suddenly.]

'Open the Dokkaebi Bag'.

[What? N-No! I am currently getting a lot of subscriptions!]

I know. My stock price was rising due to my actions with Gong Pildu. My actions of laying a trap and then sitting back meant the constellations of the 'fun seekers' group wouldn't still be on the channel which Gong Pildu belonged to.

Where would the constellations go after leaving the channel?

[New constellations have entered the channel!]

It was naturally Bihyung's channel.

[#BI-7623 channel is ready for an expansion.]

[Huhu, huhuhut, look at this, look at this! Now my channel is also…!]

It wasn't unreasonable for Bihyung to be acting like this. But this wasn't the time for amusement.

'If you don't want your channel to be ruined, open it quickly. You can see that there will be an advertisement in preparation for the channel expansion'.

[Ah, shit… really…]

Bihyung grumbled but opened the Dokkaebi Bag after showing an advertisement. It was finally time to use the coins I had saved.

'I'll give you 5,000 coins. Upgrade me to a gold member'.

Bihyung stared at me quietly and sighed. It was followed by system messages.

[5,000 coins have been consumed.]

[Congratulations! You have become a gold member of the Dokkaebi Bag!]

My member rating changed and the background of the Dokkaebi Bag also changed. Coins were really good. New item listings were added. I put the necessary items into the shopping cart.

* Behind the Scenes Contract – 10,000 C.

* Intermediate Magic Power Recovery Potion X 10 – 5,000 C.

One contract and 10 intermediate potions… this should be enough.

The spending was a bit big but the channel was going to be expanded. It wouldn't be long before I recovered it. Bihyung was nervous when he saw the items I bought.

[…Why is there a contract? Have you already forgotten the terms? You can't have a sponsor!]

'What do you mean? Why would I get a sponsor now?"

Even if I was doing that, why would I buy the contract with my own coins? At any rate, this Bihyung still needed a lot of work.

[15,000 coins have been consumed.]

[A 'Behind the Scenes Contract' has been acquired.]

[10 Intermediate Magic Power Recovery Potions have been acquired.]

Yoo Sangah showed curiosity when the items appeared out of thin air.

"What is that?"

"A contract to make a 'gap' an 'eul'."

I filled out the contract carefully, wrote my name in the 'gap' section and waited quietly. It was time for the 'eul' to come.

[The sponsor for character 'Gong Pildu' is asking for help from nearby constellations.]

Finally, the sponsor behind Gong Pildu reached his limits and started sending messages outside the channel. It was natural since the sponsor didn't have many coins in the first place. Not everybody was rich just because they were a constellation.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' scoffs.]

The other constellations in Gong Pildu's channel would've stopped sponsoring and the incarnation was dying… everything was going according to plan.

Bihyung noticed something and muttered.

[Wait a minute, surely you aren't…]

I talked towards Gong Pildu, who was in a half dead state.

"Hey, you over there."

Dudududududu! Gong Pildu fired crazily and looked up at me while breathing heavily.

"Will you die like this or will you sign a contract with me?"

"W-What…?"

"I'm not a constellation so I can't be a sponsor. But if you want, I can be a person behind the scenes. How about it?"

"What is this bastard talking about…?"

"Gong Pildu, shut up. I'm not talking to you."

"What…?"

I waved the 'contract' in one hand and the 'Intermediate Magic Power Recovery Potion' in the other hand.

"Answer quickly. I will give these items to you if you sign with me."

A message window flashed in front of me.

[The sponsor behind character 'Gong Pildu' has revealed himself.]

[The constellation 'Defense Master' is looking at you like you are crazy.]

Indeed. He wasn't yet ready to be an 'eul'. Don't worry. He would be in a hurry as time passed.

Bihyung was watching me.

[You… are you crazy?]

'This one as well'.

[You are the first to try and support a constellation.]

'I can't do it?'

[This is a constellation! Will it sign with an insignificant human?]

'That is just your thoughts'.

The intermediate constellation, Defense Master. He was a low level constellation compared to his ability.

His world had long become a 'scenario' and was completely destroyed. Therefore, the Defense Master's myth was no longer discussed. The myth had disappeared and the constellation couldn't get coins. One day, even his existence would disappear.

That's why some constellations, including the Defense Master' were obsessed with looking for an 'incarnation'. The constellations were remembered in the world through their chosen incarnation.

'That guy, he doesn't have any coins left'.

[What?]

Gong Pildu's power had fallen sharply compared to before. Unlike the 'Monarch of the Small Fries', the Defense Master was someone who cared about his incarnation. The fact that Gong Pildu was going to die meant he had run out of coins.

It was obvious but without coins, a new 'sponsor contract' was impossible. Then what happened to a constellation who couldn't create a new incarnation?

'Once Gong Pildu dies, that guy will be forgotten'.

For a constellation, being forgotten meant death.

Faint fear filled Bihyung's eyes.

[You are…?]

Gong Pildu was a great card if I could afford it. Even Yoo Joonghyuk had attempted to subjugate Gong Pildu several times in countless regressions. Of course, he had never been successful.

Yoo Sangah spoke.

"Dokja-ssi, that person will die."

Gong Pildu was biting his lips so hard that blood was flowing. Now there were only two mini-turrets left in Armed Zone. It was time to end this.

[The constellation 'Defense Master' is wondering about the contents of the contract.]

He was coming. Bihyung's eyes widened at the sight in front of him.

[…Really? No, is this real?]

I showed the contract immediately.

[The constellation 'Defense Master' has started reading the contract.]

Gong Pildu, who was shedding blood on the lower floor, suddenly shouted. He had probably heard a message from his sponsor.

"W-What? What is this message?"

What? He was being sold.

"W-What is going on Pildu-ssi?"

[The constellation 'Defense Master' is asking for some time to think.]

After a while, I heard some good news.

[The constellation 'Defense Master' as added a condition to the contract.]

[If you agree with this condition, the constellation 'Defense Master' will agree to contract with you.]

I immediately read the contract.

…

14. Incarnation Kim Dokja (Gap) recognizes the property rights of Constellation Defense Master (Eul)and should ensure the survival of 'Gong Pildu'.

15. Incarnation Kim Dokja (Gap) should help Constellation Defense Master (Eul) so that his private property 'Gong Pildu' grows well.

…

Guaranteeing Gong Pildu's life and his growth. In fact, this didn't need to be included. It was natural for Gong Pildu not to die if the contract was signed. The only thing that mattered for me was the third condition.

3. Incarnation Kim Dokja (Gap) has a command authority over 'Gong Pildu', the private property of Constellation Defense Master (Up to 10 times a day).

I checked the contract and nodded.

"I will sign the contract."

Before long, a faint thread connected me and Gong Pildu. Then system messages were heard.

[The contract has been completed.]

[You have become the co-sponsor of 'Gong Pildu' due to the contract.]

[Due to the contract, you have been given the right to command incarnation 'Gong Pildu'.]

[The duration of the contract is five years and it won't be automatically renewed.]

Yoo Joonghyuk would be stunned if he knew that Gong Pildu could be obtained so easily. If I hadn't read to the latter half of Ways of Survival, I wouldn't have known to use the Behind the Scenes Contract this way.

I handed the recovery potions to Yoo Sangah.

"Give this to Gong Pildu. You should give him one every 40 minutes."

"…It is okay to give to him?"

She had to give it. If not, this main scenario wouldn't be cleared. Gong Pildu was confused after Yoo Sangah handed him a potion.

"What is this?"

"Drink it and fight."

Gong Pildu was suspicious for a moment but soon opened the potion's lid. Blue smoke emerged around his body and the destroyed turrets returned to their original appearance.

[The character 'Gong Pildu' has completely recovered his magic power.]

Gong Pildu wiped the potion stained lips and looked up at me.

"Stupid guy. Do you think I will forgive you because of this? Once I get out of here, it will be your end…"

"Shut up, Gong Pildu."

[Under the terms of the contract, 'Command Rights' is activated!]

"O-Oof? Oof oof oof?"

Poor guy, he didn't even know what situation he was in.

"Fight hard. Don't touch my party members."

"Hup…! Oof oof…!"

Dudududududu!

Yoo Sangah's eyes widened when she saw Gong Pildu listened to my orders.

"D-Dokja-ssi? W-Why is that person…?"

"I made a 'gap' into an 'eul."

"…Did you write something?"

"Now you can rest assured about Gong Pildu."

Then the bombardment of messages from the constellations poured out.

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' finds your idea interesting.]

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' has dropped his stick at your strategy.]

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' thinks that you are impudent.]

…

I had secretly signed the contract but these guys already noticed. The Defense Master was only intermediate level but he was still a constellation.

A mere human became a co-sponsor with a constellation, the impact on the constellations would be enormous. There would be a backlash among those like the Abyssal Black Flame Dragon. But.

[Many constellations are paying attention to you.]

[A number of constellations want to become your sponsor.]

The constellations who realized my value were overwhelmingly larger. If they became my sponsor, they would be able to use the power of Defense Master.

Then the owner of Gong Pildu's channel, Dokkaebi Biryu appeared in the air.

[Constellations! W-Why… are you suddenly leaving? D-Don't go! Just wait a little longer…!]

Biryu, whose channel was being ruined, made a desperate appeal. It was the dokkaebi who created the food penalty and 'survival cost' in Gumho Station.

[H-Hiiik! N-No…]

Dokkaebi Biryu gradually blurred and disappeared.

[Channel # BIR-3642 has been forced to leave after having the subscriptions reduced.]

Bihyung muttered in a trembling voice after seeing one channel falling to ruin.

[Excuse me… Dokja-nim?]

'What is it?'

[You… were you aiming for Gong Pildu from the beginning?]

I shrugged.

[Crazy… human… what human did I sign with?]

Bihyung couldn't close his mouth. I didn't care. This place was organized and I needed to move on to the next place.

I spoke to the bewildered party members who still hadn't grasped the situation.

"Everyone. I'm sorry but I have to leave for a while'.

"Huh? Now?"

"There is a place I urgently need to go to. Hyunsung-ssi and Yoo Sangah-ssi, please stay here. You don't have to do anything. Just throw Pildu a potion until the end of the scenario and relax."

Jung Heewon asked, "What about Gilyoung and I?"

"You will come with me."

"To where?"

"Um… it is hard to explain but there is a bad guy."

"A bad guy?"

"Yes. A bad person who disappeared to eat items alone, regardless if people die or not. From now on, I am going to hit him in the back of the head."

It was very hard. Jung Heewon thought for a moment before asking.

"…Is he worse than Gong Pildu?"

I contemplated for a moment before replying.

"He is much worse."

"Then let's go."

"I'll explain the details later."

I moved with Jung Heewon and Lee Gilyoung. Then somebody grabbed my shoulder. It was Lee Jihye

"Wait, where are you going right now?"

In any case, this was good.

"Great. You can come along."

"Where are you going?"

"Yoo Joonghyuk is in danger."

Lee Jihye laughed like she thought I was joking.

"What nonsense are you saying? Master is in danger?"

My expression remained serious and Lee Jihye's laughter soon disappeared.

"…Are you serious? No, how do you know this?"

How did I know? Perhaps I was the world's foremost, no the second highest authority who knew her master.

I checked the time.

"That jerk, he went to the hidden dungeon at Exit 1?"

"U-Uh?"

"And it has been 11 hours since he entered?"

"Uhhh…" Lee Jihye spoke blankly.

I remembered that Yoo Joonghyuk' had attacked Chungmuro's 'hidden dungeon' a total of eight years. He failed twice and succeeded six times. The problem was that the two failures were concentrated in his early regressions. The 8th turn and the 11th turn.

During the 8th regression, Yoo Joonghyuk died in Chungmuro's hidden dungeon.

But the current Yoo Joonghyuk was… the third turn.

"At this rate, Yoo Joonghyuk will die today."

If my guess was right, our damn regressor would be on the 'sunfish route[1]'.

---

[1] **Sunfish route** – a reference to the game 'Survive! Mola Mola!' where a player has to help a sunfish survive troubles in the sea. However almost anything makes the sunfish die.

Chapter 37: Ep. 9 – Omniscient Sunfish, I

After a while, we moved towards the entrance of the 'hidden dungeon' on the first underground floor. I walked behind Lee Jihye, Lee Gilyoung and Jung Heewon while looking at my smartphone.

「…In the midst of the splitting headache, Yoo Joonghyuk came to his senses.

'Give up on this life'.

This was the end of Yoo Joonghyuk's eighth life. 」

It couldn't be. This hadn't happened yet.

…Shit, why was this guy doing this on only the third life? If he moved carefully like his second life, he would've passed through the mid-to-late scenarios.

I raised my eyes to see Jung Heewon looking at me.

"Dokja-ssi, what are you looking at?"

"…Ah, the calendar… This situation has made me lose my sense of the date."

I actually thought it might be more interesting to look at the calendar. Sometimes I wondered how I finished reading this novel.

Jung Heewon looked at me suspiciously before turning her head towards Lee Jihye.

"Then… did you say your name was Jihye? Do you also use a sword?"

"Yes. I like the sword."

"Right? The sword is the best. It has a good taste."

"…Unni also knows the taste?"

Jung Heewon smiled as she watched Lee Jihye's sword. It was a luxurious sword that obviously flowed smoothly. Maybe it was given by Yoo Joonghyuk.

"Your sword looks good."

"Ah, Master gave it to me. Unni…?"

"My one… I-I like mine as well."

Jung Heewon looked down at the groll horn blade and then sneaked a peek at the sword on the other person's waist.

I didn't do anything wrong but I couldn't help feeling sorry. I had no choice but to hang something on Lee Jihye.

"Hey, why are you talking to Heewon-ssi but ignoring me?"

"Uh… that, I'm a bit weak to older females."

Lee Jihye responded with a quivering voice and Jung Heewon gave her a headlock, as if Lee Jihye was cute. There seemed to be a connection between the 'demon slayers'. Lee Jihye barely escaped from the headlock and asked.

"By the way, why are you rescuing Master?"

"We are companions."

"Don't talk nonsense."

"He is a useful guy."

"…You sound like Master."

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' is wondering about your heart.]

Come to think of it, it wasn't just Lee Jihye but the constellations as well who must be wondering about my actions. He was a guy who would kill me if he got a chance. It was strange that I would run to save him.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' likes your desire to rehabilitate a fallen friend.]

[100 coins have been sponsored.]

This one misunderstood me. But the Demon-like Judge of Fire… unlike the expectations of the Archangel Uriel, I had a deeply personal reason for saving Yoo Joonghyuk.

It was to prevent him from 'regressing' after his death.

Regression after death. It sounded good. A 'regression stigma' that triggered every time you died. The protagonist had a fraudulent ability.

The problem was that this ability invoked complicated thoughts in the surrounding cast.

「By the way, what happens to the world after you return? 」

A supporting actor had asked this of Yoo Joonghyuk when Yoo Joonghyuk's number of lives had broken into the double digits. I forgot his name but Yoo Joonghyuk's answer from that time was clear.

「 …I also don't know. I always choose a world where more people can live. 」

It was plausible but in fact, Yoo Joonghyuk didn't know about the world he abandoned. In face, there was no definite theory about what happened to the world in Ways of Survival.

Science, magic, whatever.

This was why I was anxious. What happened to the world after the regressor disappeared?

Would it reset with the regression? Or would a parallel universe branch off? The latter would be fortunate, but if it was the former…

"Hyung?"

"Ah, yes?"

Lee Gilyoung, who was holding the hem of my clothes, looked up at me with anxious eyes.

"I think we're here?"

[You are approaching the outside region. Be careful not to leave the scenario area.]

This message popped up. It didn't matter. Chungmuro's hidden dungeon was treated as an 'inside' area.

We turned the corner and Exit 1 appeared. A dungeon entrance with an ominous shade greeted us.

[You have found a hidden dungeon!]

[This dungeon has already been discovered by someone. You can't get the first discovery achievement.]

[A new hidden scenario has arrived!]

[Hidden Scenario – Theatre Dungeon]

Category: Hidden

Difficulty: A-

Clear Conditions: Defeat the master of Theatre Dungeon.

Time Limit: None

Compensation: 4,000 coins

Failure: —

The surprised Lee Jihye hesitated and stepped back.

"…What is this? Theater Dungeon?"

Lee Gilyoung looked startled. Well, this must be the first time they encountered a hidden scenario. Jung Heewon also spoke.

"A movie theatre as a dungeon… it sounds romantic."

Romantic. This was only because she didn't know how scary the movie theatre could be. We entered the theatre. The familiar lobby of the multiplex welcomed us.

[You have entered Theatre Dungeon.]

We were tense as we entered the bleak dungeon. It was a multiplex consisting of nine floors, from B1 to the 8th floor.

"Hyung, the posters are torn. Who would do that?"

"I'm not sure."

I said this but I actually knew the truth.

The core of this 'Theatre Dungeon' were the 'posters' on the wall. Perhaps Yoo Joonghyuk defeated every poster as he went upstairs. His intentions were to sweep up all the rewards.

Except for the torn posters, nothing strange was found on B1. There were no items and no monsters. The only exception was the smashed elevator in one corner with a distrted door.

Lee Jihye asked.

"Isn't this a dungeon? Why isn't there anything?"

"Something will appear."

"…Do you know something?"

"A little."

"How? Something is fishy about ahjussi. Is this your second life?"

That was her master. But he had lived three times.

Then Jung Heewon said, "It is due to the sponsor behind Dokja-ssi."

"…Really?"

I ignored the two women and tried to move to the ground floor when I was caught by Lee Gilyoung. The cockroach on his head was moving wildly. Lee Jihye drew her sword at almost the same moment I covered her mouth with a hand.

"Shhh, there is somebody else besides us."

I breathed out while small sounds started to be heard. Just upstairs. Then… the lobby? I first thought it was Yoo Joonghyuk but it wasn't Yoo Joonghyuk's voice.

"…Are you sure? Here… there are a bunch of things."

"Yes. I bought the information with 1,000 coins."

"The prophets?"

"Yes. They are disgusting but the information is obvious."

I heard the sound of people talking. We went up the escalator and approached them. It seemed that four people were gathered in the lobby on the 1st floor.

Lee Jihye whispered, "Who are they? I never once saw their faces in Chungmuro."

"Maybe they came from the ground side entrance."

"Ground side? Isn't that filled with poisonous fog? Furthermore, the scenario—"

"Different stations have different scenarios at different speeds. There are those who have finished the scenario faster than our station. If there is a weak poisoning, they can eat the meat from the underground species."

I said this but I was confused.

'Prophets?'

There was no information about such people in Yoo Joonghyuk's life. At this point, Yoo Joonghyuk and I should be the only ones who knew about the hidden dungeon.

What caused the variables? Needless to say, I needed to find out.

"Then let's go inside."

A blue spotlight was floating above the men talking. A bright light surrounded them and then they disappeared.

"…What happened to them?"

Jung Heewon asked me but I didn't answer. Instead, I was searching the posters on the wall. This was torn, that as well… by the time I reached the end of the wall, only one wasn't torn. I read the words written on the poster.

Steven Spielberg, Samuel L Jackson, Jeff Goldblum…

That bastard Yoo Joonghyuk… he left this one alone? As expected from the third regression.

At that moment, the light came on again. This time, the spotlight was aimed on us. The surprised Lee Jihye and Lee Gilyoung stepped back, but there was no way to avoid it. The word 'ray' suited it.

I asked Jung Heewon, "Heewon-ssi likes movies?"

"Of course. Do you usually like it?"

"You might hate it after this."

"What do you—"

[You have been hit by a projection light.]

[The screening will begin.]

The surrounding landscape started to slowly change. It wasn't a simple illusion so Fourth Wall wasn't activated as before. The old linoleum floor became covered with green bushes, while the reception desk and popcorn stand turned into a lush rainforest. The ceiling turned into a blue sky with no clouds and no end in sight. Lee Jihye muttered in a small voice.

"Where the hell is this place?"

Lee Jihye shouted and hacked at the surrounding trees and bushes, but nothing changed. Lee Gilyoung started looking for insects with a calm expression.

I tried to touch the nearby trees. It had a hard and moist texture. It was a real rainforest from the Mesozoic era. This was a different realism from the specter's Phantom Prison. This was the power of the theatre master on the dungeon's 8th floor.

"It is a movie."

"…Really ridiculous things are happening."

A novel had become reality. There was no law that a movie couldn't become reality as well.

Jung Heewon was a fast adaptor and quickly understood.

"Ahjussi, what movie is this?"

"You'll know soon."

"…Can't you just let me know? Wait a minute, what is this kid doing…?"

At this moment, the shrubbery moved and something jumped out in front of Lee Gilyoung. An insect that resembled a giant praying mantis. The size was approximately 40cm. Lee Jihye was terrified and cried out.

"Hey Kid! Back away!"

However, Lee Gilyoung responded calmly to the fuss.

"It isn't a praying mantis. It is a Titanoptera from the Triassic period.

"What?"

Lee Gilyoung stretched out his hand to the titano. The insect didn't refuse the touch and after a moment, Lee Gilyoung and the insect's body was wrapped in a blue light.

Lee Jihye watched with a stupid expression.

"This… what?"

"Fabre."

It really was good that I brought Lee Gilyoung. This guy's ability might allow us to pass through the gateway more easily.

The giant praying mantis moved its big mouth and Lee Gilyoung nodded. I didn't know what it involved but they were having a conversation. After a while, Lee Gilyoung paled as he talked to the praying mantis.

…What was it?

Lee Gilyoung hurriedly turned to me.

"Hyung!"

As he spoke, the sound of the earth shaking was heard. It seemed that something was coming at a tremendous speed, smashing the huge palm trees.

Kuoooooh!

The muzzle of the giant reptile that appeared through the rainforest was covered with reddish blood. Some bloody men were running in front of it. It was the men who entered before us.

"Kuaaack!"

"S-Save me!"

Lee Jihye stepped back and spoke to Jung Heewon.

"I know what movie this is."

"…Yes, me too."

A body that was over a dozen metres tall and hard skin. Fierce muscles dominated the entire body. The strongest predator of the Mesozoic Era was in front of us.

At first glance, it was similar to a grade 7 monster. The difficulty level was atrocious considering this was the 1st floor of the dungeon. But my heart just thumped. The harder the hidden dungeon, the better the reward.

I pulled out a blade and said, "Get ready to fight."

Maybe Yoo Joonghyuk skipped only this movie because of the contents. The main reward of Theater Dungeon was related to the movie contents. Yoo Joonghyuk probably thought there weren't any worthy rewards in a movie where dinosaurs appeared. But he didn't know.

In this movie, a really important reward was hidden.

"…Are you serious? We are going to fight that?"

"We need to beat it to make an exit."

"The exit?"

"It is a long movie. Have you forgotten?"

A T-rex was approaching quickly. The island's central laboratory was seen behind it. And an escape helicopter was on the rooftop of the laboratory.

This was a movie. A movie that the master of Theater Dungeon made into reality.

Therefore, there was only one way to escape from here.

"Let's make a great ending."

Chapter 38: Ep. 9 – Omniscient Sunfish, II

The moment the yellow eyes looked at us, a deafening roar echoed in our ears.

Kuoooooh!

[The 7th grade, Tyrannosaurus Rex has recognized you.]

[The 'Tyrannosaurus Rex' has triggered the 'Fear the Predator' skill!]

[The exclusive skill Fourth Wall has blocked the effect of the 'Fear the Predator' skill.]

My mind was calm thanks to Fourth Wall, but I could stop the chills that occurred. This was the fear towards a predator.

"Everyone, get out of the way!"

The petrified Jung Heewon and Lee Jihye regained their spirits. I fell back with Lee Gilyoung beside me.

Kwa kwa kwa kwa!

A long tail flew through the forest in front of us.

"Kuaaack!"

The men who were running fell on the backs and coughed up blood. Fortunately, Jung Heewon and Lee Jihye were away from the danger zone.

I shouted to Lee Gilyoung lying down next to me.

"Gilyoung fall back, while Heewon-ssi and Jihye-ssi scatter to the left and right!"

Then a message popped up.

[The character 'Lee Gilyoung' has activated the 'Dinosaur Book' skill!]

…Huh?

"Tyrannosaurus are agile compared to their size, but they are vulnerable due to their narrow field of view."

"…What?"

"I saw it in a book when I was a child."

"When you were a child?"

"…Younger than I am now."

I stared blankly at Lee Gilyoung. This wasn't the time to tackle it.

Kuoooooh!

[The exclusive skill 'Purest Sword Force' has been activated.]

I started waving the iridescent blade to attract the attention of the T-Rex. Lee Jihye and Jung Heewon weren't tankers. I didn't even need to mention Lee Gilyoung. Therefore, I was the only one who could take the risk here.

"While I draw its attention, attack its rear—"

I hadn't finished talking when I saw Lee Jihye and Jung Heewon already at the T-Rex's rear. They noticed quickly.

Kuoooooh!

I barely avoided the incoming teeth and the stomping legs. Before I could wield Unbroken Faith, its tail passed over my head. An electrifying thrill swept over my body. I wouldn't die because my physique was over level 20, but it was dizzying.

Maybe I had been lucky until now. I might be the 'sunfish' rather than Yoo Joonghyuk.

Sukak! Supaak!

Meanwhile, Jung Heewon and Lee Jihye was steadily dealing damage from the rear. It was a combination of 'Sword Training' and 'Kendo'. Noticeable sword wounds were being dealt to the T-Rex's big legs. If this continued, it might take some time but the T-Rex would be defeated.

"Hyung! I'll draw its attention!"

The boy didn't listen to me about staying in the rear.

"No, Gilyoung you—"

"I can do it!"

All of a sudden, Lee Gilyoung came forward and started to make an unknown signal. I wanted to say something. Then a huge praying mantis came from somewhere, stabbed the T-Rex's eyes and fled. It was the Titano that Lee Gilyoung had been talking to before.

Kuooooh!

The T-Rex's eyes moved confusedly as it followed the praying mantis that disturbed its vision. Lee Gilyoung used dazzling hand movements to control the praying mantis. I looked at Lee Gilyoung with a fresh mindset.

Wasn't this guy actually a hugely fraudulent character? No wonder why Yoo Joonghyuk coveted him.

Kuwooooh!

Thanks to Lee Gilyoung's success, the battlefield quickly became advantageous. The T-Rex's movements became duller while a red light shone in Jung Heewon and Lee Jihye's eyes.

[Demon Slayer].

It made them vulnerable to mental attacks but it was a good skill that made them stronger when they were excited. The sight of the two women's eyes burning as they watched the rainforest was truly spectacular.

It was a pity that I had lost Lee Jihye to Yoo Joonghyuk. However, Jung Heewon also had overwhelming growth potential. Judge of Destruction was a good attribute and she didn't have a sponsor yet.

It felt like the T-Rex's stamina had decreased considerably. It was time to deal the final blow.

[Blade of Faith is activated!]

I started to focus my remaining magic power. I didn't have a sponsor, nor was I as fast as Jung Heewon or Lee Jihye. But that didn't mean my attack power was weak. I had a fraudulent system that overcame all of this.

Kuoooooh!

Ether Blade.

[The special option of Unbroken Faith is activated.]

[The ether property is converted to 'fire'.]

An enormous amount of magic power was sucked in and my physical fatigue became extreme. But I didn't mind because there was a way to supplement it later.

The blade increased by one metre and was surrounded by flames.

I ran to the rear of the Tyrannosaurus.

"Everybody out of the way!"

The moment that the Tyrannosaurus hesitated and its movements slowed, I climbed its tail. I almost fell over a few times because I didn't have the 'Sense of Balance' but I somehow held on by stabbing the blade into the epidermis.

Kuoooooh!

The T-Rex poured out blood and its body rolled across the ground. I rammed the blade in wherever I could. Flames poured into the wounds caused by the blade.

The yellow eyes of the T-Rex stared at me as it gasped painfully, before finally dying.

[You have succeeded in being the first to hunt the 7th grade species 'Tyrannosaurus Rex!']

[You have obtained 1,000 coins as compensation.]

"Ah…we really got it."

"I knew we could do it."

Jung Heewon breathed heavily as she spoke with a proud expression on her face. She could be proud because the T-Rex was top-ranked among the 7th grade monsters. Lee Jihye belatedly rushed towards me.

"I had it!"

"What? It would've taken a long time if you continued hitting it like that."

I wiped off my sword while speaking. Jung Heewon asked.

"But was a Tyrannosaurus killed in this movie?"

"No but isn't this more fun?"

"…Huh?"

"The genre is fantasy, action and adventure. This should be enough."

At this moment, a system message flashed in my head.

[The theater owner is satisfied with the changed ending of the movie.]

Jung Heewon screamed like it was absurd.

"Eek?"

Yes. The strategy of Theatre Dungeon wasn't to see the 'real ending'.

If so, Yoo Joonghyuk wouldn't have been able to beat this dungeon. It was to create the desired ending for the 'theatre master' at the core of this dungeon. Please note that the theatre owner was an extreme psychopath.

"Do you understand now? We just need to smash it."

In other words, if we removed all the obstacles to the ending, the movie would end naturally.

[Now you can move to the next floor.]

[Go to the helipad on top of the research laboratory.]

"We will move in a little while. We have to get some rewards."

I started exploring the area around the T-Red. Soon after, I found one of the guys who entered before us. The rest were eaten or mutilated by the T-Rex.

"Hey, wake up."

"U-Uwooh…"

Blood was constantly flowing from the man. The wounds were from the T-Rex's claws. The bones were revealing, making it obvious that this person couldn't recover.

"Breathe slowly."

"C-Cough! …Alive…"

I fed the man drinking water I had brought in. The man drank some water before coughing up blood again. I was forced to urgently ask him questions.

"How did you come here?"

"P-Prophet…"

"Who are the prophets?"

The man's breathing was getting rougher.

"R-Revelation… received…"

…Revelation?

"I want to… live…"

Blood burst out from the man's mouth. He finally died. Jung Heewon and the others came up behind me.

"That person…?"

I shook my head and looked down at the fallen man.

'Revelation'. What funny bullshit.

As far as I knew, only Anna Croft had the ability of 'Future Sight' in Ways of Survival.

Then there was only one answer.

…There was someone else besides me. But they didn't know as much as I did. The proof was that they didn't dare come here in person to test out the information.

"Dokja-ssi?"

"Take a break."

We covered the man's body with a large lead and gathered near the dad T-Rex. W had to hurry to pursue Yoo Joonghyuk. But if we didn't get enough rest, the party would be wiped out before we met him.

I searched the T-Rex's body.

I looked at the head and heart but unfortunately, I couldn't find any monster cores. That didn't mean there was no income. Jung Heewon drooled as she watched the T-Rex being cooked over the fire.

"…Can we eat this?"

"We can eat it because it is cooked with magic flames. The unripe parts can be cooked with the Magic Power Stove."

We sat side by side around the T-Rex's leg. As we cut the cooked flesh of the T-Rex little by little, steam rose. Lee Gilyoung shouted.

"Fresh meat!"

Lee Jihye hurriedly rushed up and grabbed a pierce first. The rest of the group, including myself, also picked large pieces of flesh. Meat of this size? It was a luxury that couldn't be dreamt of back when I was an office worker. Lee Jihye closed her eyes while enjoying the taste. Then she murmured in an ecstatic voice.

"Ah, the best taste in the world…"

It really was delicious.

The fat was properly wrapped around the muscles, making it different from the ground rats. The feeling every time I took a bit… If Yoo Sangah was here, she would've cried.

After I consumed the meat, I felt my stamina recovering. The meat of an advanced species had these special effects. However, caution was required in some cases. Jung Heewon sighed.

"Phew… I ate well. It is really delicious but I will cry if I eat anymore."

We had a moderate rest and then headed straight to the laboratory in the centre of the island.

We encountered several raptors on the way but they were easy after the T-Rex.

There were many flasks and ampoules in the laboratory. There were small incubators containing dinosaur embryos and blood samples collected. There was only one thing missing.

My eyes caught a few items as we entered the inner corridor.

[Physique Enhancing Ampoule]

[Magic Power Enhancing Ampoule]

[Agility Enhancing Ampoule]

[Strength Enhancing Ampoule]

As expected, it was here. I started to pack the ampoules. Just like the Ichthyosaur's Core, these comprehensive stat growth items were available only in the early scenarios.

It wasn't just one or two ampoules. There were close to 20 bottles. If this was the case, my stats would be able to level up explosively. It was in anticipation of this hidden scenario that I saved coins instead of investing them in my stats.

These ampoules were only available when the corresponding stat was less than level 30.

"Ahjussi, what did you find now?"

…Ah, this ghost-like girl.

"What? Physique Enhancement Ampoule?"

Lee Jihye's eyes shone as she grabbed one ampoule.

"Are you trying to eat these alone?"

"Eat them all? Of course I will share it."

"Unni, look at this! Ahjussi…!"

The other people in the party came closer due to the turmoil. Jung Heewon was shocked when she checked the item information.

"Oh my god… what are these items?"

"…This is a hidden scenario."

I spoke with a bit of disgruntlement. Damn, this was a bit difficult. I didn't catch the T-Rex alone so taking all the items pricked my conscience…

[Some constellations are displeased with the situation.]

Lee Jihye looked at the Strength Enhancement Ampoule and opened her mouth.

"Can you give me the Strength Enhancement Ampoule? I am a bit lacking in strength."

[The exclusive skill, Character List is activated.]

It was a summary version that only contained the comprehensive stats.

[Character Summary]

Name: Lee Jihye

Exclusive Attributes: Scarred Sword Demon (Rare)

Exclusive Skills: Sword Training Lv. 4, Demon Slaying Lv. 1, Absolute Sense Lv. 2, Ghost Walk Lv. 2.

Stigma: Sea Battle Lv. 1, Large Army Command Lv. 1.

Overall Stats: Physique Lv. 13, Strength Lv. 17, Agility Lv. 13, Magic Power Lv. 10.

This damn girl…

"Huh? Heewon unni, can't I have it?"

"Um, Dokja-ssi was the one who discovered it so it is his decision…"

Frankly, it didn't matter if the other party members received them but giving them to Lee Jihye was a bit of a waste. She was part of Yoo Joonghyuk's group anyway.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' expects your fairness.]

Fairness… yes, let's pick the most unbiased game I knew.

I smiled and made a suggestion.

"How about rock paper scissors?"

"Rock paper scissors?"

"There will be one winner at the end."

Greed filled Lee Jihye's face.

"Okay!"

"Well… I will do what Dokja-ssi wants. But is it okay? It could be a mistake."

"Then doesn't that mean he is unlucky?"

Lee Jihye asked. She was excited at the thought of getting a share of the items.

"Let's start with a Strength Enhancement Ampoule."

I put out the Strength Enhancement Ampoule and said to Lee Jihye.

"You will face me."

"I'm good at rock paper scissors. Will it be okay?"

"Ah, is that so?"

I smiled at Lee Jihye.

[Exclusive skill, Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint stage 1 has been activated!]

[The character 'Lee Jihye' has prepared 'scissors'.]

Chapter 39: Ep. 9 – Omniscient Sunfish, III

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' is curious about your scam.]

[Constellations have sponsored you 200 coins.]

The winner of the rock paper scissors was decided in an instant. Lee Gilyoung's face was slightly flushed while Jung Heewon had a satisfied expression. Lee Jihye flopped to the ground with a devastated expression.

"…This is ridiculous!"

Unfortunately, I couldn't read Lee Gilyoung's mind so two ampoules went to him.

"You don't have to give it to me…"

"Take it."

He was cute. I stroked Lee Gilyoung's head.

In addition, Jung Heewon won two Physique Enhancement Ampoules. Jung Heewon received them with a smile.

"Thank you. It was tough so far with my physique."

It was only Lee Jihye who didn't obtain any ampoules.

"How can you beat me 18 out of 20 times? Did you cheat?"

"I am originally good at rock paper scissors."

"Are you really going to do this? Can't you give me just one…"

"You have Yoo Joonghyuk."

I ignored Lee Jihye's whines and packed the ampoules.

Jung Heewon patted the shoulder of the grouchy Lee Jihye while staring at Lee Jihye's shining sword.

"Little sister, the world has to be fair."

Dudududu. There was the sound of the helicopter's propellers. Lee Gilyoung looked at the distant dinosaur island and asked, "Hyung, can't I take it to the next floor?"

The big praying mantis was sitting in Lee Gilyoung's lap and talking to Lee Gilyoung. The praying mantis rubbed its antenna against Lee Gilyoung's jaw.

"Unfortunately, you can't take it."

Lee Gilyoung's hugged the praying mantis with a sad expression.

"…Take care Titano."

Kwiiik.

He had already given it a name. Unfortunately, monsters created in Theatre Dungeon couldn't move to another floor.

However, items could be taken to other floors. For example, I had the ampoules that increased stats and the item I was now holding.

[Tyrant T-Rex's DNA Ampoule]

The golden ampoule was the most decisive reason for choosing this movie. It was an item that increased all stats by 10 for 30 minutes after ingestion. Although it had the disadvantage that it could only be used in Theatre Dungeon, it was impossible to break through the last floor of this dungeon without this item.

Especially if Yoo Joonghyuk was in the worst situation as I thought.

The praying mantis that Lee Gilyoung released flew in the air and the dark sky started to collapse.

[The first 'Ending Credit' has been reached.]

[Performers: Kim Dokja, Jung Heewon, Lee Jihye, Lee Gilyoung.]

[You have obtained 500 coins as compensation.]

I felt some dizziness and we appeared on the ground floor again. After we escaped, the movie posted on the wall was torn. It was evidence that we safely cleared it. Lee Jihye was complaining.

"Do you have to pass a few more floors like this?"

"Yoo Joonghyuk will have broken most of it so it will be faster than you think."

We headed straight to the second floor via the escalator. From the second floor, the remaining space was narrow because it was the full-fledged theatre. Jung Heewon asked.

"There's no change?"

No matter how long we waited, the environment on the second floor didn't change. The camera wasn't seen and the screening didn't start either. Looking closer, all the posters on the second floor were torn. Lee Jihye noticed something.

"Is it only the movies whose posters are intact?"

I checked the torn posters one by one.

Pacific Rim directed by Guillermo del Toro… a giant robots righting movie? Too bad. If this had been intact then I could've gotten the reward of Hardened Gloves.

Inception directed by Christopher Nolan… it was good that this one was torn.

"Wow, I wanted to watch this."

I saw the poster that Lee Jihye was looking at.

"Do you like superheroes?

"Yes."

"It is fortunate. Otherwise you would hate it after this."

"…I see."

On the torn poster, a green monster was roaring at us.We went straight up to the third floor.

"It is the same here."

All the posters on the third floor were torn as well. Yoo Joonghyuk had properly swept through it. It was fortunate since there were a lot of dangerous movies on the third floor.

Final Destination directed by James Wan… that bastard Yoo Joonghyuk, how did he break this? This was an annihilation movie.

"We are going up faster than I expected?"

Unlike Jung Heewon's bright voice, I was nervous every time we climbed a floor. Clearing the Theatre Dungeon required some luck. Some of the posters on each floor weren't covered in Ways of Survival. Yoo Joonghyuk didn't clear all movies.

There was a system message when we entered the fourth floor.

[You have entered the fourth floor.]

The spotlight poured down without giving me time to look at the posters. Jung Heewon gathered both hands together and prayed.

"Please don't be a ghost movie…"

I glanced at Jung Heewon and she gave me an excuse.

"Ghosts can't be killed with a sword."

…This was the reason.

[The screening has started!]

The background changed and when we opened our eyes, a sea breeze blew on the prow of a ship.

"This…?"

Salt was felt in my mouth and the open horizon spread out before me. I was enraptured by the scenery of the sea. I had been working every day and it had been a few years since I've travelled anywhere.

"What is this movie?"

Next to me, Jung Heewon was wearing a full length dress.

A violin sound was heard from the inside of the cruise ship and there was the sound of excited people. It was an incredibly romantic atmosphere from a movie…

Oh, I know what this movie is.

Then Lee Jihye's voice was heard. "Oh, accelerating all of a sudden…"

I looked back and saw that Lee Jihye was vomiting. Jung Heewon rushed over and patted her back. After vomiting for a long time, Lee Jihye said.

"Uh, I get seasick."

"It is okay, just vomit."

…I had wondered this since a while ago. Why did the Duke of Loyalty and Warfare choose Lee Jihye? No, I read the novel but I just didn't want to know.

"But Unni… is this the movie? The boat that sinks."

"It seems so."

"Then… perhaps Unni is 'Kate Winslet?'"

Lee Jihye looked at Jung Heewon's dress like she was envious, then she looked at me.

"Then ahjussi is… DiCaprio? Uweeeek!"

I felt somehow grumpy when I saw her vomiting after saying that. At this time, Lee Gilyoung emerged from behind me.

"Hyung!"

Lee Gilyoung was dressed in formal clothing. This clothing was somewhat familiar…

Anyway, everyone was gathered.

"There is no time."

The ship was now sinking. Unfortunately, the solution to this movie didn't appear in Ways of Survival.

How could we beat the Titanic? Was it a fight with the sea?

Lee Jihye was the first to comment.

"The ship is sinking anyway. Do we just have to sink with it?"

"That is a little…"

It was frustrating. It would've been better if the movie had a clear enemy to crush.

"Let's look for the villain hyung."

This was Lee Gilyoung's opinion. I didn't know if there was an obvious villain this movie., But since I couldn't think of anything else, I decided to follow it.

"Then let's handle the villain."

We started moving. By the way, who was this movie's villain? The last time I watched the Titanic…

But I didn't need to worry. The villain came to find us. A man in a clean suit was staring over here.

"Jack Dawson!"

Wait, Jack Dawson… the role that DiCaprio played? But the man wasn't looking at me.

"…Me?"

…He was DiCaprio? I sighed as I looked at Lee Gilyoung.

After a while, we kidnapped a person we thought was the villain of the movie. But the theater master didn't respond. It wasn't enough to kidnap him…

I hesitated for a moment before opening my mouth.

"Then…"

"Let's kill him."

Lee Jihye pulled out her sword and pointed it. It was at a man struggling while his body was tied up.

"The theater master is a psychopath? Then isn't the answer to kill him quickly?"

I thought so as well. No, I was sure of it.

It was the answer to another movie like this in Ways of Survival. But Jung Heewon gazed at the man in horror and unexpected said,

"But…he looks like a real person."

"…Huh?"

"This is a movie but he is just like a real person."

It was surprising that Jung Heewon said this when she had been neatly subjugating the weak a few days ago. Then again, Jung Heewon had said something like this: 'I might be a killer but I don't want to become a monster'.

Lee Jihye asked, "Unni, what are you saying this type of sentimental thing now? You don't want to kill him?"

"No, that isn't it…"

"It is good to save people. But if this person doesn't die, we will die. We are definitely alive but this guy is just a character!"

Characters…

I felt bemused at Lee Jihye's words.

Jung Heewon looked at me. "…Do you think so?"

"Even if this guy is a 'real' person, he is still a bad guy! Why is killing him bad?"

Lee Jihye's words might be right. This guy was definitely a villain of the scenario and would do bad things. So it was okay to kill him. Funnily enough, it was the logic that Yoo Joonghyuk often spoke about in Ways of Survival.

The moment I opened my mouth, Lee Jihye hurriedly drew her sword.

"Sigh, what is this? Master could be dying right now!"

The blade descended and pierced the man's chest. Blood poured out. It was incredibly realistic. Then a system message was heard.

[The theater owner is satisfied with the changed ending of the movie.]

[The stern of the ship will lead to the next floor.]

"Look, I did it properly. Right?"

Lee Jihye shouted triumphantly.

The answer obviously wasn't wrong. The theater master acknowledged this and the constellations would give coins for our actions. We would survive with these coins.

It was a way of living that destroyed this world.

[The second 'Ending Credit' has been reached.]

[Performers: Kim Dokja, Jung Heewon, Lee Jihye, Lee Gilyoung.]

[You have obtained 500 coins as compensation.]

We weren't able to get a reward item from Titanic. Thus, we went straight to the next floor and followed the guidance of the system message.

[You have entered the fifth floor, the rewards room.]

Once we climbed the escalator, the rewards room finally showed up.

"Rewards room? It isn't a scary movie?"

"This is an exhibition hall. It was a place they used to show original movie props."

In fact, I knew this but I once again acted ignorant.

Various movie props appeared in glass tubes. Equipment and costumes used by the main characters of various movies, stage accessories…

The funny thing was that they were no longer props.

Jung Heewon approached a glass tube and shouted.

"Oh my god, look at this!"

[Mikazuki Munechika – Replica] A-grade sword.

Jung Heewon's eyes sparkled as she looked at the glass tube and I nodded.

"You've finally obtained a proper sword, Heewon-ssi."

"Whoa…"

It was obviously a great sword at first glance. The originally groll horn knife wasn't comparable and it wasn't lacking when compared to Lee Jihye's blade.

Jung Heewon started to swing the sword in his hand.

"Isn't this amazing? It is light and moves properly!"

I had never seen Jung Heewon like this.

[The character 'Jung Heewon' is deeply grateful to you.]

It was nothing.

The main purpose of targeting the Theatre Dungeon was the 'compensation' of the fifth floor. The Theatre Dungeon was a good place to farm for items early on. In particular, Jung Heewon would become stronger with this weapon.

[The reward items are limited to two per person.]

It wasn't a genuine 'star relic', it was just a movie prop, but the replica version had characteristics of the original item. A-grade items were close to a scam in the early stages.

By the way, Yoo Joonghyuk had already passed through here. Two items were already gone.

"Pick your items. Each one can only obtain two so choose carefully."

I told Jung Heewon to pick an item Yoo Sangah could use while I found one for Lee Hyunsung. This one seemed useable.

[Heracles' Shield- Replica] A-grade shield.

Good… It was an item that couldn't be compared with the Old Iron Shield. I thought of how Lee Hyunsung's eyes would shine with loyalty towards me and already felt warm.

Lee Jihye, who claimed to be a fan of superheroes, was trying to pull an item from the corner.

"Ah, why can't I hold this?"

I came closer. This was it.

[Mjolnir – Replica] A-grade blunt weapon.

The hammer of the god of lightning, Thor. It would've been an enormous item if it was a genuine star relic… still, the quality of the original was so great that the performance of the replica was significant.

I watched Lee Jihye groaning as she grabbed the hammer that couldn't be moved.

"Isn't this an item that only someone special can use?"

"Damn, I'm not special?"

At this time, Lee Gilyoung came up behind her and reached out to Mjolnir.

"Hey Kid! This is mine…"

Mjolnir was lightly lifted by Lee Gilyoung's hands. Lee Gilyoung swung the hammer around before looking at me.

"Hyung, can I have it?"

"Yes, it looks good."

Lee Jihye once again looked stunned.

"Only I am unhappy… just me…"

I ignored her and searched the remaining items. Let's see what was left.

[External Reinforced Suit – Replica] A-grade protective clothing.

I didn't know what would happen in the future but it would be nice to supplement my defense. Once I wore the suit, it wrapped around my arms and legs.

[Damage from external attacks is reduced by 10%.]

[The ability to detect enemies is improved.]

[You can move more agilely than before.]

It was a bit frustrating but it was still better than not wearing it. In particular, I thought about the fight waiting at the end of this.

Now the preparations were finished.

Since there were no significant changes in the dungeon, it was clear that Yoo Joonghyuk was alive. If we moved quickly through the sixth floor, we might be able to meet on the seventh floor. In the worst case scenario, if he was fighting the boss on the eighth floor… at least he was still alive.

Now, let's go and get our damn regressor back.

Chapter 40: Ep. 9 – Omniscient Sunfish, IV

Unfortunately, Yoo Joonghyuk wasn't on the sixth floor.

The only comfort was that the movie on the sixth floor was easy. It was a typical thriller directed by Bryan Singer. I knew the killer so it was possible to clear it quickly.

[The theater owner is satisfied with the changed ending of the movie.]

[You have obtained 500 coins as compensation.]

Lee Jihye asked as if she was dumbfounded.

"…He was really the killer?"

"Don't tell me it is a spoiler? There is actually someone here who hasn't seen it."

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' hates spoilers.]

In any case, an item was rewarded due to the movie's unique characteristics.

[Skill Book: Calm Observation.]

Calm Observation. It was quite a useful skill.

This skill allowed the user to see the movements of the target and figure out their overall stats. It didn't mean much to me since I could use Character List, but it would be quite useful for people like Yoo Sangah and Lee Gilyoung. This skill would be good against enemies excellent at acting.

[The exclusive skill 'Calm Observation' has been acquired.]

Still, I felt a bit sad. It would be nice to experience a movie like Gladiator.

I had yet to obtain a suitable combat passive skill. He might purchase the skill Weapons Training but it wasn't a good idea to spend coins on the skill right now.

"…Now I am tired of movies."

I agreed with Jung Heewon's words. I didn't want to look at a movie theatre for a while. I should just be satisfied with the high performance fee.

We went directly up to the seventh floor. Maybe this time we could see Yoo Joonghyuk's back…

Damn. Most of the posters on the seventh floor were torn. Yes, Yoo Joonghyuk was now in the boss room. Under these circumstances, there was really no time to delay.

"Run. It is almost the last floor."

We started to run. We had to catch up with that guy as fast as possible. Before he gave up everything.

We passed through the auditoriums and ran down the aisles. The posters on the 7th floor were of Korean movies popular in the past.

Shit, please let all of them be torn…

However, unlike what I hoped, the last poster was still intact.

"Damn…"

[The screening will begin.]

The blue spotlight covered the party and the scene changed. My head spun and a salty smell entered my nose.

The stage was the sea. But… this time it wasn't a cruise ship. There was the smell of artillery. I could feel rough wood of the panokseon[1] deck.

The moment I turned my head on the shaky boat, I heard someone's voice.

"Everybody, down—!"

I reflexively fell down and there was a bombardment of gunfire around me. Tang tang tang tang— A few soldiers collapsed while bleeding.

"Protect the ship—!"

The soldiers dressed in old military garb were rushing around. An uneasy wind blew as war took place. The turbulent Myeongnyang Strait was swirling and there was the distant sound of drums.

Dammit.

There was no Korean who didn't know this movie. It was because this movie had been watched by most South Koreans.

Jung Heewon looked at the horizon and muttered.

"This… how can we win?"

The ending of Theater Dungeon would only open when the master was satisfied.

Kukukukung!

300 Japanese warships filled the sea. I hurriedly confirmed the power on our side. Still, this was a movie based on historical facts. There was hope.

"…What is this?"

There was only one Panokseon where there should be 12. I hurriedly grabbed one of the sailors around him and asked.

"Where is the commander?"

"Comman…der?"

"Admiral Lee!"

The navy sailor had no idea at all. My chest became cold. It was different from the movie I knew. The theatre master changed the story.

In no time, the enemy narrowed the distance. This was ridiculous. How could we win the Battle of Myeongnyang without help from the Duke of Loyalty and Warfare?

I looked around and hurriedly exclaimed.

"Lee Jihye!"

I thought that this might happen. If fact, I brought Lee Jihye not just for her power but to consider the 'what if's'.

[The constellation 'Maritime War God' is sorry for Lee Jihye.]

It wasn't difficult to find Lee Jihye. There was only one boat and the place where Duke of Loyalty and Warfare's messages could be heard was limited.

"U-Uhhhh…"

She was vomiting in a corner of the first floor deck.

"Hey, are you okay?

Lee Jihye looked up at me with moist eyes.

"I can't, I can't do it!"

This wasn't about me.

[The constellation 'Maritime War God' is encouraging 'Lee Jihye'.]

"Never, I will never do it! Oof…!"

She vomited once again.

I knew. The reason why this person was chosen by Duke of Loyalty and Warfare, despite hating the sea.

[Due to the effect of your exclusive attribute, memories from the books you have read will become stronger.]

In my head, a scene from the 40th chapter of Ways of Survival passed.

「"Hey, how did she get chosen by the Duke of Loyalty and Warfare when she is afraid of the sea?"

"I don't know. Um… maybe because she has the admiral in her ancestry?"

"…She is the descendent of the Duke of Loyalty and Warfare? 」

There was considerable criticism from a few readers apart from me who made it to the 40th chapter of Ways of Survival.

No, did it make sense for her to have the blood of the great Duke of Loyalty and Warfare?

But I had read all the chapters except for the epilogue of Ways of Survival so I knew. Lee Jihye wasn't of the bloodline of the Duke of Loyalty and Warfare.

[The constellation 'Maritime War God' misses his old friend when he sees 'Lee Jihye'.]

「"Then are you a Lee from the Deoksu clan?"

"No, I am a Jeonju Lee."」

[The constellation 'Maritime War God' looks at the descendant of an old friend.]

Lee Jihye was the descendant of Lee Eokgi, the companion of the Duke of Loyalty and Warfare.

Duke of Firmness and Compassion, Lee Eokgi.

Along with the Duke of Loyalty and Warfare, he led the navy to victory in the Battle of Tanghangpo and the Battle of Hansan-do. He was one of the few who defended the Duke of Loyalty and Warfare, Yi Sunsin when he was arrested on unfair charges. However, he didn't have enough myths and didn't become a sponsor.

[The constellation 'Maritime War God' is looking at 'Lee Jihye' with sad eyes.]

Due to that, the Duke of Loyalty and Warfare selected Lee Jihye.

She wasn't his descendant but the descendant of his closest confidant. Maybe it was simply the Duke of Loyalty and Warfare's choice.

Perhaps the Duke of Loyalty and Warfare didn't see it.

The fact that the descendant of his deceased confidant and friend would be killed by his own hands and become a demon.

Well… this was according to the setting of Ways of Survival.

[A bounty scenario has occurred!]

[Bounty Scenario – Those who seek death shall live. Those who seek life will die]

Category: Sub

Difficulty: B+

Clear Conditions: The 'Maritime War God' is asking you for help. Encourage Lee Jihye, incarnation of Duke of Loyalty and Warfare, and win the Battle of Myeongnyang.

Time Limit: 2 hours

Compensation: A stigma from the Duke of Loyalty and Warfare.

Failure: —

I doubted my eyes for a moment.

The bounty scenarios were rarely requested by a constellation alone. I looked closely because it was strange and saw that the reward was also extraordinary.

…The stigma of the Duke of Loyalty and Warfare?

If I cleared this scenario, I would be able to use one of the Duke of Loyalty and Warfare's stigmas without signing a contract. I shook Lee Jihye.

"Lee Jihye, stop it. Quickly."

"I don't want to! Urgh… The three of you can handle it!"

"Can't you endure it a little bit?"

"…Endure? Ahjussi doesn't know."

I didn't know…

Yes, this was her manner of talking. However, there was no time to accept her childish actions.

"No, I know. You aren't like this because of seasickness."

"…What?"

"It is because your dead friend liked this movie."

Lee Jihye shook, like a boxer hit in the jaw. It was like a scene rushing into her head. It was the first scenario at Daepo Girls' High School. She strangled her friend with her bare hands.

"T-That… How did you…?"

"Don't ask how I know. There is no time to explain."

Lee Jihye looked up at me with blank eyes.

"You killed your friend with your own hands only to die like this?"

The first floor deck was pierced with a hook. I grabbed the hook shooting towards Lee Jihye with my bare hands. Lee Jihye shook as she looked at me.

"You can run away here or not. You will never be forgiven. But—"

There were loud shouts. I could hear the sound of Japanese raiders jumping on the ship.

"If you wake up now, at least you can save some people."

I came up onto the second floor deck with the trembling Lee Jihye.

Lee Gilyoung and Jung Heewon were already surrounded. I raised my weapon. The enemies were ordinary Japanese soldiers. We wouldn't lose in a one on one battle. The problem was that there were too many numbers.

"Kuaaak!"

I sliced at the incoming soldiers but couldn't seen an end to it. The enemy ships were firing from a distance. We were finished if this ship sunk. The movie would end tragically and we would die here.

"Lee Jihye!"

I realized the greatness of Yi Sunsin.

How did he lead this battle to victory?

"Wake up now!"

This was a cursed scenario. We didn't have Song Yeojung or Jung Eungdoo. (Apparently close companions of Yi Sunsin)

All we had was a weak girl protected by the Duke of Loyalty and Warfare. The girl staggered on the deck of the second floor.

"I-I'm disgusting. I…I don't deserve to be alive…"

Yes, it was disgusting. I was disgusting along with the way that I was using her.

"No one would be qualified."

"U-Ughhh…"

Tears endlessly poured from Lee Jihye's eyes. I held Heracles' Shield and stood in front of her.

Kwang! Kwaang! Kwaang!

"Survive and take responsibility! Atone for the rest of your life or live a garbage life. Just somehow survive!"

The ship was being broken by the indiscriminate shelling. I turned to her with cold eyes.

"Or do you really want to die here?"

[Your understanding of the character 'Lee Jihye' has increased.]

All types of emotions came from the crying Lee Jihye. She was drowning in the dark emotions of resentment, self-contempt and disillusionment with the world. Nevertheless, there was a straightforward emotion under it.

「 I don't want to die. 」

The constellations were selfish. There were those who didn't support their incarnation or didn't care if their incarnation died or not. But.

As long as any constellation was in the stage of their 'myth', they wouldn't turn away from their incarnation.

[The constellation 'Maritime War God' has responded to the will of 'Lee Jihye'.]

A brilliant red light burst around Lee Jihye's body. It was good for Yoo Joonghyuk but I didn't get nothing. I had something to gain.

[The character 'Lee Jihye' has received a new stigma.]

The third stigma of Sword Demon Lee Jihye. It was the strongest stigma that would later make her a maritime admiral.

"…Your Majesty."

Lee Jihye held the hilt of her sword and looked at the sea. There were many enemies and no allies. She quietly turned her sword towards the world.

"I still have 12 ships left."

A radiant beam emerged from the end of her sword.

[The character 'Lee Jihye' has activated the stigma 'Ghost Fleet Lv. 1!]

*

Water vapor rose in the area. Water sprayed all over the place and 12 ghost ships appeared in the sea.

"Get revenge on the enemies."

The drumming paused like it was embarrassed. Shells flew towards the ghost fleet. However, the ghost fleet was disembodied and didn't suffer any damages.

"Die in this place."

Finally, Lee Jihye's fleet started to move forward. 12 ships moved through the water, creating countless ripples. The white barrels started firing and the ships blocking the path collapsed helplessly.

Kwa kwa kwa kwa kwa!

The girl who didn't cry led the battlefield.

In front of the ghost fleet, the warships were completely overwhelmed. It wasn't just me., Jung Heewon and Lee Gilyoung also gaped at the scene.

This was the real power of a 'stigma'. It was the power of the admiral that wasn't pushed by anyone in a maritime war.

In the fading light of the sunset, the screams of the Japanese were heard from among the smoke. The whirlpool of Myeongnyang Strait sucked in the dead bodies. It took less than an hour for the last enemy ship to collapse.

[The theater owner is satisfied with the changed ending of the movie.]

[The fourth 'Ending Credit' has been reached.]

[Performers: Kim Dokja, Jung Heewon, Lee Jihye, Lee Gilyoung.]

[You have obtained 500 coins as compensation.]

As soon as we received the ending credit, additional messages came up.

[The bounty scenario is cleared.]

[You have received the Maritime War God's reward for the bounty scenario.]

Frankly, I was filled with expectations. Maybe I would get Ghost Fleet. If I could just get it then I wouldn't be envious of Lee Jihye.

[The stigma 'Song of the Sword' has been acquired.]

I thought I heard wrong when the message popped up.

The stigma Song of the Sword. This was originally a stigma that Lee Jihye acquired midway in the story. Yet the Duke of Loyalty and Warfare gave me this stigma.

[The constellation 'Maritime War God' thanks you.]

In a sense, this skill was something I needed more than Ghost Fleet right now. If I had this stigma, I might be able to prevent the worst from happening on the eighth floor.

The surrounding scenery slowly changed and we returned to the inside of the movie theatre. The exhausted Lee Jihye was staring at me.

"Ahjussi."

"You rest here. We will go to save Yoo Joonghyuk."

"But…"

"Listen up."

I obtained a new stigma but I didn't have time to laugh. No matter how good the stigma, there was no meaning if this 'world' was over. In order to prevent that 'end', I had to save Yoo Joonghyuk.

I distributed the ampoules I gathered to everyone. When raising the stats level, the coins consumption was increased every 10 levels. Therefore, I would use my coins first before the ampoules.

[4,000 coins have been consumed.]

[The comprehensive enhancement ampoules have been used.]

[Physique Lv. 18 -> Physique Lv. 24]

[Strength Lv. 18 -> Strength Lv. 24]

[Agility Lv. 11 -> Agility Lv. 20]

[Magic Power Lv. 10 -> Magic Power Lv. 15]

[All stats have increased significantly!]

We climbed the last stairway.

"Everyone, get ready."

[You have entered the eighth floor, the Heavenly Garden.]

The eighth floor of the theatre was a rooftop. It was a small dome reminiscent of an opera house. As soon as I stepped on the green grass of the rooftop, I found the back of the regressor I was looking for.

Ah…

When I thought about all those who would suffer if he died, my anger soared. Fortunately, the back of his head was good enough to be hit.

"Hey Yoo Joonghyuk!"

I ran towards Yoo Joonghyuk and hit him in the back of the head.

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[1] **Panokseon** ("board roofed" ship) – an oar and sail propelled Korean ship that was the main class of warship used by Joseon during the late 16th century.

* Official novel illustration (canonical)

Chapter 41: Ep. 9 – Omniscient Sunfish, V

The cold sensation numbed my fingers. Dammit, I really wanted to beat this guy up. But…

There was something strange.

"…Yoo Joonghyuk?"

This guy, he didn't look back. A grey-white aura was flowing from Yoo Joonghyuk's body. The aura felt ominous and caused my hairs to rise.

I instinctively took a step back. Looking closer, the aura was connected to an old man sitting on a chair on the eighth floor. I knew everything the moment I saw this old man.

[The 'Theatre Master's Simulacrum' has been revealed.]

…Dammit, it had become like this. Yoo Joonghyuk emanated the whitish aura and slowly turned towards me. It was the worst situation.

*

[The 'Theatre Master's Simulacrum' has controlled the character 'Yoo Joonghyuk'.]

Goosebumps covered my entire body. A formidable killing intent was rising from the guy who lost all sense of reason. There was no 'character' in the world who could stop this guy now.

[The character 'Yoo Joonghyuk' has used Force Palm Lv. 4!]

I barely managed to open my mouth.

"W-Wait a minute!"

Kwaaaang!

I experienced a strong pain in my side and my consciousness became numb. As this person who did as he liked shot forward, pages flipped through my head. I was alert.

「…The 8th turn Yoo Joonghyuk didn't die in Theatre Dungeon because he was weak. Strictly speaking, Yoo Joonghyuk wasn't lucky.

The boss of the 'Theatre Dungeon' is the worst opponent for a regressor lie Yoo Joonghyuk…」

My breathing was back.

"Kuhup…heook."

[The External Reinforced Suit is damaged.]

[There is a reduction in the defense.]

I got up while holding my abdomen. It was a really nonsensical attack power. I ate so many ampoules yet still received this much damage from one blow?

One blow dealt huge damage and I was blown away to the other side of the rooftop.

[The character 'Jung Heewon' has used Demon Slaying Lv. 2!]

In the distance, Jung Heewon's eyes were burning. I tried to get up but my body wasn't listening to me.

[The character 'Yoo Joonghyuk' has used Hundred Steps Godly Fists Lv. 4!]

The current Jung Heewon wasn't Yoo Joonghyuk's opponent. She could endure a few blows due to Demon Slaying but blood started to emerge from Jung Heewon's mouth.

Yoo Joonghyuk was much stronger than I expected.

[The exclusive skill, Character List is activated.]

[There is too much information about this person. Character List is converted to Character Summary.]

[Only randomly specified items will be displayed according to User's convenience.]

[Character Summary]

Name: Yoo Joonghyuk.

Exclusive Attributes: Regressor (3rd turn) (Myth), Pro Gamer (Rare)

Exclusive Skills: Sage's Eye Lv. 8, Hand to Hand Combat Lv. 8, Advanced Weapons Training Lv. 5, Mental Barrier Lv. 5, Hundred Steps Godly Fists Lv. 2, Red Phoenix Shunpo Lv. 1…Omitted…

Stigma: Regression Lv. 3, Transmission Lv. 1

Overall Stats: Physique Lv. 28, Strength Lv. 27, Agility Lv. 26, Magic Power Lv. 25.

* The character is currently in a loss of reason state.

This bastard. He activated a new stigma.

Transmission. It was a stigma that allowed Yoo Joonghyuk to wake up the skills he had in the past over time. Through this stigma, Yoo Joonghyuk would become a full-scale monster.

"Master!"

At this time, Lee Jihye came upstairs. The jerk flying towards Jung Heewon turned towards Lee Jihye.

Kwa kwa kwa kwa!

"Kyaaack!"

Thanks to the favour of the Duke of Loyalty and Warfare or maybe Ghost Walk, Lee Jihye fortunately avoided the blow. I shouted toward Lee Jihye.

"He is being controlled! Go after the theater master!"

However, Lee Jihye wasn't free enough to do so. In the end, we couldn't reach the theatre master without going through Yoo Joonghyuk.

Jung Heewon and Lee Jihye's eyes crossed. Their swords moved towards Yoo Joonghyuk at the same time.

It was the combo of Kendo and Sword Training. But the combo that damaged even the T-Rex didn't work on Yoo Joonghyuk.

"Kuheok!"

Lee Jihye was hit in the face with Hundred Steps Godly Fists, spat out blood and collapsed.

[The character 'Jung Heewon' has activated the exclusive skill 'Judgment Time'.]

[Constellations of the Absolute Good system are silent at Jung Heewon's request.]

[The skill has been cancelled.]

Jung Heewon cursed.

"Dammit…not this guy as well?"

It was natural. Yoo Joonghyuk was ruthless but his essence was 'righteous'.

Jung Heewon was hit by a force punch and lost her sword, rolling across the ground. In this desperate moment, Lee Gilyoung used the special skill 'Mjolnir's Thunder' from behind me.

Kukukung!

[The character 'Yoo Joonghyuk' has offset the impact of the attack with 'Lightning Resistance'.

Yoo Joonghyuk looked this way. Shit. I knew he would be strong but… this much? I touched Lee Gilyoung's shoulder and staggered forward.

"Gilyoung. Please. Do you know what to do?"

Lee Gilyoung quickly noticed and immediately nodded.

"Yes, hyung."

"I'm sorry."

"No."

Lee Gilyoung started to mumble something straight away. Lee Gilyoung's pupils slowly reversed. I didn't want to do this but now I had to mobilize all my cards.

[You have used the Tyrant T-Rex's DNA Ampoule.]

[All stats will explosively increase for 30 minutes!]

Yes…let's fight you son of a bitch.

[Physique Lv. 24 -> Physique Lv. 34]

[Strength Lv. 24 -> Strength Lv. 34]

[Agility Lv. 20 -> Agility Lv. 30]

[Magic Power Lv. 15 -> Magic Power Lv. 25]

[The vitality in your body is rising!]

[The potential of your muscles have exploded!]

[You can move more agilely than before.]

[Your heart is seething with an unknown energy!]

The gap in insufficient skills was filled with overwhelming stats.

If Yoo Joonghyuk's Transmission was complete, it would be a useless gamble. But it was possible since the skill level was low.

Still, it would only be for a moment. This moment was good.

[The exclusive skill 'Purest Sword Force Lv. 1' has been activated.]

[The accumulation of stats will increase the level of Purest Sword Force!]

[Purest Sword Force Lv. 1 -> Purest Sword Force Lv. 2.]

The feeling of the magic power at my fingertips changed. I didn't have to run as he rushed towards me first. I realized my momentum was unusual as he pulled out his sword for the first time.

[The character 'Yoo Joonghyuk' has used 'Breaking the Sky Energy Lv. 2'.]

Kakakakak!

Sparks flew from our blades. Neither Yoo Joonghyuk or I stepped back. I felt tremendous pressure as I gripped the blade. Blue ether burned around his blade.

At this point, it was wonderful beyond admiration. In the world of Ways of Survival, higher stats created an absolute gap in power. Now my physical stats were over 30 while Yoo Joonghyuk's were around 20.

Still, he wasn't pushed by me at all. No, it was to the point where I was pushed. I gritted my teeth.

[Exclusive skill, Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint stage 2 has been activated!]

As soon as the skill was activated, Yoo Joonghyuk's thoughts entered my mind.

「It is painful.」

「Several more times in the future.」

「Do I need to repeat this?」

I was furious. This bastard, already?

"Wake up you jerk!"

I struck his sword with all my might and stretched out a fist towards his jaw. The attack was possible because I read his movements with Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint.

Supak!

My fist hit his chin and he stumbled for the first time.

「Once the regression begins, everything will go back to the beginning.」

「All my companions will lose their memories and my history is erased.」

"You idiot!

「Then everything will repeat again.」

In fact, sunfish were very durable creatures. They died because they were vulnerable to stress, not because they were weak.

Just like this guy in front of me.

The theater master was able to control Yoo Joonghyuk was due to his uneasy mental state. The theatre master had weak physical abilities but the best mental abilities. If Yoo Joonghyuk's Mental Barrier was over level 80,000, this wouldn't have happened.

「 What am I…? 」

Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes were blurred. I was furious once I heard the thoughts in his head.

"Aren't you a real protagonist?"

As someone who read all 3,149 chapters of Ways of Survival, I was furious.

"Haven't you only regressed three times?"

I once again hit his head with all my strength. Was it a miracle? The blow to his jaw slowed him down a bit. I didn't miss the opportunity and kicked his chest.

"Do you really think so? You have already forgotten the determination of your first attempt."

「I am the only living thing in this world.」

A lonely voice.

"You bastard… don't fall into those sentiments."

I shouted while blocking his sword.

"If you can't find the meaning of life in front of you, didn't you decide to live for the greater cause?"

[The exclusive skill, 'Fourth Wall' is activated!]

I didn't know who I was talking to anymore. Hot flames sprang up from the blade. My eyes stung and my skin became raw from the heat. My voice was breathless. Maybe I was also lost in the moment.

「I am alone.」

It was as if I was Yoo Joonghyuk or even lived Yoo Joonghyuk's life. My chest was tight.

"Alone?"

「I…」

"What did I come here for if you are alone?"

「I…」

My sword struck and tore at his hands. Blood flowed and the flesh was torn. I wielded the sword like a madman. I gritted my teeth.

"Why are you alone? When you died like a fool in the Theatre Dungeon, when you cried over your dead little sister, when the prophet stabbed you in the back! When your loved one gave birth to a child…!"

As I was talking, I strangely recalled other memories. Letters and letters passed. My old memories of Ways of Survival.

"You went crazy after your child died!"

The complex memories of his family affairs and things he experienced passed through my mind.

"Fighting against the demon kings and the returnees!"

The nightmares of the senior officers in the army.

"Helping people and fighting against the damn reincarnators! When you finally stood before the constellations!"

The days when I struggled to get a job and when my bosses were vile and abusive. Everything was in order to live. In order to survive every day.

"Look around you and try to live somehow!"

Even so, I returned home. I felt relieved when reading one novel.

"I…"

My hand holding the blade trembled. I became too excited. Dammit. I just needed to buy enough time.

I breathed roughly and looked ahead. But…something was strange. Was it an illusion? It was only a moment but a dim light was returning to Yoo Joonghyuk's hand.

「 I… 」

Some things couldn't be understood even if I read his mind. My heart thumped the moment I saw Yoo Joonghyuk's look.

[The excessive immersion has caused the 'Fourth Wall' to shake.]

Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes were staring straight at me.

「 You… who are you? 」

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* Official novel illustration (canonical)

Chapter 42: Ep. 9 – Omniscient Sunfish, VI

"What?"

「What are you…?」

I was surprised by the sudden change in thoughts. Surely he didn't regain his sense of reason after hearing my words? How could that be?

I was a bit confused. In the first place, I didn't start this operation with the expectation of such a result.

[The 'Theatre Master's Simulacrum' is embarrassed.]

[The 'Theatre Master's Simulacrum' has strengthened his control on the character 'Yoo Joonghyuk'.]

"Kuaaak…!"

Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes blurred again.

Indeed. I had felt hope but it was unreasonable for him to wake up himself. Otherwise, he wouldn't be a sunfish. I would be grateful if he didn't commit suicide. The ether of Yoo Joonghyuk's sword trembled.

[The character 'Yoo Joonghyuk's Breaking the Sky Energy' has grown!]

In the meantime, the skills received through Transmission were becoming stronger. It was thanks to the talent of a main character.

The Purest Sword Force gradually collapsed as I kept struggling. I didn't know if it was the limit of the skill itself or a difference in talent.

I glanced at Lee Gilyoung. Blood was pouring down from Lee Gilyoung's nose. The time had come.

"Joonghyuk."

Perhaps after today, Yoo Joonghyuk would become surprisingly strong. I pushed his sword away as hard as I could.

"Do you remember what I asked before? I asked if I could hit you?"

There was a difference in natural talent. In the next few years, Yoo Joonghyuk would become incomparable stronger than me.

But not right now. At least for now.

"You told me to hit you if I could. Do you remember?"

If I did this now, then at least for a moment…

[Blade of Faith is activated!]

[The special option of Unbroken Faith is activated.]

[The ether property is converted to 'fire'.]

I could overwhelm this ridiculous guy.

Ether Blade. The fire ether appeared in empty space.

Hwaruruk!

Yoo Joonghyuk was surprised by the sudden attack and took a few steps back. He instinctively felt that it was something extraordinary. But it was too late.

[The stigma 'Song of the Sword' has been used.]

Song of the Sword. It was one of the strongest combat buffs that the Duke of Loyalty and Warfare was proud of.

[Your sword is filled with the words left by the Duke of Loyalty and Warfare.]

There was a large variation in the attack power depending on which verse was sung, but it was a perfect skill for me right now.

「Shooting arrows like rain and protecting the generalissimo from guns firing on all sides.」

Fortunately, it was a verse from the Nanjung Ilgi[1].

An enormous magic power emerged and all the burning ethers were united. I swung it towards Yoo Joonghyuk.

「The chaos was like a thunderstorm.」

The fire ether took the shape of arrows and started to bombard him. It was an attack that couldn't be used for a long time due to insufficient magic power. However,this would suffice.

Dudududududu!

"Kuooh!"

Numerous red wounds appeared all over Yoo Joonghyuk's body.

In this damn world where coins represented all values and the constellations decided the development of the world, I still needed Yoo Joonghyuk.

Thus, I would protect him today.

Hwaruruk!

Yoo Joonghyuk's actions stopped as flames burned the area. His Fire Resistance meant it might not be a serious blow, but it was enough to force him into a state of inactivity. I looked at the 'theater master' sitting at the edge of the garden.

[The 'Theatre Master's Simulacrum' is extremely alert to you.]

Now was the only chance. I started running. In the distance, I could see the theatre master stiffen.

Then.

[The character 'Yoo Joonghyuk' has used Recovery Lv. 2!]

Dammit, Yoo Joonghyuk was already chasing after me.

Recovery. It was a scam skill where he could recover quickly after being hit hard once a day. He already obtained this skill due to Transmission.

No matter how fast I ran, I couldn't be faster than Yoo Joonghyuk who used Red Phoenix Shunpo.

I ignored the theater master in front of me and collided with Yoo Joonghyuk's sword. I could only believe in my last card. I cried out with all my strength.

"Gilyoung!"

Kukukung!

The moment I cried out, there was a huge crack in the ceiling of Sky Garden.

The black dome surrounding the roof was breaking. The Yoo Joonghyuk running towards me was also the Yoo Joonghyuk manipulated by the theatre master. He looked up with surprise at the ceiling.

It was generally impossible for the shielded area of a 'hidden scenario' to be broken. But it was possible for 'uncommon' existences.

In the distance, Lee Gilyoung was crying while wiping his bleeding nose.

"U-Uwahh… uwahhhh…!"

In order to deal with a monster, you had to call a monster.

Kuoooooh!

A huge insect dug into the cracks of the broken dome.

Rattle!

Like thin glass, the dome broke and the roof was split apart. The astonished theater master screamed. A monster that could destroy the shielded area of a hidden scenario. It was like a gigantic praying mantis, the insect king of great size.

*

[The 6th grade insect king, Titanoptera has appeared!]

It was an appearance that caused goosebumps. The monster that had been fighting with the poisonous rhino the other day. This monster came here in response to Lee Gilyoung's Diverse Communication. Lee Gilyoung laughed.

"He, hehe… Titano…"

Titano? Don't tell me… it did look similar but surely not.

Kuoooooh!

The huge praying mantis flew towards the theatre master. Then Yoo Joonghyuk blocked it.

[The character 'Yoo Joonghyuk' has used 'Strong Self-Defense Lv. 4'.]

Kwaaaaang!

There was a massive sound and Yoo Joonghyuk's body was pushed down into the floor of the rooftop. Yet Yoo Joonghyuk was still standing.

Ku ku ku ku!

…He was really a ridiculous monster. He could do with a 6th grade species with his current abilities? Yoo Joonghyuk even launched a counterattack.

Kyaooooh!

The Titanoptera screamed at the hard blow. Surprisingly, Yoo Joonghyuk was on par with the 6th grade insect king.

Maybe it was something he saw when fighting with me. The colour of the theatre master was returning. Yoo Joonghyuk was strong. It was a sudden situation but the theatre master thought he could win.

He was wrong. He should've been looking at me.

I ran towards the theater master again. There wasn't long left on Diverse Communicaton. I wouldn't let Lee Gilyoung's efforts be in vain.

[Blade of Faith is activated!]

The theatre master belatedly discovered me and shouted.

The theater master's simulacrum.

According to the setting of Ways of Survival, this named boss was made with all the heart and soul of a constellation. A lot of time passed and he was in a deteriorated form, becoming the boss of a hidden scenario. However… he was still able to penetrate Yoo Joonghyuk's Mental Barrier.

The one who received the divine protection of a constellation. He was never a pushover.

[The 'Theatre Master's Simulacrum' has triggered 'Simulacra'.

It was a delirium skill on a higher level than the specter's Phantom Prison.

The surrounding space distorted and all types of illusions appeared. The monsters seemed closer to reality than illusions.

The ground rats, grolls, poisonous rhinos, T-rex… The monsters I had encountered so far were running towards me. The fierce teeth and violence claws ripped and clawed at me, but I didn't stop. I wasn't afraid. It was all fake. They didn't exist. They were all fiction from a novel.

The moment that the Blade of Faith reached his neck.

[The 'Theatre Master's Simulacrum' has triggered 'Mental Erosion.]

Mental Erosion. It was the advanced cognitive manipulation skill used on Yoo Joonghyuk. I wasn't afraid because I had the Fourth Wall. But something unexpected happened the moment he penetrated my head.

[The 'Theatre Master's Simulacrum' is embarrassed.]

Abyss of the ego.

All types of thoughts gathered and the pages of Ways of Survival fluttered.

–T-This? This, is…!

Numerous texts emanated a faint light and floated in the darkness. It was the chapters of Ways of Survival that I had read.

[The exclusive skill, 'Fourth Wall' is activated!]

The complexion of the theatre master changed as he dug into my head. He looked at the strings around him and his face whitened.

–Don't, tell, me, you…ahhh!

This was the last thing he said. Strangely, he looked at me in awe.

The moment Blade of Faith was about to cross his neck, a dazzling light came from his body. It was like a ghost touching a divine light or the penalty for breaking a taboo.

He was destroyed without a trace.

I looked down at my hands and felt dazed.

…What just happened?

[The 'Theatre Master's Simulacra' has been killed for the first time.]

[You have obtained 9,000 coins as compensation.]

[You have met the conditions to clear the hidden scenario!]

[You have obtained 4,000 coins as compensation.]

These messages rose. I looked back and saw Yoo Joonghyuk collapsing after being released from the theatre master's control. Fortunately, he didn't die. The same was true for Lee Gilyoung, who had forcibly used Diverse Communication.

"Hyung…"

I rushed over and embraced Lee Gilyoung. Lee Gilyoung lost strength and fainted in my arms.

[The barrier surrounding the Theater Dungeon has disappeared.]

The barrier covering the ceiling vanished and I looked at the insect king. Surprising, it turned around and fled. It was like all interest had vanished. I breathed out with a sense of relief.

It was over.

"…Are you okay?"

Jung Heewon and Lee Jihye staggered over.

"I'm fine. Heewon-ssi?"

"I'm okay. Fortunately, Jihye is safe."

Lee Jihye was hit a lot by Yoo Joonghyuk and she couldn't speak because her mouth was swollen.

[The ending time for the third main scenario is approaching!]

Perhaps it was time for the end.

I looked around the rooftop and saw that dawn was coming, making the day brighter. If Lee Hyunsung was here, he would recite the 'homeland' prayer.

Jung Heewon groaned.

"Ah… Seoul."

The ruined city area was illuminated by the faint light of dawn. I heard intermittent explosions from far away. Now there was no more poisonous fog. The poisonous rhinos were crushed under the collapsed buildings. I could see people fighting among themselves. They were probably a group that ended the scenario before us. The entire landscape was trapped inside a huge dome.

It was a large barrier that seemed to be breaking.

Currently, Seoul was isolated in a transparent dome.

Jung Heewon said, "Really…it is all ending."

It was a scene that had to be acknowledged once again.

I looked at the collapsed buildings and thought that Mino Soft would be somewhere there. Yoo Sangah would be disappointed. It was because Yoo Sangah was a person who worked hard. Lee Gilyoung wriggled in my arms.

"Have you regained consciousness?"

Lee Gilyoung nodded and pointed to the sky.

From a distance, a meteor shower seemed to be falling. The meteor shower was originally the forerunner of the main scenario. However, the number of meteor showers was more than before.

It meant the 'hall' would open soon.

The meteor showers were probably falling all over the world.

Jung Heewon admired it.

"Pretty…"

Jung Heewon didn't know. The meteors that looked beautiful from a distance would make a nightmare for the people where it fell.

Now a bigger disaster would come.

Lee Gilyoung gathered his small hands together and muttered something. Jung Heewon and Lee Jihye were silent for a while. Maybe they were also praying.

It was funny. Wishing to the beings who would become a source of nightmare, it was probably only human beings who did this in the entire universe.

After a while, Lee Gilyoung opened his eyes and looked up at me.

"Hyung isn't making a wish?"

I looked down at Lee Gilyoung and replied.

"I have made a wish."

"What is it?"

"Gilyoung, you shouldn't ask that." Jung Heewon scolded him.

I watched Jung Heewon, Yoo Joonghyuk and then the collapsed Seoul again.

"I wish to see the novel's epilogue."

Lee Gilyoung looked at me with confusion.

I silently gazed at the sky. There were slight cracks in the sky above Seoul. Once the sun rose, the dokkaebis would open a new hell.

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[1] **Nanjung Ilgi** – personal diary of Admiral Yi Sun-sin, a first person narrative of the admiral's perspective on the Japanese invasions of Korea in the late 16th century.

* Official novel illustration (canonical)

Chapter 43: Ep. 10 – Future War, I

[Main Scenario #3 – Emergency Defense has ended.]

[You have obtained 1,000 coins as compensation.]

The main scenario, which was supposed to begin only after the sun had risen, actually started less than 10 minutes after the third main scenario was over.

[The fourth main scenario is about to begin!]

Damn, how long had it been since the third scenario ended…

I went straight to Lee Jihye.

"You take Yoo Joonghyuk."

"…Can I do that?"

"You can't go downstairs now anyway. It will be a problem for when he wakes up."

Lee Jihye nodded as she looked at Yoo Joonghyuk.

"Please inform me when he wakes up. I want to give him another hit in the back."

I headed downstairs with Jung Heewon. I carried Lee Gilyoung, who had completely fallen asleep after the meteor shower.

The dungeon disappeared and it turned into an ordinary theatre. The items in the rewards room on the 5th floor were turned into ordinary stage props. It was as if everything that happened yesterday was a dream.

Then Bihyung's voice was heard.

[…Do you know what I am going to say?]

'Yes'.

[Sigh…I nearly fell down.]

I felt a little relieved as I listened to Bihyung's grumbles.

The constellations were powerful but they weren't omniscient. It was because all the sounds and images of the scenario were transmitted through the 'channel'. What did this mean?

'Was it filtered properly? I was too excited that I said too much'.

[Of course it was. Is there something wrong with my channel? That level of information is automatically filtered.]

If my thoughts were correct, the words I said to Yoo Joonghyuk would be conveyed to the constellations in the following way.

–Do you really think so? You have already forgotten the determination of your ■■ attempt.

–Why are you alone? When you ■■■ like a fool in the ■■■■■■■■, when you cried over your ■■■■■■! When your loved one gave ■■ to a ■■!

–Helping people and fighting against the damn ■■■! When you finally ■■■ before the ■■■■■!"

In fact, I didn't know how much filtering there was.

It might be more than this, but it wouldn't be weak. In the original work, Yoo Joonghyuk experienced information being blocked this way at the beginning, even when information about 'regressors' was spreading.

[Constellations didn't hear anything. Don't worry. The problem is that even I didn't hear much.]

'…You didn't hear it?'

This was a bit odd. The dokkaebi also couldn't hear the information?

[Yes, that's right. What were you talking about?]

Information that even the dokkaebi didn't know. I had one guess. Perhaps… the constraints of 'probability' had begun? I naturally came up with something from Ways of Survival.

「'Probability' is a great deterrent that controls the Star Stream.」

…I was reminded of it but it didn't help me straight away. One of the reasons why Ways of Survival was ruined was that there were too many settings the writer didn't know well.

'What is the reaction among the constellations?'

[They are fed up. There is still an uproar about what you were talking about.]

I guess so. The constellations experienced a filter and the movie suddenly changed into a silent movie.

If they were smart, they should start paying attention to the possibilities I had. The fact that my words were filtered meant I knew information that shouldn't be revealed at the present time.

[A few constellations are watching you to explore your secrets.]

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' is excited by your existence.]

[2,000 coins have been sponsored.]

I thought Bihyung had forgotten.

[I received so many indirect messages that I didn't send them to you. Do you understand?]

'Do so in the future. I only want messages about coins'.

[…Am I your manager?]

The figure of Bihyung disappeared. I thought he was becoming cuter over time. One thing was finished and the other…

"Dokja-ssi, is it hard? I'll carry Gilyoung."

"Ah, it would be appreciated."

I handed Lee Gilyoung to Jung Heewon. Her face looked somewhat serious. I hesitated for a moment before opening my mouth.

"Heewon-ssi."

"Huh?"

"What are you worried about?"

"No, just…" Jung Heewon hesitated for a moment before sighing. "Hah… okay. It isn't in my nature to keep it in."

Indeed.

Jung Heewon got directly to the point.

"What is Dokja-ssi's identity?"

"…Did you hear something earlier?"

"A little bit."

I thought she wouldn't hear it because we were quite far away. Unfortunately, she heard something. Jung Heewon was closer than Lee Jihye and no human-to-human filtering is possible…

Lee Gilyoung let out a loud snoring noise. I decided to be half honest.

"I know part of the future."

"Really?"

"Yes."

Jung Heewon thought about something for a while. She seemed to be wondering if my words were true or not. Then Jung Heewon seemed to have decided as she bit her lips.

"Do Yoo Sangah and Lee Hyunsung know?"

"They don't know yet."

I answered in earnest and Jung Heewon stepped away from me with Lee Gilyoung.

"…Surely you aren't going to kill me?"

'What are you talking about?"

"Normally, a development like 'You know too much about me' will occur…"

Where did this normal development come from? Somehow I seemed to be a bad person.

"I don't know what the normal development is but I would've already killed Heewon-ssi if I wanted to."

"Actually, that is a bit weird."

"…I don't have bad thoughts. It is actually the opposite."

"The opposite?"

I looked into Jung Heewon's eyes and said.

"The future scenarios will be more dangerous. You might almost die many times and might lose preciouse things.

"…So?"

"So…"

I looked into Jung Heewon's increasingly nervous eyes and said.

"Please stay with me from now on."

"…What do you mean?"

"It means to be my companion."

It was time to make my people. 'Trustworthy people' who wouldn't easily betray me.

Jung Heewon, who I helped awaken and could read her mind, was the most suitable talent. Jung Heewon looked blank for a moment.

"Dokja-ssi didn't consider me a companion before?"

"It is actually the opposite. I'm not the one who doesn't think of you as a companion."

Jung Heewon's eyes shook.

I deliberately took a step back.

"If you don't want to be companions, think of it as a deal. I need Heewon's strength and my information will be helpful to Heewon-ssi. It is give and take. The important thing is that our relationship won't change in the future."

"It is a bit abrupt… Do I have to answer now?"

"No."

For a person like Jung Heewon, a leisurely approach was better than a hasty and emotional one. In fact, Jung Heewon's expression wasn't bad.

[The character 'Jung Heewon' is relieved at your honesty.]

[The character 'Jung Heewon' is seriously thinking about your proposal.]

Maybe it wouldn't be long. I had a big influence on Jung Heewon's awakening event and my presence would be deeply stamped in her subconscious.

Perhaps when this scenario was over, the second Sponsor Selection would begin. Then Jung Heewon would gain a sponsor. The real power of Jung Heewon would be shown from then on.

"Then can I ask you something?"

"Yes."

"Do you know what I am doing in the future?"

I looked up. Wouldn't this be filtered?

"I also don't know."

"…Huh?"

"There is no Jung Heewon in the future that I know."

"What…"

"That's why this deal is really necessary for Heewon-ssi."

Jung Heewon's eyes widened.

Jung Heewon wasn't in the original book. She was a variable that I raised directly. Her attribute was good enough and if she got a proper sponsor, she would play a key role in changing future scenarios. Especially if I fought against people with 'other variables' that I didn't know.

Then a loud noise was heard from downstairs.

"Think about it. Let's hurry."

We descended to the platform where many people were putting pressure on a small group.

I understood the situation. The Landlord Alliance. They were still like this.

"Where did that bastard Kim Dokja go? Tell me quickly."

Looking closer, I saw that the Landlord Alliance were harassing Lee Hyunsung. I deliberately walked towards them and spoke in a loud voice.

"Yoo Sangah-ssi, Lee Hyunsung-ssi."

"You!"

An alliance member cried out as soon as I came down to the platform of Line 4.

I saw a familiar landlord uncle. The evidence of the fierce battle remained on the bastard's body. At first glance, I could tell that his overall stats had risen sharply. I liked it.

"Gong Pildu."

Gong Pildu used Armed Zone and eight turrets rose. The alliance members centred around Gong Pildu looked at me. They didn't know the person who saved them.

"This jerk…!"

The moment Gong Pildu was about to say something. There was an electric current in the air.

[The fourth main scenario will start in 5 minutes!]

Along with the system message, Dokkaebi Bihyung appeared.

[Hahaha, everyone! Have you been well?]

People's expressions stiffened at this nasty guy's face.

[It looks like you are all restless!]

"W-What is it now?"

[Of course I came because of the announcement for the fourth scenario.]

"This is shit…"

[Now now, don't act like that. Don't you know I go after the first person who complains? The fourth main scenario has to do with the other stations. A fairly exciting story is waiting for you. I'm sure you will be satisfied!]

Everyone's complexions darkened as they heard about other stations.

Chungmuro alone was this bad. It was obvious how much trouble there would be if other stations were involved. Bihyung laughed.

[By the way, in order to proceed with this scenario, you have to perform another task first. Won't it be a mess if the number of people increases? Therefore, you need a presence to lead you. In other words, there must be a station representative!]

Representative. It was finally starting.

[From now on, we will play a 'skirmish'.] It could be called a warm-up game. The rules of the game… well, you will see!]

Bihyung smiled and disappeared, while a message window popped up in front of everyone.

[The sub scenario has arrived!]

[Sub Scenario – Elect a Representative]

Category: Sub

Difficulty: C

Clear Conditions: Take the 'white flag' installed in the centre of the platform.

Time Limit: 30 minutes

Compensation: 1,000 coins, Chungmuro's representative.

Failure: —

* The representative of the station can exercise strong control over the members.

Before the message window fully popped up, Gong Pildu was already running to the flag in the centre of the platform. He truly was like a ghost.

"Everybody get out of the way!"

Gong Pildu pushed people like a runaway locomotive and was in the lead to get the white flag. This couldn't happen. The moment his fingertips were about to reach the flag, I opened my mouth.

"Gong Pildu, down!"

[Under the terms of the contract, 'Command Rights' is activated!]

"Waaack!"

I stepped on the back of the collapsed Gong Pildu and took the white flag.

[You have pulled the white flag from the flagpole.]

[You have become the 'representative' of Chungmuro.]

[You are qualified to walk the 'King's Road'.]

Chapter 44: Ep. 10 – Future War, II

As soon as my hand wrapped around the flag, I felt a strong energy rising in my body. Originally, this was something the third turn Yoo Joonghyuk should have but… it didn't matter.

Wasn't he already strong?

['Kim Dokja' has occupied the white flag.]

[If the white flag doesn't change owners in the next five minutes, Chungmuro will be under his control.]

[If the flag is snatched in the next five minutes, the timer will reset.]

A timer appeared in the air.

[5:00]

Gong Pildu pointed at me with a pale face.

"Take away the flag! You only have to snatch it in five minutes!"

The alliance member belatedly regained their minds and started rushing towards me. Oho, it was like this?

Lee Hyunsung turned to me.

"Dokja-ssi!"

"Hyunsung-ssi!"

We called out to each other at the same time. Heracles' Shield flew out of my hands into Lee Hyunsung's hands.

"T-This?"

"I picked it out for you. Throw away what you previously used.

A big smile appeared on Lee Hyunsung's face.

[The character 'Lee Hyunsung' has used the exclusive skill 'Wide-Area Defense!]

A translucent shield centred on Heracles' Shield surrounded our party. Indeed, this was the secondary skill attached to an A-grade item.

"Wah, what is this?"

People groaned as they ran into the air shield. They tried to break the protective shields with their old weapons but it couldn't be broken with E-grade or F-grade items. In the end, the alliance members had only one place to turn to.

"Pildu-ssi!"

"Out of the way!"

The level of Armed Zone had risen considerably and there was already a small Armed Zone under Gong Pildu's feet. He reduced the area to shorten the cooldown time. He was using his brains.

Well, I had to handle it properly.

"Pildu, did I tell you to get up yet?"

"Heok?"

Gong Pildu's head once again slammed into the ground as he fell flat.

[Under the terms of the contract, 'Command Rights' is activated!]

"Keep your head on the ground until I tell you to get up."

The perplexed alliance members shouted at Gong Pildu.

"P-Pildu-ssi?"

"P-Pull me up! Quickly!"

The terrified alliance members tried to raise Gong Pildu up but it wasn't easy because Gong Pildu was very heavy.

"And… it is annoying so turn off the turrets."

[The character 'Gong Pildu' has released 'Armed Zone Lv. 6!]

"T-This bastard…!"

"Shut your mouth as well. Stay silent for 30 minutes."

[Under the terms of the contract, 'Command Rights' is activated!]

"Mmph mprh mmph!"

The alliance members became completely panic stricken once Gong Pildu became powerless with just a few words. Of course, the same was true for Lee Hyunsung, Yoo Sangah and Jung Heewon.

I said with a smile, "Now everyone seems to have figured out the situation and I'd like to talk to you…"

I could see people wincing and withdrawing.

There were roughly 29 people left. 20 members from the Landlord Alliance and nine extra people, including me and my party. The number wasn't high but it was better than I thought. It was because having too many people at the beginning was difficult to control. I watched them and said.

"Now you have two choices."

It was time to pick a side.

"The first one is to leave Chungmuro and go to another station. Or stay here with me."

"W-What are you saying so suddenly…?"

"Just answer me. Will you remain here or will you go elsewhere? You better decide before the main scenario starts. Or else your life will be in danger."

The eyes of the people present started to quickly move. Someone looked at me, someone else looked at Gong Pildu and another person looked at the tunnel leading to another station. I could tell their thoughts just be looking at them.

"I won't stop anyone who wants to leave. But anyone who stays here will be under my control."

"Control…?"

"Behaviour like the Landlord Alliance' is no longer acceptable. I won't allow tyranny over a small group."

A handful of people watching me furtively started to stand by my side. They had been treated harshly by the Landlord Association and thought it was better to stick with me. It was a good judgment. A few alliance members shouted.

"In the end, you are going to reign!"

"I won't deny it. But I won't take taxes or survival money."

"Is our safety guaranteed if we enter your group?"

A man from the alliance asked. Well, they bothered the tenants so much that it was natural to worry.

"I'll guarantee some outside safety but I won't interfere with what is going on inside. You must deal with conflicts between individuals yourself."

"T-That…"

"I'll give you one minute. You have until then to decide."

There was no need to wait for one minute. People had already made up their minds. Some of the alliance members walked over to me with determined expressions and bowed their heads. They were relatively young.

"Thank you in advance. I was wrong in the past. Thank you for your generous forgiveness."

"It is a pleasure. You don't have to ask for forgiveness from me."

[Some members within the group fell a sense of trust towards you.]

However, several others decided to leave Chungmuro. They tried to raise the fallen Gong Pildu.

I watched them and said, "Ah, leave Gong Pildu. That guy is mine."

"What?"

"If you have decided then leave quickly."

The five alliance members frowned at this and withdrew.

"Kang-ssi! Do you really not want to come with me? It is better than staying under him!"

"Let's all go! Are you really going to serve that guy? You've seen him!"

But there were no more defectors.

The five men cursed a few times before heading for the tunnel towards Myeongdong. They wanted to gain land elsewhere and become new 'landlords'. Unfortunately, their plan would fail. In the fourth scenario, the people 'wandering' were good prey to predators.

Once five minutes passed, the system messages popped up.

[The sub scenario has ended.]

[You have earned 1,000 coins as compensation.]

[The white flag will show its true effects to the Chungmuro representative.]

[Current Group: 24 people.]

[Your reputation is still too weak to gain the title of king.]

The title of king…

Indeed, it was hard to get the title of king with just a white flag. In order to walk the proper king's road, I had to change the colour of the flag. Of course, the white colour had its own 'authority'.

[You have gained control of the Chungmuro Group through the effect of the white flag.]

[You can punish a group member who goes against you.]

[There are currently five people who have left.]

I could give a 'punishment' to the five distant men but I left it alone. Terror was effective in controlling people but such tyranny wasn't suitable for me.

"Well, thank you."

I said while looking everyone in the eyes.

Lee Hyunsung was looking at me with respect while Yoo Sangah and Jung Heewon nodded. The rest of them were looking at me with similar expressions. They were still rabble but it wasn't a bad start.

Shortly afterwards, Bihyung appeared in the air.

[Ohu, you have voted for a representative. Then let's start the game!]

[The fourth main scenario is activated!]

[Main Scenario #4 – Struggle for the Flag]

Category: Main

Difficulty: C

Clear Conditions: (Hidden due to content length)

Time Limit: 12 days.

Compensation: 2,000 coins.

Failure: ???

I press the clear conditions.

Numerous messages appeared in front of me.

[Clear Conditions]

1. Every station has a 'flag' and 'flagpole' that can be occupied.

* The flag can only be carried by the 'representative' of the station.

2. You need to protect the flag from other station groups. If a flag is taken away by another group, the losing group will be taken over by the group that occupied the flag.

3. You can put a 'flag' in the 'flagpole' of another station. The authority of the flag is only for the 'representative' of each station. Once the representative dies in an armed conflict, the authority of the representative is transferred to the person who holds the flag first. If you take the 'flag' of another station group, the treatment of the group deprived of the flag is determined by the group that took the flag.

4. You must occupy the 'flagpole' of the 'target station' within a certain time limit. Failure to do so will result in the death of all group members.

5. The target station your group should occupy is Changsin Station.

Jung Heewon thought for a moment before opening her mouth.

"…We have to keep our flag and flagpole while putting out flag in other stations. Am I understanding it right?"

"That is how I understood it. We must take the flag to Changsin Station." Lee Hyunsung also spoke.

Then I said, "That's right. Everyone has understood."

Jung Heewon narrowed her eyes at my words. She knew I was pretending not to know. Now that I knew the future, she kept looking at me. I grinned towards Jung Heewon.

Yoo Sangah touched her shoulder and said.

"Again… we once again have to fight against people?"

Lee Hyunsung thought for a moment before replying.

"It said that we can decide on the treatment of the group if we occupy their flagpole… hopefully there might not be any casualties."

"Ah, I see. That death won't necessarily occur if we take over the station? If we can accept the members of that station group when deciding the treatment…"

"Yes, it is possible to clear it without anyone dying."

Lee Hyunsung replied with a smile. However, my heart wasn't comfortable.

It seemed like Yoo Sangah and Lee Hyunsung were trying to understand the world with some saintly logic.

There was no such thing as a scenario where no one died. The fourth scenario would have more casualties than any precious scenario.

As if she knew my heart, Jung Heewon changed the topic.

"What line is Changsin Station? I think we should know that first."

Lee Hyunsung confirmed it on the route map.

"Line 6. If we go to the tunnel, we can use the transit route…"

"Then we should split the group. How about a few people guarding this place while others go to scout?"

I didn't have to say anything as they actively exchanged opinions. It was somewhat heartwarming.

[The activation of the scenario will turn off Chungmuro Station's safety borders.]

[You can now freely move to other stations.]

As people were exchanging their opinions, I approached Gong Pildu.

"Gong Pildu, you can speak now."

The command was turned off but Gong Pildu couldn't easily open his mouth.

"I know that you feel badly towards me. But you have to adapt. The days when you are a landlord are over."

"…"

"I know why you have been so obsessed with 'land'. But do it moderately. If you want to survive in the future. Don't you have something to do?"

Gong Pildu's eyes were shaky. I continued speaking.

"You will be in charge of protecting this place."

Just like the third scenario, Gong Pildu was very useful for the fourth scenario. As longa s Gong Pildu protected this place, Chungmuro would be safe unless someone on Yoo Joonghyuk's level came.

"Why should I speak to you…?"

"This time I won't enforce it with a command. If you follow my request, there will be a reward."

"…"

"Think carefully. Think about your family."

Gong Pildu's eyes became bigger at my words.

"You, how…!"

At this moment, noise was heard from the tunnel.

Baang~!

There was a loud horn sound and headlights shone on the railway of line 4. There was a bike engine sound and an exhaust sound. Something was coming towards Chungmuro.

Chapter 45: Ep. 10 – Future War, III

…It hadn't been long since the scenario began and already?

I tried to recall the original story but there was no recollection of such an early invasion. It meant variables had appeared.

In the darkness, the headlights turned off and there was the sound of people talking.

"Ah, we finally made it to Chungmuro."

"Really, it took them a long time to break the scenario."

"Hey, be quiet. They are going to hear. And don't you know that the scenarios are different between stations?"

I watched as the people came closer with weapons. The most important thing in a battle was to take the lead first. I went forward, followed by Lee Hyunsung and Jung Heewon, then Yoo Sangah in the rear. Lee Gilyoung was still sleeping.

How many seconds passed? The four men and women in the darkness walked towards this side. I opened my mouth.

"Stop there."

"Eh? Well well."

The people stopped in their traces when they saw the blade I was pointing. There were white bikes beside them. I heard weapons being pulled out but a man's voice was faster.

"Wait a minute. Calm down. Oh, I can't even talk because I am too scared."

"Put down your weapons and slowly come this way."

The man put down his weapon and approached with both hands raised. Once he entered the light, the man's impression wasn't bad. He gave off a reasonably favourable impression. His thin eyes were in a gentle curve.

"Don't be too wary. We didn't come here to fight."

"Then why did you come?"

"Let's start with the introductions. I'm Kang Ilhun and I help manage the Dongdaemun Group."

Kang Ilhun? Nobody popped up in my head straight away. Furthermore, the representative of Dongdaemun… things were becoming strange.

[The exclusive skill, Character List is activated.]

Since the skill worked, he was certainly a character in the novel.

[Character Summary]

Name: Kang Ilhun

Age: 31 years old

Sponsor: Shameless Good Gossiper

Exclusive Attributes: Rumours Expert (General)

Exclusive Skills: Weapons Training Lv. 2, Art of Communication Lv. 3, Spread Rumours Lv. 1.

Stigma: Making a Commotion Lv. 1.

Overall Stats: Physique Lv. 12, Strength Lv. 13, Agility Lv. 13, Magic Power Lv. 10.

Overall Evaluation: Unfortunately, he didn't develop his character due to the wrong sponsor. But he is a person with good ability who can be used. He spreads rumours regardless of truth or lies, so be careful.

Rumours Expert… It was time for these guys to start acting. Kang Ilhun looked at me with slight impatience.

"Your name is…?"

"Kim Dokja."

"Ah, Kim Dokja-ssi…?"

A flash of wonder corssed Kang Ilhun's face as he heard my name. However, it was only for a short moment.

"Nice to meet you, Dokja-ssi. Since you have a flag, you must be a station representative?

"That's right."

He looked closely at the colour of my flag and then the people around me. It was to confirm the power on our side. He was keen eyes but unfortunately, he met the wrong opponent.

"If you have seen enough, get to the main point."

"Haha. I beg your pardon. We also need to be concerned about safety." Kang Ilhun continued speaking without any panic. "Once again, we didn't come to fight. What if we came with a good offer?"

I watched Kang Ilhun's party. None of them had a flag.

"How can I believe that?"

"Hmm, won't you know if you check the rules? If we came to fight, we would've come with the representative. Only the representative can occupy the flagpole."

It was true. It was obviously true.

"What is the offer?"

"We came to ask for an alliance."

At these words, the members of Chungmuro started murmuring. Kang Ilhun shook.

"Ah, you are uncertain because Chungmuro just opened. In fact, the fourth scenario has already been in progress for two days."

"…Two days?"

Yoo Sangah reflexively muttered. Kang Ilhun nodded.

"Yes, the third scenario is slightly different in content and duration between stations… perhaps you didn't know this?"

"Ah…"

The third scenario was just over but I already knew this. In the original story, Chungmuro was a latecomer in the scenario compared to other stations. In other words, we started with some losses in terms of information.

In that sense, Kang Ilhun's alliance offer was a timely temptation. Information was required and this was beyond our strength. The problem was what did the other side gain?

"It is a difficult offer to accept. I don't know if you have an ulterior motive."

"Hrmm, Dokja-ssi's words are definitely right. You won't believe in the alliance so I will first state what we will get from the alliance. In short, Chungmuro isn't our 'target' station."

"How can I believe that?"

"You can believe it or not. But please think about it. If Chungmuro was our target, we would've dragged the main force of our station here. To be honest, the flagpoles are most vulnerable just after the station is open."

It wasn't very persuasive.

"What will you do if our target station is Dongdaemun?"

"Haha, there is no need to worry about that. We already know the station that is targeting us. We didn't come to you for no reason."

"I see. Let's clear the scenario by helping each other, since our targets are different… is that what you mean?"

"That's right. Isn't it good to help each other at this time?"

Kang Ilhun smiled and nodded. I was silent for a moment and Yoo Sangah opened her mouth.

"I have a question."

Kang Ilhun grinned at Yoo Sangah.

"Yes, what is it pretty girl?"

"Why did you come to Chungmuro? If you came from Dongdaemun, you could've made an alliance with other stations."

It was an unexpectedly sharp point. Kang Ilhun looked slightly confused.

"Oh, that… as I told you, Chungmuro just opened. I mean… um, the other stations have already formed alliances. But I thought that Chungmuro wouldn't have… haha, I have to ask, has Chungmuro already made an alliance?"

Hrmm…

"No, we haven't."

Kang Ilhun looked happy at my words.

"Then form an alliance with Dongdaemun. You won't regret it. Above all, we have a 'winning solution' for this scenario."

"A winning solution?"

"Yes, in fact, our group knows the hidden secrets of this scenario."

Kang Ilhun grinned and drove in the last nail.

"We will tell you if you agree to an alliance with us."

After a while, I sat with Yoo Sangah, Lee Hyunsung and Jung Heewon to exchange opinions. Yoo Sangah spoke.

"What do we do? Should we establish an alliance?"

"I'm going to disagree. I can't believe them. I feel uneasy."

Once Jung Heewon spoke, Lee Hyunsung gave his opinion.

"But it wouldn't be bad if they have information about this scenario. Certainly, we can't fully trust them as Heewon-ssi said…"

Finally, they looked at me. I shrugged.

"Then for now…"

Once we made a decision, we called over Kang Ilhun and the Dongdaemun Group, who were looking around Chungmuro Station.

"I will make a decision once I have met your representative."

"Oh, is that so?"

"Where is your representative?"

"At Dongdaemun. If you don't mind, I will guide you…"

"Please do so."

We got on the back seats of the bikes they came on. The people I took with me were Lee Hyunsung, Yoo Sangah and Jung Heewon. Lee Gilyoung was left behind with Gong Pildu. It was because he overused Diverse Communication and hadn't woken up yet. Of course, I didn't forget to give an order to protect Lee Gilyoung.

"Then let's go."

There was the sound of the bikes turning on and we started moving. Once 20 seconds had passed. I opened my mouth.

"By the way Kang Ilhun-ssi."

"Yes?"

"Those people, did they say anything else about Chungmuro?"

"Huh? What does tha…"

"For example, if you come here then there will be a very scary man called Yoo Joonghyuk…"

"Haha, what are you sayin…"

I gave a signal and our party jumped from the back seats of the bikes at the same time.

"Yoo Sangah-ssi!"

Yoo Sangah used Binding Thread and tied the four bikes together. There was a roar as the bikes collided with each other.

Kwaaaang!

"Aaaagh!"

The Dongdaemun members screamed as they crashed down.

Fortunately, our party was safely hanging in the air due to Yoo Sangah's thread tied to the ceiling. It was a type of seat belt. It was an incredible feat that made Yoo Sangah seem like Spiderman.

Kang Ilhun was covered in dust as he lay on the ground and shouted.

"W-What are you doing?"

"What am I doing? That is what I want to ask." I looked at the dark tunnel. "In order to ambush us, you should raise the level of the stealth a bit more."

It was enough for me to detect despite not having Absolute Senses. Kang Ilhun noticed something was wrong and screamed.

"Attack them!"

At almost the same time, people hiding all over the tunnel emerged. I knew it. They were aiming for my flag.

[The character 'Jung Heewon' has activated the exclusive skill 'Judgment Time'.]

[The Absolute Good constellations have agreed to the use of this skill.]

['Judgment Time' has been activated.]

"Eh? I thought it might not… isn't this a complete mess?"

Jung Heewon laughed with a surprised expression.

"It is hard to find bad people."

Jung Heewon spoke in a cold voice and her sword flashed through the dark tunnel. Her eyes were red from using Demon Slayer. The bloody light swept through the darkness as people were slaughtered.

"W-What?"

"This crazy girl…! Aaaagh!"

Seokeok! Seokekeok!

There were 10 peope but Jung Heewon killed them without a hitch. It was a scene that showed how much Jung Heewon's stats had risen after the hidden dungeon was cleared.

I also used Purest Sword Force and easily suppressed Kang Ilhun. A few hours ago, I was dealing with Yoo Joonghyuk. This guy wasn't very difficult.

"Dokja-ssi, Chungmuro…!"

I looked back at Lee Hyunsung's cry and saw that there was a commotion in Chungmuro. They were ambushed as soon as we left Chungmuro. I left Kang Ilhun to be tied up by Yoo Sangah and rushed to Chungmuro.

There was already a melee happening on the platform. But I decided to watch the situation for a while. There was something I needed to check first.

"What are these bastards!"

Dozens of group members that ran from the Myeongdong direction waved weapons at the people of Chungmuro. By the way, the weapons they were carrying were familiar.

"That is Kim-ssi's weapon!"

The Landlord Alliance members who headed towards Myeongdong had already been hit by these guys. Indeed, the wanderers who lost their group were just seen as living coins.

The most noticeable enemy was one wearing a red flag around his head like a bandana.

"Gain control later! It will be over if I just put the flag in!"

That's right. He was the 'representative'.

Chapter 46: Ep. 10 – Future War, IV

"Push through to the flag holder!"

Based on the direction he was running from, he seemed to be the representative of the Myeongdong Group. They had joined hands with Dongdaemun.

[The Myeongdong representative 'Kim Hyuntae' has used the additional effect of the 'red flag'!]

It was someone who already changed the colour of the flag. Furthermore, it was 'red'.

In fact, the key to 'Struggle for the Flag' was the colour of the flag. It was from white to red, navy, brown, purple and black. The flag provided increasingly better effects as the colour changed.

[The Myeongdong Group has received the buff effect of the red flag!]

[Attack and defense has increased by 5% each!]

If the flag was already red, it meant he had occupied one or more stations or had killed the flag bearer of another station.

Looking at his eyes, he seemed to have pretty good fighting power. But…

He shouldn't have aimed for Chungmuro.

[The character 'Gong Pildu' has activated 'Armed Zone Lv. 6!]

[The character 'Gong Pildu' has activated 'Private Property Lv. 6!]

Gong Pildu didn't move too late.

"Trivial pups…!"

I was glad I didn't have to use the Command Rights. If this was the case, I could leave Chungmuro's defense to Gong Pildu.

The eight mini-turrets fired at the same time towards the Myeongdong Group running towards the flagpole.

"W-What?"

"Owaaaaack!

Dudududdudu!

Pieces of flesh flew through the air. Gong Pildu was truly a scam.

"Kuuack! Huddle up!"

The Myeongdong group gathered together in a tight defense formation but it wasn't enough to endure the shells from the level 6 Armed Zone. It was a rewarding sight that made leaving him to clear the Emergency Defense scenario alone worth it.

Kwang! Kwaang! Kwaaaang!

How many shots were fired? The enhanced magic bullets caused the Myeongdong Group to be riddled with holed and collapse. Gong Pildu was scary as an enemy but strong as an ally.

"T-There wasn't information about this!"

"Retreat!"

But there was no place for them to run away.

"Where are you going?"

[The special option of Unbroken Faith is activated.]

[The ether property is converted to 'fire'.]

The ether blade made of flames created a wall of fire that blocked their escape. The moment that the confused people hesitated, Gong Pildu shot at them.

Dudududududu!

"P-Pierce through! Quickl…cough!"

The Myeongdong representative was hit in the head by a magic bullet and the flag was released. Gong Pildu's eyes shone as he found the flag. Sheesh, this brat.

"Do you want me to step on your back again?"

The running Gong Pildu stiffened.

"Damn…"

I immediately picked up the Myeongdong flag that had fallen onto the tracks. Focus vanished from the eyes of the desperate Myeongdong Group members.

[You have won the flag of the 'Myeongdong Group'.]

[Your white flag has absorbed the cumulative achievements of the red flag.]

[Your white flag has evolved into a red flag.]

I felt a stronger force swirling inside my body.

[You are one step closer to the King's Road.]

The flags after the red flag improved not just the abilities of the representative but also the surrounding group members.

Apart from overall stats or S-grade and above items, the flag was one of the few ways to improve basic combat power. Due to this, groups aimed at stations other than the 'target' station.

The other 'king candidates' would've already entered a full-fledged war to change the colour of their flags.

The stronger they became, the more they could enjoy this world.

[The remaining members of the Myeongdong Group are waiting for your decision.]

I grabbed one of the wounded Myeongdong members in the area and asked.

"Why did you aim for Chungmuro?"

I had realized something when I first heard Kang Ilhun's words. It was true that Chungmuro had just opened but it didn't make sense for them to rush in like they had been waiting. The observations of the party and the strange look he made when he knew I was the representative…

These guys knew about this station from the beginning. I brought my blade to the man's neck and asked.

"Tell me, who gave you the information of Chungmuro?"

The most likely people were the Prophets. The guys I met in Theatre Dungeon mentioned 'hidden information' that other people didn't know.

I had been searching through Ways of Survival but I never saw the group name Prophets. If so, who were they?

There were two hypotheses.

One, due to an unknown variable, a new prophet had appeared apart from Anna Croft.

The second… besides me, there was another 'reader'.

Honestly, I thought it was probably the latter. The 'prophet' attribute wasn't so easy to obtain. Furthermore, Prophets was a plural…

Well, I could check it from now on.

I looked at Gong Pildu and said, "By the way… why didn't you act more moderately?"

"Why should I show mercy to those running wild?"

Gong Pildu looked annoyed.

Unfortunately, the people of Myeongdong Group weren't able to answer because they had been hit by too many bullets. As soon as I asked them a question, they coughed up blood and died.

In the end, I could only ask one person. I looked down at Kang Ilhun who was behind guarded by Lee Hyunsung. His eyes rolled uneasily while he was tied up with Binding Thread.

Yoo Sangah asked, "Was everything planned from the beginning?"

"I thought there was a high probability. As soon as the station opens, two groups will unite and attack. It was a prior promise."

"Saying things with such a good face…"

Yoo Sangah's expression became dark.

"Are you sorry? There isn't going to be an alliance."

"…A little bit."

"Don't believe in people too much. Things won't be as easy as you think in the future.

"I know. Still… if possible, I wanted to believe. I was able to come here because I believed in someone."

Yoo Sangah looked at me.

"Hey, how long are the two of you going to talk? Quickly pry the information out."

Jung Heewon interrupted us. Indeed, now wasn't the time to give life advice. I released the thread blocking Kang Ilhun's mouth.

Kang Ilhun was trying to stay calm.

"…What will you do with me now?"

"It depends on how much information you can give me."

"Are you basing the standards on usability?"

This guy talked back even in this situation, there was more to him than I thought. If so, I had to use a hard-line method…

Jung Heewon said, "In any case, the constellations see him as 'wicked'. How about trying torture?"

"Why bother with torture? Just kill him if he doesn't speak."

"Huh?"

I pulled out my sword without hesitation. Kang Ilhun trembled as he looked up at me.

"From now on, I will count to three. If you don't open your mouth in that time, you will die. There is no reversal."

I deliberately triggered Purest Sword Force and inserted the sword into the ground.

"One.

Kudududuk!

The ground was scratched with the power of Purest Sword Force as the blade started to move towards him. Fragments of the floor flew towards his face.

"Two."

The heat of the blade warmed his face as it approached his nose. In a short time, the ether blade would cut his eyeballs.

"Three…"

"Dongmyo Station!"

I smiled. Torture? There was no need for that.

Kang Ilhun gasped for breath and explained, "…The people from Dongmyo Station gave us information about Chungmuro."

Dongmyo, who was there?

"Who was it?"

"He called himself a Prophet…"

By the way, this guy's condition was strange. His eyes were rolling and his tongue hung out like a dead person. I had an ominous feeling.

Surely it wasn't 'Suggestion'.

"Yoo Sangah-ssi, hurry and block his mouth with a thread!"

Fortunately, Yoo Sangah's threat blocked this guy's mouth before it could close. Using Suggestion to control information from leaking… they were more meticulous than I thought.

On the other hand, it was easier for me to solve the problem. Suggestion was a skill that could only be used face-to-face.

I looked down at Kang Ilhun and stated.

"You are a lucky guy."

If he was present, I could definitely identity one of the Prophets.

Before I went on the full-fledged search, I headed to the roof of the theater.

"He still hasn't woken up?"

Maybe it was because she didn't know I was coming but Lee Jihye shook. Yoo Joonghyuk was still unconscious and lying on her knees.

Jerk, he was the main character yet he wasn't going through any hardship. Meanwhile, I was the tired one despite being the reader.

"How is it downstairs?"

"Don't worry and rest."

"Master… will he be okay?"

"He will be fine. Although there might be some trauma left."

"…Trauma?"

"His mental state is more fragile than a child's. He will be a bit better after a good sleep."

"It sounds like you know a lot."

"I know him the best in this world."

I spoke in a dry tone and pulled out some paper, writing on it with a pen. I filled it with notes and handed it to Lee Jihye.

"Don't read it but give it to Yoo Joonghyuk when he wakes up. Do you understand?"

"…I understand."

She said so but Lee Jihye would definitely read it. However, Lee Jihye wouldn't be able to understand it since it was filled with things only Yoo Joonghyuk would know.

By the way, did the information on the paper also look like ■■■ for the constellations?

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' hates ■.]

Indeed. I was turning around when Lee Jihye opened her mouth.

"By the way, can I ask you something?"

"What?"

"Earlier, with Master. Master and ahjussi…"

Somehow I seemed to know what Lee Jihye would say. Damn, Lee Jihye heard as well as Jung Heewon?

I've been stupid. I only considered the constellations and never thought about the humans listening. Yoo Joonghyuk would laugh at my stupidity.

What was a good excuse?

"Well, that. You two."

"What?" I decided to feign ignorance.

Lee Jihye's expression became more serious.

"I mean, ahjussi's words."

"So what?"

"Wake up you jerk! Don't fall into those sentiments!"

Lee Jihye imitated my voice and shouted. I felt embarrassed suddenly hearing my words emerge from someone else's mouth.

"For the first time, that… that determination! Have you already forgotten?"

"…?"

Wasn't something strange? This child, she almost heard it at the filtered level?

"I came here because of you! Why are you alone? We are together!"

"No, wait a minute."

"I've always been around you! Don't lose hope! Think of the child!"

"That isn't what I…"

"Why did I come here if you are alone…!"

I stared at Lee Jihye for a moment.

…No, how could she hear it this way?

"S-Something like that? Ahjussi, you and Master…"

I sighed. "Think what you want."

"…Indeed. Don't worry, I'll give him this love letter!"

I shrugged and turned around. Behind my back, Lee Jihye's bullshit continued.

"Wait! How did you give birth to a child?"

"Ask Yoo Joonghyuk."

Yes, Yoo Joonghyuk, I leave everything to you. The next moment, indirect messages exploded in my head.

[Some constellations are greatly affected by the truth of the filtering.]

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' respects your taste.]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' likes your companionship.]

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' thinks it is ridiculous.]

[600 coins have been sponsored.]

…Damn, there were other idiots. In any case, I told Yoo Joonghyuk what I needed to.

I hurried through the theater. During the time Yoo Joonghyuk was the sleeping prince, I had to gain as much benefits as possible.

Chapter 47: Ep. 10 – Future War, V

After coming down from the theater, I headed straight to Myeongdong Station with Lee Hyunsung and Yoo Sangah. Dongmyo Station was important but there was something to be done first.

I killed the Myeongdong Representative and taken the flag so I had to hurry and occupy the empty station.

Lee Hyunsung spoke in a worried tone.

"Is it okay with just us?"

"There won't be a fight. I will decide what to do with them. If I leave it alone, they will die soon."

The 'wanderers' who lost their group would become prey to other groups if they weren't lucky. Just like the Landlord Alliance members who left Chungmuro Station.

But the moment we arrived at Myeongdong Station, we saw an unexpected sight. The people in Myeongdong Station had already been hit by someone. It was also very gruesome.

I saw a group of men standing near Myeongdong Station. The men were flustered and quickly fled in the direction of Hoehyeong Station. It wasn't easy to chase them because they had bikes.

It was as if they knew I was coming. There was more than one or two odd things.

Lee Hyunsung asked, "Who are these people? What happened?"

"I'm not sure."

"Even Dokja-ssi doesn't know…"

Lee Hyunsung gulped nervously. Fortunately, the flag holder of Myeongdong Station was empty.

[Currently there is no group occupying Myeongdong Station.]

[Are you sure you want to take over the station?]

I plugged the flag into the flag holder and pulled it out again. Then a flag that was the same as mine appeared in the flag holder.

[You have occupied Myeongdong Station.]

[A station that has been occupied can't be taken from you unless the 'main base' or flag is taken away.]

[Currently Occupied: Chungmuro (Main Base), Myeongdong]

[The achievement points of the red flag are rising.]

The red colour of the flag turned darker.

[Your influence has expanded by taking over a new station.]

[The hidden scenario has arrived!]

[The King's Road has begun!]

[Hidden Scenario – King's Road]

Category: Hidden

Difficulty: A

Clear Conditions: Take over a minimum of 10 stations within the time limit.

Time Limit: 10 days

Reward: The attribute of a 'king'.

Failure: If you can't take over a minimum of one station per day, you and your group members will all die.

I finally arrived at the terrible hidden scenario. Once I started this quest, I couldn't turn back. There were only two fates for a king.

Become a king or die.

[The new king candidate has started to walk along his road!]

From now on, it was the full-fledge flag struggle.

I returned to Chungmuro, gathered the party members and told them about the hidden scenario. Jung Heewon made an interested expression while Lee Hyunsung looked confused. Yoo Sangah was as anxious as always.

"It sounds like a difficult scenario… Dokja-ssi, will it be okay?"

"It's okay."

An angel or a fool… In this situation, they were worried rather than jealous about the hidden scenario.

Lee Hyunsung said, "I'm glad that Dokja-ssi is the king candidate."

"Thank you."

"Then should I call you Your Majesty?"

I was hit in the head by Jung Heewon after being touched by Lee Hyunsung's serious words.

"I don't want that."

"Your Majesty, based on this hidden scenario, shouldn't we go occupy a new station right away? You should think about the lives of your subjects." Jung Heewon said sarcastically.

I nodded.

"I think we need to find out about the people who attacked us. I'll go straight to Dongmyo. Jung Heewon-ssi and Lee Hyunsung-ssi, will you go with me?"

Yoo Sangah raised her hand at my words.

"Then I…"

"Yoo Sangah-ssi will stay here."

"Ah, really… on the other hand, more…"

I listened to Yoo Sangah's voice and it sounded glum. Perhaps Yoo Sangah was thinking that she was useless.

Her damage wasn't as strong as Jung Heewon and she didn't have a strong physique like Lee Hyunsung. In addition, she didn't have a powerful trump card like Gilyoung.

"Yoo Sangah-ssi."

"…Yes?"

All her previous 'specs' had become obsolete in this new world. But she was too good to be jealous of other people. Thus, her inferiority complex was quietly festering.

"Yoo Sangah, not everyone can do the same things well."

"Yes, I am aware of that." Yoo Sangah smiled weakly.

I spoke carefully so that she wouldn't feel it was an admonishment. "Do you remember the words that you said on the subway? Dokja has a solo life and I will…"

"I will have an ivory life. Yes, I remember. I wrote it on the notepad of my smartphone."

Why did she look so elated? In any case, I couldn't hate it. I continued speaking.

"Yoo Sangah-ssi has things to do here. I can't leave the unconscious Gilyoung alone. I need someone to monitor Gong Pildu and to control the nervous group members."

Yoo Sangah's eyes shook.

"Besides, the Hoehyeon forces must be kept in check. They might attack while we're away. Gong Pildu is here but Yoo Sangah's Binding Thread might be necessary."

"C-Can I do this role well…?"

Yoo Sangah spoke weakly because of her low self-esteem.

"Hey everyone. In that way… I will give Yoo Sangah-ssi a job position. What do you think?"

Lee Hyunsung and Jung Heewon thought for a moment before nodding.

"Okay, I can trust it if it is Yoo Sangah."

"King… if you wish then do so…"

I glared at Jung Heewon. Did she think that was funny right now?

[You are using the unique permissions of a representative.]

[Chungmuro Station's representative, Kim Dokja is transferring some of his authority to group member 'Yoo Sangah'.]

[Group member 'Yoo Sangah' has become the deputy of Chungmuro Station.]

[In the future, group member 'Yoo Sangah' can deal out punishments on behalf of the representative.]

Yoo Sangah looked at me with stunned eyes and stuttered. She looked terrified.

"G-Giving, giving this position to me…"

"I will leave it to Yoo Sangah-ssi."

I meant it. Once again, not everyone could do the same things well. Based on what I remembered, Yoo Sangah would be appropriate for this.

Yoo Sangah was the best person in the human resources department, not someone else.

"Oh…I'll do my best."

Yoo Sangah bowed before slowly raising her head. Tears could be seen in her eyes.

We headed straight for the tunnel on the east side.

We had to pass three stops before arriving at Dongmyo. We moved with the fainted Kang Ilhun. Honestly, taking this guy was a burden but I needed him to identify the faces. When I looked back at Chungmuro, I could hear Yoo Sangah's voice.

"Everyone, please gather!"

As I expected, Yoo Sangah worked harder in the shadows. The people were already organized and were receiving their orders. Sentries were set up and people were put in charge of different areas. Some of the landlords said they wouldn't listen to Yoo Sangah but…

[Chungmuro Station's deputy, Yoo Sangah has used the punishment.]

I vaguely heard someone moaning.

…Was this okay? Well, it should be fine.

Jung Heewon looked at my face and said, "Good job. I felt that Yoo Sangah had been a bit depressed."

"I didn't select Yoo Sangah-ssi because I was thinking of her emotions. I thought Yoo Sangah-ssi would do really well."

"…Ah, is that so? Then please me something later. It should fit me."

"How about an executioner?"

"…Forget it."

Jung Heewon grumbled and turned her head away. It was good after all the jokes she played.

"But that gangster on the roof, is it okay to leave him?"

"Oh, you mean Yoo Joonghyuk?"

"I guess his name is similar."

"It will probably be fine."

"It sounds like you know him very well. What is it?

"That…" I thought for a moment before asking. "Heewon-ssi, do you have a younger sibling?"

"…? Yes. Why?"

"A brother or a sister?"

"A brother."

"How old is he?"

"He is one year younger."

"How is it having a brother?"

"Annoying. He easily defies me and I had to take him to school instead of my mother…"

Jung Heewon feel silent as she was complaining about her brother. She gazed somewhere in the air. Then I asked her.

"But now you are worried about him right?

"Well… we are family."

"I am similar."

"Dokja-ssi also has a younger brother?"

"Nope, I'm talking about Yoo Joonghyuk."

"Ah…" Jung Heewon looked at me and nodded. "Then do you like or hate him?"

"I hate him. I fought with many people because of him."

I wasn't the only reader of Ways of Survival in the early days. Quite a few people followed along out of curiosity up to the 10th chapter. There were also 12 readers at the 50th chapter.

There was a guy who liked Kim Namwoon… while I argued with him. I wonder if any of the people who fought with me back then were alive. Maybe the people I was going to catch now was one of them.

"You two, you seem to have become very close."

Lee Hyunsung interrupted and I suddenly realized I was walking too close to Jung Heewon.

Jung Heewon smiled.

"Why, soldier ahjussi. Are you jealous?

"Hrmm. It isn't like that…"

Come to think of it, didn't Lee Hyunsung join the army right after going to a male high school? I felt sorry for Lee Hyunsung when I thought about the setting.

"It seems we have arrived at Dongdaemun History and Culture Park Station."

In fact, the entrance of Dongdaemun History and Culture Park Station could be seen in the distance.

We nervously stuck to the tunnel wall and looked around. It was in case troops were waiting. But this worry was pointless. Jung Heewon muttered.

"It is strange. There are no sentries."

The fact that there was no guards while Struggle for the Flag was ongoing meant that the station had already been eaten by another group. Once we confirmed this, we immediately approached the flag holder.

[The station has already been occupied by 'Dongmyo Station'.]

[If you want to occupy the station, take the flag of Dongmyo Station or occupy its flag holder.]

It was as expected.

Then Kang Ilhun's body twitched. His body was shaking like he was having seizures and his condition was strange. I released the thread blocking his mouth and Kang Ilhun shouted.

"N-No…!"

"…What's happening?"

"D-Dongdaemun… Dongdaemun Station…!"

Saliva spilled from Kang Ilhun's mouth as he stuttered. I felt something and unintentionally put a hand on his shoulder.

Then.

[The character Kang Ilhun is now a wanderer.]

It was evident that Kang Ilhun's affiliation to 'Dongdaemun' had changed. Jung Heewon asked, "What is happening?"

"It seems that Dongdaemun Station has been taken over."

"…Huh?"

Suddenly everything made sense. Yes. The people who leaked the information had this in mind.

"…A double trap."

They incited the Myeongdong Group and Dongdaemun Group to strike Chungmuro because they knew the two groups would die in Chungmuro. While the main force were gone, they wanted to take Myeongdong and

Dongdaemun. The unidentified people at Myeongdong Station probably also belonged to them.

But… how did they know we would win? They couldn't know about my presence. The representative of Chungmuro Station in the third turn was originally…

…Ah right. That jerk. Was this what they aimed for?

I was certain. The Prophets who created this plan were surely…

At this moment, Lee Hyunsung reacted.

"People are coming."

A group of people were approaching from the Dongdaemun tunnel. On the surface, they were a group with a considerably good weapons.

The items seemed to have an average of a C-grade or above. It wouldn't be easy to arm them to this degree already… it was unbelievable power.

The man in the centre of the group spoke to us first. The man had a slim build and wore all types of items on his arms and neck.

"Eh, Kang Ilhun-ssi? Geez, you brought a needless load of crap to me."

Kang Ilhun was shaking and he fainted with foam around his mouth. I wondered, perhaps this guy?

[The exclusive skill, Character List is activated.]

A moment later, amazing messages were heard.

[The information of this person can't be read in 'Character List'.]

[This person isn't registered in 'Character List'.]

Look at this?

The man looked at us. "Is there going to be a self-introduction? Or…"

The group of men simultaneously pulled out weapons.

I took the lead to reply. "We are from Chungmuro."

"Chungmuro?"

At this moment, sparks popped in the air.

[Someone is using Explore Attribute on you.]

[The exclusive skill Fourth Wall has blocked Explore Attribute!]

The man stumbled like he had been shocked. He hesitated for a moment before turning bewildered eyes towards me.

"…I'm sorry, what is your name?"

I glanced at Jung Heewon and Lee Hyunsung once. Then I smiled and said towards the man. I spoke in my coldest and heaviest voice.

"I am Yoo Joonghyuk."

싱숑 장편소설

전지적 독자 시점

Omniscient
Reader's
Viewpoint

PART 1

03

비채

*

Chapter 48: Ep. 10 – Future War, VI

It wasn't an illusion. The guy's eyes instantly widened when he heard my name.

"Don't tell me…?"

He carefully observed my face. That reminded me, what was the description of Yoo Joonghyuk in Ways of Survival? There wasn't a detailed appearance but the word 'handsome' was attached. And my face…

Could this be considered a fictional allowance?

"What is it?"

"Ah, nothing."

His tone became politer. I didn't know what was going on in there but his head was probably in a complicated state right now.

At least one thing was certain. The man in front of me had clearly read Ways of Survival.

I became more certain because he wasn't registered in Character List and he was surprised to hear Yoo Joonghyuk's name.

His eyes urgently returned to Lee Hyunsung by my side.

It was inspecting the attribute… I see. Was he digging up information? I deliberately gave him some time to observe Lee Hyunsung before opening my mouth.

"Impertinent person. You better move your eyes carefully."

"…Heok?"

He confirmed Lee Hyunsung's name and also noticed that he could view my character window with Detect Attributes. I didn't know how far he had read in Ways of Survival but there were a few characteristics that could be used to identify Yoo Joonghyuk.

One of them was the SS skill, Sage's Eye which allowed for universal detection and protection against detection skills. Now he would be convinced that I had Sage's Eye.

"Did you think I wouldn't know that you peeked at me with a B-grade skill?"

The spasms started from the man's eyes and spread through his face.

Then his eyes wandered to the red flag I carried on my back. It was as I guessed. There were limits to the evidence that he could find about Yoo Joonghyuk.

"You son of a bitch…!"

One of the men in the group hadn't figured out the situation and pointed a spear at me. The moment that Jung Heewon and Lee Hyunsung was about to come forward.

Peeok!

The man's head burst and red blood splattered like a fountain. The group immediately screamed. From beyond the blood, I saw a serious looking man.

…Look at this bastard? He slowly walked through the crowd towards me.

"I'm sorry. Such a distinguished person had to see a horrible sight."

"Who are you?"

The man tried to manage his expression at my cold tone. He was pretty good. If I was him, I would like like my heart was going to burst.

"I will formally introduce myself. My name is Lee Sungkook. I am the deputy in charge of Dongmyo Station."

This guy approached and bowed before me. I liked it. Then I started the full-fledged Yoo Joonghyuk cosplay.

After I snapped at him, I opened my mouth and spoke in a cold voice.

"Dongmyo Station? I see. Then get out."

"…Huh?"

"This is my station from now on so get out."

This guy's mouth dropped open.

"What…"

"You aren't going to listen to me?"

I looked down at the flag holder that had the Dongmyo flag. Lee Sungkook belatedly understood my point.

"T-That is impossible. You can't transfer a station already occupied…"

"Do you think I'm a fool? You are the deputy."

"Yes?"

"If you have the authority of a deputy, the station can be transferred at will. You didn't know?"

"…!"

"If you don't take it out by the time I count to three, I will cut your neck. One."

Lee Sungkook's face stiffened. The men slowly surrounded me, giving off a nasty atmosphere. Jung Heewon and Lee Hyunsung were nervous because they didn't know why I was suddenly doing such a crazy thing. I continued speaking.

"Does it sound like I am joking? Two."

Was it hard to remember after reading the novel 10 years ago? It looked like he forgot who Yoo Joonghyuk was. Then I had to jog his memory.

[The exclusive skill 'Purest Sword Force Lv. 2' has been activated.]

[Blade of Faith is activated!]

Chiiiiiing!

I saw Lee Sungkook's pale face beyond the burning white blade. This was a game of chicken.

Remembering Yoo Joonghyuk meant he knew a bit about who Yoo Joonghyuk was.

If he knew how ruthless the early Yoo Joonghyuk was then he would never be able to continue this game.

If he didn't know Yoo Joonghyuk properly? Then it didn't matter. I would play the game and run away if we were going to lose. Now I had enough strength.

At this moment, Lee Sungkook hurriedly shouted.

"W-Wait a minute! I-I'll give it to you!"

This brat, he had read Ways of Survival. But he didn't read it properly.

"No need."

"…Huh?"

"You answered too late."

"Yes?"

"This place isn't enough. Give me Dongdaemun as well."

Jung Heewon made an astonished expression by my side. She looked like she was ready to act. But she couldn't go out.

No, I had to act. Because I was now Yoo Joonghyuk. I had to speak more nonsense in order to make him believe I was Yoo Joonghyuk.

I aimed my sword at Lee Sungkook and declared.

"If you don't do this, there won't be a deal."

"B-But…!"

"I will count to three again. One."

Lee Sungkook's expression changed in real time. He was starting to believe that I was Yoo Joonghyuk. The protagonist of a novel was standing in front of him.

How would he cope? The way he acted here would determine my relationship with these guys in the future.

"I-I can give you Dongdaemun History and Culture Park! But…"

"But?"

"I don't have the authority to hand over Dongdaemun… if you don't mind, would you like to meet our representative?"

It was a great response. It was just the level of prey that I wanted.

Lee Sungkook kept on talking.

"Yoo Joonghyuk-nim's reputation is well-known. Our representative will be greatly looking forward to seeing Yoo Joonghyuk-nim. Please give our group a chance to talk with Yoo Joonghyuk-nim."

"You know me?"

"How can I not know Yoo Joonghyuk-nim?"

Lee Sungkook shut his mouth the moment he said this. He thought he said something strange. Yoo Joonghyuk couldn't be famous this early on.

"A-Anyway, it will be an honour if you accompany me."

I stared at him and replied. Yes, this level was acceptable.

"Okay, show me the way."

Lee Sungkook's expression brightened and he added useless words.

"Don't worry. I swear on the King's Honour that I won't harm Yoo Joonghyuk-nim."

[Dongmyo Station's deputy, Lee Sungkook has sworn on the King's Honour.]

[If he breaks this vow, Lee Sungkook can be punished by you.]

What a great guy. But he did the right thing if he really thought I was Yoo Joonghyuk. Wasn't his understanding of Yoo Joonghyuk better than I expected?

Then he would pay for it.

"Hurt me? You guys?"

"Of course, none of us can lay a finger on Yoo Joonghyuk-nim. Ha, haha. Then… this way."

"Just a minute."

"Yes?"

I pointed to the flag holder.

"Give me that."

"…"

[You have received the transfer of Dongdaemun History and Culture Park.]

[Currently Occupied: Chungmuro (Main Base), Myeongdong, Dongdaemun History and Culture Park]

[The achievement points of the red flag are rising.]

The flag was changing before my eyes.

It was a good start.

No, wasn't this too easy?

"Then let's go."

I watched Lee Sungkook's shaking shoulders and felt strange.

Wouldn't it be okay to continue living as Yoo Joonghyuk?

We were guided by Lee Sungkook towards Dongmyo Station.

The Dongmyo members didn't know my identity but Lee Sungkook's attitude was so stubborn that they couldn't protest.

I walked with my party at the rear of the group. Lee Hyunsung hesitated before looking at me and opening his mouth.

"Excuse me, Dokj…"

Kuk!

Jung Heewon noticed quickly and hit Lee Hyunsung's stomach. There was the sound of wind being blown from the lungs and Lee Hyunsung moaned.

As expected from Jung Heewon. She didn't know the exact situation but she knew how to match the mood.

I muttered out of the side of my mouth.

'You know what to do without me telling you?'

'Yes, roughly'.

I watched Jung Heewon and then Kang Ilhun being carried by Lee Hyunsung. The most important person right now was that guy.

'Make sure to restrain that guy. Understood?'

Jung Heewon nodded and made a strange gesture. She kneeled in front of me and cried out in an exaggerated voice.

"Yes Joonghyuk! I will do as you say!"

Anyone who saw it would think about medieval knights. The funny thing was that the surprised Lee Hyunsung did the same thing.

"I-I will do as you say…!"

Lee Sungkook, at the head of the group, was surprised to hear these two voices. It was embarrassing but the result was good. I couldn't read Lee Sungkook's inner thoughts but it would be like this if I could read it.

「He must be Yoo Joonghyuk.」

Lee Sungkook met my gaze and quickly turned his head back to the front. This was how a main character felt.

Not long afterwards, we arrived at Dongmyo Station.

They were a pretty powerful group seeing as many people were on the platform. There were some people with weapons like Lee Sungkook's group, but most of them didn't have any.

They were probably wanderers from other stations who lost their group.

"Move faster!"

"I-I understand."

They were slaughtering the ground rats while being supervised by the Dongmyo members or disassembling the corpses of the monsters to make equipment.

The so-called 'slave' class. It was a common scenery in the age of kings.

Jung Heewon frowned.

"This isn't a real kingdom…"

I spoke to Jung Heewon.

"Don't be disgusted. Wait here and look at the situation."

"Yesss…"

I'm ignoring Jung Heewon and started to observe the surroundings. It was to take into account additional variables.

Dongmyo was quite important in the original novel. If I remembered correctly… the representative of this place was the 'invalid'.

But the story was likely to have changed if the Prophets intervened. I looked at the back of Lee Sungkook's head.

At this point, I had two questions. One, did Lee Sungkook have his own text version? Two, how many prophets were there?

And if I had to say a third question, did they have the same 'skills' as me…

It didn't seem like it. Otherwise he would've used Character List instead of Detect Attributes at the beginning.

Besides, he didn't seem to have the Fourth Wall when I used Character List. In other words, he was a case like Lee Gilyoung.

Well, I read over 3,000 chapters. It would be unfair if they received the same perks as me when they only read a few chapters.

Speaking of which, I don't think they had a text version…

By the way, what was this person looking so hard at? Lee Sungkook was looking at his smartphone.

[5,000 coins have been invested in agility.]

[Agility Lv. 20 -> Agility Lv. 30]

[An amazing agility lies in your body.]

I approached Lee Sungkook like a ghost.

"What are you looking at so hard?"

"H-Huh? It is nothing!"

The guy hurriedly hid his smartphone. It was a flash but I saw the screen. A yellow background and familiar speech bubbles.

I felt a sense of discomfort. If my eyes weren't wrong… I had definitely seen a chat room on the screen.

…The Internet? Right here?

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* Official novel cover (canonical)

Chapter 49: Ep. 10 – Future War, VII

The Internet, it wasn't possible.

Since the scenario started, the Internet had been shut down all over Seoul due to the activation of the dokkaebi channels.

No, wait a minute. This was Dongmyo Station. Ah… right. Then the Internet was possible?

Lee Sungkook looked at me with an uneasy expression and opened his mouth.

"Excuse me, Yoo Joonghyuk-nim?"

"What?"

"We've arrived. The representative is waiting inside."

I saw a medium-sized tent roughly set up in the middle of the platform. The representative had an assortment of goods.

"Let's go."

Lee Sungkook bowed his head and guided me. The inside of the tent was quite luxurious. It was unbelievably luxurious for such a shabby tent.

There was a red carpet and a bed that seemed to have been stolen from a luxury hotel. There was a round table for a meeting and a small desk with a computer.

The most interesting thing was the boy concentrated on surfing the Internet. The face seemed only a few years older than Gilyoung. The boy had dark circles and sat on the chair in his pajamas.

And there was a navy blue flag held tightly in his arms. Amazing. This boy had already passed the halfway mark of the King's Road.

[The exclusive skill, Character List is activated.]

[Character Summary]

Name: Han Donghoon

Age: 17 years old

Sponsor: Shadow behind the Curtain

Exclusive Attributes: Noble Invalid Hermit (Hero)

Exclusive skills: Wide-area Internet Lv. 5, Comments Manipulation Lv. 3,Keyboard Attack Lv. 3, Small Eater Lv. 6, Sound Wave Blocking Lv. 2…

Stigma: Lack of Presence Lv. 2

Overall Stats: Physique Lv. 10, Strength Lv. 10, Agility Lv. 19, Magic Power Lv. 26.

Overall Evaluation: A person who is the peak of the Noble Invalid Hermit type. His Wide-area Internet skill installs a virtual LAN cable to specific devices through the dokkaebi channels.

He has an amazing ability to incite public opinion but has weak mental defenses. The sponsor is very dissatisfied with the circumstances of his present incarnation.

* Currently under a powerful hypnosis.

I clearly remembered. Dongmyo's king. Maybe this boy would soon become the Hermit King of Shadows. The poor boy king was busy replying to Internet comments.

–Is it true that Seoul is now isolated? ㅋㅋ Gangnam land prices will fall ~~ Are the rich people crying??

└ㄴㄴ It isn't just Seoul but all the capitals in the world. Tokyo, Beijing, all of them are trapped in that dome.

└ Isn't there a plan to recapture Seoul? Didn't it start yesterday?

–ㅋㅋㅋ But now all the people inside have awakened powers ㅋㅋㅋ It isn't a crazy fantasy.

└ It became a fantasy the moment the monsters appeared.

The long-familiar Internet screen looked weird. I once again felt it was real. Indeed. This was the situation we were in now. On the outside of the dome, many people still didn't know the truth.

The boy king's fingers started to move.

–You guys, have you ever heard of the Prophets? I don't know what they are but they claim to know the secrets of this situation ㅎㅎ

[Character 'Han Donghoon' has activated Comments Manipulation Lv. 3.]

As soon as the activation message popped up, dozens of comments appeared under the boy's one.

└ Who would believe that?

└ I thought that as well, but not anymore… I saw a prophecy not long ago and it all came true. For real

└ For real? Where is their place of action? Shoot me the address.

The comment started to spread all over the Internet with tremendous power. It was surprising. They were already using the ability this way.

"Representative Han Donghoon?"

Lee Sungkook called out and the boy raised his head.

"A guest has come. Greet him."

The boy, Han Donghoon's sunken eyes turned to me.

"H, He, H, Hell…o."

Han Donghoon wasn't in a normal state.

This boy, who was called the 'Seventh King of Seoul' in Ways of Survival now looked so haggard. Originally, he avoided humans due to his nature but it wasn't this much.

Han Donghoon staggered up and sat on a chair at the round table, biting at his nails.

Lee Sungkook smiled as if he was satisfied.

"Now Yoo Joonghyuk-nim. Let's start the talk with the representative in earnest."

I gazed at Han Donghoon and laughed.

"Talk? What talk?"

"Huh?"

"Are you joking with me right now?"

Han Donghoon's eyes were blank.

"…This is the representative?"

Obviously, the boy was the representative of this station. In name. But…

The word representative didn't meant in 'reality'.

"How long are you going to make fun of me? You want to make me talk with a doll?"

I looked back and saw Lee Sungkook's hands shaking. He probably didn't think that Sage's Eye would find out. He opened the smartphone to check something and sighed.

"…Yoo Joonghyuk-nim, I'm not usually like this. Please forgive me."

"You are the real power of this station. Isn't that right?"

"Yes."

"How many other people know?"

"Only a few top executives."

Setting up a person with a strong ability as a scarecrow and taking control of the station. It was a strategy often used in Ways of Survival but it was strange to see it in reality.

"If you are the real power, why did you bring me here?"

"It was to avoid the attention of other people. I don't know if you have realized, but there is a Sound Wave Blocking skill around the tent."

I had expected it. In fact, this was one of Han Donghoon's abilities.

"It must be really important."

"That's correct. Yoo Joonghyuk-nim, it is important for you and for all of us."

"All of you?"

Lee Sungkook took a deep breath and opened his mouth.

"I'm a Prophet. To be precise, I am one of them."

The information I wanted was finally coming out. I waited silently for his next words.

"Yoo Joonghyuk-nim, you will never know the enormous joy we are feeling right now. My colleagues and I have been waiting for this day of great victory for Yoo Joonghyuk-nim."

Did I hear wrong? This guy started speaking strange words.

"We know about Yoo Joonghyuk-nim's special ability. A miracle that allows you to go back to the past after dying. In this world, only Yoo Joonghyuk-nim received such special power!"

I was a bit nervous about the constellations' filtering but I decided to keep listening.

"Maybe Yoo Joonghyuk-nim has already repeated a few lives. You have fought against terrible enemies and struggled against the beings of this world to save people. Enduring alone, lonely memories… We respect your sublime spirit."

This jerk, such skillful flattery. Yoo Joonghyuk would be moved to tears if he heard. Later when he was depressed, I would have to tell him these words.

"But Yoo Joonghyuk-nim should've realized it from your past regressions. Even if you have an outstanding miracle, you alone can't fight against the disasters that will come."

Plus, he was right.

"Yoo Joonghyuk-nim, this time will be different. It is because we are here. We Prophets have received a special blessing and have been sent to help you."

Wow, look at this?

Lee Sungkook smiled faintly.

"You must be wondering. Why did these guys who didn't appear last time suddenly show up now? It is very confusion but I hope you can trust us. It is because we have already received a revelation for this day 10 years ago."

"…Revelation?"

"Yes. In our world, there is a 'revelation' that is secretly shared among the Prophets. Yoo Joonghyuk exists in it and is a living myth. It is a single revelation that records all of the past and future.

Wait. Don't tell me 'that' was the revelation?

"You don't believe me yet. We already knew that Yoo Joonghyuk-nim would gather Lee Hyunsung. They didn't come with you but you probably already have Delusion Demon Kim Namwoon and Maritime Admiral Lee Jihye. But that isn't enough. At the very least, according to the revelation…"

I hid my nervousness and asked.

"Where is the revelation?"

"Unfortunately, it has been damaged and we can't find the original. Don't worry. We each remember a fragment of the revelation. Through these fragments, we are prepared to walk the right path with you."

…Ohu.

"If you live again the way you have always done, Yoo Joonghyuk-nim… will die again. But it will be different with us."

Lee Sungkook was going in circles. I slowly closed my eyes and said, "I see."

Lee Sungkook hurriedly stopped talking. Maybe he was nervous. Yoo Joonghyuk had Lie Detection.

Of course, I didn't have this skill. But even if I did, his story wouldn't get caught by Lie Detection. It was because Lie Detection couldn't distinguish such falsehoods.

That's why I felt it even more.

"…It is surprising."

It was true. I was shocked beyond surprise. This was a great 'setting'. A setting that was squeezed out in a short amount of time. Human creativity was really great.

"You are called Sungkook?"

"Yes, Yoo Joonghyuk-nim."

I could write the book Ways of Survival. In order to help the hero who kept dying, readers received a revelation and came from outside the novel? This was more exciting than the real Ways of Survival. But that was it.

"Don't go around in circles."

This was it.

"Get straight to the point."

I heard the set up so it was time to speak.

"You have received the revelation of the future. Then what exactly are you going to do?"

Lee Sungkook quickly replied.

"We would like to form an alliance with Yoo Joonghyuk-nim. I-It is an alliance in name but it actually means going under you…"

He was a funny guy. In the end, this was his purpose? Riding the bus that was the main character?

"I see. An alliance. You want this."

"Yes."

"It is an interesting suggestion."

"This means…"

I tapped my fingers against the table.

"But the order is wrong."

"Huh?"

"How can I form an alliance with people whose identities I don't know? If you want to ally with me, isn't this the first thing you should start with?"

"M-My identity… I already…"

I got up from the chair and sat on the plush bed in the room. Then I crossed my legs and declared.

"Kneel down."

"Huh?"

"Kneel."

Lee Sungkook was embarrassed for a moment before getting down from his chair while hiding his expression. As his knees slowly reached the floor, I opened my mouth.

"Tell me your attribute."

Once I saw the strong hypnosis on the king candidate, I guessed this guy's attribute. However, I needed to make sure.

Lee Sungkook looked up at me with complicated eyes. His mind was probably working hard. He would think this.

｢ Yoo Joonghyuk can see my information with Sage's Eye. ｣

｢He already knows it so what is the reason for asking about my information? ｣

Lee Sungkook struggled for a moment before speaking.

"My attribute is… Hypnotist."

As expected, it was Hypnotist.

"I see."

Lee Sungkook looked a bit brighter at my nod. He thought he had passed a test.

"Is that all?"

"…Huh?"

Lee Sungkook's eyes shook.

"…O-One more."

I nodded.

"Tell me."

"T-The 9th…

"The 9th?"

Lee Sungkook slowly lowered his head like he was ashamed.

"The 9th person… to get off."

I see. This brat, the 9th…

…No, wait. Then how many people were there?

Chapter 50: Ep. 11 – Night of the Prophets, I

"The 9th person to get off… it is the first time I've heard of this attribute."

"Oh, you probably wouldn't have. This is the first time us Prophets have seen it."

This brat was giving an excuse. I wanted to tease him a bit.

"But it is strange. If you really received the revelation, why aren't you a 'revelator' instead of 'someone who got off'? What is with this name?"

"T-That… the revelation… no, the book of revelation…"

Lee Sungkook stuttered. It was delightful watching him try to avoid Lie Detection. I wondered how honest he could be. Lee Sungkook finally closed his eyes.

"When I read the book of revelation… I stopped!"

"You stopped reading it? Why didn't you read it?"

"The contents of the Book of Revelations are very difficult, vast and profound…"

"Then you were the 9th person to get off?"

"Yes…"

"I don't think that will be of much help to me."

"N-No! I can definitely help you!"

The confused Lee Sungkook continued to speak gibberish while uneasily turning his smartphone off and on.

"Why do you keep touching that smartphone?"

"I-I-I'm sorry. I am a smartphone addict…"

He was trying to get advice from the other ones who got off. But that didn't last long.

"Are you going on the Internet?"

"Y-Yes, that's right. It is the ability of the hermit…"

At Lee Sungkook's words, I looked towards Han Donghoon. The hypnotized boy was busy tearing at his fingernails with empty eyes.

The Hermit King of Shadows who had the powerful information manipulation ability. This boy couldn't be kept under the prophets.

If the Prophets became involved in the story in this way, the original novel was ruined and the plans I set up would be wasted. I had to stop these guys before everything went wrong.

"Do the other prophets also have the attribute of 'getting off'?"

"…Yes."

"How many are there in total?"

"That…" Lee Sungkook hesitated for a moment before opening his mouth. "As far as I know, there are 48 people."

48 people? It was smaller than I thought.

Considering that chapter 1,200 had one hit and chapter 10 had 120 hits, I thought there would be at least 100 people.

Lee Sungkook's words resolved my curiosity.

"I know there were more prophets originally but I expect most of them didn't pass the first scenario."

"They are dead despite knowing the future?"

"That… we have received the revelation but we only recently realized that it was a 'true' revelation."

Now it made a little sense.

Perhaps at the start of the scenario, few readers thought that a novel that started serialization 10 years ago would become a reality. They might not remember it straight away.

I thought it was strange that Lee Sungkook survived. Furthermore, this guy was the ninth person to stop reading so he was literally one of the earliest readers. Then how did he survive?

"I fortunately survived the carriage. If it hadn't been for another prophet nearby, I would've died."

Another prophet in the same place as him?

"That—"

The moment that Lee Sungkook was about to speak, the ground slightly shook. The vibration was transmitted despite Sound Wave Blocking.

Lee Sungkook and I ran out of the tent at the same time.

Kung!

I thought it was a sudden sub scenario but that wasn't it. Two people stood in the centre of the epicenter. The man and woman facing each other. I didn't know the man but the other person was…

"You aren't a supporting role… yet you dare to push me?"

"What are you talking about, you dog-like jerk."

…Not surprisingly, it was Jung Heewon.

"What? Dog…? You bitch!"

The man grabbed a very large ring sword from his back. His overall level seemed in line with Jung Heewon's. But it wasn't enough.

Jung Heewon movements were already above incarnations of the same class. Jung Heewon's blade moved lightly as the man attacked.

[The character 'Jung Heewon' has activated the special option of Mikazuki Munechika, "Death God's Footsteps'…]

"Jung Heewon!"

Jung Heewon stopped his black just before she cut off the man's head. The hairs were rising on the man's neck.

It was a tremendous difference in speed. If I hadn't intervened, the man would be dead.

The startled Lee Sungkook cried out, "Jung Minseob! What are you doing now?"

I realized it when I saw Lee Sungkook's confusion.

[The exclusive skill, Character List is activated.]

Then the expected message popped up.

[The information of this person can't be read in 'Character List'.]

[This person isn't registered in 'Character List'.]

That's right. He was also a Prophet.

* * *

After a while, another prophet was on his knees in front of me, with Lee Sungkook next to him.

"I'm sorry, my friend didn't know anything… Hey, apologize quickly!"

The man sitting beside him bowed towards me.

"…I'm sorry."

Unlike Lee Sungkook. he was a very prideful person and couldn't completely remove the anger from his face. I looked at Jung Heewon and said,

"Jung Heewon, I told you not to be reckless."

"T-This bastard…!"

"Jung Heewon!"

Jung Heewon made a surprised expression for the first time.

"…I'm sorry, Yoo Joonghyuk-nim."

Jung Heewon bowed and turned to leave, Lee Hyunsung following her with a strange expression. I knew that Jung Heewon wasn't the type to raise a sword to someone for no reason.

However, it was dangerous to move in this current situation.

The other man looked at me and asked, "Are you really Yoo Joonghyuk-nim?"

"Yes, are you also a prophet?"

"…Yes."

There was a complicated expression on his face. He looked between me, Jung Heewon and Lee Hyunsung. Then he glanced at Lee Sungkook and said.

"Excuse me, Yoo Joonghyuk-nim. I'm sorry but I'm afraid I'll have to leave you for a moment. Sungkook, talk with me for a minute."

He left the tent while Lee Sungkook bowed to me.

"I won't wait long."

"Yes!"

It wouldn't be like this if it was the original Yoo Joonghyuk. But I had a reason for allowing them to talk. As soon as Lee Sungkook left the tent, I immediately called to Bihyung.

'Hey Bihyung'.

[What is it? Having fun again…]

'Hearing enhancement, 2,000 coins'.

[……]

Now Bihyung had adapted. It took less than three seconds before an advertisement went up.

[2,000 coins have been consumed.]

[The exclusive skill 'Hearing Enhancement' has been acquired.]

Bihyung warned.

[Hey, be careful from the fourth scenario onwards. For such a wide-scale scenario, the intermediate dokkaebis have jurisdiction…]

I ignored Bihyung's words.

[The exclusive skill 'Hearing Enhancement Lv. 1' is activated.]

I moved my body outside the tent blocked by Sound Wave Blocking. Then voices started to be heard. They weren't too far from where I was hiding.

"Hey, isn't it slightly strange?"

"What?"

"Do you see that as a handsome face?"

"What are you talking about suddenly…?"

"The author said that Yoo Joonghyuk was handsome."

This bastard? Fortunately, Lee Sungkook dismissed it.

"The author might have different tastes… He is Yoo Joonghyuk for sure. He has the same dirty nature."

"You only got off at the 9th chapter, what do you know…?"

"This…! You don't really remember it since you read it a long time ago!"

"Still, aren't some scenes pretty clear with the 'Memory Benefits? Would you even remember the prologue without this privilege? You might not be alive if it wasn't for me…"

Their voices were coming closer.

"It is weird no matter how I look at it. Setting aside Lee Hyunsung, who is that strange woman? If I remember correctly, there wasn't such a woman in the third regression."

"Then check it. See if he is really Yoo Joonghyuk."

"…But what if he is real?"

"We will go according to plan. If we get Yoo Joonghyuk here, we can deal with those who read until the 50th chapter."

Some really good information was coming in. Despite wanting to hug onto the main character, these guys were unleashing all types of curse words because of their situation. This was why they were humans.

Lee Sungkook and the man was coming closer.

"I apologize for the long wait. Let's go inside."

We went back into the tent.

"Yoo Joonghyuk-nim. I apologize for my previous disrespect. I will greet you again. I am Jung Minseob."

The man smiled and bowed.

Once again, this guy had pretty good items for being beaten by Jung Heewon. In particular, there was the useful Fugitive's Mask which allowed the user to freely change their face and appearance.

I cut to the chase.

"Then where did you get off?"

Jung Minseob glared at Lee Sungkook. He seemed to be saying something with his eyes.

"…The 1,089th person to get off."

1,089. Considering the number of views for chapter 1,200 was 1 and the number of views for chapter 10 was 120, this guy was a person who got off quite late.

Maybe this was the guy who saved Lee Sungkook in the first scenario.

"As a prophet who has read the Book of Revelation, I am glad and honoured to meet Yoo Joonghyuk-nim. However, Yoo Joonghyuk-nim… I'm sorry but can I ask you some questions?"

"Question? What is the question?"

"That, regarding Yoo Joonghyuk…"

"Do you doubt that I'm the real Yoo Joonghyuk?"

"…T-That's not it."

His face was red from my intense gaze.

"Try it."

"Yes?"

"Ask me."

The confused Jung Minseob nodded.

"Um… Then excuse me."

In order to properly trick these guys, I had to keep a few things in mind.

"As far as I know, Yoo Joonghyuk took Delusional Demon Kim Namwoon as a companion in the third regression. Yet you have a strange woman with you instead of Kim Namwoon."

"…"

"I thought she was Lee Jihye but she doesn't seem to be in her teens. I also heard you calling her a different name."

His memory and observation skills were quite good. Like Jung Minseob said, this world had already changed from the third turn that I knew. Now I had to shift this changed world to 'suit my taste' as much as possible.

"If you are asking me why I don't have the Delusional Demon with me, the answer is simple. In this turn, the Delusional Demon doesn't exist."

"…Huh?" D-Doesn't exist? Perhaps… did he die?"

"Yes."

Their faces were filled with confusion for a moment. Jung Minseob asked, "No, how… Who the hell killed Kim Namwoon?"

"The Delusion Demon Kim Namwoon…"

These prophets' mouths were slowly dropping. Now I would drive in the last wedge.

"He died at the hands of a prophet like you."

Chapter 51: Ep. 11 – Night of the Prophets, II

"A prophet like us?"

"Yes. At first, I didn't realize he was a prophet. Now it looks like he is. He knew the future like you."

"…Then?"

"It seems like he knows a lot more than you do. He killed the Delusional Demon and gobbled up the hidden scenarios in the beginning. Thanks to that, my plan became twisted."

"T-There is a guy like that…?"

Of course there was. The person was right in front of you.

"He even seems to be impersonating me. When I encountered him last time, he was on the verge of death but he is still likely to be active near Chungmuro."

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' admires your impudence.]

"…Chungmuro? Don't tell me?"

Jung Minseob was surprised and opened his smartphone, tapping the keyboard like Lee Sungkook. Maybe he was informing the other prophets.

Jung Minseob asked me a few more questions and I answered them briefly.

"It is like this! Ah… then the third regression changed… You really are Yoo Joonghyuk."

Jung Minseob was deeply impressed.

"That's why you got that girl instead of the Delusional Demon. She seems enough to replace Kim Namwoon. She overpowered me in one blow…"

The most important thing was their misunderstanding.

Jung Minseob thought for a while before saying, "But when listening to Yoo Joonghyuk's story, I seem to know who killed the Delusional Demon."

"…You know?"

"Yes. I said this before… let me tell you this in advance, not all prophets are on the same side."

I expected to hear this conversation. If there were 48 who knew the future, there would be some people who thought wrongly.

"There are those who call themselves the Twelve Apostles. They believe they are the only ones who have read the real revelation and that they can change this world."

12 people. It was an exact match to the number of people who read up to chapter 50 of Ways of Survival.

"Why are they different from you?"

"They… they have read more of the revelation than us."

I was right.

"Right now, there are 11 known apostles. I'm guessing that the prophet that Yoo Joonghyuk-nim met is the last unknown apostle."

As they were creative people, they adapted when thrown into the scenario. This was a convenient misunderstanding. No, wait a minute… a misunderstanding?

If I thought about it, one of the 12 people who read up to chapter 50 would be me.

"You don't have any good feelings towards the apostles?"

"To tell the truth… that's right. Unlike us, they are planning to use the Book of Revelation to conquer this world."

…Why was my conscience pricked?

"They are the ones who pursue their own interests and sincerity rather than stop the destruction of the world by helping Yoo Joonghyuk. They are like the 10 Evils."

"10 Evils…"

"That's why I would like to ask Yoo Joonghyuk-nim. Please lead us. Stop them."

I see. This was their real purpose. To be honest, it was a bit surprising. I never thought they would need me because of infighting between the prophets. I thought for a moment before opening my mouth.

"Okay. I accept. I will form an alliance."

"R-Really?"

"However, I have one condition."

Lee Sungkook and Jung Minseob's faces were tense as they waited for the conditions.

"First, give me Changsin Station."

"Huh? Changsin Station…"

"It is the station right above Dongmyo. Haven't you eaten it already?"

"Ah, then Chungmuro's target station…"

Jung Minseob seemed to know something. In fact, this was the most major part of this alliance.

In Struggle for the Flag, the target that I must occupy was Changsin Station. If I couldn't take it, I wouldn't be able to finish the fourth scenario even if I walked the King's Road to the end. If I didn't complete the fourth scenario, both me and my group would automatically die.

By the way, Lee Sungkook's expression was strange.

"Excuse me, Yoo Joonghyuk-nim. I'm really sorry… this is a bit difficult."

"Why?"

"The owner of Changsin Station isn't a member of our group."

"It isn't yours?"

It was strange. It was because Dongmyo Station was right before it.

Lee Sungkook said with a sigh, "The 'Tyrant King' has occupied it."

The Tyrant King. My blood ran cold.

"…He has already become a king?"

One of Seoul's Seven Kings, the Tyrant King. He was one of the few people who could be compared to Yoo Joonghyuk at this point.

Shouldn't it take a few days until he blossomed as a king? The guy who started at Dobong Station had already come down this far? It didn't make sense no matter how I thought about it.

Lee Sungkook received my gaze and looked down.

"Actually… some of the prophets made a few mistakes and his power suddenly rose. In the midst of taking some prophets, he took the station… at the time, Prophets had 53 members."

Suddenly, their credibility declined sharply. When I thought about it, I didn't know the beginning of the novel well without help. Why did I think these people would do well?

"D-Don't worry too much about it. We are preparing a powerful weapon to eliminate the Tyrant King. It isn't just the Tyrant King. It is a weapon to deal with the Twelve Apostles."

Jung Minseob agreed.

"Maybe Yoo Joonghyuk-nim doesn't know it well. We worked very hard to figure out the revelations…"

No, I knew. These guys shouldn't be alone. I had to end it before these people could ruin the story.

"Ah, this is good. Sooner or later, you will have a chance to see the weapon."

"A chance to see the weapon?"

"Tomorrow, with the exception of the Twelve Apostles, the Night of the Prophets will be held. I-If you don't mind…"

Jung Minseob's eager eyes turned to me.

"Yoo Joonghyuk-nim, I want you to come with us."

After the talk, Jung Heewon, Lee Hyunsung and I gathered in the accommodations provided by Lee Sungkook. I looked at the flag of Chungmuro Station.

Throughout the afternoon, my flag was changed to 'navy' due to the transfer of Dongdaemun Station and Cheonggu Station.

[You have used the benefits of the navy flag.]

[From now on, you can use the 'group chat' with the group members.]

From now on, we didn't have to worry about conversations. The group chat couldn't be intercepted unless another group member was in the same area.

I briefly explained to them about what happened today. Jung Heewon vaguely noticed but Lee Hyunsung was surprised.

–Oh my god, it is unbelievable. They know part of the future… that's why Dokja-ssi is acting as Yoo Joonghyuk?

–Yes.

–Sigh… Then we should stay here for the moment. We need to find out more information about them…

–Nope.

–Huh?

–Today I will take care of them.

I looked at Jung Heewon and said.

–I'm sorry Jung Heewon-ssi.

–Its okay… I am just a bit hurt.

–…

–I'm just joking. Isn't Dokja-ssi playing a gangster right now? If you are sorry, let me deal with that jerk from before.

Jung Heewon smiled and continued.

–Then tonight will be a hot night?

–H-Hot…?

Lee Hyunsung was freaked out by Jung Heewon's joke. I shook my head.

–I have something to do first.

–Something to do?

–Now all of them are moving. It will be difficult.

I took out a small cloak as I finished speaking. My figure suddenly disappeared and Lee Hyunsung spoke with confusion.

–Eh? Dokja-ssi?

–I will give you a signal. Then you will move.

It was a gold member's privilege item, 'Recluse's Cloak' which was purchased for 3,000 coins.

It was a five time consumable item but it could maintain 'absolute stealth' for 20 minutes once the ability was activated.

I melted into the darkness. It was useless against opponents with Absolute Senses Lv. 6 or higher but no one had such skills here.

I passed by the drowsy guards and arrived at Han Donghoon's tent. There was Sound Wave Blocking around the tent so I wasn't worried about anyone overhearing once I entered.

He carefully opened the tent and saw a boy sitting at the keyboard alone. The dark circles were thicker than they were in the daytime.

A solitary boy commenting alone. The Prophets had turned this boy into a worn-out machine. A propaganda machine that manipulated the future by scattering information that mixed fiction with truth. It didn't have much effect right now but the value of this boy would grow over time.

I quietly approached from behind and blocked his mouth. Han Donghoon gasped and struggled, but it was impossible to resist me with a level 10 strength.

I put my hand in my pocket and pulled out the Mental Awakening medicine that I bought along with the Recluse's Cloak. It was a huge 3,000 coins.

It would be a lie if I said it wasn't regrettable, but if I could get the Hermit King of Shadows with 3,000 coins, it would be a profitable transaction.

Some time after being fed the stimulant, Han Donghoon's eyes changed. The Hypnosis effect was loosened and the boy's sense of reason started to return.

"U-Uhh, you…"

Hypnosis didn't mean that he forgot everything. In this little boy's head, all types of trauma would be running through them. Once the Hypnosis slipped, his sponsor would start to intervene to some extent.

[The sponsor behind character 'Han Donghoon' has revealed himself.]

[The constellation 'Shadow behind the Curtain' has thanked you.]

[500 coins have been sponsored.]

Han Donghoon stepped back while holding the flag in his hand. I watched the flag closely and deliberately stepped away.

"Don't worry. I'm not here to snatch the flag."

"Uh-Uwah, ah…"

"You're smart so you should understand right away. If I wanted to harm you, I wouldn't have released Hypnosis."

"T-T-Then."

"I want to be friends."

Han Donghoon's eyes shook. I waited for a moment. It was until the turbulence in his head calmed down. But Han Donghoon wasn't able to speak easily. That reminded me, this guy had a problem.

"Is it hard to speak directly? If you don't mind, I'd like to talk through this."

Han Donghoon looked at the smartphone held in his hands and started muttering something.

[The character 'Han Donghoon' used 'Wide-area Internet Lv. 5' on your smartphone.]

[You can use the Internet anywhere in 'Seoul Dome' unless the consciousness of 'Han Donghoon' is interrupted.]

After a while, Han Donghoon's name appeared in the smartphone messenger.

–Who are you?

–I've been looking for you.

–Lee Sungkook also said that.

–I suppose so.

–I…

The boy's trembling fingers couldn't produce any more sentences. I instinctively realized. It was impossible to persuade this boy right now.

For more than 10 days, the boy's wounds had festered to the point where it couldn't be easily restored.

–I understand you. It is scary and confusing.

[The character 'Han Donghoon' is greatly disturbed.]

–Don't be ridiculous.

–I am different from those people.

–I can't believe you.

–Don't you hate the Prophets?

Han Donghoon's eyes shook. Deep rooted resentment filled the boy's eyes due to the hypnosis.

–If you allow me to, I can get rid of them.

–…Why? You are a prophet…

–They shouldn't exist. They are interfering with the 'epilogue'.

Han Donghoon stared at me with eyes that couldn't understand and tapped on his keyboard.

–To me… What do you want? You will just use my abilities anyway.

I looked up and slowly opened my mouth.

–No, it is just the opposite.

I stared into Han Donghoon's eyes as I spoke aloud.

"You don't have to do anything."

"Now those jerks time is over. It will all end tomorrow."

"Sigh… when this is over, I will have a bottle of soju."

"Yes. Did you see that bastard's eyes before? The Sage's Eye glared at me and I almost had a heart attack."

"Haha, how did a guy who got off at the prologue know about the Sage's Eye?"

Cheerful voices. It was so exciting that I wanted to keep listening.

"Hey, the other prophets are still suspicious… how do I convince them? They've been nagging me to go to Chungmuro…"

"Give me your phone and I will speak to them. At any rate… huh?" Jung Minseob's face stiffened as he fiddled with the keyboard. "Why is the Internet not working all of a sudden?"

"Is that brat sleeping again? Go check it out."

Jung Minseob was about to leave the tent when his body hit something. The moment he stretched out a hand.

"W-What is this…?"

Chiiiiiing!

"Aaaagh!"

Jung Minseob fell onto the ground with a scream. I took off the Recluse's Cloak and held the Blade of Faith.

"Y-Yoo Joonghyuk? How come?"

The confused Lee Sungkook stumbled while Jung Heewon poked her head in from outside the tent.

"I took care of some of them. But there are too many people… I won't last long."

Jung Heewon disappeared and the sound of fighting was heard from outside. Now the guards will flock.

"D-Don't you know what will happen if you do this? Yoo Joonghyuk, you won't be able to deal with all of us!"

"All? I don't have to deal with everyone. I just need to handle you."

This remark made Lee Sungkook's lips twitch.

"I'm sorry Yoo Joonghyuk but I can't let—"

Kudududuk!

I lightly swept the ether blade towards the fallen Jung Minseob and cut the armour he was wearing. Jung Minseob screamed.

"Aack!"

His flesh was torn and a piece of cloth fell out. I picked up the piece of cloth that had fallen out.

[You have won the flag of the 'Dongmyo Group'.]

[Your navy flag has absorbed the cumulative achievements of the navy flag.]

[Your navy flag has evolved into a brown flag.]

[A strong flag protects you.]

"You are the real representative of Dongmyo."

"H-How…?"

"No matter how stupid you guys are, you wouldn't show the flag so proudly."

In the first place, it was strange for them to give the representative position to Han Donghoon. They knew the future and wouldn't give the representative position to a character in the novel.

However, Lee Sungkook wasn't the representative. There was only one answer.

[The remaining members of the Dongmyo Group are waiting for your decision.]

Now the guards were meaningless. The hopeless Jung Minseob stuttered. "Y-Yoo Joonghyuk! The other prophets will know this…"

"How will you let them know when the Internet doesn't work?"

Lee Sungkook cried out as he realized that all their plans were broken.

"Why… why are you doing this to us?"

"Let's see.? This question is meaningless. Even if I was the 'real Yoo Joonghyuk', I wouldn't form an alliance with guys like you."

"W-What… don't tell me…?"

I grinned at the pale-looking duo and laughed.

"You should've read to the end."

Chapter 52: Ep. 11 – Night of the Prophets, III

I was in a deep sleep. It was a long-awaited good night's sleep.

[The effect of the deep sleep has completely restored mental power.]

[Some of your exclusive skills have been updated.]

I checked my clock and saw that it was already 4 p.m.

Once Dongmyo Station and the surroundings areas were occupied last night, the accumulated fatigue settled firmly on me.

[Currently Occupied: Chungmuro (Main Base), Myeongdong, Dongdaemun History and Culture Park, Dongdaemun, Dongmyo, Sindang Station, Cheonggu Station, Yaksu Station, Sinseol-dong Station]

Thanks to eating the Dongmyo Group, I now had nine stations. Now I just needed one more and the King's Road scenario would be over.

Just a bit more and I could achieve one of the key goals of the beginning scenarios, King of No Killing.

Once I came out, Jung Heewon and Lee Hyunsung were waiting for me.

"We are ready. When will we go?"

"Please wait a moment."

I looked towards the men who were heading towards me.

"Did you sleep well?"

Last night, I decided to have all members of Dongmyo join my group. The two men in front of me was the result of that decision.

Jung Minseob bowed to me and opened his mouth.

"…Please keep me alive."

"Me too, me too. Sob!"

Originally I planned to kill Lee Sungkook and Jung Minseob, but I changed my mind. These two were useful until I completely wiped out the prophets.

I put them in the Chungmuro Group and evolved the colour of the flag to 'brown'.

From the brown flag, it became possible to restrict the actions of the group members.

[You have exercised the right of the representative.]

[Group members Lee Sungkook and Jung Minseob have restrictions on their behaviour.]

Lee Sungkook and Jung Minseob's expression changed at the emerging system messages.

"One, from now on, you can't tell others about my identity."

"Yes, yep!"

"Two, you must unconditionally submit to my commands and you aren't allowed to act individually without my permission."

"…Of course."

[Group members Lee Sungkook and Jung Minseob are willing to accept their limitations.]

[This restriction is a 'life' restriction.]

[If they break the restrictions, group members Lee Sungkook and Jung Minseob will die.]

I nodded and said.

"Well… okay. I don't know when my heart will change, but everyone work hard. I will decide while watching you."

The two of them gulped and made hilarious faces. I didn't know what they were thinking. In any case, they wouldn't have been able to stick to Yoo Joonghyuk so it was better to stick to me.

"By the way, Representative-nim. What should we call you in the future…?"

"Call me like you are now. But call me Yoo Joonghyuk in front of the other prophets. Ah, Jung Minseob."

"Yep."

"Give me the Fugitive's Mask."

Jung Minseob was upset but eventually gave it to me. Anyway, I had to pretend to be Yoo Joonghyuk if I wanted to go to the Night of the Prophets. This 'mask' would be a preventive measure for a situation I didn't know.

After a moment, the muscles on my face moved in a bizarre manner as my appearance started changing. It felt a bit weird but I soon got used to it.

"Huh, this is the real appearance of Yoo Joonghyuk."

"Very handsome… The revelation wasn't wrong."

These bastards…

I wanted to snap out but I closed my mouth. I didn't need to be angry over something like this.

That reminded me, it would be better to know the details of these guys just in case.

"Jung Minseob, what is your attribute…"

At this moment, a system message flashed in my head.

[The history of this person has been updated.]

…What?

I tried to use Character List once again as a test.

[Character Summary]

Name: Jung Minseob

Age: 25 years old.

Sponsor: Cursed Gladiator

Exclusive Attributes: Light Projection (Rare), 1089th Person to Get Off (General)

Exclusive Skills: Sword Training Lv. 2, Powerful Blow Lv. 2, Berserk Lv. 3, Memory Enhancement Lv. 5]…

Stigma: Repay Grudges Lv. 1

Overall Stats: Physique Lv. 18, Strength Lv. 16, Agility Lv. 12, Magic Power Lv. 10.

Overall Evaluation: An incarnation that possesses good comprehensive skills and attributes. His sponsor is a bit lacking but his ability as a warrior is considerable. He would've been one of the 12 apostles if he had been a bit more patient. He is very regretful.

…What did it mean that the Character List was updated?

A person I wasn't able to see the attributes window of yesterday suddenly became a character.

He was a prophet. In other words, a character outside the novel. Why did he suddenly change into a character?

"Oh, my attribute is…"

"No need."

"Yes."

I also confirmed the attributes of Lee Sungkook.

Fortunately, his attributes were the same. Hypnotist and 9th Person to Get Off… The latter was garbage but the former was a pretty good attribute.

"Give me your smartphone."

"Yep! Here it is."

I received a smartphone from one of them and connected to the chat room.

Ah… the Internet didn't work. Yesterday it was disconnected…

[The character 'Han Donghoon' used 'Wide-area Internet Lv. 5' on your smartphone.]

[The device's Internet is now available.]

As soon as I thought it, the Internet was connected. I glanced towards the tent where Han Donghoon was located. There was a vibration from the smartphone, indicating that a message had arrived.

–I'm going to believe in you just once.

Maybe something changed with Han Donghoon after what happened last night. I had been really worried about it so I was glad.

I sent a reply to Han Donghoon.

–Thank you.

Sooner or later, I would have a chance to talk to him. I once again opened Lee Sungkook's smartphone to the Prophets chat room.

[Chat Room]

[List of participants: No. 9, 15 I feel like Dying, 124 Let's Drop Off, No. 763, 887 Get Off, No. 645… a total of 36 people.]

I looked at the numbers in their names and got a sense of who they were. But something was strange.

"…36 people?"

Jung Minseob answered my question.

"All the prophets in the room stopped reading early. There are no apostles."

I see.

"By the way, Representative-nim. Didn't you say it yesterday? 'You should've read to the end'… then do you know all of the Book of Revelation?"

I looked at the expectant Jung Minseob and laughed.

I knew. Do you know?

"You won't regret taking my line instead of Yoo Joonghyuk's."

After a while, we headed to Anguk Station while avoiding the surrounding conflict areas.

It was because the Night of the Prophets was scheduled to be held.

I spied on these guys through Lee Sungkook's smartphone.

___

No. 519: Really? Yoo Joonghyuk is coming this evening?

No. 67: There is no doubt. No. 9 and No. 1089 said it yesterday.

887 Get Off: The 9th is a newcomer but I can believe it if it is the 1089th…

124 Let's Drop Off: This time they will all be behind us.

887 Get Off: No. 124, you are in Seoul ㅋㅋ How can those jerks fall behind you?

124 Let's Drop Off: Ah, except for me of course. Local residents, victory ^^v

887 Get Off: I would like to be a regressor… If I had read the novel at that time… No, if I had only read up to 50… I'm jealous of those apostles scum…

15 I feel like Dying: But don't you think the people who read over 50 chapters are abnormal?? I don't know how they read to over 50. ㅋㅋㅋ

124 Let's Drop Off: Real psychos ㅋㅋㅋㅋ

___

As expected, humans who hid behind anonymity would reveal the truth. Perhaps the number before the nickname was where they stopped reading.

———

No. 888: But are you sure there is no txt version of this novel?

No. 124: A few days ago, I searched the Internet and there was really nothing left… Ahh… A novel without a txt… (tears)

No. 763: Even if you had a copy, you wouldn't share such a fraudulent thing. If I could really sell my soul, I would buy it.

———

The idea of trying to read Ways of Survival popped up. These guys, they should've read it with me at that time.Now they didn't know the days ahead.

We've arrived."

I was about to say, "What, already?" when I saw the platform of Anguk Station in front of me. The prophets who arrived in advance could also be seen.

But something was strange.

"Nobody has occupied this place?"

"Yes, it is a promise between the prophets. It could be dangerous to meet at an occupied station. It is sort of like the DMZ."

Then a prophet approached and waved.

"Hey, No. 1089!"

"Oh, it is No. 763 hyung."

Jung Minseob waved and welcomed the person.

"How have you been? You face doesn't look good?"

"Well spotted. The Tyrant Kill is giving me hell."

"I told you not to advance towards the Dobong side. Why didn't you listen…"

No. 763 glanced towards me and his face suddenly stiffened.

"P-Perhaps… he is…?"

Jung Minseob nodded.

No. 763's eyes showed astonishment.

"I-It is really an honour. Yoo Joonghyuk-nim!"

The uproar caused the scattered prophets to gather one by one.

"Is that…?"

The prophets ran together and pushed in front of me. There were also a few female prophets.

"He looks better than I imagined! I am No. 998!"

"It is great to meet you, Yoo Joonghyuk-nim! I'm No. 1055!"

This… I felt like a real king. Their shining eyes wanted to win my favour somehow. I wondered what they would all look like when they realized I wasn't really Yoo Joonghyuk.

Most of them weren't worth paying attention to. Their knowledge of the future was dim and their abilities were poor.

Yet there were some prominent people.

"It was very impressive when you fought against Demon King Asmodeus in the second regression."

Hoh?

"It was mentioned briefly in the Book of Revelations… now that I've met Yoo Joonghyuk-nim, I feel like hearing about it from you."

Ways of Survival started with Yoo Joonghyuk's 'third' regression and all the stories from the second regression were treated as recollections.

Yet this guy knew about Asmodeus? Why was he so impressed when he didn't read until the end?

"Who are you?"

"I am No. 1168."

Then he almost read to the 50th chapter. Perhaps he was the one who read the most out of those present.

No. 1168 asked me, "Excuse me, is it Yoo Joonghyuk-nim's third turn right now?"

"That's right."

"Ah, as expected…"

Some prophets had dark expressions.

Yes, I knew.

Ways of Survival was an infinite loop so those who discovered that it was early on in Yoo Joonghyuk's regressions would be quite disappointed.

These jerks, they only got the cute side of Yoo Joonghyuk in the beginning… in any case, those who didn't read until the end weren't satisfied.

Then there was a disturbance behind me.

"Lee Hyunsung-nim!"

"Steel Sword Lee Hyunsung?"

Lee Hyunsung blushed as he was surrounded by people.

"W-What are you doing? I'm not the Steel… I'm not that!"

"Wow, just like a real revelation. Look at those biceps!"

"Ohhh! So taut!"

Lee Hyunsung had a good-looking face and was quite popular among the female prophets. At that time, one passing prophet showed interest in Jung Heewon.

"Excuse, perhaps… are you Maritime Admiral Lee Jihye?"

"No."

"Then are you…"

"I am Jung Heewon. Why?"

"Ah, I see."

The disappointed prophet moved past Jung Heewon towards Lee Hyunsung. Jung Heewon looked at the situation and spoke to me in Group Chat.

–Why… isn't anyone interested in me?

–Heewon-ssi isn't famous in the future.

–Tsk.

–So do well from now on.

I turned away from the miserable Jung Heewon. I came to the Night of the Prophets for a reason. I couldn't waste time talking like this.

"Where is the weapon?"

"Huh?"

"The weapon you have hidden. I will check it first."

"Ah, here it is."

The 763th prophet excitedly moved to the centre of the platform and removed the cloth covering something. There was a big stone present.

I remembered the moment I saw the meteor shower on the roof of the theatre. No, wait a minute.

"Is that a meteorite?"

"Haha, that's right. At this point, Yoo Joonghyuk-nim might not know… according to the Book of Revelation, it contained a powerful weapon."

"A weapon?"

"Yes! That's correct. Maybe it is a weapon like a top ranking star relic."

"Doesn't the meteorite need hatching time and can't be used now?"

"Haha, we have a rotation that will provide magic power. It will hatch tonight at the latest. We have been working on it for a few days…"

I became colder as I looked at this proud bastard.

A red pattern. It was nonsense. This thing shouldn't be known until at least the fourth regression?

"Which bastard gave you the information?"

"Huh?"

"That person who brought the meteorite to you."

"Oh, that… No. 1124, he was the first one…"

No. 1124? A person who stopped reading early on knew this information?

"Where is he?"

Jung Minseob looked around the place and muttered.

"Uh… I guess he hasn't come yet."

The informant didn't come. I thought for a moment before opening my mouth.

"We have to get out of here."

It was a trap.

"Huh?"

"Right now."

This was the first time I got a cold sweat since Ways of Survival became a reality and since meeting Yoo Joonghyuk the first time.

This was a weapon? Who was stupid enough to think like this…

I glanced around at the prophets staring at me with naive eyes. Then the platform started vibrating.

Kukukung…!

I looked at the trembling 'meteorite' and stepped back. I had come here to sweep away the prophets, only to be the one swept away.

"W-What is this?"

Jung Minseob made a stupid noise.

Dammit. The fourth scenario hadn't even ended and the 'disaster' of the fifth scenario was about to appear.

I shouted toward Jung Heewon and Lee Hyunsung.

"Run away!"

This was why I couldn't trust those who didn't read to the end. Due to these damn people who got off early, today became all wrong.

Chapter 53: Ep. 11 – Night of the Prophets, IV

A red aura appeared around the meteorite and glowing lights shot all over the platform.

"Ohh! Finally!"

A prophet screamed.

Jung Heewon and Lee Hyunsung quickly approached me.

"Run away? What…"

It was too late. The red aura spread across the platform and a faint veil surrounded the station. Now none of the prophets would be able to leave Anguk Station.

[Constellations protest against the excessive filtering.]

[Many constellations' eyes are shining at the 'omen'.]

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is watching the situation with curious eyes.]

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' is expecting your brilliant strategy.]

The constellations were excited and sent me indirect messages.

The most dangerous situation in the world of Ways of Survival was one where the constellations were partying.

I asked the nervous Jung Minseob, "Was No. 1124 the one who suggested that you gather here today?"

"Huh? I don't know. We all agreed together…"

I felt clogged up, like someone had fed me ten sweet potatoes. I couldn't believe things had gone this far.

–Everybody move behind me.

I paid attention the meteorite while protecting them.

–Aren't we running away?

–We can't go. If you look behind, you can see a ward.

–Huh? What ward?

I didn't answer as I stared at the meteorite in the centre of the platform.

[Meteorite] was the main event in the fifth scenario. The danger sleeping inside the meteorite would differ depending on the colour, brightness, size and type. However, the meteorite I was looking at now was one that should never hatch.

They seemed confused because the meteorite that gave the star relic in the third regression was 'bright red'…

"I wonder what star relic will appear?"

"That…"

Some prophets hadn't noticed yet and touched the meteorite.

[An omen of the fifth main scenario has appeared.]

Then the message popped up.

"Eh? What is this?"

"Why suddenly the main scenario…"

The surface of the meteorite cracked and a red light poured out. The first thing the light touched was the prophet staring at the meteorite with wonder.

The body of the prophet who lost his head slowly fell to the ground like a broken doll.

"What is going on?!"

The prophets screamed and retreated, but they were already unable to escape the crisis.

I took the party with me as I retreated to the edge and observed the situation. I remembered seeing this type of meteorite in Ways of Survival but it was tricky to know what would come out.

Please, don't let it be that 'disaster'. The meteorite cracked and red lava poured out.

The surrounding platform burned and released a bad smell. Then the temperature of the air rose rapidly and breathing became painful.

The surrounding environment was changing. This… a lava zone? It meant…

[The 5th grade fire dragon species, 'Lesser Dragon Igneel' has appeared!]

"Fuck! What? The star relic…?"

Several confused prophets belatedly used skills. However, the meteorite stretched out a long tail and caught a few escaping prophets.

"Kuaaack!"

The body of the prophet that caught by the tail suddenly burned up. Some prophets used skills to attack the tail but their weapons started to melt.

"T-This monster…"

The meteorite was at most two metres in length, but the monster crawling out from the gap was over five metres long.

Jung Heewon asked.

–What the hell is this?

–It is a disaster.

–Disaster?

The remainder of the meteorite split apart and a dragon species entered this dimension.

Kuoooooh!

A violent dragon that was just born. Despite being a deteriorated version of a hatchling, a dragon still reigned at the apex of all monsters.

A 6th grade monster could wipe out all the prophets here and this was a 5th grade fire dragon.

"Yoo Joonghyuk-nim!"

Some of the prophets called out to me and all attention was still focused this way.

I frowned. The incident was caused by them yet they wanted me to solve it?

"Get back to the edges."

Like an obedient puppy, everyone moved to a corner of the platform. The guys who were quick were already running upstairs from the platform. But.

"Shit, there's a ward!"

The lesser dragon was a 'disaster'. In a situation where a disaster appeared, the size of the despair was different. At least, this was the pattern I knew.

Among Yoo Joonghyuk's numerous regressions, he had definitely faced this guy.

I looked at the party members.

–A hidden scenario will soon start.

–Hidden scenario?

–This is a guy who shouldn't have come out in the fourth scenario. It has an unusual difficulty so there will soon be an intervention.

In order to respond to this disaster, various benefits were needed in the fifth scenario. For example, if the blue meteorite came out…

But now we had nothing. Yes, something had to be given to balance us.

[Some constellations are complaining about the unusual scenario difficulty.]

Indeed. The next moment, sparks flew in the air and a small child-like presence appearance.

It wasn't a low grade dokkaebi like Bihyung. He wore a tidy suit with two little horns on his head. He was an impressive guy with a small lump protruding from his side pocket.

I didn't know his name but I knew what he was. He was an intermediate dokkaebi.

[Hrmm. This is difficult. How did you guys get this 'root'? It was only installed recently…]

Once his voice rang out, the movements of the lesser dragon stopped. Indeed, it was possible for an intermediate dokkaebi to intervene in the scenario to this level.

[A disaster woke up in the fourth scenario?]

The emergence of an intermediate dokkaebi meant that the 'early scenarios' had almost come to an end.

As long as he took notice of this place, I would barely be able to see the contract benefits with Bihyung.

[Some constellations are poisonous so I can't spare you… it is also hard to downgrade the difficulty…]

His gaze focused on me.

"But this isn't right! We haven't cleared the fourth scenario!" One prophet shouted.

I could see the prophets around him quickly covering his mouth. There was nothing good about yelling at a dokkaebi right now.

[I have decided. I won't downgrade the difficulty.]

The prophets glared at the dokkaebi. There was only the sound of breathing. They had read Ways of Survival so they would know.

The dokkaebi couldn't overturn the laws. But they also knew this.

[Still… it won't be interesting if you all die this way. I will use my discretion to change the scenario content.]

The dokkaebi was more talkative than I thought.

[The hidden scenario has arrived!]

The lesser dragon started moving again. The red leather-covered paws hit the floor of the platform. I avoided the scattered debris and looked at the scenario that arrived.

[Hidden Scenario – United You Die, Scattered You Die]

Category: Hidden

Difficulty: A

Clear Conditions: Within the time limit, hunt down the 'lesser dragon Igneel' or survive his attacks.

Time Limit: 20 minutes.

Compensation: 3,000 coins

Failure: Death

Hidden pieces are hidden in this mission.

A 20 minute survival mission. From the title to the contents, it was ridiculous.

Lee Hyunsung asked.

–Do we have to hunt him?

–No, don't even dream about it.

This disaster is a disaster for a reason. Even the real Yoo Joonghyuk couldn't catch a 5th grade fire dragon. I looked at the situation on the platform. Flowing flames started pouring out.

Kwa kwa kwa kwa!

"Kuaaack!"

The prophets caught in the flames turned to ashes. The walls burned by the flames melted and distorted terribly. He was slowly moving to this side.

"Everyone run counterclockwise!"

I opened my mouth and ran ahead of the rotation direction.

Fortunately, Jung Heewon and Lee Hyunsung followed me well. Jung Minseob and Lee Sungkook were a bit behind but they still seemed okay.

This time, we avoided it because I knew the pattern. The problem was that this type of attack wouldn't always occur.

[The 5th grade fire dragon species, 'Lesser Dragon Igneel' is preparing the 'Flames of Destruction'.]

…It had started. We somehow avoided the general attack but the crisis came now.

"Look for a foothold."

"Yes?"

"Number 5… or 2 and 3! Anyway, just quickly find something that adds up to 5!"

[A hidden piece is activated.]

[Numerical footholds are activated.]

[Once the appropriate number of people enters the foothold, 'Absolute Shield' can be activated in 10 seconds.]

[Absolute Shield won't activate when the number on the foothold is exceeded.]

The prophets all heard this system message. At the same time, footholds the size of two pyeong appeared all over the station.

"Footholds? Ah, right!"

"There is a hidden piece!"

I looked at the moving prophets and bit my lips. The giggling constellations reflected in my eyes. Why did many constellations protest against the difficulty of the scenario?

It was simple. There was no fun in a story with 'only death'. They didn't want ants being trampled by a giant. These guys wanted the ants to fight back to survive. In order to live, the ants would even bit at their kin.

[Many constellations are watching the situation with excited eyes.]

Damn constellation scum.

"Shit, go!"

"Kuheeok!"

The prophets, who had called each other's numbers in a friendly manner, now wielded their weapons against each other to fight over the footholds with the number '1'. Some prophets collapsed bleeding as they approached a foothold.

The swift prophets were already stepping on the footholds, strengthening their alertness.

I kept an eye on them. Someone had clearly planned this trap. Maybe they were the apostles.

They knew the prophets would gather her and decided to use this opportunity to wipe out those who stopped reading early.

It was a good idea. No matter how trivial the information, the fewer who knew the future, the better.

Usually, the apostles would be laughing at the prophets from far away. If they were 'ordinary' people.

Those who read more than 50 chapters of a boring novel weren't normal. They called themselves apostles and were greedy enough to control information.

'If they were intelligent enough to use the red meteor as a trap, wouldn't they know how to overcome the disaster?

If I was like this…

–Representative-nim! There is no foothold.

–There is nothing here!

Jung Heewon and Jung Minseob cried out urgently. There were no footholds in the place where out party was located.

–Oh, there is one here! But…

The foothold that was barely found had an ominous number. Four. In other words, only four people could survive on that foothold. But our party had five people.

[The 5th grade fire dragon species, 'Lesser Dragon Igneel' is using the 'Flames of Destruction'.]

A huge spark started from the centre of the platform and started to spread throughout the station.

It was a lesser dragon's full attack skill. The heat was enough to burn my skin despite being so far away. If the shield wasn't activated now, my party would be destroyed.

"R-Representative-nim?"

Lee Sungkook and Jung Minseob trembled as they met my gaze. I grasped the handle of Unbroken Faith.

At that moment.

"Yoo Joonghyuk-nim!"

I looked back and saw one prophet. The number '2' was written on his foothold. Despite the urgent situation, this man still looked relaxed.

"Come this way!"

This guy…? A few memories passed by quickly. I ran towards him while shouting at the people behind him.

"Activate the shield!"

[Absolute Shield is activated!]

Kuoooooh!

Then the flames burned everything on the platform. If it had touched me just a little bit then I would've melted.

"Sigh… I'm glad."

The man who triggered the shield at breathtaking timing sighed with relief. I asked him, "Who are you?"

The man laughed lightly. "I'm disappointed. Have you already forgotten? I am No. 1168. About Asmodeus…"

I remembered. He was the one who spoke to me about Demon King Asmodeus.

"That isn't my question."

The eyes of No. 1168 shook.

I hadn't thought about it before.

The scene of the confrontation between Demon King Asmodeus and Yoo Joonghyuk. To be precise, the second regression Yoo Joonghyuk was one-sidedly beaten by the demon king.

It was a scene I remembered because I really liked it. However… this recollection didn't appear before chapter 50. I could say it with certainty as the full reader of Ways of Survival.

I pulled out my blade and opened my mouth.

"I will ask you again. Who are you?"

[Due to the effect of your exclusive attribute, your memories of some scenes became stronger.]

The story of Demon King Asmodeus appeared exactly in chapter 57 of Ways of Survival.

A crack started to spread in this man's relaxed expression.

Chapter 54: Ep. 11 – Night of the Prophets, V

The self-styled No. 1168 looked at the flames beyond the shield and asked,

"My identity? What are you talking about suddenly…?"

"Have you forgotten? I have Sage's Eye."

In fact, this guy's information wasn't available to me.

[The exclusive skill, Character List is activated.]

[The information of this person can't be read in 'Character List'.]

[This person isn't registered in 'Character List'.]

What was the difference between an updated person and a non-updated person? I still didn't know the exact reason why.

But whatever the reason was, deceiving this person wasn't difficult. It was because he believed I was Yoo Joonghyuk.

"…I didn't think Yoo Joonghyuk-nim would notice."

"You are an apostle. Right?"

"That's right. You already knew it."

The fact that he said it so easily meant there were ulterior motives.

"This is a trap. Is it because of the Butterfly Effect?"

"Haha, that's right."

I wondered if my words were funny as No. 1168 smiled and looked at the other people around.

"If there are a lot of flying butterflies, unnecessary storms will happy."

The prophets who couldn't find a foothold were melting like moths in the midst of the flames. The terrible screams and the information they knew disappeared into dust. It was the price they paid for trying to obtain a star relic without the proper information.

"You are killing the larvae before they become butterflies."

"The larvae that are about to become pupa are the easiest to kill."

The fierce heat died down and the chemical reactions in the surrounding area were subsiding. The Absolute Shield was soon turned off.

[After one minute, the positions of the footholds will be recreated.]

The hidden scenario would end when footholds appeared 10 times and they survived the attacks. We had just passed one so there were nine left.

I tried pressing against the shield with my feet. The heat was high but it was enough to endure.

–Representative-nim!

I waved my hand to stop those running from afar.

Now wasn't the time to take care of them.

–The attack patterns are familiar so please learn them and avoid them on your own. I can't take care of you right now.

The party members noticed something strange and stopped moving.

In a situation where the power of the apostles wasn't clear, it was dangerous to drag them with me.

No. 1168 looked at me and said, "This isn't like what I saw in the Book of Revelations. Is this really your third regression?"

"Shut up. Where did you get off?"

"Hrmm? You would know if you checked it yourself."

"I like a person who is the same on the outside. I can't make a deal with a person who has two different sides."

The apostles' eyes widened. "How interesting."

"There must be a reason why you would so easily identify yourself."

The tail of the lesser dragon flew through the air and struck the spot where we were. It was easy for me to avoid it with my over level 30 agility. However, No. 1168's astute movements were amazing.

I triggered Calm Observation that I got from Theatre Dungeon. It was a skill I saved for those who Character List didn't work on.

His perspiration, speed, breathing interval… The sum of his physical body stats was around 49~50. It was a significant level among the prophets I had seen.

I moved behind him and he opened his mouth. "I'll formally greet you. I'm No. 1195. Among the apostles, I am the 5th Apostle."

The number of views for Ways of Survival's first chapter was 1,200. If he was 1,195, he was among the top five of the latest people to stop reading. Then he knew about the 'red meteorite'.

"What is your purpose? "Do you also need my help?"

"Huhu. To save Yoo Joonghyuk-nim… what would you say to that?"

"It is more plausible than the lie about mosquitos becoming butterflies.

"Indeed, you have Lie Detection."

He licked his dry lips. Should I do it now?

…No. A little bit more. Just listen a bit more.

"However, I'm not lying about my desire to save Yoo Joonghyuk-nim. Things would be difficult if you die here. The revelations will be greatly ruined."

"You knew I was coming."

"We discovered it a few hours ago. Therefore, we hurriedly revised the plan."

There were sparks and a few more prophets near us died. There were still those who were hanging on. It was like they knew the patterns of the lesser dragon. I kept an eye on those people.

"Originally, we had no plans to participate. If only you Yoo Joonghyuk-nim wasn't here."

"So?"

"Don't you already know the answer?"

[The positions of the footholds will be created!]

[The 5th grade fire dragon species, 'Lesser Dragon Igneel' is preparing the 'Flames of Destruction'.]

My party members successful found footholds this time. The apostle and I also found a foothold that fit two people.

To be precise, the apostle tossed the person already occupying it out with force. The drops of blood landed on the brutal apostle. He wiped it off and said, "We have to slay the lesser dragon."

Ku ku ku ku!

[The 5th grade fire dragon species, 'Lesser Dragon Igneel' is using the 'Flames of Destruction'.]

The Absolute Shield activated and once again blocked the flames.

Kuooooh!

Only two stages had occurred but there were less than a quarter prophets remaining. The party members had been keeping pace but it was uncertain how long they would last.

[A hidden piece penalty has occurred.]

[The number of footholds created in the next turn will be reduced.]

I spoke with narrowed eyes, "With your power alone?"

"It is possible. I have prepared enough."

I felt uneasy as I heard his confident voice. That reminded me, he was shedding a single drop of sweat in this heat. A bluish chill spread over his skin.

This was… I see. Their preparations were outstanding.

"It is the ice pill."

"That's right."

A pill that had a certain probability of appearing when a 7th grade elemental species was hunted in the Gangseo-gu area stations. They already managed to get their hands on this pill. It would release a powerful ice attribute for at least 30 minutes.

In other words, they had a foundation to hurt the lesser dragon. The problem was the attack power.

"It is impossible with you alone."

"Who said I was alone?"

I looked at the survivors. There were a few people I was particularly keeping an eye on. I looked closer and saw that their bodies were covered with a bluish chill.

"Huhu, how can I come here alone?"

I counted and there were five of them. They had committed half their power for this operation. The five apostles must have confidence after eating the five ice pills.

But.

"A few more people won't make a big difference."

"That's why I am seeking help. I will give an ice pill to Yoo Joonghyuk-nim if you decide to help us."

"If I refuse?"

"All of Yoo Joonghyuk-nim's party members here will die."

"Do you think you will be safe like that?"

"Even if we can't take care of the lesser dragon, we can at least take care of our bodies."

He was brimming with confidence. They would've already lost their heads if I was the real Yoo Joonghyuk.

"Do you think I am worried about my party members? People die anyway. I can gather other people."

I raised Unbroken Faith to his neck. Then he shook his head.

"Huhu, you are truly like the revelations. But you better think carefully."

"What do you mean?"

"By now, Yoo Joonghyuk-nim's main base would've entered our hands."

"…What?"

"Maritime Admiral Lee Jihye, a child who uses strange abilities. And one of the 10 Evils. It is different from the original revelation but you have made a fairly good party. If they all die, won't Yoo Joonghyuk-nim face problems starting again?"

They had already investigated up to here. These bastards…

"Won't it be worse if we take away Chungmuro Station? Right now, it is just a proposal. But don't think this proposal will last forever. Our group has already completed the King's Road scenario by taking over 10 stations. You should know the gap between a group with a 'king' and a group without a king."

"…"

"Perhaps the situation would already be over by now. The king will be waiting for Yoo Joonghyuk-nim's choice in front of Chungmuro's flag holder."

…I see.

I knew their plan. These guys, they planned to hit Chungmuro from the moment they received information I was coming to the Night of the Prophets.

"If you pledge to join us, we will promise the safety of your party as well as our full support in the future. This is a promise on the king's honour."

My heart was pounding from the precise threat. They were actually this bold against Yoo Joonghyuk. It was rare to find this in someone who read Ways of Survival.

"Who is your king? Where did they get off?"

"Hmm… the king dislikes being called someone who 'got off'."

"So what do you call them?"

"Even if you are Yoo Joonghyuk-nim, please refrain from speaking about him like that. He is the only one among the prophets who has read all the revelations. He knows both Yoo Joonghyuk's past and future."

…What? I was surprised for a moment but didn't greatly panic. This was interesting. There was another reader who read all of the novel?

Laughter emerged. It was a ridiculing laugh. It was because there absolutely couldn't be such a thing.

Kuooooh!

Finally, the third attack of the fire dragon was about to begin. I looked at the apostle and quietly stepped out of the foothold.

The bewildered apostle asked as I walked forward. "Yoo Joonghyuk-nim? What are you doing?"

The party members far away were also surprised. I waved my hands.

–Don't worry. No matter what happens, you absolutely can't move from there. Understood?

I walked in the direction of the lesser dragon. It was with slow but sure steps. The fire dragon stared ferociously at me as it prepared the Flames of Destruction.

"What are you doing?! Come back!"

The apostle behind me hastily exclaimed. I turned around and smiled at him.

"Did the king tell you about this future?"

As I listened to him, I kept thinking. These guys shouldn't be alive. But they had a 'strategy' and I couldn't kill them all by myself. If so… I laughed and continued talking.

"You guys, have you forgotten what my stigma is?"

If I was them. What would they 'fear' the most right now?

"I'm not afraid of death. I can just start over again."

The answer was simple. They believed I was Yoo Joonghyuk. If that was the case…

"I wonder. What will the effect be on you? You are unusual presences in this turn." The most 'fearful' thing to them was what I feared most. "If I die here, will you exist in the next turn? Or will you end with this world?"

They didn't want Yoo Joonghyuk to die.

"If you really read the revelations, you should know the answer right?"

The apostles' faces paled. There were times when it was easier to handle those who used their heads.

"Yoo Joonghyuk!"

The five apostles moved from the footholds and started to run towards me. I knew it. No matter how unconcerned they pretended to be, they were people who 'got off' and were caught up in this scenario.

What would happen to them in a world where the protagonist was dead? They didn't know.

"Catch him quickly!"

Just like me.

[The 5th grade fire dragon species, 'Lesser Dragon Igneel' is using the 'Flames of Destruction'.]

The moment that flames burst out from the centre of the platform, I exploded all the strength in my muscles and ran towards the legs of the dragon. Then I put my flag into the flag holder of Anguk Station located there.

[You have occupied Anguk Station.]

[Currently Occupied: Chungmuro (Main Base), Myeongdong, Dongdaemun History and Culture Park, Dongdaemun, Dongmyo, Sindang Station, Cheonggu Station, Yaksu Station, Sinseol-dong Station, Anguk Station]

[The achievement points of the brown flag are rising.]

[You have occupied 10 stations!]

[The hidden scenario – 'King's Road' has been achieved.]

[Depending on the path you walk, you will receive a new 'king' attribute].

1. King of Arrogance and Hypocrisy

2. King of Solitude and Taste

3. King of No Killing

…….

I replied without reading the rising options.

"King of No Killing."

[The new attribute, King of No Killing has been obtained!]

This was enough. I hadn't wanted to do this but it was necessary to get rid of the people here.

The apostles discovered the flames and hurried back to the footholds. However, it was already too late.

"You should've been careful. You only have one life."

The wave of flames covered them. It was an attack that couldn't be endured even if they ate the ice pill.

[The durability of the External Enhanced Suit has decreased dramatically.]

[The durability of the External Enhanced Suit has run out.]

My vision soon became dim. There was the feeling of flesh being burnt and I lost consciousness.

[You have died.]

.

.

A moment later, a system message was heard.

[The privilege of the King of No Killing is activated.]

Chapter 55: Ep. 12 – First Person Protagonist's Point of View, I

One of the most painful deaths in the world was burning to death and I had just experienced it. The neurons in my brain seemed to emit light at once.

[The exclusive skill 'Fourth Wall' has attenuated the mental pain.]

The pain was slowly reduced. It was once again the Fourth Wall. I always felt strange when I escaped from trouble with the help of this skill.

Ways of Survival had become a reality and I was living in it. Then… what was this 'wall' that I felt every time?

…….

No, these thoughts were futile. I was safe thanks to the attribute 'King of No Killing' and had to move again.

It was an attribute that could be gained only when the conditions of King of No Killing was met. Unlike its name, the privilege of the attribute was more like 'immortality' than 'no death'. It was conditional but…

In any case, I would soon return to my flesh. At least that was what I thought.

[Due to a conflict error with your exclusive skill, the privilege of King of No Killing would be delayed.]

Huh? A skill conflict error?

[Thanks to your death, your consciousness has been completely liberated from the constraints of your body.]

[Exclusive skill, Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint stage 3 has been activated!]

I was overcome with a dizzy feeling. No, wait a minute. What was happening this time?

「"Damn, if only it wasn't him."」

The dizziness flooded in and my vision brightened. Then I was watching a 'scene'.

「Gong Pildu licked his lips as he observed the people around the platform. Now he couldn't run away. He thought about it but he knew better than anyone that he didn't have the courage to do so.

"Um… Dokja hyung."

There was a weight pressing against his knee and Gong Pildu looked down. It was a boy around 10 years or so. There was a boy sleeping on his thigh.

"Why am I like this…?"

Gong Pildu wondered as he looked down at the sleepy Lee Gilyoung. His old memories surfaced. A young child. Lee Gilyoung was his daughter's age.

He shook his head and sighed.

–Pildu-ssi, we should stop now…

–Daddy. How long are you going to keep talking about land?

There was a time when he was the breadwinner of the family.

He earned money to feed his family and buy land. If he was lucky, he would become a landlord and then get tenants…

Finally, he became a 'big investor' in Chungmuro but it didn't take long to find out that he couldn't keep his small family.

"Isn't this surprisingly okay? You get along well with people."

He looked up to see a beauty with a nice face. Yoo Sangah. Two days ago, this woman had become the deputy of Chungmuro.

"Quickly stop talking nonsense."

"You were smiling just now…"

Gong Pildu made a look of distaste. Yoo Sangah sat down hesitantly next to Gong Pildu.

"Ahjusssi, how many times did you buy land?"

"What?"

"When I look at the people in the Landlord Alliance, only you are the one with the 'Land Owner' attribute."

"…It isn't good to have a lot of land. It needs to be good land. You are naive."

"Then what is good land?"

"Expensive land is good land."

"What type of land is expensive?"

"It is land that many people want."

"Was your land like that?"

"Yes."

It wasn't land that he wanted.

Gong Pildu looked into Yoo Sangah's eyes. This woman's curiosity had an oddly sharp corner. She was smiling on the outside but he couldn't help feeling uncomfortable.

Duduk. Duk. Duk.

Then a sound was heard in the distance. Yoo Sangah's expression hardened while Lee Gilyoung woke up in a flash from where he was sleeping on Gong Pildu's knees. The antennae of the cockroach on his back shook.

Ku ku ku ku!

Line 4, the tunnel from Hoehyeong. Something was coming this way. Yoo Sangah stood up while Gong Pildu used a skill.

[The character 'Gong Pildu' has activated 'Armed Zone Lv. 8!]

Gong Pildu bit his lips. This might be an intuition only rich land owners got. There was something like that.

"Hey! Huddle up!"

It was the feeling of someone trying to take away his land.

Dudududududu!

Gong Pildu turrets fired all at once into the darkness and something fell. They were ground rats.

"The enemy! Gather around Gong Pildu-ssi! We will go with the large-scale exercise we practiced in the morning!"

Yoo Sangah called out and the people scattered on the platform ran.

"Group A is near the turrets, group B will be at the centre of the gunfire and group C will be protecting Gong Pildu-ssi!"

The people moved in the orderly ranks that they had practiced in advance. The ground rats collapsed due to the people's quick response. It was much easier than when Emergency Defense was taking place.

As the dozens of ground rats collapsed on the ground, the same thought entered the minds of the Chungmuro members. It was easy. It truly was worth everyone cooperating.

Then they heard a voice from the tunnel.

"As expected, Hamelin's Flute isn't enough?"

"How can the 9th grade species compare to a place eaten by Yoo Joonghyuk?"

A group of people appeared from the darkness. Four men and one woman.

Gong Pildu's expression hardened. He didn't know the reason. However, one thing was for certain. These guys were different from the ones they had dealt with so far.

"Dammit… quickly call the samurai girl!"

"I am already here." There was a cold feeling as Lee Jihye came down from where she had been. "And don't call me a samurai. If you don't want to get beaten up."

Despite the grumpy answer, Gong Pildu felt a bit calmer. Lee Jihye was a great power. Yet Gong Pildu still felt uneasy. He was anxious and growled like a frightened beast.

"Who are you? Where did you come from?"

"It is real. The Maritime Admiral and Armed Fortress Master has become a team."

It wasn't an answer that came back but words that were close to mocking.

Gong Pildu asked, "What nonsense are you saying? Quickly go back. Otherwise I will shoot to kill!"

However, the five men and women didn't look at Gong Pildu. They just continued talking to each other.

"Who is on the dragon side?"

"Numbers 5, 6, 8 and 9. They aren't apostles but they are pretty good.

"With the exception of the one outside Seoul, there are five of us left."

"The five of us are enough. Quickly sweep them away."

The first one who came forward was a man in his 30s with a bulging belly.

He was a man with the number '7' on his shoulders. He had thick eyebrows and looked at Lee Jihye's white legs like they were to his taste.

"I will take the Maritime Admiral. She isn't a big deal without the sea."

"What are you bastards saying?"

Lee Jihye cried out sharply and rushed forward. Gong Pildu realized it couldn't be helped and infused magic power into the turrets.

"Damn, just go to hell!"

Dudududududu!

The man with a '4' on his cloak laughed.

"As expected from one of the Ten Evils. If we came a bit later, we would've been swept away."

"Numbers 3 and 4. You two take Gong Pildu. Be vigilant and attack the turrets one by one."

The man with a '3' on his forehead nodded.

"Yes… I understand. One of the 10 Evils can be handled by both of us."

"Number 2, you handle the rest."

The woman with a '2' on her cheek frowned. She was holding a small flute in her hand.

"Why do I have to handle such petty reason?"

"It is the most appropriate for you."

"What are you going to do?"

Then the man with a '1' on the dark cloak opened his mouth.

"I will be taking the flag holder." 」

The moment of immersion was broken and consciousness returned. Now it all made sense.

Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint. I had a similar experience the last time I was in the ichthyosaur's stomach. At that time, I saw Yoo Joonghyuk.

By the way, it was amazing. I thought I had prepared for the apostles but it wasn't enough. I was able to guess their thoroughness just from the items they brought.

There was Hamelin's Flute that could control the ground rats and the Magic Power Bullet Shield that could defend against Gong Pildu's attack.

They really wanted to capture Chungmuro, obtain Yoo Joonghyuk and devour this world.

But it wouldn't be so easy.

「 "W-What? Was the Maritime Admiral this strong in the beginning? Hey, isn't something wrong?"

It was the 7th Apostle who cried out first.

Lee Jihye's sharp sword pushed the 7th Apostle back little by little. It was natural. The current Lee Jihye was much stronger than the Lee Jihye in the original 'third turn'.

"Damn, why are these two turrets so hard?"

Number 3 and 4 were in trouble.

The 2nd Apostle playing Hamelin's Flute was also struggling due to Yoo Sangah's Binding Thread and Lee Gilyoung's Mjolnir's Thunder.

In the end, it was the 1st Apostle who came forward. He frowned before pulling something out and lighting it. Then he threw it at the Chungmuro party.

Kwaaaaang—!」

There was a loud roar and Chungmuro's platform was covered with explosions. I was startled.

…This son of a bitch?

[Mass Destruction Magic Bullet]

It was hard to deal huge damage to top monsters but against humans, it was the most powerful weapon of mass destruction.

It was a weapon that could be made with some items that appeared in the Gangseo and Gangnam areas, as well as some items bought from the Dokkaebi Bag.

Then he was the 'king' of the apostles. The purple flag on his back proved it.

The dust settled down, revealing the Chungmuro platform. My chest was becoming stuffy. If the apostles had this then the situation was unfavourable.

The dust cleared and the fallen Chungmuro group members were seen. People were coughing up blood.

Yoo Sangah and Lee Gilyoung were lying on their floor. Even Gong Pildu couldn't completely avoid getting injured despite using Protective Wall.

「"Phew, now it looks good. Right?"

The 7th Apostle grabbed Lee Jihye's head while her uniform was torn. She was in the front and received the biggest blow from the explosion.

"Aren't you just a supporting actor, huh?"

"Bastards…cough!" Lee Jihye screamed as she was punched in the stomach.

"Can I have this gurl?"

"What will you do with her? There is no time."

"What will I do? Looking back, isn't she destined to follow the main character and be miserable? Then I would rather…" 」

Lee Jihye's small body shook in the air like a rag doll. Her lips were trembling. She was staring at me.

「He…lp…me.」

Impulsive anger filled my head. It was unlike me. Lee Jihye was clearly just a 'character'.

[The exclusive skill, 'Fourth Wall' is activated!]

[Excessive immersion has restricted some of the features of Fourth Wall.]

I was too immersed. I became dizzy and nauseous.

[Excessive immersion lads to a profound increase in the proficiency of Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint.]

[Changing your viewpoint to first person.]

My consciousness narrowed and stretched like a rubber band. Then I opened my eyes. I was really in Chungmuro.

…How? Lee Jihye was looking at me with shaky eyes. It wasn't just her. At this moment, everyone on the platform was watching me.

My field of view moved slowly. I walked towards Lee Jihye. To be exact, my body was moving regardless of my will.

One step, another step. Slowly but steadily, I was closing the distance to her.

The 7th Apostle frowned and asked, "You are…?"

I was uncomfortable, like I was wearing clothes that didn't fit my body. The height of my gaze was different from usual as well as my five senses.

At this moment, I realized who 'I' was. I couldn't help laughing.

I disliked it. I really disliked it.

Lee Jihye's lips moved a little bit.

"Ah…"

My hand gripped the hilt of the sword like it was something I had done millions of times.

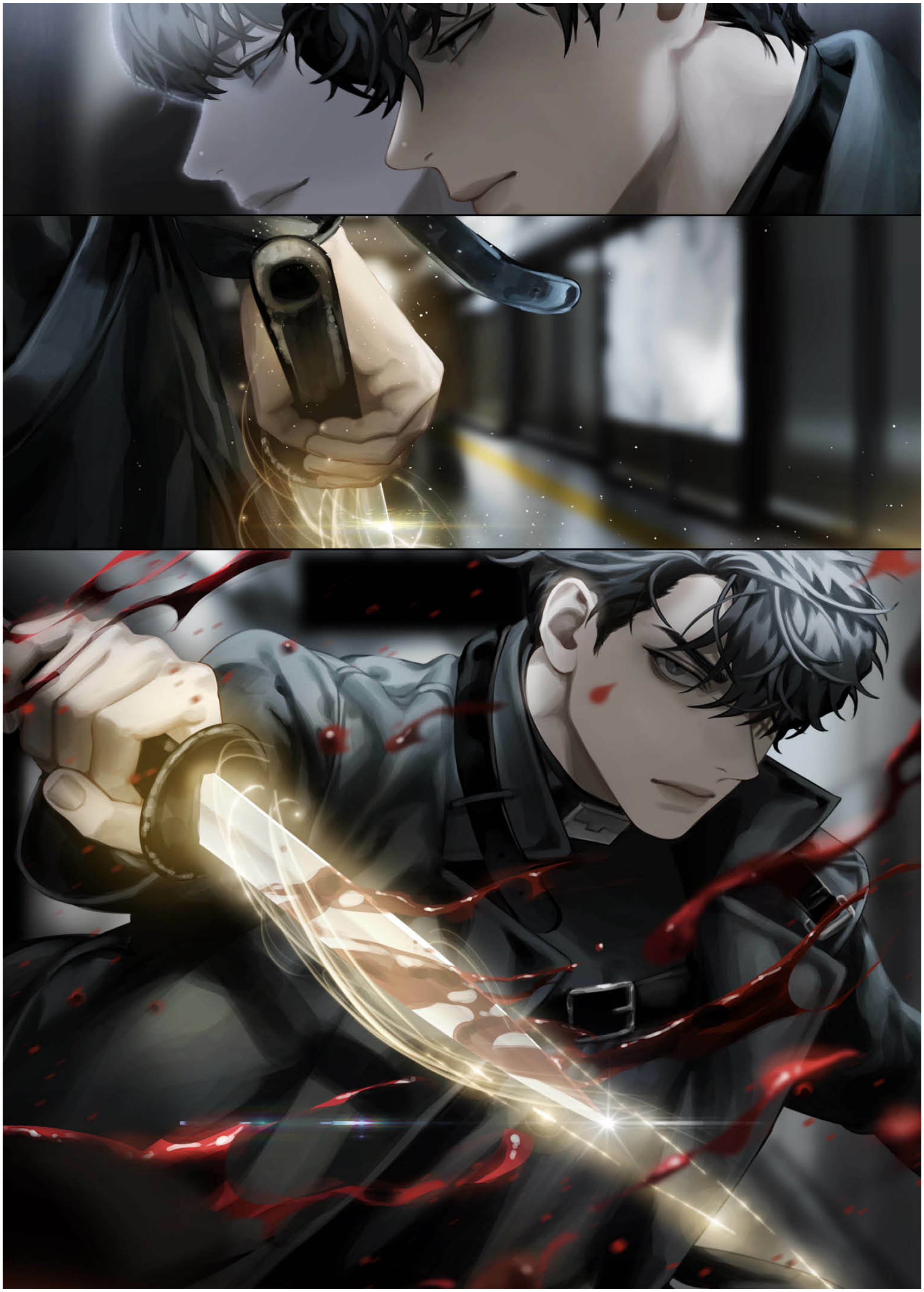
The grip of my fingers was strange. It was natural and beautiful. I was thrilled with the fantastic feeling that I felt for the first time in my life.

The blade moved silently. No one could see anything.

Just. It went through something. Something was cut off. Something fell to the ground.

Some people were shocked while other people's mouths dropped open.

The 7th Apostle holding onto Lee Jihye slowly sank down. Blood gushed from his neck. My hands moved and I caught the falling body of Lee Jihye.



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"Ah, ah…"

I lightly placed Lee Jihye down on the platform. I raised my eyes and saw the apostles looking this way. The first one to speak was the 3rd Apostle.

"You… who are you?"

How funny. It was a stupid question. I slowly opened my mouth. It was like I was this guy from the start.

"I am Yoo Joonghyuk."

The coldest and loneliest voice in the world. The sleeping prince had finally woken up from his deep sleep.

"And you shall die here."

Now Chungmuro would be safe.

.

.

My consciousness escaped from Yoo Joonghyuk's body and slowly returned to its original body.

[Exclusive skill, Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint stage 3 has been turned off.]

[The skill conflict error is normalized.]

[The delayed privilege of the King of No Killing has reappeared.]

[Your body is resurrected from death.]

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* Official novel illustration (canonical)

Chapter 56: Ep. 12 – First Person Protagonist's Point of View, II

[The recreation of your flesh has begun.]

Just like falling paint spread out, my vision slowly cleared. The surrounding contrast and saturation were unclear. By bones, capillaries, digestive and respiratory tract and my whole eyes regenerated. My senses were confused because they still hadn't found their place.

In any case, I could rest assured about Chungmuro.

No matter how strong the apostles were, they wouldn't be able to defeat Yoo Joonghyuk who was stronger than the original.

By the way… it was a truly unique experience. I shared a first person point of view with Yoo Joonghyuk. If possible, I didn't want to do it again.

[The exclusive skill 'Fourth Wall' offsets the mental shock caused by your death.]

[Compensation is being prepared for the Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint stage 3.]

…Usage compensation?

I could see Jung Heewon shouting from afar. Her face was astounded as Lee Hyunsung held onto her. Jung Minseob and Lee Sungkook were in shock when they looked over here.

Fortunately, they were all safe. I wasn't too late.

"Dokja-ssi!"

Jung Heewon forgot and cried out my name.

Kyaooooh!

In fact, there was no need to hide it anymore. Air flowed into my newly created lungs. There was still the merciless lesser dragon in the vicinity.

"As expected from Yoo Joonghyuk-nim!"

"Did he use a divine restoration pill?"

These cries came from the few prophets who had survived. Of course, I didn't have a divine recovery.

Reviving from death was completely different to recovering from a serious wound.

[The benefits of the King of No Killing has been completed.]

[100 karma points have been consumed.]

[The wastes of your flesh have been completely removed and the performance of your body has increased.]

[Physique and magic power has increased by 1 each.]

There was even a resurrection bonus. This was why 'King of No Killing' was a scam. In all of Ways of Survival, Selena Kim of the United States was the only one who obtained this attribute.

[Current karma points: 0/100]

[Fill up the points for your next resurrection.]

[One karma point will be obtained every time you save someone's life.]

The privilege of the King of No Killing was 'resurrection'. Of course, it wasn't unconditionally resurrection. Karma points were necessary. It was fortunate that the first resurrection started with 100 points.

Kyaooooh!

[The 5th grade fire dragon species, 'Lesser Dragon Igneel' is using the 'Flames of Destruction'.]

I couldn't die as soon as I revived. Since my points had fallen to 0, the resurrection privilege couldn't be used for a while.

I looked around and saw the number '2' written on a foothold. The other people were already standing on a foothold.

"Hyunsung-ssi, go over there! We'll go to the next one!"

Lee Hyunsung rushed towards me at Jung Heewon's quick judgement. Lee Hyunsung arrived and opened his mouth while sweating.

"Dokja-ssi, are you okay?"

"Just take a look."

"…I thought my eyes were mistaken for a while."

I didn't have time to explain in detail how it was possible.

[Absolute Shield is activated!]

The Flames of Destruction burned in front of my eyes. I spoke to Lee Hyunsung, who was looking at me like I was Jesus.

"Hyunsung-ssi, do you have anything for me to wear? A poncho or…"

"I might be a soldier but… ah."

Lee Hyunsung belatedly recognized the situation and looked at my body. The resurrection was good except for one thing. The external suit had melted and most of the items I picked up were destroyed.

In other words, I was now naked.

"…No, that's okay." I muttered.

Lee Hyunsung had raised his hand to his waist and now he returned it to his original position.

No matter how strong a person, this sense of sacrifice was too much. In any case, I didn't need clothes but the items that fell.

Even the Flames of Destruction couldn't dissolve star relics or scenario items. In fact, Unbroken Faith was rolling around the lesser dragon's legs and the brown flag was also on the ground. It was a location where other people couldn't easily pick them up.

As soon as the shield was lifted, people started to run from far away. The one who ran first was Jung Heewon.

"Dokja-ssi!"

Jung Heewon's expression gradually stiffened as she ran towards me.

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is looking at the black flame dragon.]

I felt her gaze covering my shoulders and back before she looked away.

"I didn't see anything so don't worry. Is now the time to care about that?"

I reflexively shrank back at the words. Then a poncho covered my body. Looking closer, it was a big one.

[Samyeongdang's Straw Mat]

Jung Heewon handed it over to me.

"Thank you, Jung Heewon-ssi."

I was very thankful to her right now.

[The constellation 'Bald General of Justice' is a little sad.]

"Let's move."

Kyaooooh!

The lesser dragon Igneel's physical movement stage had begun. We once again moved counterclockwise and avoided the attack.

Jung Heewon and Lee Hyunsung ran ahead of me. They seemed to care about the 'black flame dragon' dangling from my lower body. The straw mat was more uneven than I thought and didn't cover the front.

Jung Minseob ran without noticing and asked, "What now representative? All the apostles have died…"

As Jung Minseob said, I didn't see any remaining apostles.

The proof was that their ice pills were rolling around the areas where they died. They were items with a long digestion time and didn't melt in the flames.

A dragon's paw flew through the air.

"Kyaaak!"

Two prophets running behind the party were crushed.

I ran to the centre of the platform and grabbed Unbroken Faith and the brown flag.

[You have recovered the brown flag.]

[You can use the flag's abilities.]

I looked around and it was only my party members remaining. As I was thinking, the time for the footholds to be activated had already come.

[Numerical footholds are activated.]

"Gather!"

Fortunately, a foothold with the number '5' was activated. The problem was that there was only one active foothold this time.

The intermediate dokkaebi's voice could be heard in the air.

[Huhu, you are still holding up well. But will that luck continue?]

Next time, the number on the foothold might be three or four. If so, someone in the party would surely die. If it was six…

[The 5th grade fire dragon species, 'Lesser Dragon Igneel' is using the 'Flames of Destruction'.]

[Absolute Shield is activated.]

We barely made it with 10 seconds to spare. I had to think of this as the last time.

"Phew… this bastard. Dokja-ssi, what do we do?"

Lee Hyunsung and Jung Heewon were exhausted. It was natural since they had ran dozens of times in an environment where it was hard to breathe.

"I think we should fight."

"Can we catch it?"

"It isn't impossible."

I pointed to the ice pills rolling around on the floor. The number was exactly a match for the members of our party. If we ate the items that the apostles prepared, it wasn't impossible to damage the lesser dragon. The question was if we could kill it before the next full attack began.

[Absolute Shield will be released.]

"Run! Pick up the pills that have dropped on the ground!"

The party members popped out as I yelled.

[4,100 coins have been invested in magic power.]

[Magic Power Lv. 16 -> Magic Power Lv. 25]

[Your soul is attuned to the world!]

In order to get rid of the lesser dragon as quickly as possible, I needed to raise my magic power instead of my strength.

I picked up an ice pill and swallowed it.

[The ice property has temporarily opened.]

[40% ice damage is added.]

Now the only thing left was to inflict damage. What should I do? There was a limit to charging recklessly.

Lee Hyunsung had Great Mountain Smash but he lacked agility. Jung Heewon had excellent agility but she lacked a powerful finishing blow.

It would be good if we attacked a weak spot. Was it something that Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint could point out? Ah, that reminded me…

[Exclusive skill, Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint is already in use.]

[The compensation for the exclusive skill, Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint stage 3 is available.]

I used the reward.

[You have experienced the first person protoganist's point of view.]

[You can take one of the protagonist's skills.]

…What?

I was too puzzled to see the flying paw of the lesser dragon. Jung Heewon's body pushed against mine and the paw landed where I used to be.

Kwaang!

"Why are you freezing?"

Jung Heewon cried out but I couldn't easily answer. I could take one of the protagonist's skills. This meant I could get one of Yoo Joonghyuk's skills.

[Presenting the list of available skills.]

Oho, I got a choice?

Now that I had eaten the ice pill, what if I could get one of Yoo Joonghyuk's skills?

If I could obtain something like Strong Self-Defense or Breaking the Sky Sword…!

[Please select a skill to acquire.]

Cold Resistance

Fire Resistance

Lie Detection.

…Shit, it was like this.

Things couldn't be resolved so easily. I liked Lie Detection the most among the available skills, but it was useless for me right now.

The most useful thing for this situation was Fire Resistance…

Kuoooooh!

The lesser dragon roared and breathed out fire. Once this action was over, the Flames of Destruction phase would being.

Let me think. I was a 'reader'. There would be an answer in what I had read.

[Due to the effect of your exclusive attribute, memories from the books you have read will become stronger.]

The pages flashed in my head. The lesser dragon's attacls. There was some information in the 12th, 14th and 17th regressions. Now these things were given to me.

"Dokja-ssi, quickly…!"

I slowly closed my eyes.

Then.

"Cold Resistance."

I decided.

[The skill Cold Resistance is now available to be used.]

I turned to the others and shouted.

"Jung Heewon-ssi, Lee Hyunsung-ssi! Have you eaten your ice pills yet? Give all of them to me."

"Huh?"

"Lee Sungkook, Jung Minseob! You too!"

Jung Minseob's eyes widened just as he was about to put the ice pill in his mouth.

"Quickly!"

"Ah, yes!"

I quickly received the four ice pills. I avoided the flames and poured all of the pills into my mouth. I was certain. This was for the best.

[You have taken an ice pill.]

[The attribute overlay effect of the ice pill will increase the attribute damage.]

[200% ice damage is added.]

[The chill of your heart engulfs your entire body.]

I would've never done this in a normal situation. The ice pill was actually a type of poison. Eating just one would make you feel like you were standing naked in the middle of winter.

It meant that I should usually only take one.

[The exclusive skill 'Cold Resistance Lv. 5' has protected you.]

The skill I gained from Yoo Joonghyuk started at level 5.

"Everyone come behind me!"

I shouted as I held the handle of my sword. Perhaps it was due to the memories when I was Yoo Joonghyuk. The feeling I got when I grasped the sword subtly changed.

[Blade of Faith is activated!]

Kiiing!

[The special option of Unbroken Faith is activated.]

[The ether property is converted to 'darkness'.]

[The effect of the ice pill will add 'frost' to the ether property.]

The ether blade became a dark blue. It was due to the overlay of ice and darkness.

Chwaaaaak!

The dark blue ether blade started to hit the flames. I exploded all my muscle strength and ran to the lesser dragon.

Now it was an all out battle.

[The stigma 'Song of the Sword' has been used.]

[Your sword is filled with the words left by the Duke of Loyalty and Warfare.]

The buff ability varied according to the verse of the Song of the Sword. Please don't let it be a strange verse.

「In the night, a god appeared in his dream and said, "You will win big if you do this. Otherwise, you will lose."」

I wanted a different verse when different colours appeared on the lesser dragon's body. Most of them were green but there were parts that looked a toxic red.

[The constellation 'Maritime War God' is supporting your battle.]

I realized the meaning of the Duke of Loyalty and Warfare. I see. These were the weak points.

I ran through the fire and swung my sword at the lesser dragon's head. The first point was pale red.

Kyaaaah!

It floundered while I cut the Achilles tendon of its hind legs. The second was dark red.

Kyaaaak!

I jumped to avoid the tail and its paw swung towards me.

Peeeeok!

[The shield effect of the brown flag is activated.]

The flames couldn't be blocked but the shield could endure a few ordinary attacks.

I ran as it roared and stabbed my blade.

Puok!

It was at a red light on its chest.

Kyaaaack!

The lesser dragon started to wince.

The shield of the brown flag was instantly destroyed and flames started to gather at its mouth.

[The 5th grade fire dragon species, 'Lesser Dragon Igneel' is preparing the 'Flames of Destruction'.]

The attack phase was finally starting. Now I had no shield. I used all my magic power and the elongated ether blade struck its chest. I swung and swung again.

The explosive ice damage hit its chest. But it still didn't fall.

Kuaaaaaah!

Just a bit more.

Kyaaaak!

A bit more…

[The 5th grade fire dragon species, 'Lesser Dragon Igneel' is using the 'Flames of Destruction'.]

The flames burned in front of me. I would die once they struck me. I could hear the calls of the party members in the distance. I listened to the calls and swung my sword without backing down.

I could do it. My calculations weren't wrong. I was a 'reader'. If I had been Yoo Joonghyuk…

A sharp sense of emotion came as I wielded the sword in a trance. Yoo Joonghyuk's sword was invisible and silent. The sensation was strongly embedded in me.

I grabbed the hilt with all my strength. I recalled the feeling of that moment with my senses.

At least once. If I could iminate even a bit of that 'one sword'.

Kuooooh!

The sword moved and I heard something burst. It was the sound of flesh exploding.

The blood of the lesser dragon soaked my eyes and its body parts flew through the air.

After rolling around in the high-temperature dust, I vomited up all the congested parts.

I shook my head to regain my vision. I staggered as I barely got up. I was staring into the lesser dragon's eyes. I was taken aback and shook. It seemed that the burning Flames of Destruction had quietly turned off. The huge eyelids blinked once before it slowly backed away.

Kuuong!

The Blade of Faith was crying out silently from what it was stabbed into the dragon's heart.

[You are the first to kill the disaster 'Lesser Dragon Igneel'.]

[You are the first to contribute to clearing the fifth main scenario.]

[An impossible feat has been accomplished.]

The power slowly went out of my body. There was no power in my clenched fists. I gaped for breath as I sat down.

It was a reckless challenge. This time I really almost died.

[The compensation settlement will take some time due to the impossible achievement.]

[Some low-grade dokkaebi have requested a 'probability' request from the Administration Bureau.]

The intermediate dokkaebi was staring down at me quietly.

Anyway, now was the time for sweet rewards.

Chapter 57: Ep. 12 – First Person Protagonist's Point of View, III

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' applauds your spirit!]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' praises your courage!]

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' is curious about your tactics.]

….

[Some constellations are greatly impressed by your performance.]

[20,000 coins have been sponsored.]

I frowned as the indirect messages poured in without a filter. No one disliked praise. However, dozens of praises pouring in at once was too much.

Where did Bihyung go and why didn't he manage the messages? Ah… he would've been called by the Administrator Bureau right now.

There was no compensation for the hidden scenario and the intermediate dokkaebi disappeared without saying something.

By the way, the total number of sponsored coins was 20,000 coins… The 'minority channels' were different from the 'large channels.

I quickly looked at the fire dragon's body and pulled out the core.

[5th grade Fire Dragon's Core]

A core surrounded by a soft red light. The quality of the core that came out from the disaster was unusual.

It was deteriorated but it was still a dragon. There were many beneficial parts. For example, the bones and leather. It could be processed by a good blacksmith or exchanged.

I looked down at the body of the fire dragon. I had caught a disaster but to only obtain this much…

Then there was a sudden pain from my back as well as a cheerful voice.

"Dokja-ssi, what game character are you?"

I turned around and saw Jung Heewon standing behind me.

A cough came out.

"…My physical state is so bad right now that I will die from one hit from you."

"You will live even if you are killed."

"That isn't necessarily the case."

I expected Jung Heewon to ask but she was somewhat quiet. I realized that she was greatly shocked when I died.

She seemed to have cried… no, Jung Heewon wasn't crying. She lowered her voice like she was conscious of the other party members.

"…Did you know this and acted?"

"Not everything…"

"I really thought you were dead!"

"But I survived."

Once again, her strong palm slapped against my back. Lee Hyunsung came running out late.

"Dokja-ssi! Are you okay?"

"Yes, I'm fine."

Lee Sungkook and Jung Minseob were far away and came together. In fact, I wanted these guys to die here but they were really lucky. Well, they were in my group now so I could control them at any time. But…

Silence fell as everyone stared at me. I sighed and said, "…You can ask one by one. What are your questions?"

A sudden hearing began.

"Resurrection is a new privilege I have gained. It isn't due to my sponsor."

I moderately avoided the difficult information and only told them what I thought they needed to know. Jung Heewon muttered with a dumbfounded expression.

"Resurrection every time you save someone… isn't this a scam?"

"It is one resurrection per one hundred people but a scam is a scam."

I honestly admitted it. However, the King of No Killing also had a fatal weakness.

As long as I had this attribute, I couldn't 'directly' take the life of another person.

It wasn't a problem to injure, oppress or make them unable to fight, but he couldn't kill them. The King of No Killing would be deprived of his throne when he killed a person.

Of course, I didn't talk about these things. No good would come from it being known.

"You have to work hard to save people in the future."

"In some cases, people need to be killed…"

"Don't worry. I'll kill them for you."

Jung Heewon stated in a confident voice.

In fact, I was able to choose the King of No Killing with ease because of Jung Heewon. It was the reason why I raised the Judge of Destruction in the first place.

It wasn't a big problem to keep the King of No Killing until the middle scenarios, although there might be frustrating moments when playing solo.

As time went by, there would be more fraudulent attributes. I got a good attribute in the beginning so it would be hard to miss the timing to change it.

"But this is really like a fantasy novel. Now you have all types of abilities…"

Lee Sungkook, Jung Minseob and Lee Hyunsung were watching. I intentionally stared at them. It was a warning to Jung Heewon not to say anything.

She accepted it and Lee Sungkook opened his mouth.

"What did it feel like when you died?"

"…It was terrible of course."

I wanted to ask why he asked this but Lee Sungkook spoke again in a serious voice. "Honestly, I was a bit scared when I saw you rising alive again."

"You are scared?"

"Yes. Strictly speaking, your entire body disappeared and was restored. Common sense says that such a thing can't happened. I don't know what the principle of this world is but if your existence can be duplicated in the entirety… you might not have been 'resurrected' but 'cloned'."

He spoke a creepy story in a calm voice. It was something I never thought about…

It reminded me that this guy's attribute was 'Hypnotist'.

…Wasn't he interesting?

Jung Heewon started scolding him, "Have you been watching too many movies?"

"This is an important matter. If there is no continuity between your death and resurrection, there is no guarantee that pre-death Representative-nim is the same person as post-resurrection Representative-nim."

They were difficult words. Several memories crossed my mind. This brat, was he the one who got offended by the pedantic prologue?

"You have a very quaint idea but… there is no need to worry. I was still conscious after my death. Strictly speaking, it wasn't a real death."

"Did you experience a soul state?"

"I don't know if it can be called a soul but…"

I felt a bit of unease as I talked. Ways of Survival was a world created by the author.

This world became a reality. A world in which the soul wasn't proven now became a world in which the soul was taken for granted.

In such a world, what was 'my' existence? Me, my soul. Did it exist from the beginning? Or was I party of the story that the author made?

I shook my head. Now wasn't the time to be thinking about this.

"In any case, are the useless questions over?"

"Ah, can I ask one more question?"

"What?"

"Why are you suddenly using honorifics with me and Minseob…"

"My Yoo Joonghyuk concept is over."

Lee Sungkook made a surprised expression as he belatedly realized.

"Eh, come to think about it…"

I didn't need to hear his words. The concept of over but their treatment wouldn't dramatically change. I reached out a hand towards Lee Sungkook.

"Give me your smartphone."

"Yes?"

"I want a phone."

Lee Sungkook stuck out his phone. It was a good model. It was better than what I used.

"Can I have this?"

"…Wasn't the Yoo Joonghyuk concept finished?"

"This is my original concept."

Lee Sungkook was on the verge of tears.

"Everybody rest. I have to look at something for a while. We will move in 10 minutes. You can also collect the items."

The party members gathered the items scattered all over the place while I used the smartphone to access the Internet.

I pretended to be unconcerned but I was actually a little nervous.

[The hidden scenario compensation settlement will be delayed.]

[The 'probability' request is currently underway at the Administration Bureau.]

It was due to these messages.

The probability judgment. This was why the coins compensation from the hidden scenario weren't received.

I wanted to check the relevant parts in Ways of Survival but my smartphone was burned.

It was a mistake that wasn't like me. This was ominous. What if the mail sent by the author was erased…?

At this moment, a message appeared on the screen of my smartphone.

[Synching to a new device is available.]

[Do you still want to proceed with the sync?]

…What is this?

I pressed OK, the download of the file proceeded and a new file was created on the background screen.

[Three Ways to Survive in a Ruined World.TXT]

I see. There was this. Indeed, a file that couldn't be read by the dokkaebis or constellations couldn't disappear so easily.

I looked at Lee Sungkook and Jung Minseob collecting the items. I suddenly wondered. Would they be able to read this? Still… I should be careful as possible.

I opened up Ways of Survival and started to read.

[Your reading speed has increased due to the effect of the exclusive attribute.]

I found the 'probability' request that took place during Yoo Joonghyuk's 6th regression.

「 The intermediate dokkaebi of the Seoul Bureau 'Baram' frowned upon reading the scenario in front of him. 」

The top of the document had the name 'Regressor Yoo Joonghyuk'.

'A regressor… damn. The dokkaebis and constellations noticed quickly…'

Baram looked over at the dokkaebis. No senior dokkaebis or great dokkaebis could be seen.

It was natural. This was a 'probability request' that occurred at the level of a local dome. The principle was that the world of the district should be solved in the district. Baram asked the nervous looking dokkaebis.

"Who petitioned the bureau?"

"Aooni of Japan."

"Why is he worrying about a foreigner instead of his own country? Doesn't he have any business?"

"There is a lot of fierce fighting between the low grade dokkaebis these days…"

Baram frowned.

Certainly, according to the report, it was worth doing a probability request for 'Yoo Joonghyuk'.

There was also a lot of important information that was automatically filtered from the beginning.

In addition, the skill Sage's Eye meant that some items couldn't be accessed by the system. The data survey required the help of a higher level administration.

Baram sighed and covered up the report.

"It's okay. This guy is someone who has received permission from my superiors. Leave him alone."

"Is it okay? The aftermath…"

"He has a sponsor that we can't afford to go against."

"We can't go against a single constellation? What if the constellation alliance…"

Baram laughed.

"How can you lecture me? Do you know who his sponsor is?"

"T-That's not it."

"It will soon be the fifth scenario so take care of it. The probabilities will be gradually offset as the scenario progresses."

The atmosphere suddenly became cold and he said to the intermediate dokkaebi.

"Don't you have work to do these days?"

"Uh…!"

"Why do sales in the United States and India look like this? Isn't there the prophet in the US and the constellation alliance in India? Why are the sales like this when they are so many rich targets? Are you not making the products well?"

"T-That…"

"Shit, don't give excuses! Quickly sell the coin goods!" 」

A laugh emerged. I was reminded of Mino Soft when looking at the dokkaebis working. The planning division wasn't a joke.

In any case, I was now in a situation similar to Yoo Joonghyuk in Ways of Survival. I thought that this would happen someday but… this was why it wasn't good to be noticed.

This… what if the judgment caused me damages?

At that moment, a trembling voice was heard in the air.

[How many times do I have to be called to the Bureau because of you…]

Bihyung. I opened the dokkaebi communication.

"How did it go?"

Chapter 58: Ep. 12 – First Person Protagonist's Point of View, IV

[What is happening? Things have turned completely upside down. What skills do you have? Why can't I access the information even when I ask the Supervisory Bureau?]

I was curious as well. I also wanted to see my attributes window.

'So what happened? Am I going to be penalized?'

[Where did you hear that? Hey, do you know how hard I defended you? Administrator, please listen to me. Kim Dokja isn't a scammer or a strange person! He is just a very hard worker!]

He speak in a convincing manner.

[Fortunately, my earnest appeal was taken into consideration. I've analyzed the entire scenario and found that you only used a few skills. It isn't enough to destroy the ecology of the scenarios.]

It was as I expected. I didn't learn passive skills for no reason. The more good skills I used, the easier it was to attract the attention of the Bureau.

[Besides, there are some loud guys in other areas… the Bureau is busy right now.]

'Then it worked out well?'

[In fact, there are a few jerks… but instructions came down from the upper management and the 'great dokkaebi' said to dismiss it.]

I was amazed by the unexpected words. The great dokkaebi interfered?

[Sigh… listen to the intermediate dokkaebi. I shouldn't be here. There are suddenly more eyes on me. You should be careful. This is the jurisdiction of the intermediate dokkaebi and he has a firm grudge against you.]

'Grudge?'

[Don't you know. The probability meeting is like a tax investigation. In any case… you will have a hard time for a while.]

Bihyung disappeared. Then there was a huge spark in the air and the intermediate dokkaebi showed up in a formal suit. He looked around for a while before speaking in a gruff voice.

[…I'm sorry everyone. There was a bit of friction and the compensation was late. It is late but I will now reward you.]

[3,000 coins have been acquired for clearing the hidden scenario.]

[You have earned 15,000 coins as compensation for killing the 5th grade fire dragon.]

[You have obtained the 'Protection Symbol of the Imyuntar' for being the first to prevent a disaster.]

[In the future, you will get the favour of the Imyuntar people.]

Fortunately, the compensation was paid normally. In addition, the Protection Symbol of the Imyuntar. Now that I got this, the upcoming fifth scenario wouldn't be so bad.

It wasn't as much as what I got but the faces of the other party members were hilarious once they received a clear reward.

By the way… stingy bastards. I caught a disaster and these were the only rewards?

Then the intermediate dokkaebi started talking.

[By the way, you worked so hard that there was a bit of a problem with the scenario.]

There was something sarcastic and ominous about his tone.

[As a result of discussions with the Bureau, it was reported that the average skill of the local incarnations doesn't match the difficulty of the scenario. Therefore, I have arbitrarily adjusted the difficulty level in my area using my own judgment.]

…What? A random adjustment?

[The time limit of the fourth scenario has been significantly reduced.]

The mouth of the intermediate dokkaebi curved up strangely as he looked at me.

…No, this bastard?

[There are 48 hours left until the end of the fourth scenario.]

[All group representatives and members who haven't taken over the target within the next 48 hours will die.]

Yes… this was what he was planning? Jung Minseob stared at me from where he was picking up the fallen items. Everyone had probably heard the message.

"Who has Changsin Station now?"

"T-The Tyrant King."

One of the seven kings of Seoul, the Tyrant King…

I said with a sigh, "Then let's return to Chungmuro."

By the way, I didn't know if Yoo Joonghyuk was doing well or not. Let's wrap up the fourth scenario.

The distance from Anguk Station to Chungmuro was further than I thought. During the journey, we exchanged a few stories.

Jung Heewon and Lee Hyunsung walked ahead, while I walked in the rear with Lee Sungkook and Jung Minseob.

I couldn't take the entire body of the fire dragon so I put half of it on the exchange. The other half was also placed on the exchange, but I deliberately put it at a ridiculously high price. It wasn't for sale but a trick to use the exchange as a warehouse substitute. Bihyung grumbled but I ignored it. Jung Minseob opened his mouth.

"By the way, Representative-nim."

It felt strange because I really felt like a big company's president when I kept being called 'Representative-nim'.

"Is your name Kim Dokja?"

"Yes."

"Ah… it really is your name…"

"Is it unusual?"

"…Yes. Honestly, you are more like a prophet than we are."

His voice was rather subdued.

"Sigh… if only I hadn't stopped reading…"

It was a belated regret. At this moment, I had a moment of doubt. There was something I wanted to ask but I had forgotten.

"Jung Minseob-ssi, I want to ask you something."

"Yes."

"How did the prophets gather so quickly?"

This was a point that I always found strange. It hadn't been more than a month since the initial scenario started. However, these guys had already been working as a group.

Furthermore, the apostles were even worse. Based on the first person protagonist's point of view, they had a fairly high armed force that couldn't be obtained without occupying a large number of stations.

It was a growth that couldn't be understood with my common sense.

"There was someone who called us together."

"Called you together?"

"Yes. Soon after the first scenario ended, he came to the station where I was."

Interesting. How was this possible? At that point, there would still be a barrier between stations.

"He introduced himself as an apostle and said that he had read the great Book of Revelations. He recruited prophets to follow him. The odd thing was that it happened simultaneously in different stations. It is hard to believe it was done by one person…"

"In any case, we gathered because of that apostle. He pulled us into the group."

"Yes, we call that apostle the 1st Apostle."

"Is he the king of the prophets? The person who hates being called someone who 'got off'?"

"Ah… you already know. Yes. He likes to be called another name."

Another name?

"He claims to be a 'true reader'."

…What?

"There was a lot of talk about why he would call himself such a name. We couldn't come to a conclusion. He claimed to have read all of the Book of Revelations but…"

As the story continued, this person's identity became more and more doubtful. When I thought about the information he took advantage of, he didn't seem like a 'reader'…

I was busy thinking when Chungmuro approached. It hadn't been long since I left but I felt like I had returned to my hometown as I took in the air of Chungmuro Station.

I restrained my companions from entering the station.

"Wait a minute."

Thinking about it, I was still naked. Why hadn't anyone said anything?

I spoke to Lee Sungkook. "Lee Sungkook-ssi, please take off your pants."

I took the lead to enter Chungmuro Station, while Lee Sungkook was forced to walk behind me in his underwear.

I could see Yoo Sangah welcoming me in the distance. I looked into her moist eyes and could see how hard it had been.

Something ran into me and I saw Lee Gilyoung attached to my right leg.

"Have you been well?"

The dusty Lee Gilyoung nodded.

Lee Jihye had a serious injury and hadn't woken up yet. Gong Pildu scoffed and turned his head as soon as he saw me.

[The constellation 'Defense Master' reproaches you on your late return.]

It was a reaction I could understand since his incarnation nearly died.

"Yoo Sangah-ssi!"

Lee Hyunsung and Jung Heewon didn't know what happened in Chungmuro and ran towards the people with an aghast expression. People around the platform were bleeding. In fact, Yoo Sangah had a cloth bound tightly to her shoulder.

Some of the railroad tracks were covered with blood. They were traces of a fierce fight. Jung Minseob stuttered, "T-The apostles?"

The heads of number 2, 3, 4 and 7 were lined up side by side on the railroad tracks. Their expressions seemed like they didn't realize their own death. I knew who was this skillful.

I asked Lee Gilyoung.

"Where is Yoo Joonghyuk?"

As I spoke, I felt an ominous presence from the Hoehyeong tunnel side. I knew despite the distance. Our arrogant and dignified hero practiced the Alone Under Heaven and Earth scripture.

"Yoo Joonghyuk?"

He looked at me with no change in his expression. I thought he would say something about what happened in the Theatre Dungeon… but what was this?

The cut off head of a person was still being held in his hands. Someone screamed while Yoo Joonghyuk threw the head this way.

The head rolling like a toy was covered with a cloak with '1' on it. It was the 1st Apostle.

Yoo Joonghyuk was really great. He chased this guy to the end and killed him.

I was half relieved and half anxious. I still had questions but if the apostle died like this…

At this moment, something ridiculous happened.

"It is you! You screwed up my plan! Right?"

The severed head suddenly started talking to me.

"Waaack! What?" Jung Minseob screamed and fell over.

The eyes looked up at me while he smiled smugly. It was impossible.

The skills that could be used even when the head was cut off was extremely rare even in Ways of Survival. It was possible if he used the skill Immortal Delay but even with that skill, he couldn't stay in a state with his head cut off.

Besides, there was no blood from the cut neck…

Wait. Perhaps?

The information that I received from Lee Sungkook and Jung Minseob started to run through my head.

A man who revealed himself to all prophets and claimed to be a 'true reader'. He appeared all over Seoul as soon as the scenario began and gathered people. In addition, it was possible to pass through the barriers, he didn't die when his head was cut and there was no blood…

"The Avatar ability…"

I was certain. The guy in front of me was a fake.

The severed head continued to speak.

"Wow, I am really impressed. Pretending to be Yoo Joonghyuk, beating the apostles and the dragon… What is your identity?"

I see. This guy didn't know my identity?

"What are you?"

As far as I knew, there were very few people who could use the 'Avatar' ability in Ways of Survival.

The occupation that received such an attribute was normally fixed. They were occupations engaged in creative work and frequently experienced dissociative personality disorder due to excessive stress.

I slowly looked him up and down before asking, "You, are you perhaps a writer?"

Chapter 59: Ep. 12 – First Person Protagonist's Point of View, V

Writer. It was one of the few occupations in Ways of Survival that could give the Avatar ability.

Some of his strange miracles would be explained if he was a writer.

The lips of the 1st Apostle subtly twisted.

"Writer… do you mean the creator of the Book of Revelations? You have found out. That's right, I wrote the Book of Revelations."

I didn't mean this but this bastard was suddenly talking nonsense. For me, it was a truth that wasn't possible. I looked towards Yoo Joonghyuk.

[Exclusive skill, Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint has been activated!]

[The character Yoo Joonghyuk is currently using Lie Detection Lv. 6.]

I knew it. He was a meticulous jerk. I asked once again, "You wrote the Book of Revelations?"

"Yes. At the same time, I am also the sole owner of the Book of Revelations."

A confident laugh emerged. Really? Let's challenge it once.

[The character 'Yoo Joonghyuk' has used 'Lie Detection Lv. 6'.]

[The character Yoo Joonghyuk has confirmed that the statement is true.]

…What? This guy was telling the truth? I suddenly panicked and my circuits got tangled up. It wasn't possible no matter how I thought about it.

I hid my confusion and asked again, "What exactly is the 'revelation' you are talking about?"

"Why are you asking when you already know? A great epic about the future."

[The character Yoo Joonghyuk has confirmed that the statement is true.]

…Strange. There was some truth about it?

"Now it is your turn. How did you know about the plan of me and the apostles? Are you also an apostle?"

"You wrote the Book of Revelations yourself? Then shouldn't you know?"

"It is fun to be an omniscient creator?"

He giggled like a leisurely villain while I regained my composure. No matter how I looked, he wasn't the author of Ways of Survival.

If he was really the writer of Ways of Survival, there was no way he wouldn't know that he gave me a text version.

"By the way, it is interesting. I thought the woman in Seodaemun Prison would be the last apostle but a man like you was hiding…"

"…Seodaemun prison?"

"Hmm, you don't know yet? Let's trade. Reveal your true identity. Then I will give you some information."

"Let's see? I don't think you have information that I want."

"I might've been overpowered but this isn't my real body. You were a bit lucky…"

"I know information about the future."

I deliberately interrupted him. Now was the time to sprinkle a bit of spice for Yoo Joonghyuk.

"In addition, I know much more than you."

[The character Yoo Joonghyuk has confirmed that your words are true.]

The expression of the 1st Apostle stiffened.

"You're barking nonsense. I know more than you…"

At this moment, something flashed in his eyes.

"Wait a minute, perhaps?"

The moment he realized something, I also noticed something. This guy, was it 'him'? Right now, there were five truths that I knew.

One, he had read Ways of Survival. Two, his occupation was a 'writer'. Three, he wasn't the writer who wrote Ways of Survival. Four, he wrote a 'text' that told the future. Five, his knowledge was only 'somewhat' accurate.

I read through 3,149 chapters of Ways of Survival.

As far as I knew, Ways of Survival wasn't popular and there was no illegal text version. But if he was the guy that I thought… it would be understandable if this guy had a 'text' version and knew a lot about Ways of Survival.

I opened my mouth.

"Do you like to live while copying others?"

"W-What?"

His eyes were shaken. There was no doubt. The 1st Apostle was him.

"I didn't think you would live like this. The revelation… Do you want to live like this? My teeth starts grinding together when I think about your claims of being the creator of the Book of Revelations."

"What…?"

"It is somewhat strange. The information that you have used is meager."

The guy paled.

"Isn't it time to stop acting like this? Are you still doing it despite the world becoming like this?"

"Yoo Joonghyuk!"

The guy hurriedly looked at Yoo Joonghyuk.

"Yoo Joonghyuk! Work with me!"

He was silly.

"As I said before, I know all of the revelations. Only I can take you to the end of this road in this world!"

[Exclusive skill, Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint stage 2 has been activated!]

[Due to high fatigue, you are unable to activate Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint stage 2.]

Damn, right now?

"Think carefully! You can't break through the 46th scenario alone. You have to hold hands with me to defeat Anna Croft and the Zarathustra!"

This jerk was speaking the same words I did. Yoo Joonghyuk shook his head.

"I have never heard of the revelations."

"It is like a prophecy! Can't you see my attribute? It even says that I am the 'last'!"

[The character 'Yoo Joonghyuk' has used Sage's Eye Lv. 8!]

I also activated the skill.

[The information of this person can't be read in 'Character List'.]

[This person isn't registered in 'Character List'.]

Damn, I couldn't see it. Yoo Joonghyuk verified something with Sage's Eye and looked at me. The severed head continued to speak.

"Kill him! You should know that he is dangerous. He pretended to be you and will seriously damage you in the future. If you leave him alone, he will cause a serious butterfly effect and ruin all your plans!"

I was outraged. Did this jerk want to die together with me?

"…Isn't it the same for you?"

'I am different! Yoo Joonghyuk, hold hands with me. I will give you a vow or whatever you want! I will never betray you!"

He came out strongly. Yoo Joonghyuk watched the situation and opened his mouth.

"I see. Joining hands…"

Life started to creep into Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes as he looked at me. I couldn't inside his mind so I was going crazy. Yoo Joonghyuk slowly moved his sword towards me. The 1st Apostle's momentum rose as he shouted.

"Go ahead and kill him! Kill him!"

"One is a prophet and one is a revelator…"

"Kill him!

Peok! Yoo Joonghyuk trampled on the head of the 1st Apostle.

"Kuk… what?"

"If you really know the future then let me ask you one thing."

"What?"

The blade moved to my neck. The 'One Sword' that I experienced through Yoo Joonghyuk was now heading towards me. I felt a sting and something warm flowed down my neck.

"Hey! What are you doing?"

The surprised Jung Heewon ran towards this side. I raised my hand and restrained the party. I was nervous but it wasn't good to stimulate Yoo Joonghyuk here.

Yoo Joonghyuk asked the 1st Apostle.

"I will ask you. Will I kill this guy now or not?"

"What?"

"If you have really received a revelation of the future, you will know my choice."

…This bastard had a bad habit. He was doing this again?

The face of the 1st Apostle looked agonized. Maybe I was the same on the 'Even Bridge'. Surprisingly, the answer came quickly.

"Of course you will kill him! You must do it!"

It was a face full of strong convictions. His face was arrogantly assured that Yoo Joonghyuk would act like this.

"Come on, kill him! And…!"

The sword moved. But what followed wasn't the sound of flesh being cut.

Kwajik!

The head of the 1st Apostle burst as it was stepped on.

The person wouldn't die because it was an avatar, but he would suffer considerable psychological damage.

Yoo Joonghyuk's sword was soon removed.

"He was a mouthy bastard."

I was a bit stunned. Yoo Joonghyuk chose to spare me? I felt a bit shaken. I wasn't sure…

Yoo Joonghyuk stared at me for a moment before walking away.

"Hey! Where are you going?"

This jerk, he must think he was so cool.

…Honestly, he was a bit cool.

"Just wait! Are you going to leave with Lee Jihye?"

"Since the future has changed, the plan has also changed."

"Why don't you act together with me? I can help you."

Yoo Joonghyuk turned towards me. I reflexively shrank back at his eyes.

"The debt is paid off. My last favour is not taking away your flag."

This bastard? But I couldn't retreat like this.

"In any case, you can't leave the station unless I remove you from the group. Do you want to receive the punishment?"

Yoo Joonghyuk slowly moved his hand towards the hilt of his sword. I quickly added.

"I know what your plan is. Aren't you going towards Jung-gu? It is your goal to complete the black flag by walking the King's Road. I will help you."

"I would rather take your flag right now."

"Then try it. Is your sword faster or my tongue faster?"

It was a gamble. Yoo Joonghyuk could stab my neck before the effect of the punishment appeared.

"You don't need to go towards Jung-gu. Go to the north. The territory of the Tyrant King will be yours and it will help you make your grand flag. Getting a flag and removing the enemy, isn't it killing two birds with one stone?"

"I can do it myself."

"There are 48 hours left until the end of the fourth scenario. Can you occupy 20 stations and complete the black flag in that time?"

Yoo Joonghyuk's hands hesitated. He was caught.

"Besides…don't you have a reason for going north? Surely you aren't going to throw away your family member at this time?"

"…You."

"Remain calm. I am speaking in good faith. I really will help."

Yoo Joonghyuk's angry eyes stared at me for a moment. The atmosphere was strained. The killing intent soon disappeared.

"There is no such thing as anything free in the world. What are your conditions?"

As expected, the regressor was quick to notice. I said with a smile, "It is simple. Let me know just one thing. My condition is that simple."

"What is it?"

"That guy you just stepped on, what is his attribute? One would be the 'last to get off'. What is the other one?"

After a while, Yoo Joonghyuk opened his mouth.

---

10 minutes afterwards, I called Jung Minseob and Lee Sungkook. It was a separate matter for the two of them. Before I could open my mouth, Jung Minseob asked me first.

"In the end, what was that guy?"

I hesitated for a moment before asking.

"Do you know the novel 'SSSSS-grade Infinite Regressor'?"

"Ah, I read it!"

Lee Sungkook raised his hand.

"Wasn't it the number one platinum novel on Textpia? It was really fun…"

"Ah, that's right. I had forgotten but now it rings a bell. How did it finish?"

The two of them started speaking loudly as memories popped up. As expected, these guys must be interested in web novels if they read Ways of Survival.

"There were all types of elements but… it was still fun."

In fact, I read that novel. I was reading Ways of Survival and accidently clicked on it since it was on the 'Today's Best' list. Then I was surprised to see the development and setting of the novel.

–An infinite regressor psychopath.

–Sponsorship from transcendent beings.

–Streaming system.

–A survival game with absurd missions.

In fact, these were common settings. The problem was the details of the common settings and the way they were combined. I had left a comment as soon as I read it.

–Isn't this plagiarizing Ways of Survival?

I remembered. Rather than a plagiarism controversy, I was criticized for comparing it to a bad novel.

I received terrible messages from the readers of SSSSS-grade Infinite Regressor.

–Isn't your business over there? Stop causing inconveniences ㅉㅉ ㅉㅉ

I was furious and even sent a note to the writer of Ways of Survival. Then the author said something. He was in a better mood because the number of views had increased. I teared up because I thought the author was pitiful.

Lee Sungkook asked, "But why are you talking about this novel?"

"The 1st Apostle is the author of SSSSS-grade Infinite Regressor."

"Huh? It can't be."

That author would know Ways of Survival.

Now that the world had turned into the novel, a writer who plagiarized the novel could claim copyrights on this world. In addition, he added the absurd setting of the 'revelation'.

After some explanations, Jung Minseob understood and made an absurd expression.

"It was a plagiarized novel?"

"Yes."

"Come to think of it, the novel was similar… I can't remember well because it is old… why didn't that novel pop up first in my mind? I was much more famous."

"Is it due to the attribute? Only the portion we read popped up. The 'SS' part is also confusing because there are too many novels with them."

"Is that so? In any case, the 1st Apostle is a plagiarist? Then he will have a text version…"

I nodded and said.

"Maybe he has a copy of his own plagiarized work. He copied the plot of the original so he can see the future of this world to a certain extent."

It was painful when thinking that a plagiarist was successful even in this changed world. It was time to implement justice.

"Then isn't it impossible to win against him? If he copied the original to the end…"

"It isn't to the end. He only copied the early parts. He would stop early to prevent a plagiarism controversy later on. After a bit more time, the information he knows will decrease.

"How do you know this?"

"I just know."

It was natural. In the chapters in the 100s, I was the only reader of Ways of Survival.

"Excuse me, how far did Representative-nim read in the original work…?"

"Before that, there is something you have to do. To be exact, it is something we have to do together."

Their shoulders stiffened.

"Didn't you tell me before? The prophets were hit by the Tyrant King."

"Ah… maybe there are still a few people being used by him.

"Really? Then it is better."

"Yes?"

The time remaining until the scenario ended was 48 hours. It was hard to do it alone if I wanted to hunt the Tyrant King.

"I will disturb the information of these guys."

If the Tyrant King was using the prophets, I could take advantage of it.

"Reveal part of the revelations."

"Huh? How…?"

They still didn't understand what I was talking about so I kindly explained.

"From now on, we will make a text of SSSSS-grade Infinite Regressor and spread it."

If there were several enemies, the answer was to make them fight against each other.

Chapter 60: Ep. 13 – War of Kings, I

My plan was clear.

The 1st Apostle, the plagiarist, had information about the 'third and fourth regressions' that were the beginning of Ways of Survival. As was always the case with informed people, he monopolized information and hid it from the prophets.

On the other hand, the Tyrant King was one of Seoul's Seven Kings who used the 'revelations' after knowing about the existence of the prophets.

The guy who wanted to monopolize information and the guy who tried to dig it out. It was obvious what would happen if the two of them faced each other.

Lee Sungkook asked, "…Then you are going to make a novel text?"

"That's right."

The plan itself was simple. We would make a text of the plagiarized writer's novel. Then spread it among the people of each station.

Well, it was roughly this type of feeling.

–Some of the prophets' revelations have been leaked!

The finish was laid out well.

Thanks to Han Donghoon's Internet comments manipulation, information on the prophets had already spread on the Internet. If the leaking of a txt version was known, there would be a big ripple.

A few early readers would try to get a hidden piece while the Tyrant King would naturally move to obtain them.

"But…I have forgotten most of the contents of SSSSS-grade Infinite Regressor. How will we make the text?"

"Why do we need the contents of the plagiarized novel?"

"Huh?"

"We remember the original."

"Ah…!"

There was a short cry of admiration. However, Jung Minseob's face was still dark.

"Eh… there is still a problem. The hidden pieces that we know about in Ways of Survival have been mostly used…"

"I will give you information in hidden pieces. I know a few that are present in the beginning. I will release information on items of the right level."

Above all, it had to catch the eye of the plagiarist writer and the Tyrant King.

Lee Sungkook laughed awkwardly. "This is funny. I will make a text version. I am usually just a reader."

This jerk… was he an illegal downloader?

Jung Minseob also spoke.

"But if we do this, won't we be the same as him? In the end, we are plagiarizing the original story to make a story…"

It made sense. I thought for a moment before saying.

"There is such a thing. Plagiarism is about not wanting you to know the original, a parody is more fun if you know the original while a homage wants you to know the original."

"Oh, this is interesting."

"From now on, we will be making a homage."

It was true. I hoped that many people would come to know SSSSS-grade Infinite Regressor. That way he would be quickly ruined.

We borrowed a laptop from Gong Pildu and started typing. We didn't have a lot of experience in writing novels so we had to put our heads together. Jung Minseob pulled his hair and said,

"Writing is so difficult… writers are great…"

"Just write roughly. We just need information that will attract them. Rather, an imperfect revelation might be easier to deceive the prophets. Mix the truth and lies."

I watched what Jung Minseob typed and added some information.

"Let's change the names of the people in the novel. I am a bit anxious."

Lee Hyunsung and Lee Jihye would be shocked about being characters in the story. Whether I liked it or not, someday they would find out that this world was a 'novel'. But it didn't have to be right now.

Then Jung Minseob unexpectedly said, "Well, I don't think you need to worry about that part."

"Huh?"

"In fact, I tried to test some people by saying that this was a novel. But they didn't understand it at all. It is like a NPC… No matter how serious I am, they just take it as a joke."

It was an unexpected piece of information.

Jung Minseob and the other apostles had spoken to characters several times about them being 'supporting actors'. Thinking about the reactions of the characters at the time…there was definitely something strange.

Jung Minseob continued to speak.

"This was how the 1st Apostle was able to easily find the prophets. The 'characters' were very displeased by the words 'this is a novel' or they didn't listen. Perhaps this was why the apostles used the term 'revelation'."

I suddenly felt uneasy when I heard this. I opened my mouth. "…What is the difference between the characters and us?"

"Huh? Um… we are people in reality and characters are people in novels? Isn't that the difference?"

"Then… when was this world divided into reality and a novel?"

"Hrmmm, well… When the first scenario started?"

My question wasn't resolved with Jung Minseob's answer.

Jung Minseob and Lee Sungkook were obviously outsiders of the novel like me. It was because I couldn't see their information at first.

But not long after, it was updated and I was able to look at their information in Character List.

Then were they now 'real people' or were they 'characters?' If everyone became a character over time…

I looked at Yoo Sangah and Lee Gilyoung for a moment.

[The exclusive skill, Character List is activated.]

[This person isn't registered in 'Character List'.]

[Currently collecting information about the corresponding figure.]

Fortunately, I still couldn't see the information for both of them.

Yoo Sangah suddenly looked back at me and smiled. Lee Gilyoung also looked at me.

"What is it hyung?"

"It is nothing."

I didn't know why but I felt strangely relieved.

Soon after, we approximately completed the novel.

The quality was so bad that if it was serialized in Textpia, it would've bombed. But that didn't matter right ow.

"Let's first sprinkle the information that the Book of Revelations has been leaked."

Lee Sungkook asked.

"Is there enough time to spread the information?"

"Donghun will take care of it. If we take advantage of the Hermit Invalid, it can be spread in a short amount of time."

"Oh, Donghu… I see. But what if not all stations are capable of the Internet?"

"Then we will send someone."

I looked behind me. Kang Ilhun nodded as if he had been waiting.

Lee Sungkook agreed. "Ah, that's right. If it is Ilhun-ssi… I had forgotten."

"Kang Ilhun-ssi, are you ready?"

Kang Ilhun, the deputy of Dongdaemun. It was worth intentionally saving this guy.

Kang Ilhun nervously opened his mouth. "Leave it to me. I am confident that I can catch them. I just need to spread rumours?"

[The character 'Kang Ilhun' will follow your will.]

[Your understanding of this person has increased.]

Kang Ilhun. It was finally time to use the attribute of Rumours Expert. The time remaining until the scenario ended was 44 hours.

The next day, the game would begin.

–Donghun, thank you.

–I am just paying you back so don't worry.

[The character 'Han Donghoon' trusts you a little bit.]

Since last time, 'Hermit King of Shadows' Han Donghoon had moderately opened up his heart to me. The fact that I saved him from the prophets seemed to have played a bigger role than expected.

–I feel a strange sense of familiarity with you.

–Familiarity?

–Since a long time ago… are you also a hermit?

–Um, no I wasn't. Although I was a bit timid.

–I see. I feel an unknown wall with hyung. I can't explain it well but I like the feeling.

–Isn't it usually bad to feel a wall?

–I only believe in people with walls. In order to understand someone, I think I should face that wall first.

A person who was barely 17 years old was speaking like a wise man.

In any case, the wall. I was sure that he was right. Some walls couldn't be crossed no matter how desperate the person.

–In any case, the rumour has spread. But how will you sow the revelations? On the Internet again?

–No, the wrong people will read it if I place it on the Internet. I will sell it.

–Sell it? How?

I started to explain to Han Donghoon.

There were 40 hours remaining until the end of the scenario.

I finally summoned the Chungmuro group members.

"This journey won't be easy. If we can't take Changsin Station in the next 40 hours, our group will be wiped out. However, our current forces aren't enough."

"Well, since when has it been easy? Who is the opponent?"

I replied to Jung Heewon's question. "He is called the Tyrant King. He is one of the top seven kings of Seoul and the king with the largest territory."

Lee Hyunsung asked this time. "What type of person is he?"

"He is someone who started from Dobong-gu and built his own kingdom. He says that any beautiful or handsome man and woman will become concubines, while any ugly people will be killed or become slaves."

Jung Heewon frowned. "If Dokja-ssi is caught, you will become a slave."

"…Well, I think it will be dangerous for Heewon-ssi."

"Being a concubine is difficult… Why don't we just go ahead and kill him?"

"It will be hard because his sponsor is quite strong. Now there are two paths. Take his flag or take over his headquarters, Dobong Station."

Neither was easy, causing everyone to feel tense. I decided to get to the point.

"We will go to Gwanghwamun."

"Huh? Didn't you say not to fight them?"

"They will come to us."

"Why?"

"I leaked a bit of information. We have to consider the time he moves so we will leave soon. Everyone should be prepared… eh?"

"…What is it?"

I subtly smiled at Yoo Sangah's question.

"Nothing. It is just happening faster than I expected."

Han Donghoon's message appeared on my smartphone.

–I was able to put it on the exchange. But is it okay?

–Yes, it's fine. Well done.

Then system messages entered my ears one after another.

[The items on the exchange have been sold.]

[The items on the exchange have been sold.]

At that moment, a trembling voice was heard from the air.

[…Are you a scammer?]

'What is the reaction among the constellations?'

[They are really excited. The filtering limit has started to unravel… there are those who gave it as gifts to their incarnations. But if you do this, you will receive attention again. Will you be okay? And if you release all the information you know, won't it go against you?]

'It isn't disadvantageous'.

I still had information remaining. The information I released wasn't information I needed. Rather, it was information that would be damaging to someone.

'Give me the coins'.

[Here.]

[16 volumes of SSSSS-grade Infinite Regressors have been sold on the exchange.]

[You have earned 16,000 coins.]

Of course, I didn't release the information for free.

Anyone who needed the information would have a sponsor, so it was better to sell it on the 'exchange' than to release it for free on the Internet.

If I released the Book of Revelations for free, it would be more suspicious. But what if I sold it?

Of course they would buy it. It was because they would mistakenly think the information had 'value'. The quality of the information was sometimes determined by value rather than content.

By the way, it was 16,000 coins. This was a profit.

I spoke to the people. "I'm sorry but I will sleep for a while."

"…Aren't you taking it too easy?"

"I also need to sleep."

I lay down. Yoo Sangah covered me with a thin blanket. Jung Heewon still found it absurd.

Then I fell asleep. After a while, a system message was heard in my blurred consciousness.

[Exclusive skill, Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint stage 3 has been activated!]

So far, I figured out that Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint was divided into three stages.

Stage 1 allowed me to read the simple actions or emotions of characters.

Stage 2 allowed me to see deep inside the character.

Stage 3 allowed me to see the surrounding scenery where the characters were located or directly immerse myself in the character.

So far, I had entered stage 3 twice. Once was in my dream and the second time was when I died. In my dream, I saw Yoo Joonghyuk leaving Gumho Station. When I was dead, I witnessed the scenery of Chungmuro.

These two incidents had similarities. My consciousness was muddled and unstable. But this wasn't the only condition to trigger stage 3.

There was one important fact. It was…

「 'Representative-nim, are you watching? Damn… is this right?'

Kang Ilhun muttered to himself as he gazed into the air.

'I have spread it to the King of Tyrants. Those guys will move soon. By the way, you are listening to me right?' 」

The character and I needed to be thinking about each other at the same time.

After a while, my point of view shifted to Kang Ilhun.

「The man smiled, revealing his white teeth. A man wearing a magnificent crown and a coat of gold slowly rose from the throne, women surrounding him.

"A new revelation?"

"It is certain. I bought the information using coins."

"Who released the information?"

"It is probably one of the prophets."

"Is it reliable?"

"I checked some of the hidden pieces in the revelations and they were all true."

The man laughed, revealing his teeth.

"Let's go to Gwanghwamun. Before the others get there first." 」

Good. The Tyrant King was finally moving. Now the problem was on the other side.

I thought about Jung Minseob.

「 'Representative-nim! I have arrived'. 」

The timing was good.

Jung Minseob was at Sejong University and heading to Gwanghwamun in advance. He then looked at the surrounding scenery.

「 I am certain since he is wearing the same hood like a chunni. It is him'. 」

People were in the lower part of the building. As I thought, the plagiarist was the fastest. Gwanghwamun contained one of the hidden pieces most useful for the third regression. The plagiarist wouldn't be able to run away from this place.

「 The problem is that more people are coming. Yeongdeungpo, Yongsan, Seongdong-gu, the kings on those sides are moving… isn't this becoming too big?' 」

No, it was what I was hoping for. The people who were hiding started to emerge one by one. It was better since I didn't need to visit each one individually.

Finally, the fourth scenario was ending. The real War of Kings would begin.

Chapter 61: Ep. 13 – War of Kings, II

My consciousness rose silently and my senses slowly returned to reality.

[Exclusive skill, Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint stage 3 has ended.]

The third stage was more tiring than I thought and I couldn't maintain it for long.

In addition, I found out one more thing that I regretted.

It was that using Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint stage 3 wouldn't always result in gaining a skill. It seemed to be a reward that could be obtained by entering the 1st person protagonist's point of view. Unfortunately, I didn't know the entry requirements.

It would be great if I could get Yoo Joonghyuk's skills every time I fell asleep and used 1st person protagonist's point of view.

I opened my eyes and saw Jung Heewon watching me.

"You were talking in your sleep again."

Talking? No way.

"What did I say?"

"It sounded like… Mother."

"…Mother?"

Why was I saying that to myself? It was hard to know if this was the truth or not.

Jung Heewon just looked at me with a mysterious smile.

I gave a cursory reply.

"Well, I'm not really worried about my mother. Rather, I have a request for Jung Heewon-ssi."

"What is it?"

"Heewon-ssi, please don't participate in the Gwanghwamun battle this time."

"…Why?"

"There is something else you need to do. I can only entrust Heewon-ssi with it."

Jung Heewon licked her lips like she couldn't believe me.

"I will try. What is it?"

The first thing I did after conversing with Jung Heewon was to decide who would stay in Chungmuro and who would go to Gwanghwamun.

"Jung Heewon-ssi has a mission and I will decide the rest of the people remaining in Chungmuro."

The other members gulped. They looked like vassals about to be chosen by the king.

"First of all, Gong Pildu and Lee Hyunsung will stay behind."

"Bah, I am just your slave."

Gong Pildu scoffed like he already expected it. The problem was Lee Hyunsung. The slightly pale face was troubled, as if he had somehow missed out on a promotion.

"Hyunsung-ssi must remain. I need someone to protect this place with Gong Pildu-ssi. Hyunsung-ssi can protect Chungmuro and lead the people as well as Yoo Sangah-ssi."

"…Yes. I understand."

His expression was somewhat sad but he had no choice. There was a reason for leaving the Steel Sword behind.

"Hyunsung-sso already has great skills. The problem is that the skill levels are too low. While we are gone, Hyunsung-ssi should increase the proficiency of Great Mountain Smash. Hyunsun-ssi's help will be needed after the end of this scenario."

Lee Hyunsung's face brightened slightly.

"Yep! Please leave it to me."

Soldiers were the most efficient when following commands and when they had a routine.

Thus, we embarked on the journey to Gwanghwamun. Apart from Lee Jihye and Yoo Joonghyuk who were impossible to control, the core members were Yoo Sangah, Lee Gilyoung and Lee Sungkook.

The Chungmuro group members waved as they watched us leave.

"Deputy-nim! Come back safely!"

"You must be safe!"

For a few days now, Yoo Sangah's popularity had pierced the sky. Yoo Sangah only led the people for a short amount of time but everyone was concerned about her. However, Yoo Sangah looked uneasy.

"Dokja-ssi, will I be a help to you?"

Her self-deprecation had returned. I had to say it this time, even if she would be hurt.

"Yoo Sangah-ssi. You will be disruptive if you keep acting like this."

"Yes…"

"Yoo Sangah-ssi is good enough. Would I take someone with me for no reason?"

"I believe in Dokja-ssi. But I can't be as helpful to you as Heewon-ssi or Hyunsung-ssi…"

"The two of them can't do what Yoo Sangah-ssi can do. Yoo Sangah-ssi is necessary for this plan."

Yoo Sangah's expression slightly relaxed as it was emphasized once again. Yoo Sangah was an exceptionally talented person. She just needed confidence.

"Didn't you study Korean history before?"

"Ah, yes."

Yoo Sangah's expression became brighter once mentions of the past emerged. But it was only for a moment as she quickly became grouchy again.

"…It is useless now."

"It isn't useless. This is why I brought Yoo Sangah-ssi along."

Originally, I hadn't intended to give this role to Yoo Sangah. There was a suitable person if I went down to Gwangjin-gu. However, I didn't have time to look for him so Yoo Sangah would have to be enough.

The Yoo Sangah that I knew was smart enough to memorize the entire history of South Korea just to get a first grade degree in Korean history.

"Do you remember the statue of Samyeongdang from last time?"

"Yes."

"There will be many similar things on the way to Gwanghwamun. There is the National Museum and several statues.

Yoo Sangah shouted once she realized what I was saying.

"Ah! I see. That reminds me, the power of the constellations can remain in relics or remnants of themselves."

"Yes, Yoo Sangah-ssi's mission is to find such keepsakes or relics."

"I understand! I will use my head."

"There are some famous people but the more unknown they are, the better."

Despite being on the same level, a constellation's strength varied according to their popularity.

It could be seen in the difference between Samyeongdang and Duke of Loyalty and Warfare.

The items left behind by Samyeongdang were B-grade, while the sword left by the Duke of Loyalty and Warfare had the quality to be S-grade.

"We need to gather as much items on the way to Gwanghwamun as possible. Our side has a relatively small number of people."

Perhaps the Tyrant King had come with hundreds of incarnations. The plagiarist would have his own forces. I also needed to be careful of the kings who came from Yeongdeungpo, Yongsan and Seongdong-gu.

The latter part of the fourth scenario was just like a proxy war for the constellations. At the end of this scenario, an event greatly coveted by the constellations was hiding.

Unlike before, the incarnations would have a high synchronization with their constellations and the risks would increase accordingly. Since many constellations were determined by the history of their lives, Yoo Sangah who knew history would be useful in many ways in this scenario.

Yoo Sangah suddenly clapped.

"Ah, that reminds me of a place."

"Huh?"

"I'm not sure if I'm remembering correctly but… there will probably be Gwangsengmyo Shrine near here."

"Gwangsengmyo?"

"Yes, it is on the way and the power of a great person might be there. He isn't South Korean but…"

Not South Korean? I was a reader of Ways of Survival and I had never heard of Gwangsengmyo.

In any case, we decided to move according to Yoo Sangah. We walked for a while.

The first one who screamed was Lee Sungkook. "Eh, is that it?"

There really was an old shrine nearby. The Gwangsengmyo shrine. There was a place like this in the middle of the city?

I read the description and was even more surprised. Huh, it was this person? It was an unexpected figure.

It was a shrine for one of the best Chinese gods of war.

Yoo Sangah asked with a tense expression.

"Now what…?"

I looked around. An idol couldn't be seen.

"Let's pray."

This was different from Samyeongdang. I wouldn't always be able to get a good reward for destroying the idol.

We collected water from the shrine and prayed quietly. Some time passed. Then a system message was heard.

[This shrine has been neglected for a long time.]

[A constellation who loves gaundaos is pleased.]

[A constellation who loves gundaos has revealed his modifier.]

[The constellation 'Lord of the Beautiful Beard, Marquis Zhuangmou' has blessed you.]

Lord of the Beautiful Beard, Marquis Zhuangmou. He was Chinese but he was a great person almost everyone in South Korea knew.

It was because this constellation was Guan Yoo[1] from Romance of the Three Kingdoms.

[The constellation's blessing increases your strength and physique by 5 for the next 24 hours.]

Lee Sungkook turned rosy like a flower.

"Crazy… Representative-nim, isn't this a complete jackpot?"

"It is a decent start."

I didn't know why there was a shrine for Guan Yoo in Seoul but it shouldn't be strange when there was a shrine for the Duke of Loyalty and Warfare in Japan. Guan Yoo was world famous, just like the Duke of Loyalty and Warfare.

"I guess it is hard to get an item from here."

"It would've been nice to get something like a guandao…"

He was a great person of China. Even if there was an idol, it didn't mean a good item would appear in South Korea. It was more likely that an incarnation of China had obtained it…

He couldn't be compared to the Great Sage, Heaven's Equal or Uriel, but he wouldn't lose when it came to the Chinese constellations.

Lee Gilyoung grabbed my collar.

"Hyung."

The cockroach's antennae was moving wildly. I had a bad hunch and saw a group walking in the distance. There were approximately 50 people.

I used Calm Observation and saw that their average physical body stats were around level 40. It was lacking compared to the apostles, but it was still enough to call them elites.

A warlord with 50 elites.

Lee Sungkook muttered, "That armour, somewhere…"

The historical clothing reminded me of a museum gallery. I looked at the members and they were all handsome men.

Lee Sungkook muttered, "Isn't that Hwang Sungmin in the first row? He seems to be an entertainer?"

Anyone who saw it would think it was a historical drama filming but bloodthirst was coming from them. A man came forward and pointed his spear towards me.

"Who is blocking the way of the king?"

"Who are you?"

I guessed but I still asked. I thought I would meet this person later but the timing was faster than expected.

A woman's voice was heard from among the group of men.

"That brown flag… are you also a king?"

"…So what?"

"I didn't think there would be a king in Jung-gu. It is amazing."

Her voice was like petals blowing in the spring breeze. It was a stage voice.

I replied, "Kings are now common in this world."

"A king might be common but not just anyone can become king. Everyone, open the path!"

The retainers moved in unison and a woman dressed in a royal costume appeared in the centre of the ranks. Her hair was raised in an elegant manner. She was a stunning beauty that could easily be the heroine of a historical drama.

"A-Are you Min Jiwon?"

Lee Sungkook stuttered. The woman laughed.

"You recognize me?"

"I am a fan!"

Lee Sungkook stepped forward in a spellbound manner. Fool. The Hypnotist was being bewitched first?

[The exclusive skill 'Destroy Evil Lv. 2' is activated.]

I used it the moment I met Lee Sungkook's eyes.

"I-I-I'm sorry."

The woman's eyes narrowed.

By the way, it was interesting. Lee Sungkook recognized the name Min Jiwon like she was a person who actually existed.

…One of the Seven Kings of Seoul, the King of Beauty was a real person?

I felt a bit strange. It was because the real name of the King of Beauty in Ways of Survival was 'Min Jiwon'.

Was it just a coincidence? I should check it out.

[The exclusive skill, Character List is activated.]

Fortunately, the skill was activated safely.

[Character Summary]

Name: Min Jiwon

Age: 26 years old

Sponsor: Slumbering Lady of Fine Brocade

Exclusive Attributes: Actor (Rare), King of Beauty (Hero)

Exclusive skills: Weapons Training Lv. 5, Military Command Lv. 2, Love Affair Demon Lv. 4, Skin Correction Lv. 1, A Thousand Faces Lv. 3, Acting Lv. 2…

Stigma: Heavenly Charm Lv. 4, Unique Heroine Lv. 3

Overall Stats: Physique Lv. 18, Strength Lv. 18, Agility Lv. 21, Magic Power Lv. 23.

> Overall Evaluation: An incarnation with an excellent sponsor behind her. Her wonderful beauty will shine even more with the backing of her sponsor. Her army will only be loyal to her unless her beauty fades.

As expected, she was the King of Beauty in the original Ways of Survival.

Looking at Character List, she didn't seem to be a real person… then how did Lee Sungkook know her?

Did it have something to do with Lee Sungkook's entry in the Character List?

I bowed my head once.

"Min Jiwon-ssi, it is an honour to meet you."

"…Are you also my fan?"

Fan…

She had an outstanding beauty but it wasn't my style. Looking objectively, Yoo Sangah was just as beautiful as her. Lee Sungkook was spellbound due to the unique skill this woman possessed.

I deliberately spoke like I was in a historical drama.

"I'm not a fan. But do you know him? Seongdong-gu's king."

Min Jiwon's expression hardened.

"You…?"

Slumbering Lady of Fine Brocade.

There was only one constellation with such distinctive features in all of Ways of Survival.

"It looks like you have a very high degree of synchronization with your sponsor. Please tell this to your sponsor. It is an honour to meet the last queen of Silla."

Slumbering Lady of Fine Brocade. This was the title for the last queen of Silla, Queen Jinseong[2].

[The sponsor behind 'Min Jiwon' is greatly shaken.]

"Don't panic. Didn't you come to realize Silla's wish?"

It sometimes happened like this. The coordination between sponsor and incarnation was overturned. The sponsor would force their unfulfilled wish onto their incarnation.

It was a mistake often made by the senior constellations. There was a possibility of being destroyed by the posthumous storm.

Min Jiwon narrowed her eyes.

"You…"

Now according to the development of Ways of Survival, the three areas of Seongdong-gu, Yongsan-gu and Yeongdeungpo-gu were fighting fiercely.

Just like the old days on the Korean peninsula. Then a message popped up.

[A bounty scenario has occurred!]

Huh? Bounty?

[Bounty Scenario – Unification of the Three Kingdoms]

Category: Bounty

Difficulty: ???

Clear Conditions: The great people of Silla want the incarnation of Silla, 'Min Jiwon' to become king of the three regions. Help incarnation 'Min Jiwon' and kill the kings who have the backgrounds of Later Baekje and

> Taebong. If this scenario succeeds, you will gain the favour of the constellation, Slumbering Lady of Fine Brocade.
>
> Time Limit: 38 hours
>
> Compensation: 2,000 coins.
>
> Failure: —

I stared at the scenario window blankly while Min Jiwon sent me a coquettish smile.

"My sponsor wants to see your sincerity. Won't you accept? I won't speak much longer. Become my subordinate."

She spoke in such a domineering tone despite only offering 2,000 coins. I couldn't help smiling. This sponsor was completely seeing me as a poor person.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' dislikes the sponsor of 'Min Jiwon'.]

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' is laughing at the constellation.]

[2,000 coins have been sponsored.]

[5 volumes of Revelation – SSSSS-grade Infinite Regressor have been sold on the exchange.]

[You have obtained 5,000 coins as compensation.]

I was curious about what this woman would look like if she heard the messages that I was hearing right now.

What did she want me to do for 2,000 coins?

[1] **Guan Yu** – a military general during the late Eastern Han dynasty of China. Wiki
[2] **Jinseong of Silla** – the 51st ruler of the Korean kingdom of Silla. Her reign saw the end of Unified Silla and the beginning of the Later Three Kingdoms period. Wiki.

Chapter 62: Ep. 13 – War of Kings, III

[The constellation 'Slumbering Lady of Fine Brocade' is waiting for your response.]

I shrugged towards the confident Min Jiwon and replied, "I don't want to."

Min Jiwon's eyes shook violently. Some of the men opened their mouths and even the actor Min Jiwon couldn't control her face. She spoke in a dumbfounded voice.

"…Huh?" Rather than accepting the given reality, she chose to doubt her hearing. "I think I heard wrong… can you tell me again?"

"I don't want to be your underling."

It was laughable to become her subordinate for only 2,000 coins. I spoke to my party members waiting behind me. "Let's go. We have to hurry."

We turned around without hesitation and Min Jiwon shouted in an urgent voice.

"Wait a minute! I can give more coins if it is lacking. I can talk to my sponsor—"

"There is no need."

"I said to wait!" She ran urgently and blocked my way. It was a rather quick movement compared to her agility level. "Don't you know the value of 2,000 coins?"

Didn't she know? I could easily get a few bursts of 2,000 coins.

Min Jiwon spoke with narrowed eyes. "Can you afford to pretend like this?"

"…Pretending?"

"The war between the three kingdoms will soon begin. I don't know who your sponsor is but the small and medium groups in the area will be cleaned up. Honestly, it isn't enough that you didn't accept the 2,000 coins. But is it possible that you haven't figured it out yet? I am the king of Silla. The king who will soon unify the three kingdoms!"

She seemed to lose sight of reality as she became immersed in her acting. Well, Min Jiwon was originally like this.

She was an excellent actress and due to her deep synchronization with 'Queen Jinseong', she would live thinking that she really was the last queen of Silla.

This was why method acting was scary.

"It seems you are mistaken about something. This isn't the age of the Later Three Kingdoms[1]."

"You are the one who is mistaken about the era. The Republic of South Korea is over. Are you still waiting for rescue?" She suddenly started speaking bullshit. "A new era has opened. The beginning of this era will start with me, Min Jiwon."

I was mistaken. This type of nonsense sounded plausible when placed in this context. I was worried about how to separate from this woman when Yoo

Sangah handled it for me.

"Q-Queen-nim?"

"What?"

"As far as I know… Silla is the weakest country in the Later Three Kingdoms… won't it be hard based on the history? The one who unified the Three Kingdoms…"

Min Jiwon paled from the surprise attack.

"W-What do you know?"

"I… have a 1st grade degree in Korean history."

"1-1st grade Korean history…" The embarrassed Min Jiwon stuttered. "What is so great about 1st grade Korean history?"

"Let's go Yoo Sangah-ssi. She doesn't know history very well."

Min Jiwon's face became redder at my words.

"Just wait! My proposal isn't over yet. How about 3,000 coins?"

I turned around without saying anything.

"3,500 coins! I'll give you 3,500!"

It was only increased by 500. Now I knew the scale of the queen's capital. As expected, the constellations had different levels of wealth according to their popularity.

I ignored her and kept walking.

"3,600, no 3,700…!"

My footsteps stopped. I looked back and saw Min Jiwon making a 'that's right' expression.

I was also a bad guy. I could just walk away but I wanted to smash it. I opened my mouth and spoke in a blunt voice. "Rather, I want to make you an offer."

"What do you mean?"

"10,000, how about it?"

"…10,000?"

"Oh, is it too low? You are a king… then I will make it 20,000."

Min Jiwon's expression hardened. She glared at me.

"Are you joking with me right now? 20,000 coins? I don't think you are worth that much…"

"No, I mean that I will buy you for 20,000 coins."

"Huh?"

"To be exact, you and all your troops."

Her mouth dropped open in a daze before she barely regained her senses.

"Y-You don't have that many coins."

"I wonder what you will say when I show you this."

I pressed my index finger and thumb together. Then at the end of my index finger, the part of my coins showed up.

[20,000 coins.]

Min Jiwon's barely maintained poker face finally collapsed.

"T-This is ridiculous!"

"Do you believe me now?"

It didn't take long for distrust to turn to astonishment, astonishment to turn into greed.

It was natural. 20,000 coins was a truly huge amount. It was an amount that could affect the dominance of the three forces in the Later Three Kingdoms.

Unfortunately, greed couldn't break her pride.

"Are you trying to buy me with money?"

"Why? Is it impossible? You are the one who made the proposal first."

The leader of her subordinates came forward.

"You dare!"

He had a slender body and was very handsome. He didn't seem to have much muscles but they were hidden. Yoo Sangah said, "Dokja-ssi, this man…"

I realized it the moment Yoo Sangah spoke. Yes, Silla had this constellation.

Silla wasn't at an absolute disadvantage in the war between the three kingdoms. Looking at the era, there were quite a few competent people.

For example, Kim Yushin or… the problem was that there was no Kim Yushin in the current Silla period.

"Gwanchang is a good constellation. But he is rash. What if my constellation was Gyebaek? I don't think you want to reproduce the battle of Huangshanbeol[2]."

The confused man's eyes widened.

"You… are you from Baekje?"

[The constellation 'Hwarang[3] Knows No Retreat' is angry at your comments.]

This person truly was his sponsor.

Hwarang Knows No Retreat, Gwanchang. His stigma wasn't that great but his loyalty to the fallen kingdom was wonderful.

"I'm not from Baekje. I'm an ordinary South Korean person."

"This guy!"

"I respect your patriotism but you should be more prudent. I don't have only 20,000 coins."

I moved my fingers one more time and the number of coins started to rise. The man's face started turning pale.

Wealth was an object of desire for the poor. However, overwhelming wealth caused reverence and fear. Especially for those who were familiar with the power of 'coins'.

Min Jiwon, who had been frozen for a while, belatedly opened her mouth. "You… who are you?"

She asked me too soon. I naturally had no intention of answering.

"Min Jiwon-ssi, you can't solve everything in the world with money. I thought you would know this since you are an actor. I'm disappointed."

I finally turned around and started leaving. The party members followed me as I heard Min Jiwon's voice.

"W-Wait!"

However, she couldn't follow me anymore. Once we got a certain distance away from the Silla group, Yoo Sangah spoke in a slightly grouchy voice.

"Dokja-ssi, can I ask you something?"

"Yes."

"Is she a famous person?"

I hesitated for a moment at the unexpected question.

"Huh? Um…maybe?"

"I see. Dokja-ssi and Sungkook-ssi recognizes her… I used to watch a lot of historical dramas, why don't I remember her at all?"

This was why she was grumpy?

Lee Gilyoung interrupted. "Noona, I also don't know her."

"Ah, haha. I'm glad."

It wasn't a strange story. It was natural for Yoo Sangah and Lee Gilyoung not to know 'Min Jiwon' if she only appeared in a novel.

The problem was Lee Sungkook.

"Lee Sungkook-ssi."

"Ah, yes."

Lee Sungkook responded from the rear of the group. Min Jiwon's beauty seemed quite impressive.

"I heard that you are a fan of Min Jiwon…?"

"Huh? Haha. That's correct. Don't you know? She is a famous actress…eh?"

Lee Sungkook's expression became strange.

"Uh… Min Jiwon…ssi? Eh? Why do I know Min Jiwon? No, did I know her from the beginning…?"

I quietly activated Character List.

[The exclusive skill, Character List is activated.]

[Character Summary]

Name: Lee Sungkook

Age: 25 years old.

Sponsor: Manager of the Old Ticker

Exclusive Attributes: Hypnotist (Rare)

Exclusive Skills: Hypnosis Lv. 3, Bluff Lv. 4, Weapons Training Lv. 3, Detect Attributes Lv. 2…

Stigma: Comfortable Sleep Lv. 1

Overall Stats: Physique Lv. 13, Strength Lv. 13, Agility Lv. 17, Magic Power Lv. 18.

Overall Evaluation: The current comprehensive evaluation is currently in progress.

It was the second time I saw Lee Sungkook's information. Nothing had greatly changed, except for one thing. Lee Sungkook's '9th to Get Off' attribute had disappeared.

"Lee Sungkook-ssi?"

"Uhh… yes?"

"No, it is nothing."

I stopped speaking in order to prevent confusion. In the world of Ways of Survival, an attribute only disappeared when the qualifications for that attribute weren't met anymore.

All those who 'got off' knew the 'future' of this world. However, the future that Lee Sungkook knew was only near the prologue. The evolution of the current scenario surpassed the information he knew.

Then a hypothesis emerged. Maybe all those who 'got off' would become simple characters the moment they caught up with the 'future' they knew?

It was still a leap, but it was a possible hypothesis. If this was the case, it was understandable that Lee Sungkook and Jung Minseob's information started to be seen.

If it was like this…

Maybe one day I would also…?

[The character 'Min Jiwon' shows a weak liking towards you.]

…All my thoughts collapsed at this absurd message. I reflexively looked back. Min Jiwon was still standing still and looking this way. I couldn't see her face but her gestures looked angry.

Then this message… no, wait a minute. Why did I forget that episode?

It suddenly came to mind. On the 11th regression, she had slapped Yoo Joonghyuk as soon as he met her. Then Min Jiwon supported him throughout that regression…

I suddenly had an ominous feeling. Perhaps… it couldn't be?

At least I wasn't hit on the cheek.

* * *

An hour later, we moved through the forest of buildings near Gwanghwamun as quickly as possible. I didn't see any humans but it was clear that the kings who bought my text were hiding near here.

–Pay attention to when they start to move. We will also move in time with them.

I said to my party members while moving cautiously.

In any case, I knew the kings' goals.

「The moment he reached the entrance of the National Palace Museum, his heart started pounding. Most of the artifacts sleeping here were garbage. Only one of them was real.

The Four Yin Demonic Beheading Sword.

The strongest SSSSS-grade item was hidden here in Gwanghwamun! 」

I wrote it but my hands and feet curled up just reading the words.

It was true that the Four Yin Demonic Beheading Sword was at the National Palace Museum.

Of course, the rating of the item wasn't SSSSS. In the first place, there was no such rating.

The Four Yin Demonic Beheading Sword boasted a great performance and in fact, Yoo Joonghyuk of the third regression also favoured this sword at the beginning.

–Hyung, if there is such an item, shouldn't we get it first?

–There is no need.

Four Yin Demonic Beheading Sword was a good sword but it wasn't a necessary item right now.

However, the plagiarist and other kings would think differently. They could get the best combat power at the beginning with the Four Yin Demonic Beheading Sword. They would surely be looking for the Four Yin Demonic Beheading Sword.

My plan was simple. Take the other artifacts while they were aiming for the sword.

The problem was when would those guys move? There was no need to worry about it in advance.

In this damn world, those guys always appeared when the scenario was stagnant.

[Huhu, this is really surprising. All the key people are gathered.]

It was as I expected. There were sparks and an intermediate dokkaebi appeared out of thin air.

[Shouldn't good children be awarded a prize?]

There was the sound of something starting to rise from the centre of Gwanghwamun.

It was a single throne covered with a golden light.

There were gasps everywhere in Gwanghwamun. There wasn't an explanation yet but all the kings would've realized it at this moment.

Only a single king could take that throne.

[The main scenario has been updated!]

[Main scenario # 4 – The King's Qualifications has begun.]

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[1] **The Later Three Kingdoms of Korea** consisted of Silla, "Later Baekje" and "Later Goguryeo". This period arose out of national unrest during the reign of Queen Jinseong of Silla. Wiki.
[2] **Battle of Hwangsanbeol** took place between the forces of Silla and Baekje in Hwangsanbeol. The Baekje forces were lead by Gyebaek. Kim Yu-Shin's Silla forces won. Wiki.
[3] **Hwarang** were the elite youth corps of Silla.

Chapter 63: Ep. 13 – War of Kings, IV

Lee Sungkook was surprised by the system message and muttered.

"Another new scenario…"

It certainly wasn't good timing. Another scenario appeared before we could complete the clear conditions of the existing scenario.

I opened up the new scenario as soon as it arrived.

[Main Scenario # 4 – The King's Qualifications]

Category: Main

Difficulty: A

Clear Conditions: Occupy the 'Absolute Throne' located at Gwanghwamun.

Time Limit: 8 hours.

Compensation: 10,000 coins

Failure: —

* This scenario can only be challenged by those who have completed the hidden scenario 'King's Road'.

* The absolute king has absolute commands over all the other kings.

* There are additional special clear conditions for this scenario.

The situation wasn't good. Our group hadn't been able to take the target of the Struggle for Flags yet.

The burden had doubled. I had to complete the scenario related to the throne while taking down the Tyrant King and occupying Changsin Station.

The intermediate dokkaebi said.

[Look at your confused faces. Please don't worry too much. This scenario will proceed slowly.]

Gwanghwamun was still despite everyone being in a state of agitation. It was natural. The surviving kings knew how important it was to listen to the dokkaebi.

[As you have guessed, the fourth main scenario is to be the only king to sit on the throne. Of course, not every king can sit on that throne. Only a person who has proved their qualifications can sit there.]

The intermediate dokkaebi said with a bad laugh.

[Then I will reveal the first qualification.]

[King's Qualification]

1. 「The owner of the throne should be braver than anyone else.」

–The Absolute Throne never wants a 'weak king'. To challenge the throne, you must own at least a black flag.

(Additional qualifications will be released after a while.)

A black flag. It was disgusting from the very beginning.

[Huhu, the motive was given. Now make a fun story!]

The intermediate dokkaebi disappeared and Yoo Sangah made an anxious expression.

"If it is a black flag… you need to occupy 20 stations?"

"That's right."

Our group had a brown flag. It was a flag that could be obtained after occupying 10 stations.

"What do we do? In order to create a black flag, we need 10 more stations. If there are vacant stations nearby…"

"This is a condition that appeared because there are no empty stations."

"Huh?"

As far as I knew, no king had achieved the black flag at this point.

"Did you forget? There isn't only one method to change the colour of a flag.

The achievement value of the flag went up when taking over a station. However, there was a way to get achievement values much faster.

"Ah…!"

It was to take the flag of another representative. Right now, there were a bunch of kings with flags in Gwanghwamun.

I calmed down the party members.

"Don't worry. This wasn't unexpected. We will proceed as planned."

As planned. I said this but it wouldn't be easy.

There were clouds of war hanging over Gwanghwamun. It was a breathless tension just before the storm blew. The sound of weapons being pulled out and the organization of battle lines could be heard.

People would soon start moving.

Those competing for a promotion would now kill each other with real swords. Those who wanted a wider territory would take each other's flags to occupy more stations.

Kill each other and get better items. It was in order to survive.

Lee Sungkook watched the buildings around them and muttered in a surreal tone. "It is scary. Is this really South Korea?"

"It is South Korea. It is still South Korea."

"Representative-nim, aren't you scared?"

"I'm afraid."

It wasn't a lie. I was obviously scared. To be honest, I often felt that way. Even if I read Ways of Survival, I was still a regular office worker. I didn't express it but I often wondered if I could survive.

Of course, my worries didn't last long. It was because it was useless to think about it. It was the same in any world.

Kim Dokja who worked at Mino Soft was now Kim Dokja who lived in the world of Ways of Survival. Death would come whether I wanted it to or not.

The most important thing was…

"At least I feel like I am living right now."

[The exclusive skill, 'Fourth Wall' is activated!]

I suddenly turned around and saw Lee Sungkook looking at me with reverent eyes.

"When I look at Representative-nim…"

"Attack!"

Someone's shout was heard before Lee Sungkook's words were over. 300 metres away, there was a king who started marching north.

He was a king with a brown flag like me. I couldn't see his face because he was too far away but he was probably the king of a small district.

At almost the same time, the warlords hiding in Gwanghwamun started to appear. They were each armed with excellent self-defense equipment.

The most prominent one was a man wearing a kilt in splendid colours. I could tell who he was without looking.

Our target, the Tyrant King and the rule of Dobong-gu and Seongbuk-gu.

The vibe he gave off was new. The Tyrant King who had the largest forces among Seoul's Seven Kings. Now that he moved, the 1st apostle and the kings of the three kingdoms would act.

"Maybe most of them will go after the Four Yin Demonic Beheading Sword."

In fact, the direction of the kings' march was the northern Palace Museum where the Four Yin Demonic Beheading Sword was located. I didn't see him but the plagiarist would also be moving to that side.

Some forces ignored any damage and were running towards the museum. It was understandable.

Since the qualifications of the absolute king weren't clear yet, they thought it would be more advantageous to obtain a good item.

If the item was the Four Yin Demonic Beheading Sword, they could fill in the lacking achievement points of their flag at once.

Lee Sungkook asked anxiously, "Shouldn't we go? The Four Yin Demonic Beheading Sword is a pretty good item."

"We will just be defeated if we go."

We didn't have a lot of people. Moreover, there were many high level sponsors among them.

"Go to the west."

I moved while leading the party. All the kings were heading for the northern Palace Museum so the west was relatively lacking.

It was the historic Gwanghwamun so there were museums all over the place. Presseum, Korean Financial History Museum, Korean National Police Heritage Museum…

Yoo Sangah asked, "We aren't going to these places?"

"We should avoid the modern and contemporary exhibits."

An old relic was better.

Of course, the relic simply being 'old' wasn't enough. The hoe used by farmers in the Iron Age was also such an item but it was only F-grade. The important thing was for it to have a relationship with a famous person or a narrative.

"Let's go here."

The place we stopped at was the Seoul History Museum facing Gyeonghui Palace.

A light flashed in Yoo Sangah's eyes.

"What are we looking for here?"

"We must find the Ganpyeongui[2]. It is a relic of the Joseon Dynasty that resembles a disc, but I don't know what floor it is on."

"Okay, I will try and find it!"

"We have to find it quickly so let's scatter. Gilyoung, you move with Sangah noona. And Lee Sungkook-ssi—"

As I was speaking, something sharp flew from behind me. I reflexively crouched down, pulling the party members with me.

The exterior wall of the building was pierced by an arrow. There was a trace of magic power on the shaft.

I got goosebumps.

[Strong Magic Arrow].

This person had learnt the archery skill properly. Who was it? The unexpected ambush complicated my thoughts. Was there someone who read the movements of my party?

"Everybody go inside! Quickly!"

Several more arrows flew.

[Blade of Faith is activated!]

I swung my sword and struck the flying arrows. Fortunately, the amount of magic power wasn't high so they weren't difficult to block.

The problem was the number. One arrow flew out and pierced my thigh. I quickly retreated and hid behind cover.

"Hahaha! Where is the novice king wandering to?"

A voice echoed through the area. A group of men armed with bows and swords appeared 500 metres away.

Their flag couldn't be seen. In other words, they sent out a detached force. Some kings were smarter than I thought. Was he going to eat up items while taking away the flags of the smaller kings?

[The exclusive skill, Character List is activated.]

I used a skill on a person in the lead.

[Character Summary]

Name: Chu Wangin

Age: 33 years old.

Sponsor: The Last Hero of Hwangsanbeol

Exclusive Attributes: Minor Actor (General)

Exclusive Skills: Weapons Training Lv. 4, Acting Lv. 1, Weak Investigation Lv. 1.

Stigma: Baekje Kendo Lv. 4, Prepared to Fight to the Death for the Country Lv. 2, Detached Force Management Lv. 3.

Overall Stats: Physique Lv. 19, Strength Lv. 19, Agility Lv. 21, Magic Power Lv. 15.

Overall Evaluation: It is a case where even a nobody can grow if he meets an excellent sponsor. Due to the high degree of synchronization with the sponsor, the strength of his stigmas is significant.

Damn, a tiger had come. I didn't expect to meet Hwangsanbeol's master here. Those with actor attributes tended to cling to these types of constellations.

"If you know honour as a king, surrender your flag. Then your group members won't lose their lives."

The poor dramatic tone told me why he was only a minor actor. The Last Hero of Hwangsanbeol was attached to such a person. It seemed that bad luck with partners applied even to constellations.

But this was difficult. The level of the stigmas Baekje Kendo and Detached Force Management was too high.

Considering the number of people, it would be hard to handle all of them without raising my overall stats.

[Coins Possessed: 68,150C]

…Should I use my coins here? However, the difficulty of the last phase of the fourth scenario would increase sharply if I used coins to raise my overall stats here.

It would disturb my whole plan.

If I closed my eyes and used around 20,000 coins…

"Isn't it embarrassing for you to persecute the king of a weak nation using the name of the Three Kingdoms?"

I looked around as I heard a voice and saw a familiar person approaching. The incarnation of Gyebaek, Chu Wangin made a fierce expression.

"What is the queen doing here?"

"Your crude tone is just as expected for the master of a ruined kingdom."

The woman shot back with a smug expression. King of Beauty Min Jiwon. Why did this woman appear here?

…Surely she hadn't followed me?

No. There was no way.

Min Jiwon's eyes glanced at me.

[The character 'Min Jiwon' shows a weak liking towards you.]

…Really?

"Shut up! The cowardly Silla blood now claims to be rule of the Three Kingdoms? I won't recognize a girl like you as a king!"

Chu Wangin's roar of anger burst from his body. He might be a minor actor without much skills but his voice was very loud.

By the way, it was interesting. Gyebaek and Queen Jinseong were born in different eras but they could face each other like this after becoming constellations.

I asked Min Jiwon, "Why are you helping me?"

"Silla doesn't ignore weak countries."

"It is Silla who destroyed Gaya."

"…Did you also have a 1st-grade degree in Korean history?"

"Any high school graduate would know this much."

Min Jiwon's expression became slightly gloomy.

"I don't know because I didn't go to high school."

It was natural. Min Jiwon had been an actor since her teens. She became an actress at an early age and learned things other than history.

"Your words are correct. I can't obtain people with money. I'm repaying the debt caused by my rudeness. That's it."

I knew Min Jiwon's history as an actress and could feel the sincerity in her words. It was still surprising. She was an incarnation with a high pride so I didn't think she would bow before me like this.

Gyebaek's incarnation laughed at our conversation.

"A king is swayed by personal matters? That's why a chick like you…"

Min Jiwon's captain came forward on behalf of the Hwarang.

"Rude! How can a man like you be the king of a country?"

Gyebaek's eyes were drawn to the Hwarang.

"Hwarang…? Very interesting. Did you sign with that constellation?"

The Hwarang captain turned red at the words. It reminded me that the Hwarang captain's sponsor was Gwanchang.

"Do you want your neck to be cut like your sponsor?"

In the battle of Hwangsanbeol, Gwanchang died from Gyebaek cutting his throat.

"Shut up!"

Thank you for coming to help but the relationship between constellations was the worst. This was particularly bad due to their high level of sympathy.

There was a hierarchy among the constellations due to the history of their lives.

A person couldn't go against their king and the enemy was determined according to historical records.

For example Kurushima Michifusa of Japan could never beat the Duke of Loyalty and Warfare.

It was just like how Gwanchang couldn't win against Gyebaek.

Min Jiwon also knew this and didn't look happy.

I spoke first. "Just defeat the army. Or we can't win."

Baekje's army had slightly more military force.

Gyebaek was a military commander. The more people he led, the stronger his power. Gwanchang was no match for him.

Then Yoo Sangah's voice was heard. "Dokja-ssi! I've found it!"

I looked back and found Yoo Sangah running with a small disc. She found it already?

The Ganpyeongui. The relic resembling a wall clock glowed in Yoo Sangah's hands.

At this moment, I had an idea. I looked at Ganpyeongui, then Min Jiwon and the incarnation of Gwanchang. Then I made a decision. Perhaps I could win this without using coins?

"Attack!"

[The character 'Chu Wangin' has used the stigma Detached Force Lv. 3!]

The Hwarang kept falling under the hands of the Baekje forces. Min Jiwon looked towards me with a desperate expression and I said, "I think we can win."

"Huh?"

"We will recreate the battle of Hwangsanbeol."

Many people knew this but Hwangsanbeol was a battle that Silla won[1].

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[1] **Battle of Hwangsanbeol** took place between the forces of Silla and Baekje in Hwangsanbeol. The Baekje forces were lead by Gyebaek. Kim Yu-Shin's Silla forces won. Wiki.
[2] **Ganpyeongui** is an astronomical observation device.

Chapter 64: Ep. 13 – War of Kings, V

Min Jiwon was surprised by my words.

"…Battle of Hwangsanbeol?"

"Yes, Silla originally won the Battle of Hwangsanbeol. This is according to history."

Chu Wangin's sword ran through a Hwarang member.

Obviously, Silla would win if it was like history. If it was like history. But before I could speak, the captain of Hwarang came forward and shouted, "Don't retreat! There is no stepping back in a battle!"

At the same time, the Hwarang pulled out their weapons.

"No!"

"Victory! Loyally serve the king!"

"Serve!"

This bastard?

[All of the Hwarang of Silla are subjected to the effect of Mundane World Five Commandments Lv. 2!]

"Hahaha, you are pushing them!"

Gyebaek's incarnation, Chu Wangin cried out. Hwarang's captain came running towards him with a spear. He was following his damn sponsor.

[The character 'Chu Wangin' has used the stigma Baekje Kendo Lv. 3!]

"Keeoook!"

The body of the Hwarang captain flew through the air after being hit by a big sword.

I shouted towards Min Jiwon. "Tell them to set up the formations!"

"Take your formations! Hurry!"

[Character 'Min Jiwon' has activated Military Command Lv. 2.]

[The army has lost their sense of reason.]

[The skill activation is cancelled.]

"Set up the formation!"

Min Jiwon screamed again but the Hwarang were already inspired by Mundane World Five Commandments and didn't listen to her order. In the first place, they were loyal to the beauty of Queen Jinseong, not her charisma.

I heard a sound. Then Lee Gilyoung landed next to me from where he broke through the window of the museum's second floor.

"Hyung, should I call Titano?"

Lee Gilyoung's eyes shone as he prepared to use Diverse Communication.

"No, it is okay."

It would be helpful if Lee Gilyoung could call the 6th grade insect king like last time but then he would be unconscious for two days. High grade monsters were difficult to control and could also sweep away allies.

In any case, Lee Gilyoung was my hidden card. I had to save him until the beginning of the war with the kings.

"Kuaaak!"

The Hwarang in front of us were knocked out. On the other hand, there wasn't a single dead Baekje person.

I reached out to Yoo Sangah who ran to me.

"Yoo Sangah-ssi, the relic…!"

Yoo Sangah handed me the Ganpyeongui.

The Ganpyeongui. Everyone was distracted by the Four Yin Demonic Beheading Sword but in fact, the Ganpyeongui was an essential item for the fourth scenario.

The Four Yin Demonic Beheading Sword had no meaning if this item didn't exist.

"Kuheeok!"

The captain of Hwarang was a wreck as he was hit by Chu Wangin again. It wouldn't be strange if he died in one more blow.

[The constellation Hwarang Knows No Retreat is in a hurry.]

[The constellation 'Last Hero of Hwangsanbeol' is happy.]

[The constellation 'Slumbering Lady of Fine Brocade' is irritated.]

The momentum of the Baekje army grew while Silla's morale broke down. It felt like the spirit of Gyebaek was flowing from Chu Wangin's body.

"Destroy the damn Silla!"

The more that the constellations were in a situation similar to the history that they lived, the greater the synchronization with their incarnation and the stronger the power of the stigma.

In addition, the encounter with 'related' constellations…

It was time for the 'stage' to be created.

"Uhh?

What?"

People screamed with surprise. Sparks filled the surrounding space and the scene changed. Seoul's Gwanghwamun was transformed into a rugged mountain wilderness.

｢Stage Transformation. ｣

It was a phenomenon that occurred when the coordination was high between incarnations with historical correlations.

Space Transformation summoned the space-time that the constellations had fought in. Of course, the space wasn't really changed. It was close to an augmented reality.

The problem was that this wasn't the case for the people who summoned the stage.

"Hahahaha… I missed you Hwangsanbeol!"

Chu Wangin achieved a considerable level of synchronization with his sponsor and shouted. Now he seemed to completely believe he was Gyebaek.

Gyebaek was in a hurry. If a constellation did something like this in the early scenarios, it was likely they would receive a sanction from the Bureau. However, Gyebaek was less likely to be affected than the low level constellations.

"U-Uwaaah!"

The frightened Hwarang started to step back.

Lee Sungkook muttered, "He isn't one of the Seven Kings but he has such power… does this make sense?"

"It is possible because Gyebaek is the protagonist of this stage."

Chu Wangin was like a mad monster as he ran around. Once Stage Transformation occurred and synchronization with the sponsor increased, the incarnation's strength would multiply.

I looked at the trembling Min Jiwon and opened my mouth.

"I have two ways. One is to let the incarnation of Gwanchang die."

"That…what do you mean?"

Originally, the Battle of Hwangsanbeol was a battlefield that Silla won thanks to Gwanchang's sacrifice. One half of the battle was complete if he died.

"As soon as Stage Transformation began, this has become the battlefield of history. If the incarnation of Gwanchang dies, the morale of the Silla troops will rise due to their anger. This is recorded in history."

I didn't listen to Min Jiwon's answer.

"The second way is to change history."

I looked down at the Ganpyeongui in my hands. Ganpyeongui, an astronomical observation device produced by Joseon in the 17th century.

Min Jiwon felt uneasy and asked, "What will happen if it fails?"

"Your country will perish."

"Then of course it will be the first option…!"

This was truly Queen Jinseong. She was considered an incompetent ruler for a reason.

"I didn't mean to give you a choice. I will do the second method."

"Then why did you mention it?"

"I gave you a chance. You are not what Silla needs right now."

I manipulated the two discs that made up the Ganpyeongui.

The two discs were called the sky disc and the earth disc respectively. The top was the earth disc and the bottom was the sky disc.

There was a simple definition for Ganpyeongui in Ways of Survival.

「The Ganpyeongui is an item that can find the constellations in heaven.」

As I slowly turned the earth disc, the constellations engraved on the sky disc started to burn brightly.

[Ganpyeongui's special option 'Echo of the Stars' has been activated.]

['Echo of the Stars' allows you to ask for the help of a constellation.]

[The constellation can refuse your request and the number of times Ganpyeongui can be used is reduced when the constellation responds to the request.]

There were seven constellations left on the sky disc. In other words, I can use it seven more times in the future.

It would've been good if there were more constellations left on the relic. Well, it couldn't be helped.

Lee Sungkook seemed to have noticed something and asked, "Are you going to get help from a constellation with that?"

"Not all the constellations are available but there are some great people."

Lee Sungkook was filled with admiration at my answer. He belatedly found out the true value of this item.

"That's it!" Lee Sungkook cried out excitedly, "How about calling Xiang Yoo or Lu Bu? If you call them, you can easily deal with Gyebaek."

"I have to know the modifier of the constellation."

In the world of Ways of Survival, the modifier was like the constellations' space-time coordinates. The modifiers were like the the X and Y axis coordinate system in the Star Stream.

"Ah… then…"

Lee Sungkook made a sad expression. He thought that I didn't know the modifiers of Lu Bu and Xiang Yoo. But that was an illusion. There was no one in the world who knew as many constellation modifiers as me.

"I'll call a constellation."

[The great constellations hear your voice flowing through the stars.]

Of course, the constellation I was calling wasn't Lu Bu or Xiang Yoo. There was no guarantee they would respond to this request and there was someone more fitting for this battlefield.

I stared at the stars in the sky. I faced the numerous stars and opened my mouth.

"I want to call Hwarang Leader King Heungmu the Great."

[The star navigation has begun.]

A part of the sky darkened and a shadow fell to the ground. The battle between Silla and Baekje stopped.

"What nonsense are you saying?"

Chu Wangin sensed something suspicious and started running towards me.

"Representative-nim, we will stop them."

Lee Sungkook pulled out a sword. I didn't know how long the hypnotist would be able to endure but I should have some time.

After a while, one of the stars in the sky shone brightly. He finally appeared.

[The constellation 'King Heungmu the Great' is looking at you.]

"General."

[The constellation 'King Heungmu the Great' is listening to you.]

"There are people here who need your help. I am calling you because your people are dying."

[The constellation 'King Heungmu the Great' is silent at your words.]

King Heungmu the Great. He wasn't royalty but he was the only person who was given a posthumous name of a king of Silla.

He probably wouldn't reject my request. It was because Hwangsanbeol was his battlefield.

But something unexpected happened.

[The constellation 'King Heungmu the Great' doesn't want to be involved in the history of modern life.]

[The constellation 'King Heungmu the Great' will reject your offer.]

…What? The constellation was about to fade away when Yoo Sangah interrupted.

"General, please listen to my words!"

The smart Yoo Sangah noticed who King Heungmu the Great was.

[The constellation 'King Heungmu the Great' is looking back.]

"I'm well aware of General's story! The Battle of Hwangsanbeol, the Siege of Pyongyang…! I've read all about it in the records!"

Yoo Sangah took a deep breath before starting to talk.

"I understand that you want to respect the past and history. But General! Some histories don't end after they are recorded."

Yoo Sangah's voice was clear and straightforward.

"Don't you regret it? The battlefield where the young Hwarang are sacrificed and countless people are buried…! Have you already forgotten?"

[The constellation 'King Heungmu the Great' is listening to incarnation Yoo Sangah's story.]

"History won't change. The soldiers on the field won't be comforted and the lives of the young Hwarang won't return. But General! The history here hasn't ended yet! If you come here, at least you can change the history in this place!"

I had forgotten how good a talker Yoo Sangah was. During her early days, she was the queen of PT at Mino Soft.

"General! Your Battle of Hwangsanbeol is over… but we are still at Hwangsanbeol."

[The constellation 'King Heungmu the Great' has silently closed his eyes.]

There were such moments in life. I knew what would happen from now on, even if no one said anything.

[The constellation 'King Heungmu the Great' has responded to your request.]

One of the constellations on Ganpyeongui disappeared and a light from the star in the sky shone on me.

I smiled at the nervous Yoo Sangah. "Well done Yoo Sangah-ssi."

[You have temporarily received the protection of constellation 'King Heungmu the Great'.]

The muscles in my body twitched like they were surprised. My heart pumped and light and darkness crossed several times in my head. Something was being constructed inside me.

[This is just on old man's reminiscence of the past.]

This was the true voice of the constellation. Just listening made my existence at stake.

[Please, lend me your voice for a while.]

I nodded while opening my eyes. Everyone on the field of Hwangsanbeol was looking at me.

The incarnation of Gyebaek, Chu Wangin was astonished. "That person…?"

The spirit of a constellation was felt despite him not descending directly. This was the size of the existences called constellations.

"It has been a while, Gyebaek."

There was a strange depth in my voice. In the distance, the incarnation of Gwanchang staggered.

"Hwarang Gwanchang, there is no need to pay respect to me."

"G-General…!"

King Heungmu the Great was watching the world through me. He looked at Gwanchang, Gyebaek and the broken Seoul. I was also watching the world through King Heungmu the Great. The sunlight covered the plains of Hwangsan.

"It is funny. Why is it that all of you have gathered here again?"

Chu Wangin laughed madly at these words. It was a laugh filled with deep-seated resentment. At this moment, he really was Gyebaek.

"Don't you know? It was to meet you again on this field!"

[The character 'Chu Wangin' has used the stigma Baekje Kendo Lv. 4!]

Chu Wangin's sword filled with power and moved. Originally, it was an attack that I wouldn't have been able to avoid or block. But I avoided the attack without much difficulty.

"Gyebaek, why are you doing this to your incarnation? Have you forgotten the constraints of plausibility? You will destroy your incarnation."

It was as he said. Gyebaek was acting unreasonably. I also wondered this as a reader of Ways of Survival.

"Kim Yushin… You must've heard nothing about this world."

"What do you mean?"

"It doesn't matter. My wish was achieved the moment I met you. I'll have no regrets even if I die now!" The incarnation of Gyebaek cried out. "I carry on Baekje's legacy of Buyeo, Gyebaek of Hwangsanbeol! I will settle my lifelong regret here!"

King Heungmu the Great watched Gyebaek's incarnation with sad eyes and opened his mouth through me.

"I am the 15th captain of Hwarang, Kim Yushin."

King Heungmu the Great, Hwarang Leader Kim Yushin.

"I will comfort the soul of the unfortunate constellation and correct the history of modern humans."

The man who led the Battle of Hwangsanbeol to victory sent me his will. I moved my right hand. A bluish glow grew from the hilt.

「 The sword of the Hwarang leader is now on the battlefield. 」

[The power of the star relic 'Blue Dragon Sword' is temporarily stored in Unbroken Faith.]

The blade of the Blue Dragon Sword soared high into the sky of Hwangsan.

All of Hwangsan seemed to scream. Enormous magic power escaped and a large crack appeared in the earth, centred around me.

「 Dragon Flower Tree unit, come to this place right now. 」

[The stigma 'Gather the Hwarang' is activated!]

Something was happening in the crack.

The forgotten ghosts buried in the eternal history. There were no names left but they were Hwarang who once lived on this land and who fought only for honour.

Kuoooooh!

The Dragon Flower Tree, Kim Yushin's elite unit showed up from the pages of history.

Chapter 65: Ep. 14 – Master of the Throne, I

Kim Yushin's stigma 'Gather the Hwarang' was a skill that called the elite Hwarang that died in history, the Dragon Flower Tree.

To put it simply, it was a ground version of the 'Ghost Fleet' that Lee Jihye used.

It wasn't comparable to the Duke of Loyalty and Warfare's power but it was still a great stigma used by a constellation.

"Go!"

The buried bones were removed and the Dragon Flower Tree unit rose to fight with Baekje's army. Some Hwarang had no eyes while others had no arms or legs.

It was cruel. They would raise their blades as long as Kim Yushin was here. This was despite their souls being worn down, their anger erased and even their hearts gone.

They were soldiers who fought to prevent the fall of their kingdom. Now they were fighting for a fallen kingdom.

"You are still a coward Kim Yushin! Now you are even pushing your dead men!"

"…"

"Come on! Let's have a one-on-one fight!"

I was still at Gyebaek's provocation. It was because Kim Yushin didn't want to move. He would crush Gyebaek with the overwhelming force of the Dragon Flower Tree. The magic power that emerged from his sword mercilessly filled the air.

"Kim Yushin—!"

The shout filled the air and even the emotionless Dragon Flower Tree hesitated for a moment.

This was Gyebaek. The last master of Baekje, Gyebaek.

Gyebaek was a constellation that overwhelmed Kim Yushin just in terms of physical buff abilities. In fact, Gyebaek never fought one-on-one against Kim Yushin in the Battle of Hwangsanbeol.

To be exact, it was right to say that Kim Yushin avoided the confrontation.

[The character 'Chu Wangin' has used the stigma Prepared to Fight to the Death for the Country Lv. 2!]

In history, Gyebaek's army fought against Kim Yushin's army that outnumbered them by several times and won a few impossible battles.

The last winner might be Kim Yushin but Gyebaek wasn't defeated until the final battle of Hwangsanbeol was held.

He united his soldiers with patriotism and his shouts were close to insane.

I carried Kim Yushin behind me right now but if things were different, I might've called Gyebaek.

Gwanchang's incarnation shouted, "General!"

"Don't move."

Kim Yushin spoke through my mouth. My expression was unchanged despite looking at the dying Dragon Flower Tree members.

Kim Yushin's serene image was conveyed.

Gyebaek shouted, "Your cowardice hasn't changed despite you becoming a constellation!"

That's right. Kim Yushin was a coward. He was afraid of death and afraid of defeat. That's why he was strong. His emotions were unshakable and he didn't commit rash acts.

Defeat the enemies in a way that achieved victory. That's how he won the final battle of Hwangsanbeol, despite being defeated four previous times.

"Kuaaaaak!"

The hundreds of Dragon Flower Tree members clashed fiercely with Gyebaek. His incarnation was so severely hurt that he could no longer survive. His whole body was bloody while there were fatal wounds on his arms, thighs and sides.

However, Gyebaek kept moving through the crowd of Dragon Flower Tree members towards me.

"Kim…Yoo…shin…!"

[The stigma 'Request for Reinforcements' has been activated!]

Ghost soldiers appeared like shadows from behind Kim Yushin and sprang towards Gyebaek. Based on the different articles of clothing on the soldiers, they might not be Silla troops.

Perhaps they were the Tang Dynasty troops called to destroy Goguryeo.

As expected from Kim Yushin. The only thing important to him was winning. Using foreign forces wasn't an important issue for him.

Numerous spears pierced his chest. Gyebaek's incarnation couldn't overcome the pain and fell to his knees.

"Kuheok…!"

The incarnation of the strong Gyebaek was now at his limit.

Gyebaek laughed.

"…I am resentful. I can't touch you even on this fake stage. I wanted to cross swords with you just once."

Gyebaek's red eyes made me feel confused. Gwanchang was alive, history had changed. But this was one part that didn't change.

Kim Yushin asked, "Gyebaek. Why did you do this?"

"…"

"If you die in this state, you can't choose another incarnation for a while. Why did you suddenly abandon the scenario?"

Gyebaek had a distant look on his face and then he gave a meaningful smile. Kim Yushin waited before pulling out a blade.

I hurriedly took back control of my voice.

"He can't be killed with my hands."

[Why?]

"…There are restrictions."

The King of No Killing meant I couldn't carry out direct slaughter. As soon as I killed one person, I would lose my throne.

Kim Yushin nodded like he understood.

[…I see. I roughly understand. Don't worry. The stars will honour your commitment. But it is I, Kim Yushin, who will deal with Gyebaek, not you.]

"But…"

[…There is a lingering attachment, please understand.]

Kim Yushin gestured and one of the Dragon Flower Tree members nodded. I handed over my voice to Kim Yushin.

"Gyebaek, let's meet in the next world."

Gyebaek's incarnation looked up at us silently. He wanted to say something but he couldn't open his mouth. At the last moment, his face looked like a minor actor who completed his scenes rather than Gyebaek.

Then the incarnation's head quietly flew through the air.

[Stage Transformation has ended.]

[You have experienced the Battle of Hwangsanbeol.]

[1,000 coins have been earned as experience compensation.]

I looked around and saw that all of Baekje's army was wiped out.

[The authority of King of No Killing is retained due to the indirect nature of the killing.]

It was fortunate. King of No Killing was only lost when I killed someone directly with my own hands. The life that the Dragon Flower Tree member took wasn't recognized as me killing someone.

"Representative-nim! Are you okay?" Lee Sungkook's voice was heard from behind me.

Yoo Sangah sighed with relief while Lee Gilyoung was disgruntled that he couldn't do much. Then Min Jiwon asked, "What the hell was that…?"

She looked like she had completely lost her soul.

I shrugged and said, "You should study history if you want to be a king."

I might've called Kim Yushin but I didn't belong to Silla or Baekje. I called Kim Yushin because he was the most appropriate one to deal with Gyebaek.

Anyway, I was glad that the result was better than expected. I was able to thoroughly check the performance of the Ganpyeongui and I could get some coins and items from the Baekje members.

[You have earned 5,400 coins.]

[Coins Possessed: 74,950 C]

Now I wasn't afraid of the final phase of the fourth scenario.

"It is time to go to the north."

[The remaining duration of the call is three minutes.]

Kim Yushin's divine blessing still remained. I should take advantage of the remaining time left on the Ganpyeongui. It could only be used seven times so I couldn't waste it.

"Rise up Dragon Flower Tree!"

The broken fragments of the Dragon Flower Tree unit rose again and I pointed north with my sword.

"Advance!"

The consumption of magic power was huge so the operation time of the Dragon Flower Tree unit was short. The Dragon Flower Tree unit started to march north, randomly sweeping away the small and medium groups.

It might be possible to wipe out all the forces of the other kings gathered at the National Palace Museum.

There were screams as forces fought all over the street.

"What are these skeletons? Aacck!"

The incarnations that ran towards me were crushed by the Dragon Flower Tree unit.

Since I wasn't the one attacking, I didn't get a penalty for killing. Yes, this was an invigorating taste.

Kim Yushin's holy voice was heard in my head.

[There is something strange about you. Your mind is intact despite hearing my true voice…]

"I have a strong mentality."

I was a bit surprised by the words. The constellations used the 'indirect messages' to communicate for a reason.

Kim Yushin was just a low-ranking constellation but most people would pee their pants or faint hearing his holy voice.

In fact, I was a bit worried about that too…

[Remember, you owe me a big debt. In order to help you, I had to embrace more possibilities than necessary.]

There was something sinister about his tone. I quickly expressed my appreciation.

"I am thankful. I won't forget General's help."

[You are a hasty friend. You don't have anyone to pass it onto yet…]

"…Won't it happen one day? If I give birth to a child, I will surely tell them what happened today."

[Rather, you don't seem to have a sponsor.]

I had an ominous feeling. Damn, this old fox kept talking.

[I like you. If you don't mind, I would like to become your sponsor in this world.]

His words were nice but it merely meant to be his slave.

"That will be a problem."

[Why? Isn't my strength enough? You can become the strongest of this age with just my stigma.]

The Gather the Hwarang stigma was good. But that was when applied to Kim Yushin's saga.

The strongest in this era? He was trying to scam me.

The words were ridiculous for someone who wasn't a narrative-grade. If the Great Sage, Heaven's Equal heard it, he would've squeezed Kim Yushin's head tightly.

"Now isn't the age of the Three Kingdoms. You are old and should take a break."

We had fun together but let's not see each other again.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is laughing at 'King Heungmu the Great'.]

[300 coins have been sponsored.]

Kim Yunshin was silent for a moment, perhaps because his pride was pricked. I thought he would back off but a sharp pain suddenly shot through my head.

[Have you forgotten that my divine blessing still remains?]

Currently, Kim Yushin and I were connected through the Ganpyeongui. The muscles of my body spasmed in an unusual manner. No matter what, wasn't he a great person of Korea…? No, maybe he could do this because he was a great person of Korea.

Dammit.

[It would be better to think again.]

Yoo Sangah looked at me with worry.

"Dokja-ssi?"

"Yoo Sangah-ssi. Get away from me. Quickly!"

My trembling right hand didn't listen as it raised Unbroken Faith and started pointing it at Yoo Sangah.

Kim Yushin started to exert control over my body.

[Did you say there was a restriction on your actions? I wonder what the restriction is. What if I kill that woman right now?]

"Kim Yushin, this is your will. It isn't my karma."

[Huhu, I don't know. What if I disengage the moment I stab the blade? Won't it be recognized as your actions? And this woman seems to be quite precious to you?]

"…Stop."

[Make a promise. In the next Sponsor Selection, you will choose Kim Yushin.]

The intent of this old fox was obvious. The second Sponsor Selection would begin the moment the fourth scenario was over. Kim Yushin wanted to use this pledge as an opportunity to acquire me.

If I hadn't read Ways of Survival, it might not be a bad choice. Kim Yushin was a fairly decent constellation and there were a few scenarios in the middle that could be cleared with Gather the Hwarang alone.

However, if I was going to pick a sponsor, I would've picked the Great Sage, Heaven's Equal in the beginning. Why should I choose Kim Yushin now?

"I said no."

In addition, I had the contract with Bihyung that didn't allow me to choose a sponsor.

Kim Yushin's voice hardened.

[You are a stubborn young man. But it is the wrong choice. How long can you endure?]

The blade in my hand started moving towards Yoo Sangah.

"Yoo Sangah-ssi, quickly—!"

Why didn't the smart Yoo Sangah move? I looked at my right hand moving against my will and finally made a decision. Dammit, I respected him as a great person but he forced me to do this…

I took a deep breath. This was my body. I would never give it to this guy or any constellation.

[The exclusive skill, 'Fourth Wall' is activated!]

Chapter 66: Ep. 14 – Master of the Throne, II

The pages of Ways of Survival flashed in my head. A light streamed through my head and the strings of light started to line up. They were the text of Ways of Survival.

[Heok…?]

Kim Yushin discovered something was wrong and his presence became noticeably thinner. The old fox noticed quickly.

[The echo of the constellation connected through Echo of the Stars has disappeared.]

At the last moment, Kim Yushin's astounded voice was heard.

[What are you…?]

Then Kim Yushin was gone.

I was surprised as well. I expected it to be possible with Fourth Wall, but I didn't think the Ganpyeongui connection to the constellation could be broken so easily.

The encounter in the Theater Dungeon was a hint. The Fourth Wall had destroyed the theatre master the moment he tried to look inside my head.

I was hoping the same thing would happen to the constellation but Kim Yushin noticed quickly and ran away.

[The constellation 'King Heungmu the Great' has doubts about your existence.]

[The constellation 'King Heungmu the Great' will be watching you closely in the future.]

In any case, I was still being followed by the old geezer.

"…Are you okay?"

"Yes. I'm fine. But…"

What was this? I looked up and found that my limbs were tied up with magic power. It was a chrysalis-like appearance. Yoo Sangah's face was completely red.

"That… I couldn't run away but I couldn't let you attack me."

I roughly understood what was going on. She used Binding Thread on me during that short interval. I thought she was frozen with surprise but she was actually using a skill.

"Your improvisation is amazing."

"…I'm sorry."

"It is a compliment. If I start acting strange in the future, act like you did now."

"I-I will release you!"

Yoo Sangah looked embarrassed but I was serious. It was my mistake when I thought of her as an ordinary office worker.

I looked back and saw Min Jiwon looking between me and Yoo Sangah with curious eyes. "Well…it turned out like this. I came to help only to end up being helped."

I nodded. "We will be enemies the next time we meet."

"…Why don't you join us now? It is a common proceeding in dramas."

"This isn't a drama."

"My friend! Make friends with faith. It is the banner of our Hwarang." Min Jiwon said with a smile before moving away.

Could she be a good king? I don't know. Perhaps even the King of Beauty didn't know.

"We will go as well. Lee Sungkook-ssi! Come on."

Lee Sungkook emerged from behind the building with Lee Gilyoung. This bastard, when did he hide in such a place?

I took my companions and started to move north.

The place that Kim Yushin's Gather the Hwarang swept through was devastated.

The armed forces of the small kings were lying all over the place. This was the dignity of a proper constellation. Kim Yushin was a cowardly but useful constellation.

I picked up three flags and built up my achievements.

[Your brown flag has absorbed the cumulative achievements of the brown flag.]

[Your brown flag has evolved into a purple flag.]

[You are able to use the perks of the purple flag.]

Indeed, the best thing was to grow without a fight. I looked around and saw that most flags had already been collected.

From the purple flag onwards, the achievement values of the flag wouldn't rise well. In other words, it was useless to grab a small king from now on.

"Jung Minseob-ssi, are you there?"

The next moment, Jung Minseob appeared out of thin air. The Recluse's Cloak that I handed him in advance was covering his body. Jung Minseob's mission was to scout the National Palace Museum.

"How many have gone inside so far?"

"A total of nine kings have entered, including the Tyrant King and True Reader."

Nine. It was a reasonable number.

"What are the flag types?"

"There are seven purple and two brown flags. In particular, there are two with really a really deep purple colour."

"I guess they are the Tyrant and True Reader."

"That's right."

Jung Minseob, wasn't his talent quite useful?

I opened my mouth. "This time, I will only go with Yoo Sangah-ssi and Gilyoung. Both of you wait outside. Stay hidden using the cloak."

"…Will it be okay?"

"Yes, I only need three people right now."

"I will enter if you call us."

I appreciated the thought but it would just be a disruption. It was because the current Seoul Palace Museum was a dungeon.

[A new hidden scenario has arrived!]

[Hidden Scenario – Artifact Trials]

Category: Hidden

Difficulty: F ~ A+

Clear Conditions: Clear the right 'artifact dungeon' with the proper personnel.

Time Limit: None

Compensation: 500 ~ 5,000 coins

Failure: Death

A white marble lobby appeared before us as we entered the museum. There were no signs of anyone else in the lobby.

Yoo Sangah spoke in a soft voice.

"I can't like culture now without feeling scared. There was the previous theatre and now this museum…"

"Hyung, are we going to get the legendary sword?"

"No, not right now."

Of course, I could find the Four Yin Demonic Beheading Sword in this dungeon. That's why I sowed the information.

[Please select the type of dungeon you want to enter.]

* Single player dungeon – Nagak

* Three person dungeon – Acupuncture Copper Man

* Five person dungeon – Dongui Bogam (Korean book compiled by a royal physician, considered as one of the classics of Oriental medicine)

* Seven person dungeon – Dragon Jar

However, the dungeon with the Four Yin Demonic Beheading Sword couldn't be entered in a normal manner. It was because the dungeon was only accessible using the Sang Pyong Tong Bo coin which was given as a reward when clearing a dungeon.

"I will choose the three person dungeon, the Acupuncture Copper Man."

[You have entered the three person dungeon.]

Lee Gilyoung looked a bit disappointed. He had been expecting to get a great artifact.

"Gilyoung. An artifact isn't about the outward appearance."

"…Huh?"

"There are many impressive looking things that have no substance."

The Four Yin Demonic Beheading Sword was one such item. Rather, the good things in this dungeon could be obtained from the commonplace dungeons.

An example was the skill that could be obtained the Acupuncture Copper Man dungeon.

Yoo Sangah was amazed and surprised as soon as we entered the dungeon.

"…There are other people besides us."

Intermittent screams could be heard from the dungeon.

"Uwaaaaack! Go away!"

It was a monster in human form with a matte colour. The three person dungeon was filled with these copper people.

It was the 7th grade species, the Acupuncture Copper Man.

After a certain amount of time, these guys would self-proliferate unless the method to attack them was known. The Acupuncture Copper Man didn't suffer because they had a strong body, no internal organs and no neural networks.

"Aaaah! Save me!"

Some of the incarnations' swords cut at copper men but they didn't receive much damage. Rather, they pulled the incarnations' bodies down.

The body of a man in his 50s was torn to pieces in the hands of the copper men.

"…Dokja-ssi, how do we deal with these guys? They don't receive damage at all."

Yoo Sangah and Lee Gilyoung aimed their weapons or skills at the incoming copper men but there was hardly any effect.

Sometimes Lee Gilyoung's blunt attack would damage them but he didn't have any idea of what he did.

"Look at their bodies."

The monsters that appeared in the 'artifacts trials' were based on relics kept in Seoul Palace Museum.

For example, the monsters in the one player dungeon was literally a musical instrument made of a seashell and as for the Dongui Bogam five person dungeon… there was no need to explain anything. It was the same for the Acupuncture Copper Man in the three person dungeon.

Yoo Sangah stared closely at a copper man and opened her mouth.

"Is there something etched on the body?"

"That's right."

In fact, the Acupuncture Copper Man was a relic that displayed 354 acupuncture points on the human body, including the front, back, arms, legs and head.

It was an artifact used to study acupuncture in the Joseon Dynasty.

[Blade of Faith is activated!]

I stabbed one of the acupuncture points on the copper man. Then I twisted it and the body scattered into powder. It was a meaningless end for a 7th grade reproduction species.

[You have hunted the first Acupuncture Copper Man!]

"If you look closely, the colour for each acupuncture point was subtly different. Some are devoid of blood and some are deadly. Some of the points… there is a different effect every time an acupuncture point is hit."

"Ah…!"

The important thing was to find the acupuncture point that didn't break the flow.

I demonstrated a few times and Lee Gilyoung and Yoo Sangah got the knack for it very quickly.

Lee Gilyoung used Diverse Communication to shock the points with small insects, while Yoo Sangah applied Binding Thread. I honestly admired what I saw.

These two people, they really had excellent growth.

[Your party is the first to hunt 100 Acupuncture Copper Men!]

[You have cleared the three person dungeon.]

[Four Sang Pyong Tong Bo coins are obtained as a basic reward.]

[The exclusive skill 'Hit a Pressure Point' has been acquired.]

I got the skill I aimed for.

Hit a Pressure Point. It was a unique technique to use the pressure points to subdue the enemy. It was an essential skill for me to maintain the 'King of No Killing'.

Yoo Sangah looked at the Sang Pyong Tong Bo coins curiously and muttered, "Can we buy something with this?"

"It can be exchanged for coins or a dungeon ticket."

"Then…"

"Of course, we will use it for the dungeon admission ticket. Pay me three each. I have four so combined, it will be 10 coins."

"10? Wait a minute, Dokja-ssi…?"

"We will enter the hidden dungeon where we can get the Four Yin Demonic Beheading Sword."

Yoo Sangah asked with surprise.

"But didn't you say we wouldn't get the Four Yin Demonic Beheading Sword?"

"We aren't going after the Four Yin Demonic Beheading Sword."

We were going to 'hunt' the kings.

Chapter 67: Ep. 14 – Master of the Throne, III

We were going to enter the dungeon but not to get the Four Yin Demonic Beheading Sword.

Yoo Sangah and Lee Gilyoung immediately understood what I meant.

"You are going to take their flags."

"Then you will kill them."

They had different interpretations.

Yoo Sangah looked down at Lee Gilyoung with surprised eyes. The interesting thing was that Lee Gilyoung looked up at Yoo Sangah with disappointment.

"Hyung, leave the finishing touches to me."

This boy… he already noticed that I couldn't directly kill a person.

[The exclusive skill, Character List is activated.]

[This person isn't registered in 'Character List'.]

[Currently collecting information about the corresponding figure.]

Lee Gilyoung's information still wasn't available.

I turned my head and encountered Yoo Sangah's worried eyes. She looked between Lee Gilyoung and I before bowing her head. I spoke to Lee Gilyoung, "Do as you please."

I could see what Yoo Sangah was worried about. Lee Gilyoung wasn't even in middle school yet. But she should be aware of it. The morals that we used to have were now useless in this world.

"This isn't a game. Be careful."

"Yes, don't worry."

I listened to Lee Gilyoung's voice and hid the flag on my back.

Until now, the flag was a good bait to attract the small kings. However, from now on, it would just be bait for predators. There was nothing good about advertising that I was a king on this battlefield.

The intermediate dokkaebi's voice was heard.

[Huhu, everyone is doing well! So many people are doing hidden scenario then what is the meaning of 'hidden'?]

It had no nerves. I would find it embarrassing now and again.

[Someone has already fulfilled the requirements for the first qualification. Once again, this is interesting.]

A king had already achieved the black flag. It was probably one of the Seven Kings.

[After a while, the requirements of the second qualifications will be revealed.]

I turned to look at the party members and said, "Quickly. The dokkaebi's 'after a while' might not be long."

I put together the Sang Pyong Tong Bo coins in the lobby one by one.

[You have entered a hidden field using 10 Sang Pyong Tong Bo coins.]

[Do you want to enter the hidden chapter, the Big Dipper?]

Right now, I had the purple flag. The kings with the same purple flags would flock to the Big Dipper. In other words, my prey were all gathered in one place.

[You have entered the Big Dipper chapter.]

My vision waved and the lobby soon changed. The white marble lobby was transformed into a spacious waiting room.

There were seven doors at the end of the waiting room.

"Uh…!"

Yoo Sangah let out a brief groan and took a step back. There were bodies at Yoo Sangah's feet. They were the bodies of group members who had fought each other. Lee Gilyoung looked down at the corpses with an expressionless face.

There were so many bodies that it was hard to walk straight. Hundreds of bodies were scattered all over the place like graves. There was a wave of blood already.

I felt a bit strange. If I hadn't spread the plagiarist writer's textbook, they might not have died. Then didn't they die because of me?

"Hey, there are people."

The centre of the waiting room contained a huge bonfire using the bodies of people as fuel.

I could see the faces of some survivors. I didn't know if they were allies or held a truce, but they weren't fighting.

I looked at the group of people and spoke to my party members. "Be careful."

A group stood up. Greed could be seen in their eyes.

"You are a newcomer. Who is your king?"

Some people secretly moved behind out party while others drew our attention. The encirclement was gradually becoming narrower.

"Is it you? Or maybe the woman next to you? It can't be the kid."

[Many of the constellations are annoyed by the pests.]

[A few constellations want you to take serious action.]

I was already planning on that.

"Hey, why aren't you answering… aack!"

The white light of Unbroken Faith filled the air. The unstoppable trajectory cut off the limbs of a person. A confused person shouted, "Damn! Just kill him!"

The people took out their weapons like they had been waiting. But it was too late.

"W-Why are you so fast?"

There were few people with agility higher than me right now.

They didn't have high level skills so no one other than the Seven Kings could follow my movements right now.

The Blade of Faith swung in a semicircle and cut five or six people at the same time.

The attack that followed cut off a hand holding a weapon. I pierced another wrist.

"Kuaaaak!"

The severed limbs flew unrealistically through the air. I walked behind a man screaming painfully and used a skill.

[The exclusive skill 'Hit a Pressure Point Lv. 1' is activated.]

I had cut off the man's limbs but there was no need to be cruel.

There was a dark blue dagger hidden in the man's arms. This was the poisonous dagger that could be obtained at the end of the 5 person dungeon, the 'Dongui Bogam'. If my response had been even a bit late, this would've been us.

As soon as the people collapsed, I called to Lee Gilyoung.

"Please."

Lee Gilyoung nodded. Lee Gilyoung's hand stopped the people's breathing one by one. He moved his hand like he was killing insignificant insects. I was also a little surprised.

Then Yoo Sangah came forward.

"I'll do it Gilyoung…"

"…Can you do it?"

"I will still do it."

Yoo Sangah's tone was unusually stubborn. She looked grimly at Lee Gilyoung. She held a knife and turned her back to me. Maybe Yoo Sangah despised me.

Perhaps it was fortunate that I couldn't read Yoo Sangah's mind.

Yoo Sangah moved even more efficiently than Lee Gilyoung and took the lives of the remaining people. Her fingertips trembled as the work finished.

"…Will we continue in this fashion?"

"Yes, probably."

"I will do it in the future instead of Gilyoung."

"Can you do it?"

"…There is no problem. It is just like breaking an egg."

Yoo Sangah used an analogy as she pretended to be calm.

"I can do it better." Lee Gilyoung grumbled, making Yoo Sangah place a hand on his head.

There would be many twists and turns in the future. Sometimes we might feel like collapsing or want to give up. But we had to overcome it.

Most of the Seven Kings we would soon meet would have higher stats than us and they would also possess unique skills. There would certainly be situations where we couldn't win without being hit by the enemies.

We silently picked up the items that the group dropped.

[You have earned 2,300 coins.]

[The item 'Dongui Bogam – Various Diseases (Upper Half of the Body)' has been acquired.]

As expected, they were people who cleared the five person dungeon. A total of eight books were available from the five person dungeon, each with different usages. I was sure there were a few people who cleared the five person dungeon so the others should be moderately easy to find.

Unfortunately, there was no 'king' in the group I just killed.

Clap clap clap.

Then the sound of clapping was heard.

One of the men watching from the big bonfire approached me with a smile on his face. He showed no signs of panic despite the other group being wiped out.

I raised my item and warned them casually.

"What do you want?"

The man took one step back and raised both hands as if he had no intention of fighting.

"Uhh, calm down. I don't want to fight."

I took a closer look at the man. There was a large spear on his back. The firm chest muscles were revealed by the clothes and his long hair was tied back.

"You have great skills. You don't seem to have any passive skills but you wiped out the Chungjeong group… those bastards, they are one of the groups that lost their king."

Of course, that's why they came forward so recklessly.

"But you're a little late. The major kings have all entered the dungeon. They will be busy fighting now. Well, the winner is almost decided but… the last king who passed through here was incredibly fierce."

"Who is that?"

"Do you know the Tyrant King?" The man continued to speak. "He is currently the most powerful king in northern Seoul. This is a story between those who already know. The owner of the Absolute Throne will surely be the Tyrant King."

A person might think so if they saw the Tyrant King in person. The Tyrant King's armed force was certainly the top among the Seven Kings.

But it was laughable for him to be the owner of the Absolute Throne. The Tyrant King was strong but he wasn't the strongest among the Seven Kings.

As if reading my mind, the man opened his mouth.

"But I don't think so. I think that the Tyrant King will never become the owner of the Absolute Throne."

"…Why do you think that?"

"I saw it myself. He has a strong power but he doesn't know how to handle people. A king must know the hearts of the people."

The hearts of the people?

"My king is able to do that. It is why many incarnations follow him. I am sure that my king will become the master of the Absolute Throne."

I followed the man's glance. The Big Dipper chapter consisted of seven entrances. Perhaps his king was moving in one of the passages.

"What is your point? Do you want us to join you?"

"Haha, that would be nice but you won't follow me just like that, right? I just want to make an offer. If you don't mind, why don't you ally with us?"

I realized why this man was still in the waiting room. This guy was a bait.

"Why should I?"

"The Tyrant King is very strong. I believe in my king but I don't think he can defeat the Tyrant King alone."

In contrast to his loyalty, he was a very realistic guy. But he was a 'real' loyalist.

"Think about it. What will happen if we can't stop him from holding the legendary sword? What if he gets the Absolute Throne and controls all the kings in Seoul? Don't you think that you should stop this no matter what?"

I dimly remembered.

It didn't happen in the third regression but the 'Anti-Tyrant King Alliance' had formed many times in Ways of Survival.

Once again, the future had changed.

"You have a point."

"That is why I'm making this suggestion. Our group will soon be acting against the Tyrant King. We have already talked with several other kings. I don't know what group you belong to but you won't lose anything by joining us. You just need to give us a spoonful."

It was exactly as he said. The problem was that the price of the spoonful was bigger than he thought…

The man took my silence as my acceptance.

"If you are serious, you can meet our king and think about it. It is almost time for him to return to the waiting room… Oh, there he is."

In fact, one of the seven doors opened and the group that entered the Big Dipper returned.

"King…"

The people standing at the door knelt down at once. Then the man in the centre of the crowd approached this side.

He was a clean shaven man. There was a brown club in his hands.

Wait. This guy, was it him?

Chapter 68: Ep. 14 – Master of the Throne, IV

The one-eyed man approached us. This was my first meeting with one of Seoul's Seven Kings.

Yoo Sangah talked in the group chat.

–Dokja-ssi, this person is perhaps…

–Yes, you're right.

I nodded to Yoo Sangah. It was impossible not to think of this person when seeing the appearance.

–By the way, I don't understand. Even if the constellation is 'that person', why is the incarnation dressed like that?

–His synchronization with the constellation seems to be high. The higher the synchronization, the more the incarnation is influenced by the lifestyle of the constellation.

–I should never cough in front of him.

The man with long hair tied back was bowing to the man approaching us.

"Your Majesty. You came."

"Yes."

"What happened?"

"Do I need to say it? Here."

The one-eyed man pointed to his staff. There was a blue jewel available from the Big Dipper embedded on it.

[Greedy Wolf Star].

The long-haired man admired it.

"Ohh…!"

Wasn't he quite good? Already gaining one star jewel…

The star jewels were the rewards of the Big Dipper chapter.

It was an item that increased overall stats by one level. It had a good effect on its own but the star jewels were meaningful when seven were collected.

It was because the jewels were the summoning material for the Four Yin Demonic Beheading Sword.

The one-eyed man looked at me. "Who are these people?"

"They have just entered the Big Dipper chapter. Their abilities are quite good so I was thinking about getting them to join."

"Really?"

The one-eyed man and I extended our hands to each other at the same time.

"I am Cha Sangkyung."

"I am Kim Dokja."

I shook his hand while activating a skill.

[The exclusive skill, Character List is activated.]

[Character Summary]

Name: Cha Sangkyung

Age: 26 years old

Sponsor: One-eyed Maitreya

Exclusive Attributes: Pseudo Sect Founder (Hero), Maitreya King (Hero)

Exclusive Skills: Weapons Training Lv. 5, Mental Barrier Lv. 3, Eloquent Speech Lv. 3, Skillful Deception Lv. 3, False Prayer Lv. 1…

Stigma: Maitreya Promised Land Lv. 2, Law of Interest Lv. 2, Demonic Enemy Lv. 3

Overall Stats: Physique Lv. 28, Strength Lv. 26, Agility Lv. 28, Magic Power Lv. 25.

Overall Evaluation: No one can be free in front of his 'eye' that gives insight into everything. Be careful not to cough in front of him.

It was regrettable that Jung Heewon wasn't here. If she saw this man in front of me, she would never speak nonsense about my sponsor again.

Cha Sangkyung said, "I have a burden of seeing things. Can I look at you once?"

"Yes."

Yes, he could try.

[The character 'Cha Sangkyung' has used Law of Interest Lv. 2!]

The stigma 'Law of Interest' was quite interesting among the investigation techniques in Ways of Survival. It didn't reveal the attributes window of the opponent but it was a skill that roughly gave information about the personality of the opponent. In other words, he would see a 'Easily fooled Demonic Enemy' if the person was 'good', while he would see a 'Back-stabbing Demonic Enemy' if the person was 'bad'. For example…

[The character 'Cha Sangkyung' has discovered that you are a demonic enemy that shouldn't be touched.]

It was like this.

"T-This?"

"King, why are you acting like this?"

[The character 'Cha Sangkyung' is greatly disturbed.]

Cha Sangkyung shouted with a pale face.

"D-Demonic enemy!"

"Huh? It can't be…"

At his words, the group members of the Maitreya King simultaneously looked at me. The atmosphere became tense when Cha Sangkyung urgently added.

"N-Nothing. I have made a mistake."

"Huh? There's nothing?"

"Yes, it is nothing. Everyone back off."

Indeed. He would be a fool to ignore the warning of the constellation. By the way, a demonic enemy that shouldn't be touched…

Maybe the One-eyed Maitreya didn't want to fight with me.

"Sigh… it isn't surprising."

The dubious thing was the reaction of the long-haired man. It was momentary but there was an expression of 'regret' on his face.

"The plan will start in one hour. I'm looking forward to your participation despite being a bit late."

Cha Sangkyung said before returning to his group members.

The first encounter with Gung Ye ended like this.

The long-haired man said, "Phew, it almost became a major event. I'm glad."

"It is absurd to say that he is a king who knows the hearts of the people."

"Haha, Gung Ye might be recorded as a tyrant later on but he was a good and wise king first. You never know what will happen in the future. History can change."

I looked carefully at the long-haired man and asked, "By the way, who are you?"

"Oh, I haven't introduced myself yet. I am Han Sooyoung. I am Cha Sangkyung's assistant."

A man who supported the incarnation of Gung Ye. It was highly likely that he was attached to Gung Ye's side because of his sponsor.

Who was it? Perhaps it was a king? I immediately used a skill.

[The exclusive skill, Character List is activated.]

[The information of this person can't be read in 'Character List'.]

[This person isn't registered in 'Character List'.]

…What?

"Um? What's wrong?"

I looked at the shamelessly speaking Han Sooyoung and couldn't help laughing. I see… now I knew who this person was.

"It's nothing. Just… I feel like you are a demonic enemy."

"Haha, what do you mean?"

I could see Han Sooyoung's eyes change strangely. Maybe at this moment, both of us were thinking the same thing. The question was who would pull out a sword first.

The doors of the waiting room started to open one by one.

"The kings are coming!"

There was tension in the Maitreya group while several people in the waiting room started cheering.

I watched the kings walking out the door and asked Han Sooyoung.

"Are they on the same side?"

"Yes, they are all kings who promised to cooperate with us. From left to right, there is the 'Prudent King' Yoon Kiyoung and 'Fighting King' Kim Baekho Then the last one who came out is the 'Earth Dragon King' Gu Daesung."

I remembered something when I heard this nickname.

The Prudent King and Fighting King. They were just like their nicknames. They had decent skills and stats but they were one step lacking compared to the Seven Kings.

The only one I needed to pay attention to was the Earth Dragon King Gu Daesung.

Gu Daesung discovered Cha Sangkyung and asked, "You have already come out?

Fast."

"You are a rude earthworm."

"…Earthworm? Is that what you are calling my sponsor?"

Yoo Sangah was startled when she heard their words and whispered to me, "That person, I think he has a good sponsor behind him."

"…How do you know?"

"I heard the story that the king of Baekje was born from an earth dragon."

"Earth dragon?"

"That's what they meant by 'earthworm'. The other kings are calling him the son of an earth dragon in a mocking manner."

She was really amazing. She figured out the identity of Gu Daesung with this much information.

Yoo Sangah was right.

Earth Dragon King Gu Daesung. In my memories, he was one of Seoul's Seven Kings with the late King Gyeon Hwon as his sponsor.

"There are quite a few people who have a king for a sponsor. Then the king we saw before…"

I nodded. In fact, it wasn't a coincidence that there were so many incarnations whose sponsors were all kings of some kind.

The situation would be similar in other areas, not just the Seoul Dome.

In Japan, there would be a competition between the three heroes including Oda Nobunaga. In the UK, there would be a competition between Richard the Lionheart or Henry VIII.

The world's greatest constellations would be preparing for a war over the Absolute Throne, raising their synchronization with their incarnation to a breathtaking level.

[The constellation 'Maritime War God' is expecting the appearance of a new story class constellation.]

[The constellation 'Bald General of Justice' is watching the situation with sweaty hands.

The other high-ranking constellations were also interested. It was natural. As I said before, the fourth scenario was an event for the greatest constellations of each country.

"Is everyone gathered?"

The kings soon gathered in the middle and gave a speech.

"Our enemy is the Tyrant King who entered the third door! The Tyrant King has already received two jewels from this dungeon and cowardly raided innocent kings. Some of the people present would've lost a king to him."

That's why this waiting room was a field of corpses.

Perhaps the Tyrant King killed two kings and took away their star jewels. It meant he would soon gather all seven star jewels…

"The new Seoul shouldn't be handed over to such a person. If he gets the Four Yin Demonic Beheading Sword and then takes the Absolute Throne, there will be endless grief and tragedy in Seoul!"

"Thus, the people have to fight! Get up right now! The kings here are all wise. The future will be fine no matter which of us becomes the absolute king. We have to at least stop the worst king!"

"This will be a struggle for a righteous way of living! Take care! You will be great fighters taking your first step into a new history!"

The speech didn't have much substance but people became excited. Some people cheered, some sympathized while others were touched to tears. It was like they were real revolutionaries fighting for justice.

I looked at the scene alone.

Just one month ago, the people here had voted for a president. They did their duty and agreed to have private property through legitimate economic activities. All of a sudden, it felt like a dream.

In just one month, Seoul had returned to the kingdom days.

"Depart!"

Hundreds of people entered through the third door. Cha Sangkyung's group was at the back and we moved in line with them.

Our vision wavered before a giant tunnel appeared. It was a huge tunnel where the size couldn't be easily measured.

Han Sooyoung walked beside me and opened his mouth. "This is so exciting. I feel like I'm in a martial arts novel."

"A martial arts novel?"

Han Sooyoung nodded with a meaningful smile. "Why, don't you think it is like a martial arts novel? It is like a treasure map. The legendary sword is sleeping in the stone chamber and whoever obtains the sword shall be the best person in the world!"

Han Sooyoung spoke accompanied by gestures seemed quite plausible. It wouldn't be unbelievable if he was an actor.

"It is a common cliche in a martial arts novel, the treasure sword."

"Oh, Dokja-ssi, do you read martial arts novels as well?"

It couldn't be missed when talking about genre fiction.

"I read quite a bit. By the way, there is a common development in these cliche novels."

"Common development? What is it?"

"It turns out that the treasure map is a fake! This type of development."

Han Sooyoung's eyes shook. "This is interesting. What happens next?"

"It is an obvious story. The 'shadow' laughs quietly and kills the people gathered because of the fake treasure."

"Hoh… is that the current situation? Could someone be a shadow?"

I nodded and stated, "It is a possibility although I don't like such obvious cliches."

"Um? What does that mean?"

"To be honest, there are too many cliches like the treasure sword.

"Hmm… there are too many stories, making it bad?"

"For writers, I think it is a story that lacks distress."

Han Sooyoung's expression slightly hardened. "Then what would Dokja-ssi do if you were the writer? What if you had to write about the treasure sword?"

"I'm not sure. I am a 'reader' as my name suggests."

"I think that a reader would do the same. Writing familiar cliches will give satisfaction to the readers."

Yes, I thought he would say something like this. I smiled and asked, "Who said this? You are speaking as a writer. I'm not saying that cliches are bad. At the very least, a plagiarist shouldn't use it."

"Pla…giarist?"

"Yes, a plagiarist."

It was funny to see Han Sooyoung's face change colours.

"Well, every story is similar. It is the details that are a bit different… Can it really be called plagiarism? Perhaps if Dokja-ssi is the writer—"

"Nope, I would do it differently."

Han Sooyoung's eyebrows twitched. "…You would write it differently? How?"

"For example, like this."

I raised Unbroken Faith and cut his neck. No blood was visible as his head fell down.

I added, "Why are you hiding when it will be revealed anyway?"

Then Han Sooyoung's head spoke from where it was lying on the ground. "How interesting. Kim Dokja."

Chapter 69: Ep. 14 – Master of the Throne, V

I picked up his severed head and asked, "As expected, this is also an avatar. Han Sooyoung is your real name?"

"Yes."

Han Sooyoung was the First Apostle as I thought. That damn plagiarist was always hiding like a coward.

"W-W-What is this guy?" People shouted with alarm from all sides. There were confused voices and voices filled with betrayal. I stepped to one side with Yoo Sangah and Lee Gilyoung. Of course, Han Sooyoung's talking head was still held in one hand.

"I was right. It is you who spread out the 'text novel'. Right?"

"That's right, I scattered the text version of your plagiarized novel."

"…The revelation isn't plagiarized."

"It is plagiarism. Did you write the original setting?"

"Don't compare my work to that rubbish."

"You understand what I am saying and don't deny reading the original."

Han Sooyoung glared at me.

"Everyone, kill him! What are you doing?"

"A-A head is talking!"

Han Sooyoung's expression distorted. People were alarmed by the turmoil but showed no signs of acting. In addition, they would soon have no room to worry about us. I smiled at Han Sooyoung.

"The cliche that you said will start soon."

I waited and there was a burst of light. The rings of light moved, drawing lines of blood on the bodies of some people.

"What…?"

A person screamed as blood spurted from a body cut to pieces. The people in the back screamed and moved.

"Damn these guys!"

It was black magic power that came from a strong presence approaching in front of me.

"Raise the palanquin."

The neutral voice came from the large palanquin. There was the shadow of someone inside the palanquin. I reflexively shouted.

"Yoo Sangah-ssi, Gilyoung! Move back!"

A voice flowed from the palanquin.

"Move."

The palanquin started to approach the group of people. The three rings of light mercilessly swept over the battlefield. Dozens of people died at once.

People stared with disbelief as their limbs disappeared and blood spurted. The start of the battle lines instantly became bare.

"Uwah…"

The terrified group members retreated. In the seething silence, everyone shut their mouths like dead mice.

The Tyrant King walked out of the palanquin.

"They really aren't very good. The kings of the previous age…"

He held the Three Ring Loop in his hand, an item that released condensed magic power. It was a hidden item available in northern Seoul but it wasn't something the original Tyrant King had.

It must be true that he had some prophets.

[The exclusive skill, Character List is activated.]

[Character Summary]

Name: Jung Youngho

Age: 33 years old.

Sponsor: Great King Heoncheon Hongdo Gyungmun Wimu

Exclusive Attributes: Circus Member (Rare), Tyrant King (Hero)

Exclusive Skills: Grabbing Techniques Lv. 5, Sky Steps Lv. 3, Weapons Training Lv. 5.

Stigma: Palanquin Tank Lv. 5, Cheoyongmu Lv. 5, Tyranny Lv. 4

Overall Stats: Physique Lv. 30, Strength Lv. 28, Agility Lv. 28, Magic Power Lv. 34 (+2)

Overall Evaluation: The worst tyrant on the Korean Peninsula has met disgruntled citizens. Small citizens dissatisfied with the social system won't ignore the opportunities he gives them.

* 'Starter Pack' is currently applied.

* A growth package is currently applied.

* The New Scenarios package is currently applied.

The attributes window made sense. He was so strong because he used three packages. He also had a constellation who liked to walk dangerously on a tightrope.

An aura covered his entire body.

The Tyrant King was raising his synchronization with his sponsor to the limit. Several dokkaebis, including Bihyung, were staring at him from the air. They were prepared to make a 'plausibility request' at any time if he violated 'plausibility'.

"I certainly was a tyrant. But I am no longer a tyrant."

The Tyrant King, Great King Heoncheon Hongdo Gyungmun Wimu.

"History isn't scary. It is because from today onwards, I will make a new history for this land."

The top tyrant of the Korean peninsula who wasn't recorded as a 'king' in history.

"I am Yeonsangun[1], born Lee Yung!"

A tremendous magic power emerged from the Tyrant King as synchronization with the sponsor reached its limit.

The group members in the way exploded. Level 30 magic power was inserted in the Three Ring Loop. It was very dangerous.

"Don't back down!"

"Everyone fight!"

However, the Anti-Tyrant King Alliance was also unbelievable. Apart from the other kings, there was also the Maitreya King and the Earth Dragon King.

Once the kings united, the disadvantages were gradually reduced. The other kings raised the synchronization with their sponsor close to the limit. It wasn't just the incarnations, the constellations were also desperate.

I looked down at Han Sooyoung's head and asked, "You aren't going to fight?"

Han Sooyoung laughed at my words.

"Laughing? I guess you still have room to spare," I said.

"You… do you think it will go as you planned? Yeonsangun and the other kings have started to fight. Once they are exhausted, you will be able to take the Four Yin Demonic Beheading Sword. Right?"

It was pretty close.

"But it won't work! Your act of spreading the text was quite good but I have been preparing for today much longer than you."

"What nonsense are you saying?"

"In the end, the cliche will win."

The voice of the intermediate dokkaebi was heard in the air.

[Huhu, everyone is fighting well. Great constellations, are you desperate? I see. The incarnations and constellations should work hard. Does everyone want to go up another narrative class?]

The battlefield quieted down at the dokkaebi's voice.

[That's why I've brought good news. From now on, the second qualification test will begin!]

[King's Qualification]

1. 「The owner of the throne should be braver than anyone else.」

–The Absolute Throne never wants a 'weak king'. To challenge the throne, you must own at least a black flag.

2. 「He who dreams of the throne must desire it.」

–The number of 'kings' that can challenge the throne is decided. In order to gain the right to challenge it, you must remove the other kings around you.

The intermediate dokkaebi laughed.

[Please note that only five kings can challenge the final qualification of the Absolute Throne. The remaining number is… let's see.]

[Number of kings remaining: 14.]

The people started murmuring.

"F-Fourteen?"

"Are there still kings outside?"

[For your reference, there are 12 kings currently inside the hidden dungeon.]

I was a bit surprised. There were so many kings in this dungeon. Well, I didn't think I would be the only 'hidden' king.

"Who is it? Who is the king that is hiding?"

The Tyrant King laughed at the confused people.

"Hahaha! It is very funny that you are hitting each other in the back of the head!"

"Now isn't the time to fight among ourselves! We must pay attention to the Tyrant King!"

It happened when the kings barely regained their sense of reason.

"Here! This guy is the king!" Han Sooyoung's head shouted to everyone. "I saw it! He has a flag!"

"What?"

This was really…

I quickly trampled on Han Sooyoung's head. Everyone's attention focused on me. It was the moment when the death of one of the 'remaining kings' was decided.

"If we kill him…"

I felt it was cheap. The plagiarist's plot was too shallow. Wait a minute, perhaps?

…How interesting. Was it like that?

I focused on the people secretly moving behind the kings. They were the loyal subjects that the kings cherished.

"Cough…!"

The thin knife cut off the head of a king.

[The number of remaining kings has been reduced.]

[Number of kings remaining: 12.]

The Prudent King and Fighting King were exhausted, while the Maitreya King and Earth Dragon King were hit hard by the surprise attack. Even the Tyrant King was stabbed in the side and thighs by three men from behind.

"These damn people…!"

I realized who was behind this. The humans who betrayed their kings didn't bleed when their heads were cut off. The gems of the fallen kings were quickly taken by someone.

"The jewel! My jewel!!"

The star jewels were moved through the hands of the hidden 'avatars' and gathered in one person's hands.

"I told you. In the end, the cliche won."

A beautiful girl moved through the air and laughed as she landed on a niche. Surely this wasn't the main body of the plagiarist writer?

…I hadn't expected a woman.

The seven jewels gathered in her hands emitted light.

[The Fake King Han Sooyoung has gathered all seven star jewels!]

[The seven star jewels are sacrificed to summon a new item.]

[Fake King Han Sooyoung is summoning the Four Yin Demonic Beheading Sword!]

In the end, the plagiarist writer became the master of the Four Yin Demonic Beheading Sword.

She was the Fake King. It was an attribute that matched amazingly well.

"Dokja-ssi. What should we do?"

"It is still okay."

Yoo Sangah made a strange face at my blase words.

"Is it okay to be so calm? That is a great item."

That's right. The S+ grade item was great. But Yeonsangun's Three Ring Loop was also an S-grade item. The performance was a bit different but it wasn't that bad.

"Hahahaha! Die! Die!"

A dazzling magic power poured out of the Four Yin Demonic Beheading Sword and swept through the battlefield. However, people didn't die easily. People thought they were going to explode but they managed to neutralize her magic power.

Her magic power was weakened because she used a lot of avatars and above all, the three main kings were still alive.

The confused Han Sooyoung shouted, "W-What is this? Why is it so weak?"

"Kill her! Kill her and take away that sword!"

"U-Uwaaah! Back off! Back off!"

It turned out like this. Han Sooyoung was pushed back to where my party was located. I said to her,

"The cliche was subverted. This is what usually happens."

"Shut up!"

"Do you want me to help you?"

"No need!"

Han Sooyoung cried out and waved her sword again. But she seemed to be getting pushed back. I wanted to say something to this silly girl. The weapon wasn't famous because it was strong, but because the original owner was strong.

"I will kill you!"

The Tyrant King recovered his confidence and started attacking, while the other kings started to fight as well.

The battle soon became a melee with no allies. By the way, it should be time for him to come…

Was he still wandering? The northern region of Seoul was far but it was enough time for him to return.

[Number of kings remaining: 11.]

The signboard in the air changed.

[Number of kings remaining: 10.]

Ah, indeed.

[Number of kings remaining: 9.]

He came.

"W-What?"

"Why is the number dwindling suddenly?"

The surrounding kings were filled with fear. The number of kings started decreasing for an unknown reason.

[Number of kings remaining: 8.]

The fear of the kings' reached the limit as the number decreased to one digit.

"There is someone. Someone is killing the kings!"

On the other hand, there was someone rejoicing.

The Tyrant King.

"Hahaha! Who cares? You will also die!"

The Tyrant King was about to fire the Three Ring Loop again when the ceiling collapsed and the Tyrant King fell.

Kwaaaaang!

A formidable storm of magic power struck and the Tyrant King screamed painfully. The enormous storm of magic power that disassembled all living things into particles destroyed the Tyrant King's body.

"Uhh…ahhh…uwaaack!"

Then.

[Number of kings remaining: 7.]

Only the cold appearance of a person remained in front of them. The people close to the unusual scene trembled and flopped down.

"W-What? What is this?"

A man had killed the Tyrant King in a single blow, like he was a bug. The explosion cleared and his appearance was gradually revealed. The surviving kings and dying kings, everyone looked at him with captivation.

Han Sooyoung's legs shook with fear and she retreated.

"Nonsense… this is nonsense!"

The words of her avatar suddenly came to mind. The strongest among the Seven Kings in Seoul was the Tyrant King. I previously thought so but these words weren't true.

So far, I had met five out of the Seven Kings, including Han Donghoon who didn't become a king because of the prophets.

Hermit King of Shadows, Han Donghoon.

King of Beauty, Min Jiwon.

The Maitreya King Cha Sangkyung.

Earth Dragon King Gu Daesung.

Tyrant King Jung Youngho.

Apart from the Neutral King, who hadn't appeared yet, there was still one person.

Then who was the remaining person? The answer was simple. In fact, I met him before any other kings.

A furious voice rang through the battlefield.

"Kim Dokja…"

I smiled and waved towards him. A large black flag flew behind the person heading towards me.

"You came…"

Of the Seven Kings of Seoul, the strongest was naturally the Supreme King, Yoo Joonghyuk.

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[1] **Yeonsangun** is considered the worst tyrant of the Joseon Dynasty, perhaps all of Korean history, notorious for launching two bloody purges of palace officials. Wiki.

Chapter 70: Ep. 14 – Master of the Throne, VI

Nevertheless, a main character was a main character. I sent him to Gangbuk Station but he already had a black flag.

If a non-representative took away the flag of a representative, the hidden scenario 'Revolutionary Road' would open. He knew this and killed a representative on the way here, making him a king.

Looking at Yoo Joonghyuk's current appearance, it seemed like Lee Jihye and Jung Heewon did a good job.

I took a few steps back and looked at Han Sooyoung. "Hey, quickly give me that sword."

"I-I don't want to."

"Do you want to die here?"

Han Sooyoung's eyes were shaken as Yoo Joonghyuk moved. I exclaimed, "Gilyoung!"

Lee Gilyoung's eyes turned white like he had been waiting. I heard a tearing sound and something pounding on the dungeon.

Then after a while. The sickle of a praying mantis flew through one wall.

[The 6th grade insect king, Titanoptera has appeared!]

Lee Gilyoung's ability was the best. The whole cave shook with the enormous power of the giant insect king. As Yoo Joonghyuk looked back, I struck Han Sooyoung.

"A-Ack…!"

Han Sooyoung groaned and let go of the Four Yin Demonic Beheading Sword. I picked up the sword as well as the flag hanging from Han Sooyoung's neck as a bonus.

[You have won the flag of the 'Hongik University' group.]

[Your purple flag has absorbed the cumulative achievements of the black flag.]

[Your purple flag has evolved into a black flag.]

[You are able to use the perks of the black flag.]

[Congratulations! You have completed the first king's qualification.]

[Number of kings remaining: 6.]

I ran straight towards the Tyrant King. The Tyrant King was lying down between a pile of stones, his body crushed like dough. It was terrible. He tried to kill everyone only to die in vain like this.

Han Sooyoung shouted from behind me. "You thief!"

I ignored her and quickly swept up the Tyrant King's items.

[The item 'Three Ring Loop' has been acquired.]

[The item 'Dragon Jar' has been acquired.]

The revival 'Dragon Jar'. The Tyrant King obtained it by clearing the seven person dungeon.

"…Kim Dokja!"

Yoo Joonghyuk was chasing after me at a scary speed. Despite the fact that I had 30 agility, he narrowed the distance to me in an instant. I looked around and hid behind the nearest king.

"W-What?"

It was the king of Later Baekje, Gu Daesung.

"Kuaaaak!"

Yoo Joonghyuk's relentless blow cracked his head while Yoo Joonghyuk obtained his flag.

[The constellation 'Founder of Hannamgun' is looking at you.]

I felt sorry for Gyeon Hwon but it couldn't be helped. I promised to make it up to him next time.

At this time, I decided to stop running away.

"Joonghyuk, stop for a minute. Let's talk."

"That note…"

"The note?"

"My sister."

It was only two words but I instantly understood. Fortunately, Lee Jihye handled things safely. The note was given to Yoo Joonghyuk at the right time.

"What about your sister?"

"Where did you hide my sister?"

"What are you talking about?"

[The character Yoo Joonghyuk is currently using Lie Detection Lv. 6.]

[The character Yoo Joonghyuk has confirmed that your words are false.]

"If you don't tell me right away, you really will die."

I knew it was true even without Lie Detection. The reason why Yoo Joonghyuk was like this was entirely due to my plot.

I drove him to go north to save his sister, causing him to waste time searching the north. Yoo Joonghyuk's less worn-out personality in this third regression made the plan possible.

It couldn't be helped, even if I was acting cowardly. If Yoo Joonghyuk, who was much stronger than the original third regression, ignored everything and engaged in the war of kings, this scenario would've ended at his pace.

Then I would never get the ending that I wanted.

"…Okay. Let's put the sword down and talk. What if I was a real jerk?"

"Are you taking my family hostage?"

"That's going overboard. Isn't that just your words?"

The concept of a hostage didn't exist for him in the first place. This guy could just die and go back.

"Then why did you do this?"

"Why do you think"

Yoo Joonghyuk noticed that I was buying time and his expression cooled. "I should've killed you at that time… then die."

The moment that Yoo Joonghyuk raised his sword, a voice was heard from the air.

[Everyone here, please calm down. Why are you still fighting? Let's see, you've met the qualifications.]

The intermediate dokkaebi appeared at this moment.

Yoo Joonghyuk also confirmed the number board floating in the air.

[Number of kings remaining: 5.]

[The 'Last King's Qualification' has begun.]

The bodies of the remaining kings, including me and Yoo Joonghyuk, started to be forcibly moved through space.

"Kim Dok…!"

Yoo Joonghyuk reached out for me but it was too late.

I finally reached the last phase of this scenario.

[The qualified kings will move to the final testing place.]

The landscape started changing. It felt like my body was being sucked somewhere else. The next moment, tung! There was the sound of me bumping my head against something. A moment later, I became conscious again.

[You aren't qualified to take past in the 'Last King's Qualifications.]

…What?

I looked around and saw that I was standing in the centre of Gwanghwamun. I had bumped into a barrier the size of a schoolyard. The centre contained the Absolute Throne, the last reward of this scenario.

Why couldn't I enter?

[Hahaha! This, this! You were only looking at the big picture and missed something important!]

I looked up at the sound of laughter and saw the ridiculing face of the intermediate dokkaebi. I thought he was playing tricks on me but then an unexpected message flashed.

[You have failed to occupy the 'target station' of the fourth scenario.]

[You must first take the target station to be qualified for the 'Last King's Qualifications'.]

[Your group's target station is Changsin Station.]

Ah… I was only thinking about the kings and forgot. I hadn't occupied it yet.

[The last phase can't be performed unless the previous phase is cleared properly. Did you think you could get away with it?]

There was already fighting going on inside the barrier. If this continued, everything I had done would be in vain. I thought I should run to Changsin Station before it was too late.

By the way… damn. Wouldn't all the scenarios end if I ran there?

"Dokja-ssi!"

Yoo Sangah was rushing over here while carrying the collapsed Lee Gilyoung. But there were more people with them. Huh?

"Heewon-ssi?"

Jung Heewon ran to this side while holding the hands of a unknown girl.

"Is my brother really here?" The girl asked.

"Yes. How many times do I have to say it?"

"But I'm hungry."

Jung Heewon wasn't supposed to be here right now. After saving a girl from the Gangbuk area of Seoul, she should wait at Changshin Station. That was Jung Heewon's job in this scenario.

"Heewon-ssi, why are you here? I told you to wait at Changsin Station…"

"No, how long was I waiting? Besides, she has been hungry since morning. Aren't you worried about your sister?"

At Jung Heewon's words, the girl pointed to me and said, "That person isn't my brother."

"Eh?"

"He is uglier than my brother."

Damn kid. Jung Heewon was surprised as she looked between me and the girl. "Eh? This isn't Dokja-ssi's sister? I thought that was why you asked me to save her."

"No."

"Then who is it?"

It was natural for Jung Heewon not to know. Who would think this girl would be the psychopath's sister?

I heard a growling sound from the girl's stomach. I listened to the sound and laughter emerged.

…Would my perfect plan collapse here?

"Dokja-ssi, where are you going?"

"I'm going to occupy Changsin Station."

I had to challenge it, even if I was late. I wish there was a long-distance teleport scroll but the intermediate dokkaebi wouldn't let me open the Dokkaebi Bag.

Then Jung Heewon looked at me and opened her mouth. "Why would you go there?"

"Huh?"

"Kid, bring that thing out. Didn't I give it to you before?"

"Yes!"

Yoo Joonghyuk's sister, Yoo Mia put her hand in her mouth. After a moment, her mouth became abnormally large and an unusual sized stone emerged. It was Yoo Mia's exclusive skill, Inventory. I moved towards the chunk of stone.

"What is this?"

"Don't you know?"

I examined the rough surface of the stone. Then I saw a small groove that could hold something.

…I never thought of this. Was this method possible? No one had tried this in Ways of Survival.

Jung Heewon shamelessly said, "Don't you need the flagpole to occupy the station?"

What type of ignorant human would think up an idea like this? Jung Heewon had cut up the floor that contained the flag holder of Changshin Station.

[The constellation 'Adventurer who Stands Up an Egg' admires Jung Heewon's idea.]

I tried to say something but fell silent.

"Why, is something wrong?"

"…No."

"Then what are you doing? Go ahead and insert the flag."

I nodded and pulled out the flag.

[You have occupied Changsin Station.]

[You have earned 2,000 coins as a reward for 'Struggle for the Flag'.]

I really did it.

[Your group has occupied the target station.]

[Your body has moved to the battlefield of the 'Last King's Qualification'.]

My consciousness flickered again. A message popped up as a king's qualification was added.

[King's Qualification]

1. 「The owner of the throne should be braver than anyone else.」

–The Absolute Throne never wants a 'weak king'. To challenge the throne, you must own at least a black flag.

2. 「He who dreams of the throne must desire it.」

–The number of 'kings' that can challenge the throne is decided. In order to gain the right to challenge it, you must remove the other kings around you.

3. 「A single king stands alone without any help.」

–The king who can challenge the throne must be able to prove his strength was just his body.

[The constellation 'Maritime War God' is calmly watching the situation.]

[The constellation 'Bald General of Justice' is cheering for the historical-grade constellations.]

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is laughing.]

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' scoffs at the historical-grade constellations.]

The constellations had opposite reactions unlike other times. It was because the constellations had different ranks.

The gap between historical-grade and narrative-grade was like the difference between a child and an adult.

That's why the reaction of the constellations watching the broadcast differed. Like adults not paying attention to a child's game of hide-and-seek, this scenario was meaningless for constellations above narrative-grade.

But the historical-grade constellations were different.

In this scenario, the triumphant historical-grade constellation would climb to the absolute throne and build up their 'story'. This was why the historical-grade constellations were impatient once the King's Qualification scenario began.

I opened my eyes and the King's Battlefield began.

[From now on, all kings can't receive the support of their sponsor.

[From now on, the attack and defense of all items will be limited.]

[From now on, all skills, stigmas and special item options will be sealed.]

[From now on, the total stats of all kings will change to 10/10/10/10/10.]

[The Last King's Qualification will continue until one person is left.]

Chapter 71: Ep. 15 – A Kingless World, I

The last king's test. It was an extreme trial that had to be overcome with your body only.

The floor of Gwanghwamun was a mess. The Absolute Throne was in the centre while the kings were fighting each other.

King of Beauty, Min Jiwon.

The Maitreya King Cha Sangkyung.

Supreme King Yoo Joonghyuk.

Then the middle-aged man in the corner… He was the Neutral King. The Neutral King raised his hands as he met my eyes.

[The Neutral King has abstained from fighting for the throne.]

As the name suggested, the Neutral King wasn't greedy for the throne. Only the remaining three were greedy.

One of the three was Yoo Joonghyuk so the fight should've ended in less than a minute. At least, if it was the original story.

"Die!"

Maitreya King Cha Sangkyung's leg split apart the air while Yoo Joonghyuk's kick struck Cha Sangkyung's abdomen.

"Kuk!"

However, Cha Sangkyung wasn't as damaged as expected. It was because all stats were changed to level 10. The skills were sealed so Yoo Joonghyuk had to win the battle with just his flesh memories.

Min Jiwon looked behind them and saw me. I nodded slightly at her.

"We meet again."

"…Yes. I didn't want to fight you if possible."

Min Jiwon must've filled the other king's qualifications if she came to this place. It was great. I honestly didn't think she could survive until the end.

"If you don't abstain, I will attack."

"Try it. Do you think it will be easy?"

We have to fight with all our stats at level 10 with no skills or no stigma. It was too shabby compared to the kings who broke the city while fighting a while ago.

There was a loud noise and Cha Sangkyung screamed, "Cough! W-Why…?"

Cha Sangkyung rolled around painfully on the floor after being struck by Yoo Joonghyuk's fist. It had been an equal fight until then but something was changing little by little.

Skills and stigmas couldn't be used but Yoo Joonghyuk's attacks were getting faster and harder. It wasn't merely Yoo Joonghyuk's combat sense.

Min Jiwon became surprised as she noticed.

"…How?"

If I remembered correctly, Yoo Joonghyuk knew the loophole of the last phase. Maybe these messages were currently rising in Yoo Joonghyuk's mind.

[400 coins have been invested in physique.]

[400 coins have been invested in agility.]

[400 coins have been invested in strength.]

The funny thing was that this battlefield controlled everything except for one factor. It was the use of the coins.

[The constellation 'Slumbering Lady of Fine Brocade' questions the fairness of the scenario.]

The intermediate dokkaebi laughed.

[Haha, what is your question? It is a natural right to be able to use coins. The 'coins' are the hard-earned work of the incarnations. They worked so hard to gather coins that they should have a chance to use it.]

Yoo Joonghyuk was raising his stats using his coins.

[Oh, the stats increased with the coins will be reset after the scenario is over. So be careful! It is like throwing away coins into the air! Hahaha!]

Min Jiwon and Cha Sangkyung's complexions darkened once they heard the words of the intermediate dokkaebi. Perhaps they didn't have much coins remaining. It was natural. They wouldn't be able to save coins in the battlefield between kings.

But Yoo Joonghyuk was different. Yoo Joonghyuk grew by breaking through all types of hidden scenarios from the beginning and always carried an appropriate amount of coins in reserve.

The original third round Yoo Joonghyuk had around 30,000 coins at this point. Now he had more coins than the original story so… it should be around 40,000?

There was the loud sound of somebody being hit and Cha Sangkyung's body flew through the air.

[The Maitreya King Cha Sangkyung is out of combat.]

Yoo Joonghyuk looked at the nearby Min Jiwon. She jumped with surprise and hurriedly raised both hands.

"…I will abstain."

['King of Beauty' Min Jiwon has abstained from the battle.]

Finally, Yoo Joonghyuk turned towards me. His angry eyes calmed down. It was understandable. If he took the Absolute Throne, he could control all kings and it wouldn't be a problem to get his sister back from me.

But would that happen?

"Yoo Joonghyuk."

We aimed out swords at each other. I couldn't use any skills so I had to rely on my flesh memories and my stats.

For the first time, Yoo Joonghyuk's blade was visible. It must be a fake. He was estimating my stats and how much coins I had left.

He was truly a prudent person. It was a trick to win by investing the minimum amount of coins.

However, his pride would cause his defeat this time. It was because there wasn't any king in Seoul who had more coins than me right now.

[Coins Possessed: 80,850 C]

Who would think that I had 80,000 coins? I laughed at Yoo Joonghyuk who was running towards me.

"I'll hit you gently so please don't die."

Now was the time to spend big. I invested a large number of coins into 'strength'.

[4,000 coins have been invested in strength.]

[Strength Lv. 10 -> Strength Lv. 20]

[5,000 coins have been invested in strength.]

[Strength Lv. 20 -> Strength Lv. 30]

[6,000 coins have been invested in strength.]

[Strength Lv. 30 -> Strength Lv. 40]

.

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[11,000 coins have been invested in strength.]

[Strength Lv. 80 -> Strength Lv. 90]

[12,000 coins have been invested in strength.]

[Strength Lv. 90 -> Strength Lv. 100]

[72,000 coins have been consumed.]

[Your 'strength' has broken through the limits of a human.]

[The achievement has been processed! You are the first to achieve a three digit level in strength.]

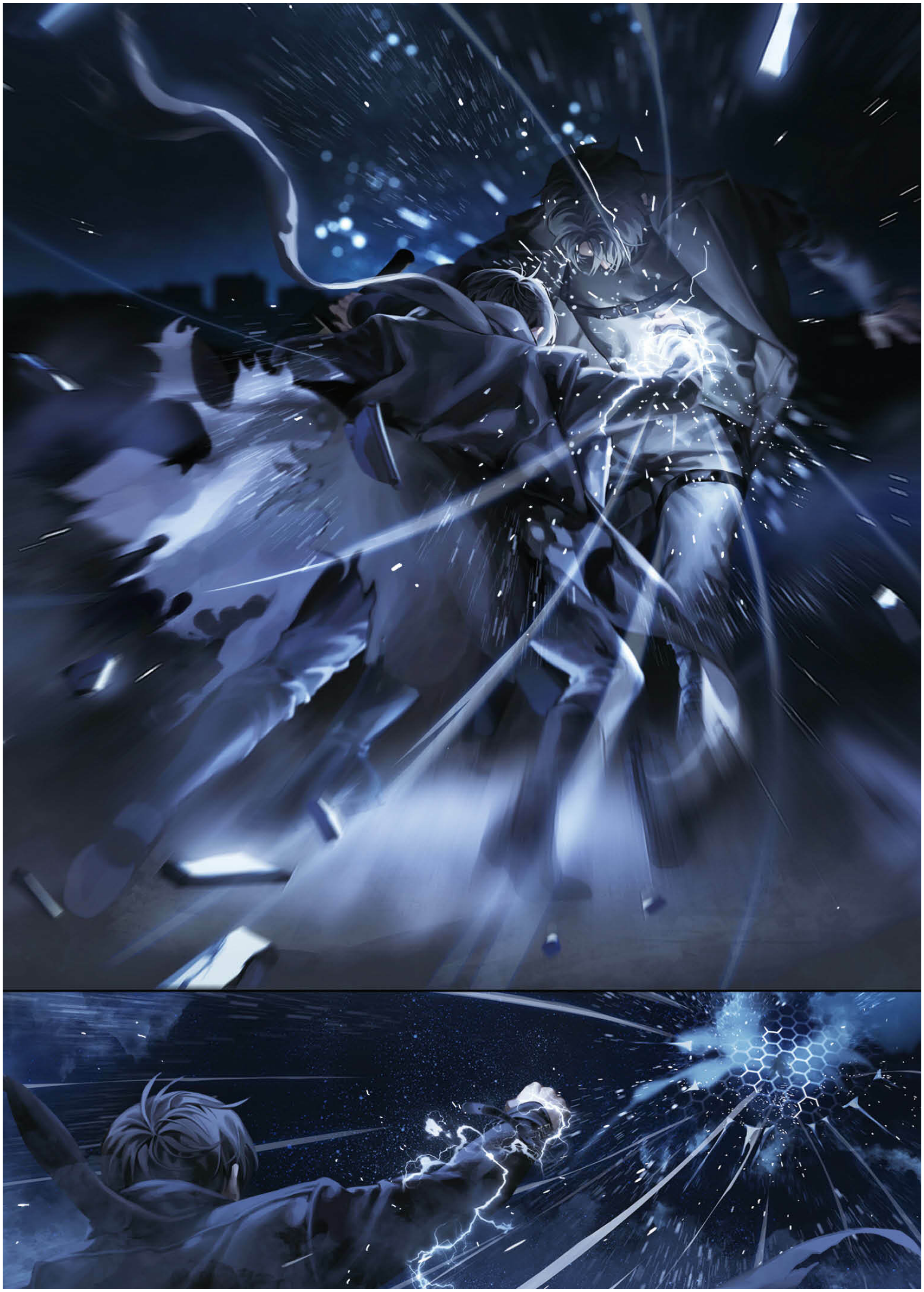
[30,000 coins have been acquired as a reward.]

I adjusted the power in my fist. A strike containing 100 strength was enormous. It would be difficult if I accidentally killed Yoo Joonghyuk.

I felt the space around my fist bend slightly. According to Ways of Survival, all stats had different destructive power from the moment they broke through the three digits.

How did it feel? Of course, it felt like I was a killer. It felt like my fist was holding a check for a billion won.

Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes widened as he hurriedly used coins. However, it was too late. There was a sound like a sonic boom.



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Yoo Joonghyuk shot into the sky like a baseball being hit by a bat.

Unfortunately, it was impossible to hit a home room in this stadium. The flying Yoo Joonghyuk hit a barrier, bounced in the opposite direction and hit another barrier and landed on the ground after repeating this ping-pong action five or six times.

…Surely he wasn't dead? I ran towards Yoo Joonghyuk with a bit of confusion in my heart.

Damn, why did I do this? I should've used a bit less strength. I carefully pulled Yoo Joonghyuk off the ground. Then.

Ah, this was a main character. Yoo Joonghyuk was staring at me with wide open eyes. He was still conscious despite being hit by a punch filled with 100 strength?

"…Yoo Joonghyuk?"

"…"

"Joonghyuk?"

"…"

His eyes didn't move. This bastard, did he faint with his eyes open? Did I hit him that hard? No, I would have to keep hitting Yoo Joonghyuk in the future.

"Well, you will be in trouble if you keep acting as usual. How can you say you'll kill me every time you see me?"

I slapped his swollen face. Somehow, I felt his eyes move whenever I hit him, causing me to feel nervous…

In any case, he was breathing. The bones in his body were broken and he was bleeding…

It was a situation where he couldn't use the Recovery skill so his life could be in danger.

I had to do my work quickly.

[Supreme King Yoo Joonghyuk is out of combat.]

[Congratulations! You have passed all the tests of the Absolute Throne.]

The ward in the air slowly disappeared.

[The temporary stats added by the coins are reset.]

[All constraints on the kings have disappeared.]

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' has his hair standing up from excessive carbonic acid.]

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' applauds your actions.]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' admires your patience.]

[4,500 coins have been sponsored.]

I also heard the messages of the historical-grade constellations.

[The constellation 'Slumbering Lady of Fine Brocade' is regretful.]

[The constellation 'One-eyed Maitreya' has thrown away his eyepatch.]

[The constellation 'Founder of Hannamgun' feels a grudge towards you.]

Of course, the kings of the three kingdoms blamed me. Thanks to me, they missed an opportunity to jump to the 'narrative' grade.

[…Oh, a surprising winner has appeared.]

The intermediate dokkaebi looked somewhat dissatisfied. He hadn't expected me to win. Yet I had won.

[Well… good. This is the result. Now, I am informing all incarnations of Seoul. Just now, a new owner of the Absolute Throne was born!]

I stopped the intermediate dokkaebi who was about to launch the system messages.

"Wait a minute."

[…What do you want?]

The dokkaebi's eyebrows twitched.

"You are too hasty. I haven't even sat on the throne yet. Shouldn't you ask me first?"

[You will go up now so does it matter?]

I approached the Absolute Throne. At this moment, I felt all constellations observing the Seoul Dome focus on me.

The Absolute Throne floating in the sky slowly descended towards me. It showed off its golden charm like it had been waiting for me for a long time.

I asked the intermediate dokkaebi, "What can I do with this?"

[You can do anything to humans.]

It was short but scary.

[The Absolute Throne is just the name of the item. As long as you sit on the throne, you can become an omnipotent power. No one on this earth can stand against you and everyone will bow before you!]

The people looked at me enviously after hearing the dokkaebi's explanation.

It was natural to envy me. Everybody had run to this place for this reason.

[The constellation 'Slumbering Lady of Fine Brocade' is licking her lips.]

Even the constellations…

It was really pitiful and strange. They felt envious despite knowing the real identity of the item. I really disliked the constellations.

"Is that all?"

[…Huh?]

"It is so good that it's ridiculous. I will enjoy absolute power on the land that I control."

[Isn't it right to receive a reward in return for suffering? How many times have you almost died due to the throne…?]

"Ah, so the throne can act beyond the constraints of plausibility?"

[What?]

"You are good at lying. Aren't you a dokkaebi? Won't the Bureau say something if you scam me like this?"

The expression of the intermediate dokkaebi hardened. On the other side, Bihyung was looking at me with a pale face. [I am tired of this talk.

I have to finish the scenario. Now sit on the throne. If you talk nonsense one more time, I will break the Absolute Throne.]

"…Ah, you can do that? Then go ahead."

[Huh?]

I looked at the dokkaebi and the people staring before opening my mouth.

"I will never sit on this Absolute Throne."

A terrible silence swept through Gwanghwamun.

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* Official novel illustration (canonical)

Chapter 72: Ep. 15 – A Kingless World, II

There was the sound of thunder in the sky and it started to rain. Light rose from the Absolute Throne to touch the sky. Thick rain clouds swirled around this light. It was a sign of the fifth scenario, the Great Hole.

The intermediate dokkaebi opened his mouth amidst the rain.

[…What did you say just now?]

"The throne, I won't accept it."

[I don't know why you're doing such a thing. Don't you think it will benefit you to gain more coins at this time? Didn't you just use a lot of coins? You should be rewarded. If you don't have the power of the Absolute Throne, the Seoul Dome will never survive the fifth scenario.]

The people in Gwanghwamun screamed at me once they heard the dokkaebi's words.

"What? What are you thinking?"

"Don't be stupid and sit down quickly!"

"Damn, I will sit…!"

The dokkaebi kept talking like he thought it was going his own way.

[That throne can give you what you want. Just sitting on the throne will build up your 'narrative' and the sponsor you have contracted with will rise. Don't you know what this means?]

In fact, I could hear the outcry of the constellations in my ears.

[The constellation 'Adventurer who Stands Up an Egg' wants to be your sponsor.]

[The constellation 'Seo Ae Il Pil' wants to be your sponsor.]

…….

[500 coins have been sponsored.]

The intermediate dokkaebi continued to speak in a cold voice.

[I will warn you in advance. I'm not like the low level dokkaebis. Don't think that flimsy tricks will work on me.]

I looked at the Absolute Throne. As the dokkaebi said, the fifth scenario would be difficult to clear without the Absolute Throne.

However, I knew what the dokkaebi wasn't saying. If I used this 'Absolute Throne' once, I would never be able to reach the end of the scenarios. In the original work, Yoo Joonghyuk noticed this only at the 14th regression.

The 'Absolute Throne' was such an item.

"Why aren't you becoming king?"

An agitated person appeared among the crowd. The man breathed out and spat at me like I insulted him.

I turned towards the man. "That is what I want to ask. Why do you want me to become king?"

"What?"

"What will you do if I kill you after you become king?"

The lips of the man stiffened for a moment. I continued watching the people around us. "All of you are the same. Have you already forgotten? We originally didn't live in a kingdom. Why are you acting like citizens of a kingdom?"

Why didn't I want to be king? It was simple.

"I don't want to be the king of ugly humans like you." I looked up at the sky while speaking. "In addition, I don't want ugly constellations like you to be my sponsor."

Then I looked at the throne.

"Thus, I will never sit on the Absolute Throne. But." I pulled out my blade. "I won't allow other people to sit on the throne."

Once someone sat down, it meant that no one else could sit. The intermediate dokkaebi's cold eyes flashed.

[You should be careful. I'm not that patient…]

I continued to speak as I stared at the dokkaebi.

"How long will you continue to be drawn helplessly into the dokkaebi's scenarios? Does anyone know what it means to sit on the Absolute Throne?"

I knew how much the people who were once 'obedient' would pay to leave this obedience.

"The constellations of the Korean peninsula. It is the same for you. I know that not all constellations are the same. Some constellations are low and some are high."

There was an invisible rank among constellations.

Just as some constellations watched the incarnations, other constellations watched the constellations. To be precise, the low constellations were the ones being watched.

"But is it enough now? How long will you turn this land into a playground for unhappy guests?"

[The constellation 'One-eyed Maitreya' is immersed.]

"Working up to build up history to become a constellation and then building up narratives to become narrative-grade constellations… then what? The higher the sky, the brighter the star? How long will you continue using the descendants of this land for your own sake?"

[The constellation 'Slumbering Lady of Fine Brocade' is silent.]

At this moment, the intermediate dokkaebi acted.

[I can't stand it any longer.]

A system message arrived at the same time.

[A new sub scenario has arrived!]

[Sub Scenario – Forced Succession]

Category: Sub

Difficulty: B

Clear Conditions: Suppress the incarnation Kim Dokja, who doesn't want to sit on the throne and place him on the throne.

Time Limit: 30 minutes

Compensation: 6,000 coins

Failure: —

Yes, I thought it would turn out like this.

The people who had been shaken by my words were now approaching.

In the end, it was just like the dokkaebi said. The people present and me as well. No matter what I said, they would sell their conscience for a few coins.

Of course, this didn't apply to everyone.

"Pass me if you can." A woman appeared in front of me. People faltered at her growled out words. It was Jung Heewon.

"No matter what the world is like, there is something you shouldn't forget." Yoo Sangah suddenly approached. Lee Gilyoung was standing behind me with a hammer like he had been waiting. Jung Minseob and Lee Sungkook also came forward.

"…Sometimes, Representative-nim is more like the protagonist than Yoo Joonghyuk."

"Yoo Joonghyuk isn't this crazy…"

There were also surprising people.

"Just this once, I will help you."

"Your words are convincing."

They were King of Beauty Min Jiwon and Maitreya King Cha Sangkyung. I didn't know which of my words had moved their hearts. However, it was clear that something had changed. Even so, it was only a handful.

[You are playing well… what are all of you doing? Pull him down now!]

People started running towards the throne. Jung Heewon pushed through the people around me and asked, "Dokja-ssi, do you have an idea?"

"Yes."

"What should we do?"

"Buy me some time. I have to destroy this throne."

The length of the new scenario was contained in this throne. I pulled out a sword causing someone to cry out.

"The Four Yin Demonic Beheading Sword!"

The S+ grade Four Yin Demonic Beheading Sword.

However, it was an item that could be changed into a star relic if certain conditions were satisfied. It was because the Four Yin Demonic Beheading Sword was an item made with the soul of a constellation.

[Ganpyeongui's special option 'Echo of the Stars' has been activated.]

['Echo of the Stars' allows you to ask for the help of a constellation.]

"I'll call a constellation."

[The great constellations hear your voice flowing through the stars.]

I called out to the constellations like I had memorized a spell.

"I want the first star of the Big Dipper."

The Greedy Wolf star (Dubhe).

"I want the second star of the Big Dipper."

The Great Gate star (Merak).

"I want the third star of the Big Dipper."

The Blessing star (Phecda).

"I want the fourth star of the Big Dipper."

The Literate Turn star (Megrez).

"I want the fifth star of the Big Dipper."

The Clean and Pure star (Alioth).

"I want the sixth star of the Big Dipper."

The Military Turn star (Mizar).

[The star navigation has begun.]

[The six constellations are looking at you.]

The thousands of constellations disappeared and my mind became heavy like a crowded subway. I felt dizzy while blood flowed from my nose and ears. It was hard to even think. My brain became overloaded the moment I contacted six constellations at the same time. The Great Bear stars started talking.

[What are you thinking?]

[You called all of us.]

[Your mind will be completely destroyed.]

[Why call us?]

[Why don't you go the easy path…]

[Instead of the thorny path?]

However, I didn't stop. Yes, one more constellation needed to be called if I wanted to use the Four Yin Demonic Beheading Sword. But there were no constellations left on the Sky Disc.

[You have exhausted the number of times that Ganpyeongui can be used.]

I pulled out the Dragon Jar that I got from the Tyrant King and dissolved something in it.

The 7 person dungeon, the dissolving jar. I put two items in the jar.

"I will sacrifice the S-grade Three Ring Loop and the S-grade Ganpyeongui to call one more constellation."

[The 'Dissolve' power of the Dragon Jar has shown its strength.]

[The S-grade Three Ring Loop has disappeared as a sacrifice.]

[The S-grade Ganpyeongui has one more use.]

I once again used Ganpyeongui and called one last constellation.

"I want the seventh star of the Big Dipper."

The Broken Army star (Alkaid).

Seven stars filled the air. The seven stars that made up the Big Dipper were all gathered. At the same time, the seven stars spoke to me.

[What do you want from us?]

"I want to cut off the signs of the constellations. Lend me your sword."

[…Do you know what this means?]

"I know."

I did this despite being well aware of the risk.

The final reward of the fourth scenario was the Absolute Throne.

The throne was an item that borrowed the power of a 'god of the world'.

It would be very convenient if I got the throne. I would be able to put restrictions on Yoo Joonghyuk and the enemies threatening me would disappear.

But Seoul would surely be eliminated. It would be a complete destruction without any salvation or miracles.

It was the price to be paid for borrowing the power of the throne. In order to obtain the ending I wanted, no one could take this throne.

[Even the heavenly constellations are afraid of the founder of the throne.]

[But you, a human, wants to challenge the owner of this thing?]

"I can do it with your help. And I'm not fighting against the owner. I just want to cut the connection between the owner and this thing."

[It is likely that you can't afford it.]

[You will die.]

"It is something that I've decided. Then I will start now."

The seven stars were silent. Some time passed. The Big Dipper shone brightly and their signs were engraved onto the sword.

[I shall respect your will.]

[Even if you die here.]

[We will remember you.]

A dazzling light wrapped around the Four Yin Demonic Beheading Sword and it started to burn with bright flames.

[The S+ grade Four Yin Demonic Beheading Sword has evolved into the star relic 'Four Yin Demonic Beheading Sword'.]

The star relic Four Yin Demonic Beheading Sword was originally a ceremonial sword. It was a sword to cut off evil energy and prevent disasters.

I swung the sword towards the Absolute Throne. There was a loud sound and fire flared.

*

The Four Yin Demonic Beheading Sword was one of the few items that could break the link that a constellation had to a star relic.

There was a tearing sound in the air.

As if it started to notice something, an ominous black light floated above the Absolute Throne. I swung it a few more times and the Four Yin Demonic Beheading Sword started to collapse. Now I had to believe in the Big Dipper stars. Yoo Sangah cried out, "Dokja-ssi! Quickly!"

I wielded the sword like a madman. I ignored the breaking blade and continued to hit the throne. Sparks flashed and the blade broke.

Then finally.

[The constellation linked to the star relic 'Absolute Throne' has disappeared.]

[The 'Unknown God' has noticed a change in this world.]

The Absolute Throne became an ordinary chair and lost its light. The intermediate dokkaebi's angry voice was heard.

[You lowlifes can't grasp who you are dealing with…!]

[The sub scenario has ended.]

People stopped moving. The scenario was over so they didn't have to continue. The Big Dipper stars told me.

[Incarnation, prepare for the flooding of probabilities.]

As soon as I heard the voice, blood poured from my mouth.

It felt like something was pulling at my presence. An enormous power that seemed to tear at my flesh surrounded me. I struggled to regain my mind. It was going to be okay.

The 'probability' would become 'plausibility'. I tried my best to make everything plausible. Thus, I could overcome this.

I barely held onto consciousness. Then a star in the distant night sky shone quietly.

[The constellation 'Maritime War God' is looking at you.]

It was a calm, lonely but gentle gaze.

[The constellation 'Bald General of Justice' is looking at you.]

Then two.

[The constellation 'Last Hero of Hwangsanbeol' is looking at you.]

Three.

[The constellation 'Slumbering Lady of Fine Brocade' is looking at you.]

…….

The intermediate dokkaebi called out when he saw the messages from the constellations.

[Why…?]

Every time a star was added, my pain diminished a little bit. I realized that the constellations were sharing the 'probabilities' that I had to bear. The 'story that isn't plausible' became a 'plausible story' with the consent of many stars. Numerous stars were wrapping me in their light. The Big Dippers also lent me their strength.

[Is this the story that you wanted to show?]

I wanted to answer but I didn't have the power.

[We will watch you, king of the world without kings.]

The chaotic Seoul night sky. I looked at the stars that sent me light.

[The constellation 'King Heungmu the Great' is looking at you.]

[The constellation 'One-eyed Maitreya' is looking at you.]

…….

All the historical-grade constellations of Seoul were shining towards me. There were many stars. Still, it wasn't enough to overturn the dark night sky.

I looked up at the turbulent clouds that filled the Great Hole.

[The fourth scenario is forcibly ended.]

[There was an unscheduled incident so it will take time to settle the scenario.]

I wiped the blood pouring from my nose and the intermediate dokkaebi approached.

[You have made the worst choice. You will regret what you did today for the rest of your life. I will make sure of it.]

I laughed as my vision blurred. The dokkaebi's words meant that I won the game.

[You have accomplished a non-existence achievement.]

[Your new narrative is created.]

[The story 'King of a Kingless World' has been born.]

[You have obtained the possibility of a stigma.]

I didn't have a next 'regression'. I would reach the end of the story in this world.

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* Official novel illustration (canonical)

싱숑 장편소설

전지적 독자 시점

Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint

PART 1

04

비채

*

Chapter 73: Ep. 15 – A Kingless World, III

The first narrative was built. With this, the main goal of the fourth scenario was achieved.

"What the hell is going to happen now?"

"No, why did you break the throne?"

There were people who were bewildered by the situation while others were scared about what the angry dokkaebi would do.

From the perspective of the people present, I was a sinner who made the fifth scenario difficult. Some people cried out to the dokkaebi.

"Make the Absolute Throne again! I'll join the scenario again!"

"This time I will be the master of the throne!"

[The scenarios that have already ended can't be changed by anyone. Anything that happens to you from now on is the fault of that human.]

The intermediate dokkaebi's answer was cold.

The dokkaebi pointed towards me while the wet shoulders of the gathered people shook.

[A world with no kings? Okay. Let's try it once. I will see how well you can survive without a focal point.]

The intermediate dokkaebi flicked his finger. Then the people in Gwanghwamun started to disappear like smoke. People screamed and ran away.

"What? What's happening?!"

…This was an unscheduled development.

I looked back and saw Jung Heewon, Yoo Sangah, Lee Gilyoung and the others calling out to me.

"Dokja-ssi!"

The next moment, Yoo Sangah disappeared. Then Lee Gilyoung and Jung Heewon. Next was Jung Minseob and Lee Sungkook. One minute after the dokkaebi flicked his finger, I was the only one remaining in Gwanghwamun. The intermediate dokkaebi looked at me with a creepy smile.

[Please keep this in mind. If this world is destroyed, it is all because of you.]

The moment I wanted to speak, there was a ringing sound.

My body shook and I was moved elsewhere. It was accompanied by severe nausea and a headache. I lost consciousness because I had consumed a great deal of energy.

[10,000 coins have been earned as settlement for the fourth scenario.]

I slept for quite a long time because I was tired from excessive contact with the constellations.

I even dreamt. It was a dream from before the end began.

–Hey, aren't you awake?

The moment I heard the voice, I realized it was my high school days. They were the days when I was beaten up by the school gangsters.

…Yes. There were times like this. It was a childish dream but I became furious when I thought about it again.

–What? Why are you looking at me like that? Do you want to kill someone?

My head fell back from his slap.

Blood flowed from my cracked lips and my tingling cheeks caused a feeling of shame.

Arms, legs, and shoulders. Pain came from all these places. It might be a dream but it was more painful than reality. Maybe it was because there was no Fourth Wall here.

–Why? If it is too much, stab me. Do you want to appear in the same newspapers as your mother?

My clenched fists trembled but I couldn't hit him. At that time, what had I been thinking?

'…If only I was Yoo Joonghyuk'.

Yes, that's right. This was what I thought in my misery. It was the time when I was reading Ways of Survival.

I say the name on the uniform's name badge.

Song Minwoo.

What was he doing now? I remember that he had gone to university and was working well. That was the first time I thought the world was unfair. I didn't know if he was still alive.

[The exclusive skill, 'Fourth Wall' is activated!]

My dream collapsed and I was left in the dark again.

[Exclusive skill, Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint stage 3 has been activated!]

Voices started to overlap.

「Hey, can you hear me? Are you okay?」

「Representative-nim?」

「Dokja-ssi, where are you?」

They were the familiar voices of people I knew.

The words were conveyed through the 'third person perspective' of Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint's third stage. I knew who the voices belonged to without looking.

「"Ah…why here? Dokja-ssi? Can you hear me?"」

There was a bar with various types of wine. Jung Heewon was frowning and sighing.

「"A love letter… I will meet that ahjussi again… damn, why did I fall to the school?"」

Lee Jihye was touching her cheeks as if she had been hit by someone.

「 How come… why… here…? 」

Lee Hyunsung was trapped in a nearby military base.

…I could roughly guess what happened based on people's reactions.

The people in Gwanghwamun seemed to be moved to places they had an association with. That's why Lee Jihye was at a school while Lee Hyunsung was sent to a military base. Lee Hyunsung was the most pathetic one.

Maybe it was the damn intermediate dokkaebi's doing.

He created a situation where the incarnations were scattered all over the place. No matter how irrelevant it was to the main scenario, the intermediate dokkaebi would surely be reprimanded.

I looked at the confused people and muttered.

'I'm fine so take care of yourself. I will see you soon'.

They couldn't hear me but I hoped the words would reach them.

[Exclusive skill, Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint stage 3 has ended.]

I slowly returned to consciousness as my eyelids opened. Black clouds were still swirling over Seoul like a black hole.

I got up and looked around. It was a panoramic view of Seoul. It was a place where skyscrapers and high-rise buildings could be seen.

That reminded me, I should be moved to a place related to me. At first glance, it looked like the rooftop of a high-rise building in Seoul…

"This place…?"

Damn, I thought it was possible but I really didn't want to come here.

[A few constellations are looking forward to the words you will say to yourself.]

"…Mino Soft?"

This was the rooftop of the company I worked for, Mino Soft.

[A few constellations are disappointed.]

[Constellations who don't like to be rushed are pleased.]

When I saw the indirect messages that came to my mind, I felt that the constellations focusing on me had expanded after I broke the Absolute Throne.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' threatens the newly appeared constellations.]

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' is coughing at the pretentious people.]

Why did I come here? A street in Seoul without any cars. The offices with the lights turned off.

I felt nostalgia as I saw these familiar buildings. It was the first time I went to work in a month.

I felt really weird when I remembered coming up to the rooftop with Deputy Yoon after being scolded by Team Leader Han. When previously I had been testing new games, now I was cutting people with a blade.

Was Deputy Yoon still alive?

I turned my head and saw messages flashing in the air.

[There are 10 days before the start of the fifth scenario.]

The scenarios were flowing as I expected. If the Absolute Throne was destroyed, Seoul Dome would get a respite for 10 days.

The fifth scenario, the Great Hole.

During this grace period, I had to find a way to clear the fifth scenario without the Absolute Throne.

[A sub scenario is in progress to supplement the interlude.]

[Sub Scenario – Survival Activities]

Category: Sub

Difficulty: C+

Clear Conditions: Survive for 10 days in the ruined city. You should eat three meals a day and get at least six hours of sleep a day. Don't forget to pay 500 coins per day before going to sleep every night. There will be a clear penalty if you violate any of these three rules.

Duration: 10 days

Compensation: None

Failure: Death

* This is a scenario where a 'coin event' is applied.

* All monsters in the scenario have a certain probability of dropping coins.

I roughly knew how things had gone. The existing scenario was completely destroyed so they hastily put together a sub scenario.

Furthermore, it overlapped with a coin payment event. I thought they were going to do it soon but I hadn't expected it to start already.

A survival fee of 500 coins a day… it was a scenario that couldn't be cleared without a coin event.

Anyway, now I had to move. I couldn't miss out on the chance to replenish my coins.

Then people's voices were heard from below the roof.

"Drag it! Quickly!"

I looked down and saw armed people entering the building, with others behind them.

Mino Soft was located near Seocho-gu. But in my memories, there were no 'king' forces in the Seocho area.

…Then who were they? I carefully observed the armed people and realized something.

Yes, they were the 'wanderers'. Each person had a different way of living in this destroyed world.

Someone would become 'king' and others would become 'the people'. Someone else would become a 'wanderer' without any affiliation.

And Seocho was the land of wanderers.

I turned on my smartphone to look up the information on this area. Unfortunately, I was out of battery. I needed to find a place to recharge the battery or find a spare battery…

I opened the roof door and went downstairs. I passed through the president's office, the planning department and the finance department. I walked through the office of the QA team that I had worked in for a while when I stopped.

It was fair to say that my memory was quite good. I went into the office and opened the drawers one by one.

It was because I thought a spare battery might be left behind. At that time, someone entered with a flashlight.

I reflexively pulled out my sword but there was a strange noise.

"Eh?"

…?

"D-Dokja-ssi? It is Dokja-ssi!"

Then I saw the man's face.

"Deputy Yoon?"

"Ahh, you're alive! You are alive!"

It was Deputy Yoon of the QA team.

"It was really terrible."

I heard from Deputy Yoon about what happened at Mino Soft. To be exact, it was what happened after I got off from work.

"The first scenario started for all the people on the night shift."

Deputy Yoon spoke while holding his nose.

The corridor of the company was filled with rotting body odor and maggots. Some of the bodies had faces of people I knew but I didn't see any mourning or sadness on Deputy Yoon's expression.

"Do you know? That guy over there, Team Manager Kim, I killed him. Why, that bastard… I stabbed his neck with a ballpoint pen and blood… it really was like a game."

"…Deputy Yoon."

"S-Sorry. Is it uncomfortable talking about this? Haha."

It was a natural change but I felt bitter seeing Deputy Yoon's changed appearance. No… maybe this was what Director Yoon was like now.

"Are you alone here?"

"Huh? Ahh, I'm not alone. By the way, where was Dokja-ssi?"

"Ah, I…"

"I didn't see you in the company. What group are you affiliated with? Where you somewhere else?"

"Yes, well… Something similar. I was originally on the Gwanghwamun side of the bridge when…"

Deputy Yoon didn't listen to the end as he interrupted.

"Aha, I see. Dokja-ssi, you luck is really bad."

"…Huh?"

"There is no need to pass through all the scenarios. Don't you know? If you hide well and use moderate tricks, most scenarios will be broken by other people. There is no need to risk your life. Haha, it is very comfortable despite the world being like this."

It was true. If you became a 'wanderer' who didn't belong to anyone, you could get rid of some scenario that must be cleared and have the main scenarios cleared by someone else. There were many such people in Seoul Dome.

They problem was that if you lived in hiding and were caught by surrounding groups, you would die. There was no prey as good as the 'wanderers' moving alone.

"You don't have to worry. Wanderers also have a lot of power. Is there a need to be a king to build power?"

We exited Mino Soft. People were crowded around the company and there were a bunch of wanderers gathered. Some of them were seen moving kidnapped people. At this time, one armed man asked, "Yoon Sangho-ssi, who is this?"

"Ah, he is one of my coworkers. We met by chance."

"Hrmm… a wanderer? No one from a group is accepted. Do you know?"

Deputy Yoon nodded lightly and the man passed by us. I looked at the man and asked, "Who is this person?"

"The manager of a 'coin farm'."

"Coin farm?"

"Ah… Dokja-ssi doesn't know."

For a moment, a dismal expression appeared on Deputy Yoon's face.

Coin farm… that reminded me of something. But these guys already started it?

"Look here."

There were two people trapped in cages placed at regular intervals, like it was a zoo or police station. The wanderers around them screamed with excitement.

"Hey! Are you kidding me? Fight harder! Who will give you coins if you look like this?"

Inside the cage, two people were fighting each other. Blood splashed, eyes were pulled out and a man with guts hanging out cried out like an animal.

[The constellation who likes the Colosseum is delighted.]

I looked closely and there were several such cages. Not all of the cages contained fighting.

There was one cage with a naked woman and several men inside, while another cage contained a lone woman, like the men had already finished with her. I could hear pained moans and cries from all corners.

Outside the cages, the wanderers holding their penises were laughing.

"Hey, how are you? Good? Come out quickly!"

"Next is my turn you bastard!"

[The constellation who likes excitement is delighted.]

Deputy Yoon opened his mouth.

"In the game industry, consumers were the king. In Mino Soft, the president was the king. Dokja-ssi, who is the king in this new world?"

"…Are you depending on the sponsorship of the constellations?"

"Yes. Sometimes there are crazy constellations like this. The more stimulating the sight, the more coins they cough up. It's like Twitch bits. We get coins from these people and in return, we provide them with food to survive."

Deputy Yoon threw a chocolate bar into one cage. The woman behind bars cried out and grabbed for it.

There were those in the world who first identified the system and figured out how to exploit it. The 'coin farm' was the structure that those who first understood the world devised in order to take advantage of the system.

"I see people from our company…"

"They were from our company."

I realized for certain after hearing his cold tone. The 'Deputy Yoon' that I knew from Mino Soft, he didn't exist in this world anymore.

"Hey! There are new slaves! Imprison them!"

"Yes!"

The slaves were moved to the prisons. I was stunned to see a familiar face among them.

Deputy Yoon smiled.

"Oh, there is a new one? Hey! Strip her and bring her to the cage!"

A petite person with white skin. Fine black hair that fell down to the shoulders and slightly raised eyebrows.

I rubbed my eyes but there was no doubt. The First Apostle, Plagiarist Han Sooyoung was here.

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* Official novel cover (canonical)

Chapter 74: Ep. 15 – A Kingless World, IV

Han Sooyoung was thrown into a cage.

She was unconscious and probably lacking magic power after I took the flag from her.

Han Sooyoung must've been moved to the area near here. She was a writer so she might have a management or publishing company nearby.

"Aren't you quite good looking? Hey, you haven't touched her already have you?"

"No. I know that the constellations are all gathered here."

[A constellation who likes obscenity is excited.]

[A few constellations have eyes that are shining in a lascivious manner.]

White underwear was revealed by Han Sooyoung's torn jeans. There were men already playing rock paper scissors.

I stared at Han Sooyoung beyond the bars. No matter how I looked, there were no signs that anything happened.

…….

This woman would be a hindrance if she was left alive. She was the one who knew the most about this world, apart from me.

The story had completely changed from the third or fourth regression from the first quarter of the story and the knowledge she had might be obsolete, but…

The moment I thought this, I shuddered with disgust at myself.

…Why was I worrying about this?

Killing someone because they would be dangerous in the future. Who should I save because they would be useful in the future?

I wasn't Yoo Joonghyuk to be thinking about these things.

"Do you want to do it Dokja-ssi?"

Deputy Yoon laughed as he saw me staring intently. It was a expression that said 'I can help you'.

"If you promise me one thing, I will let Dokja-ssi do her first. How about it?"

"…What do you want me to promise?"

"You have a group, right? Please introduce me to Dokja-ssi's group. We will soon start expanding our forces. Looking at Dokja-ssi's items… it is a pretty big group?"

I stared at Deputy Yoon and said, "I can introduce you if you like. But I want you to stop this."

"Huh? Haha, Dokja-ssi. What does that mean?"

"Let that woman go."

Deputy Yoon's eyebrows twitched because he knew it wasn't a joke.

"Hmm…Dokja-ssi. What is wrong with treating people like this? If you have survived to this point, don't you already know?"

"…"

"I have been watching Dokja-ssi for a long time. I knew that if it was Dokja-ssi, you could survive anywhere."

There was a strange ridicule in Deputy Yoon's expression.

"Aren't you always reading web novels alone? You always commute to work in a gloomy fashion. Sometimes you would talk to me and a few other colleagues. They were good people like Yoo Sangah-ssi."

"What does that have to do with this?"

"Dokja-ssi is enjoying the situation right now. Isn't that right?"

Enjoying it? It was like aiming a dagger at my heart from a completely different angle.

Deputy Yoon grabbed my shoulders.

"I am also like Dokja-ssi. We are on the same QA team. I heard the same nagging every time and lived with their contempt. Do you remember what the other departments called us? The training dummy team. We are cheap people who don't have any specs. We just test games."

"…"

"Dokja-ssi. Those people who are trapped right now, don't you know who they really are? Look carefully. They are the scum who ignored us."

My vision broadened and the screams of people could be heard. Looking closer, I did recognize them.

Many of the people trapped behind bars were those I knew from Mino Soft. There were people I didn't know very well, people who didn't know me or who didn't care.

"It is over now. The finance team, the planning team, none of that matters. The best ones in the world right now are our QA team. Haha. Dokja-ssi, shouldn't you know from testing bugs? This world is a game. A game with bugs. There are too many loopholes that I can take advantage of."

Numerous messages from constellations were heard in my head.

The messages that wanted a more stimulating, more lascivious, more decadent story quietly overlapped with Deputy Yoon's face.

Sometimes inferiority turned people into monsters.

"There is nothing to be afraid of. This world is a game that exists for us! Do you know how many coins my group earns a day with this?"

"I don't know."

"It is 5,000 coins a day. 5,000 coins… can you imagine? We don't do the scenarios and we get 5,000 coins. It is 5,000 coins just from making people fight and mate. It is the same as the planning team taking cash items. Don't you know what this means?"

I saw men approaching Han Sooyoung one by one. I slowly breathed out. So far, I showed courtesy to the colleague who once shared a rooftop with me by listening to his story.

I removed Deputy Yoon's hand from my shoulder and opened my mouth. "If you want to make coins, there is a better way."

"What?" Deputy Yoon turned red. "Did Dokja-ssi also find a bug? What is it?"

"The principle is the same as a coin farm. Stimulate the constellations."

"Oho, there is something more stimulating than this? Is that possible?"

"Yes, it is. Would you like me to let you know?"

"It would be good if you share the know-how!"

"The constellations really like…'

[Blade of Faith is activated!]

"…This."

There was the sound of the bars being cut apart. I swung my blade indiscriminately towards the wanderers surrounding the cage. I cut the Achilles tendon of those running away.

The knees of those who weren't prepared for resistance became twisted.

"Aaaaack! What is with this bastard?"

"My leg! My leg!"

I kept swinging my sword amidst the rising blood.

"Something like this."

I cut off the hands harassing a member of the human resources department then the arms of a man trying to take off Han Sooyoung's shirt.

"This is also good."

Blood splattered onto my cheek. I quietly wiped the blood and continued cutting at arms and legs. Then Deputy Yoon's voice was heard.

"W-What are you doing? What is this?"

"Thank you for the story."

I turned to look at Deputy Yoon.

"I created a situation that the constellations really like because of you."

With just two knives, none of the men who entered Han Sooyoung's cage could do anything against me.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is pleased with your judgment.]

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is snorting from the relentless punishment.]

[Many of the constellations who dislike the atrocities of some constellations are greatly satisfied with your judgment.]

[8,000 coins have been sponsored.]

Deputy Yoon turned white and flopped to the ground.

I laughed at him.

"Why bother creating something like the coin farm? It is easy to earn money."

"…Y-You son of a bitch!"

There was a large number of wanderers. In an instant, approximately 20 wanderers surrounded me.

It was an ambiguous number that might make me violate the principle of 'no killing' but I wasn't overly concerned. I just had to get out of here.

I retreated a bit while hugging Han Sooyoung's light body. Suddenly, her eyes flashed open and she asked, "…Why did you save me?"

"Were you awake? Then get up."

Han Sooyoung's voice was weak.

"If you save me, won't the constellations in your channel run away? Don't you know what the constellation's hate most?"

"There are some who like it."

[The constellation who has been waiting for a harem carefully puts both hands together.]

[The constellation who likes 'enemies turning into allies' is delighted.]

Han Sooyoung frowned.

"Now this is a cliche. Right? The moment that the woman is about to be raped, the hero will rescue her. Why are you acting like this despite saying that you dislike cliches?"

"You are mistaken about two things."

I started while lightly cutting a wanderer's legs.

"One, I'm not a hero. And two…"

[You have saved a life.]

[Your karma points have increased by one.]

[Current karma points: 14/100]

Karma points were gained when the system determined that a person had been 'saved'. In other words, if I left it alone, it was likely Han Sooyoung would've died.

"You're not a woman."

"…Put me down!"

I threw her to the ground without hesitation.

Han Sooyoung shouted, "You really put me down?"

"You fight as well."

"What?"

"We will fight together. Don't you like cliches?"

"No matter how much I like cliches, isn't it really cliche to fight on the same side as an enemy?"

She grumbled but we were quite well matched. I cut the legs of the approaching wanderers while Han Sooyoung followed me and stopped their breathing. We took their lives slowly and carefully until only a few survivors were left.

*

The terrified wanderers started to flee the coin farm.

"This is a complete profit."

I looked at the coins that I got from the wanderers while Han Sooyoung staggered with a smile.

[You have acquired 18,400 coins.]

Her contribution wasn't as high as mine but she would've got a decent amount of coins. I didn't get as much coins as I would've without Han Sooyoung present but I decided to think of it as a tip.

I looked in front to where Deputy Yoon was still sitting on the ground.

"Haha… psychopath. I thought you would be like this. I should've known when I heard the rumour…'

"Sick jerk. You are too talkative."

Han Sooyoung stabbed Deputy Yoon in the neck. Blood spurted from Deputy Yoon's neck and the light in his eyes died.

Another person who remembered Kim Dokja in reality disappeared.

Han Sooyoung saw me watching and grumbled. "…What is with your expression? Are you sorry that this jerk is dead?"

"No."

"Then why did you keep listening to him?"

I was a bit surprised because I didn't expect these words to emerge from Han Sooyoung's mouth.

"You were just listening to this guy's bullshit. Why? The constellations don't like frustrating things."

I listened blankly to her words before smiling.

What was this?

"You don't seem to know but it is better to listen to this bullshit moderately in order to get more coins when they are killed. There is no refreshing feeling without being frustrated first."

"No? Dokja… no, don't the constellations prefer to kill right away? What do you know when you aren't a writer?"

"I know very well. I am a reader."

"This…!"

I ignored Han Sooyoung and rummaged through the items that had dropped. Most of it was garbage but there was a suit that I could wear.

*

[Old Gentleman's Close Combat Suit]

It was a B-grade item and only slightly improved defense but it was better than not wearing it. I couldn't wear Samyeongdang's Mat forever… come to think of it, I should start item farming.

The fleeing wanderers seemed to be heading to their lair. It would be better to pursue and hit the wanderers.

If I remembered currently, Seocho had a few 'meteorite stones' to use in the fifth scenario. If it fell here then I had to obtain it.

Once I got a secondary battery…

[You have saved a life.]

[Your karma points have increased by one.]

[Current karma points: 25/100]

One or two people approached. They were all those who had been stuck behind bars.

Colour returned to the faces of some people who remembered my face.

I raised my hand before they could speak.

"I can't help you now. Take care of your own lives."

Faint despair filled their eyes but it wasn't a situation where I could help. It seemed cold but in the end, I had saved their lives.

"Pick up the items in moderation and then go to Chungmuro if you can afford it. There might be some people who can help you there."

Before I finished speaking, people started picking up the items that had fallen. Their eyes were blazing again as they hoped for survival.

Watching them, I understood why the dokkaebi brought me here.

"That is mine! Put it down!"

"I-I saw it first!"

The people who were victims were now looking at each other while holding weapons. They pointed the weapons at each other without hesitation.

This was a kingless world.

There was no one to control this world.

The dokkaebi was trying to show me this sight.

A world without a king was wild, without the laws and ethics that we had been guarding, showing how poor our belief in other humans was.

An unexpected voice stopped those who were about to wield their weapons.

"Do all of you want to die?"

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* Official novel illustration (canonical)
* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)

Chapter 75: Ep. 15 – A Kingless World, V

The frightened people looked at Han Sooyoung at the same time.

Han Sooyoung squatted down and spat out.

"Are you all idiots? Wake up. Think properly if you want to live. You don't know when you will meet other bad people yet you want to cut down the number of people who can be colleagues?"

"T-That…"

"In this world, the underdogs have to be united. You want to fight over a few garbage items instead of combining forces?"

The people suddenly came to their senses and reddened.

The intermediate dokkaebi probably didn't know that among the people he scattered, one of them was a web novelist.

"Don't you have the necessary weapons and supplies? Can't you survive? Don't you know that the selfish ones are the first to fall? Do you think you can get stronger just by picking up a few more trash items?"

The complexions of the survivors darkened. Their bloodthirstiness slowly subsided.

"If you can't become strong enough so that no one can touch you, make trusted colleagues. Isn't that common sense?"

It was natural for a plagiarist to say such things.

In fact, her words were effective. People started to look awkwardly at one another. If someone opened their mouths at this moment, the people could unite. A few words caused their survival rate to rise sharply.

I stared at Han Sooyoung and opened my mouth. "But for you to say this…"

"Do you understand. Everyone should act correctly!" Han Sooyoung said quickly before turning and running away. Her stamina was low so she couldn't run far. "Pant, pant! Why are you chasing me?"

"You even plagiarized the words of the novel?"

「"If you can't become strong enough so that no one can touch you, make trusted colleagues."」

This was the advice that Yoo Joonghyuk gave to survivors in Ways of Survival. Han Sooyoung shouted, "How is it plagiarism? These lines are from my novel!"

"Then why are you running away?"

"…No reason! Why are you chasing me?"

She refused to admit that she plagiarized to the end. I grabbed her collar.

"I saved you so you should pay back the value."

"What value?"

I laughed at Han Sooyoung's nervous expression.

"If you have a spare battery, take it out. You must need it for your novel text."

Han Sooyoung's expression distorted.

I hadn't intended to take Han Sooyoung with me at first.

To be honest, Han Sooyoung was a bad person considering what she had don so far. However, her 'avatar' ability was quite useful and I had a few things to figure out. Most of all, she would be useful to clear the current sub scenario…

"I don't have a spare battery. I lost everything in Gwanghwamun."

"Then give me your novel."

"No. Pay for it if you want to read it."

"How am I supposed to pay when all the platforms are gone?"

I took her smartphone away from her. The upset Han Sooyoung clung to my shoulders and reached out an arm.

"What? Give it to me!"

The text version was on her desktop. She was relaxed.

[SSSSS-grade Infinite Regressor]

Let's see…

I nervously clicked on the app file. I wondered if her text version would be invisible to everyone else like mine.

However, that wasn't the case. A page in the middle of the book appeared, like I had been reading the novel.

「…Yoo Joonhyun quietly opened his status window. He wanted to check the Sage's Eye that he just received.

[Character Summary]

Name: Yoo Joonhyun

Age: 27 years old.

Star Contract: ???

Exclusive Attributes: Regressor (3rd turn) (Myth), Pro Gamer (Rare)

Exclusive Skills: Sage's Eye Lv. 1, Hand to Hand Combat Lv. 1, Weapons Training Lv. 1, Mental Barrier Lv. 1, Lie Detection Lv. 4…(Omitted)…

Stigma: Regression Lv. 3

Overall Stats: Physique Lv. 24, Strength Lv. 24, Agility Lv. 25, Magic Power Lv. 23.

Yoo Joonhyun laughed as he confirmed his status window.

"Huhu, I finally got Sage's Eye. I am lucky this regression."」

I read up to there and looked at the frozen Han Sooyoung.

"Don't you have a conscience?"

"…What?"

"Didn't you copy the personal information from Ways of Survival? As a writer, shouldn't you change the composition?"

Han Sooyoung hesitated for a moment before muttering, "Ways of Survival is a sponsor and mine is a star contract. It is completely different. And there is no comprehensive evaluation in my novel!"

"…Even so. Isn't the name of the protagonist too much? It is like Joonhyun was a typo. Shouldn't you change it more? The author of Ways of Survival would cry if he saw this."

Han Sooyoung's face turned red and she screamed, "It is just… no, so what? What are you curious about?"

"How many chapters of the original did you read?"

"99…hey! Can't you give that back to me?"

She read up to chapter 99?

What would the author think if he knew that the person who read Ways of Survival the most after me was a plagiarist?

Well, he was the one pleased by the views raised during the plagiarism controversy so he might say, "Thank you for reading up to chapter 99. You are a true reader."

I sighed and asked, "Chapter 99, then do you know the location of the meteorite in the fifth scenario?

Didn't it appear in your novel?"

"There is no such thing as a meteorite in my novel!" It was surprising. I thought she would've copied this as well. "I have a sealing stone!"

As expected.

"Then I am going to get the sealing stone, so be prepared."

"You are going to get the meteorite?"

"Let's unify the terms. Anyway, you know that I saved you?"

"I didn't ask you…"

The meteorite containing the fire dragon was found by Han Sooyoung. I almost died because of this woman. That reminded me, I put the carcass of the fire dragon on the Exchange. Had it been sold yet?

I ignored Han Sooyoung for a bit and called out to Bihyung.

'Bihyung'.

There was no answer.

The existing scenarios completely disappeared in an unexpected way. Perhaps the dokkaebis of the Seoul Dome were in a meeting right now.

They might be saying something like, "This edition is ruined anyway so sell a lot of coin products…"

The next moment, the 'Exchange' window and 'Dokkaebi Bag' window opened at the same time.

This brat, he didn't have time to send a message?

[Many constellations are dissatisfied with the sudden advertisements.]

Furthermore, he didn't forget to play the advertisements. I opened up the sales history on the Exchange first.

[The item 'Fire Dragon's Scales' has been sold for 8,000 coins.]

[The item 'Fire Dragon's Bones' has been sold for 5,000 coins.]

Unexpectedly, there was someone who bought these expensive items.

The items that weren't meant for sale were also sold.

[The item 'Fire Dragon's Bones' has been sold for 22,222 coins.]

…The items that I had stored on the Exchange were sold. Someone must be desperate for the fire dragon's bones. If I knew this, I would've set the price as 99,999.

The incarnations that possessed such power at present were Anna Croft, Ranveer Khan of India and China's Feihu… in any case, that person was ignorant.

I opened the Dokkaebi Bag and bought some items that I needed. Then Han Sooyoung spoke to me in a timely manner.

"Why do you want me to go with you? You can go alone."

"It is like what you just said. The most important thing for survival is to obtain reliable colleagues."

Han Sooyoung looked at me suspiciously.

"Hrmm…"

I pulled out an item I just bought.

"Now, swear here."

[The item Temporary Pledge has been used.]

[Temporary Pledge]

1. Kim Dokja (Gab) will sign a contract with Han Sooyoung (Eul) until the sub scenario currently in progress is over.

2. Kim Dokja (Gap) and Han Sooyoung (Eul) will not harm each other until the sub scenario currently in progress is over.

3. During the contract period, Kim Dokja (Gap) and Han Sooyoung (Eul) will sleep alternately in prepared for the 'sleeping penalty'.

…….

6. During the contract period, the guidelines for the party will prevail over Kim Dokja's (Gap) opinions.

7. During the contract period, Han Sooyoung (Eul) will cooperate with Kim Dokja (Gap) to clear the scenarios. She will follow Kim Dokja's orders as long as her life isn't in danger.

8. During the contract period, Kim Dokja (Gap) will protect Han Sooyoung (Eul).

9. This contract will expire at the end of the sub scenario. The body will be destroyed if the contract is violated.

Temporary Pledge. It didn't have the effect of a sponsor contract but it was effective for short-term contracts.

Han Sooyoung looked at me with surprised eyes.

"Do you think I will sign this?"

"Then don't."

"…Why should I sign it? I have never done it before."

"Good. The first experience is important."

Han Sooyoung gritted her teeth. Even so, I knew she would accept. There was no other choice for a person with exhausted magic power. It was suicide to wander alone in Seocho-gu and she needed someone to protect her for a bit.

"…Okay. I accept. But I have one condition."

"What is it?"

"We will share information with each other. How about it? I have a lot to ask you. You should answer honestly. I have Lie Detection."

She already got something that I couldn't obtain?

[The character 'Han Sooyoung' has used 'Lie Detection Lv. 1'.]

…It was real.

Han Sooyoung got to the point. "What is your attribute?"

"I don't know."

[The character Han Sooyoung has confirmed that your words are true.]

Han Sooyoung made a stupid expression and raised a hand to her temple.

"…Is this broken?"

"No, it is normal. Then ask me the next question quickly. I will only answer three. For your reference, you have already used one."

"No, what do you mean that you don't know your attribute?"

"I really don't know. Now, what is the next question?"

Han Sooyoung's eyes narrowed and she reluctantly continued to ask questions. "Why did you give up the Absolute Throne?"

I figured that this question would emerge.

"My plan was ruined because of you. If it wasn't for you… do you know how hard I prepared those apostles only for them to be eliminated? If I was sitting on the throne, I would've been prepared for the next scenario by now…"

"If you sat on the throne, Seoul would've perished."

[The character Han Sooyoung has confirmed that your words are true.]

Han Sooyoung frowned. "Why does the skill keep breaking?"

"It isn't broken. We would've been ruined if anyone, not just you or me, sat on the throne."

[The character Han Sooyoung has confirmed that your words are true.]

Han Sooyoung's eyes widened.

"How do you know? Where did you get off? Why do you know this when I don't?"

"I'm not someone who got off."

[The character Han Sooyoung has confirmed that your words are true.]

Han Sooyoung was extremely shocked and managed to squeeze out a question after a moment.

"You…how far did you read in Ways of Survival?"

"Your three questions are over."

"This is the most important question!" Han Sooyoung's chin trembled. "No way… right? You… there can't be such a crazy guy… yes, it is unlikely…"

Da da da da!

Then something that sounded like horse hooves were hard in the distance.

I told the muttering Han Sooyoung to be silent and we quickly fled to the rear of a nearby building. Something was approaching.

It was in the form of a human…? I used Character List on the people rushing towards me in the cloud of dust.

[The information of this person can't be read in 'Character List'.]

[This person isn't registered in 'Character List'.]

Looking closely, I could see that all the people running had fur sprouting from their whole body.

Their faces were human but their bodies were monster-like and twice as big as a human. They seemed like bipedal wolves.

Looking closely, one monster in the lead was holding a man by the neck. It was the biggest of the monsters.

Grrr… "Where is he?"

"T-This area! The coin farm…"

There was a sound and the man's head was blown away. He was one of the wanderers who had been in front of Mino Soft. The monsters rushed eagerly and started eating the man's body.

I think I knew what these monsters were.

Han Sooyoung realized something and muttered, "…The outside species?"

Wanderers had their own ways of survival. There were those who still existed as humans and made coin farms, while others gave up on being human and walked the path of a new species.

The outside species had limits but because they gave up on their humanity, they could grow faster than others in the beginning to mid part of the story.

Maybe these guys were the werewolves…

"…They gained the power of the meteorite."

Right now, it was only the fifth scenario. At the current time, the only way people could evolve into werewolves was by using the power of the meteorite. The wanderers had already got their hands on the meteorite that fell in Seochu-gu.

Han Sooyoung opened her mouth. "I know him. That bastard, he is someone who stopped reading."

"…How do you know?"

"I can see it. It is the privilege as the last person who got off the novel."

"Privilege?"

"I can read the information and attributes of those who stopped reading." She spoke in a slightly boasting tone.

Speaking of which, I remembered a story that I heard from Jung Minseob.

Shortly after the scenarios began, the First Apostle came to them. This would be explained if Han Sooyoung had the ability to find those who stopped reading. Then she used her Avatar ability to appear before them.

Han Sooyoung kept speaking.

"That's why I doubted your identity. A guy who can't be read by my skill…"

Han Sooyoung stared at me before looking back at the outside species.

"At that time, there were a few people who refused my offer. That wanderer was one of them. I thought it wasn't a big deal since most of them would die early…"

"Who is that guy?"

"He is Song Minwoo."

Song Minwoo? It definitely wasn't the name of a character. Yet I had heard the name somewhere…

[The 6th grade outside species 'Werewolf Song Minwoo' is searching the surroundings.]

I could see the face of the person in the distance. Ah…perhaps.

A recent memory came to mind. It was the dream I had a few hours ago. I remembered my days in high school and the gangsters who bullied me. Many years had passed but his facial expression seemed to fit. No matter how much time passed, I couldn't forget that name on the name badge.

Song Minwoo… it must be him. But that bastard was someone 'who got off?' That gangster read a novel?

"Where did he get off?"

"That guy… he was a bit strange. He is a bit different from the usual readers."

"What is it?"

Han Sooyoung worried for a moment before saying,

"In my eyes, he… 'partially got off at 173'."

At this moment, Song Minwoo sniffed and he turned his head this way. His yellow eyes seemed to be saying, 'I found you'.

He fell to the ground on all fours and started rushing to this side.

Chapter 76: Ep. 15 – A Kingless World, VI

By the time I realized, Song Minwoo was immediately in front of me. It was a tremendous speed. His agility must be at least above level 40 in order to achieve this speed.

"You?" He asked in a tearful voice. This guy had already finished his transition to an outside species.

[The 6th grade outside species, Song Minwoo has triggered 'A Predator's Threat Lv. 5!']

[The character 'Han Sooyoung' has used 'Mental Barrier Lv. 3'.]

[The character 'Han Sooyoung' has alleviated some of the effects of A Predator's Threat.]

In a moment, his hand shot out and grabbed Han Sooyoung's throat.

"Keok…"

Han Sooyoung might not be in a perfect physical condition but it was too much for her to be suppressed at once.

The 6th grade outside species. It was the worst enemy to deal with right now.

It was different compared to the 5th grade fire dragon. At that time, my ice attribute overwhelmed the fire attribute and I could take advantage of the dull movements of the big monster.

But now…

Song Minwoo stared at me. "Did you break my coin farm?"

The tone was certain despite it being a question. Han Sooyoung screamed the moment she saw Song Minwoo's white fangs. "Shit, kill him quickly!"

I used Blade of Faith while Han Sooyoung used Avatar. At almost the same time, Song Minwoo's powerful kick arrived. The just created Avatar's head burst while I went flying through the air.

[The 6th grade outside species, Song Minwoo has triggered 'Accelerate Lv. 5!']

Song Minwoo's fist followed at a speed that was almost invisible. Head, shoulders, belly. The onslaught poured out towards those areas. Air burst out from me.

Han Sooyoung's voice cried out, "Kim Dokja!"

…No, even if this was an outside species, how could he be so strong? It was too late to avoid the blow. I hurriedly raised my overall stats.

[16,000 coins have been invested in physique.]

[Physique Lv. 24 -> Physique Lv. 50]

[A giant-like physical fitness fills your body.]

The pain quickly dwindled and it reached the point where I could tolerate it. But the situation wasn't over.

"Kim Dokja? Where did I hear that name?" I heard Song Minwoo mumbling.

I could see this face through my defenses and that was the problem. This guy wasn't strong. The problem was me.

[The effect of A Predator's Threat has reduced your will to fight.]

[A Predator's Threat has slowed down your movements.]

It was ridiculous. I overcame the threat of the 5th grade fire dragon only to be affected by this guy?

It was impossible. I had the Fourth Wall…

[The exclusive skill, 'Fourth Wall' is shaking.]

This situation had happened once before.

It happened when I fought Yoo Joonghyuk in the Theatre Dungeon and when I was immersed in Yoo Joonghyuk's first person view… but now Yoo Joonghyuk wasn't here. So why?

Song Minwoo roared and raised his claws. "…Kinda familiar. Do I know you?"

–Hey, Kim Dokja. What is this?

A familiar voice overlapped with the same voice.

[The exclusive skill, 'Fourth Wall' is shaking.]

I grabbed his wrist and answered, "I don't know."

"Really? I think I remember."

–Stop reading and go and get me some bread. Yes?

[The 6th grade outside species, Song Minwoo has triggered 'Memory Enhancement Lv. 3!']

"I know you."

[The exclusive skill, 'Fourth Wall' is shaking.]

…Dammit. I see. Now I knew what the Fourth Wall skill was.

There was a smile on Song Minwoo's face. "Strange. How does a geek like you survive up to this point? You were reading a novel every day."

"…"

"Haha, you are that person. Aren't you the guy who was beaten up by me while reading a novel in your spare time? Don't you remember?"

I remembered. Of course I remembered. A late rage filled my head.

"You are Song Minwoo. You should remember the face of your old school friend right? It is good. I was wondering if you were still alive."

When I was 17, I used to think that if I had the strength, I would tear apart this guy in front of me.

Song Minwoo kept talking. "The novel you were reading at that time. Where can I see it?"

The moment I heard this, a scene came to my mind. I had been sitting in my seat and scrolling through the novel when he hit me.

…Perhaps?

–This otaku, you are reading this? Is this fun? It is laughable.

Of course, the novel I was reading at that time…

Song Minwoo's fist struck my abdomen and my body flew through the air. The moment I slammed into the outer wall of a building, Han Sooyoung's avatars attacked Song Minwoo. The exterior wall of the destroyed building fell on me.

[The exclusive skill, 'Fourth Wall' is shaking.]

The Fourth Wall. It was an exclusive skill that I had from the beginning. I still didn't know all the functions of this skill but I was confident of at least one thing.

This skill made me recognize this world as a 'novel'.

In fact, I often felt strange. I made judgments and did actions that weren't possible in reality. It was like I was calmly watching this world from the outside.

It was due to the Fourth Wall.

"Shit… What are you doing?"

An angry voice was heard. As I cleared away the pile of stones, the angry Han Sooyoung blocked my way.

Her dozens of avatars were dealing with Song Minwoo and the werewolves in the corridors of the building. Blood was flowing from Han Sooyoung's nose and her blood vessels popped out as she struggled.

It was because Han Sooyoung was squeezing out every drop of her already low magic power to exert this strength.

"I believed in you but what are you doing now?"

I slowly raised myself while feeling a sharp pain in my bones. This was truly real pain. I had forgotten since the Fourth Wall acted as a cushion for this pain.

[Many constellations are confused by the unexpected development.]

I endured the pain and stood up, shaking off the dust. "This is an awakening event."

"…What?"

"Where is the fun in easily winning all the time? Sometimes I should go through adversity.

"Oh, is that why you are so beaten up?"

"I was just thinking for a while."

[Many constellations are relieved.]

The Fourth Wall was a skill that made reality like a novel. Then it was obvious why the wall was shaking. It was because I currently regarded Song Minwoo as 'reality'. He was the asshole who beat me up and made my teen years a tragedy.

"…Do you know that bastard?" She was a writer and a really quick female. I stared at her and the hesitating Han Sooyoung hurriedly added. "I'm sorry. I didn't want to hear it but the words he said to you…"

I replied honestly to the person who had Lie Detection. "Yes, I know him."

"I can roughly guess…"

"That bastard. He is obviously a trauma."

"…Where is the obvious trauma? A trauma is serious."

Han Sooyoung stated as she spat out blood.

"Then what is the problem? Han Sooyoung, you can help me awaken. If you tell me a few words from Ways of Survival, won't I awaken?"

"Do you think I'm Lee Hyunsung?"

In the end, I had to solve this problem myself. I would have a hard time going forward if the Fourth Wall shook every time I met a person who stimulated my traumas.

Above all, I was 28 years old right now. I wasn't a 17 year old who was flustered by a bully.

[A constellation who likes revenge has revealed his own modifier.]

[The constellation 'One who Overcomes the Late Trials' is cheering for you.]

[Some constellations are in agreement.]

[A bounty scenario has occurred!]

[Bounty Scenario – Overcoming Trauma

Category: Sub

Difficulty: C

Clear Conditions: Some constellations, such as One who Overcomes the Late Trials has commissioned a bounty scenario for you. Overcome your trauma within the time limit and get rid of the specter of the past.

Time Limit: 1 hour

Compensation: ???

Failure: The contempt of One who Overcomes the Late Trials.

One who Overcomes the Late Trials was a constellation I had seen in Ways of Survival.

As far as I knew, this guy was a constellation of a different world… well, more of these constellations would start emerging in the fifth scenario.

In any case, this was a blessing in disguise. I threw Samyeongdang's Straw Mat to Han Sooyoung.

"Wipe up your nosebleed and stay back."

"What?"

"It is enough."

I jumped over Han Sooyoung's avatars towards the group of werewolves.

[6,000 coins have been invested in agility.]

[Agility Lv. 30 -> Agility Lv. 40]

[An amazing wind lies in your body.]

[15,500 coins have been invested in strength.]

[Strength Lv. 25 -> Strength Lv. 50]

[Your muscles are squirming like they are monsters.]

I should've done this sooner. I had been too wary since being hit by the 'possibilities storm' not long ago.

[The special option of Unbroken Faith is activated.]

[The ether property is converted to 'divine'.]

There was no reason for me to lose this fight. I just had a momentary lapse in judgment from the Fourth Wall shaking. If I thought about it, I had the means to overpower these guys. In fact, I had many methods.

The werewolves collapsed before my blade. Werewolves had the dark attribute, making them vulnerable to the divine attribute.

Moreover, I didn't need to worry about the 'no killing' penalty with them. As I said, they were an outside species, not human. They weren't my kind any more.

I found Song Minwoo's face among the werewolves. His eyes slowly grew larger while Han Sooyoung's voice was heard behind me.

"Hey! Is it okay?"

I didn't answer. In fact, this situation was almost exactly the same.

[The exclusive skill, 'Fourth Wall' is shaking!]

However, it would turn out differently from earlier.

"It's okay. My awakening event is over."

I ran straight towards Song Minwoo.

Grrrrr!

A few thoughts passed through my head. If I used Ganpyeongui and called the 'Hunter of the Hexagram', this game would end easily. But I wouldn't overcome my trauma by fighting like that.

This time, I had to fight with my own capabilities.

[The 6th grade outside species, Song Minwoo has triggered 'Accelerate Lv. 5!']

Song Minwoo's body moved at great speed after Acceleration was triggered. He already had level 40 agility and now his speed was increased with the effect of Acceleration Lv. 5.

I didn't have any footwork skills so I was forced to use a shortcut.

[7,000 coins have been invested in agility.]

[Agility Lv. 40 -> Agility Lv. 50]

[An amazing storm lies in your body.]

If I didn't have skills, I could use stats. I lightly dodged the flying claws and raised my blade.

"Kuaaaak!"

His arm flew through the air and I cut off his other arm. The confused Song Minwoo lost his balance. I didn't miss this opening and cut off his legs.

Song Minwoo roared as his limbs were severed in an instant. Along with the roar, his severed limbs were growing back.

This was the privilege of a werewolf's 'Physical Regeneration'. However, normally the speed was lower… this bastard, did he receive a 'protection'?

Yes… this was better.

[The constellation 'One who Overcomes the Late Trials' is focused on your actions.]

The goal of the bounty scenario was to overcome the trauma. The constellation wouldn't be satisfied with an easy kill. I turned off the blade and used my fists instead.

[8,000 coins have been invested in strength.]

[Strength Lv. 50 -> Strength Lv. 60]

[Your power has started to attract the attention of the giants.]

[Your total stats have almost reached the limit of this scenario.]

I grabbed Song Minwoo's neck.

[The exclusive skill, 'Fourth Wall' is shaking.]

Whenever I looked at this guy's face, I felt the '17 year old Kim Dokja' inside me shrink back.

Poor thing. From now on, I would get revenge for 'him'.

"Minwoo, I didn't greet your properly earlier."

"What…?"

"It is nice to see you."

I hit him in the stomach.

"Kuheeok!"

"By the way, I was in pain a lot back then."

The 17 year old Kim Dokja was watching me in my memories. Feel free to watch.

"If you have a conscience, shouldn't you apologize first?"

I held him with one hand and continued to punch. The chest, the stomach and the face.

"What is wrong with reading a novel? Eh? Did I harm you?" On behalf of the 17 year old Kim Dokja, I hit him again and again. "Bastard, I even used some money to buy the books."

His teeth were broken, his chest muscles damaged and his bones shattered. The nearby werewolves growled at the assault but couldn't come close. I was giving out a Predator's Threat despite not using any skill.

Real fear came from a strength that was on a different dimension. 10 minutes passed before Song Minwoo started begging.

Grrr! "S-Sorry, I'm sorry…!"

"Really? You're sorry?"

"Yes! I'm really really sorry! I-I was young at the time…"

Of course he was. I knew. That degree of malice was understandable in his immature days. But.

"You must be mistaken… I wasn't trying to get an apology." This was something that couldn't be understood or forgiven. "In the first place, I'm not the one you should apologize to."

"What does that…"

"First, I will hit you until all my trauma has disappeared.

I watched the collapsed Song Minwoo and thought of my teen years. I was helpless, weak and only knew novels.

In fact, Han Sooyoung was right. There was no obvious trauma in this world.

All trauma was severe for the person involved so I didn't think these actions would completely eliminate my trauma.

I would often have nightmares as the 17 year old Kim Dokja repeated the tragedy of that time.

Still, this might be a bit comforting. Just like when I read Ways of Survival back then.

The 28 year old Kim Dokja might be able to help the 17 year old Kim Dokja escape from the nightmare for a short time.

"Keok! Cough! S-Stop… stop…"

Just like 'Yoo Joonghyuk' was to me in those days.

"Keoook…"

How long did I hit him? Finally, there was a moment when I looked at Song Minwoo's face and felt nothing.

[The exclusive skill, 'Fourth Wall's' shaking has subsided.]

[You have met the conditions to clear the bounty scenario!]

Chapter 77: Ep. 16 – The Fifth Scenario, I

Song Minwoo's blood dripped onto the ground.

The feeling of my blood-soaked fist was dull. Song Minwoo was bleeding but he didn't open his eyes or talk. The shattered flesh seemed to have given up on restoration.

Han Sooyoung muttered, "A scary guy… you killed a werewolf with bare hands?"

The other werewolves had already run away or were taken care of by Han Sooyoung. I looked down at Song Minwoo and said,

"He hasn't died yet."

Now the Fourth Wall didn't shake when I looked at him. I didn't know if the trauma was resolved but I could resist it more than in the past.

[The constellation 'One who Overcomes the Late Trials' sends encouragement to you.]

[The constellation 'One who Overcomes the Late Trials' wants to give you his own stigma.]

Giving me a stigma? Really? The bounty scenario wasn't a single constellation request so it was surprising to give a stigma as a reward.

Of course, I appreciated it.

[The stigma Self-rationalization has been acquired.]

[The constellation 'One who Overcomes the Late Trials' smiles with satisfaction at you who has succeeded his stigma.]

[You will now have a defense mechanism that won't be bothered by any trauma.]

Thanks… I stared absentmindedly for a bit.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is grabbing his belly and laughing.]

Self-rationalization? What did this mean? Are you kidding me?

Han Sooyoung asked, "Hey, aren't you going to kill him?"

"Eh?"

"I'm talking about that."

I looked down at Song Minwoo in my hands. Should I kill him? There was no burden since he was an outside species.

[The backer of Song Minwoo is looking at you.]

The constellations of Bihyung's channel would like it if I killed him.

[Many constellations desire your revenge.]

I looked at Song Mingwoo for a while before putting him down.

"Let's go."

"What? Really?"

"Yes."

[Some constellations are disappointed with your hypocrisy.]

[Many constellations are questioning your judgment.]

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' is watching your judgment.]

"You really won't kill him? Won't this bastard have coins?"

"Yes."

"Then can I kill him?"

"Go ahead. But won't you regret it?"

"Regret?"

I shrugged and walked towards her.

To be exact, it was in the direction that the werewolf group had run away. Perhaps their origin would be at the end of this direction. If my guess was right, the meteorite was what helped transform them into werewolves. The meteorites must be collected to prepare for the disaster scenario.

Han Sooyoung looked after me with a suspicious expression.

All of a sudden, the sound of footsteps died up and headed in another direction. It was in the exact direction of Song Minwoo.

Her avatar…

Yes. I thought Han Sooyoung would do this. I let her do what she want. In return, she would turn a blind eye to my hypocrisy.

Then after a while.

"Shit! What is this?"

Han Sooyoung gave a terrible scream and shook. I could tell the messages that were appearing in her head. Perhaps they would be messages like this:

[The 6th grade outside species 'Song Minwoo' has been killed and the demon king 'Andras' has noticed the murderer's presence.

[The demon king 'Andras' will remember the one who dealt the final blow.]

[The demon king 'Andras' will search for the one who dealt the final blow.]

[Final Blow: Han Sooyoung]

Han Sooyoung looked at me with a pale face and I laughed.

"I told you that you would regret it."

Song Minwoo was a member of the 72nd demon king, Andras' household.

* * *

The 72nd demon king.

The constellations weren't the only strong ones among the Star Stream.

There were some strong people who refused to be subscribers to the heavens and travelled around planets. One of these superpowers were the 'demon kings'.

"You are a really bad jerk."

The demon kings sought their own 'households', just like the constellations chose incarnations. Corrupted incarnations could choose to join the household of a demon king.

The werewolf was one of his symbols and was located at the bottom of the 72nd demon king Andras' caste.

It was due to Andras' blessing that Song Minwoo had the Physical Regeneration ability.

Han Sooyoung stuttered out, "H-How can I…"

"Don't worry. Some people I know were cursed by a demon king like you but they didn't die right away."

"Why are you saying it now?"

Come to think of it, Han Myungoh who was cursed by the demon king, Asmodeus… I didn't know what happened to him. Was he still alive?

"I think it is good. Andras isn't a very high ranking demon king. If you are enemies with a demon king, you will get the favour of the absolute good constellations and get more donations. It is a good thing."

"Will the archangels care? Besides, I don't get along with sponsors and angels!"

Why? Was it also a demon king? I couldn't help thinking so when I suddenly closed my mouth.

…What did she just say?

"You don't get along with sponsors and angels?"

Han Sooyoung noticed my gaze and cursed.

"Damn, my damn mouth…"

"Do you not have a sponsor?"

It wasn't impossible. I also had no sponsor. In fact, in the first scenario, many of the survivors wouldn't get sponsors. To be precise, they didn't have any choices.

However, it was unexpected that a strong person like Han Sooyoung had no sponsor.

"I didn't choose one. Isn't it strange to choose from the beginning? I can only pick once."

"Well, that's right."

If the Sponsor Selection could be postponed, it was better to postpone it.

There were many good constellations and depending on how the person acted in a scenario, they could literally go from a 'turd to a Mercedes'.

The Sponsor Selection occurred once after the first scenario and were regularly implemented before the 'disaster scenarios' occurred.

The fifth scenario was a 'disaster scenario' so Han Sooyoung would be able to participate in the upcoming second round of the Sponsor Selection.

I raised my hand and asked, "Who will you choose? Is there a constellation you are thinking about?"

Han Sooyoung made a confident expression at my words. "Won't you be surprised when you find out? They are already interested in me."

"Who is it?"

Was it perhaps the Great Sage, Heaven's Equal?

"Have you heard of the Abyssal Black Flame Dragon?"

…The black flame dragon?

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is looking at your reaction.]

I hesitated for a moment before replying, "Ah, yes. He is a good sponsor."

The Abyssal Black Flame Dragon was the sponsor of the Delusional Demon Kim Namwoon in the original novel. The Delusional Demon was one of the best fighters along with the Steel Sword, so it wasn't a bad choice.

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is looking at you with a complicated gaze.]

This guy wasn't interested in me anymore.

Han Sooyoung's eyebrows twitched at my nonchalant tone. "What is with this sour expression? Who is your sponsor?"

"No, it is nothing. I was just feeling envious."

"Really?"

"Really."

[The character 'Han Sooyoung' has used 'Lie Detection Lv. 1'.]

[The character Han Sooyoung has confirmed that the statement is false]

"Is this real?"

I didn't care about the Abyssal Black Flame Dragon. I just wanted her to get a sponsor. Han Sooyoung and this thug matched very well.

[The constellation who likes harems is cheering on you and Han Sooyoung.]

[500 coins have been sponsored.]

Han Sooyoung's expression distorted like she heard the same message as me.

"What is this again…?"

Unfortunately, the wish of the harem constellation wouldn't come true. Han Sooyoung and I would only be together for the next 10 days.

There was a moment of cooperation but it didn't change that she was a threatening enemy.

"It looks like we've arrived."

After a while, we reached the place that was probably the base of the werewolves.

It was near a broadcasting station. There was a bloody smell coming from the narrow forest of buildings. I heard the cries of the werewolves and people in the distance, like a battle was going on. Han Sooyoung said, "It seems that we are a bit late. Is there a preceding visitor?"

I didn't see any werewolves moving around as guards. Once we entered a bit further, a coin farm that was even bigger than Director Yoon's came into view.

The coin farms were the exclusive property of the destroyed world. I was tired of facing these sights all the time.

It seemed like the coin harvest was over because there were no surviving people behind bars.

Han Sooyoung was moving ahead when she suddenly grabbed her nose.

"Yuck, what is this?"

As we headed through the imprisonment area to the residence of the werewolves, a more horrifying sight awaited us. Severed human thighs were hanging from rubber bands. It was like pork in a butcher's shop, making the purpose obvious.

[The exclusive skill 'Fourth Wall' has offset your emotional trauma.]

I read these scenes in the text but this was my first time actually seeing them. There was a fixed way for humans to evolve into an outside species.

Cannibalism. In other words, eating their own people.

Han Sooyoung cursed, "You fucking scum…"

Most outside species evolved accidentally. Those who couldn't clear the 'find food' sub scenario usually walked this path. Once they ate a person, they couldn't stop. Those who changed species would no longer feel guilty about killing humans.

I stated, "You look upset when you see this."

"Of course. Who wouldn't be upset?"

"The other prophets said you want to use your information to control the world."

"Who said that?" Han Sooyoung sneered and added, "It is just as absurd as you calling me a plagiarist."

"…"

"World domination? It would be good. But my first goal is to prevent the destruction. Why else did I collect the apostles?"

"The apostles were all trash."

"They were originally trash? Is that my fault?"

Tang! Tang! Tang! Tang!

We reflexively held our breaths. There was a loud sound from in front of us. I could hear the sound of flesh exploding.

Tatang!

No matter how I thought about it, this was the sound of gunshots. Wasn't the army already wiped out?

We ran towards the building from which the gunshots were coming from. Even if the army was still intact, it was ridiculous to deal with a werewolf with guns. But the sight in front of me changed the story.

Bodies of werewolves were piled up in front of me like a mountain. All of the bodies had bullet wounds. Han Sooyoung and I talked almost simultaneously.

"Attribute bullets."

"A bullet with the divine attribute?"

I saw some people pointing guns in the distance. They were armed with modern rifles and unusually, they were all wearing prison uniforms.

Han Sooyoung nervously grabbed my collar. "Hey, do you remember me telling you that there was someone like you in Sondaemun Prison?"

"Yes."

"They are her forces."

Han Sooyoung was pointing to a woman wearing a mask. It would be hard to know the sex if it wasn't for the long hair hanging down, covering most of the body including the face.

"She is the leader. It is obvious that she is a reader but I don't have any information on her."

I see. They were from Seodaemun Prison… Then why wasn't this force visible during the struggle for the throne?

Han Sooyoung opened her mouth while looking at the mountain of werewolf corpses.

"They are also wanderers. They are quite powerful wanderers… the most powerful wanderers I know."

A woman with a gun headed straight to this side. It wasn't the leader that Han Sooyoung pointed out.

I pulled out Unbroken Faith while Han Sooyoung prepared Avatar. The gun of the woman approaching us moved.

She leaned back and her muzzle pointed to one of the mountains of werewolf corpses.

Dudududududu!

The dead bodies collapsed from the bullets. Then something hidden under the bodies was revealed.

"This is?"

There was a glowing stone that was 2m in length and height. It was one of the meteorites I needed to prevent the 'disaster'.

The yellow meteorite was here. This meteorite was also the source of the werewolves' strength.

The woman gazed at the meteorite before slowly turning to me.

"Are you Kim Dokja?"

Chapter 78: Ep. 16 – The Fifth Scenario, II

Looking closely, the woman seemed quite old.

Based on the wrinkles, she wasn't in her 40s but she was at least in her mid to late 30s.

She knew me? How?

I was a bit embarrassed but I maintained my composure as I looked at the woman.

"You must be mistaken. My name is Yoo Joonghyuk. Kim Dokja is the name of the guy I hate the most."

"…Yoo Joonghyuk?"

"Yes. So tell your leader not to talk nonsense. Just tell her, even if you're not sure what I mean."

I looked to the side and saw Han Sooyoung watching me with an absurd expression. I winked at her. If I knew Han Sooyoung, she would understand what to do from now on. The woman opened her mouth.

"I already know that you are Kim Dokja. Stop the unnecessary lies."

[The character Han Sooyoung has confirmed that the statement is true.]

Han Sooyoung nodded towards me. This woman came because she knew for certain who I was.

"The king said that she will entrust this meteorite to you."

It was unexpected. She knew me and now she was giving me the meteorite…

"Who are you?"

"We are the people of the Wanderer King."

"That woman over there is your king?"

The woman nodded. I looked at the tall masked woman in the distance. Looking closely, I felt a sense of deja vu. But there was something strange.

"King… You don't seem to have a flag?"

"The king doesn't dwell on such things."

…What was with this answer? The woman continued speaking. "The king said that we will take care of the disaster in the north. But she will leave the other four disasters to you."

Before I could ask anything, the woman turned and left like her words were over.

Han Sooyoung shouted, "Hey! What do you mean? Shouldn't you explain it before you go?"

Despite the shouts, the woman kept walking away without turning back. Han Sooyoung looked at me and asked, "What is this… do you know that woman?"

"How can that be?"

I quietly activated Character List.

[This person isn't registered in 'Character List'.]

[You can check the information of the person by updating Character List. Do you want to update it?]

It seemed that the update cycle was back. I nodded.

[The update has been completed.]

[Some people will be added to the dictionary.]

Then a window popped up.

[Character Summary]

Name: Cho Youngran

Age: 37 years old.

Sponsor: First Sorceror of Joseon

Exclusive Attributes: Escaped Prisoner (General), Officer of Justice (Rare)

Exclusive Skills: Prison Escape Lv. 3, Patience Lv. 6, Execution Time Lv. 3, Shooting Lv. 4…

Stigma: Transformation Occult Art Lv. 2

Overall Stats: Physique Lv. 30, Strength Lv. 34, Agility Lv. 36, Magic Power Lv. 28.

Overall Evaluation: The current comprehensive evaluation is currently in progress.

* 'Starter Pack' is currently applied.

* A growth package is currently applied.

Look at this, the First Sorceror of Joseon?

[The constellation 'First Sorceror of Joseon' is looking at you with wary eyes.]

I didn't think there would already be a woman with Jeon Woochi[1] as a sponsor.

In addition, she had the fairly good attribute of Officer of Justice, although it was less than the 'judge'.

If the subordinate was this good, what was the king like? I immediately looked at the tall woman.

[The information of this person can't be read in 'Character List'.]

[This person isn't registered in 'Character List'.]

The moment I met the gaze of the woman in the mask, a stinging pain flashed through my head.

I reflexively looked away from the woman. My heart beat quickly.

The Fourth Wall instinctively shook.

The woman caused an even greater shaking than Song Minwoo. Despite having Self-rationalization, I didn't want to take the risk because I wasn't sure of the stigma's performance.

Han Sooyoung asked me anxiously, "Hey, what is it?"

"…Never mind."

The Fourth Wall responded to people who had an important influence on me in real life.

In other words, that woman was someone I knew. But there was only one person in this world who gave me a bigger trauma than Song Minwoo.

I see… As expected, she survived. However, I didn't expect her to be in Seoul.

It was why she was able to make a large force and why they were wearing prison uniforms. It was convincing if it was that person.

The wanderers soon began to move.

They aligned themselves and headed back the way they came. It was a march with no hesitation. A loyalty could be felt from the group.

The leader moved at the forefront of the group.

A crown like the Tyrant King, a woman who was different from the King of Beauty.

I looked at the ruins that they moved through. There were the broken coin farms and the survivors they spared. They had placed blankets and necessities beside the survivors. The survivors watched the leaving wanderers with awe-filled eyes.

I had forgotten.

A person didn't need a flag or to sit on the throne to become king. In this kingless world, there was still a king.

After a while, I examined the yellow meteorite they left behind.

A yellow meteorite.

The meteorite, also called the moon stone, was usually a star pierce that hovered in other dimensions.

It was truly the same as I read in the novel.

The exhilarating magic power that I could feel just by touching the meteorite, the faint light flowing out from the opaque interior, and the white streaks all over the surface—this yellow meteorite definitely contained one of the powers that could counter the disaster.

Then a system message was heard.

[The 'moon stone' wants to provide you with a high level strength.]

I refused the meteorite's offer and the power returned to the meteorite.

The moon stone basically had the power of the night and the outside species would receive this power. Perhaps the cannibals who received the power of the night were able to evolve into the outside species, the werewolves.

[The 'moon stone' gives off a feeling of familiarity.]

However, the real use of this meteorite wasn't simply to evolve the outside species. Even a few hundred werewolves couldn't prevent the future disasters.

Of course, a few thousand would help but then another disaster would come from the large number of outside species and the power of the demon kings.

"I feel like a volunteer… Hey, did you find something?"

As I was examining the meteorite, Han Sooyoung was taking care of the survivors lying nearby. It was a little unexpected but she was probably targeting coins.

[Constellations of the Absolute Good system are touched by Han Sooyoung's good works.]

In a place filled with the demon king's household, the dominations would be bigger than usual.

Indeed, a human's double-sidedness was profound.

Among the constellations of the Absolute Good system, there might be the Abyssal Black Flame Dragon. The second Sponsor Selection was coming up so Han Sooyoung would be looking at him. I looked around and said,

"The avatars are useful."

Dozens of avatars were quickly organizing the surroundings. The corpses of the outside species were burned, while the terrible cages and human butcher stores were also demolished. She earned coins while getting a nosebleed…

Han Sooyoung wiped the blood and asked, "When are you going to tell me?"

"What?"

"I'm talking about that."

I realized her question wasn't about the meteorite. "Are you still worrying about that?"

"How can I not care?"

There were two types of 'readers' that she didn't know about. In addition, there seemed to be a connection between the two. It was natural for Han Sooyoung who was the 'last to get off' to pay attention.

"Who knows?"

"…Don't you know?"

"I only know the woman, the leader of the group."

"The Wanderer King?"

I nodded and said, "That person isn't someone who got off. To be precise, she never read the original."

"What? Then how does she know the contents of the plot?"

"By talking directly to me."

Han Sooyoung looked like she had been hit in the back of the head with a hammer. "You told others about the story? Why?"

"I needed something to tell her when I met her." I gave her a moment before continuing. "Because I had nothing else to say to her."

Maybe she sensed my dark mood, making Han Sooyoung hesitate as she was about to question me. She probably had a lot that she wanted to ask me. Who was the woman and what was her relationship with me?

Han Sooyoung was silent for a while before speaking again. "I don't know what your relationship with that woman is but is it okay to leave her alone? If there are more people besides us who knows the future…"

I understood her concerns but it should be fine. At the very least, that woman was a person with principles and she couldn't carelessly use the future information.

I knocked on the moon stone and opened my mouth.

"Rather, there is something more important. From now on, we will wake this up."

"What? This thing?" Han Sooyoung watched me like I was insane. "You want to wake up the disaster?"

"Why are you so startled? Didn't you do it before?"

Han Sooyoung had incited the Night of the Prophets and awakened the fire dragon, Lesser Igneel.

"Hey! I picked a small disaster. This one…"

"It isn't a disaster."

"…Then what is it?"

"It looks like you were negligent in your plagiarism. Don't you remember? Do you really not know what will appear here when the scenario starts?"

Han Sooyoung stared at me before turning on her phone and reading her own novel.

"Ah… This, perhaps…"

"Have you realized? You copied it well."

"Shut up. But the main scenario hasn't opened yet. Is it okay to do this? Moreover, what if a plausibility request occurs?"

"It won't happen."

"The intermediate dokkaebi hates you…"

"Then I will deal with him." Right now, he would be busy being reprimanded by the Bureau. "We will start injected mana. Based on my calculations, it will hatch in 10 hours. I will take four hours and you will take six hours."

"Why do I have to inject mana for six hours?"

"Isn't your magic power level higher?" At this moment, the number of avatars decreased dramatically. I noticed something. "Tell me honestly. What level is your magic power?"

"Why should I tell you?"

"It is information needed to clear the scenario."

[The provisions of the Temporary Contract will take effect.]

Han Sooyoung's expression distorted.

"…Level 55."

I was honestly surprised. I thought it would be over level 40 because she could control dozens of avatars, but level 55… this was almost approaching the scenario limit.

Her physique and strength were relatively low so she must've been putting all her coins into magic power.

"I will change it. I will take two hours. You will take eight hours."

"Hey! That's unfair! And now I have run out of magic power."

I opened the Dokkaebi Bag and bought a few Intermediate Magic Power Recovery Potions.

"Then drink this."

'What is this?"

"Coin item."

"…Is your sponsor huge? You are just giving something like this to me?"

"I am the one who is big."

Han Sooyoung glanced at me. "Did you put anything strange in it?"

"Then I'll start first."

I touched the moon stone and started injecting magic power. 10 hours later, the guy inside the meteorite would wake up.

How long was I asleep? I opened my eyes at the sound of someone shouting.

"Hey, get up quickly! That guy has started to move!"

Han Sooyoung shouted with a nervous face while touching the meteorite.

The meteorite had started to crack.

It was a phenomenon similar to when the fire dragon broke out of the meteorite. It wasn't an aggressive reaction but if I said one word wrong… both of us might die here.

A brilliant light emerged from the moon stone, lifting some of the darkness of the night.

It was an awakening of a powerful presence that gave off a heavy pressure just looking at it.

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[1] **Jeon Woochi** was a Taoist scholar during the Joseon dynasty of Korea. Known by many as the most prominent "sorcerer" in Korean history.

Chapter 79: Ep. 16 – The Fifth Scenario, III

The broken pieces of moon stone fell to the ground. A being scattering a silver mane was hatching. If he was a cub, I could control him using the 'imprinting' phenomenon. But this being wasn't such a naive creature.

[You have encountered a creature from a different world for the first time in this scenario.]

[Affinity with the species from a different world has increased.]

[2,000 coins have been rewarded.]

[You have received a bonus skill for smooth communication with the other world species.]

['Other World Interpreter Lv. 1' has been acquired.]

I could hear Han Sooyoung gulp next to me.

It was natural to be nervous since the encounter with the other world species was the prelude to the fifth scenario.

It was completely different from the previous scenarios. The slightest mistake in the fifth scenario could cause all of Seoul to disappear.

[The exclusive skill 'Other World Interpreter Lv. 1' is activated.]

[The effect of the item Protection Symbol of the Imyuntar has increased understanding of the specific language.]

The item I got from the fire dragon would be helpful from now on.

[Automatic interpretation has started.]

I heard a voice from the shining moon stone.

""#%#$… damn, already?"

The creature curled up inside the moon stone grumbled and raised its body. The silver mane reminded me of a wolf at first glance, but I knew he was different from a wolf. Above all, I knew the species of this person.

「 They are three metres tall. The dominant species of the world 'Chronos' that can transform using the moon stone at night. They are fighters with monstrous physical strength who use the power of the wind. 」

One of the five dominant species of Chronos.

"I am the great first wolf."

「 In Chronos, they call the first wolf 'Imyuntar'. 」

"I am Lycaon of the Imyuntar."

There was a creepy breathing sound in the darkness of the night, causing the surroundings to be still. I made eye contact with him while Han Sooyoung hid behind me. Of course, I didn't back down.

[The exclusive skill, Character List is activated.]

[Character Summary]

Name: Lycaon Isparang

Age: 371 years old.

Sponsor: Shadow of a Destroyed World

Exclusive Attributes: Noble Imyuntar (Hero), Humiliated Survivor (Rare)

Exclusive Skills: Way of the Wind Lv. 9, Advanced Weapons Training Lv. 9, Roar of the Battlefield Lv. 8, Sage's Insight Lv. 4, Steel Skin Lv. 8, Acting Lv. 4…

Stigma: Destruction Delivery Lv. 1

Overall Stats: Physique Lv. 75, Strength Lv. 75, Agility Lv. 75, Magic Power Lv. 75.

Overall Evaluation: One of the five dominant species of the destroyed Chronos. After losing his world, he invested in the Star Stream and became a guide in the scenario. He is characterized by always looking at the world with eyes filled with remorse.

As expected, the hero of another world had great skills and stats. The average level of the stats was 75. He exceeded the current limit of the scenario. He was the goal of many representatives.

Lycaon's blue eyes looked down at me like I was interesting.

"You are the ones who woke me up?"

I nodded.

"I see… Is it finally time? Congratulations on clearing the tutorial scenarios, warriors of this world."

It sounded like a tutorial. It was funny how he imitated the dokkaebi for dramatic effect.

There was no tutorial in this world. Every scenario was an actual event and the dead couldn't come back again. Then what type of tutorial existed?

"Those who are facing extinction. First, I deeply regret that 'disaster' has come to your world."

Lycaon spoke while looking up at the sky.

He was looking at the Great Hole over Seoul, Korea.

A huge vortex reminiscent of a black hole was gradually increasing its volume every moment. Lycaon would've also seen the Great Hole on the day his world was destroyed.

All guides in the scenarios were those who lost their homes to the scenarios.

"Since I am here, you can rest assured. I am a 'guide' to stop the destruction of this world. I will train you to prepare for the disaster and give you the necessary instructions. And…"

It came out quite hastily but he was good at reciting the words. He probably got a manual grom a dokkaebi.

Lycaon suddenly stopped talking.

"…By the way, you are the only ones who woke me up?"

"It is just us."

"Strange. The fourth scenario isn't cleared? If it had been cleared properly, the five guides, including myself, would be hatched in the same place… Where is the owner of the Absolute Throne?"

He was right. Originally, the five guides, including Lycaon, would gather as soon as the master of the Absolute Throne was born.

I spoke to Lycaon. "We have no king."

"There is no king… did the master of the Absolute Throne die? No way. At present, there is no way to kill the master of the Absolute Throne."

Lycaon expressed his disbelief in a threatening manner.

"There was no owner of the Absolute Throne from the beginning."

"What does that mean?"

"We cleared the fourth scenario without getting the Absolute Throne."

Flames appeared in Lycaon's eyes.

"Are you lying to me right now? Such a thing is impossible! The fourth scenario doesn't end until someone takes the throne."

"There is also the method of destroying the Absolute Throne."

Lycaon's expression stiffened. He seemed to grasp my words and his eyes widened.

"…Perhaps?"

The embarrassment of such a noble hero was really worth seeing. His silver mane quivered as he looked closely at me.

"The numerous constellations…surely you didn't destroy the throne…?"

"That's right."

"How could you do such a terrible thing?"

Lycaon let out many curses that I couldn't hear properly. Han Sooyoung looked at the bellowing Lycaon and whispered to me, "Hey, was it that serious? For you…?"

Han Sooyoung also received Other World Interpreter and heard the conversation. Lycaon screamed before I could answer.

"Why did you do that? Now there is no one in the world under the banner of that great god?"

"No."

"Ahh! The Star Stream constellations didn't care about Chronos! Now this world is ruined! Living things with less intelligence than a kobold should do their jobs!"

I felt scorn as I watched the despairing Lycaon.

Yes, this was the essence of these guys. On the surface, they were dispatched to help this world. However, they had a separate purpose that I would never let happen.

"Prince of the Imyuntar, Lycaon Isparang. It is too early to be frustrated."

The prideful prince of the Imyuntar immediately responded to the change in my attitude.

He growled out angrily. "Cheeky human. Show respect in front of a great species! You don't know the weight of your sin!"

"Lycaon, didn't you see anything when your world perished? The Imyuntar were the ruling species of Chronos, not Earth."

Lycaon's expression stiffened. I didn't miss this gap and continued, "There were five disasters that destroyed your world."

"What…"

"The southern continent of Chronos where you lived was destroyed by the dragon. Right?"

Lycaon's eyes filled with disbelief. "How do you know this?"

"Fire Dragon Igneel. The Disaster of Burning Hell. It is the name of the disaster that destroyed your world."

The small disaster that I killed, Lesser Igneel was originally a 'disaster'.

A single flame could turn a small city into a sea of fire and a single flap of its wings could destroy a lower species.

The southern continent of Chronos was destroyed by him. The fire dragon that woke up from a meteorite.

Lycaon gritted his teeth. "You are speaking like it is someone else's story. You will regret it. Pretty soon, your world will also struggle in that hot hellfire."

"Don't worry. Igneel won't come down to this world."

"What?"

"I have already killed him. There will be no 'Burning Hell' disaster in this world."

Lycaon had a bemused expression, like he heard his home had been brought back.

"That is the best joke I've ever heard. Is there such a joke in this world? Is it fun to joke about the world that will soon cease to exist?"

Well… of course not. I pulled out a blue coloured medallion. Then like magic, Lycaon's laughter subsided.

The Protection Symbol of the Imyuntar. Lycaon's shaking hands reached out to take the medallion.

"W-Why… how do you have this…?"

The Protection Symbol of the Imyuntar was proof that a person had hunted a disaster dragon.

"Lycaon of the Imyuntar. Pay respects to the protector."

Lycaon's body slowly fell. First his knees touched the ground, slowly followed by his head. There was a severe shaking of his eyes like he couldn't admit it.

"Do it properly."

Before long, his head touched the ground. He was over three metres tall so it wasn't until he fell down that his eyes were lower than mine. I looked down at Lycaon.

This was the useful part of catching the fire dragon.

Han Sooyoung wasn't able to grasp the situation yet and looked at Lycaon with confused eyes. I was almost killed by Han Sooyoung's brutality but she ended up making things easier.

Lycaon spoke in a quivering voice. "Great dragon hunter… I would like to belatedly ask your forgiveness for my rudeness."

"My name is Kim Dokja."

Once again, I thought that my name wasn't that great. This would be a great scene if my name was Yoo Joonghyuk. I added a quick remark to diffuse the awkward atmosphere.

"Lycaon. There is something I need you to do."

Lycaon carefully looked up."

"Teach me the Way of the Wind, which is the secret technique of your people."

Lycaon's eyes slowly became bigger. This was my purpose behind hatching Lycaon.

The southern disaster of the fire dragon had disappeared so the first disaster in the fifth scenario would surely be the 'east disaster'.

In order to prevent the catastrophe in the east, I needed to gain the secret technique of the Imyuntar.

Way of the Wind It was the only answer to the disaster of the east, the 'Disaster of Questions'.

An hour later, I explained the situation to Han Sooyoung who hadn't been able to follow the conversation.

"Then the medallion you got from killing the fire dragon is an important thing for them?"

"Yes."

"I still don't understand… the fire dragon you killed at that time was one of the disasters?"

"That's right."

"…Then in the fifth scenario, we have to prevent four instead of five disasters?"

"You seem to understand yet not understand?"

Han Sooyoung frowned.

"I still don't understand. Didn't you kill the 'Lesser Igneel?' How can he be a disaster if he's just a deteriorated dragon? Is this also a development of Ways of Survival?"

"…Everything that hatches from a disaster meteor is a disaster. That guy came out instead of Igneel so Igneel won't appear in this disaster. In addition, Igneel didn't appear in the original. Igneel's hatchling came out. It is only the fifth scenario so how can something like that wake up already?"

"…You speak well. Are you a spokesman for Ways of Survival? Are you actually the writer?"

The scenario difficulty was ridiculous but it was adjusted so that it could be cleared if people risked their lives.

…Of course, the adjustment was carefully controlled.

The Lesser Igneel, the deteriorated version of the hatchling had annihilated the prophets, which could be called the elite troops at the time. Was that all? I was once killed by that dragon. If it wasn't for the King of No Killing, I wouldn't be standing here.

If Lesser Igneel had been released into Seoul and continued to level up, Seoul would've ended up the same as Lycaon's hometown.

Of course, Han Sooyoung had no knowledge of such matters and was busy complaining.

"Anyway, aren't the disasters a bigger deal than I thought? I have a lot of trouble grasping the scale because of the way it was expressed in Ways of Survival…"

"We were lucky with the fire dragon. The disasters that will come will be in their original state. Terrible beings will appear."

It was pleasant to see the expression of the plagiarist writer at the word 'original'.

"Then what should we do?"

"We have to use that guy."

I looked at Lycaon, who was preparing for the training in a distant place.

Han Sooyoung asked, "He looks strong. Do you want him to fight?"

"That guy is a coward. In addition, the guides are prohibited from fighting against disasters of another world. We have to take care of our work on our own."

I heard Lycaon calling out to me.

"Protector, I am ready."

Protector was the title for the owner of the medallion. I told him to call my name a few times but Lycaon didn't yield.

"From now on, I will teach you the secret technique of my clan, the Way of the Wind."

Way of the Wind. It was a hidden skill that allowed the user to use the wind like their own limbs.

Among the other species, only those with the Protection Symbol of the Imyuntar could learn this skill.

Yoo Joonghyuk was originally scheduled to obtain this but not this time. I couldn't give the strong person all the good skills.

"Then I will start."

For the next three hours, I sweated hard to learn the skill.

It would be nice if the system had a message like 'Would you like to learn the skill?' but this wasn't possible. It was only possible to gain the skill by learning it directly.

I had read the novel so I was able to follow Lycaon's movements a little bit. To be exact, I thought I was following it.

Approximately one more hour passed. Lycaon hesitated before opening his mouth. "Protector. I'm sorry to say this but…"

Chapter 80: Ep. 16 – The Fifth Scenario, IV

I gasped and asked, "What? Is it over?"

"No, that is…"

"…Then what am I doing wrong?"

"To be precise…"

"Don't drag it out and tell me quickly."

"It is all wrong."

It was so sincere that I sat down like I had received a nuclear punch. I breathed roughly and looked up at the sky. All of a sudden, the Great Hole floating in the sky seemed bigger. It seemed to be mocking me.

Lycaon looked at me and prepared for the kill.

"Protector… you don't have any qualities suited for Way of the Wind. No, to be honest, you don't have the qualities for almost every skill."

If this went wrong, the world might perish because of me.

A few more hours passed like this and then days went by. There were eight days left until the start of the fifth scenario.

I didn't give up and continued to learn Way of the Wind. Of course, it wasn't possible.

Grrr. "Protector, it is better to give up…"

"…Why can't I learn it?"

Han Sooyoung giggled beside me and said, "Why? It is because you have no talent."

"That isn't possible."

"Why not? You aren't the protagonist. Do you think that you became Yoo Joonghyuk because you have been doing a good job lately?"

My chest was sore like I had been stabbed. I spoke with a frown, "But I understand everything in my head."

"Ah, yes. Everyone thinks they can go to Seoul National University."

"I'm telling the truth."

I remembered most of the enlightenment associated with Way of the Wind. I felt so frustrated one hour ago that I got a second battery from the survivors and read the text again.

"There is a gale in the right hand and a storm in the left hand. The Way of the Wind will be opened when the straight lines and the curves meet."

"H-How… You really understand it!"

Lycaon felt admiration from where he was listening to me.

In fact, the words I just muttered was Yoo Joonghyuk's enlightenment in Ways of Survival. In Ways of Survival, Yoo Joonghyuk gained insight in a single 'phrase' followed by a Chinese character. He learned Way of the Wind in just 5 minutes.

But it wasn't that simple and I had wasted two days already.

"How can I do this?" I grumbled.

"Huh? You just said it… there is no representation more accurate than that."

"No, it was a metaphor."

"Your words weren't a metaphor."

It was enough to make me go crazy. This time the problem wasn't solved by the writer's description in Ways of Survival. It was because the explanation was just complete noise to me and the Fourth Wall was also useless at this moment. Fourth Wall gave me judgment and calmness but it didn't give me talent.

I felt a little feverish as I spoke to Lycaon. "Then you should try this. One wind will meet another wind to form ying and yang. Once again, one wind will meet another wind to form the principles of negative and positive."

Yin and Yang was a concept from Earth but Lycaon understood it instantly.

"How could you have gained such profound insight?"

"Don't just speak it, spread it directly through your body."

"So it is like this."

Lycaon concentrated and winds from different directions started to form around him. The two winds swirled, adding a hot and cold energy to the wind.

…To be honest, I thought it was ridiculous. He just heard it and could carry out the technique instantly? Then why couldn't I do the same?

My pride was provoked.

"Then how about this? 'Four winds meet and form a defense. Then another four winds are added, making it the Eight Trigrams. Therefore, wind is everywhere yet exists nowhere'. Can you do this as well?"

This sentence was the enlightenment that Yoo Joonghyuk gained in the 9th round of regression. This time Lycaon made a puzzled expression. I spoke in a triumphant voice.

"You can't? This is how I am feeling."

"Pushov… no, Protector. I really appreciate it."

…What?

[The 5th grade other world species 'Prince Lycaon of the Imyuntar' has received great enlightenment.]

Lycaon suddenly turned and started practicing.

[You have a great impact on the evolution of Prince Lycaon of the Imyuntar.]

[Lycaon of the Imyuntar feels a great appreciation towards you.]

[Some constellations from the ruined world 'Chronos' thank you.]

[2,000 coins have been sponsored.]

I finally figured out what was going on. That damn wolf gained enlightenment by hearing what I said.

Han Sooyoung was laughing so hard that she was holding her belly.

I felt belated frustration. Maybe I knew Ways of Survival but I didn't know anything about myself.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' admires your patience.]

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' is disappointed in your weakness.]

Looking at the system messages appearing in the air, I thought about signing a contract with a sponsor. Of course, it was impossible due to the contract with Bihyung.

[So why did you break the throne? Fool.]

I looked up and saw a transparent figure floating in the air. I opened the dokkaebi communication.

'Is it okay to talk now? What about the intermediate dokkaebi?'

[He won't come for a while. He is being properly disciplined. He won't come before the fifth scenario opens. Ah, my channel also upgraded again. Hopefully I can reach the intermediate level next month. It is all thanks to you.]

'That's good'.

[Why don't you look happy? It is also good for you if I do well.]

'You will be busy when you reach intermediate level'.

Bihyung laughed at my words.

[Brat, don't worry. I don't know about other incarnations but won't I look after you? These days there are many intermediate dokkaebi at the Bureau but… it is noisy because some bastards are twisting their probabilities extensively.]

I didn't need him to tell me who it was.

[Oh, of course it isn't you.]

It was completely Yoo Joonghyuk.

In fact, Yoo Joonghyuk's growth rate was impossible through any possibilities. He was growing at a rate that was close to a cheat.

[There is one abnormally rapidly growing guy and the Bureau can't touch him… I think his sponsor is probably a formidable guy.]

Perhaps Yoo Joonghyuk's 'possibilities' wouldn't be a problem in the future.

In the end, the 'possibility' wasn't a problem if there was a constellation capable of that 'possibility'. And it was possible for Yoo Joonghyuk's sponsor.

[By the way, why don't you buy a growth package? I'll sell it for a cheap price if you buy it now. Aren't you suffering right now because you can't learn that skill? This package…]

'I won't buy it. In any case, isn't the growth package only applicable to skills already learnt? Did you show up just to eat money?'

The growth package had a penalty when abused. It was why even the powerful Yoo Joonghyuk didn't use the growth package.

[Sheesh, you knew…?]

Bihyung muttered with a dissatisfied expression.

'But it is time to buy something'.

[Coins Possessed: 62,372 C]

I still had a lot of coins despite raising my stats due to selling the fire dragon parts.

If I had 40,000 more coins, I would've bought Sky Dragon Steps but I couldn't this time.

Bihyung's face became rosy.

[Oh, really? What do you want to buy?]

'Aren't you going to receive new coin items soon?'

[…How do you know? Did you plant a mole?]

'It is natural since a new scenario will open soon. At that time, tell me. I'll buy it'.

[Hoh, you will…]

I turned off the dokkaebi communication. I didn't want to talk to him when there was nothing to say. I looked back and Lycaon was still gaining enlightenment. Han Sooyoung approached me and raised her chin.

"Hey, what are you going to do now?"

"…I don't know. I'm still thinking."

"Then let me learn it."

"What?"

"Or let the other survivors learn it."

I looked at the people around us.

It was two days after the coin farms collapsed. The rescued survivors were working together and caring for the other wounded.

The atmosphere was quite different from the survivors of Deputy Yoon's coin farm. Perhaps Han Sooyoung's hypocrisy-filled good deeds had changed them. It turned out that hypocrisy was a good thing.

Han Sooyoung opened her mouth again. "Isn't it just learning Way of the Wind? Does it matter who learns it?"

"…Right, anyone can learn it."

"Why do you insist on being the one to learn it? Are you trying to get the attention of the constellations alone?"

It wasn't wrong, but it wasn't exactly right.

"Only people with the protection medallion can learn Way of the Wind."

"Then give it to me."

"It isn't transferable."

[The character Han Sooyoung has confirmed that the statement is true.]

This woman really…

"You are the first person who is more suspicious than Yoo Joonghyuk."

"You brought it up. This skill, Yoo Joonghyuk should've originally learnt it?"

"That's right."

"Then why do you have to go through this trouble? You can leave it to Yoo Joonghyuk. It isn't too late now so let's go find Yoo Joonghyuk. He is growing well. That guy would manage it somehow."

"Yoo Joonghyuk doesn't listen to what other people will say."

"I'll tempt him."

I stared at Han Sooyoung before looking away. "Yoo Joonghyuk doesn't like the body of a child."

"Are you ignoring me now?"

"Besides, there is also a problem in finding Yoo Joonghyuk."

Even Yoo Joonghyuk couldn't learn Way of the Wind without the protection medallion.

It meant the medallion needed to be taken from me, but ownership wouldn't be released until I died.

In other words, Yoo Joonghyuk must kill me. Besides, even if he had the medallion…

"You know that I beat him up pretty badly in the end. Once we meet, he will definitely try to kill me."

Yoo Joonghyuk flew from my punch filled with 100 strength. In the meantime, the eyes that wanted to tear me to pieces were still vivid.

"…Well, he was really bold when he cut off my head." Han Sooyoung stroked her neck as memories of Chungmuro Station surfaced.

"Besides, finding out where he is now…"

At this time, an uproar was heard in the distance.

"There is someone injured. Please help! It is serious!"

Someone had found a wounded person nearby.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is looking forward to your companionship.]

[Some constellations are expecting you to treat the wounded.]

The messages of the constellations, including Uriel, arrived. What was going on?

I took Han Sooyoung and headed there.

After a while, I found the cause of the problem and glared at Bihyung floating in the air.

Bihyung sniggered at me.

[I didn't know about this.]

The bleeding Yoo Joonghyuk was waiting for me there.

Chapter 81: Ep. 16 – The Fifth Scenario, V

I stepped away from the bleeding Yoo Joonghyuk lying down and spoke to Bihyung.

'Is this your doing?'

Even if Yoo Joonghyuk was nearby, he couldn't be found in such a timely manner. It was clear that Bihyung had made a sub scenario to bring Yoo Joonghyuk over here.

[Are you suspecting me? Is there evidence?]

There was no evidence but I felt it in my heart.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is concerned with your judgment.]

[500 coins have been sponsored.]

I felt a strong belief.

Han Sooyoung whispered to me as I looked down at Yoo Joonghyuk with a dumb expression. "…We found him. What are you going to do?"

"What else?"

"Shouldn't you save him? This jerk, he is the protagonist."

Of course I had to save him. However, if I saved this bastard, I would surely die. Han Sooyoung looked scared that Yoo Joonghyuk would wake up straight away.

"Do you have anything that will restrain him?"

"Yoo Joonghyuk won't tolerate them."

"Lock him up…"

"Then he will commit suicide."

"But if he goes back… Damn, what will happen if he regresses?"

Han Sooyoung belatedly came to this realization.

What would happen to this world if Yoo Joonghyuk went back? It was one of my biggest challenges living in this world.

"We have to stop it. Nobody knows what will happen."

It was right to assume the worst when things were unknown. If I made a mistake and the world was reset, my existence would disappear.

By the way… how did this jerk end up like this?

I looked closely at him. There was a wound around the belly. All internal organs and ribs were broken. It felt like someone incredibly powerful had hit Yoo Joonghyuk in one blow…

At this moment, I stared blankly at my fist. Perhaps?

"What is with that expression? Why is your face suddenly dark?"

"…It is nothing."

All of a sudden, I was convinced. He was hit with a fist filled with 100 strength…

Then he had been like this for two days. Now I felt sorry. With this, it might not be possible to restore my relationship with Yoo Joonghyuk.

As I slowly looked from his belly to his face, I took a few steps back because I got goosebumps.

"…Shit."

Yoo Joonghyuk was staring at me with bloody and teary eyes. His lips were moving and he was obviously saying something like 'Dead, Kim Dokja'.

I thought Han Sooyoung was beside me but she had run away as quickly as possible. I shouted towards Yoo Joonghyuk from a distance.

"Hey! Can't you release your anger?"

"…"

"Wasn't it a fair fight? Didn't you try to kill me as well?"

Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes didn't change. Dammit…

I had no choice. Yoo Joonghyuk had to survive here, even if he killed me. I might be able to stop the Disaster of Questions without Yoo Joonghyuk but I wouldn't be able to prevent the other disasters and the world would be destroyed.

Why was the protagonist of Ways of Survival such a person? The story would've been easier of it was Lee Hyunsung or Jung Heewon.

…This wasn't the time for complaints.

I decided to use a skill. It was obvious what he was thinking but I needed to check.

[Exclusive skill, Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint stage 2 has been activated!]

At this moment, something amazing happened.

「Kim Dokja.」

My eyes widened as I watched Yoo Joonghyuk.

…Did he just call out to me?

「You can hear my words. Isn't that right? If I look back at what you have done so far…」

…What?

「Say that you can hear me. If you don't move now, the world will…」

I looked at him in a slightly confused state.

「…It was my mistake. Dammit.」

Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes slowly closed. I hesitated for a moment before approaching Yoo Joonghyuk. Yoo Joonghyuk didn't seem to have the power to fight me at all in this state. Besides… I didn't see any animosity towards me.

"Yoo Joonghyuk. Can you hear me?"

Yoo Joonghyuk struggled to raise his eyelids, only to close them again. It was strange.

No matter how badly wounded he was, he would've automatically triggered Recovery when he was hit. Then why was he still in this state?

[The exclusive skill, Character List is activated.]

[There is too much information about this person. Character List is converted to Character Summary.]

[Character Summary]

Name: Yoo Joonghyuk.

Exclusive Attributes: Regressor (3rd turn) (Myth), Pro Gamer (Rare), Supreme King (Hero)

Exclusive Skills: Sage's Eye Lv. 8, Hand to Hand Combat Lv. 9, Advanced Weapons Training Lv. 8, Mental Barrier Lv. 6, Hundred Steps Godly Fists Lv. 6, Red Phoenix Shunpo Lv. 6…Omitted…

Stigma: Regression Lv. 3, Transmission Lv. 3

Overall Stats: Physique Lv. 60, Strength Lv. 60, Agility Lv. 60, Magic Power Lv. 60.

* Currently in an abnormal condition.

* Currently, this person is affected by the Thousand Spirits Poison.

There were no problems with his stats. Yoo Joonghyuk was still one of the strongest incarnations in Seoul and his skills had grown compared to the last time I saw him.

The problem was his abnormal status.

Yoo Joonghyuk didn't have the skills Thousand Poisons Resistance or Immunity to Ten Thousand Poisons yet. Therefore, poison was currently one of Yoo Joonghyuk's few weaknesses.

He was like this because he was poisoned.

I looked closer and saw that there were blue blood vessels all over his body. It hadn't been long since he was poisoned. Fortunately, he was still alive.

But it was strange. I knew of only one person who could infect Yoo Joonghyuk with Thousand Spirits Poison at this time…

A woman watching me in the distance asked, "You… are you Kim Dokja-ssi?"

I nodded. I looked at the woman who brought Yoo Joonghyuk here.

"He was like this the whole time. He kept asking me to take him to Kim Dokja…"

Yoo Joonghyuk?

I looked down at Yoo Joonghyuk's face, which was more blue-tinged than before, and instantly had many thoughts. The terrified Han Sooyoung who had been fleeing came back.

"Hey, what's going on?" Han Sooyoung poked my shoulder but I didn't answer.

I struggled for a moment before speaking to Bihyung.

'Bihyung, open the Dokkaebi Bag'.

[Now do you understand? This wasn't my doing.]

'Open the bag'.

After confirming my remaining coins, I found a coin item that could cure Yoo Joonghyuk.

He was affected by the Thousand Spirits Poison so it couldn't be removed simply by eating the Ellain Forest Essence. I quickly turned on the text and checked some of the ingredients before purchasing items from the Dokkaebi Bag.

[You have purchased one Midday Tryst.]

[You have purchased one Old Barbara Branch.]

[You have purchased two Putna Daltun Horns.]

[You have purchased one Detox Potato.]

[You have purchased two Aintern Temple's Purification Water.]

[You have purchased one Ellain Forest Essence.]

[A total of 7,370 coins are consumed.]

It was an unexpected bleeding service. I asked the survivors around me for a small bucket, lit the Magic Power Stove and poured the ingredients into it. Han Sooyoung asked,

"What are you going to make?"

"An antidote."

"Did you decide to save him?"

I nodded and replied, "This bastard, he came to me deliberately."

"Deliberately? Why?"

"I don't know."

"Did he come to ask you for help? I don't think Yoo Joonghyuk would come all this way to kill you."

"That is impossible for Yoo Joonghyuk."

"How do you know?"

"I know. He is that type of bastard."

I adjusted the flames of the stove.

Fire blazed and the contents in the bucket started to boil. Based on the colour and form, it looked like food from the Death Valley goblins. It might seem terrible but this soup was an excellent antidote.

Han Sooyoung placed her hands on her knees and stared at the terrible food. "By the way, was Yoo Joonghyuk such a bad person in Ways of Survival?"

"…What?"

"It was a thought that I had. Didn't Yoo Joonghyuk save a lot of people and do good deeds? Of course, he is like a psychopath but isn't he moving for the people? He is fighting to save the world. I don't want to admit it because I am a bad person."

When I thought about it, Han Sooyoung's words weren't completely wrong. I laughed and said, "Your defense of Yoo Joonghyuk is energetic because you haven't read as far as me."

"But that is that and this is this. You can't judge people by only looking at one side."

It was an unexpected conversation so I looked up at Han Sooyoung for a while.

Han Sooyoung was smiling coldly.

"No matter how much you claim that my work is plagiarism, it has actually never been affected by Ways of Survival."

"…You almost convinced me without saying that. It is a real pity."

I said this but my mind was a bit complicated.

What type of person was Yoo Joonghyuk? Could I really say that I was familiar with the existence of Yoo Joonghyuk?

I was able to confidently answer until a while ago. I was the only reader who read all of Ways of Survival.

But I felt that some of my answers were being diluted in the soup. Did I know Yoo Joonghyuk at all?

Not long after that, the soup started boiling.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is impressed with your good deed.]

[Constellations of the absolute good system support your good deed.]

[3,000 coins have been sponsored.]

It was rare for a person to be damaged by sponsorship. Shit.

I approached Yoo Joonghyuk with the soup. Han Sooyoung brought me a spoon from a nearby store. I scooped up the soup with the spoon and put it in Yoo Joonghyuk's mouth. Han Sooyoung watched me blowing on the soup.

"You are acting like a wife."

"Do you want to do this?"

"I don't want to."

In fact, I wouldn't have given the job to her anyway. It was due to the system message that I heard every time I scooped up a spoonful of soup.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is impressed with your good deed.]

[500 coins have been sponsored.]

It was tremendous to receive coins every time I fed him.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is impressed with your good deed.]

[300 coins have been sponsored.]

I thought it was a loss to me but it turned out to be a huge honey event. Indeed, people should live a good life.

However, I started to feel a bit strange after 10 spoonfuls.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is impressed with your good deed.]

[400 coins have been sponsored.]

…Was this constellation really impressed with the good deed? Would it last until the bowl was empty?

Yoo Joonghyuk started to open his eyes with a slight groan. He was still in bad shape but he was gradually healing from the poison. I didn't miss his opportunity and took out one item.

[You have used the Midday Tryst.]

[You are seeking consent from the target.]

Midday Tryst was an item that allowed for a one on one conversation with the selected target for a specified time period. If I had a bit more coins, I would've learnt the Sound Transmission skill but I didn't have that much to spare. Therefore, I chose the next best thing.

[The target has agreed to communicate with you.]

[The Midday Tryst has started.]

Once I sent a message to Yoo Joonghyuk, a small messenger window emerged in front of me.

–Hey, can you hear me?

The connection was formed.

I purchased this item for three reasons.

One was because Yoo Joonghyuk's tongue was paralyzed by the effect of Thousand Spirits Poison and the second reason was to avoid leaking information to Han Sooyoung. The third and most important reason was that I didn't want to confirm to Yoo Joonghyuk that I could read his thoughts.

The next moment, Yoo Joonghyuk's message came up.

–Kim Dokja, move to the east right now.

Chapter 82: Ep. 17 – SSS-grade Talent, I

I frowned at Yoo Joonghyuk's words.

Move to the east right now? I saved his life and now he was giving me an order?

I was a bit annoyed but Yoo Joonghyuk spoke before I could say anything.

–The Disaster of Questions is waking up.

…What?

I was frustrated because I couldn't understand what he was saying and Yoo Joonghyuk frowned.

–Someone is waking the disaster up.

After a while, Han Sooyoung and I left Lycaon who was still receiving enlightenment and headed for Gangdong-gu.

It was at a tremendous pace.

"Can we just leave that wolf?"

"The Imyuntar can feel the master of the medallion. He will come find us when he wakes up. Rather…" I looked at Han Sooyoung running beside me and said, "Can't you carry him? You can use your avatar."

"I don't want to." The disgusted Han Sooyoung quickly moved away from me.

"Didn't you say earlier that Yoo Joonghyuk might not be a bad guy?"

"That is that and this is this. Isn't he the one who cut my head off?"

I couldn't say anything to refute her words. Yoo Joonghyuk spoke through Midday Tryst.

–You can leave me. I don't need help.

–Don't be so prideful. I really will abandon you.

I couldn't see Yoo Joonghyuk's face because he was being carried on my back.

–When will you be able to move by yourself?

–In two days.

–Will you kill me when you recover?

I asked half-jokingly but this bastard didn't give an answer. I deliberately reduced the pace at which I was moving.

–Then I can't help you. How can I believe a guy who is trying to kill me? I will help you if you swear an Oath of Existence. Swear not to kill me until the end of this regression.

–I can't do that.

Lousy bastard.

–Then swear you won't hurt me until the fifth scenario is over. If you can't do that, I really won't help you.

Yoo Joonghyuk thought for a moment before replying.

–I swear.

Surprisingly, Yoo Joonghyuk agreed to the oath. The Oath of Existence. It was a constraint on the person who swore it.

A cold flame emerged from Yoo Joonghyuk's body and dug into his heart. If he broke the oath, this blue flames will burn his heart. I felt a bit relieved but then Yoo Joonghyuk continued.

–I won't kill you. But…

–But?

–I will hit you once.

–What?

I was dazed for a moment. He was going to hit me?

–Is this because of two days ago?

Yoo Joonghyuk didn't answer again. I thought it was strange that Yoo Joonghyuk agreed to the oath so easily.

–…It is one hit. I'll do it gently. Understood?

Yes, it might not be bad if one hit could restore my relationship with Yoo Joonghyuk. In my current state, I wouldn't die from one of Yoo Joonghyuk's blows.

Shortly after that, we crossed Cheongdam Bridge and entered Gwangjin-gu.

I felt the surrounding ecology change little by little. Grass was growing on the streets and instead of rotting bodies, the smell of monster feces filled the area.

The trunk of a huge plant emerged from the ground and wrapped around the surrounding high-rise buildings.

[The 7th grade plant species 'Yanaspleta' is on the lookout.]

I spoke to Han Sooyoung who was pulling out a weapon. "Don't act so rashly. It is fine as long as we don't attack first."

"…Don't these types of monsters suddenly attack with tentacles?"

"That is just in the manhwas. They are gentle. Just be careful not to step on the roots."

At the top of the building, the head of the plant that resembled a sunflower followed after us with its eyes. It seemed scary but it was actually a good monster. This didn't mean that the situation was optimistic.

The plant species originally came after the Great Hole was fully opened.

"The terraforming has started."

Terraforming.

The fifth scenario was world versus world. Humanity fought against the worlds that were coming.

Just like Seoul was suffering from the erosion of Chronos, China would be facing the '3rd Murim World' while Japan would be facing the 'White Demon Realm'.

Han Sooyoung scouted around with avatars and said.

"It is a monster colony. Damn."

"The terraforming will be even faster if the disasters awaken."

"What type of person is waking up the disaster?"

"A person like you. You woke up the fire dragon."

Han Sooyoung bit her lips.

"…Didn't you tidy it up?"

"At that time, the intermediate dokkaebi placed a penalty on the fire dragon. And what if I didn't kill it? Don't tell me that you would catch it?"

"There was a penalty? Then didn't it benefit us to catch a weakened disaster?"

"The Disaster of Questions has no penalty. It is questionable if the dokkaebi would even place a penalty on it."

We moved quickly to avoid the monster's colony. In the streets, the ground rats and grolls were eating corpses.

Looking at the traces of the destroyed monsters, Yoo Joonghyuk seemed to have come through this path. Yoo Joonghyuk was great to walk so far in this physical condition.

I spoke to Yoo Joonghyuk.

–I have a question.

–…

–Why come to me? I honestly thought you would commit suicide.

–Suicide? How ridiculous.

If he had seen his future in the 8th turn, he wouldn't be able to say this. I was a bit confused by his next words.

–If I was going to give up so easily, I wouldn't have started this journey.

It really felt like the first time I read Ways of Survival. I thought that maybe Han Sooyoung was right. The Yoo Joonghyuk I believed I knew was the Yoo

Joonghyuk who easily gave up, easily killed people and repeatedly caused numerous tragedies.

However, the Yoo Joonghyuk of the third round wasn't yet like that. Maybe I didn't know the Yoo Joonghyuk of the third round.

[Your understanding of the character 'Yoo Joonghyuk' is increasing.]

In the meantime, Yoo Joonghyuk said.

–I thought of you right away. I thought you would be a bit of help since you are the one who smashed the Absolute Throne.

–You aren't going to say anything about me breaking the throne?

–I don't want to talk about what already happened. In addition, I thought about it. You must've done it to rule out the 'god of the other world'.

–…You know?

I was honestly frightened because I had never really spoken to Yoo Joonghyuk before.

Putting aside his coolness, this bastard had such a great mind?

Yoo Joonghyuk kept speaking.

–Honestly, I think it isn't a bad way. The problem is what happens next. After you crushed the throne, the guides were scattered and there was a setback in collecting the meteorite. This is why the terraforming of Gwangjin-gu and Gangdong-gu is so fast. The wanderers are using the power of the meteorites.

–What do you mean? Terraforming won't accelerate simply by using the meteorites.

–One of the 10 Evils has taken possession of a 'disaster meteorite'.

The 10 Evils. My heart instantly sank. I had expected it but actually hearing it was a different matter.

–Is it the Poisoner?

–…You know.

–She is the only one who uses Thousand Spirits Poison.

But there was still a part that I didn't understand.

–Then why are you poisoned? If you knew that the opponent was the Poisoner, shouldn't you have avoided facing her from the front?

–I was trying to convince her.

–Convince? You?

Then a scene belatedly popped up. Yoo Joonghyuk said.

–I wanted to make her a companion.

Companion… I see. I remembered now. Poisoner Lee Seolhwa was Yoo Joonghyuk's companion in the second round.

The 10 Evils weren't always opponents.

Just like Armed Fortress Master Gong Pildu changed in this round, Lee Seolhwa was transformed into a companion in several rounds, including the first regression. In all other regressions so far, Poisoner Lee Seolhwa was one of the few companions that Yoo Joonghyuk could rely on.

–You did something that isn't like you.

–I admit it. I was pathetic.

–…

–She isn't the person I remember. I knew it. Still, I wanted to believe for a moment that the woman in my memories was still alive. I wanted to be with her again.

*

I couldn't help opening my mouth at the loneliness that he had buried deeply.

In his second life, Lee Seolhwa didn't last long but she was Yoo Joonghyuk's lover.

–I understand.

Yoo Joonghyuk was silent for a moment.

–You are talking as if you have regressed before.

–I don't need to regress to understand.

I knew that I shouldn't speak about understanding. Still, I wanted to say it. Since he wouldn't receive understanding from anyone in the future, I thought I could say this.

[The character 'Yoo Joonghyuk' is deeply shaken.]

[The character 'Yoo Joonghyuk' has received a faint consolation.]

–Strange. You obviously aren't a regressor… But I feel like you really understand these emotions. Is this also the power of a prophet?

I didn't answer, making Yoo Joonghyuk continue speaking.

–Of course, you aren't a good person. You are the unscrupulous person who kidnapped my sister.

–When did I kidnap her? I just protected her. You must've understood with Lie Detection…

"Kim Dokja."

We stopped talking at Han Sooyoung's tense voice. The road from Cheonho Bridge to Gangdong was visible. The Great Hole emitted a bright light and something fell towards Gangdong-gu.

Dammit, it was already happening.

We fully entered Gangdong-gu and the density of the strange grasses covering the ground increased. Dirty trees grew between buildings and there were small beasts running on the trees.

Gangdong-gu was already half of another world.

Han Sooyoung bit her lips and asked, "Are we too late? What if the disaster has already awakened?"

"It hasn't happened yet. Then we would've received the scenario."

We took a few more steps and saw several markings on the ground. It looked like graffiti but it was actually a territorial display.

It was a warning that no one should enter.

From here on, it was the area of the Poisoner. Like the other wanderers, she settled in Gangdong-gu and started to expand her base.

The progress was faster than I expected.

Han Sooyoung said, "If this group is well guarded, it won't be easy to attack… Have you thought of something?"

No. I didn't intend to wage an all-out war in the first place.

"We only need the meteorite. We can just steal it. I will buy time while you take the meteorite."

However, it wouldn't be so easy. The story might be different if I had an assistant like the Wanderer King.

Yoo Joonghyuk interrupted.

–There is no need to rush. Even if the disaster begins, the Disaster of Questions is a disaster that can be suppressed at an early stage.

An early suppression. Indeed, it was possible for Yoo Joonghyuk.

–Early suppression? Who will do that? Are you a half god?

–Of course it should be you. Weren't you thinking about it anyway?

–Why do you think that?

–You have already woken up the guide and received the Way of the Wind.

Based on his tone, he was slightly angry that I had taken the Way of the Wind that he was supposed to learn. I said with a smile.

–I didn't learn it.

–…Why? There wasn't enough time?

I'm actually glad.

–No, I don't have talent.

I could feel Yoo Joonghyuk's deep contempt in his silence.

–You, from the beginning…

"There are people."

The moment I heard Han Sooyoung's words, I raised Unbroken Faith. It was the territory of one of the 10 Evils so the peple would naturally belong to their group.

I entrusted Yoo Joonghyuk to Han Sooyoung's avatar.

"…I will be gone for a while so take him. Do you understand?"

The people were getting closer. But something felt strange. Usually it wasn't so loud when a single group moved. Then the clear voice of a woman was heard in front of us.

"Everybody run towards Cheonho Bridge!"

It wasn't the Poisoner's group.

They weren't as powerful was the Wanderer King's group but some people who survived the Poisoner's Group were escaping from Gangdong-gu. The unarmed survivors gasped for air when they found us.

"O-Out of the way! Hurry!"

Terrible arrows came flying towards them. The man who spoke to me fell down after being hit by an arrow. The man's back quickly became discoloured and blackened. It was poison.

"Get those scum!"

The Poisoner's group. Dozens of men and women simultaneously fired arrows.

The moment we tried to avoid it by moving behind a building, threads of silk spread out in the air.

Dozens of webs were arranged at once, causing the arrows to become tangled in the thread and not go any further. Han Sooyoung's eyes widened.

"…What the hell is that technique?"

In fact, it was fired from behind the Poisoner's group. The thread was like steel wire. The sharpness of the thread caused the legs of people to fly through the air.

"Kuaaak!"

All the threads were connected to one woman. The woman wearing a tight black battle suit flew through the air. Two knives stretched out from the fingers of the woman brilliantly riding the thread of magic.

The woman freely manipulated the length of the thread and she swept away the Poisoner's group in an instant.

There wasn't any hesitation in her hand. The movements were beyond beautiful. The combination of stats and skills showed that she didn't have an ordinary sponsor.

[The information of this person can't be read in 'Character List'.]

[This person isn't registered in 'Character List'.]

She wasn't even on the Character List.

Han Sooyoung muttered. "Hey, that woman…"

I knew without her saying anything. It was because this woman was someone I knew.

"…Yoo Sangah-ssi?"

I hadn't met her in two days yet she was completely different from the girl I knew.

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* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)
* Official novel illustration (canonical)

Chapter 83: Ep. 17 – SSS-grade Talent, II

The bodies of her enemies were torn apart whenever Yoo Sangah's daggers moved.

Amazing.

…Was this really the Yoo Sangah that I knew?

There weren't many skills that could show such power against a large group. At the present time, it was probably just Armed Fortress Master Gong Pildu's Armed Zone and Han Sooyoung's Avatar. Yet Yoo Sangah was showing such power without such a great skill.

How did she become so strong? What was this talent?

Yoo Joonghyuk spoke as if he had read my thoughts.

–She grew faster because you aren't around. You seem to have no aptitude for raising your fellow companions. It is the same with Lee Hyunsung.

–…They grew to this extent because I pushed them in the beginning.

Actually, I didn't really believe it but I wanted to say it. Damn, why did she get stronger when I wasn't around? Why didn't I seem to be much help?

"Hey." A voice was heard. I nodded at Han Sooyoung's words. I couldn't be overwhelmed by Yoo Sangah forever. In any case, there were many enemies and Yoo Sangah was alone.

"Yoo Sangah-ssi, this way!"

Yoo Sangah stopped when she heard my words. She clearly hadn't expected to meet me in this place.

"Han Sooyoung, please."

Han Sooyoung triggered Avatar like she was waiting. Dozens of avatars disturbed the vision of the Poisoner's group and I safely made contact with Yoo Sangah.

"Dokja-ssi? How are you…"

"Let's talk after moving."

The group members were chasing from afar. Fortunately, the survivors seemed to have escaped safely through Gangdong Bridge. The problem was on our side.

–Go back to the high-rise buildings. The most important step is to go up and secure visibility.

As expected, Yoo Joonghyuk's judgment was valid. I might've read all of Ways of Survival but I couldn't make battlefield judgments like Yoo Joonghyuk. Then Yoo Joonghyuk followed with meaningful words.

–And that woman, you should be careful of her.

Be careful? Who? Yoo Joonghyuk didn't say anything else.

We quickly hid inside a nearby high-rise building. The monsters suddenly flooded the area, probably due to the turmoil, and just narrowly missed our tail. They soon gave up and returned to inner Gangdong.

I looked back at Yoo Sangah.

"Yoo Sangah-ssi, are you okay?"

"Yes, I'm fine. Dokja-ssi?"

"Yes, I'm also fine."

It had only been a few days but the conversation was awkward. It felt like I was meeting an alumni from high school 10 years after graduation. I looked away from her in her tight battle suit and opened her mouth.

"That, um…"

I couldn't figure out what to ask.

In the meantime, I looked at Han Sooyoung. Yoo Sangah saw Yoo Joonghyuk being carried on the back of Han Sooyoung's avatar and gave me an unknown smile.

"Dokja-ssi must've done a lot in the meantime."

It was time to listen to a short story.

* * *

After the Absolute Throne was smashed, Yoo Sangah fell to Gangdong-gu. Fortunately, there was someone who fell with her.

"Gong Pildu was with you?"

"Yes. Ahjussi helped me a lot."

Seeing that she was calling him ahjussi, they seemed to have become quite familiar with each other.

"Where is Gong Pildu?"

"Two days ago, he was injured while we were fighting the Gangdong-gu group. It was while trying to save me…"

Many surprising things kept happening today. '10 Evils' Gong Pildu risked himself in order to save someone else. Yoo Sangah bowed her head and spoke with difficulty.

"In the end, ahjussi lured them to Han River…"

Yoo Sangah bit her lips and a poisonous expression filled her face. I suddenly realized why Yoo Sangah killed the Poisoner's group without hesitation.

I spoke to comfort her. "Gong Pildu is probably okay. Don't worry."

I had a contract with Defense Master so I would know immediately when Gong Pildu died. I would be penalized according to the terms of the contract. The fact that there was no reaction meant that Gong Pildu was alive somewhere.

Like the Poisoner, Gong Pildu was also part of the 10 Evils. It wasn't that easy for him to die.

"Where did you get those clothes and the dagger?"

"Ah, this…"

After separating from Gong Pildu, Yoo Sangah found the green meteorite. The green meteorite was a meteorite containing rare items. I checked the items she had. I remembered that there was a meteorite containing these items in the vicinity of Cheonho-dong.

[Ancient Assassin's Dagger]

[Rich Cat's Leather Suit]

Both were excellent S-grade items.

The Ancient Assassin's Dagger had the option of increasing damage to distant enemies while the Rich Cat's Leather Suit increased movement speed the longer the duration of the attack.

"They are great items."

"Yes, I am able to fight well thanks to these items."

Yoo Sangah smiled and then the quietly listening Han Sooyoung spoke up.

"Hrmm, are you sure that's all?"

"Huh?"

"Let's say that you 'accidentally' got the items. But it doesn't make sense to have such combat skills with barely any items. Who the hell is your sponsor? How did you raise 'Quick Movements' or 'Dagger Mastery' so quickly? It is impossible for the growth to be so fast even with a growth package."

"…Who are you?"

"Me? It am the 1st Apostle."

Yoo Sangah raised her weapon without speaking. "Calm down Yoo Sangah-ssi. This person isn't an enemy."

Yoo Sangah looked at me with disbelief. "Are you friends now?"

"We aren't friends…"

"The Chungmuro group members died because of that person. Surely you haven't forgotten?"

Yoo Sangah was the deputy of Chungmuro while I was absent.

Therefore, her affection towards the Chungmuro members would be much deeper than mine. Han Sooyoung said, "Chungmuro? Ah, I see. You are that woman?"

Yoo Sangah narrowed her eyes at the words.

Han Sooyoung smiled and added, "Hey, Kim Dokja. I am a bad person but I am also a good judge. She has a big sponsor behind her."

"You…"

"When I saw her at Chungmuro, she wasn't that strong. Isn't it strange? She can't grow so explosively in such a short period of time, even if she has a narrative-grade sponsor. Maybe if she has an SSS-grade accelerated growth skill… How can many constellations can provide such support to South Korea?"

My heart wanted to deny it but rationally, I knew that Han Sooyoung was right. There was also Yoo Joonghyuk's words from a short while ago. In addition, Yoo Sangah had been hiding her sponsor from me.

Yoo Sangah's troubled eyes met mine.

I used to think that Yoo Sangah's sponsor was 'Abandoned Lover of the Labyrinth'.

The only person who could find the path through the magic room was the person who handed the thread to Theseus in Daedalus' Labyrinth, 'Ariadne'.

But as Han Sooyoung said, it was impossible for her to grow to such a degree with Ariadne's sponsorship.

In addition, the movements that she showed while moving through the air in the previous battle was closer to the Hermes Walking Method than Air Steps. Ariadne's incarnation couldn't use Hermes' stigma.

I was about to open my mouth when something unexpected happened.

[Haha, everyone! How have you been?]

Dammit… this timing. I immediately looked out the window. A new dokkaebi was floating in the sky.

[The participants in this scenario are quite hasty. There is still a week before the start of the scenario and people are already waking up a disaster. Are you curious about the next scenario?]

It wasn't the level of Bihyung's nonsense but it was still talking nonsense. Perhaps there was no one in charge so this low-grade dokkaebi took their place.

[The dokkaebi have left their positions so I will be here for this period… haha. Now have you all eaten your fill? You do know that this event can't be skipped, right?]

This wasn't good. It was a really bad development.

[I want to do that but I won't be a dokkaebi if I don't give scenarios.]

The fact that a scenario was appearing now told me one thing.

[The sub scenario – Disaster Prevention has arrived.]

It meant that the outbreak of a disaster was just around the corner.

[Sub Scenario – Disaster Prevention]

Category: Sub

Difficulty: S-

Clear Conditions: Unknown powers in Gangdong-gu are trying to hatch one of the disasters. Defeat them and stop the incoming 'disaster'.

Time Limit: 2 hours

Compensation: 22,000 coins

Failure: Early emergence of the Disaster of Questions.

Since we received the 'Disaster Prevention' scenario, the Poisoner's group would've received the 'Defend the Disaster' scenario.

The damn dokkaebis were still trying to be part of this unforeseen situation. I looked at the party members and said, "It isn't the time for us to fight. Now we have to handle this situation."

Han Sooyoung and Yoo Sangah nodded at the same time.

* * *

The Poisoner's group was based in Cheonho-gong of Gangdong-gu. To be exact, it was an area filled with churches and a cathedral.

If their purpose was to awaken the disaster early, it was a good choice to choose a religious area. The prayers of those who lost their places would create an environment suitable for hatching the 'disaster'.

Han Sooyoung finished scouting and opened her mouth.

"The road with the lowest level of terraforming is in the northeast, centred on the base. It is 16 Cheonjung-ro. If we go this way, we can reach the base in the shortest time. But the defenses are formidable."

I nodded. We didn't have time so we had to go through the fastest way.

"It's okay. We have to reach that building as quickly as possible. Han Sooyoung and Yoo Sangah-ssi will take the front. Don't fight each other."

"…I understand."

Yoo Joonghyuk couldn't help right now so I decided to leave him on the roof of the high-rise building with Han Sooyoung's avatar. His role was to watch the battlefield. Yoo Joonghyuk didn't express much dissatisfaction. He just gave this piece of advice.

–If possible, get rid of them before the disaster hatches. Without Way of the Wind, the initial suppression of the Disaster of Questions is almost impossible.

Of course, I wanted to do that if possible.

"Let's go."

The moment I gave the signal, we jumped down the building.

Han Sooyoung used Avatar and took the lead. Dozens of avatars jumped onto the road and attracted the attention of the Poisoner's group.

"What? Kill them!"

As the confused group members chased after the avatars, thin and transparent thread filled the air.

"Kuaaak!"

The people chasing after the avatars were caught by sharp threads and their legs were cut off. This wasn't the end. There was another strong thread in the location where the people fell.

Their heads were cut off and flew through the air.

It was a terrifying double trap designed by calculating the angle of the fall. Han Sooyoung clicked her tongue.

"She is brutal."

"You aren't someone who should be saying that."

Apart from their feelings towards each other, the combination of the two was worth looking at. No, it was very useful.

Thanks to their help, I was able to dig into the centre of the base while avoiding their surveillance.

It wasn't difficult to find the disaster meteorite. It was a huge meteorite over 8 metres high. It emitted an ominous aura and seemed to say 'I am the disaster'.

Certainly, it felt like the fire dragon was no comparison. If I couldn't stop this disaster, Seoul would surely be destroyed.

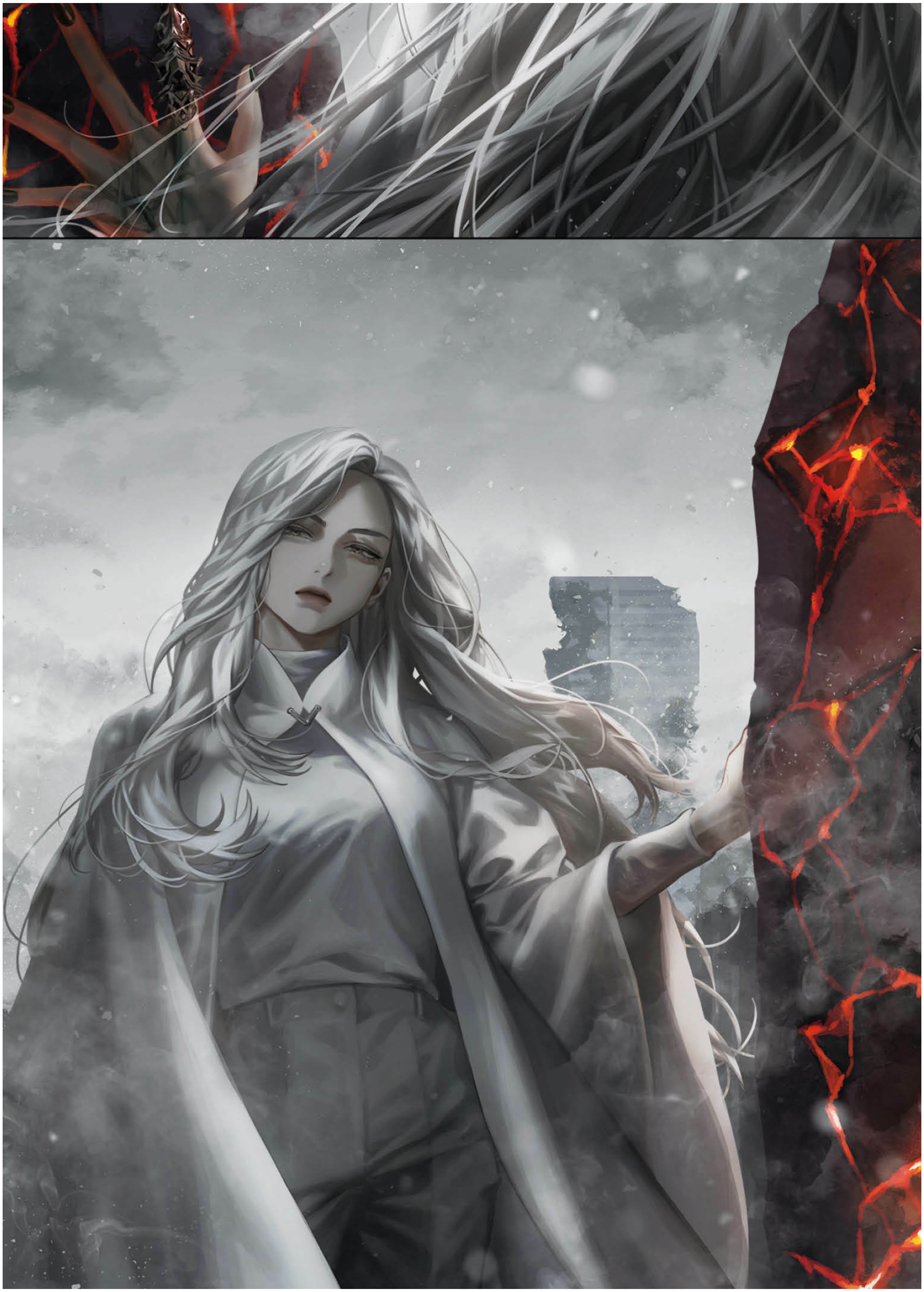
Then a woman appeared next to the meteorite. She had hair as white as snow. As I saw the lips that were like red flowers on a snowy mountain, I could see Yoo Joonghyuk's taste.

The cold and glassy eyes stared at me and I felt a terrible spirit emerge from her body.

It made my skin crawl. It was an overwhelming feeling compared to Gong Pildu.

I see. Did she also receive the power of the disaster meteorite?

"…Who are you?" One of the 10 Evils, the Poisoner Lee Seolhwa asked.



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* Official novel illustration (canonical)

Chapter 84: Ep. 17 – SSS-grade Talent, III

There were three ways to wake up a disaster meteorite.

One was to let the meteorite hatch in line with the scenario. The second method was to draw out the power of the disaster meteorite in advance. The third and fastest way was to supply magic power to the disaster meteorite.

Dozens of Lee Seolhwa's group members were praying.

A faint magic power was flowing out of their bodies into the disaster meteorite.

The hatching ceremony. They had chosen the third method. Based on the meteorite's heavy shaking, the disaster would hatch in 30 minutes.

I looked at Lee Seolhwa and opened my mouth. "Won't you stop? Unless you want to die together."

"…"

"What are you thinking?"

It was strange.

In the third round of regression in the original, there was no one foolish enough to wake up the disaster, even if they did borrow the power of the disaster.

Yoo Joonghyuk must've visited Lee Seolhwa in advance because he knew about it.

"Stop hatching the disaster meteorite. Then I will spare you."

Lee Seolhwa looked at me quietly. "What if I don't want to?"

"You'll die here."

Poisoner Lee Seolhwa had an expression of ridicule on her face. Her hands moved and the humans praying towards the disaster turned towards me at the same time.

[The eighth grade outside species 'Lower Human Nam Minhyuk' has showed hostility towards you.]

[The eighth grade outside species 'Lower Human Jung Minji' has showed hostility towards you.]

[The eighth grade outside species 'Lower Human Kin Gapil' has showed hostility towards you.]

Antennae grew on their heads and their hands turned sharp like rakes. These wanderers seemed to become transformed humans rather than wolves. There was a worrisome point.

"…It is strange. Isn't transforming humans the power of the disaster meteorite?"

I murmured at the same time that Lee Seolhwa shouted, "Die!"

The loyalists leaped into their air, their wings spreading out. I aimed the hilt towards them.

[Blade of Faith is activated!]

[The special option of Unbroken Faith is activated.]

[The ether property is converted to 'fire'.]

White flames split apart the air. All species with insect properties were weak to 'fire'. The ether flames of Unbroken Faith spread to the skin of the lower humans.

One to two, two to three.

"Kieeeek!"

The flames burned the skin of the lower humans. I cut off the legs and wings of the lower humans.

"Kiiit!"

Magic power gushed out and burned the lower humans in a flash. It was the same in the case of the werewolves. They walked a path other than human and I didn't receive a penalty from killing them. I broke through the flames and ran towards Lee Seolhwa.

For the first time, Unbroken Faith was blocked. Lee Seolhwa's fingernails and forearms were tinged with a dark light.

The power of the disaster increased the level of the stigmas. By borrowing the power of the disaster, her Poisonous Nails could block the Blade of Faith. However, that didn't mean she could prevent all damage.

"Kuuack!"

Sparks flew and Lee Seolhwa's body was pushed back a few steps. It would be strange if this didn't happen.

My current overall stats were the highest among all incarnations apart from Yoo Joonghyuk. I might have no talent but I wasn't weak among the incarnations.

"Give up. It won't be good for you if the disaster hatches now. Doesn't this sub scenario have no penalty for failure?"

Lee Seolhwa looked towards the disaster meteorite nervously. There was a change in the atmosphere.

It felt like she was aiming at the 'disaster' rather than power from the disaster meteorite.

It was strange. Even a person who didn't read the original novel would expect Seoul to be destroyed when a disaster hatched. Then why did she want to wake up the disaster?

[The exclusive skill, Character List is activated.]

[Character Summary]

Name: Lee Seolhwa

Age: 26 years old

Sponsor: Guam Divine Doctor

Exclusive Attributes: Competent Physician (Rare) Master of Poison (Rare)

Exclusive Skills: Weapons Training Lv. 7, Love Affair Demon Lv. 4, Emit Deadly Poison Lv. 5, New Poison Preparation Lv. 4, Counteract Poison Lv. 5…

Stigma: Deadly Poison Lv. 4, Thousand Spirits Poison Lv. 4, Crossroad of Life and Death Lv. 3

Overall Stats: Physique Lv. 44 (+10), Strength Lv. 42 (+10), Agility Lv. 44 (+10), Magic Power Lv. 35 (+10).

Overall Evaluation: The current comprehensive evaluation is currently in progress.

* This character is currently infected with a 'parasite'.

* The parasite is controlling the body of the character.

* Some of parasite Antinus' stats will be transferred to the character.

…Damn. I didn't think her condition would be like this.

[Due to the effect of your exclusive attribute, your memories of some scenes became stronger.]

In my head, pages flipped and the sentences of some pages flowed over my retinas.

｢There are five dominant species in the world of Chronos. The Velkia in the east, the Parasites in the west, the Imyuntar in the south and the Mistilen in the north. Finally, the Inba in the centre.｣

I avoided the poisonous attack and kicked her back, causing her to lose her balance. Lee Seolhwa rolled around the ground and groaned. I watched Lee Seolhwa and opened my mouth.

"The fifth scenario is a scenario where the 'Disasters of Chronos' was made into a motif."

Lee Seolhwa's eyes shook as she heard 'Disasters of Chronos'.

"On the day that Chronos was destroyed, the five dominant species of Chronos elected one hero from each species. The five chosen heroes shamefully survived the destruction and carried on Chronos' path."

"…"

"They were sent to another world through a contract with the Star Stream. They came to that world, encountered other species and promised their lives in exchange for stopping the disaster there."

A non-human cry emerged from Lee Seolhwa's mouth at the story.

"They were called guides."

"…Kit. How does a human of Earth know such things?"

How did I know? I knew because I saw it in a book.

"You aren't Lee Seolhwa."

The disasters were hatching faster than the original. There were no 'humans' who would do such a thing.

"Parasite Queen Antinus. Why is a guide trying to wake up the disaster?"

Only a 'fallen guide' would dream of such a thing.

[The 5th grade Parasite Antinus is looking at you.]

Parasites were a parasitic species that lived through other species. Now Lee Seolhwa was being manipulated by one of the guides.

I looked at the dead bodies of the lower humans.

Just like with Lycaon's meteorite, it wasn't the power of the disaster but the power of Chronos' guide that promoted the human transformation.

"Why are you infecting the humans here? Why are you doing this?"

Kiiik…

"What do you get for waking up the disaster early? Isn't the purpose of the guides to prevent the disaster along with the people of this world and unite with us to build a new world? Why are you trying to destroy the terraformed world?"

Kikik, kikikik…!

"This is an act that violates your mission! It isn't too late so get out of her body right now. Do the right thing, Guide Antinus!"

If possible, I didn't want to kill Lee Seolhwa. Maybe Yoo Joonghyuk would do the same.

The Poisoner became one of the Ten Evils after being infected by the Parasite. Lee Seolhwa might not be one of the 10 Evils if the infection was removed.

It was why Yoo Joonghyuk's conversation didn't work. He tried to protect his old lover from the Parasite Queen.

The messages of the Midday Tryst blinked in the air.

–Kill her.

It was Yoo Joonghyuk.

–The important thing isn't her life but the survival of this world. Act wisely, Kim Dokja.

Due to the far distance, I couldn't see what Yoo Joonghyuk's expression was like.

He had to worry about this world rather than the woman to whom he once gave his affection. Maybe this was the nature of a hero.

I said.

–Then you will be unhappy.

–It doesn't matter.

Yoo Joonghyuk's voce was steady and firm. But I knew. If Lee Seolhwa died here, Yoo Joonghyuk would someday collapse.

Kiiit!

The deaths of his acquaintances would pile up, gnawing at Yoo Joonghyuk's memories and making his mind weary.

"Kit! You are just a human!"

The Parasite Queen spoke through Lee Seolhwa's mouth. Hatred for humans was ingrained in her tone.

In fact, I knew why she hated humans so much. However, the situation wasn't relaxed enough for me to think about her feelings.

"Kit. Die."

Black liquid started to flow from Lee Seolhwa's body. The Thousand Spirits Poison. This was when Lee Seolhwa's talent started to be shown off. Black liquid shot from her fingernails towards me.

I took a few steps back while the Thousand Spirits Poison melted the ground. If Yoo Joonghyuk was an ordinary incarnation, he would've already become like this ground. Yoo Joonghyuk asked.

–Do you have a countermeasure to the Thousand Spirits Poison?

–I do.

I also wasn't an ordinary person. Strictly speaking, I wasn't an incarnation. Lee Seolhwa's poison spread through the air towards me.

It felt like it had its own will as the poison freely moved through the air and found my weakness. A few drops splashed on my thighs and then my forearms. A part of the suit hit by Thousand Spirits Poison started to melt.

A satisfied smile appeared on Lee Seolhwa's face. However, this was an early judgment.

I ran through the poison and punched her hard in the belly, throwing her back.

"Kiiiiiet!"

She flew through the air with a terrible cry.

My skin touched by the Thousand Spirits Poison showed some discolouration but it soon returned to its original colour. Lee Seolhwa was upset.

"…Kik, the Thousand Poisons Resistance?"

Horror was in her eyes. Thousand Poisons Resistance was the terror of all beings who used poison. However, I didn't have Thousand Poisons Resistance or Immunity to Ten Thousand Poisons.

"Antinus, you don't know the sponsor behind your host?" I put my hand in my pocket. "That's why you don't know. You don't know but I'm sure its inside that body. Right?"

After a while, a book appeared in my hands.

[A constellation worried about the degradation of Oriental medicine has revealed his own modifier.]

[The constellation 'Guam Divine Doctor' looks at you with amazement.]

"Kiiit…?"

[Dongui Bogam- Unfinished Book]

It was one of the greatest Oriental medicine records of the East. The Dongui Bogam was an item that appeared in the five person dungeon during the King's Qualifications.

"I had a hard time collecting this."

During the King's Qualifications scenario, all the kings were frantically trying to get the Four Yin Demonic Beheading Sword.

While the kings coveted the Four Yin Demonic Beheading Sword, I picked up other items. Many items were thrown away because they didn't know their value. Among them, I was interested in the Dongui Bogam.

Internal Medicine – 4th part.

External Medicine – 4th part.

Various Diseases – 11th part.

Remedies – 3rd part.

Acupuncture – 1st part.

Table of Contents – 2nd part.

It was a star relic that could be completed after 25 parts were collected.

Unfortunately, I only collected eight pieces but that alone was enough to see an effect. Even if I only collected eight parts, the Dongui Bogam had the effect of the S-grade Immunity to Poison Bead.

[The effect of the Dongui Bogam – Incomplete has been activated.]

[Your body has temporarily gained the Poison Resistance ability.]

The baffled Lee Seolhwa shouted.

"How? The Thousand Spirits Poison…!"

"I know. Thousand Spirits Poison is a poison that can't be counteracted with ordinary poison resistance. But it is possible for the Dongui Bogam. Why do you think that is?'

[The constellation 'Guam Divine Doctor' is smiling faintly.]

One constellation faintly glowed as if in response.

"It is because the constellation who made the Thousand Spirits Poison is the author of Dongui Bogam."

Chapter 85: Ep. 17 – SSS-grade Talent, IV

「The greatest good person can turn into the worst killer at any time.」

This was a sentence that described Guam Divine Doctor in Ways of Survival.

Guam Divine Doctor Heo Jun.

According to the records in Ways of Survival, the task that Heo Jun devoted his last years to wasn't medicine but poison. Like many great people who later became constellations, Heo Jun reached a level beyond the actual history records.

「"If I make a poison that can kill anyone, I can make a pill that can save anyone."」

Heo Jun was banished after the death of King Seonjo and devoted his last seven years to this question.

Why was poison a medicine for some people and a poison for others? One day in his last years, he finally reached a mystical answer.

「"It isn't the body but the spirit that determines the action of the poison."」

A poison made by analyzing a thousand souls. The result was the heavenly poison that flowed out of Lee Seolhwa's body, the Thousand Spirits Poison.

Dongui Bogam was actually written from Heo Jun's failure to reach Thousand Spirits Poison.

"Kiik, kiiik!"

I moved through the Thousand Spirits Poison and dealt a merciless blow to Lee Seolhwa.

Lee Seolhwa flew through the air. It wasn't hard to defeat Lee Seolhwa if her poison was disabled.

It was the Thousand Spirits Poison that solidified her reputation as one of the Ten Evils. If I hadn't got the Dongui Bogam, I would've become a sacrifice of her reputation…

This time her luck was bad.

[The constellation 'Guam Divine Doctor' is looking at you like he is sorry.]

[The constellation 'Guam Divine Doctor' is looking forward to you dealing with this properly.]

[300 coins have been sponsored.]

The 'Parasite' infection was irrelevant to Guam Divine Doctor's intentions. In other words, Lee Seolhwa's attack on me wasn't according to Lee Seolhwa's will.

By the way, only sponsoring 300 coins…

[The constellation 'Seo Ae Il Pil' is looking forward to you dealing with this properly.]

[The constellation 'Bald General of Justice' expects you to do your best.]

[300 coins have been sponsored.]

I ignored the response of the constellations and approached Lee Seolhwa. Lee Seolhwa crawled across the ground with fear.

I could feel Yoo Joonghyuk's gaze in the distance. Yoo Joonghyuk would probably be hurt badly if Lee Seolhwa died here.

I looked at the fallen Lee Seolhwa and opened my mouth. "Hey."

To be exact, I spoke to Parasite Antinus inside her.

"It would be good if you come out."

"Kik?"

"It isn't too late now. Return to your duties as a guide. Teach people skills and get along with them."

"…"

"If you work hard, maybe you can become a constellation one day?"

The Parasite Queen, Antinus was a strong hero.

It wasn't possible for her to exert all her strength because she was restricted by the probabilities. It wasn't impossible for her to become a constellation if she continued to be a 'guide' and accumulated history.

"You humans… I hate…"

The problem was that she thought of humans as enemies. It was also a mortal enemy. I glanced at the disaster meteorite that was intermittently shaking.

"I am sorry that your world was destroyed. But is it necessary to destroy this world? Are you going to reproduce the same tragedy here?"

"…All of you will die."

I watched the smiling Antinus and sighed. If she didn't go out on her own, I would have to force her out.

In fact, I didn't want to use this method. It wasn't just due to the pain Lee Seolhwa would go through. I didn't want the burden of dealing with Antinus after she left the body.

I glanced up at the sky. The constellations of the Korean peninsula. I owed them a debt last time so this time I had to make a concession.

[The special option of Dongui Bogam – Incomplete has been activated.]

[Dongui Bogam – Incomplete has conveyed the essence of Oriental medicine to you.]

I had an incomplete version of Dongui Bogam so I couldn't do miracles like making a powerful poison or saving a dying person. However, I could do simple treatments.

For example, taking a parasite out of a body.

Her body had to be bound for a smooth treatment, so I held Lee Seolhwa's arms from behind, holding her to the ground. It was a misleading position but her consciousness was buried deep inside her.

Common sense told me not to go after Yoo Joonghyuk's ex-girlfriend unless I was a madman. Especially in front of Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes.

[The exclusive skill 'Hit a Pressure Point Lv. 2' is activated.]

I started to press at different pressure points on Lee Seolhwa's body.

Soon after, her skin turned red and I planted a needle made of magic power into her reacting blood. It was my first time doing this so I didn't know if it would work.

"Kiiit! It hurts! It huuuuurts!"

Lee Seolhwa howled loudly. I ignored her and kept pressing the pressure points.

"Kiiit! Kihit! Kyaaaak…!"

Then Lee Seolhwa's screams gradually changed. It changed from the cry of an insect to a human voice.

The mysterious thing was using Oriental medicine to remove a parasite from the body. I was embarrassed that a person who had relied on Western medicine so far was now practicing Eastern medicine.

[The essence of Oriental medicine is effective!]

[The constellation 'Guam Divine Doctor' is looking at you with a warm expression.]

I got up while Lee Seolhwa gasped for breath.

Yellow mucus was flowing from the glands in her body where poison had been secreted. The mucus was the main body of a Parasite.

"K…Kuock…"

This would've satisfied the constellations.

[The constellation 'Guam Divine Doctor' thanks you for your good deed.]

[500 coins have been sponsored.]

Lee Seolhwa's eyes slowly opened. Consciousness had returned to her eyes but there was still no focus.

It was because she had been infected with a Parasite not long ago. She wouldn't be able to see my face right now with her five senses half dead.

"You… who are you?"

I was well aware of the events that would happen if I answered this question. A similar thing happened when Yoo Joonghyuk saved Lee Seolhwa in other rounds. That's why the important thing wasn't my identity.

"I was sent by Yoo Joonghyuk."

–Kim Dokja. Don't do anything unnecessary.

Yoo Joonghyuk's angry voice pierced my ears. Lee Seolhwa's expression changed.

"…Yoo Joonghyuk? Who is that?"

"You will soon find out."

Poisoner Lee Seolhwa had to become part of Yoo Joonghyuk's group.

After the prophets appeared and the Absolute Throne broke, the flow of this world was slowly changing from what I knew.

It was difficult to make the mistakes of the original but it was also hard to see the future that I didn't know.

That's why it was necessary to balance the important events directly. Some things flowed the same while others flowed differently.

There were twists and turns but in any case, I thought that this 'round' was approaching the ideal approximation that I was thinking of. And the Poisoner… No, Immortal Doctor Lee Seolhwa could be one of the greatest set points of this approximation.

"Kim Dokja, this side is done!"

I turned around and saw Han Sooyoung and Yoo Sangah approaching this way. Amazing. The two of them swept up that many people?

It might be a situation where the Poisoner was missing but they were still the 'Poisoner's Group'…

The original plan became meaningless. The two of them might be comparable to Lee Jihye's Ghost Fleet and Gong Pildu's Armed Zone.

"Wait, don't come over here."

I had to restrain their movements. It was difficult if they didn't have immunity to being infected. This fight hadn't ended yet.

Kiiiit… human…!

The mucus that escaped from Lee Seolhwa's body gathered in a ball at one point in the air.

Parasite Queen Antinus. She was scary in parasitic mode but even scarier when she didn't have a host.

The mucus moved like a small bug and formed a shape. It was a body made of nutrients that had been absorbed for many years. It was a body with beautiful curves and solid muscles.

She had dragonfly-like wings and a tail that resembled a scorpion. She was covered in an insect's shell apart from the face, but she looked more like a bipedal creature than an insect.

The real battle started now.

"Get away before you are infected!"

The sharp tail aimed for my stomach.

[The effect of the Dongui Bogam – Incomplete has been activated.]

[Your body is immune from a parasitic infection.]

It was so fast I couldn't avoid it despite having over 50 agility. I narrowly caught the tail before it pierced me. But if it hit, I would've definitely got a hole in my stomach.

Kik.

She used the fact that I was holding her tail to fly towards me and hit me. I was knocked onto the ground and a strong pain filled my body.

Strong. She became even stronger when she wasn't in a host. The power of her main body was comparable to a 5th grade insect king species.

Once Antinus unleashed her fighting power, it was equivalent to the deteriorated fire dragon I once killed.

It might be destroyed but she was still the hero of her world. She was as strong as Lycaon who emerged from the yellow meteorite.

This didn't mean I had no chance.

It was a clear violation of the scenario rules for the 'guide' to cause such an uproar before the fifth scenario ended. It wasn't just killing a few people. She even tried to hatch a disaster, which meant she had given up on her probability.

The sign of a probability storm was already descending on Antinus' body.

As time passed, the collapse of her body would accelerate, even if I didn't attack. It was a fight I could win if I just bought time.

Kiiiiit!

The problem was how much time I could buy before dying. At this moment, the Protection Symbol of the Imyuntar started shaking.

Ah, that's right. There was this. I held my aching body and said to her, "I'm sorry but I'm not your opponent."

As I spoke, a flash of silver light crossed the sky, causing a sonic boom. The gorgeous mane scattered in the air as something landed in front of me with a loud roar. The being was over three metres tall.

Lycaon, Prince of the Imyuntar, stood up.

"I'm sorry for the delay, Protector."

Chapter 86: Ep. 17 – SSS-grade Talent, V

Prince Lycaon of the Imyuntar paid respect to me before immediately turning to look at Antinus.

I couldn't feel reassured because the other world species were companions.

"Antinus."

"Lycaon…"

"What the hell is this?"

The queen of the Parasites just laughed.

"Have you forgotten your mission? Why are you fighting the humans of this world?"

"Kikik, mission? Was there something like that?"

Lycaon's expression became determined at her teasing tone. "We are the 'guides'. We have to tell the people of the other worlds the right way to face the disasters that are coming."

"You have already been spellbound by the dokkaebis. Wake up Lycaon."

"You are the one who needs to wake up Antinus!" Lycaon's voice was furious. "Have you forgotten the sacrifice of the Chronos warriors? Have you already forgotten the moment when the five ruling species was destroyed? We are here to stop the disasters. Work with the species here to defend the terraformed planet and rebuild Chronos' civilization in this world! It is our sacred mission!"

Rebuilding Chronos' civilization. Antinus no longer laughed. "Lycaon, it is impossible. This planet will perish. It is the fate of the scenario."

"No, this time will be different." Lycaon glanced at me. "The Protector has stopped a disaster before all the disasters woke up. He has the medallion of my people as proof. Perhaps there is a way to prevent the destruction."

"If it was a deteriorated disaster, we could've stopped it at any time."

"Earth is now only in the fifth scenario! There is no planet that has stopped a disaster before the fifth scenario began. Think about it Antinus! There is still hope for this planet!"

Antinus' compound eyes slowly blinked. The cry of an insect was boiling inside her. Her cry was full of anger.

"Don't be so arrogant. You came here to stop the disaster? If you really wanted to help them, why didn't you start when the disaster's destination was set to 'Earth?'"

"That…"

Han Sooyoung quietly approached me while listening to their story. "These guys, what are they saying now?"

Han Sooyoung didn't know the details of this scenario. The guides didn't have such an in-depth conversation in the original third and fourth regression. Now they were talking about something vague.

Antinus continued speaking. "Lycaon! You are like me. We came to this planet for revenge! We will return the same disaster to those who brought us the disaster!"

"If you do that, you will die. The probability of the Star Stream won't forgive the 'guide' for going against it.

Antinus laughed. "Lycaon, I died with my kind on Chronos."

"…It doesn't make sense." Lycaon exposed his fangs. "Antinus. The conversation ends here."

"Kikikik! Lycaon! Poor wolf of the Imyuntar! Have you forgotten the history of Chronos? The wolf has never once won against the insects!"

The battle between the prince of the wolves and queen of the parasites began.

Grrrrr!

Lycaon roared. The flow of ambient air was different. Some winds were fast while some winds were slow. Sometimes there was no wind and sometimes it was strong wind.

"I'm not the Imyuntar you knew!"

The winds in the surrounding area started to press on Antinus. Lycaon was finally showing his Way of the Wind that had evolved one step.

"Kiiit… interesting! I'll check to see how your 'way' has grown!"

Antinus was the first one to move. The air barrier created by Way of the Wind and Antinus' tail hit each other. Sparks filled the air and the sound of leather tearing was heard.

Han Sooyoung and I looked up at the sky, spellbound for a moment. This was the fight between fifth grade species. It was the confrontation of those who showed a superior physique to humans.

Antinus quickly made her way through the gaps in the atmosphere and arrived in front of Lycaon. Antinus' tail underwent an external transformation into a wedge and rushed to Lycaon.

It was only one attack but it could mean the difference between defeat and victory. But at this moment, Antinus' movements slowed down. It was like a repulsion force was pushing at her tail.

Kihit?

On the other hand, Lycaon's movements were slightly faster. His attacks suddenly accelerated. Antinus' tail struck empty air.

[The 5th grade species Parasite Antinus has activated Accelerating Wings Lv. 8.]

Antinus' wings spread open and vibrated before she disappeared.

The S-grade movement skill, Accelerating Wings.

Her wings flapped thousands of times per second and she instantly appeared in front of Lycaon, as if she had teleported. Antinus' arms turned to scythes and flew towards Lycaon's back.

[The 5th grade species Parasite Antinus has activated Praying Mantis Breakthrough Lv. 8.]

The accelerated scythes struck the atmosphere wall, causing a terrible burst of noise. It was so fast that it seemed like even Lycaon couldn't avoid it.

Even so, Lycaon evaded. At the decisive moment, Antinus' attack slowed down while Lycaon's movements accelerated. It was the difference between life and death. Antinus' compound eyes blinked with surprise.

Yoo Sangah asked with surprise, "What type of technique is that. Instant Acceleration?"

"No, that is the Way of the Wind."

The secret technique of the Imyuntar, Way of the Wind.

At first glance, the two of them seemed to change speed but this was actually Lycaon's ability. The surrounding atmosphere flowed according to Lycaon's will.

"Kit, this damn wind…!"

Antinus also noticed. There was wind on the path that she moved. Antinus was caught in the wind and Lycaon used the wind.

It was a skill that controlled the movements of Accelerating Wings while avoiding Antinus's Praying Mantis Breakthrough. The roads made of wind could be used for evasion or to attack.

This was why I needed this skill. If I learnt Way of the Wind, I could replace the necessary skills with that one skill. Lycaon roared.

"Queen of Insects! Kneel in front of the wind!"

The wolves of the wind. The sharp claws of the wind tore at her wings, while a gale like kick hit her abdomen. His blow was filled with the wind's acceleration and struck the upper part of Antinus' shell.

"Kyaaaack…!"

Antinus' lost half of her wings and she fell down. Perhaps if it wasn't for the enlightenment I gave him, Lycaon wouldn't have been able to defeat Antinus now.

I thought it was only good for others but it turned out to be helpful for me. The sign of a probability storm on Antinus' body became stronger.

"Kiiit! It won't end like this."

Antinus attempted a landing with half her wings.

–Kim Dokja! Kill her! Quickly!

I was already running towards Antinus when I heard Yoo Joonghyuk's voice.

[Blade of Faith is activated!]

It was possible to be caught up in her probability storm but that wasn't important right now.

"My world, my race, my children!" She was heading in the direction of the disaster meteorite. "The cost of destroying my world, I will absolutely make you pay it!"

She shot all her magic power towards the disaster meteorite.

Lycaon ran to block the magic power while I swung the fire property Blade of Faith towards Antinus' neck.

The insect's mouth became a smile of ridicule. Was it blocked? I turned my head and saw Lycaon's pale face.

"Grrr…Protector, sorry…"

Then all sound disappeared.

Light burst from the disaster meteorite and a huge explosion struck me. One of the fragments of the exploded meteorite struck my head. The world shook. Lycaon flew away from the explosion.

The 'guide' couldn't withstand the force of this disaster. It was impossible to rewrite the history of 'defeat'.

The balance of the world was collapsing.

[You have failed to clear the scenario.]

[The 'Disaster of Questions' has come to your world.]

My vision darkened and I was buried under a pile of shattered building fragments. I barely came to my senses when Yoo Joonghyuk's voice rang in my ears.

–Kim Dokja! Wake up! Hurry!

–…Recover your spirit.

–Get moving! Now you can still stop the disaster!

I honestly thought it was too much. I didn't have Way of the Wind and the Disaster of Questions had hatched. It was better to consider a different route than to carry out a suicide attack.

Yoo Joonghyuk opened his mouth like he read my mind.

–You, are you that weak?

–What?

–All the words you told me were false.

I reflexively raised my body. This bastard…

–The one who told me not to give up on this world will succumb to a disaster of this degree?

Laughter emerged. I had to hear this from Yoo Joonghyuk, not anyone else. Suicide wasn't enough to get rid of the shame.

–Of course not. I was just thinking for a second.

The damn Yoo Joonghyuk was right. It was too early for me to say that was 'impossible'.

I emerged from the pile of building fragments. The eight metre tall disaster meteorite had split in two. It was obvious that something had hatched from it.

I looked around quickly but couldn't see the disaster.

"Hey, this is…" Han Sooyoung approached me with a restless expression.

I couldn't see Yoo Sangah. Then I heard a voice.

"This place…"

There was a boy around a dozen steps away. He looked like a high school student. He was completely naked without a stitch of clothing. The boy muttered.

"This is… perhaps?"

The boy stretched and looked around like he couldn't believe it. I listened to his murmurs and thought that I had to kill him right now.

However, my body couldn't move.

[An early hatching has weakened the Disaster of Questions.]

[Due to the early hatching penalty, you won't be able to attack the Disaster of Questions for three minutes.]

Dammit…

We were the ones being penalized? That dokkaebi scum, what was he doing?

The boy walked around the area and arrived in front of a woman nearby. It was a woman who was part of the Poisoner's group.

The boy shouted in a clear voice towards the woman. "Woman! Hey, are you okay?"

"U-Uh… who…"

"Excuse me, can I ask you something?"

No. She shouldn't answer that question. I wanted to shout but my voice didn't come out.

"Where is this place? What year is it now?"

"W-Why all of a sudden…"

"Are you asking me a question back?"

The boy's strange tone seemed to bewitch the woman.

"T-This is Seoul and… the current year…"

A system message was heard the moment the woman answered.

[The first question has been resolved.]

[The first seal of the returnee 'Myung Ilsang' has been released.]

"Ha, haha… Hahaha!"

"W-What is that…?"

The boy laughed wildly at the confused woman and asked, "Do you know how much I suffered? Do you know?"

"H-Huh?"

"Have you lived for 100 years? In a place where I was the only human… Do you know that there are other dimensions?"

"Other… dimension?"

"Disgusting insects, werewolves and bird people… I have a problem. Can you guess what it is?"

The confused woman shut her mouth. The boy asked, "Insects, wolves, birds. Which of these three races are the best?"

"What… the best?"

Once the woman asked, the boy laughed like he was dying with joy. It was a creepy laugh.

"Then… who among the three has the most delicious meat?"

I listened to the Disaster of Questions and thought. Yes, it might be natural that Antinus wanted to destroy Earth. It was because a 'human' of Earth destroyed her world.

The woman didn't answer the boy's question.

"P-Please, spare me…"

There was a sound and the woman's head flew away. The boy chuckled and looked around.

"Now, there is this development. What, an S-grade incarnation? Those scum are squeezing this kid. It is also a heavy duty alliance. No wait, before that…"

[The early hatching penalty has ended.]

[The power that controlled your movements has disappeared.]

Shit. It was too late. I was about to yell when the boy disappeared and moved to a remote location. Unfortunately, it was a place where another woman was standing.

"Haha! Noona is pretty! Yes?"

I cursed.

–Yoo Sangah, avoid him!

Yoo Sangah raised her dagger and asked cautiously, "…Who are you?"

The boy grinned at the question.

"Are you curious?"

The boy's hand grabbed Yoo Sangah's chin at a speed that couldn't be seen.

"Should I tell you?"

One of the five disasters that destroyed Chronos, the Disaster of Questions. He was a 'returnee' of Earth transferred back to this world.

Chapter 87: Ep. 17 – SSS-grade Talent, VI

Returnee. This was the first statement that mentioned them in Ways of Survival:

「Some people go back in time, others go to another dimension and some are born again. In the end, the way to adapt to destruction varies from person to person.」

The second 'method' of 'How to Survive in a Ruined World'. To survive, destroy other dimensions and return.

"Answer me. Are you curious about my identity?"

Returnee Myung Ilsang. This boy was a returnee from Earth who was summoned to be a warrior in the world of Chronos.

"Hmm…isn't it normal to blush and lower your eyes in this situation? Noona is looking straight at me?"

The Disaster of Questions was such a bastard.

Yoo Sangah opened her mouth. "What…"

–Yoo Sangah-ssi, don't answer the question!

Yoo Sangah's head turned towards me at my words. However, her chin was caught by Myung Ilsang and forced her to look back.

"Where are you looking? Look at me. Is that your boyfriend?"

"Remove your hand."

Yoo Sangah shook off Myung Ilsang's hand. Her dagger moved in a threatening manner through the air. Myung Ilsang laughed.

[The second question has been resolved.]

[The second seal of the returnee 'Myung Ilsang' has been released.]

"Ah, that's right. I've had a baby-face for 100 years."

The boy's cold eyes turned towards me. I didn't use Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint but it was clear even without the skill.

"You were having fun in this peaceful world?"

His right arm aimed at me. At the same time, purple particles condensed around his hand.

[The character 'Myung Ilsang' has triggered 'Small Black Fire Cannon'!]

Black Fire Cannon. This was the fire of death that destroyed the eastern part of Chronos and burned all the insect kings in the forest.

The whole atmosphere was burning and I was surrounded by flames. Pain spread across my skin. I cursed inside my heart. Damn! It hurt. It really hurt. It hurt…

…Less than I thought?

After a while, the flames turned off and I looked at my skin. Every inch was scorched and painful, but it was a bearable pain.

This was the black fire cannon that drove the insect kings to fear? However, the Small Black Fire Cannon… it didn't hurt?

I looked up and saw Yoo Sangah wielding her dagger. Unexpectedly, she had the advantage. Even the Disaster of Questions was perplexed by the overwhelming attacks.

"…What? Why are you so strong? Is noona also a returnee? Or am I weak?"

I didn't understand. The original Disaster of Questions with two seals released should be stronger than this.

[The exclusive skill, Character List is activated.]

[Character Summary]

Name: Myung Ilsang

Age: 17 years old (127 years old)

Sponsor: Mass Production Maker

Exclusive Attributes: SSS-grade Warrior (Hero), Disaster of Questions (Legend)

Exclusive Skills: SSS-grade Growth Acceleration Lv. 10 (Currently Lv. 1), SSS-grade Swordsmanship Lv. 10 (Currently Lv. 1), Black Fire Cannon Lv. 9 (Currently Lv. 1), SSS-grade Footwork Lv. 10 (Currently Lv. 1)…

Stigma: The Answer is Fixed and You just Need to Answer Lv. 7 (Lv. 2).

Overall Stats: Physique Lv. 99 (Currently Lv. 55), Strength Lv. 99 (Currently Lv. 55), Agility Lv. 99 (Currently Lv. 60), Magic Power Lv. 99 (Currently Lv. 55)

> Overall Evaluation: The Disaster of Questions that destroyed Chronos. All stats are sealed due to the current scenario penalty. Every time a seal is released, the stats will rise. Once all seals are released, the real power of the disaster will awaken. If you want to survive, don't answer his questions. But you are still going to die.

I was nervous about the constant 'SSS' filling the screen but once I read it in detail, I understood why he was weak.

The dokkaebis were fair. Right now, he was weaker than the original disaster.

"Han Sooyoung! Yoo Sangah-ssi!" I didn't know if Bihyung was using his strength but now we had a chance. "Attack with all your strength! We must kill him now!"

If this was his current state, perhaps we could win without Way of the Wind. I poured my remaining coins into my stats.

[Physique Lv. 50 -> Physique Lv. 60]

[Agility Lv. 50 -> Agility Lv. 60]

[Magic Power Lv. 25 -> Magic Power Lv. 60]

[39,500 coins have been consumed.]

[All stats have reached the scenario limit.]

I ran aggressively while activation Unbroken Faith.

"Remember! You should never answer his questions!"

Myung Ilsang seemed interested when he saw my Blade of Faith. "What? An energy sword?"

My attack missed by a hair's breath due to his high agility.

Myung Ilsang kept chattering. "Ahjussi, are you a martial artist? How can you use the energy sword already? Isn't this crazy?"

I ignored him and triggered a stigma.

[The stigma 'Song of the Sword' has been used.]

[Your sword is filled with the words left by the Duke of Loyalty and Warfare.]

A random verse of Duke of Loyalty and Warfare's story appeared in front of me, followed by a message.

「 The 28th day. Clear skies. I went to do official business. 」

Then nothing happened. Dammit, the Duke of Loyalty and Warfare didn't help me at this time.

The Nanjung Ilgi didn't always contain content that fought against the enemy. In fact, most of the contents were ordinary.

The sky was clear.

The Duke of Loyalty and Warfare went to do official business.

If I wrote a 'Destruction Diary', my diary would roughly be like this.

The sky was dark.

Kim Dokja was right.

I rolled across the ground to avoid Myung Ilsang's kick.

Myung Ilsang's expression gradually became serious. He carefully looked at my Blade of Faith and sighed with relief.

"Phew… that's right. It isn't a real energy blade. Ahjussi, why are you acting like it is real? You almost scared me?"

"Brat, you talk too much."

It was a cold female voice. While I was stalling for time, Han Sooyoung made dozens of avatars and they ran towards him.

"Die!"

Han Sooyoung's attacks poured onto the boy whose movements were blocked.

However, her attacks weren't strong enough to harm Myung Ilsang's body. Rather, Yoo Sangah was unable to do any damage due to the excessive number of avatars.

Myung Ilsang laughed as he was hit by Han Sooyoung's small hand.

"Aren't you also quite pretty? How old are you? A student?"

"Shut up, die!"

Myung Ilsang's face was marred by the continuous hits.

"…What is wrong with everyone? What did I do wrong? If you see a nice-looked returnee like me, shouldn't you welcome me with open arms? Should I get rid of all the monsters from now on?"

"What a mad dog!"

"Ah, were my words ridiculous? Wait a minute, perhaps you are…"

Myung Ilsang's expression changed.

"You guys are from the Hunters Association! Right? Isn't there normally this development? Aren't they always the first one to show up with a returnee comes back?"

"This chuuni bastard… no, shit?"

[The third question has been resolved.]

[The fourth question has been resolved.]

[The fifth question has been resolved.]

[The third seal of the returnee 'Myung Ilsang' has been released.]

Myung Ilsang smiled and nodded.

"You are from the Hunters Association."

It was really crazy. His momentum became even stronger. The surrounding avatars were destroyed by a powerful wave of energy emitted from Myung Ilsang's body.

Myung Ilsang burst out laughing. "Now, it is the munchkin's time!"

Han Sooyoung stepped back and glanced at me with an absurd expression. "What is with that bastard?"

I gasped with irritation. "Didn't I tell you not to answer him? You are just feeding that jerk."

"I didn't answer! I just swore."

"Just don't speak."

The point of the questions asked by the Disaster of Questions wasn't to get an answer. No matter what the answer, he would use it to strengthen his abilities.

Myung Ilsang kept speaking, "Then who should I kill first?"

But his words didn't last. It was because Yoo Sangah appeared behind him while emitting a fierce killing intent.

[Hermes Walking Method].

[Theseus' Resolution].

[Arachne's Web].

The system messages didn't pop up but I was able to recognize these skills. In a future scenario called Ragnarok, these skills were clearly described. They were the stigmas of the Olympus related constellations.

The surprised Myung Ilsang unleashed a series of Small Black Fire Cannons to keep Yoo Sangah in check.

However, Yoo Sangah rushed towards Myung Ilsang without caring about the black fire cannons.

"Something like this…?"

It was impossible.

As long as they didn't experience a special scenario event, there was no way for an incarnation to simultaneously possess the stigmas of various constellations.

It was a situation where I only had two stigmas. Then how could Yoo Sangah have such a large number of stigmas?

"Let's try it! Does it hurts?"

Sweat covered Yoo Sangah's forehead.

The thread of magic power kept expanding and shrinking. She stepped freely through the air. The dagger pierced without hesitation whenever there was a visible gap. The vitality inside her body was burning.

It was an extraordinary change in just two days…

At this moment, I sensed something. The stigmas of various constellations in one incarnation.

There obviously wasn't a single case in Ways of Survival. It didn't even apply to Prophet Anna Croft of the United States. Then Yoo Sangah…

"Dokja-ssi! Now!"

Yoo Sangah gave the signal and I supported her explosive attack with the Blade of Faith. Han Sooyoung also participated. Little by little, Myung Ilsang became dizzy from all the hands and feet.

His movements were delayed for a moment and my Blade of Faith aimed at the gap, cutting his shoulder and belly.

"Shit…!"

Blood flowed out. Myung Ilsang pulled back and chanted something.

[The character 'Myung Ilsang' has used Blink Lv. 1.]

Myung Ilsang's figure became blurry. My mind was in a hurry. He couldn't get away.

I aimed the blade at his waist. But his body faded away just as the blade hit. The only thing left was scattered blood.

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' lets out a sad sigh.]

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is going crazy from all the sweet potatoes.] (Sweet potato is slang for when something is so frustrating that there is a stuffy sensation)

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is pointing a finger at your heart.]

[The excitement of some constellations has reached a critical level.]

Han Sooyoung shouted, "Shit, we missed him!"

"It's okay. He is injured so we can catch him soon."

[Some constellations have calmed down.]

"Yoo Sangah. You did really well… Yoo Sangah-ssi?"

There was no answer from Yoo Sangah. I headed over because I sensed something strange, where she was standing there stunned. Han Sooyoung asked,

"What's wrong with her?"

I belatedly realized. Theseus' Resolution was a skill that drew out all the power of the incarnation. The use of that skill allowed Yoo Sangah to deal with a monster for a while.

I looked at her for a moment before handing her over to Han Sooyoung.

"Giving another person to me? Am I a daycare centre?"

"We need to find the disaster quickly. Shouldn't you scatter more avatars?"

"I think I roughly know where he went."

"Please guide me."

I couldn't miss that guy here. Han Sooyoung opened her mouth again, "I don't remember well… He becomes stronger every time he answers a question, right?"

"That's right. He is weak at first but becomes stronger every time he hears an answer. The returnees are too strong so there is a penalty when they fall into this world. Didn't you see the seals being released?"

"That boy… how many seals does he have?"

"Perhaps dozens. There will be no answer if he releases all of them."

So far, five seals were released.

Fortunately, the additional scenarios of the dokkaebis hadn't come down yet.

If an additional scenario was released, many people would try to hunt that bastard and his seals would be released in a flash due to the many idiots answering his questions.

…The moment I was feeling relieved.

[Hrmm. Everyone, aren't you great? Despite the penalty, this is still a disaster. Only three people putting pressure on him…]

Han Sooyoung and I looked up at the air at the same time.

[By the way, aren't you being too greedy? As the old saying goes, you should share the beans.]

"Shit."

Han Sooyoung cursed while messages arrived like they had been waiting.

[A new sub scenario has arrived!]

[The sub-scenario – SSS-grade Hunt has begun!]

I grasped the handle of Unbroken Faith. The situation was reaching the limit.

Chapter 88: Ep. 18 – A Reader's Fight, I

The dokkaebi's voice rang out.

A group of low-grade dokkaebis were looking down like they were watching a burning house. Bihyung's figure could also be seen. He whistled when he met my eyes.

The dokkaebi in the middle of the crowd slowly opened his mouth and spoke to all of Seoul.

[Incarnations of Seoul! I have to tell you unfortunate news. Unfortunately, due to the actions of some people, one of the disasters has woken up in Gangdong-gu.]

The dokkaebi smiled as he met my eyes. This bastard?

[Ah, the sound of your sighs can be heard from here. I can see people who are already leaving Gangdong-gu. Haha, everyone. You should listen to the end. You will regret it later if you run away now. This disaster is definitely an opportunity for you.]

The dokkaebi spoke in a loud voice.

[Haven't you been having a hard time gathering coins? I know it all. Your life collapsed overnight and now strange existences are taking your coins. The people who were friends yesterday are suddenly stabbing you today. I'm glad I'm not you. Right now, the stars in the sky are probably tell you, "Hey, shake your ass a little better. I'll give you 100 coins."]

[A handful of constellations are giggling and laughing.]

The dokkaebi didn't laugh.

[I understand that you feel like shit and hate these jerks. Since the world is destroyed, you just want to live the way you want. You are very courageous but you feel a sense of helplessness when you realize that this world is divided in two. You feel disappointed when you realize that your constellation, which was barely obtained after shaking your ass, is inferior to the constellation of a successful person. You feel angry about the unfair world. I'm well aware.]

[Some constellations oppose the dokkaebi's speech.]

Speaking of which, this dokkaebi wasn't ordinary. A low-grade dokkaebi with weak courage wouldn't be able to say this. Their channel would be ruined if there was a backlash from the constellations.

But this was only for minority channels. The bigger the channel, the more different the dokkaebi.

They knew the laws of the story. They couldn't tell a big story if they were only obsessed with subscriptions. A true storyteller must deal with the 'person' rather than the 'audience'.

I closely observed the dokkaebi who was still talking.

[I have prepared something for all of you. You who are unlucky, lucky or worked hard, you have a chance to become 'someone' overnight.]

The pointed horn on the crown. The leg shown through the white cap looked like a one-legged crow.

Wait a minute, surely this bastard wasn't…Dokgak?

At this moment, a huge screen appeared in the air. A bleeding boy fleeing was shown on the screen.

[Now, this boy you are seeing is an SSS-grade item walking around! Are you looking at him from head to toe? His name is Myung Ilsang. He was fortunate enough to be picked by the Star Stream to go to another world. Can you imagine it? Imagine being summoned to another dimension, suddenly receiving a powerful strength, spending a hot night with a cute elf girlfriend, saving the world and being loved as a warrior! That's right. This damn guy is the 'disaster' you have to catch today.]

It was somewhat strange.

I was wondering why a low-grade dokkaebi replaced the position of an intermediate dokkaebi. It was because he was the dokkaebi of a major channel.

[I can already hear your resentment. How the hell can you kill an SSS-grade? Haha, there is no need to worry. This guy currently has a penalty on him. His powers are sealed. He is strong but he is a treasure chest if you hit him all at once.]

"…He is creepy." Han Sooyoung clicked her tongue. As a writer, she had already grasped the dokkaebi's intentions.

If a disaster was called a disaster, no one would come. Then what if the disaster was a treasure chest?

[Your life hasn't been ruined yet. Rather, I can say that you have good luck. The sub scenario that I offer now will be a great stepping stone to reverse your life. Now, the chance will only be for one day! Move immediately! Only those who move the quickest can become the owner of an SSS-grade item!]

As soon as they heard this, the incarnations scattered throughout Seoul would gather in Gangdong-gu.

[The sub scenario has been updated.]

[The sub-scenario – SSS-grade Hunt]

Category: Sub

Difficulty: B ~ ???

Clear Conditions: Get rid of the SSS-grade Myung Ilsang.

Time Limit: None

Compensation: 50,000 coins, ???

Failure: The fall of Seoul Dome.

The worst scenario was beginning.

Perhaps due to the failure result of the scenario shining red in the air, the huge reward that had never been seen before seemed insignificant.

"Quickly find him before everyone dies."

"…Won't he be affected by probability?"

"The probability is offset to some extent by the interest of the constellations."

This was why dokkaebis preferred exciting scenarios. The stories that many constellations wanted offset the probabilities. Of course, it would be the responsibility of the dokkaebis if it failed, but this situation was different.

[The eyes of many constellations are shining.]

If it went as Dokgak planned, Seoul would end before the fifth scenario began. Han Sooyoung immediately used all her magic power to summon the avatars to search.

Five minutes passed before Han Sooyoung shouted, "I found him. He is 2km northwest from here!"

I ran along the road with Han Sooyoung and soon heard voices.

"Over here! There he is!"

"That brat went this way!"

There were already people flocking. Myung Ilsang was laughing as he was surrounded by a group of people.

"Uh… right. Here I am."

"You jerk! Are you having fun?"

"I'm having a lot of fun…"

"This fuc…hey! Kill him!"

It was surprising to see so many humans with an inferiority complex. Myung Ilsang avoided the swords waving through the air and asked, "Are you jealous and want me to send you to that other world?

"What, you will send me there?"

"Of course. I will send you. You really want to go right?"

"If I can go then of course I want to go! It is better than this shitty world…"

Myung Ilsang nodded and extended his right arm towards the crowd.

[The eighth seal of the returnee 'Myung Ilsang' has been released.]

[The ninth seal of the returnee 'Myung Ilsang' has been released.]

…….

"Then go well. Although I have no idea if it is better than here."

"What?"

[The twelfth seal of the returnee 'Myung Ilsang' has been released.]

[The thirteenth seal of the returnee 'Myung Ilsang' has been released.]

[The fourteenth seal of the returnee 'Myung Ilsang' has been released.]

…….

I felt a sense of hopelessness as I watched the messages appearing in the sky. It was too late.

"Because that place, I destroyed it."

[The character 'Myung Ilsang' has triggered 'Small Black Fire Cannon' Lv. 3!]

I grabbed Han Sooyoung and rushed behind a building.

A violet flash overturned the forest of buildings. Up to half a dozen high-rise buildings were hit and an entire street disappeared. Those who ran towards him disintegrated without leaving even bone dust behind.

A single entity that could be a disaster. This was the real strength of a returnee.

Han Sooyoung collapsed beside me. "Crazy… how do we defeat that?"

This was real fear. It was fear that caused our bodies to shake, rather than a skill. I spoke in an effort to resist it. "We can win."

"Don't speak nonsense and let's go back. We can never kill that guy."

"No. I can catch him. We will be better off if I kill him now'.

[The character 'Han Sooyoung' has used 'Lie Detection Lv. 2'.]

[The character Han Sooyoung has confirmed that the statement is true.]

Han Sooyoung's eyes widened. "…Really? You couldn't kill him before."

"A person who only thinks about one thing, how can you live?" I was only speaking a half truth. In fact, the original plan was to defeat the Disaster of Questions and build up a second narrative.

The problem was that my plan was based on learning Way of the Wind.

"Does anyone else want to go to the other world? Raise your hands! I will send you!"

People screamed and ran away. Myung Ilsang was getting closer.

Then Yoo Joonghyuk's voice was heard from a translucent window.

–There is no chance if you fight him head on.

–I know. But I still have to try it.

–Why did you make the situation like this?

–What?

–You had many chances. You could've killed Lee Seolhwa. Or if you had killed Antinus with Lycaon, you could've stopped the disaster.

I couldn't give any excuses. I didn't kill Lee Seolhwa because of Yoo Joonghyuk and I didn't fight with Lycaon because I couldn't find a gap.

–I'm not a regressor like you. I have to be careful in case of failure. If I don't think until the end…

–Careful? Don't be so cocky. Do you think you are a constellation? Knowing the future doesn't mean you can control everything.

I felt like someone had punched me. Funnily enough, I thought that Yoo Joonghyuk's words were right.

[The exclusive skill, 'Fourth Wall' is in use.]

It was arrogance from knowing the future. I thought I could somehow make it even if the story was distorted. Maybe that led to the current situation.

–Then why don't you fight a little?

I couldn't answer.

–Don't use having no talent as an excuse. Not having the Way of the Wind doesn't mean you can't win.

–I can win?

Yoo Joonghyuk was silent for a moment. The moment I was about to break the silence, Yoo Joonghyuk's voice continued.

–My attribute is a 'pro gamer'. What is yours?

–What?

–I'm asking what can you do well?

…What could I do well? There was a tickling feeling somewhere deep in my head. I felt that I was missing something important. But there was no time to think.

"I've found you! You haven't left yet."

Myung Ilsang whistled as he rounded the corner. Han Sooyoung groaned while I stepped back.

"…Uh?" The Hunters Association people from before?" Myung Ilsang laughed. "Great. I really wanted to meet you. Don't you know that my wonderful debut plans were ruined because of you?"

"…"

"I was trying to live well. Kill some S-grade incarnations, defeat the bad groups and love the pretty noonas. But what is this? I have completely become a villain. What should I do?"

I grasped my sword instead of answering.

[The stigma 'Song of the Sword Lv. 1' has been used.]

[Your sword is filled with the words left by the Duke of Loyalty and Warfare.]

「Today I am prepared for death. I pray to God in Heaven, may I destroy the enemy.」

The Duke of Loyalty and Warfare's words recorded in his war diary. Fortunately, the Duke of Loyalty and Warfare took my side this time.

[The stigma 'Song of the Sword' has been used.]

[The decision to die has improved your fighting power.]

I squeezed out all of my magic power at once.

[Blade of Faith is activated!]

The Blade of Faith burst out. I ran towards him. Myung Ilsang's hands lightly struck the Blade of Faith.

The splitting pain caused me to loosen my grip. It was only one blow but I could clearly know it. The overall stats of Myung Ilsang had already exceeded the limit of this scenario.

"What, you want to fight? Really? Didn't you just see me fighting?"

I looked at him laughing and was reminded of Ways of Survival. What could I do well? It was to 'read'.

[Exclusive skill, Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint stage 1 has been activated!]

Then I started to hear his movements.

「Right shoulder.」

「Left thigh.」

The strikes still hit me despite me reading the moves. The fists surrounded by a purple light ruthlessly poured towards me.

「The belly, the belly, the belly, the belly.」

Blood poured from my mouth and my vision shook. I didn't give up. I thought and thought again.

[The character 'Myung Ilsang' admires your spirit.]

[Your understanding of the character 'Myung Ilsang' has increased.]

The information contained in Ways of Survival alone couldn't beat him. It was different from when I hunted the Dark Keeper. I couldn't fight despite calculating everything.

「Strong, weak, torso, head…」

Too much information poured in at once, causing my dizziness to worsen. This was despite borrowing the power of the stigma. At this rate, the battle would be over in no time. I wiped the blood at my mouth and backed away.

…Did I have to use Ganpyeongui? I felt bitter that the last method I had was to borrow the power of the constellations. If I called a powerful constellation, I could probably win.

However, there was a burden of the probability after the last incident and most of all, I didn't like to owe the constellations.

Damn, I wish I had talent. It would be preferable if I could steal someone's talent.

…Eh? Wait. Steal? A dull shock filled my head. So far, my main weapon was 'information'. However, there was so much 'information' that I actually forgot some of it.

Pathetic. Why the hell did I forget about this skill? Wasn't this the first thing I should've done?

[The exclusive skill 'Bookmark' can now be activated.]

['Character Bookmarks' is activated.]

[Available Bookmark Slots: 4]

[Bringing up the list of available bookmarks.]

[People Listed in the Bookmark Slots]

1. The Delusion Demon Kim Namwoon (Understanding 35).

2. Steel Sword Lee Hyunsung (Understanding 75).

3. Demagogue Cheon Inho (Understanding 20).

4. Empty slot.

There was no change apart from the one additional slot.

I chose the empty slot.

[List of People who can be Registered on the Bookmarks]

1. Poisoner Lee Seolhwa (Understanding 10).

2. King of Beauty Min Jiwon (Understanding 25).

3. Tyrant King Jung Youngho (Understanding 10).

4. Hermit King of Shadows Han Donghoon (Understanding 30).

5. The Prophet Anna Croft (Understanding 1).

6. Armed Fortress Master Gong Pildu (Understanding 30)

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As expected, Yoo Joonghyuk's name wasn't on the list. The main character was the main character. Special conditions must be met before he was unlocked.

In addition, people who weren't characters like Han Sooyoung, Yoo Sangah and Lee Gilyoung weren't on the list.

It didn't matter. They weren't the people I needed right now. I scrolled for a bit and finally found the person I wanted.

There he was. Why did I forget that he was also a 'character'. I didn't hesitate to put him in the fourth bookmark.

[The level of the Bookmark skill is low, shortening the activation time.]

[Activation Time: 30 minutes]

[Your understanding of the character is significant. You can select some of his skills to import.]

I chose a skill. The next moment, a silver storm emerged around my body. I felt the courage of a wolf nestle in my body.

Damn, I felt like a fool. What had I been trying to learn so far? I wasn't a regressor or a returnee.

[The character 'Prince Lycaon of the Imyuntar' has been registered on bookmark 4.]

[The number four bookmark has been activated.]

I was a 'reader'.

[Way of the Wind Lv. 8 has been activated.]

And this was the way I fought.

Chapter 89: Ep. 18 – A Reader's Fight, II

As I felt the refreshing wind wrap around my body, I recalled the sentences that appeared in Ways of Survival.

Han Sooyoung was summoning avatars when she noticed the skill I was going to use.

"What? I thought you didn't learn this?"

"Step back."

Way of the Wind.

「 There is a gale in the right hand and a storm in the left hand. The Way of the Wind will be opened when the straight lines and the curves meet. 」

The sentence that I couldn't understand became a reality the moment I felt wind at my toes.

Myung Ilsang's fist suddenly approached my nose.

The attack that should've hit was meaningless. The overwhelming power of this skill filled in my lacking stats. This was the secret technique of the Imyuntar.

Myung Ilsang's eyes shone.

"…Huh? You sped up?"

I didn't answer as I focused on enlightenment. From now on, it was a fight against time. The remaining time for Bookmark was 30 minutes.

"Aha, I understand. Is it the skill of those wolves?" Myung Ilsang laughed at me. "Did you receive a great enlightenment that allowed you to use this shitty skill?"

"…"

"Do you know? I killed the king of those guys with my own hands."

Of course I knew. I remembered the creatures of Chronos who died.

Prince Lycaon of the Imyuntar, Parasite Queen Antinus…

The fate of those who survived their destroyed world was to be used in the scenarios unfolding on another planet. I would be in the same situation as them if Earth was destroyed.

A Medium Black Fire Cannon shot from Myung Ilsang's right hand.

「One wind will meet another wind to form ying and yang. Once again, one wind will meet another wind to form the principles of negative and positive.」

I used all my imagination to put these words into images.

Hot and cold wind swirled in front of me and the direction of the wind started to twist.

The black fire was deflected once it hit the wind and energy spread in every directions.

All ether attacks were propagated through a medium. If the root of the medium was dispersed, the attack would have no choice but to go back.

Myung Ilsang looked surprised. "…Pretty good. You must have some talent?"

Myung Ilsang once against started to flee.

[The character 'Myung Ilsang' has used Blink Lv. 4.]

It was another Blink. However, it wasn't hard for me to pursue him. Once I closed my eyes and concentrated on the wind, I could read everything near me.

I ran along the street at a speed that matched Yoo Joonghyuk's Red Phoenix Shunpo and found Myung Ilsang. He was grabbing people randomly and asking them questions.

I kicked off the steel frame of a building and flew towards Myung Ilsang. It was a blow that would crush bone but he stood up.

[The twenty-fourth seal of the returnee 'Myung Ilsang' has been released.]

His next seal was released by a hair's breadth.

"…It was ticklish?"

Myung Ilsang spoke in a playful manner. He believed that he would win anyway. His wounds were healed by the seal being released and as time went by, more of my magic power was being consumed.

"Hahaha, try to stop me!"

In fact, I couldn't kill him if I used Way of the Wind as a buff skill. If this alone could defeat the Disaster of Questions, Chronos wouldn't have perished in the first place.

I had to do 'it'. The problem was… someone needed to buy time for me to use this technique.

…Huh? Something suddenly fell from the sky diagonal to me. It looked like a descending hawk as it pierced through the air towards Myung Ilsang.

There was a terrible explosion and a small crater appeared. A familiar person was seen where Myung Ilsang was lying on the ground. I looked at the man with a wide mouth and muttered, "…Yoo Joonghyuk?"

Didn't this bastard say he would take two days to recover? I looked at the approaching Yoo Joonghyuk and reflexively stepped back. Surely he wasn't planning to hit me right now?

However, Yoo Joonghyuk stopped a few steps in front of me and turned around.

"Get started." Yoo Joonghyuk stood before me as if he knew what I was trying to do. "I'll block him."

Han Sooyoung muttered on my behalf from where she was lying nearby. "Ha, shit. As expected from the protagonist…"

But unlike her words, Yoo Joonghyuk appeared to be in a dangerous state. His body was still unsteady and the blood vessels on his body were still bulging.

Meanwhile, Myung Ilsang stood up from the crater, laughing while coughing up blood.

"Ah, it is a bit annoying…"

He wasn't badly damaged despite the impact. It was unbelievable that he was on the weak side of the 'returnees' who would appear.

Myung Ilsang ran forward and Yoo Joonghyuk met him.

Then I invoked Way of the Wind.

「Four winds meet and form a defense. Then another four winds are added, making it the Eight Trigrams. Therefore, wind is everywhere yet exists nowhere'.」

It was my turn to use the verse that gave Lycaon enlightenment. The mysterious air wall in the shape of an octagon started to swirl.

It was a small dome of space. The tight seal choked me.

From now on, it was a fight against time. Yoo Joonghyuk flew back from a blow while Myung Ilsang's expression hardened. He finally realized that this wasn't a game.

"What…?!"

The next moment, all the air in the dome was removed. My ears became blocked and all sound disappeared. The wind blew terribly but the dome was as calm as the eye of a storm.

Myung Ilsang opened his mouth.

"…!"

"…?"

He moved his mouth several times but his voice wasn't heard. Sound wasn't possible because there was no medium.

He was in a complete vacuum. Due to the difference in air pressure, the air in my lungs momentarily escaped. I quickly sucked it back in.

Outside the dome, Han Sooyoung was shouting something.

[Exclusive skill, Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint stage 2 has been activated!]

「What is this?」

I could hear Myung Ilsang's thoughts.

「 Why don't I have a voice? Magic? 」

Myung Ilsang was shouting with confusion. It was natural. All returnees had a penalty. This was especially true for returnees who could quickly recover their original strength under certain conditions.

[The penalty of the Disaster of Questions is activated.]

[The power of the returnee 'Myung Ilsang' has been weakened.]

[The twenty-fourth seal of the returnee 'Myung Ilsang' has been locked.]

「 Uwaaah, no! 」

They had the condition of being 'weakened' as easily as they were 'strengthened'.

[The twenty-third seal of the returnee 'Myung Ilsang' has been locked.]

Why did the Disaster of Questions keep asking questions? It was simple. His abilities would weaken if he didn't ask questions.

「 Shit! Release this! Quickly release it! 」

His fist hit the wall of air many times but the wall didn't break easily. In a space without a medium, the black flames didn't burn.

[The twenty-second seal of the returnee 'Myung Ilsang' has been locked.]

A vacuum prison that could be made using Way of the Wind. This was the optimum strategy against the Disaster of Questions that I knew.

「 Uwaaaaah! 」

Myung Ilsang belatedly rushed towards me. He thought that the vacuum prison would be broken if I died but it wasn't the case. This was a place that I made.

I used Way of the Wind to avoid his attack and quickly reduced the area of the prison.

Once the wall shrank, I made a narrow passage and escaped outside the dome with Yoo Joonghyuk. Now Myung Ilsang was the only one left inside the dome.

「…You jerk!」

A returnee wasn't a returnee for nothing. The dome cracked a little bit under his power. I raised my hand and the wind filled in the weak spot. Then the size of the dome started to shrink rapidly.

Blood flowed from my nose due to my excessive concentration. My ultimate goal was to limit the vacuum prison to his body.

However, it wasn't easy to control. Shit, Yoo Joonghyuk had managed it easily. Why was this so difficult?

"Don't try to control it. You must lead the wind." Yoo Joonghyuk's voice was heard.

At that moment, I received enlightenment. Maybe it was my mistake to make a 'wall'. The important thing was to remove the medium around his body.

「U-Uwaaah, uwaaaaah! I'm choking!」

Myung Ilsang frantically scratched at his neck, causing himself to bleed.

"…Pretty good. Although you still aren't very talented." Yoo Joonghyuk's voice was heard again.

Then Myung Ilsang attempted his last hurrah.

[The character 'Myung Ilsang' has used Great Black Fire Cannon Lv. 3.]

Myung Ilsang's right arm was surrounded by dark flames. To my surprise, the great flames shot through the dome of wind.

I fell down while protecting Yoo Joonghyuk's body. A dull impact filled my head. Myung Ilsang seemed to be squeezing out his remaining magic power as the black fire cannon continued.

But the wind wasn't still. Once the black fire cannon was fired through the dome, wind instantly filled up the spot again.

The last hurrah didn't change anything. The problem was that people were dying from the black flames.

Yoo Joonghyuk saw my face and said, "Kim Dokja, don't think about it. They wouldn't care if you died."

"There are people like that'.

But not everyone was like that. I got up and confronted the black flames.

The black flames were scattered and twisted by the power of the strongly rotating dome. A terrible pain followed. It was because I intercepted the majority of the black flames.

The black flames burned my skin and the sensation in my bones faded little by little.

I could do it. He wasn't strong right now. At this moment, I reached an area beyond my limits. As my senses became faint, my body was like the wind.

[A constellation who loves effort enjoys your pain.]

[A touch of talent sleeping in your soul has blossomed.]

I controlled the vacuum prison with my left hand while moving the wind with my right hand to dissipate the energy of the black flames. In a complete trance, I tasted new heights in Way of the Wind. The wind at my fingertips was creating a landscape I had never known before.

[The thickness of the exclusive skill 'Fourth Wall' has temporarily thinned.]

It was a strange feeling. This was how the 'characters' saw the world.

No matter how hard I read the text, I didn't know what to feel. I felt that a part of the narrative that was felt through the pages touching my fingertip, which I could never fully reach, was now completely understood.

Reading was different from understanding. Maybe I still didn't understand one percentage of this world yet.

Soon afterwards, I felt the power of Myung Ilsang's black flames weaken.

「Shit! Scum! Die! Diee!!」

The momentum of the black flames was rapidly declining. In addition, my magic power was still full.

It was a strange feeling. Even if I was in a trance, how could I have this much magic power left?

Behind me, Yoo Joonghyuk said, "…I will kill you."

…Somehow I had absorbed Yoo Joonghyuk's magic power.

Then after a while, Myung Ilsang's attacks ceased.

[All seals of the returnee 'Myung Ilsang' have been locked.]

Yoo Joonghyuk and I looked at each other.

[The exclusive skill 'Way of the Wind Lv. 8' has been released.]

The fear-stricken Myung Ilsang stared at us.

"C-Cough, cough…!"

I threw Unbroken Faith towards the man who was gasping for air and trying to run away.

"Kuheeok!"

He fell down with the blade in his back. He wouldn't be able to escape with Blink anymore. I ran over and grabbed his neck.

"…Hah, it is really frustrating not being able to speak. Have your questions finished?"

"Keeeok…"

"I will kill you if you ask me a question right now. Don't ask anything."

Returnees. The most arrogant and brutal existences in Ways of Survival. Among the returnees, Myung Ilsang was one of the worst.

"Now I don't want to hear one sound from you."

Peeok! Peeeok-!

"Kuaaack!"

Myung Ilsang looked up at me like it was unfair. I hit him again and again until that fear was completely crushed. The beaten up Myung Ilsang barely managed to say, "I-It can't be like this…"

I looked at this guy and remembered when he was a warrior.

「"I-I am a warrior? I am a real warrior? Really?"」

The 17 year old high school student, Myung Ilsang. The innocent boy who was chosen as a warrior to save the world and fell onto Chronos.

He obviously didn't want to become like this. He didn't want to be a murderer that wiped out life on a continent. But he did so.

"It is you who chose to become a disaster."

Now he couldn't change that fact.

[Your understanding of the character 'Myung Ilsang' has increased.]

Myung Ilsang's face distorted. "I, obviously, p-protagonist, this, world…"

The man who wanted to become a protagonist but failed in the end. The real protagonist soon approached and slammed a blade into his head.

I looked into the eyes of the man killed by Yoo Joonghyuk. It was a futile death for the disaster that destroyed a world.

[You have won against a 'returnee' for the first time in the scenario!]

[Contributor: Kim Dokja, Yoo Joonghyuk]

[You have earned 40,000 coins as an achievement reward.]

[A new item will be added to your story.]

[The Story, 'Person who Opposes the Miracle' has been added.]

[You have obtained the possibility of a new stigma.]

Chapter 90: Ep. 18 – A Reader's Fight, III

I looked at the system messages that appeared after Myung Ilsang's death. He left this world with just a few lines of messages.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is satisfied.]

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' nods with slight discontent.]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is greatly pleased with your story]

[Someone has recommended your scenario to the Star Stream.]

[25,000 coins have been sponsored.]

I got up and slowly looked around.

Gangdong-gu was ruined. The disaster had only briefly passed but the ground was destroyed and the tall buildings collapsed.

On the road lit by the glow of the sunset, people covered with black dust crawled out. They were all people who ran here to obtain items. People who wanted to be the protagonist but had to remain as 'characters'.

Some people held their injuries while others wiped their tears. I could also see people bowing down to me. However, most people were lying on the ground as cold bodies.

I had read all of Ways of Survival. I understood the settings, the meaning of the explanations and finally thought that I had figured out the author's intentions. But in Ways of Survival, there were no sentences describing these deaths.

I turned and saw Yoo Joonghyuk watching the same scene as me. Perhaps Yoo Joonghyuk had seen this scene alone many times.

"Yoo Joonghyuk." He turned to look at me. I rolled the words around the tip of my tongue for a bit before shutting my mouth. "…It is nothing."

The scenarios would continue in the future and I would see this moment many times. I would encounter scenes that weren't expressed in the text several times.

Then a translucent window appeared in front of me and I heard an unexpected message.

[The dokkaebi 'Dokgak' has invited you to his channel.]

…Who was inviting me to a channel? I was confused for a moment but decided to ignore it. Then the message flashed again.

[The dokkaebi 'Dokgak' has invited you to his channel.]

I looked up at the air and saw one dokkaebi looking down at this side. It was a one-legged dokkaebi with an unpleasant smile. Bihyung was behind him with a terrible expression and looked between us. There was a gap even among dokkaebis of the same rank.

…Yes, I had a rough idea of this situation. I took a deep breath and deliberately spoke in a loud voice, "What? You won't give me the rewards?"

Dokgak's eyebrows twitched at my words. However, his mouth was still relaxed.

[Oh, of course. I'm sorry. I made a mistake.]

Dokgak was a scary dokkaebi. He wasn't silly like Bihyung but had a different constitution from the intermediate dokkaebis. Not just anyone could be a streamer of a major channel.

[The sub-scenario – SSS-grade Hunt has ended.]

[The compensation settlement will begin.]

[You have obtained 50,000 coins as compensation.]

I felt better when I received a huge number of coins. This scenario gave me 50,000 coins in one go. It was a great scenario.

Given the fact that sub scenarios were formed at the discretion of the dokkaebi, most of these coins would come from Dokgak's pocket. I thought his stomach would hurt but Dokgak was smiling softly.

[It is a great pleasure to see interesting stories. How can I not be amused?]

He muttered like he read my mind. Well, he had a big channel in Tokyo Dome so this level of coins being bled wouldn't matter.

Why did he leave Japan now? Chances were high that great players like Oda Nobunaga or Miyamoto Musashi would still be active. Yes… was he full because the incarnations in his house were so busy?

"Then give me the extra compensation quickly. Is this all?"

[Ah, of course. I should naturally give it to you. You are the one who made this scenario interesting.]

I became somewhat angry at his sarcastic tone. If it wasn't for this bastard, the Disaster of Questions would've been a lot easier. Bihyung glanced at me from behind and communicated with me.

–Hey… you know.

However, Dokgak interrupted Bihyung before his words could be conveyed.

[Bihyung, prepare the compensation.]

Bihyung made a surprised and angry sound.

[Huh?]

[Prepare for compensation. Do I have to tell you twice?]

Look at this? Bihyung hesitated before opening his mouth again. [You are currently in charge of the sub scenario…]

[How interesting Bihyung. You dare act like this in front of the incarnations?]

A fierce aura started to crush Bihyung's body. The power of the dokkaebi depended on the size of the channel.

[It seems to be true that the size of your channel has grown lately.]

Bihyung shrank back as Dokgak kept talking.

[N-No! It is a misunderstanding!]

[You do know that the sixth scenario involves Korea and Japan together? Have you already forgotten?]

[I-I'm really sorry. I'll prepare it right away!]

[Get started right away.]

[Yes!]

I didn't feel good because Bihyung was the one managing my channel. To be honest, Bihyung and Dokgak's relationship seemed similar to how Song Minwoo bothered me during high school.

[Additional compensation settlement will begin.]

[You have acquired Protection Symbol of the Parasites as a basic reward.]

[An additional selection reward exists.]

[You are the largest contributor to this scenario.]

[You have the first choice of additional compensation.]

I saw a translucent catalogue appear in front of me. Once again, it was quite useful to catch a disaster.

[Infinite Dimension Space Coat] – SSS-grade.

[Dark Fire Half-Gloves] – SSS-grade.

[Sylphid's Jump Boots] – SSS-grade.

Triple S-grade compensation items. I quickly looked at the options of the items.

The Infinite Dimension Space Coat had a special option of a 'inside pocket space' that allowed it to hold many things.

Dark Fire Half-Gloves greatly amplified skills with the dark and fire attributes.

Finally, Sylphid's Jump Boots allowed me to use the 'jump' effect three times a day.

They weren't star relics but it was enough to go to the 10th scenario. People might say, 'It is SSS-grade but it is only to the 10th scenario?' But the world of Ways of Survival was originally like this.

The item grade inflation was substantial in the world of Ways of Survival. The difference in performance of the items obtained in the early stages to the middle stages was huge, despite having the same grade.

Of course, it wasn't necessary to throw away SSS-grade items now but special materials would be needed to transcend equipment.

This was why it was good to have star relics. Unlike other items, star relics didn't need transcendence. Once scenarios opened, the star relics would recover their inherent power that was beyond the constraints of probability.

[…Please choose a reward.] Bihyung told me with a grouchy expression. He was exhausted by the harassment.

At this moment, I heard Bihyung through the dokkaebi communication.

–Personally, I recommend the Infinite Dimension Space Coat. There is one more hidden option. It is easier to transcend later.

He was working as my manager. The quick-witted Dokgak was staring at Bihyung.

[Bihyung?]

[…Yes!]

[You must explain the items to the constellations. Have you forgotten?]

[I-I understand!]

Bihyung quickly started to explain the items to the constellations of Seoul Dome. I used this break to talk to Yoo Joonghyuk. "Yoo Joonghyuk, what are you going to choose?"

I had first choice but I decided to give it to Yoo Joonghyuk since I received his help.

…Of course, this was if Yoo Joonghyuk didn't hit me into the ground.

"Yoo Joonghyuk?"

He didn't answer. He was just staring at me.

"Did you pass out again?"

I waved my hand in front of his eyes several times but his pupils didn't change.

[The character Yoo Joonghyuk is currently using Recovery Hibernation Lv. 3.]

…Indeed, it was abnormal for him to move with that body. His body must be half broken to be able to use Recovery Hiberation. I couldn't just pick so I left a message with Midday Tryst. Han Sooyoung watched by my side and interrupted, "…Perhaps I should choose instead?"

"Only if you want to be hit by Yoo Joonghyuk later."

Han Sooyoung became silent in an instant. I spoke to Bihyung, "I will choose Infinite Dimension Space Coat."

However, the answer didn't come from Bihyung. Dokgak nodded and turned off the catalogue with a flick of his fingers.

[You have picked a good item. Then let's go the payment area.]

Payment area?

[The additional compensation can't be paid here.]

Look at this.

"Where are you going to take me?"

[I'll take you to my 'Dokkaebi Official Post'.]

The Dokkaebi Official Post.

In folk tales, it was a type of clothing but here it was different. It was a 'room' that all dokkaebis had. It was a room that hid their true colours.

"That is a problem. Just give it to me here."

It was their unique space. I didn't know what to expect. As far as I knew, there was no procedure regarding moving to a Dokkaebi's Official Post in order to receive additional compensation.

It was obviously this guy's suggestion to go to his official post. Bihyung was watching me anxiously from next to him. I watched Dokgak with narrowed eyes.

[Hrmm… do you want me to cancel the additional compensation?]

"Try it."

The scenario's compensation was a fixed rule of the Star Stream. Even a sub-scenario made with a dokkaebi's discretion couldn't take back an item that was given after the scenario was over.

A smile flashed on Dokgak's face.

[How interesting.]

–This isn't a good idea.

The dokkaebi communication opened.

As Dokgak opened his mouth, I heard him saying two different things.

[Kim Dokja. I've heard your story. You are so famous that the constellations of the lands beyond the peninsula know about you.]

–I know about your contract with Dokkaebi Bihyung. But among the dokkaebis, it is possible to 'transfer incarnations'.

[I've heard that you act proudly in front of dokkaebis and today I have discovered that the rumour isn't false.]

–I will speak bluntly. Come to my channel. I am going to expand my channel to the Korean Peninsula. I will be happy to meet your desired items and conditions.

Interesting. He made me a scouting proposal in this manner. The suggestion from Dokgak could be seen as moving from a team in the Asian League to a top team from La Liga.

It was an attractive offer. The problem was… the transfer. I knew this guy called 'Dokgak'.

"I might look like this but I'm actually really scared. I'm trembling while talking to you like this. So give me the item quickly."

Dokgak's expression hardened at my words.

[How interesting. You are humble.]

–You are too arrogant. You will be humbled one day.

"…What does that mean?"

–Bihyung's channel will soon disappear.

A laugh emerged from Dokgak's mouth.

[Then it can't be helped. I originally wanted to announce this after paying the 'compensation' but I'm sorry.]

…An announcement? What announcement?

Dokgak looked up at the sky. He looked at the constellations emitting light and slowly opened his mouth. His voice seemed to echo in all of Seoul.

[I have regrettable news for the constellations who have watched the scenario with interest so far.]

The low-grade dokkaebis quickly withdrew from Bihyung's vicinity. Bihyung made a bewildered expression. It wasn't good whenever the dokkaebis acted like this.

[Unfortunately, among the channels operating in Seoul Dome, there is a channel that has been illegally manipulating the scenarios.]

[Many constellations are paying attention to 'Dokgak's words'.]

[It is the #BI-7623 channel of Dokkaebi Bihyung. As a result of a survey, the low-grade dokkaebis in Seoul Dome have concluded that 'probability' has been infringed due to excessive channel scenario manipulation.]

…Wait, what?

[On behalf of the low-grade dokkaebis of Seoul Dome, I am formally asking the Bureau to determine the 'probability conformity' of this channel.]

Chapter 91: Ep. 18 – A Reader's Fight, IV

Han Sooyoung asked with a dumbfounded expression.

"What? What does this mean? Why did he suddenly mention the probability?"

"He is arguing needlessly."

"Arguing? Why?"

Why? Was it because I rejected his offer? Dokgak floated in the sky and reported to the Bureau.

The probability judgement…

I didn't think it would be used in this way. I expected the dokkaebis of other big channels to start a fight but I didn't expect it to be like this.

Bihyung's face turned red and he was tearful as he looked between me and Dokgak. It looked like tears would burst out as soon as he was touched.

–W-What? What do I do now?

–Tell me honestly. Did he find out about our contract?

Bihyung shook his head.

–Did he notice you opening the Dokkaebi Bag?

–T-That can't be.

–Really?

–P-Probably…

–Well, don't panic yet. Even if that is the case, it isn't something that is worth asking for a 'probability conformity request'. In the first place, it isn't a violation of regulations.

It was true. There was no precedent in which an incarnation made a 'stream contract' or could use the 'dokkaebi bag', so it wasn't a direct violation of Star Stream's regulations.

Bihyung belatedly nodded with relief.

–Y-Yes. I understand.

Seeing this childlike Bihyung, I didn't know if he was the dokkaebi or if I was. I looked at Dokgak and the low-grade dokkaebis again.

[The #BI-7623 channel manipulation has been reported.]

[The Bureau is currently discussing this issue.]

If I was right, the probability request would eventually be cancelled. Although the story would be different if Dokgak had 'evidence' for this…

He was hiding information and I had no way to figure out what it was. Then there was only one way left.

"Hey, can you stop stalling and quickly give me my reward? Don't you see that the constellations are becoming bored?"

[That is a problem. This is more important than the compensation payout.]

–Have you changed your mind? If you agree with my proposal, I will get rid of all of this for you.

I looked up at Dokgak. Yes, let's try a frontal confrontation.

"What are your concerns? Let me look. How is the channel I belong to illegally manipulating the scenario? Is there any evidence?"

I would find out what his evidence was if he had it. If he was bluffing, the situation would end immediately.

Dokgak smiled like he had been waiting.

[Do you really want to hear it? You will regret it.]

"Tell me."

[This issue involves you, Kim Dokja.]

"…Me?"

At this moment, I had a thought.

Was it because I used future information from the text? But due to the filtering, this information shouldn't have spread to the constellations or the dokkaebis. Otherwise I would've already been caught in a probability storm…

[Do you see the screen?]

A huge screen appeared in the air. The screen showed videos of my recent battles. The first screen showed my conflict with Poisoner Lee Seolhwa.

[This is proof.]

"…What is the proof?"

The screen just showed that I didn't kill Lee Seolhwa. Dokgak changed the screen.

[This is also proof.]

The second screen showed me watching the battle between Lycaon and Antinus. What was this…

[This is the third proof.]

On the third screen, I was attacking the Disaster of Questions, Myung Ilsang. It was a scene where Myung Ilsang continuously released his seals. Suddenly, my stomach felt pained.

[What do these screens have in common?]

I realized it at this moment. This guy wasn't talking to me right now.

[Constellations looking at the screens, do you have any idea?]

Everyone in the area became quiet.

[The fight against the Poisoner, the fight against Antinus and the fight against the Disaster of Questions. There is one thing these three fights have in common.]

Then the screen kept changing.

[He actually had a chance to kill the Poisoner and stop the disaster.]

His finger pointed to the Poisoner.

[He could stop the disaster by killing Antinus.]

Then he pointed to Antinus.

[He could've stopped the Disaster of Questions before the seals were released.]

He pointed to Myung Ilsang then he pointed towards me.

[But he 'deliberately' didn't do it.]

"Wait! You are now…!"

Now I noticed what Dokgak was trying to do. Goosebumps covered my entire body.

I see. This was what the dokkaebi was planning.

[Constellations. Incarnation Kim Dokja colluded with the channel's streamer, 'Bihyung'. He deliberately concealed his strength and manipulated the development of the scenario. He made the scenarios harder for malicious purposes.]

Then the final screen appeared. It showed me using Way of the Wind to stop Myung Ilsang.

[He did this to 'direct' the last catharsis.]

This bastard, he didn't intend to ask for the 'probability conformity request' from the beginning.

Dokgak…

This was his real purpose.

[It is just to rip off coins from you.]

It was the end of Bihyung's channel.

[Some constellations are silent.]

The evidence that Dokgak exposed didn't violate the terms of the 'probability conformity judgment'. Dokkaebis controlling incarnations to make a scenario interesting wasn't uncommon.

The problem was the constellations who hated it. The moment they thought I wasn't serious about the scenario, the constellations would lose interest.

It was like alienating them from the play. The moment the fourth wall between the audience and the character collapsed, the audience would cool off straight away.

This was what Dokgak aimed for.

[The constellation Bald General of Justice's mouth is gaping open.]

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is chuckling.]

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' shrugs like it is fine.]

Some constellations were astonished, some constellations had no idea and some constellations were silent.

The problem was the other constellations.

[Some constellations have left the channel.]

[Constellations questioning the fairness of the channel has left the channel.]

[Some constellations are requesting coin refunds from the channel.]

The constellations left and Bihyung's channel started to shrink.

[The size of the channel is reduced.]

The messages continuously popped up. Bihyung's pale body was becoming smaller. His horns were shrinking.

I eventually sighed. "The channel is dead."

There was only one way left. I looked at the dwindling number of constellations and spoke to Dokgak.

"I understand so give me the compensation when you are done talking. I will accept your offer."

Dokgak's lips curved upwards.

–You are smart.

Bihyung's eyes grew wider with disbelief.

[Y-You…!]

"Don't look at me like that. It can't be helped." I shrugged while speaking in a loud voice.

Bihyung's lips trembled from the betrayal. This child was scared.

–Bihyung, do you trust me?

–What…

–Trust me this once. Aren't you already ruined?

I finished the communication and spoke to Dokgak.

"Start moving."

[Good. Then let's have a sweet rewards time.]

Dokgak flicked his fingers and the surrounding landscape disappeared. We reappeared in a room reminiscent of a luxury hotel suite.

…This was his 'official post'? I looked around a bit nervously. Low tables and chairs suitable for a dokkaebi were placed over luxurious rugs. There was a wide variety of alcohol on one side. Later I realized that it was a suitable setting for a dokkaebi who liked to drink.

I finished looking around and approached the window. The landscape outside was…

Oh my god. A darkness with no end filled my vision.

Glittering stars flowed in the darkness of the grand universe. It was a superb vision of the grand universe like endless jewels. The constellations repeated their orbits and rotations, each one part of the huge galaxy.

It was funny that at his moment, I was purely impressed. This was the Star Stream. It was the flow of the great stars that governed all scenarios. Every story began here.

"It is great." I looked back and saw Dokgak standing there. "Sometimes I just stare blankly at this landscape. I never get tired of this sight."

"You are now…"

"Ah, are you surprised? This is my 'real' voice."

It was the first time I heard the dokkaebi's voice. Previously it was always heard through a broadcast. In other words, the sight before me was Dokgak's real 'body'. Dokgak's eyes shone.

"What are you thinking about?" I asked.

"What do you think? Ah, do you think I'll kill you?" He burst out laughing. "You know that is impossible."

"I'm not crazy enough to fight against a dokkaebi either."

"I like it. Then let's start the contract."

Dokgak flicked his fingers and a dokkaebi with a contract appeared before him. It was Bihyung. He was tied up by the system and stared at me with reproachful eyes.

"I brought Bihyung as a notary. In any case, you have to break the contract with him to form a contract with me. The cost of the destruction will be covered by Bihyung."

I was a bit surprised. This guy, he knew about my contract with Bihyung. It meant he knew from the beginning that I was a good person to attract the 'find an incarnation' group.

I pretended to be calm. "Do as you like. I don't care."

"It is good that the story is fast. Would you like to check the contract? It is also my first time making such a contract."

I read the contract. Needless to say, the contract was completely full of adverse conditions for me. Donations would be distributed 5:5. There were also some conditions that bound my freedom. Even now, I was the 'gap' instead of the 'eul'.

Dokgak laughed. "How about it? This is the industry average but I can make some adjustments."

It sounded like the industry average. Bihyung also tried a similar contract in the beginning.

I nodded and said, "Well, it isn't bad. But before I sign the contract, I have a suggestion."

"Suggestion? What is it?"

"Isn't it a shame if I'm the only one moving channels? Surely you won't be satisfied with just one thing? There are some strong constellations in my channel."

"Hoh? Who are they?"

"Prisoner of the Golden Headband, Abyssal Black Flame Dragon, Demon-like Judge of Fire…"

Dokgak looked surprise at each modifier.

"Prisoner of the Golden Headband? I didn't think you would have such constellations… Bihyung, you are quite good."

Bihyung hissed through his gag.

I continued speaking. This was the most important part.

"Honestly, I don't want to leave these constellations behind in this channel. Therefore, I want you to build a bridge so that the constellations can move channels with me."

Chapter 92: Ep. 18 – A Reader's Fight, V

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' will judge your sincerity.]

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' is somewhat annoyed.]

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is actively giving off annoyance.]

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' asks if you really want to move channels.]

Dokgak smiled like he was interested.

"A bridge?"

"Connect your channel to me."

"Then isn't it like a duplicated connection?"

"It doesn't matter. You will be able to move channels through me without having to struggle with the constellations."

"Hrmm. That's true. Very interesting."

"There is also something I'm curious about."

"Curious about?"

"What types of constellations are in the channel I will contract with? I'm just wondering what a big channel looks like since I've only been in a small channel like this. I would like to see it in advance. Is it okay?"

I deliberately spoke towards Bihyung. Bihyung's expression became hurt in real time. A smile of satisfactory appeared on Dokgak's face.

"Bihyung, you signed with a really good incarnation. I really think so."

Dokgak's hands moved through the air and he started to manipulate the system.

"Good. Then let's show you the air of a big city."

The next moment, it felt like a new cord was stuck in my body. There was a definite connection that seemed to lead somewhere.

I slowly blinked and felt countless gazes on me. One, two, three… all the hairs on my body rose. It was quite different from Bihyung's channel. I could feel their presences just from their eyes.

Amazing. This was the channel of a dokkaebi who dominated Tokyo Dome?

"How is it? There is a new league for you to play in."

It seemed that there weren't just Japanese constellations. Did this jerk had fixed subscriptions on other continents or worlds? If I worked in such a place, how many coins could I get at once? To be honest, I couldn't even guess.

I murmured, "Great. Isn't this really big?"

"Then the contract…"

"Before that, I want to say hello for a moment. Is that okay?"

"…Please do so."

Dokgak made a disgruntled expression but he eventually allowed it. I started talking with my eyes closed. "Constellations of Tokyo Dome. Can you hear me?"

[Some of the constellations who hate the Korean peninsula are looking at you.]

"I'm sure that some of you have heard my story. I am Kim Dokja, the one who smashed the Absolute Throne and became the king of a kingless world. Please note that I have no sponsor… um, well. That's correct. I hope to get along with you in the future."

[Constellations of Tokyo Dome are listening to you.]

I only gave a brief introduction and some constellations were already starting to approach me indirectly.

Good. The start wasn't bad?

"By the way. As a memorial to my channel, I will do a small event. I mean, a joint event between South Korea and Japan… If you are curious, please connect to #BI-7623 right now. I will draw tickets for the early constellations and give coins—"

Then the channel link was disconnected. I opened my eyes and saw Dokgak staring at me as he asked, "What the hell are you doing now?"

"What? It is an event."

"What are you thinking? Do you want to die? The constellations in my channel don't play in such shallow waters…"

I would gladly give him a surprise because he cut me off at the point where people were feeling curious. Then Dokgak's body started to slowly change.

"Wait, constellations. Where are you going?"

The flow was changing. Constellations started pouring into Bihyung's channel little by little.

[A number of constellations have entered channel #BI-7623.]

[The channel level has risen.]

I smiled widely. "A lot of you came. Thank you. Are you here for the event?"

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is annoyed at the appearance of these constellations.]

[The constellation 'Maritime War God' resents the appearance of hostile constellations.]

"Wait, don't fight. I didn't call you here to fight."

[The constellation who likes Murasama is urging you to proceed with the coin lottery.]

[Some constellations are asking about the coin event.]

"Don't be in a hurry. I'll do it in a bit. Think about it. Is it so important to get a coin or two? What is the point if you don't have incarnations to spend the coins on? Go slowly, slowly."

[Some constellations are looking at you with disgruntled eyes.]

"You may have heard of this but I'll tell you again. I am Kim Dokja and I don't have a sponsor. I won the war between kings and prevented a disaster before it began. There are probably few incarnations stronger than me if you look around the world. There will be none with no sponsor. By the way… it will be hard to last until the end."

Dokgak started to turn pale as he noticed my intentions.

"Wait! You…!"

I laughed at Dokgak. A production? Yes, I would show him what a real 'production' was.

"Seoul Dome is now ahead of the fifth scenario. If you are smart, you will know what that means. Yes, that's right. There will soon be an event that you will like."

Now there was less than a week until the start of the scenario. Before the entire disaster scenario started, a special event would be hosted. A banquet for all the constellations in the Star Stream. Soon, the second Sponsor Selection would start.

I continued speaking. "In celebration, I would like to do a surprise event. If the number of subscriptions to this channel reaches 10,000 on the day of the Sponsor Selection…"

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is gulping.]

"I will make one of the constellations in this channel my partner."

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' is looking at you with interest.]

"It doesn't matter what gender, race or world you originated from. It doesn't matter if you are strong or weak, famous or not famous. Anything is okay. What I am looking for is passion. I hope you have the passion to see the end of this damn story with me."

[The constellation 'Bald General of Justice' wipes his head.]

"Whoever is good. I will be waiting for you. 10,000 viewers. Do you remember? Please convey it to other people properly."

"W-Wait a minute! Wait! Just wait!"

Dokgak cried out but it was already too late. There was a wicked voice and unstoppable channel messages. I was dizzy from the indirect messages that came from everywhere.

Some time passed.

Cold anger rose on Dokgak's face. He made a decision and raised his hand towards me. "Incarnation Kim Dokja. You will die here."

Yes, I thought he would react like this. I laughed while pretending to be calm. "There are currently many constellations watching. Aren't you afraid of the storm?"

"Don't underestimate the master of Tokyo Dome."

There was no patience left in Dokgak's furious face. Damn.

"Do you think I can't deal with the probabilities caused by killing a bug like you?"

Dokgak's fingers moved. It was a gesture like he was flicking away a bug. Powerful sparks appeared around me. It was the 'balloon burst' that was Dokgak's specialty. The currents would cause my body to burst like a balloon. My swollen intestines would scatter as fragments and all the pieces that made up my body would become dust scattered into the universe.

This was what originally should've happened.

"…What is this?"

He tried again. Dokgak flicked his fingers two more times. However, there was no change. Not long afterwards, even the sparks disappeared.

"T-This is…" The confused Dokgak stared at his fingers. However, he still didn't understand. The problem wasn't his fingers.

There was a chill and a enormous shadow appeared behind me, darkening my vision.

"Hey. Dokkaebi."

A voice was suddenly heard. I instinctively knew. The owner of this voice was now protecting me. It was natural when thinking about it. One a dokkaebi who used the system could prevent the use of the system.

"Is it fun to show off your power?" It was the first time I heard Bihyung's real voice.

The astonished Dokgak stuttered, "Uh, how did you get Character Redemption…?"

"Ah, this? Didn't you just give me a hard time because of your strength?"

Dokgak's face turned red. Belated rage filled his face. "You are at best a low-grade dokkaebi… Bihyung! What do you mean by this rudeness?"

"Low-grade? You are also low-grade despite your number of subscribers."

"I didn't get a promotion on purpose. Do you dare anger me, the master of Tokyo Dome?"

"Tokyo Dome? Good, Tokyo Dome. Are there many good constellations left there?"

Bihyung moved from behind me towards Dokgak. "By the way, were you this small?"

Their appearance looked the same but now Bihyung was several times larger than Dokgak.

Bihyung's giant shadow proved it. Once again, a dokkaebi's power increased with their number of subscribers.

The fear stricken Dokgak staggered back. "H-How…?"

"You were talking very well earlier. What? I was illegally manipulating the scenario?" A black arm emerged from Bihyung's shadow and grabbed Dokgak's neck, raising him into the air. "The jerk who steals the incarnations of others… who taught you business ethics?"

"U-Uh. You absolutely won't be safe if you do this…!"

"What the fuck!" Bihyung's right arm swelled enormously. "Go to Andromeda and find your concept!"

The shadow's fist burst through the shield on the ceiling and Dokgak flew to the far side of the universe.

He wouldn't die because he was a dokkaebi but he would be hit hard for a while. Bihyung let out a breath like he was relieved.

By the way, I nearly died. I sighed with relief and approached Bihyung. The channel had just grown but Bihyung seemed strange. We looked at each other and I was met with Bihyung's confused eyes.

I couldn't tell if he was laughing or crying. Perhaps this was the expression that dokkaebis made when they were really happy.

"Do you know what I am seeing right now?"

I didn't know but I had an idea. It probably wasn't much different from what I'm seeing.

[The channel level has risen.]

[The channel level has risen.]

[The channel level has risen.]

.

.

.

[A constellation who likes the Korean peninsula wants to be your sponsor.]

[A constellation who wants historical reconciliation wants to be your sponsor.]

[A constellation who likes to change gender wonders about your heart.]

[A constellation that enjoys subculture is interested in you.]

The endless messages started to fill the ears of me and Bihyung. Now the stage would expand to the world.

Chapter 93: Ep. 19 – Singularity, I

Since it was the first time I came to a dokkaebi's official post, I looked at some of the documents on the table while Bihyung managed the constellations.

[Singularity Trend Report]

…Singularity? The moment I curiously turned a few pages, the documents disappeared into dust. It seemed to be a database system, not real documents.

Bihyung looked this way.

–…What are you doing?

–Nothing.

Bihyung saw the powder on the table and looked at me suspiciously. Then he sighed and opened his mouth.

–Hey, are we okay?

–Why? Are you regretting it now?

–That…you know. The constellations that come out using this method will quickly leave.

The fallen constellations would return to the Tokyo Dome channel. At that time, Dokgak's revenge would begin. But that was for then.

–Besides, you lied before. What the hell are you going to do? What if the subscriptions really reaches 10,000? It is already at 5,000.

I shrugged without speaking and Bihyung continued.

–Wasn't there a condition for you to not choose a sponsor when you signed the contract with me? How can you say something like this?

–It will work out somehow. You can also break the contract.

–I can't do that.

–Jerk… I risked my life for you yet you can't do this?

Bihyung's expression darkened.

–That…

Indeed, I was a fool to expect anything. I told him,

–Don't worry, I have an idea.

–…Really?

–Yes, so give me my item. Dokgak is gone so shouldn't you hand me the item now?

–Ah, that's right.

Bihyung belatedly manipulated the system. Then after a while, a white coat descended from the air. The clean design carefully paid attention to fashion as well as combat function. I took the coat and checked the pocket first.

[The special 'space' feature of the Infinite Dimension Space Coat is activated.]

The advantage of this coat was that I could store various items in it without the Inventory skill. It was a good item for me since there were many troublesome items to carry such as the Ganpyeongui, Dongui Bogam and Magic Power Stove.

"…By the way, it is white unlike the catalogue photo."

[The other colour is out of stock.]

Out of stock. How many of these items were there?

[Don't you know? This is a mass production item.]

I checked the options of the items.

[Item Information]

Name: Infinite Dimension Space Coat ver1.1 (made by Mass Production Maker)

Rating: SSS

Description: A customized coat for returnees. Despite being a mass produced product, it was mysteriously given an SSS rating. In consideration of the returnees who can't activate the attributes window, the additional 'Subspace' function can be activated from the inner pocket of the coat. Of course, the space isn't wide so use it cautiously.

I looked at it again. Only the subspace could be used but it had an SSS rating? When considering that the ancient dragon Ignitus's heart had an SS-grade…

[…Honestly, it is just due to the influence of the maker. He is a powerful constellation.]

It made sense. The Mass Production Maker was a famous constellation among returnees… Even if the rating was a bit off, this was one of the best items to get early on.

In any case, I received it.

[Then let's go back.]

Bihyung flicked his fingers and the surroundings started to change. I blinked once and returned to ground. Han Sooyoung freaked out and retreated when I suddenly appeared in thin air.

"Hey! Where the hell did you go?"

"I had to do something for a moment."

"…Was it resolved well?" Sometimes Han Sooyoung had a habit of speaking like this without knowing what happened. Was it a writer's ego? I just nodded.

"New clothes? Damn, I'm envious." She gazed at the coat I was staring with envious eyes and then Yoo Joonghyuk, who was still unconscious. She looked between Yoo Joonghyuk's black coat and my white coat before opening her mouth.

"By the way, are you a couple?"

"…It is just a coincidence. It is a common design."

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is delighted for an unknown reason.]

[A constellation who likes to change gender has shining eyes.]

…Come to think of it, there were many unique constellations. Who was the constellation who liked to change gender? Did this constellation appear in Ways of Survival? I thought I should look through the novel soon.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is controlling the constellation who likes to change gender.]

Speaking of which, I decided to look at Yoo Joonghyuk. Fortunately, his recovery seemed to be going smoothly. His breathing was stable and his wounds were healing.

"Let's go quickly. Before this jerk wakes up."

Yoo Joonghyuk had fainted with two clenched fists. It wasn't hard to imagine what would happen if this guy woke up first.

* * *

I left Gangdong-gu with Han Sooyoung. Yoo Sangah was being carried by Han Sooyoung's avatar. She was still unconscious from exhaustion.

I had gone back to the battlefield where we fought Antinus but couldn't find Lycaon. There was no body so he seemed to be alive. I just didn't know why he didn't come to me. He must be severely injured after being struck by the hatching disaster.

Han Sooyoung looked back at me and asked, "Is it really okay to leave him?"

"It's fine."

"But that is the Poisoner. Can you trust her?"

The unconscious Yoo Joonghyuk was left with Lee Seolhwa.

"The Poisoner originally isn't a bad person. It is due to the Parasite."

In many episodes where she wasn't infected by the guide, Lee Seolhwa was called the 'Doctor' rather than the 'Poisoner'. Maybe she would be called that in this regression.

–Take him and go towards Gaebong-dong. In the 5603th military division, a poor soldier will be waiting for you.

I confirmed Lee Hyunsung's location using Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint and decided to accept Yoo Joonghyuk's advice. I was arrogant to think I could raise my colleagues with my strength.

I had a limited time and information, even if I was a complete reader. Therefore, the best trainer for Lee Hyunsung right now wasn't me, but Yoo Joonghyuk.

"I'm hungry. Shall we eat that?"

I pointed to a plant growing around a high-rise building.

[The 7th grade plant species 'Yanaspleta' is looking at you.]

Han Sooyoung looked at the huge sunflower's eyes and cried out with fright, "…Can we eat that?"

"We have to eat it because there is nothing else. According to Ways of Survival, it is quite delicious. It is also a child and easy to hunt."

"Uh…"

Han Sooyoung made a disgruntled expression and soon started to summon her avatars. We cut off the stems and tentacles of the plant species. The yanaspleta was shortly disconnected from its roots and closed its eyes.

Once again, I felt like I had become stronger. Even if it was young, a seventh grade species was handled so easily.

"Han Sooyoung. Are you going to eat?"

"…I don't know."

"Then I'll cook."

I started cooking the yanaspleta like I had read in Ways of Survival. I peeled off the hard skin of the stem and sprinkled a bit of herb salt that I got from a nearby grocery store.

The inside contained pinkish flesh reminiscent of seasonal crab meat. Han Sooyoung's eyes shone.

"What the hell is this? It is a plant right?"

"That's right."

"We are eating a salad?"

"Of course not. I'll burn it."

I roughly cut off a branch of the surrounding tree, turned the yanaspleta stalk into skewers and put it on the Magic Power Stove. I set the stove to a medium fire but it took a long time to cook because it was a seventh grade species. I flipped it around a few times and then sprinkled more salt. After some time, the smell of grilling meat filled the area.

"Hey, can you smell it?"

"Wait, we can't eat it just yet." I stopped her from reaching into the stove and handed her a teacup that had been warming up on the side. "Drink this before eating."

"What is it?"

"Juice from the boiled stem. It needs to be consumed before eating the yanaspleta."

Han Sooyoung took the cup with a doubtful expression. Then after a while, her expression became impressed. She drank all the juices and started to cut the stem.

"Eat slowly."

"…This isn't a joke. You can really cook."

"Maybe only in this ruined world."

I laughed because she looked like a five year old child stuffing her face with good food.

[Some constellations who love cooking are curious about your cooking.]

[Some constellations who like fast progress and violence are complaining.]

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' says to keep watching.]

There was one week left until the start of the fifth scenario. The Burning Hell disaster and Disaster of Questions had been overcome, making the development smooth.

Yoo Joonghyuk would take the disaster in the west with Lee Hyunsung once he woke up while the Wanderer King would handle the north. The only thing to be aware of now was the 'central disaster'.

I picked up the yanaspleta juice and looked at the still unconscious Yoo Sangah. "Yoo Sangah-ssi."

Was I mistaken? The unconscious Yoo Sangah obviously flinched.

"I know your mental state right now. Come and eat this."

"…"

"If you don't, I will just eat it."

Yoo Sangah didn't rise. Then I heard a growling sound from her stomach.

"You must be sleeping. Then we will eat this. Ah, too delicious."

"…W-Wait a minute!" Yoo Sangah cried out and rose from her spot. As expected, Yoo Sangah couldn't just lie down after smelling the food. She consumed a lot of stamina so it was natural for her to be hungry.

I glanced over at Han Sooyoung, who was still eating. "Hey. You have eaten a lot so get up."

"Why?"

"Do you have to ask?"

"…Tsk. You make people feel uncomfortable. I understand."

Maybe Han Sooyoung knew that Yoo Sangah was already awake. She also knew that Yoo Sangah wouldn't move because of Han Sooyoung's presence. This girl was really bad.

"I will go around the area once. Don't eat it all and leave me some. Understood?" Han Sooyoung grabbed a skewer and disappeared into the darkness.

Once she completely disappeared, Yoo Sangah slowly approached. The skewer on top of the stove made a delicious cooking sound. I gave the skewer to the hesitating Yoo Sangah. Yoo Sangah accepted it and started biting into it.

Yoo Sangah ate one skewer and barely managed to open her mouth.

"…Delicious."

There were tears in her eyes. Anyone who saw her now wouldn't think she was that girl wielding the daggers.

"Eat slowly."

The two daggers at her waist showed that her appearance during the daytime wasn't a dream. It was one month since the destruction began. I felt like there was a lot of work to do.

Yoo Sangah ate the skewers silently while I also ate while watching her. The skewers were really delicious. It was as if the taste wasn't of this world…

Yoo Sangah watched the flames blazing from the stove and muttered, "…This is real."

"Probably."

"Now we can't go back?"

"Yes, probably."

Yoo Sangah's hands faintly trembled. She killed humans with those hands. In order to live, her hands had taken away the lives of others.

The hand that had been covered in someone's blood now covered her eyes. Her shoulders intermittently shook. It was probably her last pride that no sobs leaked out.

"It isn't your fault." I didn't know if my words comforted her or not. I couldn't see Yoo Sangah's heart. Yoo Sangah started to cry. Tears flowed down her face and the skewer she was eating fell to the ground.

How much more would she cry? Little by little, her sobs died down.

The 7th grade yanaspleta showed a strong sleeping effect when eaten without taking the juices.

I looked at her for a while before opening my mouth. "It really isn't your fault."

These words were for Yoo Sangah.

"So…" At the same time, I spoke words not directed towards Yoo Sangah. "I hope to find out who you are, how about it?"

In the ruined city, the spooky cries of monsters were heard. It seemed like I was talking to myself. I watched Yoo Sangah while asking, "Are you going to pretend?"

"…"

"I don't know why you are watching me but haven't you been doing it for a while now?"

The white blade of Unbroken Faith shone in the darkness.

"I won't hesitate to do anything to reach my purpose." I pushed the white blade towards Yoo Sangah's throat. "You better open your mouth quickly. Unless you want your precious incarnation to die."

From now on, it was a game of chicken. I waited while gradually pushing the blade towards her throat. The blade was 1cm away from her throat and blood started flowing. All of a sudden, Yoo Sangah's eyes shone.

[The exclusive skill 'Fourth Wall' has offset your mental shock.]

There was a gust of wind and I was thrown away from Yoo Sangah's body.

There was a menacing presence that made my heart dull. A faint glow appeared around Yoo Sangah's body. I looked into Yoo Sangah's blurry eyes. Revolving in the pupils, the shadow of a distant nebula was seen. Then a voice like thunder burst inside my head.

[Insignificant human.]

I wiped the blood flowing from my mouth and grinned. They finally appeared. The damn constellations of Olympus.

Chapter 94: Ep. 19 – Singularity, II

In the world of Ways of Survival, the constellation were divided into two types. One type were the free constellations that didn't belong anywhere. The second type were constellations belonging to a particular nebula.

[A trivial human dares to threaten the great stars?]

I swallowed my saliva in front of that furious momentum. There were several famous nebulae based on the myths of Earth.

There was Asgard from Nordic mythology and Eden from the apocalypse type mythology. Then there was the equally famous Olympus in front of me.

I told them, "…Pick a form. I'm not a devotee."

Yoo Sangah's expression changed. The constellations that suddenly descended looked a bit embarrassed but I kept talking.

"The probabilities in the beginning scenarios will never allow access to the gods of Olympus. Isn't that right?"

[You…!]

If the probabilities didn't exist as a balance, the Seoul area would've already been destroyed by the Olympus 12 descending. The ripple effects of the storm would be huge. Many of the gods of Olympus might look down on it but they weren't stupid. I saw the threads of magic power wrapped around Yoo Sangah's body.

"It seems that you are currently the only one who can come out, Abandoned Lover of the Labyrinth."

Just like Korea had great constellations, Olympus also had great constellations. In fact, the majority of Olympus were great constellations.

The Abandoned Lover of the Labyrinth. This was the modifier for Ariadne, the lover of Theseus.

"You represent the lowest possible cost so Olympus must be quite stingy to send you."

[Shut up! You dare!]

The magic threads fluttering around her caused the ground to shake. The ground was split apart by the momentum.

Indeed, Ariadne couldn't be ignored. No matter how weak the power of her story, she was still stronger than non-constellations. But I knew that she couldn't attack me.

Sparks flew in the air. The shackles of probability had moved. It wasn't a full descent but a large amount of probabilities was consumed when she deprived the will of the incarnation and partially descended.

Besides, Ariadne was a constellation belonging to a big nebula. Her movements were bound to be exposed to other powerful beings.

The Great Hole in Seoul's sky was howling. An unprecedented fear filled me and my whole body got chills.

Yoo Sangah's complexion paled due to Ariadne inside her.

"I don't think you have much time. Shall I get straight to the point?"

This was the reality of the constellations. They were the strongest of the Star Stream but they couldn't throw off the heavy shackles of 'probability'.

"The gods of other worlds seem to have noticed you."

[…How can a human know this?]

"Is that important right now? Didn't you come to me for a reason? I don't think the constellations can endure the probability storm that will soon occur."

Thunder struck around the Great Hole. As expected, it was too early for the great constellations to descend.

I continued speaking, "I will ask three questions. If you answer my questions, I will answer your questions."

[You want to do the three questions exchange?]

"Yes."

The three questions exchange. This was originally the trading style of the constellations to minimize the consumption of probability.

Ariadne glared at me with disapproval. [A human using the constellation's method of trading…]

"Are you going to agree or not?"

[…Wait.]

Yoo Sangah's eyes closed. Perhaps Ariadne was now communicating with the other Olympus constellations through their network.

[A constellation who doesn't like the fun to be spoiled is interested in your proposal.]

In any case, the Olympus spectators had appeared. Ariadne finished the communication and opened her eyes.

[I will allow the questions.]

Then a message was heard.

–The Divine Three Questions and Answers has begun.

–Both sides will exchange three questions and answers.

–All questions should only be answered with the truth.

–Both sides can refuse to answer one question.

–The conversation won't end until the questions and answers are fully exchanged.

"I will ask first."

[Okay.]

–The first question ticket has been used.

"One, why are you in Yoo Sangah's body?"

[…]

"Your home is on the other side of the continent and aren't you busy working on your scenarios? Why this place?"

[It is to monitor the singularities of this world.]

–The first answer has been received.

"Singularity?"

[Is that your second question?]

Dammit, she was quite smart. The 'question ticket' disappeared even when the person answered the question vaguely.

"No. Now you ask."

–The constellation 'Abandoned Lover of the Labyrinth' has used the first question ticket.

[What is your identity?]

"Me? I am one of the singularities you are watching."

–The constellation 'Abandoned Lover of the Labyrinth' has received the first answer.

The embarrassed Ariadne muttered, […How do you know this?]

"I just guessed I was a singularity."

I was just talking but it ended up being right. Ariadne's eyes narrowed.

[You…]

"Don't be angry. Don't you guys do it often?"

[A constellation who doesn't like the fun to be spoiled is pleased with your wit.]

Ariadne's atmosphere became filled with killing intent. However, the 'Three Questions Exchange' should be done in this way. Those who answered the other person's questions straight away would only see a loss. The questions ticket should be used in a useful way while wasting the opponent's question ticket. This was the intense fight of the Three Questions Exchange.

I continued speaking.

–The second question ticket has been used.

"Then this is my second question. What the hell is a singularity?"

[It means beings like you.]

Urgh, she was using her head. However, this time I couldn't accept this much.

"Answer it properly. Or do you want to keep spinning in circles?"

[…In principle, they are the ones who appear in a 'divine message'.]

"Can you tell me more? I still can't get the hang of it."

Ariadne thought for a moment before speaking.

[We originally didn't mean to monitor you. It is just a coincidence that we found you.]

…A coincidence?

[We were trying to monitor someone else. He carries the wheel of a giant destiny on his back and destroys the probability. A singularity is such a person.]

As soon as I heard this, I understood what a 'singularity' was.

–The second answer has been received.

Those from Olympus had already found Yoo Joonghyuk in this regression. An Olympus level nebula would be able to search through the mass-produced filters and trace the information back.

First of all, they had the excellent information tracker in Hermes. In addition, the great constellations would already become aware of the deviation in the world's probabilities due to Yoo Joonghyuk…

However, there was something strange. The information about the 'regressor' wasn't information that the current Ariadne could reach.

[It is my turn for an answer.]

–The constellation 'Abandoned Lover of the Labyrinth' has used the second question ticket.

[Who will you select in the next Sponsor Selection?]

It was an unexpected question. I didn't expect Olympus to be aiming for me.

[A constellation who doesn't like the fun to be spoiled is listening to you.]

[Some constellations that love the Korean peninsula are nervous.]

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is chanting his own modifier.]

It was difficult but I had no choice.

"I won't answer. Is it any fun if I tell you who I will pick?"

–You have used a 'refusal ticket'.

–You can't exercise the right to refuse to answer a question from now on.

It seemed she had expected this as Ariadne immediately followed with a question.

–The constellation 'Abandoned Lover of the Labyrinth' has used the third question ticket.

[Then I will ask the last question. How did you notice that we were watching?]

Shit, this was her purpose from the beginning. It was probably the result of Ariadne thinking hard. Simply asking for my 'identity' didn't give an answer so she created a specific question. I thought for a moment before opening my mouth.

"I read a book well."

[What?]

"I found out after reading books."

My answer wasn't convincing but I couldn't reveal the story of Ways of Survival here. It would all be filtered anyway, making it impossible for her to understand. In addition, I didn't want to explain.

"Originally, us Koreans know the myths."

[…What does that mean?]

"You are quite famous in my country. You are so popular that children's cartoons are produced. Don't you know that you are quite famous in my country? Is there anyone who doesn't know about Olympus?"

Ariadne's confusion was conveyed through her shaky eyes.

[It is impossible. A small country…]

"The Cretan labyrinth."

[…!]

"A half monster."

Her eyes became bigger.

"The lover who forgot you. Naxos Island. The love affair afterwards… shall I continue?"

[S-Stop! I understand so stop!]

–The constellation 'Abandoned Lover of the Labyrinth' has received the third answer.

Ariadne made a completely wounded expression and closed her mouth.

[How can humans in a trivial country…]

I inwardly sighed. I somehow succeeded in overcoming this. Ariadne was a constellation with a low probability cost. It was fortunate that she came out as the representative of Olympus.

The movements of the Great Hole was becoming increasingly restless.

I opened my mouth, "Then this is the last question. What is the content of the 'divine message' you received this time?"

Ariadne worried about it for a long time while her eyes looked like she was measuring an invisible scale.

[I can't tell you.]

–The constellation 'Abandoned Lover of the Labyrinth' has used the refusal ticket.

–All questions and answers have been fully exchanged.

–The three questions and three answers have ended.

I expected it but I felt sorry. In fact, the last question was the most important.

[A constellation who doesn't like the fun to be spoiled has a taste of regret.]

Ariadne looked at the lightning bolts falling from the sky and frowned.

[My husband was curious about your story and I gave him a bit of entertainment, but it ends here.]

Her voice started to accelerate like she realized she had no time.

[I only came here for one reason. Olympus will give you a stern warning. Don't hinder our work. We are working to prevent the destruction of the world. This woman will grow into a breakwater of the great destruction.]

"Why this woman?"

[Looking for the reason is pointless. Even the three sisters who spin the thread of fate don't know why.]

Damn. Olympus used the excuse of the Fates.

[Incarnation caught in the scenario. The direction of fate is turning. The stories of the stars are gathering in one place and the fate of the constellations will begin.]

"What are you talking about? Are you referring to Gigantomachia?"

[…You even know this information. You are really amazing. But even if you know this information, you shouldn't arrogantly think that you understand everything.]

The sparks around Yoo Sangah's body were reaching the limit. It was the sign of a probability storm.

[You, a puppet of the moment, will never understand. Remember. Once the time comes, if you aren't standing on the right side—]

At that moment, a lightning bolt struck Yoo Sangah's body and I felt Ariadne's power draining out of her. The sound of tearing through space and time resonated and Yoo Sangah's body collapsed like a broken doll.

I hurriedly grabbed Yoo Sangah's body. Then I felt someone's gaze from the sky. I shouldn't raise my head right now. Nobody told me this but I instinctively knew. If I looked above me…

[The exclusive skill 'Fourth Wall' has offset your mental shock.]

I looked up with confusion. There was something in the distant Great Hole. It was a presence that destroyed Ariadne's power. It seemed to be a tongue or a tentacle but in the end, it didn't resemble anything. It was a fear that was beyond language and it was unable to be comprehended.

A god from another world.

Time seemed to slow and sweat soaked my forehead and back. It was a flow of time filled with breathless pain. I barely blinked and the Great Hole returned to normal. I trembled with fear. This thing was what I had to fight.

I saw Han Sooyoung running towards me in the distance. The roar of agitated monsters filled the moonlit night and the screams of humans came as they were intermittently hit by lightning.

There were several scenarios related to 'the end'. Ragnarok. Gigantomachia. Armageddon… I didn't know what Ariadne was talking about but it was certain that something was different from what I knew.

This was what I wanted. I could never reach the end I wanted if it flowed like the original story.

I carefully laid down the collapsed Yoo Sangah. It felt like her flesh would break if I touched it. Yoo Sangah's face was pale and she had a tight clenched fist, as if she didn't want to support her sponsor.

Humans were weak. However, there was one thing overlooked by the stars who were only afraid of a great probability. It was that all the myths on Earth started from the weak humans they ignored.

I gently touched my fist to Yoo Sangah's fist.

[In the depths of your soul, the power of the 'story' is wriggling.]

[Your first stigma is ready to germinate.]

I would build a 'story' that didn't fall to any myths.

At this time, a silver wolf was running through the darkness.

'Kiik… damn wolf'.

Parasite Queen Antinus frowned as she looked at her body. The newest body she required was an Imyuntar.

Of course, it was a situation where she just survived. Her body was torn by the probability storm and she would've died if Lycaon hadn't been lying unconscious nearby. Her instinct of survival saved her. It was only possible because she was a parasitic species.

Black blood poured from Lycaon, who was hit by a fragment of the disaster. The guides had a body that couldn't resist the disasters. Now Antinus didn't have much time left.

'…I need a new host'.

Antinus shook as she thought of the men who killed the Disaster of Questions.

Those humans prevented the disaster that destroyed her planet. She was desperate in front of the unbelievable sight and decided again. She would get revenge through any means. She would exterminate the humans who destroyed her home, Chronos. At this moment, her antennae reacted.

'This aura?'

A familiar aura was felt. It was a power that she felt from the insect kings species found on Chronos in the past. Antinus' increased her pace. If she infected a person with this potential, revenge wasn't impossible.

Finally, Antinus reached the location and encountered an unexpected being. She couldn't believe it. How was this presence on Earth?

"K-Kieeek—!"

She instinctively made a sound and the boy's eyes gleamed in the moonlight.

"You will be the first insect!" The boy, Lee Gilyoung laughed at Antinus.

Chapter 95: Ep. 19 – Singularity, III

It was already morning when I opened my eyes. Han Sooyoung saw me wake up and smiled. She was the last person keeping guard. "Did you have a nightmare?"

"A little bit."

The embers of the firewood burning all night was white. I put out the fire and touched my forehead, which had a splitting headache. The scene that I saw through Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint…

Gilyoung, I didn't know if he was okay. "Where is Yoo Sangah-ssi?"

"She went to scout." Han Sooyoung answered while touching her smartphone.

I asked her, "What are you looking at?"

"A novel."

"Your novel?"

"What other novel would I look at?"

Indeed, it would be strange to read other novels under these circumstances.

"I always wondered, is it fun for a writer to read what they wrote?"

"It is very fun."

"Even though you know all the details?" I actually asked without thinking but Han Sooyoung gave me an unexpected answer.

"I sometimes feel that the story is different despite reading the same thing."

"What?"

"A writer doesn't have complete mastery of the novel. There are many holes whenever I look back. In the end, reading is the process of keeping the irregular holes in place."

"I really don't know what you're talking about."

"…It means that after some time, I can see it as someone else's writing. Ultimately, every human is their own writer."

The words were unexpected and I felt surprised. Han Sooyoung was able to say such a difficult thing.

I told her, "Come to think of it, you are like that. You really wrote someone else's novel."

Han Sooyoung yelled something back but I blocked my ears for a while. Who told her to plagiarize in the first place? Han Sooyoung turned off her smartphone and asked me, "By the way, what are you going to do next?"

"What will I do? I will wait for the start of the next scenario."

"Who would believe that? I'm sure you have a plan."

She seemed to have something to say so I let her speak. In fact, she kept on talking anyway.

"Yoo Joonghyuk is taking charge of the west and the Wanderer King is handling the north. What about the centre?"

"We will stop it all together."

"Isn't there an easy method? Have you forgotten?"

I stopped for a moment and stared at Han Sooyoung. "Did you copy that as well?"

"…When did I do that? I just came up with it in my novel." Han Sooyoung fumbled with her words while pouting. "In any case, aren't I right? As far as I know, there is an easy way to prevent the disaster in the centre."

Certainly, her words were right. If we did that, we could clear the fifth scenario and prevent all disasters without difficulty. Han Sooyoung looked at me with piercing eyes. "Are you going to do it?"

"That… let's think about it on the way."

I looked around and saw Yoo Sangah waving her hand in the distance. Han Sooyoung grumbled, "Why do you look so happy after seeing her?"

"It is because she is a trustworthy person."

"Tsk. Untrustworthy people will survive."

We set out again. There were five days remaining until the start of the scenario. We moved west along the Han River.

There were two purposes behind this. One was to look for the missing Gong Pildu around Han River and the second was to collect coins from nearby monsters. More than anything else, it was currently a coin event so I should gain as much as possible.

"Yoo Sangah-ssi, to the left! Han Sooyoung, take the lead!"

We hunted all the visible 7th grade monsters. Once Yoo Sangah joined us, we were able to hunt 7th grade species and even 6th grade. I had a thought while watching Yoo Sangah.

Maybe she didn't know about those from Olympus. I called them out to figure out their intentions. They had used up their assigned probability and couldn't interfere with Yoo Sangah for the time being. The battle ended and I approached Yoo Sangah.

"Yoo Sangah-ssi. You should only use one stigma at a time in the future."

"Ah, I'm sorry. Was I a big problem last time?"

"No, that isn't the reason."

The people supported by a nebula were special. Of course, being sponsored by a nebula didn't mean all constellations in the nebula would support her. However, the laws of the Star Stream applied to the constellations and incarnations.

The price for going against the laws would eventually be returned to the constellations and incarnations. The constellations might have a way to escape but the problem was the incarnations.

"Using multiple stigmas will place a burden on Yoo Sangah-ssi's body."

The damn Olympians wouldn't tell her this but there was a limit to the story that a single being could afford. Every stigma contained the history of the constellation and the random blend of histories would impair the human spirit.

If Yoo Sangah borrowed the stigmas of a large number of constellations, her remaining vitality would be reduced in an instant. Then in probably one year…

Yoo Sangah smiled faintly. "Thank you for your concern."

I realized something and opened my mouth. "Did you already know?"

Yoo Sangah's eyes moved downwards and she spoke quietly, "Dokja-ssi, do you still think that I'm a competent office worker?"

Yoo Sangah continued speaking. "I'm different from Dokja-ssi. I can't do anything in this changed world. This is a world where the TOEIC, degrees and service scores are useless."

I wondered, "Do you think everything can be resolved if you become stronger?"

"A little bit."

Her words were correct. In fact, strength only made up for some of the world's problems.

"I have decided to build up useful specifications of this world. That is the only thing I can do."

There were numerous wounds on the back of Yoo Sangah's hand as she spoke. The wounds felt like a big hole for me. Han Sooyoung had said, 'In the end, reading is the process of keeping the irregular holes in place'.

If there was something a reader had to do, I needed to read it properly. I felt a vibration in my arms. I opened my smartphone and saw that there was a notification window.

–Han Donghoon: hyung, are you okay?

The Hermit King of Shadows, Han Donghoon. I was stunned when I read the message.

–Han Donghoon: I haven't been able to connect to the Internet recently so the messages are delayed. I am struggling with my ability…

He had been sending messages for a long time and they stacked up. It seemed the piled up messages arrived at the same time once the Internet connected.

I showed the messages to Yoo Sangah in order to change her mood. I looked at Yoo Sangah's smile and thought.

I wasn't a completely incompetent reader.

I connected to Han Donghoon through the messenger but I could hear news about other people through it.

–Han Donghoon: I am on the Yongsan-gu side. There is also Gilyoung.

–Kim Dokja: Gilyoung is there?

–Han Donghoon: Yes.

The location of my main party were roughly grasped. Lee Hyunsung and Jung Heewon's positions were also confirmed through Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint.

I was a bit curious about what happened to Jung Minseob and Lee Sungkook but it was difficult to care about them. They had some prior knowledge so they should manage. Lee Jihye… well, Yoo Joonghyuk would take care of it.

–Kim Dokja: For the time being, don't leave Yongsan. I'll be there soon. If possible, try contacting other people.

A reply didn't come back. Perhaps it had disconnected again. I looked around at the party members and said, "I think we'll have to cross the river."

Currently, we were south of Han River. North of Han River was Yongsan-gu.

"We have to cross that?" Han Sooyoung asked me with a dumbfounded expression.

It wasn't strange. I looked at Han River with her. Flickering shadows could be seen from the swirling water. The ichthyosaurs that had travelled near Dongho Bridge had once again filled Han River. We had been following the river but I never thought of crossing because of them.

"Have you seen Cheonho Bridge? It is broken."

The ichthyosaur was a 7th grade monster species. It wasn't a problem to hunt but there were too many. It wasn't just one or two so it would take a few days to deal with all of them. We were going to cross Han River in such a situation? It was unthinkable.

"We will move along the river. There might be a place that isn't broken."

We moved along the river for several hours but an intact bridge couldn't be found. Instead, we found a group of wanderers.

Han Sooyoung was going to raise her weapon but Yoo Sangah moved first. She took meat out of her backpack, making Han Sooyoung irritated. "What are you doing?"

"The people are hungry."

"So what? You want to share that? Are you crazy? Don't you know that people are the most dangerous existences in an apocalypse?"

"I can kill all of them if I want." Han Sooyoung saw killing intent for a moment on Yoo Sangah's face and shut her mouth. "Therefore, I can save all of them if I want."

Yoo Sangah took the meat from the monsters and distributed it to the people. Some people felt sorry and bowed to her.

"Ah, this…"

"It is just leftovers. It doesn't matter."

I left Han Sooyoung alone and pulled a yanaspleta stem out of my bag. It wasn't possible for everyone to become a 'hunter' in this world. By now, there would be a great deal of research about the monster species all over the world. The man who received the plant from me bowed deeply.

"Ah! Thank you…"

"It's nothing. Difficulties should be shared."

Of course, I was essentially a different person from Yoo Sangah. All my good deeds were planned activities.

[A few people have a great liking towards you.]

[Your understanding of the character 'Shin Yooin' has increased.]

[Your understanding of the character 'Ma Kangcheol' has increased.]

[New characters have been added to your bookmarks.]

Han Sooyoung said sarcastically, "You're a fake."

"…Sometimes I do good things."

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is impressed with your good deed.]

[400 coins have been sponsored.]

Han Sooyoung grumbled as she watched Yoo Sangah, "Damn, she is like a woman from a novel."

I agreed with her words. Yoo Sangah was like the heroine of a novel even before the fall of the world. Now that reality had become a novel…

From among the crowd, a child approached me. She was a young girl around the same age as Gilyoung.

"What is it?"

The girl who bowed had a Western look. Her eyes were bright and her face was full of an exotic cuteness. The child bowed 90 degrees towards me.

"Thank you."

She was a very polite child. I looked around but didn't see anyone who looked like this child's parents. The child noticed my gaze and said, "They aren't here anymore."

"Both of them?" The child nodded.

I was a bit confused. A child without a guardian survived alone until the fifth scenario. It was almost impossible in Ways of Survival.

…Wait a minute? The moment I used Character List, the child spoke again, "Then I'll be going."

Did she come just to thank me? I tried to grab the child and reflexively looked back at Han Sooyoung. She happened to be looking elsewhere.

"…Be careful."

It would soon be dark. I worried for a moment before summoning the party members together.

"We will rest here today."

We looked for a place to sleep. Han River was cold even when we lit a fire, so we decided to use a partially destroyed building. Han Sooyoung became firmly determined and warned Yoo Sangah.

"Just watch. Those people from earlier will be back. Didn't you see them covet our weapons? They will clearly bite the hand that fed them."

Han Sooyoung declared that all humans were wicked and trash who would repay goodness with malice. I carefully looked at Yoo Sangah who said, "Not every person in the apocalypse is bad."

"No, they are all bad. Almost everyone is bad."

One hour passed.

"They'll come soon. Then you will be crying."

Two hours passed.

"Um, they are patient people."

Three hours passed.

"…Is this possible?"

Finally, four hours later, noises started to be heard outside. Yoo Sangah's expression darkened and Han Sooyoung smiled with satisfaction.

"Look, what did I say?"

Han Sooyoung had just taken out her weapon when someone entered the building.

"H-Hello?"

Han Sooyoung stopped as she was about to get up. The one who came was a young girl. It was the child who politely thanked me during the day. The little red-eyed child held something out.

"T-This…"

It was a blanket. She must've grabbed it from the area because she was afraid we were cold. Han Sooyoung made a surprised expression while Yoo Sangah looked blank. In the apocalypse, goodwill wasn't always repaid with malice.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is making a loving smile.]

[2,000 coins have been sponsored.]

Yoo Sangah acted as the representative of the party. "Thank you, I'll use it well."

"Yes…"

"By the way, are you alone? It is dangerous to wander around at night."

"It is the same everywhere."

Yoo Sangah's expression darkened at the words. "Would you like to stay with us?"

"Huh?"

"It will be fine if you are with us."

Yoo Sangah looked at me like she was asking for permission. However, the child's answer was faster. "I don't want to be a nuisance."

It happened when the child was trying to run away. A flag flew from somewhere and fell in front of the child's feet. The frightened child fell down and Han Sooyoung's scathing voice followed.

"Wait a minute. You can't leave."

"What are you doing right now?" Yoo Sangah looked at Han Sooyoung and spoke in a cold voice. However, Han Sooyoung was looking at me.

"Kim Dokja, don't you know what to do? Isn't that why you wanted to sleep here?"

I slowly closed my eyes. Damn, she had noticed… It was a miscalculation. I didn't know this person could use Detect Attributes. Han Sooyoung asked, "Ah, are you going to act as a hypocrite? Is it because the other person is a child?"

"…"

"The other person is a child? Then the villain must solve it."

Han Sooyoung approached and Yoo Sangah blocked the way.

"Stop."

"Get out of the way. Do you want me to kill you?"

"Why are you killing an ordinary kid all of a sudden?"

"An ordinary kid?" Han Sooyoung laughed and pointed towards the child.

"I told you to stop." At the same time, Yoo Sangah's dagger pointed to Han Sooyoung's neck. Then Han Sooyoung summoned dozens of avatars. Han Sooyoung grumbled.

"Kim Dokja, explain it quickly. Before I turn around and kill everyone."

It ended up like this. I sighed and opened my mouth. "This child…"

The child looked up at me with innocent eyes and I felt a sense of urgency.

"…Five days later, she will destroy Seoul."

Yoo Sangah's eyes shook. If Han Sooyoung hadn't found out, I might've let it pass by but now it couldn't be helped. This damn scenario never gave us the happy endings we wanted.

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is smiling.]

[Many constellations are interested in the development of this scenario.]

It had been a long time since the messages of the constellations seemed so hateful.

"This child is the last disaster of the fifth scenario."

Chapter 96: Ep. 19 – Singularity, IV

That night, the child didn't die. Yoo Sangah didn't want to kill her and I agreed.

"Do what you want." Han Sooyoung muttered and left in a huff, leaving only Yoo Sangah and I in the abandoned building. The child was temporarily frozen with Hit a Pressure Point. Yoo Sangah stroked the sleeping child's hair and spoke in a dark voice.

"She is a disaster?"

"Yes."

"Dokja-ssi, do you know this with your ability?"

"It is something similar."

I recalled a sentence from Ways of Survival.

「The final disaster of the fifth scenario. The Disaster of Floods is the most dangerous and saddest disaster.」

Yoo Sangah bit her lips and asked, "Is she the same as the Disaster of Questions?"

"It is similar but a bit different."

The Disaster of Floods. If she used all her strength, she would be an unmatched disaster compared to the Disaster of Questions. The Disaster of Questions would just affect Gangdong-gu but the Disaster of Floods was different. With her power, Seoul would be wiped out in less than an hour.

"No matter how I look, she doesn't seem like a disaster. Can this kid become a disaster in just five days?" Yoo Sangah wondered.

In fact, Yoo Sangah was right. Right now, the child wasn't a disaster.

[The exclusive skill, Character List is activated.]

[Character Summary]

Name: Shin Yoosung

Age: 11 years old

Sponsor: None (Two constellations are currently showing interest in this person).

Exclusive Attributes: Beast Tamer (Rare), Reflexive Killer (General)

Exclusive Skills: Taming Lv. 5, Diverse Communication Lv. 7, Agile Feet Lv. 6, Hybridization Lv. 4

Stigma: None

Overall Stats: Physique Lv. 12, Strength Lv. 12, Agility Lv. 16, Magic Power Lv. 24

Overall Evaluation: She has good magic power but her overall abilities are low. She has excellent talent and rare attributes but isn't receiving the attention of constellations due to her fragile nature.

Shin Yoosung. This child's name showed that she was the disaster. This child would destroy Seoul in five days.

Yoo Sangah said, "I heard that disasters hatch from meteorites. Yet this child didn't come from a meteorite…"

"That's correct. This child didn't hatch from a meteorite. She was born and raised on Earth. She will still be a human of Earth in five days."

"Then why…"

"The Disaster of Questions was originally from Earth."

Yoo Sangah's eyes widened. "This child is like the Disaster of Questions…"

"Yes and no."

"Huh?"

All disasters from Earth were returnees. They were destroyers who wiped out another world and returned. This child could be called a returnee because she destroyed Chronos. However, that wasn't all.

Among the five disasters of Chronos, this child was special. She was also the most dangerous.

"The one who will cause the disaster isn't this child, but her future self."

"Her future self?"

"This child came back from decades in the future to finish off Earth."

The sweet and innocent child would become one of the most terrible disasters of this world in the future.

"That is why Han Sooyoung said to kill this child. If we kill this child now, we can eliminate her 'future'."

A disaster that even Yoo Joonghyuk couldn't stop.

「 Yoo Joonghyuk looked at the empty hole in his chest. It was a wound that couldn't be healed without using Recovery immediately. He angrily asked the woman who made the wound.

"Shin Yoosung. Why… have you thoughts changed?"

"Changed? I didn't change." Shin Yoosung laughed. "I'm not a regressor like Captain. I'm just a toy stuck in the cogs of the scenario. I have the same personality as the 'disasters' that Captain has met in the past."

"Then why…"

"Is this currently your third regression? I must've given you a chance in the second regression. Yet Captain once again failed. I gave you so much information but you failed again."

Shin Yoosung smiled sadly at the blank-looking Yoo Joonghyuk.

"You can't change the world. Many things are still intact and nothing has changed." Shin Yoosung spoke while looking up at the Great Hole in the sky. "Thus, I thought about it. Indeed, this world should end here." 」

My old emotional state came back as I read Ways of Survival again. This was the taste of Ways of Survival.

"Hey, what are you doing?" I heard a voice and turned off my smartphone. It was Han Sooyoung and she asked, "What did you decide?"

"I'm still thinking."

Han Sooyoung frowned at the indecision in my voice. She whispered while paying attention to Yoo Sangah and Shin Yoosung. "Have you forgotten? Yoo Joonghyuk almost died because of the last disaster in the third regression."

"He didn't die."

"That doesn't matter. The important thing is that we can't win in a frontal battle."

Han Sooyoung's words were true. The third round Yoo Joonghyuk actually ended up dying because of Shin Yoosung.

"If you hadn't killed him then the Delusional Demon Kim Namwoon could've…"

Unfortunately, this time there wasn't the Delusional Demon to kill the young Shin Yoosung.

"I certainly said that I am opposed to it. I warn you, do you think I will do nothing?"

[Some constellations dislike the burning of the sweet potatoes.]

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is getting out some cider to go with the sweet potatoes[1].]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' expects your wise judgment.]

Perhaps this conversation wasn't properly filtered. The filtering of future information was slowly loosening up…

Yoo Sangah sighed after talking to Shin Yoosung and came this way. "Dokja-ssi, you can't think about it."

Her face was desperate.

"It is a future that hasn't happened yet. If we take good care of her now, perhaps the disaster won't happen? Like the butterfly effect…"

It wasn't without reason. The person who came to this world was the 'future Shin Yoosung'. This world was the 'first world' that created the future Shin Yoosung.

In other words, if we changed the present Shin Yoosung then the disaster might not come. It was theoretically possible. It was the same as killing Shin Yoosung to prevent the disaster. However, there was a problem.

"The event that makes this child a disaster happens in the distant future. It won't be affected by anything we do now."

The butterfly effect didn't happen that easily. A butterfly flapping its wings in the Pacific Ocean would cause a typhoon on the other side of the world?

It was theoretically possible. The important thing was the time it took for the wings to become the 'typhoon'.

Yoo Sangah's expression became grouchy. "You don't know that…"

"Once again, it isn't possible at this time. Even if we change the kid, the disaster that will come in five days won't change."

In fact, Yoo Joonghyuk had attempted it several times in the mid to late regressions. The first thing he did was find Shin Yoosung and try to prevent her from becoming a disaster. He failed every time. No matter what changes were made to the Shin Yoosung in the present, the future Shin Yoosung would return in five days. Then she destroyed Seoul.

Yoo Sangah voice gradually weakened. "Why is this child a disaster? What happened in the future?"

"I don't know."

I naturally knew the answer but I didn't say anything. Instead, I walked towards the child who was eating meat and asked, "Is it delicious?"

"…Yes."

I could feel Yoo Sangah and Han Sooyoung watching me from a distance.

'No'.

'Kill her'.

'I won't let it happen'.

'Kill'.

In fact, killing Shin Yoosung wouldn't damage the important part of the ending point. If I didn't kill Shin Yoosung now, the slightest mistake meant Seoul would be destroyed.

Looking in the short-term, saving Shin Yoosung would only bring damages. Shin Yoosung ate the meat and looked at me with unknown eyes. "Ahjussi, can you see the future?"

"Huh?"

"I… am I a bad person in the future?"

Perhaps she heard our conversation. I replied quietly, "Perhaps."

"How bad am I?"

"You are probably the worst person in Seoul."

"As bad as Joker or Thanos?"

"I don't know."

Shin Yoosung lowered her head. "It isn't unusual."

"Why?"

"I am already a bad person."

She didn't have to tell me why. I already knew how Shin Yoosung was able to survive in this world.

[Your understanding of the character 'Shin Yoosung' has increased.]

[Exclusive skill, Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint stage 2 has been activated!]

「I killed him.」

She killed her dog in order to survive the first scenario.

「I'm sorry.」

She stole a coat from an old man who collapsed from an attack. She killed a woman who always looked after her to protect her own green zone. She handed over a person chased by someone in order to get food.

In this world, everyone was forced to commit crimes. Not everyone could rationalize such things.

「I will be punished. It isn't worth living.」

Determination filled the child's frightened eyes. The expression of a person determined to die was no different for an adult or a child.

"You can kill me. I'm ready."

If I was the protagonist of this story, I would've killed Shin Yoosung without hesitation. However, I was a reader. A reader had to make a reader's choice.

Of course, I wasn't a writer so the only things that emerged from my mouth were obvious words. I stroked Shin Yoosung's head and said, "Don't worry. Your death isn't in the ending that I want."

Yoo Joonghyuk's regression would have no meaning if I killed this child. He was fighting to change the past. If someone killed another person because the future was fixed, what did this suggest?

Thus, I would prevent this child's death for Yoo Joonghyuk.

Her eyes shook.

[The character 'Shin Yoosung' feels a faint loyalty to you.]

[Your understanding of the character 'Shin Yoosung' has increased.]

"But I must die…"

"There is a way to stop the disaster."

I could hear Han Sooyoung sighing behind me. By her side, Yoo Sangah was watching with tightly closed lips.

"I can do it with your help."

In the first place, the ending I wanted was impossible. Yet if I changed small impossible things one by one, I might end up changing it to the impossible ending. Shin Yoosung would be one of the small cornerstones of this impossible story.

I immediately opened the Dokkaebi Bag and bought a few items. Shin Yoosung muttered without any confidence, "What can I do? I don't have a sponsor."

"Why does it matter if you don't have a sponsor?"

[You have sponsored the 'Growth Package I' to the incarnation 'Shin Yoosung'.]

Shin Yoosung's mouth dropped open.

[You have sponsored the 'Growth Package II' to the incarnation 'Shin Yoosung'.]

[You have sponsored the 'New Scenario Commemorative Package' to the incarnation 'Shin Yoosung'.]

…

The messages continued rising. Shin Yoosung paled.

"W-What is this?"

"It's okay, I have a lot of money."

"Ahjussi, who are you?"

"I am Dokja. Kim Dokja." I tapped the head of the child who lost her sense of realism. "In the next five days, you will become stronger than anyone here."

It was true. Beast Lord Shin Yoosung. This child would later become one of the world's 100 most powerful people.

This child, who might become a disaster, would become my 'first incarnation' in this round.

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[1] **Sweet potatoes** and **cider** are two Korean slang words, meaning "frustration" and "relief" respectively.

싱숑 장편소설

전지적 독자 시점

Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint

PART 1

05

비채

*

Chapter 97: Ep. 19 – Singularity, V

I wanted to sleep for a while but it was early dawn when I opened my eyes.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' encourages you to take care of your incarnation.]

I unknowingly woke up from Uriel's message. Damn, the constellations had been making a fuss since I made the 'sponsor declaration' yesterday.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is chuckling at your choice.]

Truthfully, there was no way I could be a sponsor when my narrative wasn't properly built. A sponsor who couldn't give their incarnation a stigma was just a hindrance, although I had a lot more money than a decent sponsor.

[Many constellations are curious about your choice.]

[Some constellations think that your actions are ridiculous.]

The reaction of the constellations to my incarnation was split into two. Those who liked me were the 'incarnation seekers' while those who disliked me were the 'amusement seekers'.

Of course, there was one constellation who was unclear.

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' is watching your strategy with interest.]

[1,000 coins have been sponsored.]

I thought he was ordinary when I first saw the modifier but I recently changed my mind. The average size of his sponsorship was too large. This constellation was at least 'narrative' grade. However, no matter how much I searched through Ways of Survival, I couldn't see the name Secretive Plotter at all.

This meant he wasn't a constellation of this world or he wasn't properly handled in Ways of Survival. Who was it?

Wooong. Since last night, Shin Yoosung had been practicing her skills in one corner of the abandoned building. Shin Yoosung used the magic power recovery potions that I gave her and kept using a skill on the nearby young groll.

A faint aura stretched out from Shin Yoosung and touched the skin of a groll. This was the power of Diverse Communication that I saw from Lee Gilyoung.

I looked down at Shin Yoosung who had dark circles under her eyes. "Yoosung, have you slept?"

"Not yet."

"Don't you know the penalty for not sleeping? Go to sleep."

"Just a bit more."

[The character 'Shin Yoosung' has used 'Diverse Communication Lv. 8'.]

[The character 'Shin Yoosung' has used 'Taming Lv. 7']

Shin Yoosung's concentration soon disappeared.

[Taming has failed!]

[The monster has started to run wild!]

The groll broke away from the control and rushed towards Shin Yoosung. Before I could move, the drooling Han Sooyoung sleeping nearby acted. The groll stopped breathing as it slammed into a wall of the abandoned building. Han Sooyoung fell asleep again.

I spoke to Shin Yoosung, who was controlling her breathing with a dejected face. "Do you understand now?"

"Yes." Shin Yoosung made a gloomy expression.

[The exclusive skill, Character List is activated.]

The abridged version.

[Character Summary]

Name: Shin Yoosung

Exclusive Attributes: Beast Tamer (Rare), Reflexive Killer (General)

Exclusive Skills: Taming Lv. 7, Diverse Communication Lv. 8, Agile Feet Lv. 8, Hybridization Lv. 6.

Stigma: None

Overall Stats: Physique Lv. 19, Strength Lv. 14, Agility Lv. 44, Magic Power Lv. 45

* Growth Package I is currently applied.

* Growth Package II is currently applied.

* The New Scenario Commemorative Package is currently applied.

Her skills growth rate was enormous thanks to the growth package I bought her.

There was also the New Scenario Commemorative Package that promoted the evolution of stats. I didn't know if any incarnation on the Korean peninsula had received such package support.

She was a talented person so Diverse Communication would soon break through the 10th level and become Advanced Diverse Communication.

The problem was that she couldn't properly tame the 8th grade groll despite her stats. This should be impossible thanks to the help of the system. Shin Yoosung bowed her head like she was embarrassed. "…I don't have any talent."

If she didn't have talent then I should just kill myself.

"Don't worry. You have talent. " I couldn't let my precious incarnation become frustrated. Perhaps Shin Yoosung couldn't use it properly because of her trauma. "What are you thinking of?"

"I'm scared."

It wasn't hard to guess why she was scared. I told her, "The monsters aren't pets."

"I know."

"Still, it might be okay to make one a companion. They are durable and strong."

Shin Yoosung was someone who killed her dog with her own hands. It was to survive. This fact still remained deep in this child's heart. I thought for a moment before saying, "Did you know? If all the scenarios are cleared, you can make a wish…"

"Ahjussi's face changes when you lie. Your nostrils become larger."

This reminded me of Gilyoung. Perhaps the children with Diverse Communication were more sensitive to body language. I decide to go forward like a gangster. "…What do you want to ask?"

"Can I do it?"

"You can do it."

"You are speaking without any sincerity."

"I chose you." Shin Yoosung's eyes shook at my words. "I chose you instead of Seoul. I don't regret it."

"…"

"You can do better than anyone else."

Shin Yoosung looked up at me as she squeezed her fingers together. Then she started to tear up. "Ahjussi, if I really become strong…"

"Strong?"

Shin Yoosung hesitated for a moment before laughing. "It's nothing. I will try hard."

Then Shin Yoosung turned around and used the skill again. I suddenly remembered something. I recalled the type of person Shin Yoosung was like in the original novel.

「"Joonghyuk oppa is handsome."」

「"Joonghyuk oppa is the best."」

「"I like Joonghyuk oppa the most."」

…This girl, she was a fan of Yoo Joonghyuk in Ways of Survival. Of course, she wasn't a heroine candidate. Due to her age, she was in the younger sister position. I remember her having a big fight with Yoo Mia…

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*

I suddenly became a bit worried. Would I lose the person I worked so hard to raise to Yoo Joonghyuk?

I suddenly turned my head to where Han Sooyoung was stretching as she woke up. Han Sooyoung noticed my gaze and turned away. This girl, she had been sulking since yesterday.

I called out to her. "Hey."

"What?"

"Are you going to keep sulking?"

"Don't talk to me."

"There is something I want to ask you."

Han Sooyoung raised an eyebrow at my words. I lowered my voice so that Shin Yoosung couldn't hear and asked, "What do you think about my looks? Especially when compared to Yoo Joonghyuk."

Han Sooyoung looked at me like bugs had entered her ears. "Why the hell are you asking me this?"

"I'm just purely curious."

I had never been interested in what I looked like since I graduated from high school. Then I thought about the reactions of the prophets when I pretended to be Yoo Joonghyuk and it seemed that I was ugly. I didn't think I was ugly when I took occasional selfies in the bathroom.

[A windy constellation is looking at you like you are pathetic.]

She replied, "Accept your fate."

"No, I really am just curious…"

"All I can do now is cheer you up."

Shit.

"…To that extent?"

I quietly looked at Shin Yoosung and made up my mind. I could never let her meet Yoo Joonghyuk.

We hunted the monsters around us and collected the coins. I invested the collected coins into Shin Yoosung, causing her stats to grow remarkably fast.

The coins were primarily used for agility and magic power. It was to maximize the advantages of Agile Feet, Taming and Diverse Communication.

By the time night came again, Shin Yoosung finally learnt Advanced Diverse Communication. However, the Taming skill still didn't succeed. Shin Yoosung asked, "The future me will be much stronger?"

Of course. The current Shin Yoosung was no match for the future Shin Yoosung in a frontal battle.

However, if she trained intensively then she could seal one of future Shin Yoosung's important abilities. The Disaster of Floods was dangerous because she could lead an army by herself.

"I believe in you more than the future that hasn't come yet."

If the future Shin Yoosung could do it then it was a possibility for the present Shin Yoosung. Besides, there was a chance of winning if she confronted her future. It was because the future Shin Yoosung could never kill the present Shin Yoosung.

"I ate well." Yoo Sangah gave a short prayer after eating the groll meat and cleaning up its bones.

"Yoo Sangah-ssi is religious?"

"No I'm not."

"Then why pray…"

"I did it for the gods of Olympus."

It was such a realistic prayer that I was dumbfounded. That reminded me. The gods we knew had become reality and the objects of our prayers were now clear.

"Today Han Sooyoung and I will stand guard first. Yoo Sangah can sleep."

"Is it okay?"

"Yes."

Yoo Sangah lay down and fell asleep first. Han Sooyoung leaned against the wall opposite her and messed around with her smartphone.

It was natural to be uncomfortable. They were enemies by nature. Han Sooyoung's ideas were the opposite of Yoo Sangah's ideals. No matter what happened in the future, the two of them would be more antagonistic than friendly.

The tired Shin Yoosung had fallen asleep and only embers remained of the fire. Han Sooyoung spoke first. "You sleep too."

I lay on the floor but sleep didn't come easily. There were four days left until the start of the fifth scenario. Shin Yoosung hadn't made any new progress today but a message came from the Gangseo area this afternoon.

[Someone has dealt with the Disaster of Ice that came from the west.]

This was the message. I didn't have to ask who killed the disaster. Yoo Joonghyuk had prevented the disaster that would've caused Seoul to become an Ice Age. Perhaps he had met up with Lee Hyunsung.

Han Sooyoung was watching the embers when she suddenly opened her mouth. "Hey, I have a question."

"You are ugly."

Han Sooyoung frowned. "Who is wondering about that? You bastard."

"…Then what is it?"

"What do you want to do?"

"What do I want to do?"

"What is your purpose? I think it is strange every time I see you. You shattered the throne and didn't kill me. What do you want?"

"I have a desired ending."

"Ending?"

I nodded lightly. Unexpectedly, Han Sooyoung didn't ask anything else. Instead, she spoke about something else. "There was an ending I wanted to write."

"For your novel?"

"Yes."

"Then let me ask you something."

"What is it?"

"Why did you plagiarize? You write well."

"It isn't plagiarism. Do you think that Ways of Survival is like the Bible? Aren't the ideas everywhere? The sponsorship of transcendent beings. Survival missions. A protagonist who regressed. Isn't it harder to find a novel that doesn't have one of these ideas nowadays?"

"It is because yours is the closest."

"There is a reason for that. Shall I tell you a story? In the past, there was a poor girl…"

"It is a story of a literary girl living in poverty who became frustrated with her dream and eventually plagiarized a novel for food and living."

Han Sooyoung's mouth gaped open. "Can you actually read someone's mind?"

"Eh?"

"Anyway, something like that is possible. Right?"

"What type of god do you think I am? I wouldn't be suffering like this if I had that skill."

[The character 'Han Sooyoung' has used 'Lie Detection Lv. 3'.]

[The character Han Sooyoung has confirmed that the statement is false.]

Han Sooyoung laughed. "Is it possible for me?"

I didn't answer.

"Well, you don't have to tell me. In any case, if possible please read my mind right now."

"I can't read it."

"In fact, I didn't plagiarize."

I looked at Han Sooyoung suspiciously and she used Lie Detection on herself.

[The character Han Sooyoung has confirmed that the statement is true.]

…What?

"It is just a coincidence that the story I wrote was similar to Ways of Survival. I just wrote according to the dreams I had."

[The character Han Sooyoung has confirmed that the statement is true.]

…This girl was using her subconscious as a shield.

"In any case, you saw it. It was a dream to you."

"Maybe that is true. Then…" Han Sooyoung hesitated before saying, "Sometimes I think about it."

"Think about what?"

"If this reality is the original and I only reproduced the original then I might've plagiarized…"

"What are you saying? Then you did plagiarize?"

"Who said that? I said it was just a thought."

In fact, I didn't mean it. It was a thought I had from the moment Ways of Survival became reality.

Was this world overlaid on a novel? Or was reality turning into a novel?

I stood up and shook my head. "Hey, let's change the shift. Go ahead and sleep. The constellations on my channel will be reduced if I keep listening to such a painful story."

"My constellation support has reduced because I've been with you lately."

"That's because you keep doing cancerous things."

We shot a few more barbs at each other before shutting up. I leaned against the wall of the building and looked at the snoring Han Sooyoung.

I suddenly had a thought. Perhaps I was a bit lucky that she was here. At least I wasn't alone in knowing that this world was a 'novel'.

At some point, I fell asleep. It might be because I was too tired or perhaps I was distracted by the unexpected comfort. It was a short but sweet sleep. However, perhaps I shouldn't have fallen asleep.

When I opened my eyes the next day, Han Sooyoung was a cold corpse.

* Official novel cover (canonical)
* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)

Chapter 98: Ep. 20 – Disaster of Floods, I

My heart sank as soon as I looked for Han Sooyoung's pulse. I was more shocked by the fact that Han Sooyoung was dead. A bit of time passed before my sense of reason returned.

"…Dokja-ssi?" Yoo Sangah noticed something and got up. I examined Han Sooyoung's corpse with Yoo Sangah's help.

"There are no wounds."

The situation came to a standstill. There were no wounds. Then was it a poison? If there was a poison that could kill Han Sooyoung without leaving any traces then it was a terrible poison.

However, such a poison couldn't be released now. That wasn't the only problem. Why was only Han Sooyoung poisoned while the rest were safe? Even if there was a person with such a poison, there was no reason to only poison Han Sooyoung.

It was strange that I suddenly fell asleep in the first place.

…Wait a minute, I fell asleep?

"Uh, I'm sorry. I slept too much." Shin Yoosung finally opened her eyes.

I suddenly looked back at Yoo Sangah. "Yoo Sangah-ssi, did you sleep all night?"

"…Yes."

Yoo Sangah blushed like she was embarrassed. If Yoo Sangah hadn't woken up then no one was standing guard yesterday. I was the last lookout and once I fell asleep, everyone was sleeping.

I was a fool. My suspicions should've started from 'Why did I sleep?' rather than 'Who killed Han Sooyoung?'

Was it a sleeping spell? No, only returnee had such magic. Hit a Pressure Point? They must be able to fool my senses to use it.

In the end, there was only one answer remaining. I approached the fire where the bones of the groll I ate yesterday was hanging.

This was the only possibility for everyone falling asleep. I cleared up the bones that were eaten cleanly of their flesh and some green powder fell to the ground.

'It is the stem of the yanaspleta'.

It was as expected. There was only one reason for this being here. Someone had mixed the plant stem powder into the groll meat. The stem of the yanaspleta had a powerful sleeping effect if not taken with the juices. It wasn't poisonous so it couldn't be resolved with Dongui Bogam. That's why I always boiled it with the juices.

"Who cooked the groll yesterday?"

"It was Sooyoung-ssi…"

I inwardly sighed. The meat I ate yesterday was the young groll that Shin Yoosung failed to tame. The one who killed the groll was none other than Han Sooyoung.

"It was one blow."

I approached the pale body of Han Sooyoung. I was so confused that I had forgotten for a while. An avatar didn't vanish unless the head was destroyed.

However, why did she set up this play? She was bound by the 'Temporary Pledge' and couldn't run away. At that moment, a blue light emerged from Han Sooyoung's heart. This was…?

"Wait a bit."

I didn't care about the reaction of the others and trampled on Han Sooyoung's head. The blue light burst out and the avatar was destroyed.

[The character Han Sooyoung's avatar has received the punishment for violating the contract.]

[The character Han Sooyoung has offered up her avatar as a sacrifice to offset most of the punishment of the Temporary Pledge.]

"Ah…"

Yoo Sangah let out a groan as if she realized something. I had no idea the avatar had such an effect. I had seen it receive damage on behalf of the original but I didn't know it could take the contract's punishment. It looked like only some of the punishment was offset but Han Sooyoung wouldn't die.

Shin Yoosung asked, "That unni went away?"

"It seems so."

The question of why was meaningless. Once I thought about it, Han Sooyoung didn't have much to do with me.

–My constellation support has reduced because I've been with you lately.

I would soon meet with the people of Chungmuro and they would be hostile to Han Sooyoung, just like Yoo Sangah.

Tsk. A person who couldn't be trusted would live in misery. Han Sooyoung would be alone, surrounded by enemies. For a moment, I mistook her for a companion.

There were some coins and a piece of paper in the place where the avatar turned into white powder.

–The value of the meals.

This was how she said goodbye. As if to turn the time we spent together into nothing, her avatar was blown away by the strong winds of Han River.

Still, I was curious about why Han Sooyoung stayed with me for so long despite being able to use 'Surrogate Death' through her avatars.

I didn't know. I couldn't read Yoo Sangah or Han Sooyoung's mind. Ways of Survival, which explained everything, didn't tell me this.

"We should get up."

Then a strange sensation overcame me. Was it Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint? I instinctively looked in the direction that I felt it but couldn't see anything.

…Was I mistaken?

"A fool."

Han Sooyoung looked at the abandoned building from a distant high-rise building. The wind of Han River permeated through her ripped jeans and was cold. She bit her lip and muttered.

"…Shouldn't you pretend to feel something?"

However, she knew he couldn't do that. It was natural. He was as much a 'reader' as she was.

She turned on her notepad and started to type something. It was the habit of an author to write it down when inspiration struck.

「Reading a book doesn't mean you will understand people.」

'I will see you again'.

She didn't know the ending that Kim Dokja wanted. However, they would surely meet again as long as they kept moving towards the end.

「She didn't know if they would be enemies or not the next time they met.」

Han Sooyoung covered her smartphone and started walking.

* * *

The morning hours passed quickly.

That afternoon, Shin Yoosung's agility and magic power reached the scenario limit of level 60. I felt that it was time and bought the Sponsor Contract from Bihyung. Bihyung grumbled but still gave me the contract.

[…You do know that this won't change the disaster?]

'…'

[The present her isn't directly related to the future disaster. The disaster comes from a world derived from the 'first world' line. Even if their existences are connected, the history…]

'Don't speak useless words and give me the contract'.

I finished writing the contract and handed it to Shin Yoosung. "I have no stigma right now and can't lend you my strength like other constellations. I only have a lot of coins."

"…"

"You don't have to sign the contract if you don't want to. However, you won't regret it if you sign with me."

"Mother told me not to mess around with this type of stuff…"

"It's okay. I don't really mean to be a typical sponsor."

"If I sign this, I can't contract with another constellation?"

"Yes."

Shin Yoosung nodded with determination. "Okay. I believe in ahjussi."

[The Sponsor Contract has been concluded.]

[You have become the sponsor of the incarnation 'Shin Yoosung'.]

A brilliant light rose and wrapped around me and Shin Yoosung. Unlike the brilliant light, a humble message popped up.

[You aren't a constellation. You are unable to use most of the functions of a sponsor.]

[List of Available Functions]

[1. Sponsor the incarnation.]

[2. Encourage the incarnation.]

Well, I had expected it. This was about it for now.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' scoffs.]

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' congratulates you on your first contract.]

[5,000 coins have been sponsored.]

[A number of constellations want to be your sponsor.]

The reactions of the constellations were hot. It was different from the time with Gong Pildu. Shin Yoosung was now my direct incarnation. Therefore, the 'incarnation seekers' group were going crazy over me.

I wasn't a constellation, I was an 'incarnation' with an 'incarnation'. If they signed a contract with me, Shin Yoosung would naturally come under that constellation as well. As I increased my number of incarnations, the number of constellations who wanted me would increase rapidly.

[The channel is going crazy…!]

Bihyung screamed happily as I looked at the party. "It is time for us to leave. We will cross Han River."

"We still haven't found any bridges. Will it be okay?"

"We'll go swimming."

"Huh?"

"Don't you know how to swim?"

"I do know but…" Yoo Sangah looked at the river with concern.

I knew what she was worried about. The water levels of Han River had increased. There were more ichthyosaurs present than yesterday and they were intermittently roaring. They were all 7th grade. Shin Yoosung muttered, "I can't swim…"

"Hold onto this and cross."

I pulled out a styrofoam box that I had obtained in advance. I asked Yoo Sangah to connect the box to me using Arachne's Spiderweb.

"Let's go."

I jumped into Han River without hesitation and Yoo Sangah immediately followed me. Shin Yoosung was frightened but she quickly grabbed the styrofoam box and dipped her feet into the water of Han River.

The cold temperature of Han River wrapped around my body. There was the smell of strange beasts and the movements of the ichthyosaurs started to change. Yoo Sangah asked,

–Is this really okay?

Of course it wasn't okay. However, it was the only way considering the time remaining.

–If it gets really dangerous then get out as soon as possible.

–…Yes.

–That's why you should pretend to be in danger before it is actually dangerous.

–Huh?

–It is for Yoosung to quickly awaken. I am deliberately creating a crisis. Understood?

I pulled the styrofoam box as I started swimming in Han River. This was the reason why I raised Shin Yoosung's skill level without worrying. It wasn't shown in the attributes window but she had an innate ability to adapt.

An ordinary girl could never survive until the fifth scenario. Shin Yoosung seemed like a good child but her inner self wasn't that simple.

A child who killed her dog, who tricked adults and who disguised herself to gain favour from the strong. Shin Yoosung was such a child. The first time we met, there were many calculations going on inside her head.

I spoke to Shin Yoosung who was looking around. "Yoosung."

"Y-Yes!"

"Don't run away."

"…"

"If you run away from here, you can't go back." Shin Yoosung closed her slightly open mouth. Shin Yoosung was a clever child rather than a brute. "Do what you can."

Tricks wouldn't work on her. I couldn't protect her just because she was a child.

"I understand."

Fear was fear, fear was determination.

[The character 'Shin Yoosung' has used 'Advanced Diverse Communication Lv. 3'.]

Killing intent was all around me. The predators seeking prey were increasing. I could see 10 of them above the surface of the water. It was a difficult number to fight all at once. However, I could escape and survive. The ichthyosaurs couldn't chase me the moment I left Han River.

"Dokja-ssi!"

Yoo Sangah called out a warning. The attack of the ichthyosaurs began. Sharp fangs flew from every direction.

[Blade of Faith is activated!]

I swung the blade and immediately pierced one ichthyosaur. The serpentine body hit the surface of the water.

The ichthyosaur's writhing overturned Han River. I flew in the air along with the river water. Looking back, Shin Yoosung had let go of the styrofoam box and was also rising in the air.

Something quickly rose into the sky and Yoo Sangah's spiderweb wrapped around Shin Yoosung. It was the linked Hermes Walking Method and

Arachne's Spiderweb.

Yoo Sangah retrieved Shin Yoosung safely while I stepped on the dead ichthyosaur and started swinging my sword at the approaching ichthyosaurs.

"This way you bastards!"

More than a dozen ichthyosaurs swam in my direction. Huge waves rocked the river and the body of the ichthyosaur I was standing on was in danger. I took a deep breath and adjusted my posture.

Way of the Wind would allow me to easily handle this crisis but it wasn't time yet.

"Ahjussi!"

Shin Yoosung's face became desperate as she was held in Yoo Sangah's arms. Several fangs aimed at my skin as I wielded the blade. A few ichthyosaurs received mortal blows and fell down. The flowing blood cooled down and this area was becoming more and more crowded. However, I laughed.

Become more urgent.

Become more anxious.

Become more desperate.

It was the only way.

A terrible injury was created where an ichthyosaur's fans grazed my skin. Blood started to pour from the wound.

「No—!」

The scream entered my eardrums.

[The character 'Shin Yoosung' is about to evolve.]

[Incarnation 'Shin Yoosung' has entered a trance state.]

Shin Yoosung's eyes were turning white. It was the same as when Lee Gilyoung used his power. It was as I thought. All of this was staged for Shin Yoosung's awakening.

[The character 'Shin Yoosung' has used 'Taming Lv. 9'.]

The level 60 magic power started to spread out through Han River, the aura pouring like a waterfall.

The ichthyosaurs' momentum slowed. The ichthyosaurs shivered and groaned, as if responding to an enormous spirit.

The number of ichthyosaurs seen above the surface of the water increased. Previously it was around 10 and now it was more than 20. This meant that below the water, more than twice the number of ichthyosaurs were gathering.

Then the ichthyosaurs started looking at me again. The confused ichthyosaurs emitted a sharp killing intent and became more violent.

Dammit, was it a failure?

"Yoo Sangah-ssi!"

It couldn't be helped. It was best to use her stigma to escape quickly. Yoo Sangah nodded, escaped the ichthyosaurs and released her threads. I called out to Shin Yoosung.

"Yoosung. You can stop. Shin Yoosung!"

However, Shin Yoosung didn't answer. The waves around Shin Yoosung grew stronger and now her body was covered with a bluish aura.

At this moment, a whirlpool occurred in the centre of Han River. I couldn't grab onto anything and was swept away by the water. The surrounding ichthyosaurs screamed. I barely endured the centrifugal force while hanging onto the scales of an ichthyosaur.

The next moment, there was a huge splash of water. Then an ichthyosaur five or six times bigger than the other ichthyosaurs slowly rose.

It was so big that it didn't seem like an ichthyosaur. It was much bigger than the sea commander that I killed previously. It had a majestic beard and arrogant eyes that dominated its species.

All the ichthyosaurs around it bowed their heads to the surface of the water.

[The fifth grade seawater species, the 'Queen Mirabad' has been discovered!]

…Shit, she called this monster? I knew Shin Yoosung had great talent but I didn't know it was enough to call a 'queen'. This was a monster comparable to a disaster.

I opened up Bookmark and was about to invoke Way of the Wind when Yoo Sangah's voice was heard.

"…Dokja-ssi?"

I looked back and found that Shin Yoosung's body was floating in the air.

She followed the path of the aura that stretched out to Queen Mirabad and Shin Yoosung slowly approached the queen. The queen looked at Shin Yoosung and Shin Yoosung looked at the queen. Then Shin Yoosung's small hand quietly touched the queen's nose.

The river water subsided and the ichthyosaurs quietly disappeared. I looked over and saw Shin Yoosung riding on the queen's head. I now realized what Shin Yoosung was.

Beast Lord. The ruler of all monsters.

The colour slowly returned to Shin Yoosung's eyes as she watched me. She wiped at her bleeding nose like it was nothing and said, "Let's go, ahjussi."

I nodded.

Chapter 99: Ep. 20 – Disaster of Floods, II

I remembered Han Myungoh boasting about a private yacht at his Maldives villa. He had said this: The propeller cutting through the water was like a highway on the sea.

Now I knew what that feeling was like. If Director Han's boat on the ocean was like the Gyeongbu Expressway then I was currently on the Autobahn.

"It is really amazing."

Yoo Sangah and I rode on the back of the queen and watched the ripples of Han River with fascination. As if testing her control, Shin Yoosung led the queen straight through the group of ichthyosaurs. Now Han River had become a safe zone and it was preferable to disembark near Yongsan-gu.

The ichthyosaurs swam after Queen Mirabad like ducklings following their mother. I closed my eyes and felt the cool air against my face. This was a real feeling. It was a luxury I wouldn't have enjoyed if the world had remained the same.

Shin Yoosung kept mumbling on the queen's head in order to sync their spirits. Yoo Sangah watched Shin Yoosung and spoke with a complicated voice. "By the way, Dokja-ssi. If Yoosung becomes stronger now then won't her future self be stronger as well?"

I thought she would ask something like this.

"I don't think so."

According to the original novel, the disaster that would come was the Shin Yoosung of the 'future of different regressions'. She was betrayed by Yoo Joonghyuk and abandoned outside the world.

She lost her sense of time and wandered the universe. Then she became part of the scenarios due to the Star Stream's blessing and she became a 'disaster' of past scenarios.

Yoo Sangah raised a question. "Then why will the future disaster be stopped if the current Yoosung dies? If the branch is completely different…"

"Have you heard of the Disconnected Film theory?"

"…No." I watched the water and opened my mouth. "Put simply, it is like this. Let's assume that the history of Yoosung from the first world is a film."

"Film… are you talking about the film for movies?"

I nodded and continued. "Assuming that this world is film one, there must be countless films of the other worlds right? There could be two films and there could also be 34 films."

"I see. Is that right?"

"What happens when one of the films, with the front broken, sticks to the back of the first film? For example, what if the ripped 34th film sticks to the back of the first film? What do you think will happen if the film is played?"

Yoo Sangah seemed troubled for a moment. "Then the movie would change along the way… ah, wait a minute. The two stories will never affect each other?"

"That's right."

"Ah… Yoosung is currently in such a situation. The present Yoosung is from the first film while the disaster Yoosung is from the 34th film. The two stories are completely independent and any changes in our world can't affect the disaster." Yoo Sangah was truly smart. "Still, the question remains. Shouldn't the disaster remain if the current Yoosung is killed?"

"The contents of the film don't affect each other but the two films are connected."

"Huh?"

"What if the front of the film is set on fire?"

Yoo Sangah shouted after realizing. "The rear film… will be on fire as well."

The two world lines were connected. If the present Yoosung dies, the future Yoosung would also die. However, any changes to the present Yoosung wouldn't change the future Yoosung. That ambiguous paradox was at the heart of this disaster.

"Dokja-ssi really knows a lot. I've heard of parallel cosmology but I've never heard such a theory before."

I awkwardly nodded. Of course she wouldn't know it. It was a theory that the author of Ways of Survival created. As far as I knew, the laws of Ways of Survival had never been violated.

After a while, the water of Han River calmed down. We finally arrived at the other side of Han River. The queen dropped us off and then disappeared into Han River again.

Shin Yoosung sighed like all the tension had been released. "…How was I?"

"Are you really asking? You have done well."

"Yes."

Shin Yoosung's expression changed. She was pleased at receiving praise. Now there was nobody left to praise the child.

Then I felt a fierce hostility coming from the buildings of Yongsan-gu. A huge shadow came out from the shadows of the building.

…A giant praying mantis? The boy on top of the praying mantis looked down at me.

"Dokja hyung?"

There were Lee Gilyoung wearing a snapback and Han Donghoon with headphones.

Lee Gilyoung slid down the praying mantis and rushed into my arms. Lee Gilyoung's snapback fell off his head.

It was a reunion after one week. Then a message popped up on my smartphone. It was from Han Donghoon.

–It is good to see you, hyung.

"Shouldn't you say it is nice to meet me after a long time?"

–I don't want to.

* * *

Lee Gilyoung and Shin Yoosung had a war of nerves as soon as they met. Lee Gilyoung's hair was moving like it was really an antennae while Shin Yoosung kept touching her hair.

"Ahjussi, that boy keeps glaring at me."

"Hyung, who is she?"

It seemed people of a similar type recognized each other. One was a beast master and the other was an insect master. I didn't know if they would fit together.

I asked Lee Gilyoung, "You haven't met Heewon-ssi yet?"

"Yes. However, I know where she is. I sent an insect to look. Heewon noona is currently in the north."

As expected from Lee Gilyoung. He was already searching for the group members without needing to be told.

By the way, the north was where the King of Wanderers was currently located. Maybe Jung Heewon was in contact with her.

"I knew hyung was coming. I sent a lot of diving beetles."

Speaking of which, the bugs on Lee Gilyoung's head had increased. There had definitely only been a cockroach before… Shin Yoosung frowned like it was disgusting. I checked the power of the party and concluded.

"It is better to stay here for two days. Raise your skill levels as high as possible and collect coins in your spare time. Take care of your overall stats. Ah, Yoo Sangah-ssi."

"Yes."

"Did you contact your family?"

Yoo Sangah's face suddenly darkened. It seemed that she hadn't contacted them yet.

"Donghoon."

Han Donghoon kept his headphones on and nodded silently. Han Donghoon had Wide-area Internet as a skill. In other words, it was possible to communicate with the outside world.

Yoo Sangah's smartphone rang and there was a message that it was connected to the Internet. Yoo Sangah looked down like she doubted her eyes before staring at me tearfully. I nodded and continued.

"Please tell your family of this situation. Once this scenario is over, the outside of Seoul will no longer be a safe zone."

"What will happen?"

"I don't know what will happen. Just tell them to be prepared. That is enough for now."

"Dokja-ssi, don't you have to contact anyone?"

"I'm fine."

"But…"

"My family is in Seoul."

"Seoul? Then…"

"They are safe."

I silently stared towards the north. Then the system message arrived like it had been waiting.

[Someone has dealt with the Disaster of Water in the north.]

The King of Wanderers had finished her work safely. There was only one disaster left. It was the Disaster of Floods.

「 The bright energy sword made a faint sound as it was raised in the air. It struck dozens of energy blades at once. Blood flowed from Jung Heewon's eyes and scattered through the air. Soon Jung Heewon's sword stopped.

"I think that's it."

Jung Heewon carefully inspected the sword and smiled with satisfaction. The middle-aged woman across from her also smiled faintly.

"Jeon Woochi's technique is amazing."

"Heewon-ssi's kendo is also excellent. You will soon have a sponsor and I might not be a match anymore."

"I'm flattered."

Jung Heewon stared at the woman's blue prison uniform. In the past week, Jung Heewon had been indebted to them. It was a debt that probably couldn't be repaid with the remaining time. A middle-aged woman asked.

"Do you really not want to join our New Wave group? The king will be delighted if Heewon-ssi joins."

"I'm sorry but my companions are waiting."

Jung Heewon raised her hands in an apologetic manner. The middle-aged woman just smiled like it couldn't be helped. The woman already knew who the members of Jung Heewon's party were.

"I hope he knows that Heewon-ssi is this desperate."

"He knows." Jung Heewon looked at the sky with a slightly disgruntled expression. "Somehow, I think he is watching me right now." 』

…This was why I didn't want her knowing about Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint.

In any case, Jung Heewon seemed to be growing well. I was worried since her character hadn't seen the light in the original book but I was glad my choice was correct.

Then I watched someone else using Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint. Unfortunately, there weren't many visible points to determine the person's identity.

…Um? What was this? A familiar face soon appeared on the screen.

…It was me? Wait. These people?

「"Hey, you." Lee Gilyoung spoke in a ferocious voice. "Stay away from hyung."

Then Shin Yoosung, who was lying next to me, replied, "What if I don't want to?"

"This mongrel…"

"Don't talk to me, you worm bastard."

Lee Gilyoung was stunned. The cockroach and other bugs moved wildly on his head. Lee Gilyoung barely regained his composure.

"Hyung hates kids like you."

"I know who ahjussi likes."

"…You know who hyung likes? Who?"

"An unni."

Lee Gilyoung laughed. "Unni? I think you are misinformed. Hyung likes a man."

"How do you know?"

"I've been with hyung for a long time."」

I barely managed to wake up as the terrible conversation began. I hurriedly looked around and saw Lee Gilyoung and Shin Yoosung sleeping with their heads leaning on something.

…Did I see wrongly? Was it just a dream?

"Dokja-ssi, what's wrong?"

I shook my head at Yoo Sangah's question. It must be a dream. I was just lying back down when I heard a whisper from somewhere.

'Hey, bug. Come to think of it, you hugged ahjussi earlier?'

'…'

'Are you a baby? Do you like old people?'

It wasn't a dream.

"Excuse me… aren't you sleeping?"

Yoo Sangah warned. Then the surroundings became silent and the children's snoring started soon afterwards.

Two days flew by in a flash.

[The sub-scenario – Survival Activities has ended.]

Everyone heard the system message as they woke up and got ready. It didn't feel like a lot of time has passed, but the scenario was already over. Then a message from Bihyung arrived.

[9,421.]

It was a number. Bihyung spoke again.

[9,513.]

'What?'

[Don't you understand? 9,611.]

I noticed right away what the number was. At that time, I made a '10,000' promise.

[Constellations who love the Korean peninsula are nervous about the number of subscribers left.]

I asked Bihyung, 'Did you do what I told you?'

[…I did but I don't know if it will be any good. In any case, I wish you luck. 9,781.]

The swirling Great Hole in the sky showed an unusual omen. There was a thunderstorm and the intermittent sound of thunder was heard. Then an intermediate dokkaebi appeared in the air.

[Everyone, you have been waiting a long time.]

The intermediate dokkaebi looked gaunt. He had probably been suffering from the bureau.

[Did you enjoy the survival activities? The scenario that you have been waiting for will finally begin. There were some disruptions but… yes, well. It will be a fun scenario to look forward to.]

He looked at me and the incarnations and continued speaking in a disgruntled tone.

[You have stopped four of the five disasters. I fully acknowledge your accomplishments. But do you know? The other four were just child's play compared to the last disaster.]

The faces of the people became tense. In fact, he was right. None of the other disasters could compare to the Disaster of Floods.

[Depending on the success of this scenario, everything that you have done so far might go away and everything will be over. Frankly, the odds of that happening are over 90%. Fortunately, there are those who commiserate with you.]

I formed tight fists. It was finally starting. The last event before the fifth scenario started.

[Then, from now on I will start the second Sponsor Selection.]

Chapter 100: Ep. 20 – Disaster of Floods, III

There were bright lights in the sky that shot all over Seoul.

Some lights went to the north while some went to the west. However, the width of the scattering wasn't large. Most of the lights were gathered in central Seoul. It was evidence of where the incarnations were gathering to prepare for the scenario.

"Finally a contract! I will also have a contract!" The incarnations waiting in the area cried out enthusiastically.

I wasn't the only incarnation who survived this far without a sponsor. Soon little stars emerged over the heads of the incarnations without a contract. The number of stars represented the number of constellations who wanted the incarnation.

[Sponsor Selection]

–Please select your sponsor

–Your chosen sponsor will be your strong supporter.

Perhaps by now, all the unsigned incarnations would be seeing the same thing I was. Of course, mine was probably a bit different.

1. Prisoner of the Golden Headband.

2. Abyssal Black Flame Dragon

3. Secretive Plotter

As expected, there was the Prisoner of the Golden Headband and the Secretive Plotter. I felt sorry to keep rejecting them but it couldn't be helped.

…This Abyssal Black Flame Dragon was here again. He had Han Sooyoung so why did he keep coming to me?

4. Seo Ae Il Pil

5. Bald General of Justice

6. King Heungmu the Great.

The great people of the Korean Peninsula also lined up. Seo Ae Il Pil was probably Ryu Seongryong…

Ah, our Samyeongdang also came. In addition, there was the fox Kim Yushin. Did he think I would really choose him?

The list continued.

21. Goryeo's First Sword

22. God of Wine and Ecstasy

Anyone who was called Korea's best swordsman could be Goryeo's First Sword. Then there was Dionysus… Olympus had also stepped into the race for Kim Dokja. I felt a bit confused as the list continued. It was because unexpected constellations kept appearing.

48. Black Light of Guidance

49. Scribe of Heaven

50. Ruler of Revenge and the Apocalypse

I didn't remember all the modifiers so I only had dim memories of Black Light of Guidance and Ruler of Revenge and the Apocalypse.

However, I was certain about Scribe of Heaven. That guy, he was a powerful constellation of the absolute good system. The archangel Metatron. Based on angelic authority, this guy was ranked much higher than Uriel. This was the second heavenly being. Dammit, what type of constellations were watching me?

…

The hundreds of stars above my head formed a magnificent spectacle. It was a brilliance that seemed like it would light up all darkness near it. Some incarnations stared this way with soulless expressions.

"That…"

"What is that person?"

Shin Yoosung stared above my head in a blank manner and muttered, "Ahjussi, you are like a Christmas tree."

[Constellations who love the Korean Peninsula want you to keep your promise.]

[A number of constellations want to see your faith.]

In the end, it came. I take a deep breath and called to Bihyung.

'Bihyung'.

[What?]

'How many are there now?'

I had made a promise to the constellations when fighting off Dokgak. If the number of subscribers to the channel reached 10,000 before the Sponsor Selection ended, I would choose a sponsor.

[9,812. No, 14… 16.]

The number of constellations continued to rise. Bihyung's tone became tense.

[There are three minutes left to complete the Sponsor Selection.]

Now the result would be determined in three minutes.

[The constellation 'Bald General of Justice' is looking nervously at you.]

Unfortunately, there was no point looking at me desperately.

[There are two minutes left to complete the Sponsor Selection.]

[The constellation 'Bald General of Justice' has sponsored you 200 coins.]

[The constellation 'Seo Ae Il Pil' has sponsored you 300 coins.]

[The constellation King Heungmu the Great' has sponsored you 300 coins.]

The sponsorship competition was finally starting. It was a natural choice for the constellations if they wanted to stand out.

[Some great constellations above narrative-grade constellations are clicking their tongues.]

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' has sponsored you 5,000 coins.]

This was the exact development I hoped for. Good, good. Give me more money.

[The constellation 'Scribe of Heaven' has sponsored you 30,000 coins.]

…As expected of Metatron. It was an entirely different class. It should be obvious since he was a chancellor of heaven.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is looking at the constellation 'Scribe of Heaven'.]

[There is one minute left to complete the Sponsor Selection.]

I asked Bihyung. 'How many now?'

[9,973… 76, 77.]

It had finally reached a breathtaking level.

[9,981… 84.]

30 seconds left.

[9,993.]

20 seconds.

[9,998.]

[A few constellations are holding their breaths.]

10 seconds.

[9,999…]

5 seconds, 4 seconds, 3 seconds…

[The Sponsor Selection has ended.]

Then I let out a light sigh. I gazed at Bihyung who opened his mouth with a smile.

[I'm really sorry everyone.]

[Many constellations think it is ridiculous!]

There was no use in yelling.

[Current number of subscribers: 9,999]

The screen that floated next to Bihyung showed reality. Some incarnations saw it and their mouths dropped open. Shin Yoosung asked, "Ahjussi, are you a star on Youtube?"

Maybe it was similar. I spoke in a shameless voice towards the sky. "It is too bad. I would've selected a sponsor if there were 10,000 constellations."

[Many constellations wonder who you would've chosen.]

Then Bihyung intervened.

[This information can't be revealed to protect the privacy of the incarnation.]

Well done Bihyung.

[A number of constellations are rioting!]

The sky above Yongsan-gu distorted and lightning started to fall towards the innocent people. Sparks filled the air. The dokkaebi's power to influence probability could also block the constellations' wrath.

[Now now, all constellations. Please calm down. Unfortunately, the event had to be cancelled because we are lacking one person…]

Then Bihyung glanced at me and continued.

[As an apology, I will create a compensation event.]

The lightning temporarily stopped.

[Perhaps you are thinking this? Shit, what should I do if it continues like this?]

[Many constellations are listening to the dokkaebi Bihyung's words.]

[I understand your thoughts. So! I will punish the incarnation who didn't choose anyone in the second Sponsor Selection! However, I will only do this if the constellations are in favour of it…]

[Many constellations are in favour of the dokkaebi Bihyung's words.]

Bihyung nodded with satisfaction. Shin Yoosung stared at me with a dumbfounded expression. "What is happening?"

"Don't be upset by the events unfolding."

"Ahjussi, why didn't you choose a sponsor?"

"Well, it isn't time yet."

Honestly, I was a bit shaken when I saw Metatron but if I chose someone here, everything I had done would be in vain. I couldn't enter under anyone else. This was the only way.

"Yoo Sangah-ssi. Take the kids and hide."

"…Do you have an idea?"

"Of course. Never come out unless I signal to you."

[A new bounty scenario has arrived!]

[You have become the target of the bounty scenario.]

As expected, the bounty scenario began.

[Bounty Scenario – Punishment]

Category: Bounty

Difficulty: A

Clear Conditions: Brutally kill the incarnation Kim Dokja. The more brutal his death, the more coins you can receive.

Time Limit: 20 minutes.

> Compensation: 40,000 ~ ????? coins.
>
> Failure: —

Anyone who saw it would think I was the fifth disaster. It was 40,000 coins to kill one person. Shin Yoosung paled when she received the scenario. "… Ahjussi?"

Yoo Sangah grabbed Shin Yoosung who was reaching for me and retreated. At almost the same time, the incarnations in the area discovered me and started to flock. There was the 'target' mark floating above my head.

"Crazy! 40,000 coins?"

"Hey, get that fucker!"

[Many constellations are enjoying the development of the scenario.]

The constellations angry at my choice loved the way I was being chased like a rodent. Everybody had forgotten about the '10,000 event'. Yes, this was the nature of constellations.

Bihyung glanced at me and communicated with a nasty expression.

–I didn't realize it would turn out like this.

'I knew. I used to do this when working at the game company'.

The only way to appease angry users was to open a new event. Bihyung shivered and murmured.

–Is this okay? If it is noticed… I really will receive a Probability Conformity Request this time.

In fact, it was an obvious channel manipulation that the number of subscribers didn't break through 9,999.

It was because from the beginning, Bihyung's #BI-7623 channel only accommodated 9,999 viewers.

I wouldn't be able to escape if someone like Dokgak provoked a fight. Fortunately, there was no one like that present. The low grade dokkaebis had been on guard since the last incident.

'I decided to take the chance'.

It was still a dangerous method. There was no doubt that some smart constellations would doubt this. The number stopped exactly at 9,999. This defied coincidence. Thus, an event to shift the attention of the constellations was needed.

The constellations hated annoying things and were vulnerable to fun. I used the current Punishment event to take advantage of that.

Bihyung opened his mouth and spoke to everyone.

[Constellations, please note that the incarnation Kim Dokja can receive a penalty if coins are sponsored.]

The moment he spoke, my body suddenly became heavy.

[A selfish constellations has given you a speed penalty.]

[500 coins have been sponsored.]

The more coins I received, the more penalties that would be inflicted on me. The incarnations, who normally never would've been able to follow me, were right on my tail.

"Everyone seems blinded by the coins. Right?"

I smiled and wielded Blade of Faith.

"Uwaaah!"

[A constellation who wants your misfortune has given you an attack penalty.]

[500 coins have been sponsored.]

My attack power was halved and the incarnations didn't die. I was actually glad about this. I didn't want to kill them,

[A constellation who wants your death has given you an defense penalty.]

[500 coins have been sponsored.]

The fucking sponsorship. A dagger flew from somewhere and hit my arm, causing terrible pan. My arm would've been cut off if it wasn't for the Infinite Dimension Space Coat.

[A few constellations feel sorry for your adversity.]

There were also constellations who supported me. Thank you for your tears. I grabbed my injured arm and ran to the southwest of Yongsan-gu.

If I was right, the meteorite where the Disaster of Floods slept was in that direction. The energy of the meteorite showed it was close to hatching.

[Bihyung. What the hell is this?]

[What's the matter? It is simple entertainment before we enter the game.]

Another dokkaebi's voice was suddenly heard. Now Bihyung was speaking in a strong manner.

It was a sharp contrast to my heavy body. Just a bit more…

A river finally appeared.

"Hold it!"

I barely managed to escape from the clutches of other people and plunged into Han River. The other incarnations knew what was in Han River and couldn't easily follow me.

"This crazy guy!"

The 7th grade ichthyosaurs swarmed like they had been waiting. They wanted to make my feeble self their food.

[Many constellations are filled with joy.]

I had a thought as I watched the ichthyosaurs. I didn't have any talent. No matter how hard I trained, I wouldn't become as skilled as I wanted. However, I didn't want to use that as an excuse to say I was weak.

[The exclusive skill 'Bookmark' can now be activated.]

The way that I could become stronger was different from other people.

['Character Bookmarks' is activated.]

[Available Bookmark Slots: 4]

[Bringing up the list of available bookmarks.]

"I will release Demagogue Cheon Inho from the 3rd slot and add Beast Tamer Shin Yoosung."

[The number three bookmark has been activated.]

A bright light surrounded my body and the smell of the monsters changed. Some smells were friendly while some were filled with hostility. I realized that there was a world I didn't know. After all, it was sensitivity to the world that determined how a person read it.

[The level of the Bookmark skill is low, shortening the activation time.]

[Activation Time: 30 minutes]

[Your understanding of the character is significant. You can select some of her skills to import.]

One of the far-off ichthyosaurs synched with me and complex circuits were forming in my head.

[Advanced Diverse Communication Lv. 3 has been activated.]

[Taming Lv. 9 has been activated.]

Blood flowed from my nose. This was how the kids always felt. I slowly opened my mouth, "Come, Queen Mirabad."

Chapter 101: Ep. 20 – Disaster of Floods, IV

The ichthyosaur queen cut through the water. The grandeur of her streamlined body filled Han River. The confused incarnations immediately moved away from Han River.

"Uwahh, shit!"

"What is this?"

There was a feeling of solemnity as I faced her. I was facing the ruler of a species. I once again felt how great Shin Yoosung and Lee Gilyoung were.

"Come down."

The queen's whiskers touched the water at my words. Once again, it was unreasonable to have the same effect even with the same skill. It was similar to when I used Lycaon's Way of the Wind. I approached her and climbed up using the scales.

The body of the queen shook like she was rejecting my touch. This was the limit for me. Honestly, it felt like my frontal lobe was burning from the connection with the queen.

I left the incarnations hunting me behind and opened my mouth, "Let's go."

Then my struggle with the queen began. As if she was playing with me, the queen swam through the water regardless of my breathing.

"Ahah!" I gasped for air, looking like a wet mouse. "This…!"

The surrounding ichthyosaurs poured towards me like they were amused.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is laughing at you.]

My control was a mess but the queen was moving in the direction I wanted. It was southwest of Yongsan-gu. It was Nodeulseom, one of the few islands in Han River. If I remembered correctly, this island was the place with the most potential for the Disaster of Floods to hatch.

「 The fifth disaster hatched on an artificial island in Han River. 」

Ways of Survival was a novel where the year wasn't specified.

Therefore, I didn't know exactly what year Ways of Survival was based on. I thought it was close to the year I lived in but it had been serialized for 10 years and the technology development wasn't right. There was little mention of modern devices in Ways of Survival and sometimes there were no fixed geographical names used.

This situation was an example.

'An artificial island in Han River… where the hell is it?

Nonetheless, I was able to determine that it was Nodeulseom due to the description and the size of the meteorite.

My thoughts were interrupted by the queen's sudden stop. I rolled down and was thrown on Nodeulseom. Queen Mirabad glanced at me before disappearing into Han River. She was a heartless jerk.

[The exclusive skill 'Bookmark' has been turned off.]

"Uweeeek."

The world turned around as I coughed out the river water. I raised my head and the landscape of Nodeulseom spread out in front of me.

I had never been to Nodeulseom before but something felt strange. The trees on Nodeulseom looked like they were before the world was ruined.

The ichthyosaurs disappeared and the incarnations were preparing to cross the river. I could see some of the incarnations flying through the sky. I hid behind a tree and held my breath as I watched them.

"Where is he? Didn't he obviously come here?"

I didn't think there would be so many people who had learnt Flight Maneuvers. These jerks weren't regressors. Why did they adapt so fast? Many of them landed on Nodeulseom and looked around.

"Hyung, let's look around. I don't have any confidence facing him alone."

"I agree. Did you see all the stars above his head? He is a monster."

"Hero-like traits aren't necessary when dealing with a monster."

"…Will he be as strong as the king in the west?"

It was a conversation discussing how to kill someone. I thought it was too shameful to compare me to Yoo Joonghyuk. I wanted to hide until the end of the time limit but someone showed up from the forest on the island.

"Ahjussis should be careful. Get off this island if you know what is good for you."

It was a strong voice. The girl dressed in a black hoodie over her uniform walked towards the men.

"Who are you?"

"A young person who is unafraid…"

"My armmmmm!"

"Uwaaaah!"

Her sword moved through the air and the men who had their arms cut off screamed. One of the relatively younger incarnations shouted.

"It is her, the Duke of Loyalty and Warfare!"

"What? Why is that girl here?"

"Run! Run away!"

The incarnations hurriedly used Flight Maneuvers but their talent wasn't as high as I thought. A couple were decent. However, the Duke of Loyalty and Warfare wouldn't make just anyone his incarnation, even if they were a descendant of his friend.

The girl pointed her sharp blade at me. "Ahjussi, are you going to come out? Why are you hiding when you have the target mark on you?"

That reminded me, I still had the arrow above my head. I sighed and left the forest with both hands raised. "Are you going to kill me?"

"I'd like to but Master will be sad." The long-haired girl, Lee Jihye put away her sword with a laugh. Her strength had increased in the 10 days we hadn't met.

Lee Jihye saw my injured arm and said to me. "How have you been? I don't think you have been well."

"Then why ask? I thought you had returned to Daepong High School. Why are you here?"

"Master picked me up a few days ago. I don't know how he found me."

Yoo Joonghyuk? I knew that Lee Jihye was a key member of Yoo Joonghyuk's party but to go there and find her…

I looked at her physical body stats using Calm Observation. The total value was roughly over 160. Her strength and physique seemed slightly lower but she had reached the limit on her stats for the fifth scenario.

Moreover, Demon Slayer and Sword Training had improved further. It seemed that all characters in Ways of Survival grew faster when they weren't around me. Did they all have a mental block because of me?

"What about ahjussi's party? Have you meet Heewon unni?"

"The others are waiting in Yongsan-gu. I haven't met Heewon-ssi yet."

"Too bad. She wanted to see you."

Come to think of it, Jung Heewon and Lee Jihye were in similar positions. I looked around carefully and asked, "Did you come with Yoo Joonghyuk?"

"Huh? Why does ahjussi know everything?"

At this moment, I heard a sound from the edge of Nodeulseom. Incarnations who had been fighting the ichthyosaurs finished and approached the island.

Some came on duck boats and some swam. Some of them came on boats or used special skills. They looked like group tourists.

"I found him! There he is!"

I was the tour product. Lee Jihye became angry when she saw the incarnations. "Why did you drag that bunch of trash here?"

"I brought them to catch the disaster."

Some people were preparing themselves for the disaster but not everyone. Those who didn't belong to any groups were hiding all over Seoul, waiting for someone to clear the main scenario. Then they would take action in the resulting power loss.

The last disaster couldn't be broken by such a flimsy determination. If everyone didn't fight together…

"Why did you do that? There is no point."

"Huh?"

"There won't be a disaster. Master is taking care of it." My eyes stared at Lee Jihye with disbelief. "The last disaster won't be dangerous at all. Instead, useless people can't enter the island… shit, they are entering."

Lee Jihye once again pulled out her sword. This was the reason why she controlled the island. Lee Jihye wasn't the only one controlling entrance to the island. A large person waved towards an incoming ship.

"Everyone, you aren't allowed inside here. This is a danger zone!"

"What? Who are you?"

"A lieutenant of the 6502 unit…"

"What nonsense is this?!"

A flying blade was caught in the man's hands and he stated, "…It is dangerous to resist the authorities."

"Y-You!"

The lieutenant wore a suit reminiscent of a giant bear and had a dirty beard.

"I will take you to a safe place."

The lieutenant lifted the man with one hand and threw him to the other side of Han River. The man flew across Han River at a great speed and landed on the other side.

The lieutenant asked, "Is there anyone who needs guidance?"

"Crazy! A monster!"

The lieutenant facing the incarnations had tired eyes, like a mountain had piled up on his shoulders. It was a face that looked terribly weary.

「It is hard… .」

「I think I will die… 」

「Dokja-ssi, where are you? 」

"Lee Hyunsung-ssi."

At that moment, Lee Hyunsung looked at me. His expression was like he found an oasis in the middle of a desert.

"Dokja… Dokja-ssi?" Lee Hyunsung came towards me. I instinctively took a step back. "D-Dokja-ssi! It's me! Lee Hyunsung!"

I was about to open my mouth when another group of incarnations disembarked.

"There he is! Catch him!"

Lee Hyunsung's expression distorted. "I… told you it is a danger zone!"

He turned around and slammed his fist into the ground.

[The character 'Lee Hyunsung' has used the stigma 'Great Mountain Smash Lv. 5'.]

The entire island of Nodeulseom shook as the edges exploded. I was captivated by the second scene of incarnations flying. That Yoo Joonghyuk bastard, how did he raise a person?

I asked the delighted looking Lee Hyunsung, "Where is Yoo Joonghyuk?"

Lee Hyunsung's expression became slightly sad. "Oh, he is in the middle of the island. That…"

"I will be right back. Then we will talk."

I ignored Lee Hyunsung's desperate gaze and ran to the centre of the island. There were many things I wanted to ask Lee Hyunsung but now wasn't the time. I had to check something quickly.

How long did I walk through the forest? I finally saw a huge meteorite stuck in the centre of the forest. The size of the meteorite was overwhelming compared to the other ones. The red aura on the surface implied a sure destruction. There was a woman standing in front of the meteorite.

"Oh, you are…?"

My expression changed at the sight of Lee Seolhwa when the person I was looking for emerged from the rear of the meteorite.

"Yoo Joonghyuk."

Yoo Joonghyuk stood there calmly, exuding a steady presence. I asked him, "What are you doing right now?"

"You must know because you have Future Sight."

I was speechless at the calm answer. The yellow meteorite stuck in the middle of the huge disaster meteorite. I immediately noticed why Yoo Joonghyuk wanted to come here quickly.

"Are you feeding the guide meteorite to the disaster?"

"The guides will only interfere later. It is better to kill them while we can handle them."

Once again, my ominous feelings were always right. This bastard was trying to hatch the disaster early. He was Lee Seolhwa's lover for a reason.

"No, why? Putting aside the guide, why are you trying to wake up the disaster early? Have you finally gone crazy?"

There was slight disappointment in Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes as he replied, "You don't seem to know a lot this time."

"What?"

"This disaster was my colleague in a past life."

Who didn't know this? Yoo Joonghyuk declared with an arrogant expression, "That's why this disaster is safe."

…Safe? Several thoughts passed through my head.

…Joonghyuk. Yes. Sometimes he was too naive.

[The Disaster of Floods has hatched.]

I had forgotten for a while because I received his help several times. This guy in front of me was someone who barely took a step towards the end after dying over one hundred times.

Chapter 102: Ep. 20 – Disaster of Floods, V

The situation became clear. This Yoo Joonghyuk believed in something he shouldn't have.

I shouted towards Lee Seolhwa, "Lee Seolhwa! Take the kids and escape from this island right now. The Disaster of Floods is different from the past. We must fight her together. If we don't all fight—"

"Kim Dokja, don't disturb me if you don't want to die." Yoo Joonghyuk came up behind me and grabbed me by the neck. All of a sudden, my body lost strength and my knees fell to the ground.

I bit my lip and exclaimed, "Yoo Joonghyuk, listen to me! The Shin Yoosung waking up now isn't the Shin Yoosung you know. Once you meet her…"

I wanted to say more but my voice suddenly changed into a squeaky sound. Dammit. I used Hit a Pressure Point to gradually relieve the energy that Yoo Joonghyuk had released into my blood.

Now I had to subdue him…

Of course, no one in Seoul could subdue Yoo Joonghyuk. No, there was only one. That person was coming right now.

[The Disaster of Floods is waking up.]

Along with the message, a green light emerged from the meteorite. Finally, the hatching of the meteorite began.

I heard the voice of the intermediate dokkaebi.

[The incarnations of Seoul are really hot-tempered. Other areas aren't so eager to wake up the disaster and are struggling to avoid the disaster…]

It was difficult for Bihyung to stall any longer.

[Do you miss your first companions? Now, prepare to face the disaster. Your companions are waiting for you in the other world.]

[A new main scenario has arrived!]

[Main Scenario # 5 – Disaster of Floods]

Category: Main

Difficulty: SS

Clear Conditions: Kill the Disaster of Floods, Shin Yoosung.

Time Limit: —

Compensation: 100,000 coins, ???

Failure: The fall of Seoul.

The large meteorite split apart and revealed the interior that was reminiscent of a womb. A completely nude woman was trapped inside like a fossil.

It was a mysterious woman with pure white skin. Her beautiful hair was tied up in a ponytail and wrapped around her body. This was the appearance of the adult Shin Yoosung.

"A girl?"

"What is this? That is a disaster?"

Lee Jihye and Lee Hyunsung stopped while some incarnations secretly looked at her. They seemed to feel the severe gap in power.

[The exclusive skill 'Fourth Wall' has offset your mental shock.]

The Disaster of Floods was different from other disasters. Unlike other disasters who were weakened by the early hatching, the Disaster of Floods had no such thing. The Disaster of Floods was stronger the earlier she woke up.

The moment that Shin Yoosung opened her eyes, white fur grew all over her body. The white fur was reminiscent of an animal's pelt and covered her body in the form of clothing.

Shin Yoosung slowly emerged from the meteorite and stepped on the ground. She was like a child taking her first step. She had just taken a step when everyone around her was frozen.

She was a species with a different strength. Even the strong ones among the incarnations found it hard to move. However, there was a person who wasn't troubled by her pressure at all.

"I have been waiting, Shin Yoosung."

Shin Yoosung slowly turned towards the man.

"…Captain?" It was a short encounter but Shin Yoosung instantly realized something. "Captan was waiting for me… this isn't the first time you have seen me? Right?"

Yoo Joonghyuk nodded. "I need your help."

"Before that, what regression are you on now?"

"Why are you wondering?"

"I need to know."

Yoo Joonghyuk hesitated for a moment before replying. "The third time."

"Ah, I see… Then you met me in the second regression. Right?"

"Yes."

She was the reason why Yoo Joonghyuk could reach the 46th scenario in the second regression. It was thanks to the Disaster of Floods in front of us.

The Disaster of Floods was Shin Yoosung from the 41st world line. She came to the past because of the Yoo Joonghyuk of the 41st regression. Shin Yoosung was abandoned by his world, travelled for many years and eventually descended into a scenario of the past Earth.

"This is the third regression. I gave you information last time but you still failed?"

"That's why I need more information."

The second regression Shin Yoosung chose Yoo Joonghyuk and gave him all the information she knew. It was a final consideration for the Yoo Joonghyuk that she knew. It was only for the second regression.

Shin Yoosung opened her mouth. "…It took thousands of years."

I could feel countless years of fatigue piled up in Shin Yoosung's expression. The things done by the 41st round Yoo Joonghyuk were worse than murder. Thousands of years. This period of time was enough to make a person collapse and for their ego to wear down. Shin Yoosung endured all that time and finally became a disaster.

"Captain, do you know how hard it was for me? I endured all these years to comply with your request."

"…What do you mean?"

"I wanted to see Captain."

Yoo Joonghyuk didn't see the despair in Shin Yoosung's smile. He opened his mouth in a nonchalant manner. "Give me all the information from the 41st regression. Did the future me say anything?"

I wanted to shout at him but my voice wouldn't come out. Shin Yoosung's eyes were as calm as the eye of a storm. Only I could read the turbulent emotions hidden deeply in her eyes.

「 Nothing has changed. 」

Thanks to Yoo Joonghyuk, Shin Yoosung moved alone in the labyrinth of worlds for over 1,000 years. She worked 200 years for the sake of humanity. She kept her promise to defend the world for 200 years. Then for another 200 years, she remembered Yoo Joonghyuk and her companions.

Throughout the years, Shin Yoosung used the handful of memories to protect herself. However, questions rose the more she remembered.

「 What does all of this mean? 」

Time erased her cause and sense of justice. Once the cause disappeared, only the poor human truth remained.

She felt resentment towards Yoo Joonghyuk who turned her and her companions into a tool of 'regression'. Loneliness and despair of losing the world permeated her bones. Shin Yoosung hated Yoo Joonghyuk who made her into this.

"Captain has never changed."

"Don't say unnecessary things and turn over the information. I don't have time."

"What are 'we' to Captain?"

"…What?"

"I did everything for you. I gave you one chance. However, Captain is still here." She graciously helped Yoo Joonghyuk in the second regression. "You will keep going forward. You will turn people like me into tools and abandon me in the terrible labyrinth of worlds. It is all because of that goddamn sense of justice. I hate you for living in this world alone."

Now Shin Yoosung was facing the Yoo Joonghyuk of the third regression.

"There is only one thing I'm going to tell you. Captain can't save anyone." Shin Yoosung laughed. "Your third regression ends here."

Light emerged from Shin Yoosung's hands the same moment I was able to release myself using the pressure point. I ran with all my strength and was hit by the ether storm.

"Get out of the way Yoo Joonghyuk!"

My belly was split open and my mind became blank. A massive crater formed in the centre of the island. Me and Yoo Joonghyuk jumped into the air and then rolled along the ground for a while.

It hurt. Shit. It really hurt.

"…Kim Dokja?" The surprised Yoo Joonghyuk looked down at my fallen self.

My breathing was fast and the sky had turned yellow. It was true that I had been lucky so far. The world was originally like this. Only one thing had to go wrong for the world to be destroyed.

"Kim Dokja!"

Bastard, there was no need to make a big fuss. I smiled at Yoo Joonghyuk and told him, "Hey, kill me. You usually want to kill me."

"What do you mean?"

"There is one minute left so I'll let you kill me. Kill me."

Yoo Joonghyuk looked at my belly. I wanted to touch my belly but it felt like nothing was there. Blood constantly emerged from my mouth and I was dizzy enough to vomit. I kept struggling to breathe.

[The exclusive skill 'Fourth Wall' has offset some of the pain.]

If it wasn't for Fourth Wall then I might be weeping. I couldn't feel it last time because I died in one blow.

"Wait Kim Dokja! It isn't too late."

"It is too late."

"It isn't!"

"If you kill me now then you can gain coins. I'm already dying. Just kill me."

Yoo Joonghyuk made an expression that I hadn't seen for a long time. It was the expression he made when he first saw me on the subway.

"I can't do it."

My vision blurred. I could see Yoo Joonghyuk trying to stop the bleeding but I had already lost too much blood. More than anything… my internal organs were gone. There was no way I could live. It was unreasonable even for Lee Seolhwa. My consciousness slowly scattered into the air like a collapsing sandcastle.

[You have died.]

.

.

A moment later, a system message was heard.

[Current karma points: 100/100]

[You have enough karma points to use the privilege.]

[The privilege of the King of No Killing is activated.]

As expected, I opened my eyes in the darkness. It was this state again. It was a truly dirty feeling.

[Due to a collision error with your exclusive skill, the privilege of King of No Killing would be delayed.]

[Thanks to your death, your consciousness has been completely liberated from the constraints of your body.]

[Exclusive skill, Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint stage 3 has been activated!]

I heard familiar messages in the darkness. The next moment, a screen appeared in front of me. It was the third person observation.

｢"Flood."｣

It was like the intermediate dokkaebi said. The Disaster of Floods was more than the other disasters combined. Shin Yoosung gave an order and the air distorted, making monsters pop out.

Monster Gate, the main feature of the legend grade attribute Beast Lord. The numerous monsters domesticated by her as she travelled the dimensions were being released as nightmares on Earth.

｢"Tear, break, destroy."｣

Many 7th grade and 6th grade species could be seen. There were even some comparable to the 5th grade fire dragon.

｢"It is time for the disaster."｣

Nodeulseom exploded and waves covered Han River. The confused incarnations became the food of monsters. The late-arriving 'kings' started giving orders. Then I saw a person with a fearsome aura behind Shin Yoosung.

「"I'm going to kill you, Shin Yoosung."」

…This crazy bastard? Yoo Joonghyuk's ether blade moved through the air with a terrible sound.

Shin Yoosung avoided the attack and smiled lightly. 「"Your level of Breaking the Sky Sword is quite high already? However, you can't beat me no matter how you try. At most, it is this level?"

"You must turn in this round."

"We'll see. I won't die now. It might be possible if it was 10 years later."

"I will kill you."

"…Captain, aren't you too agitated? What is the reason?"」

I quietly prepared 1st person protagonist's point of view. In the current situation, it was best to transfer to Yoo Joonghyuk's body. I didn't feel good but it would be a bit easier to deal with the disaster if I transferred to this guy.

「"Something is strange. Are you really Captain?"」 Then Shin Yoosung's eyes shifted to my dead body. 「"Who is that person? I haven't never seen such a person before."」

Yoo Joonghyuk stayed silent. He just swung and swung his sword. This was his only answer. How long did he swing his sword?

Yoo Joonghyuk slowly opened his mouth.

「"…That guy."」

Shin Yoosung's face gradually filled with doubt and disbelief. The silent Yoo Joonghyuk finally spoke.

「"He is my companion."」

Chapter 103: Ep. 21 – Things That Can't Be Changed, I

「"…Captain, what did you just say?"」

I came to my senses because of Shin Yoosung's disbelieving voice.

「"Say it again. What did you say just now? What? Companion?"

"…"

"That man is your companion?"」

Yoo Joonghyuk didn't reply to the voice filled with distrust. I was surprised as well but Shin Yoosung's shock was devastating. The Yoo Joonghyuk with a strong ego had called me his 'companion'.

「"Yes."」

This suddenly scared me. No matter how I thought about it, he wasn't someone who would call me a 'companion'. Didn't this bastard know I was going to be resurrected?

[The constellation 'Maritime War God' is touched by your companionship.]

[The constellation 'Bald General of Justice' is blushing at your companionship.]

[500 coins have been sponsored.]

Yes, now I understood. Yoo Joonghyuk, he was looking for coin sponsorship. It was a little strange to see that Uriel wasn't involved but he must be targeting sponsorship by one of the constellations.

I became convinced as I watched him bleeding. Considering that this was his third regression, it wasn't impossible for Yoo Joonghyuk to say the word 'companion'. In the early rounds, he had called Lee Hyunsung and Lee Seolhwa 'companions' when they died.

It hurt to think about the large number of coins he would be receiving right now. I couldn't help my emotions becoming cold. Damn, I should've said that line.

「"Captain, how can you say that?"」

Of course, Shin Yoosung didn't know Yoo Joonghyuk's thoughts and looked as if the world had collapsed.

There was no choice. The 41st regression Shin Yoosung…

She never once heard Yoo Joonghyuk call anyone his companion. Shin Yoosung's fist hit Yoo Joonghyuk's blade.

Despite the clash between the body and the weapon, the thing that received damage was Yoo Joonghyuk's sword. It was the SS-grade Splitting the Sky Sword. Putting aside the special options, the durability and strength were one of the best. Yet this sword was damaged by Shin Yoosung's fist.

In the end, the Splitting the Sky Sword failed to overcome the shock and was bent. The mighty Splitting the Sky was helplessly deflected.

「"How dare you say this in front of me?"」

Shin Yoosung shouted and didn't use any special skills. She just threw a punch that contained ether condensed to the limit.

Yoo Joonghyuk coughed up blood and flew back at this blow. Her attacks, her speed and her variations. Shin Yoosung was superior to Yoo Joonghyuk in all aspects.

The Red Phoenix Shunpo and Breaking the Sky Sword that Yoo Joonghyuk was proud of faded in front of Shin Yoosung.

There was the terrible sound of the body breaking and Yoo Joonghyuk was pushed back. It wasn't a matter of talent but a matter of time.

Despite being weakened by the descent, the 41st Shin Yoosung was the Beast Lord who was close to the limits that Shin Yoosung could reach. On the other hand, the current Yoo Joonghyuk was in the early stages of Yoo Joonghyuk's growth.

「"Why call him a companion? Is it because he sacrificed himself for you? Just because of this?"」

Blood emerged without stopping. However, Yoo Joonghyuk didn't give up. He didn't stop and kept wielding his sword. That jerk, why the hell was he fighting?

I watched the bleeding Yoo Joonghyuk and became increasingly frustrated. Shouldn't he run away after realizing something was wrong? Wasn't that what he normally did?

Once again, Shin Yoosung opened her mouth.

「"Then what about me and the others? Jihye unni and Hyunsung oppa. Seolhwa unni? What the hell are the people who fought with you?"

"I… I don't know what you're talking about."

"What?"

"There is only one thing I know." Yoo Joonghyuk wiped the blood from his lips and said. "You killed my companion in this round. Thus, you will also die." 」

Damn, this time I couldn't help feeling touched.

[Excessive immersion has restricted some of the features of Fourth Wall.]

I was fooled by his acting. Yes, I read Ways of Survival for this taste. Come to think of it, I had been in tears when Yoo Joonghyuk said something similar to Lee Hyunsung.

I suddenly felt restless. A mere reader became a companion of the main character, Yoo Joonghyuk.

Shin Yoosung looked at Yoo Joonghyuk with a face that seemed to have lost everything.

「"You can't be like this…" 」

An ominous aura filled her surroundings. It was a process where emptiness turned to betrayal and betrayal turned to anger.

「"You are changing. I can't tolerate it." 」

Ether filled Shin Yoosung's fists. I wanted to watch a bit more but I was filled with a sense of crisis.

[Excessive immersion leads to a profound increase in the proficiency of Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint.]

If this went wrong then Yoo Joonghyuk would really die. I couldn't let him be killed here. I quickly switched the mode of Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint.

It was from third person to 1st person protagonist's point of view.

[Changing your viewpoint to first person.]

…

[Changing to the 1st person protagonist's point of view has failed.]

What? Why?

[You have failed to meet the conditions to change the viewpoint.]

It felt like I had been hit in the back of the head. There were two conditions to use 1st person protagonist's point of view.

One, I must be dead and in an out of body state. Two, the target and I should be thinking about each other.

The first condition was met but the problem was the second condition. That jerk wasn't thinking about me right now?

Then what was with all the running amok because of revenge? I watched Yoo Joonghyuk who was frantically attacking and became stunned.

「"Die. I will kill you."」

…That bastard, was he thinking about anything? Shin Yoosung watched Yoo Joonghyuk and opened his mouth.

「"It can't be helped. I was going to finish it quickly but I changed my mind."」

Shin Yoosung smiled like she was a devil.

「"I will finish off Captain's world in the most terrible way."」

Shin Yoosung's eyes shifted away from Yoo Joonghyuk. My heart sank the moment I followed her gaze. Shit, I really couldn't wait here and watch. If I couldn't transfer to Yoo Joonghyuk then someone else…

At this moment, a sharp sensation crossed my mind. An unexpected character was thinking of me.

…Could I transfer to this person? Was it possible? Ah, that's right. It was because Yoo Joonghyuk said those words. Yes, maybe it would be better to transfer to this person. I don't know, let's just try it.

I started projecting my mind towards that person. Then after a while. My vision shook and I became dizzy.

[Changing your viewpoint to first person.]

My consciousness was sucked to another place.

'Companion?'

The first time she heard it, Shin Yoosung questioned her ears. Companion. How was this possible? This was Yoo Joonghyuk, not another person.

Shin Yoosung couldn't understand the emotion that blossomed deep inside her heart. It was an emotion she had forgotten for a thousand years.

Yoo Joonghyuk, companion.

She didn't know what had happened to Yoo Joonghyuk. But if it was true, perhaps the Yoo Joonghyuk of that time towards her…

Shin Yoosung touched the ground without realizing it.

'It is low'.

Shin Yoosung thought so. Thus, I thought so.

"This is your last chance." She couldn't tolerate such a lowly thing. "If you take your words back then I will send you away without any pain. Say it. Say he isn't your companion, just someone you know."

The bleeding Yoo Joonghyuk didn't answer despite his condition. Shin Yoosung had crushed one arm and his legs were weak. Even so, Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes were still alive.

Shin Yoosung stared at Yoo Joonghyuk and gritted her teeth before giving an order. "Hold onto Yoo Joonghyuk."

The 6th grade sulfur mummies that had passed through the Monster Gate started moving. Their white bandages grabbed Yoo Joonghyuk's body and Yoo Joonghyuk's limbs were pulled as if they were going to be torn apart. Shin Yoosung declared, "Captain, I'll kill them one by one. Captain, you are the one who chose the most painful way."

Shin Yoosung walked towards the edge of the island, leaving Yoo Joonghyuk alone.

"Kill her! She is the disaster!"

The incarnations climbing up from the water discovered Shin Yoosung. Shin Yoosung waved her hands towards them. The incarnations were touched by the light that came from her hands and were torn apart like wet newspaper. There was no time for them to scream.

"Flood."

Monsters poured from the Monster Gate at her order. Two of the most powerful monsters were standing behind her like they were guards.

The 5th grade sea species, King Masswood. The 5th grade behemoth, Heavy Metal Bean.

They were monsters who could cause small disasters in this world. She was about to speak when a sharp strike came from the side.

"Where are you going?"

It was a flashy sword. The person wielding it wore a black hoodie over a slim skirt. Shin Yoosung immediately recognized who she was. Demon Slaying was burning in Lee Jihye's eyes.

"You dared to make Master look like that?"

The majesty of a great constellation emerged from Lee Jihye's body. It was the power of a person who was stronger than anyone in the sea. Shin Yoosung noticed the stigma that Lee Jihye wanted to use. This place was a river.

"…Your Majesty."

The moment she started reciting a passage, transparent ships emerged from every corner of Han River.

"I still have 12 ships…!"

12 ships appeared on Han River, scattering the water. It was a sight that made people speechless. The stigma of the Duke of Loyalty and Warfare, Ghost Fleet. Despite the oppressive aura of the ships, Shin Yoosung just smiled like she had missed it.

"…Indeed. This is Unni's skill."

"Unni? You are a lot older than me!"

"However, you still have a long way to go. The captain should be on the ship. Why are you in a place like this?" Shin Yoosung reached her in an instant and touched Lee Jihye's chin. There was no time for resistance. "Poor Unni. You don't know anything."

"Shit! What is this speed?"

Lee Jihye hurriedly retreated but she couldn't escape Shin Yoosung's speed.

"You don't know. Yoo Joonghyuk will use you and abandon you. You will die."

Lee Jihye's blade flew towards Shin Yoosung. Shin Yoosung lightly grabbed the blade.

"You, who wanted to be acknowledged by Yoo Joonghyuk, died in the sea you loved so much. You were horribly slaughtered by the Japanese who hated your sponsor."

"Everybody, attack with full power!"

The 12 ships started firing the moment Lee Jihye shouted. Shin Yoosung laughed as she watched the flying shells.

"Do you know what Yoo Joonghyuk said after losing you?"

The shells hit Shin Yoosung's body. There was the loud sound of an explosion. Shin Yoosung emerged from the smoke and kept talking.

"In the future, sea battles will be a bit difficult."

The countless shells didn't damage Shin Yoosung's white fur armour. It was one of Shin Yoosung's unique skills, her strongest defense skill called Beast King's Sensitivity. The white fur wrapped around her didn't tolerate even a single scratch.

"Don't worry Unni. That won't happen this time."

Shin Yoosung laughed.

"I'll send you away without any pain."

Chapter 104: Ep. 21 – Things That Can't Be Changed, II

Shin Yoosung's right hand quietly rose towards the sky.

"Cry, King Masswood."

Then the ichthyosaur king behind her quietly raised his body. The king of the ichthyosaurs, the King Masswood used Ice Breath. Han River instantly froze and the ghost fleet firing their shells gradually lost their function. The fleet was unable to move.

"Unni, I will give you one piece of advice. The ghost fleet is nothing without water."

Everything happened in an instant. Shin Yoosung's fist moved as well. There was the sound of something popping. Lee Jihye lost her sword and flew through the sky.

"Of course, it is useless to give the advice at this time."

The bleeding Lee Jihye flew away and had already lost consciousness. King Masswood's Ice Breath had spread completely across Han River.

"Aaaagh! What?"

The incarnations crossing the cold water shrieked. The hundreds of people were destined to be frozen along with Han River. It was a person watching nearby who saved the helpless incarnations.

[The character 'Lee Hyunsung' has used the stigma 'Great Mountain Smash Lv. 5'.]

Lee Hyunsung's abnormally inflated right arm hit the frozen river. His right arm seemed to burst as he used Great Mountain Smash to break up the ice.

His efforts were rewarded. The surface of the cracked Han River collapsed and the influence of Cold Breath weakened. The incarnations took the opportunity to climb onto Nodeulseom.

"Wahhhh!"

"Attack!"

Shin Yoosung saw Lee Hyunsung standing in the middle of them and smiled sadly. "Yes, Hyunsung oppa. I knew you would be here."

"…You know me?"

"You were our most reassuring shield. You saved my life many times."

Shin Yoosung gestured and the huge chimpanzee behind her hit his chest and walked forward. The 5th grade behemoth, Heavy Metal Bean. He stomped his hind legs and the nearby incarnations rolled around on the ground.

Lee Hyunsung rushed towards Heavy Metal Bean. Lee Hyunsung's swollen arm hit the Heavy Metal Bean's steel muscles. Lee Hyunsung's power was amazing. He wasn't pushed back by the 5th grade behemoth despite his blood vessels bursting and blood flowing from his mouth. No, he was rather overwhelming.

Shin Yoosung kept speaking to Lee Hyunsung. "You are the same as ever. Hyunsung oppa. One of Yoo Joonghyuk's most loyal…"

"…Who are you?"

"You saved the lives of countless people and protected Yoo Joonghyuk to the end. Then you were hit with the breath of the iron blood dragon and scattered into a handful of ashes."

"What…?"

"Do you know what Yoo Joonghyuk said then?" Shin Yoosung's tongue was a sharp scalpel that transplanted the wounds she received onto another person. "I lost a bad shield."

Shin Yoosung saw Lee Hyunsung's changed expression and struggled with a solitary pleasure. 'Yes, you should feel this too. The pain I felt, the sights I saw. I won't unleash all of them but you should understand this too'.

However, she didn't know. This round of regression was different from what she knew.

Lee Hyunsung hit the Heavy Metal Bean and opened his mouth. "I don't know what you're talking about but I don't follow Yoo Joonghyuk."

"What?"

"I am in Kim Dokja's party."

"Kim… what?"

The Heavy Metal Bean fell to the ground with a loud sound. Shin Yoosung's expression hardened and she approached Lee Hyunsung.

"What are you talking about?"

There was a popping sword and Lee Hyunsung flew through the air. Shin Yoosung had punched Lee Hyunsung in the belly. The ether storm pierced through Lee Hyunsung's solid skin and he flew to the middle of Han River.

The blow was hard enough to cause all his organs to rupture. The Lee Hyunsung of the third round would no longer be able to live. However, a question remained in Shin Yoosung's head.

It was a name she had never heard of before. Kim Dokja… Who was he?

Shin Yoosung tore off the heads of the incarnations rushing towards her and slowly walked towards the frozen river. The frightened incarnations fled and were torn apart by the claws of monsters. Little by little, despair filled the eyes of the people.

A sense of resignation spread through the incarnations facing the impossible disaster.

"Shoot!"

Of course, there were some people who tried to resist. The kings grouped up and used long distance skills to fire arrows and ether bullets. Shin Yoosung knew them.

King of Beauty, Min Jiwon.

The Maitreya King Cha Sangkyung.

The Neutral King, Jeon Ildo.

It was strange. They were those who originally shouldn't be alive or had already gone under Yoo Joonghyuk's leadership. It was because all kings other than Yoo Joonghyuk should've been incorporated into one throne at the end of the fourth scenario.

Then what the hell was this?

"Attack! There is only one enemy!"

Who the hell was this army under? Where had the Absolute Throne gone? Who was governing this world?

It was at this moment that she felt killing intent. The ground where Shin Yoosung was standing was frozen.

…Ice Breath?

She reflexively looked behind her and saw a large serpent pouring its breath towards her. It wasn't the King Masswood. She raised her right hand and the King Masswood moved.

Two ichthyosaurs roared at each other as they collided.

The king and queen bit at each other, turning the entire Han River into a huge battlefield. An ichthyosaur the size of a dragon was fighting King Masswood. This ichthyosaur, Shin Yoosung knew its identity.

"…Queen Mirabad?"

She knew that the queen was on Earth but there was no reason to attack her. No, what was this?

"Are you the future me?" A voice was heard.

She looked back and Shin Yoosung's mind became blank. The nostalgic days shook her soul.

"Save ahjussi!"

The girl shouted while a woman tried to stop the girl.

"Yoosung, no!"

Shin Yoosung recovered from the shock and noticed everything.

"Haha… yes. I knew it."

Shin Yoosung moved towards the girl. She knew why Yoo Joonghyuk had done this. He was a human who would just any means and methods to achieve his purpose.

"Yoo Joonghyuk, you son of a bitch…"

"Yoosung, flee!"

Yoo Sangah simultaneously activated Hermes Walking Method and Arachne's Spiderweb. Shin Yoosung's eyes narrowed.

'…Olympus?'

However, Yoo Sangah's dagger didn't reach Shin Yoosung. Shin Yoosung made a simple hand gesture and the flying monsters gathered around the gate flew towards Yoo Sangah. In a flash, Yoo Sangah disappeared into a horde of monsters.

Shin Yoosung ignored Yoo Sangah and approached the little girl. The girl looked up at her with fear and anger. The girl wasn't able to move an inch. Shin Yoosung raised a hand to the girl's cheek.

"Yoo Joonghyuk really did find the 'me' of this world."

"Uh, ah…"

"He tried to kill the little 'me' to stop me. Right?"

A terrible joy filled Shin Yoosung's head. The faded hatred and anger quickly returned to their place. There were some things that couldn't be changed no matter how many times a person went back to the past.

The 'disaster' Shin Yoosung laughed. "Hello, my past self."

The moment her hand moved, a strong blow came from the rear and swallowed up Shin Yoosung. The dust rose and a giant praying mantis appeared.

"A 6th grade insect king?"

"Titano! Do it!"

The sickle attacks of the praying mantis turned the ground into tofu. It was a scary attack. Of course, it wasn't an attack that could kill a disaster.

"Get lost."

The ether condensed in Shin Yoosung's right arm and drilled a hole in the titanoptera's stomach. The praying mantis spilled green blood and fell to the ground.

"Titano!"

The outraged Lee Gilyoung jumped from the head of the praying mantis. A yellow mucus emerged from Lee Gilyoung's body and spread into the air.

"Go! Antinus!"

A wind parasite emerged from Lee Gilyoung's body. It was a 5th grade parasitic species. Shin Yoosung was startled.

"…Antinus?"

Shin Yoosung knew this presence. It was because she destroyed Chronos before coming to Earth. Antinus was the from the dominant species on Chronos. She was a monster in the form of a queen.

Shin Yoosung couldn't believe it. The child had dominated Antinus?

"You are better than expected, Kid."

After her moment of surprise, Shin Yoosung grabbed the parasite in her hands. Antinus' mucus that was touching her fingertips started to burn black. It was natural. The guides had bodies that couldn't resist the disasters.

"You have the talent to tame a guide. You are a child with the talent of a Lord. Right? He also found…"

Lee Gilyoung shouted without caring about her questions. "What did you do to Dokja hyung?"

"What?"

"Where is hyung?"

Lee Gilyoung's fist hit her belly. It was a direct blow but Lee Gilyoung was the one whose wrist broke. He was a great talent but the opponent was too terrible. Shin Yoosung grabbed Lee Gilyoung's neck and lifted him into the air.

"…Who is Dokja?" Blood poured down the struggling Lee Gilyoung's face. "Say it. Otherwise I will kill you."

At this moment, a booming sound was heard in the distance and shells fell towards the ground where she was standing. Shin Yoosung jumped lightly and avoided the shells. The Ghost Fleet started firing again? How?

"Gilyoung!"

She could see Lee Jihye and Lee Hyunsung running in the distance. Doubt filled Shin Yoosung's head…

It was strange. Surely those were deadly blows. How were they still alive? Did her strength control fail? Her?

Shin Yoosung feel annoyed and inserted more strength into the hand holding Lee Gilyoung's neck. In any case, it was better to ask them.

"Goodbye Kid."

The moment she increased her grip, pain spread in her head. She was startled and dropped Lee Gilyoung to the ground. Her trembling right hand was wriggling abnormally.

Surely she wasn't infected with a parasite? No, it was impossible. A 5th grade parasite couldn't interfere with a returnee. Then what was this?" Why wasn't her body listening to her all of a sudden?

Then she heard a voice. 「 Stop, Shin Yoosung. 」

Strangely, Shin Yoosung found something deep inside her react the moment she heard this voice. One side of her heart started to ache like crazy. She didn't know it. It was obviously a voice she didn't know.

"…W-Who the hell are you? Get out of me!"

What was this nostalgic feeling? Shin Yoosung grabbed her head like she was resisting her own senses.

"You! Get out of me!"

She was filled with the desire to vomit as unknown memories revolved in her head. The films of the worlds were becoming tangled together.

「Yoosung.」

She was distracted by the voice when the young Shin Yoosung approached.

The young Shin Yoosung's lips moved. "Ahjussi, are you there?"

Chapter 105: Ep. 21 – Things That Can't Be Changed, III

Controlling the body of a disaster? I didn't intend on this from the beginning. Originally my plan was something else. I decided to modify the plan the moment my mind transferred to Shin Yoosung's body.

[Exclusive skill, Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint stage 3 has been activated!]

[The 1st person supporting role viewpoint has been activated.]

To be exact, I had to modify it.

「…I can't admit it.」

「Then what am I? How long have I lived?」

「What can I get for returning?」

In the midst of Shin Yoosung's turbulent pain, I saw the world with her eyes. I breathed through Shin Yoosung's nose and killed people with Shin Yoosung's hand. I expressed Shin Yoosung's thoughts with her voice. I was Shin Yoosung.

[The exclusive skill, 'Fourth Wall' is shaking!]

Then I met Lee Jihye. I knew the moment I met her that Lee Jihye would die here. Thus, for the first time I tried something that I hadn't done before.

[The 1st person supporting role viewpoint interferes with the behaviour of the character.]

[The exclusive skill, 'Fourth Wall' is shaking ominously.]

There was an electric current in my head followed by tremendous pain. Yet the moment Shin Yoosung dealt the decisive blow, I was able to pull back her right hand. It was a fine adjustment so Shin Yoosung didn't notice, but I definitely did it.

Lee Jihye didn't die.

[Your understanding of the character 'Shin Yoosung' has increased.]

The same thing was repeated with Lee Hyunsung. My mind had become a bit ragged but I thought that I might be able to do something. I poured more of my heart into it and increased my grip on Shin Yoosung's body.

Finally, it happened when Shin Yoosung grabbed Lee Gilyoung's neck.

"W-Who are you?"

I succeeded in controlling Shin Yoosung's right hand.

[You have a very high understanding of the character 'Shin Yoosung'.]

Someone else's arm moved according to my will. It was an amazing experience.

"…Ahjussi?" Shin Yoosung asked.

"Get out of me!"

Shin Yoosung's right arm under my control starting shaking. The abnormally deformed arm turned black and swollen, like the blood vessels were bursting. The young Shin Yoosung rushed to grab the blackened arm.

"Ahjussi, you're in there right? Ahjussi!"

The young Shin Yoosung grabbed my right arm. At this moment, a strong spark entered the right arm. It was a spark similar to a probability storm. The surprised people came running but the sparks blew them away.

The 'disaster' Shin Yoosung and the 'young' Shin Yoosung saw each other at the same time. The wave of memories were gathering.

「"Ahjussi."」

「"Captain."」

It wasn't possible. If the 'Disconnected Film' theory was correct, the two people shouldn't have a shared history.

「"You… can kill me. It's okay."」

「"I wanted to survive."」

When I thought about it, the Disconnected Film theory only applied to 'characters'. I came from outside the novel. What if my existence played a role in connecting their memories? What if I connected the two films?

I could feel both Shin Yoosungs holding my hand. The third round and the 41st round. The two different times were facing each other.

*

「"Is it worth it for me to live?"」

「"Then what is the value of this life?"」

"No! This… these memories…"

The panicked disaster Shin Yoosung stuttered and bit on her blue lips. A mighty energy was being created inside Shin Yoosung's body.

There was the sound of something tearing and the young Shin Yoosung was thrown away from the right arm.

Shin Yoosung was damaging her own body in an attempt to get me out. Blood flowed from her and her combat power started to rapidly drop. The balance of her flesh was being broken due to the excessive magic power.

「Shin Yoosung! Wait, stop this!」

"Aaaack!"

Shin Yoosung grabbed her head and struggled to expel me. I shared her senses and felt like I was going crazy from the nausea and pain. Shin Yoosung's mind was blank.

I was troubled for a moment. If this continued, the disaster Shin Yoosung…

Dammit!

.

.

My consciousness left Shin Yoosung's body and all five senses disappeared.

[The skill conflict error is normalized.]

[The delayed privilege of the King of No Killing has reappeared.]

[Your body is resurrected from death.]

…

Maybe this wasn't the right choice. However, I wanted to give it a try.

[A constellation who likes to change gender is sad.]

I would always regret it if I didn't.

[The recreation of your flesh has begun.]

[The exclusive skill 'Fourth Wall' offsets the mental shock caused by your death.]

[Compensation is being prepared for the Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint stage 3.]

It was my second resurrection after dying from the fire dragon.

I felt my nerves being reconstructed and struggled once again. The regenerated lungs filled with air and the optic nerves were connected, restoring my vision. The abstract activity of the mind was transplanted onto the cerebral cortex.

[The privilege of the King of No Killing has been completed.]

[100 karma points have been consumed.]

[The wastes of your flesh have been completely removed and the performance of your body has increased.]

[Physique and magic power has increased by 2 levels each.]

[You have exceeded in overall stats limit for the scenario.]

Fortunately, it was the second resurrection and I didn't have an unseemly appearance.

I looked around and saw my scattered items and clothing. It was lucky that no one had taken them. I started putting on my clothes when I heard an eerie voice behind me.

"…Kim Dokja?"

Ah, come to think of it, that bastard was right beside me. I looked back and saw Yoo Joonghyuk staring at me with disbelief. His shoulders were still covered with the sulfur mummies' bandages.

"How on earth?"

I sighed. I couldn't explain about the King of No Killing here so I said something else. "…Don't say that you will kill me again. I really will die this time."

"Kim Dokja, you…!"

"I will explain it later. There is no time."

I swung the Blade of Faith and freed Yoo Joonghyuk from the sulfur mummies' bandages. The sulfur mummies shrieked and stared at me. Then I activated Way of the Wind through Bookmark.

I carried the injured Yoo Joonghyuk on my shoulder and rushed towards the frozen Han River.

From afar, I could see incarnations fighting with monsters. There was a black aura rising from Yongsang-gu, Seoul. It was for certain. The disaster Shin Yoosung was over there.

"Ahjussi?"

"Dokja-ssi!"

I found my party members running towards me. I put Yoo Joonghyuk down on the ground and ordered.

"Take a break."

Then I ran straight towards the disaster Shin Yoosung.

"Dokja-ssi, it is dangerous."

"It's okay." I stopped Lee Hyunsung and moved forward. "Shin Yoosung."

The Disaster of Floods was sitting down while holding her head. Blood flowed down and hit the ground.

I was certain that the incarnations didn't dare approach because of the terrible aura she was emitting. Right now, everyone could kill the current Disaster of Floods if they combined forces.

"You… who… are you?" The disaster Shin Yoosung looked at me with trembling eyes. "It's all ruined… because of you… this isn't the round that I know."

The soul that had lasted over a thousand years was shaking with fear.

"No, not at all."

The change began with Yoo Joonghyuk and then her spirit started collapsing the moment she encountered the Shin Yoosung of the past.

She hated Yoo Joonghyuk. Her anger had accumulated over a thousand years. The strong emotions had crumbled at the memories she received.

Maybe this hope could change the world. It was the small bit of hope that the disaster Shin Yoosung saw. It might be very small but hope could overwhelm despair.

I approached Shin Yoosung and knelt down beside her. Shin Yoosung stared at me.

"You have done well." I kept thinking about what she would most want to hear. No such thing had appeared in Ways of Survival. I could only come up with the words myself. If I was Shin Yoosung… "I've been waiting for you for a long time."

Shin Yoosung's eyes shook uneasily. "…You have been waiting? Who are you?"

"A person who wants the same world you do."

At this point, Shin Yoosung's eyes changed drastically.

「I... 」

Little by little, Yoo Sangah touched my shoulder.

"Dokja-ssi."

I nodded and got up. My companions were looking at me. I looked at them and opened my mouth.

"Everyone."

I liked the Disaster of Floods episode. I loved all the characters who appeared in this episode and valued them. Perhaps that was why I hoped for this episode to not happen.

"I won't kill the disaster."

I thought about it. In the original third round, the Disaster of Floods died after the young Shin Yoosung was killed. However, I wondered if there was another ending to this episode that I didn't know about. It was an ending that had never been attempted.

"I won't accept any arguments. This time, I hope you will listen to my suggestion."

"Ahjussi, what is this bullshit?"

There was no time limit for the fifth scenario. What if the Disaster of Floods gave up her role and what if we didn't hunt the disaster?

Perhaps this scenario would just continue without anyone dying. Some people understood while others looked confused. The first one who nodded was Yoo Sangah and then Lee Hyunsung opened his mouth.

"You must have an idea. I will follow Dokja's will."

"It is fine if that's what hyung wants. But can I hit her as much as she hit Titano?"

"Damn, do whatever you want. Since when hasn't ahjussi done what you wanted? But is it okay?"

I listened to the party members' words and then looked at the young Shin Yoosung.

"I…"

The girl had tears in her eyes. Perhaps Shin Yoosung had seen it, everything that her future self experienced.

Thus, it was cruel to ask the young Shin Yoosung about what to do with Shin Yoosung. I stroked the child's hair and finally looked back at the disaster Shin Yoosung. She had a distorted expression like she was a wounded beast.

"You will spare me? Don't make me laugh. Who are you to say that?"

The only thing she had left was her pride.

"I have lived through the 41st round of regression. I remember everything that no one in this world knows. What do you know? How did I spend that time? How can I forget all of that?"

The words of the future Shin Yoosung stopped. It was because Yoo Joonghyuk was watching her.

"…"

In this moment, Shin Yoosung realized the real meaning of what she said. Being lost among worlds. Losing her loved ones. Nevertheless, living in that world again. There was only one person in this world who understood her grief.

"Every regressor lives hating the things that haven't happened yet."

Regressor Yoo Joonghyuk started talking.

"That guy will be a bad person in the future and I should kill him. That person will kill my companion in the future and I should kill him. That person will be my companion in the future and I should save them."

I could read the emotions in Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes. Since I was able to read them, Yoo Joonghyuk felt strange to me for the first time. I had never seen such an honest Yoo Joonghyuk.

"It is a future that hasn't happened yet. I know they don't remember me and that they haven't done anything yet. Still, I believed and acted like they did. That's how I lived. It is because everything clearly happened to me and I can't live by denying it."

Anger returned to Shin Yoosung's eyes.

"Yes! It is because you lived that way! My companions…"

"So you also live that way, Shin Yoosung."

"…What?"

"If you want, I will bear your hatred."

I couldn't say anything because I was too saddened by Yoo Joonghyuk's words.

"Survive this round for the sake of killing me."

Yoo Joonghyuk spoke some final words. Perhaps this was the warmest that Yoo Joonghyuk could be.

It was the first time I noticed that Yoo Joonghyuk's back was so big and wide. His back was wide and lonely.

Shin Yoosung stared at Yoo Joonghyuk with her mouth wide open.

Ironically, she understood the man who she hated for thousands of years due to all the years she lived.

"Captain… wait. Captain!"

I was able to feel the ripples in Shin Yoosung's heart.

「 …Is this really okay? 」

「 Keep going for this reason. 」

「 This world, you don't have to abandon it… 」

Some anger hadn't disappeared and some sorrows hadn't been erased. However, as long as she lived, salvation would come one day.

I told Shin Yoosung, "Shin Yoosung, this is your 'round' now."

I couldn't change anything when I was a reader. It was because I was a reader that I could change it now. I thought I could change it.

At least, until the voice of the intermediate dokkaebi was heard.

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* Official novel illustration (canonical)

Chapter 106: Ep. 21 – Things That Can't Be Changed, IV

[I'm sorry but that's a bit difficult.]

I thought it was time for this guy to come out. It was the fucking intermediate dokkaebi. This guy managed the entire Seoul scenario and couldn't help moving at this time.

However, I was a bit confident. "Why is it difficult? We aren't breaking the scenario's rules."

[Spare the disaster? Are you insane? You must want to die.]

"No, it is the opposite. I am doing this to live."

The voice of the intermediate dokkaebi became harder.

[Don't you know that this is a violation of the rules? The content of the scenario is to kill the disaster. If you don't stick to the scenario…]

"Don't worry. I will kill the disaster." Everyone looked at me the moment I said these words.

"Ahjussi, what are you…?" In particular, Lee Jihye looked at me like I was a psychopath.

It wasn't strange. I previously said I wouldn't kill the disaster and now I said I would. Most of the party members were waiting for my next words. I felt a bit flattered by the trusting silence.

"Just not right now."

[What?]

"The scenario doesn't indicate a time limit. Then it is up to us when we want to kill the disaster." The intermediate dokkaebi looked like he had eaten Chinese medicine. "Thus, there is no need to rush."

The disaster Shin Yoosung looked up at me with a bemused expression. She hadn't known that such a thing was possible.

[The constellation 'Scribe of Heaven' is looking at you with strange eyes.]

The agitation of the constellations could be felt. There weren't many episodes that rebelled against the scenario, even when I searched all of Ways of Survival. That's why it was of great interest to the constellations.

This was particularly true in situations where the distinction between good and evil was ambiguous. The number of subscribers from the absolute good or absolute evil constellations would rise in an overwhelming manner. It was their daily routine to discern the good and evil of the characters.

[I can't allow it.]

"Are you going to interfere in another scenario? Have you forgotten what happened last time?"

[…]

My confidence came from the fact that this was a main scenario, not a sub-scenario.

It was also the fifth scenario that was scaled to engulf all of the dome, making it difficult for the intermediate dokkaebi to change the criteria of the scenario. In addition, the intermediate dokkaebi had already received disciplinary action from the bureau.

He must be afraid of being punished again and didn't have much chance of winning this fight against me.

I saw Bihyung biting his nails nearby and told him, 'Be prepared. If something happens, you are the only one I can believe in'.

–Dammit, why should I?

'Don't forget that we will die together'.

Bihyung settled down and the intermediate dokkaebi opened his mouth.

[Very interesting. But it won't turn out as you think.]

Yes, I knew he wouldn't give up easily.

[Not all incarnation in Seoul Dome are the same as you.]

The intermediate dokkaebi flicked his finger. Then system messages popped up.

[A new sub-scenario has arrived!]

I knew what he was thinking. If he couldn't touch the main scenario then he would set up the sub-scenario.

[From now on, I will double the bounty on the disaster.]

The original compensation was 100,000 coins and it was doubled, which meant 200,000 coins. It was an amount that could make someone rise to the top of Seoul Dome in an instant. It was enough to risk their lives…

For some reason, no incarnations came running.

"Don't move."

"Cherish your lives. If you don't want to die like moths!"

The powerful kings were controlling the incarnations. They were King of Beauty Min Jiwon and Maitreya King Cha Sangkyung. There was also the Neutral King, Jeon Ildo.

[The constellation 'Maritime War God' is proud of the incarnations on the Korean Peninsula.]

Of course, there were forces that the kings couldn't control but they also didn't act. They had already seen the power of the disaster. It was natural that a small number of people wouldn't act, regardless of whether the reward was 100,000 or 200,000 coins. There was also our party covering the disaster Shin Yoosung…

[…How disappointing. The incarnations of Seoul Dome are cowards.]

There was an ominous feeling in the air. The intermediate dokkaebi was thinking about how to make this situation worse. I had to act quickly. At this point, I had to go for victory.

"Do you yield? Honestly, won't everyone be satisfied?"

[Everyone will be satisfied?]

I didn't say anything else. I'm sure the intermediate dokkaebi understood without me saying anything.

[Haha, I see. Is that what you were thinking? I heard from Dokgak but you truly put on a great show.]

The reason for the existence of the dokkaebis was the scenarios. They were the scenarios that many constellations responded to and many constellations liked.

In the world of the Star Stream, there was only one case where there was a miracle that reversed the scenario. It was if the majority of constellations saw the scenario and wanted to change the direction of the scenario.

[…Certainly, violence isn't the only stimulus.]

I tried to appeal to the constellations with disaster Shin Yoosung's situation. I chose words to avoid the filtering and continued to ignite the constellations by exposing information. I made them sympathize with the disaster Shin Yoosung.

It was all to support my rebellion. As a result, this whole situation was created. Indeed, I could hear the messages of the constellations in my ears.

[The constellation 'Bald General of Justice' respects your will.]

[The constellation 'Last Hero of Hwangsanbeol' admires your will.]

Everything was going as planned.

"If you understand then can you decide now? Give me the reward or continue with the fifth scenario."

There was no problem with continuing the sixth scenario even if the fifth scenario hadn't ended. It was possible to run multiple main scenarios. If the dokkaebi was smart then he should stop while the constellations were satisfied.

[Incarnation Kim Dokja. You are the smartest and scariest out of all the incarnations I know.]

I felt a strange sense of incongruity from the dokkaebi's expression.

[However, it is this cleverness that is grabbing at your ankles.]

"…What does that mean?"

The dokkaebi's following words weren't for me.

[Okay Constellations. Now I will show you the story you have been waiting for.]

Sparks filled the air. The intermediate dokkaebi was moving the scenario.

[The intermediate dokkaebi has intervened in the scenario.]

[According to the scenario contract, control of the 'Disaster of Floods Shin Yoosung' has been transferred to the intermediate dokkaebi.]

Shin Yoosung's expression started to change at the system messages.

"N-No. Wait. I… aaaack!"

A black aura rose from disaster Shin Yoosung's body. I hurriedly shouted, "Wait! What are you doing?"

[I am fulfilling the contract. This is a cog in the scenario.]

I only realized now what he was trying to do. It was the scenario enforcement right. It was the power to control the fate of all 'parts' involved in the scenario. I knew it existed in Ways of Survival but I didn't think it would be used immediately.

[The personality of the character is forcibly changed.]

[The personality of the character 'Shin Yoosung' will be fixed to 'evil'.]

The disaster Shin Yoosung was becoming a monster. I bit my lip. The scenario enforcement generally wasn't used because the dokkaebi consumed a lot of probability. But to use it now…

[Many constellations are cheering the development of the scenario.]

[Many constellations hate your new drama.]

It could only be used if many constellations agreed to this development. Dammit, why?

"Dokja-ssi?"

"Hyung!"

The party members nervously approached my side. They realized that something was wrong. However, I couldn't understand. Why had the constellations suddenly turned their backs on me?

Bihyung's expression was dark as he looked at the sky.

–Sorry, I tried to persuade them but it didn't work.

'Why…'

–Your reputation is worse than you expected.

The intermediate dokkaebi said, [Arrogant incarnation. Do you think the constellation would be that easy?]

…Then what about all the favourable indirect messages?

[Well, humans originally have the habit of believing what they want to believe.]

I had misjudged due to the indirect messages that popped up one after another.

[Many constellations are laughing at your decision.]

[Some constellations have withdrawn their support for you.]

That's right. Not all constellations sent indirect messages. Only a small number of constellations sent messages.

[Many constellations are wary of your intentions.]

It might be natural that public opinion was bad towards me. I cheated them through a trick and canceled the event. The constellations probably already knew that Bihyung's channel had a capacity of 9,999. They knew but had been deceived by my scenario. Now they were no longer fooled.

[Constellations of the Korean Peninsula are looking at you sadly.]

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is looking at you with compassion.]

Maybe I was too shallow when I thought about the constellations.

[It seems like your luck ends here, Incarnation Kim Dokja.]

"Ahhhhh!"

A disturbing aura flowed from the body of Shin Yoosung who had been forced to become evil. It was a killing intent that felt like it could melt flesh. The incarnations screamed and fled. I could see Yoo Joonghyuk pulling out Splitting the Sky Sword in the distance.

[I hope you put on a good show till the end.]

I slowly withdrew from the disaster. Shin Yoosung's face distorted sadly. It ended up like this. I quickly glanced at Yoo Joonghyuk. Things had turned out this way and it was obvious what choice he would make.

"Wait a minute, Yoo Joonghyuk."

"You have failed."

"Don't touch the child." I hid the young Shin Yoosung behind my back. "I won't forgive you if you touch this child."

Yoo Joonghyuk glared at me. "There is no other way."

A way… I bit my lips until they bled.

"There is a way. We need to show the constellations their favourite scenario."

"What do you mean?"

"Defeat the disaster."

Yoo Joonghyuk's expression hardened. "It is suicide Kim Dokja. Are you going to be a pushover?"

I saw Shin Yoosung turning into a demon and destroying everything around her. I didn't want it to be like this. This wasn't the ending I wanted. This damn world, even resisting a scenario became another scenario.

[Many constellations are excited by your words.]

[Many of the constellations want an exhilarating melee.]

Yes, they wanted to see this.

"Support me Yoo Joonghyuk. I will stop the disaster."

I had to give it a try.

"Kim Dokja, you…"

"I can do it."

I blinked slowly and the option I had postponed emerged in front of me.

[You have experienced the first person supporting role viewpoint.]

[You can take one of the supporting role's skills.]

[Presenting the list of available skills.]

[Please select a skill to acquire.]

I opened the list and picked an option without hesitation.

"No. 3, Beast King's Sensitivity."

[The exclusive skill 'Beast King's Sensitivity' has been acquired!]

As if waiting, an ether storm emerged from disaster Shin Yoosung's hands. It was the ether storm that made a hole in my belly and made Yoo Joonghyuk incapable of fighting.

I protected my party members and received the storm head on.

[The exclusive skill 'Beast King's Sensitivity Lv. 3' has been activated.]

A pure white fur cloak. It was a unique skill of Beast Lord Shin Yoosung. More than half of my magic power was consumed activating it and I became dizzy, but I succeeded in receiving the attack of Shin Yoosung. The dignity of Beast King's Sensitivity didn't lose to the mighty storm.

Yoo Joonghyuk frowned. "You stole her skill but it is still impossible."

"I know."

I looked at disaster Shin Yoosung. Despite her nature being set to evil and losing control of her body, her eyes were filled with emotions. She told him.

「…It's okay. Kill me.」

Who could swing a sword after seeing those eyes? The woman who wandered for over a thousand years and suffered. I had to kill her now.

This was the price I paid for failing to change the story… For the first time, I felt resentful that Ways of Survival had become reality.

"Open your eyes and watch carefully." I looked up at the sky and declared. "This is the scenario you wanted."

[The exclusive skill 'Bookmark' can now be activated.]

Now that Shin Yoosung was in her final phase, it was an unwinnable fight. In the end, it was a fight that no one could win.

['Character Bookmarks' is activated.]

[Available Bookmark Slots: 4]

[Bringing up the list of available bookmarks.]

"I will release Delusion Demon Kim Namwoon from the 1st slot and add Judge of Destruction Jung Heewon."

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[The level of the Bookmark skill is low, shortening the activation time.]

[Activation Time: 30 minutes]

[Your understanding of the character is significant. You can select some of her skills to import.]

Shin Yoosung ran towards me and I ran towards her. No one wanted to kill each other and there was no sincerity. This was only a fight for the constellations' amusement. Everything was a scenario and therefore everything was fake. However, the result of this battle was that someone was going to die.

['Judgment Time Lv. 5' has been activated.]

The activation skill was level 5. It seemed that Jung Heewon had been training hard. Jung Heewon wasn't here but it wasn't bad.

[The constellation 'Scribe of Heaven' is embarrassed.]

[Constellations of the Absolute Good system are deep in thought.]

It was natural to be confused since someone who wasn't a judge had used an unauthorized skill. Yet they were bound to give me permission. It was because the presence in front of me was obviously evil.

[The Absolute Good constellations have agreed to the use of this skill.]

A hot aura sprang up from deep inside my body. It was a blind sense of righteousness that would punish all evils in the world. The history of the archangels who fought a holy war with the great demons passed through my head in pieces.

–Punish evil.

Judgment Time was originally a skill used by the great valkyries. Thus, the user of this skill received the archangels' favour.

The madness that excluded everything other than the narrow definition of justice wriggled in my brain. Jung Heewon felt like this every time she killed other people for me. It was terrible.

A wave of unrivaled magic power burst out from the Blade of Faith. The ether blade resonated and moved in a straight line towards Shin Yoosung.

Blood splashed from the shoulder of the surprised Shin Yoosung. The Beast King's Sensitivity that wasn't damaged by the shells of the Ghost Fleet was finally torn. Drops of blood fell onto the white fur.

Hour of Judgement. The user of this skill couldn't be defeated as long as the enemy was 'evil'.

Now all my stats rose to the point where I could resist the disaster Shin Yoosung. Judgment Time was a fraudulent skill. There were only a few skills in all of Ways of Survival that could give such crazy buffs.

"Everyone attack!"

I might've become stronger but Shin Yoosung's skill masteries were still ahead of me. Thus, I needed help.

"When she is attacking normally, support using ranged attacks. When trying a wide range attack, be sure to get behind me!"

The party members nodded at my words.

"If you don't have ranged support then kill the monsters emerging from the Monster Gate. It is urgent as well."

In fact, it was because monsters were still emerging from Shin Yoosung's Monster Gate that Yongsan-gu was almost on the verge of collapse.

"Everyone fight!"

The kings ordered and the full-fledged battle began. The forces of the kings blocked the monsters coming from the Monster Gate. Most of them were 7th grade species and were quite daunting. Fortunately, the incarnations didn't seem to be greatly pushed back.

"I'll take care of that monkey."

Lee Hyunsung ran towards the 5th grade Heavy Metal Bean.

"I will take Yoosung's king."

Lee Gilyoung moved with the young Shin Yoosung.

Queen Mirabad controlled by Shin Yoosung roared and some of the insect kings' subordinates that Lee Gilyoung summoned rushed towards the King Masswood. The cold breaths of the ichthyosaurs poured towards each other and Lee Jihye stepped forward.

"Ahjussi, leave the covering fire to me."

"I'll block her movements."

Lee Jihye fired the cannons and Yoo Sangah made a trap with Arachne's Spiderweb, keeping the movements of the disaster Shin Yoosung in check. Of course, it was only a small help.

The shell bombardment barely damaged her and Shin Yoosung just tore apart the web. It was better than nothing.

"Yoo Joonghyuk. Can you fight?"

Apart from me, only Yoo Joonghyuk could follow the movements of Shin Yoosung and endure her attacks to some extent.

"…Don't worry about me."

Yoo Joonghyuk spilled blood on the floor as he stood beside me with the Splitting the Sky Sword. He might've already used Recovery because his condition seemed better than before. There wouldn't be long until he received the backlash of using Recovery.

I asked, "How many minutes do you have left?"

"30 minutes. You?"

"I am the same."

It was only possible to use Bookmark for 30 minutes. Thus, I had to end it in only 30 minutes. The black aura flowing from Shin Yoosung's body thickened. It meant that her physical stats were increasing due to the evil energy.

Yoo Joonghyuk's expression hardened. "…It seems that she joined hands with a great demon to cross worlds."

Yoo Joonghyuk's guess was right. In fact, now her soul was mortgaged to a great demon. Then that great demon turned her over to the damn dokkaebis.

[Hahaha, interesting. Very interesting.]

The intermediate dokkaebi sounded pleasantly surprised.

[The scenario is now like this.]

It was a battlefield were blood splattered and flesh was damaged. The destruction of Seoul Dome, which I wanted to prevent, was approaching with every second.

[Many constellations are excited by the battle.]

"Let's go."

Yoo Joonghyuk launched himself quickly along with his words. Shin Yoosung puffed up and blew a breath towards us.

Beast King's Breath. It was an ether storm of destructive that was comparable to the 5th grade sea species' Ice Breath.

"Avoid it!"

Yoo Joonghyuk invoked Red Phoenix Shunpo to the extreme and escaped from the attacks of the disaster Shin Yoosung. I didn't avoid the attacks like Yoo Joonghyuk and used Beast King's Sensitivity instead. I felt genuinely impressed with Yoo Joonghyuk's combat senses.

The disaster was a disaster but Yoo Joonghyuk was a monster. It was only Yoo Joonghyuk who could resist the disaster without the Judgment Time buff. He was a strong, cool, ruthless regressor. I was relieved that he was currently on my side.

"Do it properly, Kim Dokja!"

"I'm doing it!"

"Dammit…"

I just needed to approach and deal a blow, but it wasn't that easy. After several successful attacks, Shin Yoosung became more violent.

She was in a berserk state and kept firing the ether storm. Her magic power might be depleted but I was barely able to withstand it with Beast King's

Sensitivity.

Yoo Joonghyuk had dealt some blows but the damage hardly accumulated. How long did we exchange blows? It had been already 20 minutes when I came to my senses.

Yoo Joonghyuk's physical strength dropped sharply and the magic power potions I drank like juice were running out.

Strong. I never thought I would struggle so much despite using Hour of Judgement. My stiff body creaked violently. The side effects of Judgment Time were gradually being felt.

[Hahaha! This is a really nice scenario. Constellations, don't you agree?]

I listened to the voice of the intermediate dokkaebi and moved forward with all my strength. The fur of the Beast King's Sensitivity flapped like crazy.

My skin became black from the ether storm. One step, two steps. I got near but time wasn't on our side. I wouldn't be able to do enough damage before the 30 minutes was up.

Then something happened inside Shin Yoosung's body. Her body shook like she was struck by lightning and her dark eyes temporarily recovered its senses.

「Attack me.」

The disaster Shin Yoosung was controlling her body with her will.

「Stop me.」

I didn't say it but I heard it.

「Protect this 'round'.」

I broke through the temporarily weakened ether storm and ran forward with Yoo Joonghyuk. I swung my sword and blood splattered from Shin Yoosung's body.

[The constellation 'Scribe of Heaven' is looking at you.]

I did my best not to show the worst performance.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is looking at you.]

Shin Yoosung screamed as she was cut by the blade and the storm blew Yoo Joonghyuk back.

"…Go, Kim Dokja."

I pierced through the gap that Yoo Joonghyuk made. The Blade of Faith dug exactly into Shin Yoosung's shoulder without hesitation.

Magic power ran through the blade and ripped through the Beast King's Sensitivity. Then Shin Yoosung's left arm was cut off.

Blood fell. I stared into Shin Yoosung's face. Just like in Ways of Survival, Shin Yoosung was smiling. I realized that she deliberately allowed herself to be hit by my sword.

[A number of constellations can't take their eyes off your battle.]

"Dammit…" I smiled weakly and the sword fell from my hands.

Shin Yoosung laughed.

｢Don't you look stupid?｣

She grabbed me and threw me to the ground without any screams of anger. However, it didn't hurt. It wasn't an attack.

｢Do you want to continue?｣

"Yes."

I swung my sword towards her and Shin Yoosung fired a breath at me again. It was like an answer to a question. We frantically damaged each other.

"It can't continue like this."

My Beast King's Sensitivity was losing its effect because I was lacking magic power. Hour of Judgement strengthened my body to the limits but it was just a temporary crutch. Blood flowed and the world spun because of dizziness. However, I didn't stop. The damage was definitely accumulating.

[Some constellations reluctant towards you have become curious.]

Go crazy.

[Constellations roaming the battlefields are paying attention to your battle.]

Make a lot of fuss.

[Constellations of the great battlefields praise your will.]

Just wait until the day I go and pull out your tongues.

How many more blows did we exchange? My weakened body staggered back.

[There are 30 seconds left for Bookmark.]

Some internal organs were damaged and a broken rib kept irritating my lungs. I did the best I could yet the disaster was still strong. The recovered eyes of Shin Yoosung were once again turning black.

In any case, this Disaster of Floods seemed stronger than the original novel. The disaster Shin Yoosung looked at me with anxious eyes.

「It isn't enough.」

She couldn't commit suicide. The intermediate dokkaebi wouldn't allow her to die that way. This was the limit that she could penalize herself. I was also at my limit in a different way.

「How are you going to stop me?」

"Don't worry. They'll come soon. The person who will stop you."

From the beginning, I had no intention of killing Shin Yoosung with my own hands. It was impossible for Yoo Joonghyuk in his current state. There was still one person remaining who could kill her.

The moment Shin Yoosung's mouth was about to open, the ground around her exploded.

There was the distant roar of artillery. A woman dressed in a blue prison uniform appeared from the north. The monsters split apart and troops advanced to this side. A woman in a mask stood in the middle and commanded the army.

The King of Wanderers. I thought she had gone somewhere but she had been taking care of the monsters as she advanced from the north. However, they weren't the one I was waiting for.

I looked at a person who was running this way. The woman turned this way and asked, "Sorry, am I late?"

"Just a bit late."

"Stop pretending. Aren't you still alive?"

The Judge of Destruction. 10 days later, Jung Heewon was much more restrained than I knew. She lightly patted my shoulders and moved.

"Leave it to me and take a break."

A red aura rose as she activated Hour of Judgement. It was much more powerful than the skill I stole. Jung Heewon was the last card I had left. If this failed…

Had I done enough damage to Shin Yoosung? Would Jung Heewon finish the job well?

"What are you so worried about?" Jung Heewon asked with a smile. Confidence that was different than usual filled her voice. It wasn't just Judgment Time that she believed in.

[The constellation 'Scribe of Heaven' is talking to himself.]

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' shows hostility towards Jung Heewon's sponsor.]

That reminded me, Jung Heewon had a sponsor. Who had she chosen? Shin Yoosung watched Jung Heewon with shaky eyes.

「 You… 」

"I roughly know the situation. My sponsor was making a lot of noise along the way." Jung Heewon faced Shin Yoosung with sad eyes. "Thus, there is no need to worry."

Jung Heewon lightly swept her sword in front of her. Flames started to rise from the places her hands touched.

It was early in the morning. On a night where the darkness of Seoul was the darkest, Jung Heewon's blade burned. The flames on the blade were brighter than any flames I had seen. It was the holy white flames of a stigma that would punish all evil.

[Hell Flames Ignition.]

I naturally knew this stigma very well. I remembered the description of the stigma from Ways of Survival.

In some cases, it was one of the greatest stigmas of Ways of Survival and boasted powerful destructive power comparable to the stigma of The Great Sage, Heaven's Equal.

Hell Flames Ignition was the stigma of Demon-like Judge of Fire.

Jung Heewon laughed coldly. "I will finish this damn scenario."

The archangel Uriel chose Jung Heewon as an incarnation.

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Jung Heewon ran forward. Her muscles were strengthened by Judgment Time to the limit and the Demon Slaying buff gave her a sharp edge.

Along with Uriel's Hell Flames Ignition, her combat power was enhanced to the most ideal form.

The blazing flames of judgment. They weren't judging Shin Yoosung. Even so, it was Shin Yoosung who would receive the flames.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is watching the battlefield with sad eyes.]

Jung Heewon's blade declared the opening.

[The character 'Jung Heewon' has used Hell Flames Ignition Lv. 1.]

The stigma was only level one but the hell flames burned through Shin Yoosung's ether storm.

The power of a great demon, the Beast King's Breath poured out but Jung Heewon didn't care. She just grasped her sword as firmly as possible and drew a line connecting the sky and earth. The Beast King's Breath turned to smoke as soon as it met Hell Flames Ignition.

Someone muttered, "Oh my god, what is that?"

Hell Flames Ignition was a stigma that could evaporate the sea of a planet when it reached the final level. When the 'Messiah' appeared in the original novel, it was Uriel who opened the way in preparation for him.

The archangel feared by all demons, the great demons' enemy that was closest to a great demon.

Shin Yoosung nodded as she saw Jung Heewon rushing through the flames.

「I see. Uriel. You were waiting for this.」

The disaster didn't back down in the presence of the terrible archangel.

「It is enough to make an ending.」

No, she looked rather relaxed. It was as if she had finally fulfilled her duty.

The ether wrapped around Shin Yoosung's fist and the flames that clung to Jung Heewon's blade collided. Shin Yoosung stumbled and Jung Heewon pushed forward without missing this gap. No matter how good the overlapped skills, the powerful buffs would have a short duration.

Jung Heewon was well aware of this and accelerated her attacks. The surrounding land was affected by the holy flames.

Shin Yoosung persisted despite being long exhausted. She was like a seasoned actor playing the last performance of her life as she tried her best to live.

[Many constellations are excited about your design.]

The constellations that came over from Dokgak's channel were excited.

[15,000 coins have been sponsored.]

The hateful donations of the constellations rose sharply. Affection and hatred were just a moment of entertainment for the constellations. Unfortunately, the story that lasted a moment for them was a life for humans.

[Constellations of the Korean Peninsula are looking at you sadly.]

In front of the many watchers, I drew the ending of this scenario by myself.

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' is focused on your choice.]

In the meantime, Jung Heewon had turned the Beast King's Sensitivity into rags and the flames of Hell Flames Ignition were gradually burning Shin Yoosung. Injuries were also piling up on Jung Heewon's body. It was a close match but victory wasn't on the side of the exhausted Shin Yoosung.

Jung Heewon ignored all defenses and plunged through the ether storm, stabbing her sword into Shin Yoosung's belly.

A bright blaze of flames surrounded Shin Yoosung's body. The holy flames burned at the energy of the great demon in her body. The black aura coming from her turned to smoke.

Blood splattered from the place where the sword was pulled out. Shin Yoosung looked down at her blood like it was a prop on a stage. It was finally settled.

I suddenly saw the collapsed King Masswood and Heavy Metal Bean. The Monster Gate had closed and the fight against the monsters was ending. I approached Shin Yoosung.

Control of her flesh had come back but her body wasn't normal. Shin Yoosung looked down at her body and stated.

「…I am dying now.」

In normal cases, the Beast Lord wouldn't die from these wounds. The Beast King's Vitality was as good as Yoo Joonghyuk's Recovery. Unfortunately, she was hit by Hell Flames Ignition.

The flames of hell were deeply embedded in her body, burning her vitality to extinguish all evil. Uriel's stigma was a fire that never burned out until all the evil was gone.

[The exclusive skill, 'Fourth Wall' is shaking!]

[Due to excessive immersion, stage 2 of Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint will always be activated.]

The fire was inside her body and Shin Yoosung would never survive. Shin Yoosung watched me and smiled weakly. "I'm glad to be here during this round of regression. It was good to hear Captain say those words."

「It hurts. I'm going to disappear like this.」

"Now I can die in peace. Something really might change."

「I don't want to die…」

The omniscience was a curse. Knowing someone's heart meant always deceiving someone.

She smiled and stared up at the air. There was an intermediate dokkaebi with a stiff expression. "I'm going to die now. Isn't it okay as a drama? This was a great scenario."

[Some constellations are nodding.]

[Some constellations are complaining.]

The intermediate dokkaebi was silent. Well, he hadn't expected this. The scenario was completed but it wasn't as he intended. Now he would pay for what he intended.

I looked back and saw Yoo Joonghyuk approaching. He asked, "Is she going to die?"

"…Perhaps."

"You must be lacking hatred."

This bastard was really…

Yoo Joonghyuk pulled out his sword. I was about to stop him from trying to kill Shin Yoosung when his Splitting the Sky Sword stopped. The cold blade was supporting Shin Yoosung's head. Shin Yoosung said, "Hold on until the end. I will die soon Captain."

Shin Yoosung's thoughts flowed into my ears.

「 There is something I want to hear from you. 」

「 Just once. 」

「 I wish to hear it just once. 」

They were words that could never be said. Yoo Joonghyuk couldn't hear these words and spoke nonchalantly. "I have something to ask."

"What is it?"

I felt miserable as I saw the anticipation on Shin Yoosung's face. It was because I knew her expectations would never be rewarded.

"Who is the great demon that helped you cross over to this world?"

She stared blankly at Yoo Joonghyuk for a moment before laughing. "…Captain is the captain to the end."

「 You don't change. 」

"Tell me."

"Have you heard of the 'Great Demon of the Horizon'?"

「 That is why I admired you. 」

"I know the name."

"If Captain's luck is bad, you will meet him soon. However, never fight him. It is almost impossible for Captain to kill him…"

「For a long time, a really long time…」

Her earnest sincerity didn't reach its target and I struggled. I wanted to say something. This stupid Yoo Joonghyuk, who couldn't hear the vivid voice in front of him. The moment I opened my mouth, Shin Yoosung's hand grabbed me.

Yoo Joonghyuk kept speaking. "I will remember."

Yoo Joonghyuk turned around at these words. Then Yoo Joonghyuk's inner thoughts were conveyed to me.

「I will get revenge for you.」

I trembled at the sadness in these words. I looked down at disaster Shin Yoosung. I see. This person was already aware of it. She didn't need to hear it to already know.

Something was pouring down from Shin Yoosung's eyes. For the first time, I thought that Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint might not be omniscient.

「Goodbye, Captain.」

「Good job.」

「I'll leave it to you.」

「Rest.」

Only a few stray sentences were left as I stared at the two people. Their thoughts had definitely reached each other. I clearly read this story. Then Shin Yoosung started to scatter into ashes.

「Pretty…」

The young Shin Yoosung approached me and held onto me. What did she feel when she saw her future self disappearing? No matter how many books I read, there were some emotions I couldn't reach. The disaster Shin Yoosung smiled at me and the young Shin Yoosung.

「…I'm envious.」

The lower body of the disaster Shin Yoosung had almost disappeared. The speed of her destruction was accelerating.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' has closed her eyes.]

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is sighing.]

As the constellations watched her, I kneeled and grabbed the hand of the disaster Shin Yoosung. Shin Yoosung was surprised by my unexpected behaviour and looked at me.

I invoked Beast King's Sensitivity with my last remaining magic power. It was to pass on a gift to her.

The mysterious senses of the beast kings touched and for a short moment, Shin Yoosung's soul was connected to mine. It was a sensibility that only beasts shared.

The passing wind whispered something. It was a story that neither the constellations or dokkaebi could hear. The dying Shin Yoosung's eyes widened like she couldn't believe it.

「…Are you serious? Really?」

Fortunately, the message was properly delivered. Her chest had already turned to ashes and now she had no voice left.

「Why…」

Tears slowly filled her eyes. She tried to tell me something but the cold wind stopped her. The connected films of two worlds were breaking again.

The pieces that she was made of turned to ashes and scattered. Her eyes, nose and mouth. Her voice. The person who lived over one thousand years scattered into pure white ashes like snow.

The ashes like a trail as it disappeared into the sky. It was like a distant journey or even a dance.

I looked up at the faint traces drifting in the air. I couldn't believe it was real and the young Shin Yoosung held onto me tightly.

"Did she really die?"

I steadied my heart.

"Can't you change it? Really?"

Then she nodded.

"Ahhh. Ah…"

Lee Gilyoung grabbed my sleeve and wiped his eyes with it. Yoo Sangah was crying and I didn't know why but Lee Hyunsung was also tearful. Yoo Joonghyuk didn't cry while only Lee Jihye didn't know the exact situation. "… Why is everyone crying? I am also sad."

My forehead was cold and sleet was falling from the misty sky. There was no snow or rain. The cold sensation relieved the people. It was funny. Humans felt most alive when they confirmed the death of another.

"Ah…"

The people of Seoul Dome collapsed once their tension disappeared. There were people laughing, crying or feeling angry.

The donations of the constellation flowed here and there. The responses were different but there was one thing they all agreed on.

The 'Disaster of Floods' Shin Yoosung had died.

There was a frozen intermediate dokkaebi staring up at the sky. Bihyung, who had been watching silently, finally opened his mouth.

[Intermediate dokkaebi. The scenario has ended.]

[How? This…]

[If you don't do it then I will end it.]

A moment later, a message was heard.

[The fifth main scenario is activated!]

[The compensation settlement is being prepared.]

Finally, the scenario declared her death. The future Shin Yoosung had died and the disaster was over. This was the conclusion of the fifth scenario. Everyone thought so and believed so.

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To be exact, everyone except me had to believe this. From beginning to end, everything had to be a perfect drama. It was a drama that declared things couldn't be changed.

A tragedy that followed the constellations and scenario. This was the only way for the 41st regression Shin Yoosung to escape from the damn scenario.

At this moment, the young Shin Yoosung's hand heated up.

"I will kill…" The girl's eyes were fixed on the intermediate dokkaebi floating in the air. "That dokkaebi, I'll kill him."

I was trying to restrain her when sparks flew in the air. The sky was crumbling and a portal was opening.

Two white dokkaebis emerged from the portal. The low-grade dokkaebis found the two dokkaebis wearing white armour and backed away at once.

It was natural.

These dokkaebis were people that all dokkaebis hoped to never meet. The bureau. They were the dokkaebis of the Executive Branch, responsible for investigating the 'probability' in scenarios. The two dokkaebis had a fearsome atmosphere as they approached the intermediate dokkaebi and arrested him.

[…Executives. What are you doing?]

An executive dokkaebi declared to the shocked intermediate dokkaebi.

[Intermediate dokkaebi 'Paul'. You shall be arrested for violating the Star Stream regulations.]

Chapter 109: Ep. 22 – Three Promises, I

The Executive Branch's emergency arrest.

According to Ways of Survival, an emergency arrest was only possible when a dokkaebi acted in a manner that severely violated the probability of a scenario.

[Intermediate dokkaebi 'Paul'. From now on, you will be led to the Executive Branch. You will remain silent about all scenarios and be deprived of all progress in the main scenarios.]

The expression of the intermediate dokkaebi Paul kept changing.

[You will lose the achievement points of all the scenarios you have built up and will be demoted to a low-grade dokkaebi after your punishment…]

[D-Demoted? Wait! Wait a minute!]

The intermediate dokkaebi Paul hurriedly shouted. He made an outraged expression and looked at the dokkaebis around him.

[A sudden demotion? Shouldn't you tell me what I did wrong?]

[Are you really asking because you don't know?]

Another dokkaebi of the Executive Branch asked. Paul hesitated for a moment at the dignified voice before continuing.

[I don't know. What the hell did I do wrong?]

He even had the audacity to move forward.

[Look at the constellations. Aren't they all happy? Didn't the scenario end brilliantly?]

The executive dokkaebi frowned at Paul's confident words.

[There is no problem with the probability. I used the scenario enforcement with the consent of the constellations and the constellation also…]

[…This is the problem with streamers. They sing songs of the constellations.]

Not all dokkaebis respected the constellations. It was because among the dokkaebis of the Executive Branch, there were some who had once been constellations.

They were constellations but they lost their characteristics and were forced to live as dokkaebis. They were the dokkaebis of the Executive Branch. Paul continued despite his customers being insulted.

[Your words are going too far.]

[Don't panic Paul.]

[You might be an enforcer but I can't tolerate insults to my customers.]

Paul rode the momentum and continued.

[I can guess why the executives came here. It is probably because I used the enforcement rights.]

[The scenario enforcement can only be used when the majority of constellations support the probability of the scenario.]

[I'm aware of that. Otherwise, there is the risk of a probability storm. But the constellations' satisfaction is high…]

[Satisfaction? Paul, look at yourself and tell me.]

Paul looked down at himself and he paled.

[T-This…?]

The space around him was filled with blue sparks. It was the forerunner of a probability storm.

[Why am I receiving a probability storm…?]

The probability storm was a punishment for going against the flow. The probability of the world now wanted to erase Paul's existence. The enforcer dokkaebis laughed.

[The enforcement right is a power that demands the greatest amount of probability from a dokkaebi. Did you think you would be safe using this authority for such a crude development?]

[That, that isn't the case!]

[Paul. You had a chance to end the scenario without using the executive rights. It was a fresh development I had never seen before. Why did you stop it? Thanks to your brutality, an emergency was dropped on Seoul Dome's bureau.]

[T-That… no, wait a minute. I exercised the enforcement rights according to the opinions of the constellations!!]

Paul looked around.

[C-Constellations! Didn't you agree with my development?]

However, no constellations answered.

[…Constellations?]

The numerous indirect messages from the constellations died out.

[Unbelievable… Why?]

All the constellations who supported his development had left the Korean channels.

The executive frowned. [You stupid fool. Can't you see that the constellations are gone?]

Many of the constellations who wanted to kill me and who instigated him had left the Korean peninsula in large numbers once it turned into a 'drama'.

It was natural. It was strange to keep watching when an unwanted development occurred. In fact, Bihyung's channel lost close to a third of its subscribers.

The remaining ones were:

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is looking at the intermediate dokkaebi 'Paul'.]

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is chuckling at the intermediate dokkaebi 'Paul'.]

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' is mocking the intermediate dokkaebi 'Paul'.]

…

They were all constellations who didn't agree with the intermediate dokkaebi's development.

[N-No. I can't be destroyed in this way. Executive!]

[Don't worry. You won't be destroyed.]

[W-What does this mean…?]

A glimmer of hope appeared on Paul's face.

The executive dokkaebi said something that turned off the light completely.

[You will be given a worse punishment than destruction. Our bureau received a large probability debt because of you.]

[The executives will use Dokkaebi Paul's Redemption Code.]

Then the body of the dokkaebi Paul was forcibly pulled into the world. The intermediate dokkaebi Paul trembled. His true voice emerged because he lost his broadcasting rights.

"T-This is a conspiracy. It can't be like this!"

Then Bihyung spoke from beside him,

[This is why you didn't want to finish the scenario quickly.]

"Bihyung!"

In the end, Paul exploded. Paul held the Redemption Code and pointed at Bihyung.

"Executives! Arrest him as well. I have evidence that his channel broke the rules of the Star Stream!"

[He will naturally come along as well.]

Paul's expression brightened. However, the people of Korea knew that people should listen to the dokkaebis' words to the end.

[It is because he is the dokkaebi who called us.]

"W-What… don't tell me?"

The executive dokkaebi said.

[Yes, the dokkaebi who reported you is Bihyung.]

Bihyung briefly waved towards the red-eyed Paul. The executive smiled coldly.

[Dokkaebi Bihyung. He is a very good dokkaebi. Look at his humility. He has the integrity of a streamer who ignores everything and immerses himself in the scenarios. It is different from you and the dokkaebis who only wear luxurious clothing.]

Bihyung had a shy expression on his face. He didn't know that his poverty would help him in this way.

"N-No! That guy Bihyung is…!"

[Shut up.]

Paul screamed terribly from where he was tied to the Redemption Code. The executive dokkaebi kept talking.

[You have been punished twice before. This is your third time. You are familiar with the third punishment, right?]

"T-This is ridiculous! Do you think my superiors will allow this? You are making a mistake right now. If you touch me…"

[I will listen to your bullshit after going to the bureau.]

A glowing portal appeared in the air. It was finally time to say goodbye to the intermediate dokkaebi. Perhaps I wouldn't see him in the future scenarios anymore. Paul's eyes glared at me. A flame burned inside me the moment I met his eyes.

[The 'Fourth Wall' is shaking due to your high emotions.]

The Shin Yoosung of the future had scattered into ash. She might've been saved if it wasn't for the intermediate dokkaebi.

She could never return to her time but she might've been able to live in this new world. The intermediate dokkaebi trampled on that last possibility. That was why I opened my mouth. "Wait a minute."

He might receive the death punishment but I couldn't be satisfied. My words shocked my party members.

[…Are you calling us?]

The dokkaebis were surprised. They didn't expect an incarnation to stop the dokkaebis of the Executive Branch. The executive dokkaebi looked at me quietly and opened his mouth.

[That's right. You are the incarnation Kim Dokja. Right?]

The other executive dokkaebi laughed.

[Do you know this person?]

[He is a famous incarnation in this area. He is one of the strongest incarnations on the peninsula but he hasn't signed with a sponsor.]

[Hoh?]

I watched the leisurely dokkaebis and spoke to Bihyung through the Dokkaebi Communication.

'Bihyung. I'll give you 100,000 coins'.

–What?

Bihyung's eyes widened.

'Promote me to a platinum member of the Dokkaebi Bag'.

–No, why all of a sudden?

'Just do it'.

–Shit…

I looked at the executives and rushed Bihyung. Bihyung sighed and started to manipulate something in the air.

[100,000 coins have been consumed.]

[Congratulations! You have become a platinum member of the Dokkaebi Bag!]

Originally, there would be splendid special effects for the promotion but I asked Bihyung to omit it. Unlike the gold membership that could be obtained for 5,000 coins, the treatment of platinum members were different.

[Yes, Incarnation Kim Dokja. Why did you call us?]

The executives didn't know about my promotion and asked me again. These dokkaebis were really big and I was nervous facing them. They might've fallen but some of them were originally great people.

I breathed lightly and opened my mouth. "I am requesting the Dokkaebi Solo Meeting Right."

[What?]

The executive dokkaebis were confused by my words. Then laughter soon emerged.

[Only platinum members can ask for the solo meeting right… Don't tell me?]

"That's right. Please check it."

The two dokkaebis looked at each other again. They manipulated the system to identify a few things and soon let out a cry of amazement.

[It is real.]

[How can an incarnation become a platinum member?]

"Aren't I qualified now?"

The executives hesitated for a moment before nodding.

[That's right. What do you want with the solo meeting right? The platinum qualifications allows you to meet with a senior dokkaebi. The appointment schedule…]

"I don't want that. The dokkaebi I want is currently with you." I pointed a finger at the dokkaebi I wanted. "I want a solo meeting with the intermediate dokkaebi Paul."

Chapter 110: Ep. 22 – Three Promises, II

The two executive dokkaebis glanced at each other. How long did this last? Then the two dokkaebis burst out laughing at the same time.

[Kuk. Ahahaha!]

[Interesting. Don't tell me…]

The smart executives seemed to have noticed something. Paul watched the scene with a puzzled expression.

[I will allow a solo meeting with the dokkaebi Paul.]

[The free solo time is 20 minutes.]

The executives of the bureau agreed to my request like it was interesting. I figured they would do this.

Originally, the executives didn't like streamers. They were closer to the 'subscribers' than the 'streamers'. The moment they spoke, a transparent dome formed around me and Paul. The original 'solo meeting right' was a space for constellations and dokkaebis to secretly meet.

[The solo meeting with the intermediate dokkaebi Paul has begun.]

However, the usage could be changed according to the user. I saw Bihyung talking to the executives outside the dome.

Paul was trapped with me and revealed his hostility. "Why did you want to see me? Did you want to pick a fight?"

His body was still affected by the executive dokkaebi's Redemption Code. As long as the code existed, Paul wouldn't be able to use his own power as well as the authority of a dokkaebi. In other words, the person in front of me was completely helpless.

"Don't bluff. I know your current situation."

Paul winced and withdrew to the edge of the dome. Yet there was still a smile on his face. "Haha, I see. I know what you are thinking. Do you want to get revenge for that slave?"

"…"

"How funny. Don't you know it is a superficial human desire? Yes, you can try it once. I don't know how you found about the solo meeting rights but this is a place where we can't hurt each other. No matter how hard you try…!"

I ran to him and punched him as hard as I could. Blue blood emerged from his nose and the person who couldn't grasp the situation screamed and belatedly collapsed. I told him, "I can't kill you but I can beat you to a pulp."

"Keooook! You dare…!"

"Yes, now your true nature is emerging. I don't want to hear those disgusting honorifics."

"Heok, kuheok…"

"Is this the first time you are feeling pain? You must've never been beaten up like this after living as a dokkaebi."

"K-Kuhut! Kuhuhut…" Paul was still smiling despite his blood dripping down. "You made a mistake just now. There are special rules in place to prevent people like you from exploiting the solo meeting rights."

Then the system message arrived like it had been waiting.

[You have injured the dokkaebi in the solo meeting space.]

[500 coins have been consumed as a penalty.]

These dokkaebi, they were really great. They prepared a penalty in case the constellations tried anything. It was a coins penalty. However, I was aware of the penalty and just shrugged.

Paul laughed as he wiped off his blood. "Foolish human. You are bringing destruction on yourself with your anger. Yes, try to hit me as many times as you like. The coins you have at the moment…"

"How much coins do you think I have?" Paul fell silent. "Isn't it strange? How could I become a platinum member when I am an incarnation?"

I grinned at his shaky eyes. "I have a lot of coins. I made a lot of money thanks to you."

My fists descended towards the pale Paul. The damn scenarios I experienced so far passed through my head.

[Coins Possessed: 205,902 C]

I remembered Shin Yoosung's dying appearance. These were among the things I told her:

–That dokkaebi, I'll beat you to death.

This was the first promise I would keep.

[500 coins have been consumed as a penalty.]

Once again, my fist moved and his nose was broken. I didn't say that it was someone's share. In the first place, this couldn't be anyone's share.

[500 coins have been consumed as a penalty.]

"Kuaaak! A-An insignificant human dares…!"

Peeeok-!

[500 coins have been consumed as a penalty.]

"Y-You won't be safe if you do this to me…!"

Peeeok-!

[500 coins have been consumed as a penalty.]

"I'll kill you! I will surely kill you…!"

Peeeok-!

[500 coins have been consumed as a penalty.]

"W-Wait a minute! Wait! Stop…"

His frightened body curled up and I stopped my fists for the first time. For a moment, hope filled his eyes.

"Y-Yes. You thought well. There is nothing about doing this here…"

I watched him hurriedly speaking with honorifics and asked, "Did you stop?"

"What?"

"When Yoosung asked you to stop, did you?"

I quietly looked down at him. He didn't say anything and just looked at the ground. Then he raised head and stared at the sky. He felt resentment for the ones who made him like this.

"This doesn't mean anything! Your dead companion won't come back to life!"

My dead colleagues wouldn't come back to life. He was right.

"It means something." However, I raised my fist to the trembling guy. "So what if she is dead. Shin Yoosung would've done this as well."

Peeeok-!

Paul's fangs protruded as he rolled across the ground.

"Lee Hyunsung would've done so as well. Yoo Sangah and Lee Gilyoung also."

My fist slammed into his belly.

"Maybe… that bastard Yoo Joonghyuk…"

My companions outside the dome were looking this way.

Shin Yoosung was forming fists with red eyes. Lee Jihye and Lee Gilyoung were shouting something. Lee Hyunsung's eyes were red as he made a serious expression and Yoo Sangah was staring at me with wide eyes. Yoo Joonghyuk was the last one I looked at before glancing back at Paul.

"I-I am outside the scenario! You can't earn coins by doing this! It won't benefit you!"

Coins…

Yes, only the dokkaebis would think like this. Some stories would become coins. Some stories wouldn't become coins.

"Maybe that is true."

None of the constellations had made a bounty scenario, nor was there a sub-scenario. However, this behaviour was meaningful. Nobody was making me do this.

"I'm not intending to get any benefits from this."

"W-What?"

Since the fall of the world, coins had become the principle behind every human's actions. They moved if the constellations gave coins and didn't move if there were no coins. Still, humans often moved regardless of whether there were coins or not.

"You don't know it but humans are animals that seek for the meaning of life through these things."

"W-What…kuoock!"

I raised my fist and started beating him again.

Peeeok-!

The subsequent punches crushed his face, ribs and joints. I didn't have to control my power because there was no fear of him dying. One blow was the best blow. Every time bones broke, something exploded inside of me.

[500 coins have been consumed as a penalty.]

In fact, I knew.

[500 coins have been consumed as a penalty.]

I knew very well. No matter how hard I beat him up, it wouldn't give me any comfort over Shin Yoosung's death. The dead Shin Yoosung would never see this sight yet I still moved my fists. I hit and hit him again.

Peeeok-!

It was just like Yoo Joonghyuk. He kept repeated his regressions until the last moment, even if no one knew his cause.

[500 coins have been consumed as a penalty.]

Then the message of a constellation was heard.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is excited about the unseen development.]

[500 coins have been sponsored.]

I stopped punching for a moment and stared up at the sky. Even this was a story to the constellations.

"It isn't an act this time."

[You have returned the 500 sponsored coins to the constellation.]

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is very embarrassed.]

Think of it as a free service. Now things would be good for me.

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' is interested in your actions.]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is thrilled with your actions.]

I started punching again. There were only the sounds of the dokkaebi's skin bursting and intermittent groaning.

The constellations silently watched what I was doing. No one gave me any coins but I could feel them watching me. Sometimes, this alone was sufficient.

"U-Uhhh… I was wrong. S-Spare me! P-Please! Please!" Paul couldn't endure it anymore and dragged his body to the edge of the dome.

The wall of the dome made a faint sound but the executives didn't respond. Rather, they were pleased with my actions. Maybe they would be saying something like this:

「That coin making bastard.」

「 Damn streamer scum. 」

The executive dokkaebis didn't like streamers. The executives who evolved from constellations were good at fighting but had no talent in leading the scenarios.

Shortly after, Paul's body became completely ragged. I grabbed at his bloody neck. At this point, I asked what I really wanted to know. "Where is Shin Yoosung's soul right now?"

Dead souls that were part of the scenario couldn't escape from the confines of the contract, even in death. It would've been different if the contract itself had been destroyed.

The intermediate dokkaebi Paul opened his mouth after he was hit a few more times.

[T…That. I also don't know. You borrowed the power of an archangel and… our contract was destroyed…]

Indeed, it was like this. The dokkaebis had been handed the 'disaster Shin Yoosung' by a great demon. In the course of the transfer, the strings of the contract were created using the great demon's power.

Then Uriel's Hell Flames Ignition had burned those strings. In other words, Shin Yoosung's soul was now floating around the world.

[Y-You. Absolutely, can't, regain, companion… Her soul, soon, the labyrinth…]

Paul finally collapsed.

[The 'Dokkaebi Solo Meeting Rights' has ended.]

The transparent dome disappeared and the executives whistled.

[Oh, you are in terrible shape even before the disciplinary hearing.]

They glanced at me before moving away with delighted smiles. I watched Bihyung hurriedly chase after them and asked,

'Did you get back the money?'

–Of course. But didn't you use too many coins?

'I still have a lot left'.

I hit Paul exactly 124 times.

[Coins Possessed: 143,902 C]

Bihyung sighed as he glanced at me.

–I won't be able to communicate with you after entering the bureau. I will keep the channel open so don't get into trouble in the meantime. Please.

Watching Bihyung act like a mother-hen, I thought to myself that this was good. Because without him, there wouldn't be anyone who'd question the things I'd do from now on.

[The scenario error will delay further compensation settlement.]

The administrator of the main scenario had completely left the scene and the scenario development was likely to be stagnant for a bit. It should only be a day or two but that was enough time.

I looked up at the dokkaebis disappearing into the portal and recalled the last conversation I had with Shin Yoosung.

–Don't worry. You won't die.

–What do you mean?

–I can help you resurrect. I've resurrected twice so it isn't as bad as you think.

In fact, I tried to avoid using this method until the end. After all, according to the design, she must 'die once'. There was also no guarantee that she could revive again.

–I don't know how long it will take. If you just wait and don't give up, I will surely revive you.

If Shin Yoosung's soul had fallen in to the labyrinth of the world, it was almost impossible to revive her again. However, that wasn't necessarily the case. She would surely survive if I could regain her soul. The problem was 'how' to find her soul.

I suddenly looked back at Yoo Sangah. "Yoo Sangah-ssi."

"Yes."

Shin Yoosung's soul might enter a new world line but in the all, all souls escaped from this world through the 'Underworld'.

I remembered some constellations related to the afterlife. All of them were in a place I didn't dare touch or were beyond my reach. Still, there was one person that I could talk to.

"Can you call the Abandoned Lover of the Labyrinth here?"

Yoo Sangah hesitated for a moment before nodding. After a while, faint sparks appeared around her. It wasn't the previous method of directly descending due to the increased probability consumption but it was certain that Ariadne nestled inside her.

I opened my mouth. "Olympus. I want to do business with you."

The sparks bouncing around the area were rough. Well, our last encounter wasn't great. This time, I had to make concessions. I took a deep breath before getting to the point.

"Let me meet with the King of Hell."

Now it was time to keep the second promise.

Chapter 111: Ep. 22 – Three Promises, III

I could see Olympus's answer from Yoo Sangah's expression. She became red and then paled. Based on Yoo Sangah's eyes, I thought I was too hasty in bringing up the story.

"That…Dokja-ssi."

I wondered what she had heard to make her hesitate while watching me. I felt sorry for some reason.

"Can you tell me what the sponsor said?"

Sparks flew from Yoo Sangah's body. Ariadne seemed to be running wild. I waited a bit until the situation calmed down. I hadn't realized the aftermath of the three questions and answers would be so large. The sparks soon subsided and Yoo Sangah spoke in a mixed voice. "The Father of the Rich Night isn't someone who can be easily met…"

The Father of the Rich Night. It was the modifier given to King Hades, one of the three head gods of Olympus.

One of the three head gods of Olympus, he resided in a famous place that the '12 gods of Olympus' couldn't enter. Hades was far too great for Ariadne to contact him.

I quickly thanked her. "Thank you Yoo Sangah-ssi."

"By the way, Dokja-ssi…"

The smart Yoo Sangah probably already knew that the Father of the Rich Night was Hades. She had a vague idea of why I was looking for Hades.

The story of Orpheus, who visited the Underworld in order to revive his wife Eurydice, was a famous myth in South Korea.

"…Is it possible?" Yoo Sangah wondered.

As a rule, resurrecting the dead was impossible.

I was subjected to the probability correction of the King of No Killing effect, but in most cases, there was no such correction. It was the same for Shin Yoosung. If resurrection was possible then Yoo Joonghyuk wouldn't have needed to regress.

Yet if I could somehow obtain her soul…

"I can't tell you the details right now. I'm sorry."

I didn't want to speak about my future plans in a situation where the constellations were staring at me. There were many constellations who disliked me due to the previous situation.

I threw the bait and now I had to wait and see if they bit. The important thing was to be patient.

I looked at the people around me and opened my mouth. "Shall we organize things?"

Then my party members approached me one by one, as if they had been waiting. Shin Yoosung and Lee Gilyoung were with Lee Hyunsung, while Lee

Jihye stood in a distant place with a slightly sulky expression.

I heard the voice of a low-grade dokkaebi.

[I am the dokkaebi 'Youngki', who will temporarily take charge of the compensation settlement.]

He was a newbie dokkaebi and spoke in a slightly stiff voice.

[I will now settle the additional compensation for the fifth scenario.]

Perhaps all the higher level dokkaebis had disappeared.

[You have received the 'Ellain Forest's Vital Energy'.]

People caught the small fruit that fell from the air.

[This is the most popular recovery item in the Star Stream. Even if you are seriously injured, you can recover quickly by eating this and sleeping.]

It was the first time I had seen such a polite dokkaebi and it was hard to believe. Then dokkaebi talked to me and some other people.

[Additional compensation for the key contributors will be given this evening. Thank you for all your hard work. I hope you cheer up in the following scenarios.]

The voice disappeared and I watched all the people holding the fruit. Characters I didn't know would be dead and some people would be dying right now. Still, we survived. The party members weren't sure if they should feel grateful or sad. Once this happened, someone was bound to act as the representative.

I stared at them and slowly opened my mouth. "Everyone, you have suffered."

The moment when nothing was decided only remained for a moment. Sadness was sadness and happiness was happiness. If we made decisions then at least these moments would remain meaningful.

"You really struggled."

Relief slowly filled the party members' faces as I didn't say anything about rewards. They deserved it.

Lee Jihye was the one who spoke first. "…By the way, it was really shocking ahjussi. You looked cooler than Master for a moment? I acknowledge you."

Then Lee Hyunsung and Jung Heewon also opened their mouths.

"…It was wonderful."

"I felt refreshed."

…These people, this was all they wanted to say to me? A wry smile appeared on my face as they started making a fuss. The biggest crisis of the beginning scenarios was over and Seoul was protected. For the time being, Seoul wouldn't be threatened until a few scenarios had passed.

"Dokja-ssi also suffered." Yoo Sangah stared at me and smiled brightly.

Maybe this was the reward given to me.

There was the sound of something hitting me and Shin Yoosung placed her forehead against my side. Lee Gilyoung was somewhat disgruntled but he didn't say anything. I placed my hand lightly on Shin Yoosung's head.

…Yes, this as well.

* * *

In the evening, the additional compensation for the main contributors began. There were three main contributors who received additional compensation. They were me, Jung Heewon and Yoo Joonghyuk.

[The additional compensation for the fifth scenario is a B-grade skill.]

Someone else might say that a B-grade skill as a reward wasn't right, but it was actually balanced. A low alphabet letter didn't mean the skill was useless.

In addition, the scenario compensation was in the form of a 'free choice'. In other words, I could choose the B-grade skill I wanted. There was a skill that was difficult to acquire among the B-grade skills and I had to get it.

[Do you want to see the list of B-grade skills?]

It was a list with tens of thousands of skills. I was able to avoid a difficult choice because there was a skill I thought of from the beginning.

[Do you want to receive the B-grade skill Lie Detection as compensation?]

I nodded and there was a faint glow as additional messages appeared.

[The exclusive skill 'Lie Detection' has been added to the skills list.]

I finally obtained it. It had been really frustrating not having Lie Detection…

I looked back and saw that Jung Heewon was having a hard time picking something.

I asked Lee Jihye who was next to me. "Hey, do you know where Yoo Joonghyuk is?"

"Ah, he was going somewhere with Seolhwa unni."

…Lee Seolhwa? Lee Jihye looked at me with pitying eyes, as if she knew what I was thinking.

"…Sigh, it isn't what ahjussi thinks."

"…"

"Really. I watched the whole time. It is completely different from the two of you. I'm certain."

I had a headache. Speaking of which, it was certain that they were lovers in the second regressions but I couldn't remember in the third regression. Yoo Joonghyuk had a long road to walk. So where the hell did he go? Was it to pick up his younger sister?

[The sixth scenario will start in three days.]

A system message was heard. I think I knew what Yoo Joonghyuk wanted to do. The sixth scenario was when we finally encountered incarnations from other domes.

He was a restless guy so he probably went to get some hidden skills and items that he couldn't get in the last regression.

There were still some hidden scenarios in Seoul Dome. It was a bit upsetting that they would be taken away by Yoo Joonghyuk but it was better than he eating up skills.

Moreover, he needed to be stronger than he was now to make the rest of the scenarios easier.

"Ah, that's right. I have a message for ahjussi from Master?"

"For me?'

Lee Jihye nodded as she grasped her sword and declared in a serious tone. "Kim Dokja, the oath period is over."

My heart sank. The Oath of Existence. I had forgotten about it.

–Then swear you won't hurt me until the fifth scenario is over. If you can't do that, I really won't help you.

–I swear.

We had made this oath. That guy… surely he hadn't left me alive because of the oath? Then I remembered strange nonsense.

–I won't kill you. I will hit you once.

I couldn't help gulping. Surely this wasn't his plan? Was he going to learn a skill to hit me?

"By the way… what oath did the two of you swear?"

"Shut up."

Yes, it would somehow be okay. Above all, I had the Beast King's Sensitivity used by the disaster Shin Yoosung. It was also level 3.

…I had Way of the Wind through Bookmark and there were also my strong companions.

I met Lee Jihye's eyes as she said. "You know that I won't help you against Master, right?"

"I wasn't expecting anything from you."

Instead, I looked at Lee Hyunsung. I was really impressed when he told Shin Yoosung that he was part of my party, not Yoo Joonghyuk's. Lee Hyunsung gazed at me with perplexed eyes before opening his mouth. "That…Dokja-ssi."

"Yes."

"To tell you the truth, I'm a bit scared of Yoo Joonghyuk-ssi."

"…Ah, it's okay. I understand."

Come to think of it, Lee Hyunsung's strength was because of Yoo Joonghyuk. Dammit. However, it was too early to be frustrated.

I also had Jung Heewon. She was someone who didn't appear in the original novel and I raised her with my own hands.

Then Jung Heewon scratched her head and said, "I don't know what this is about but I won't get involved in the fight between the two of you."

"…Huh?"

"I won't disturb the two of you… what the hell is this?"

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is making a loving smile.]

I suddenly got a chill down my spine. What was that angel thinking?

[The constellation 'Scribe of Heaven' is watching Demon-like Judge of Fire with solemn eyes.]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' has jumped and changed her expression.]

"Dokja-ssi." I looked up with astonishment and saw Yoo Sangah smiling calmly at me. "Don't worry. Joonghyuk-ssi isn't a bad person."

"…I hope so."

"I'm sure that he is a good friend."

I heard Yoo Sangah's words and inwardly sighed. I didn't know why but I thought of Han Sooyoung at this time. Apart from me, she was the only one who knew what type of person Yoo Joonghyuk was. Well, she wouldn't have protected me even if she was here…

The scenario was over but I didn't know what she was doing now. We finished organizing the surroundings and collected items.

It became late in the night and Yoo Joonghyuk still hadn't returned. Instead, Jung Heewon went to scout and returned with welcome things.

I was amazed. "There was still some left?"

Jung Heewon had six bottles of beer and soju with her. She said with a smile. "Let's have a drink as a memorial."

We set up a campfire and sat down. I quickly hit Lee Jihye's hand as she grabbed a beer.

"You're a minor."

"…There are no laws now. Why does it matter if I'm a minor?"

"Drink cider with the kids."

In the meantime, I took a quick swallow of the alcohol. Jung Heewon had red cheeks as she drank while Lee Hyunsung snored like a bear after drinking a few beers. He was weaker to alcohol than he looked.

"The mood…"

Lee Jihye secretly drank a few cups and collapsed with a red face. Surprisingly, Yoo Sangah had already drank four bottles of soju. I couldn't see any signs of her being drunk.

"I'm a heavy drinker."

Come to think of it, I had never seen Yoo Sangah drink at a work party.

"…It is hard to get drunk."

There was sorrow in her words. The company had a few men who wanted to do something to Yoo Sangah while she was drunk. Maybe this was the first time she could drink while at ease.

"Isn't it okay for today?"

Perhaps it was because she was paler than usual that I looked away with shame.

There was a lonely moon in the sky and the cries of monsters couldn't be heard today. The other drinking groups around us were making loud noises.

I wanted to drink well in this situation but I also thought it was because of this situation that I had to drink.

It was a world where everything couldn't be endured without drinking. Then small sparks appeared around my glass. The surprised Yoo Sangah looked at me.

I nodded. It was a good thing I hadn't drank too much alcohol. The alcohol poured down onto the ground.

[The constellation 'God of Wine and Ecstasy' wants to talk to you.]

Olympus had finally taken the bait.

Chapter 112: Ep. 22 - Three Promises, IV

The God of Wine and Ecstasy. The only person who used such a modifier was Dionysus, one of the 12 gods of Olympus.

[The constellation 'God of Wine and Ecstasy' is humming.]

I couldn't hear the song but I could see the drops of alcohol dancing to an unknown melody. The bubbles moved like they had life, forming numerous notes on the ground. The notes repeatedly moved between me and Yoo Sangah.

Yoo Sangah looked at the notes carefully and opened her mouth. "It is the puppy waltz."

"Can you read musical notes?"

"A little bit."

Yoo Sangah cocked her head and continued speaking.

"Why did Chopin suddenly appear?"

I didn't have a clue. It was strange that Dionysus knew about Chopin in the first place. No. According to the original story, he was someone with great interest in the musical culture of later generations. It wasn't strange.

The notes formed a circle and then arrows that pointed towards the remaining soju bottles. Yoo Sangah wondered, "…Is he telling us to drink more?"

"Let's drink." There was no other way to interpret it. "Yoo Sangah-ssi, drink only a little bit. At least one person should be sane."

I needed someone to protect my teammates if I became drunk. I could wake up Lee Gilyoung and Shin Yoosung, who only drank cider, but I wanted to let them sleep well.

"Dokja-ssi can't drink well?"

"I'm not a strong drinker."

I lightly tapped my glass against hers and drank the soju. The alcohol entered my body and made me feel hot. However, the notes didn't stop.

"…I think I should drink more."

I drank a few glasses in succession. Heat rose from inside me and I could feel the redness in my face. The movements of the musical notes became more active. No, did it look more active because I was drunk? Yoo Sangah smiled. "It is nice to drink with you. I was a bit lonely."

Thus, I drank a few more cups. I felt a bit better as a mellow smell rose. I suddenly turned around and found that I was very close to Yoo Sangah. I had obviously been quite far away…

I was mistaken. The sound of breathing was harsh. I didn't know if it was my breathing or the breathing of Yoo Sangah. Yoo Sangah's shoulder lightly touched mine.

"Dokja-ssi."

"Yes."

It was clearly a face free of makeup but it was hard to find any blemishes. Yoo Sangah slowly leaned towards me. Her face was getting closer and closer.

A pair of quarter notes and eighth notes danced intensely around us. My heart started to beat faster at the touch against my shoulders.

…Wait, something was strange.

[The exclusive skill 'Fourth Wall' has offset some of the drunkenness.]

The message popped up and my mind cleared. Yes, this couldn't happen in reality. Yoo Sangah wasn't such a person. It was only possible because this was Ways of Survival. I firmly held Yoo Sangah's shoulder and urged her, "Yoo Sangah-ssi, stay alert."

"Huh? Ah… ah?" The startled Yoo Sangah blinked. Her face turned red for the first time. "I-I, what did I…?"

As expected, it wasn't Yoo Sangah's will. I was in a slightly miserable mood as I opened my mouth and spoke towards the notes hovering on the ground. "Stop playing and get straight to the point."

The notes all stopped at the same time. It was a serene silence, like the midnight festival had suddenly stopped. The alcohol bubbles fell to the ground and sparks flew. Then the bubbles formed one string of words.

–You are no fun.

I was a bit surprised by the letters written on the ground. A few words written in bubbles on the ground might not seem great, however it was extremely difficult for constellations to communicate with incarnations in Ways of Survival. It was why the constellations used the dokkaebi channels to convey 'indirect messages'.

In the first place, spreading messages to Earth without the help of the dokkaebis was only possible among the highest-class constellations and the consumption of probability was huge. The probability of the world was sensitive to 'language'.

I heard a faint cry from the Great Hole in the sky. The god of this world had noticed Dionysus' existence. The fact that he delivered a message directly without going through an incarnation meant he had confidence in his backer… As expected, the 12 gods of Olympus were different.

I opened my mouth in a deliberate provocation. "If you are so confident then come and talk to me in person."

Then the string of words moved.

–I don't like those with tentacles. They are annoying to fight. If I go down myself, everyone will die.

In fact, I hadn't expected anything. Seoul would be turned into powder if the 12 gods of Olympus really descended.

–My mother died that way because of my father.

Yoo Sangah saw this sentence and whispered to me. "…What does this mean?"

"Maybe he is talking about the myth of his birth."

As far as I knew, Dionysus' parents were Zeus and Princess Semele of Thebes. Hera was jealous of Zeus and Semele and disguised herself as Semele's nurse, encouraging Semele by saying the following. 'Zeus might be a fake. Ask him to show you what he really looks like when he is in Olympus'.

Semele was fooled and demanded that Zeus do this. Then she died from Zeus' brilliance.

Yoo Sangah listened to the story and cocked his head. "Uh… isn't it a bit different from the story I know? As far as I know, his mother isn't the princess of Thebes…"

I was a bit surprised by Yoo Sangah's knowledge. I wondered if she had a level 1 degree in myths, not just Korean history. Of course, I didn't have such a degree.

The string of words changed like it was amused.

–Hrmm. You humans know me very well.

As Yoo Sangah said, Dionysus' birth myth was twofold. One was the version where Princess Semele of Thebes was his mother. The other version had Hades' wife, Persephone as his mother.

I asked Dionysus, "I'm curious. Which of the two versions is real?"

–Is it important?

"It is important. There is a reason I need it to be the latter."

In fact, Jung Heewon's suggestion to drink was an attempt to lure Jung Heewon.

Dionysus was the son of Persephone. If this myth was correct, Dionysus could probably contact Persephone, Hades' wife.

–Rude human.

The string trembled.

–Still, I like rude humans.

In fact, I already knew which myth it was. Dionysus' story was mentioned in Ways of Survival.

–There used to be a human as foolishly brave as you. He was someone who played the lyre very well. He didn't end up well.

"I'll be different."

–I can open up the entrance of the Underworld. The Father of the Rich Night doesn't like me but the goddess of the Underworld will listen to me. However, it is very dangerous and there is no guarantee you will come back alive.

"It's okay."

–Good. I like eager people.

I became nervous due to the excellent atmosphere. Dionysus was a constellation whose thoughts I could never predict.

–Keep this in mind. I can only give you 12 hours. If you don't come back in that time then you can never return to the scenarios.

I became dizzy and then suddenly felt drowsy. I realized what was going to happen. Damn, this was why he made me drink.

I hurriedly spoke. "Yoo Sangah-ssi, wake up the kids."

Perhaps these were my last words.

[A new hidden scenario has arrived!]

The moment I closed my eyes, the drops of alcohol seemed to be laughing.

–I hope the Father of the Rich Night will listen to you.

* * *

[The constellation 'God of Wine and Ecstasy' is guiding your soul.]

[You are free from the physical restraints of your body.]

Many colours passed through my mind and it was like I was on drugs. There was a sharp pain from my forehead and then a faint voice was heard.

[Who is this?]

[…Interesting.]

[The soul of an incarnation is walking in the world of the constellation?]

[You will regret it.]

The voice spoke negative words. Perhaps it was someone from Olympus.

[The exclusive skill, 'Fourth Wall' is activated.]

The noisy voices disappeared like they had been muted.

[The soul of a living person has entered the Underworld.]

[The judges of the Underworld have noticed your presence.]

Once I heard the last message, countless traces disappeared from my surroundings. The world turned around quickly and my body sank heavily. After a while, it felt like I had reached somewhere. It was hard to move but I could guess what I would see when I opened my eyes.

The air of the Underworld was sticky. The sand at my fingertips was cold. Perhaps I was at the river of the Underworld that Hades ruled. There was Acheron River flowing towards Hades' palace and the Underworld boatman Charon would be waiting for me. And…

"Hey! Wake up! What are you doing here?"

Something dull hit my head and it felt like oil was being poured on me. I took deep breaths as I sat up. Someone fumbled at my body, grabbing my neck and lifting me up.

"A newbie? I've never seen this face before."

I had also never seen this face before. It was a man with a rough face and big muscles. The people in the surroundings were gazing at us.

"He looks fine? Check his body. He might've brought something with him."

"Hey, don't touch. If he fell here then he must be a mess. Have you forgotten the crazy person who came a while ago?"

"That crazy jerk was a bit special. Are people like him common?"

I let the people to talk among themselves and looked around. It was a spacious place where a scorching heat could be felt. Judging by the infestation of ghosts, this seemed to be the Underworld.

Frames made of the metal of the Underworld were all over the place and there were also furnaces for smelting metals. It was a factory-like atmosphere. The dead spirits were enslaved in the Underworld and making something. At first glance, it seemed like a giant robot…

What was this place?

"Hey, are you ignoring me now?"

I ignored his words and slowly twisted his arm that was holding me.

"W-What? This strength…!"

I couldn't waste time dealing with these small fries. I decided to check the hidden scenario that I had received.

[Hidden Scenario - Scenic Walk]

Category: Hidden

Difficulty: A+

Clear Conditions: Avoid the eyes of the judges and return safely to the ground.

Time Limit: 12 hours.

Compensation: 10,000 coin

Failure: You will be forced to become a resident of the Underworld.

The scenario checked out. The time that Dionysus said was accurate. Then why was I here? I should've fallen at Acheron River.

"T-This bastard! Daring to look down on us…!"

The big man was just about to punch my head when I heard a voice from behind me.

"Over there, what's going on? Did something funny happen?"

"U-Uwaaah!"

"Haha, let me in on it as well. Huh? I'm bored to death because I've been working on the Gundam every day."

"Run away! Run away!"

The people surrounding me started to shrink back. It was like herbivores meeting a predator. I looked to the side where the voice came from. It was a young man with a slim body and bangs covering his forehead. The young man discovered me and moved towards me.

He peered closely at me and muttered with an aghast expression. "…Why are you here?"

I couldn't understand his words for a moment. This person knew me?

"What? You can't recognize me? Have you really forgotten?"

The young man lifted his bangs and I recognized him.

…Dammit. Come to think of it, the Underworld was a place where the dead came. I hadn't even thought about it. Of course the people I killed would come here after dying.

"Ah, don't be so vigilant. Aren't we both dead?"

The curious young man's eyes came closer. There was a mean and cruel look in them. I only saw him for a short time but it was an unforgettable impression. The man smiled. "Yes, who the hell killed you? Please open your mouth. Huh?"

The person who died in the first scenario, Delusional Demon Kim Namwoon was in Hades' domain.

Chapter 113: Ep. 22 - Three Promises, V

I looked around and discovered what this place was. Then I felt despair.

Damn, there was no doubt. This place was…

"You don't have to be so nervous. I won't bite if you get closer." Kim Namwoon told me and I sighed.

I was certain. It was Tartarus, the famous prison of the Underworld. I glanced at the three-headed monster guarding the entrance of the prison. It was a cerberus, a mythical monster dog. Two of its heads were dozing off while one head was acting as lookout.

"That son of a bitch. It should be a 4th grade monster. There are even stronger ones downstairs." Kim Namwoon spoke like he was a guide to hell.

He was right. This was how it was described in Ways of Survival. The strongest prisoners were trapped in the lower floors of Tartarus, meaning the size of the cerberus became bigger with each floor you descended.

Kim Namwoon chuckled and asked, "What do you think of hell?"

I watched his attitude and opened my mouth. It was natural to be nervous when this psychopath had changed. "I have something to ask."

"What is it?"

"Is there anyone else beside you?"

"There is ahjussi."

"I'm not talking about me."

I closely watched the faces of the ghosts passing by. There were no faces that I recognized. For example, the Disaster of Questions or people like Song Minwoo.

Kim Namwoon told me, "I don't know. I was the only one from the subway who came here."

Hades' Underworld was just one of the myriad worlds. The dead incarnations probably went to different Underworlds according to their beliefs or random characteristics. It was the same for Myung Ilsang and Song Minwoo.

I kept an eye on Kim Namwoon's expression as I asked, "Has a young woman come here recently?"

"Young woman?"

"She has white hair in an um… ponytail. She is really pretty."

Kim Namwoon frowned for a moment before suddenly giggling. "Aha, now I understand."

I listened in case he had seen Shin Yoosung.

"Ahjussi, you died trying to save a woman?"

"…"

"This is the problem with people like you. Dying because of love… do you think you are in a fairy tale?"

"Did you see her? Just answer that."

"Of course I haven't see her. How can I see your dear girlfriend?"

As expected, Shin Yoosung's soul hadn't come here. Perhaps she still hasn't crossed the Acheron River. She was a soul that came from another world. She would stay here for a while before being deported out of the world. All I had to do was get to her soul before then.

"What are you doing here?" I asked.

"I was making something. Now ahjussi is going to make it with me." Kim Namwoon shook the ashes off his hand and pointed to something. "It is that thing. Doesn't it look like a Gundam?"

I stared at it. The appearance resembled the figure of a giant. The huge weapon was finished off with a black, glossy metal and it breathed slowly like a living creature. It was a weapon prepared for the most terrible war in the myths.

The Giant Soldier. Hades was already preparing for Gigantomachia. It was different from the 12 gods of Olympus who played around, ate and fought using the excuse of preparing for Gigantomachia. Come to think of it, Hades was a constellation of the Greek myths but he wasn't part of the Olympus nebula.

Then a loud noise was heard from outside the entrance. Kim Namwoon grabbed my shoulder. "Come on. Come with me."

"Why?"

"Can't you see the manager coming? There is a place where I am working. Go there and pretend to hammer. You have to move quickly if you are a newcomer. Understood?"

I knew this much. If this place where really Tartarus's slave smithy then I knew something about it. That's why I wasn't surprised by Tartarus.

Kim Namwoon bit his lips. "Why are you looking at me like that?"

I tried not to say it but I couldn't help myself. "Don't you have any thoughts about me?"

"What thoughts?" Kim Namwoon thought about it for a moment before an eerie smile appeared on his face. "Aha, are you afraid of me?"

"…"

"You think I will get revenge. Right?"

It would be abnormal if I wasn't scared. I killed the person who was a psychopath in the original novel, even more than Yoo Joonghyuk. Now he suddenly acted friendly with me. I was strange if I wasn't scared.

"Haha, don't be afraid. Is it necessary to be wary when we have both already died? I also changed a lot after coming here. I had a lot of time to reflect."

I was speechless. The Delusional Demon Kim Namwoon reflecting was as impossible as Yoo Joonghyuk becoming a girl. I knew it was a lie but I still activated Lie Detection as a last courtesy for him. In any case, it was a skill that I acquired to use.

[You have confirmed that the statement is true.]

…What? I was taken aback and stared at him. Kim Namwoon cried out, "I'm telling the truth Why don't you trust what I am saying? Aren't I living in atonement? I am even thankful that you killed me."

"Why?"

"A meal is served when it is time to eat. I can sleep when it is time to sleep. I don't have to go to school and won't be nagged at by my parents… It is a bit hot but this place is the best."

He was talking about Tartarus in hell. "Besides, I can assemble the Gundam if I get bored. Isn't this good?" He saw the Giant Soldier as a gundam. "It is thanks to you. I'm serious. Really thank you."

This guy was really crazy.

[The character 'Kim Namwoon' has a favourable impression of you.]

Damn, I couldn't not believe it when these system messages came up.

"Then come this way quickly. There is no time."

I was led by Kim Namwoon towards his workshop. His tools were placed along the workbench and I could see the metal that the gundam was made out of. It was a metal of the Underworld. I felt that this was a setting for this person's chuuni disease.

Kim Namwoon said, "They're coming. Listen."

The cerberus started barking.

Grrrr…

My bones seemed frozen when I heard the sound. The administrator holding a whip and bat passed by the cerberus and entered Tartarus. It was a subordinate of Hades wearing a black cloak. He didn't look as strong as the judges but it wouldn't be good if I was caught.

I stood and pretended to be hammering. Kim Namwoon was giggling next to me. The administrator went to a platform at the entrance and cried out in a scratchy voice.

–Tell all the slaves on the 1st floor. There will be an unannounced inspection.

Kim Namwoon frowned and grumbled, "These jerks are always the same. If they have nothing to do then an inspection…"

However, the administrator's next words shut Kim Namwoon up.

–There is an illegal intruder in the Underworld. It is said that the soul of a living person crossed Acheron River.

The ghosts had confused expressions. The administrator's words continued.

–If the Great Death finds out about this, terrible things will happen to you as well. This inspection is to find the impure intruder. It isn't a formal one so don't be nervous. Everyone stand in place.

Dammit, the progress was faster than I expected. In this case…

Kim Namwoon's complaints could be heard. "This is really stupid. Even if a living person came here, why would they hide in Tartarus? When someone comes in, they can't go out. Right?"

"…"

"Ahjussi?"

"Uh, yes." I replied one beat late.

Kim Namwoon watched me and muttered in a dumbfounded voice. "I just want to ask you. Perhaps they are talking about ahjussi…"

"Right."

"Shit." Kim Namwoon threw the hammer and laughed. "Wow, it is amazing that you are a living person. I have been talking to someone alive?"

It was an expression where he didn't know to be angry or amused. I sighed and asked, "Is there anywhere to hide here?"

"Shit, you want to hide in a prison? If you can't find anywhere then hide in the gundam over there!"

I looked at the Giant Soldier. I really could hide in there. The problem was that it was already close to a 'living creature'. I was likely to be digested if I went inside.

"Has that been completed?"

"Not yet. There is something wrong with the core. Are you really going to hide in there?"

"No."

"Good thinking. Ahjussi will disappear if you go inside there."

"…I thought you were grateful?"

"I'm only good to people who are also dead. I'm sorry that we met when you are a living person. Ahjussi, you should die soon and come back again."

Kim Namwoon spoke like I was in a terrible position. As we were talking, the administrator had neared this area. If the Giant Soldier had been completed then I could've beaten the cerberus and gone straight to Hades' palace. Now that was impossible.

[Due to the effect of your exclusive attribute, memories from the books you have read will become stronger.]

I desperately searched through the contents of Ways of Survival. Yoo Joonghyuk had visited the Underworld in the mid to late regressions. What had he done at the time?

「"Tell this to the king. I will take the Great Soldier."」

「"If you don't want to die then tell everyone to get lost."」

…Dammit. He was a crazy bastard. I liked it when I read it but it didn't help my situation at all.

Facing Hades' judges head on. This thing was possible for the regressor Yoo Joonghyuk. He had that type of power and opportunity. Yet I…

No, wait a minute. Why couldn't I do it like him? The direction of my thoughts suddenly changed. Of course, I couldn't really act like Yoo Joonghyuk.

However, there were many courageous ways I could resolve this. Why couldn't I be caught by the judges? Would I fail the hidden scenario and become a resident of the Underworld? No, perhaps the judges would see Hades' behaviour and try to destroy me?

I was a fool. There was no need to worry if I solved one issue. The administrator finally came to our workshop. I faced him.

Then the administrator asked, "Who are you?"

"The one you are looking for."

At this moment, a light shone in the administrator's eyes. The sharp sound of metal was heard from somewhere. I felt my body gradually freeze and my back was cold. If I looked back now then Hades' judges would grab me by the neck.

I resisted the freezing cold and opened my mouth. "You should think carefully before killing me." I didn't have Yoo Joonghyuk's strength but I had something he didn't. "If you kill me now, you will surely be defeated during Gigantomachia."

The administrator's eyes shook and the chill subsided for a moment. I didn't miss this moment and looked up at the Giant Soldier.

"Tell the Father of the Rich Night. I know how to finish the Giant Soldier."

A fearsome silence descended. The area around my neck was slowly freezing but I didn't resist.

This was a test. The ice came down from my neck to my shoulders and chest. I didn't panic. A little bit more. Just a bit more. Finally, the cold reached the edges of my heart. Suddenly, it stopped like magic.

Then a message appeared in my head.

[The hidden scenario has been updated.]

.

.

After a while, I was guided by the judge towards Hades' palace. I looked back as I moved away and saw Kim Namwoon behind the cerberus. I waved my hand towards Kim Namwoon, who stared blankly at me.

Stay well in hell, Namwoon.

Chapter 114: Ep. 22 - Three Promises, VI

Kim Namwoon's last look remained with me but I hadn't come to rescue him in the first place. Besides, why should I save him when he liked Hell?

The legless judge climbed the stairs quietly, like a ghost. Some of the symbolic bodies along the way looked at me with interested eyes. Were they constellations who dwelled in Hades' palace? I didn't know. It wasn't all constellations here.

The judge seemed aware that I was drifting off and spoke without looking back.

[You will lose your way if you don't follow along well.]

It was a scratchy voice that made me feel uncomfortable. Still, it was the correct advice.

I looked at the judge before shifting my gaze to the ceiling and opening my mouth slightly. 'Hey, can you hear me?'

It was a small whisper that the judge couldn't hear.

'I know you're listening'.

This wasn't Earth but Hades' Underworld. I was curious. Did the dokkaebi channel work here? Then a faint voice entered my ears.

–…Yes.

There was a reply on the dokkaebi communication. It wasn't Bihyung's voice.

'Are you a new dokkaebi?'

–Yes. I am the low-grade dokkaebi Youngki. I am temporarily serving as an administrator while Bihyung is at the bureau.

Dokkaebi Youngki. Perhaps it was the dokkaebi who dealt with the compensation settlement for the fifth scenario during the day. I got straight to the point.

'Why aren't you doing your work properly?'

–Huh?

'The hidden scenario has updated but why aren't you letting me know the contents?'

I came to this terrible place and should at least get compensation.

–Ah, t-that…!

It turned out that this dokkaebi was a beginner. I could see how good Bihyung was at handling things. He just slightly lacked intelligence… The dokkaebi went silent for a long moment before stuttering.

–E-Excuse me…

'What is it now?'

–How do I update the scenario?

I was speechless for a moment.

'Why is a dokkaebi asking a constellation?'

–B-Bihyung told me to ask Kim Dokja-ssi if I'm not sure of anything.

That bastard Bihyung made me an advisor?

–P-Please wait a moment! I'll ask another dokkaebi about it. Ah, and…

'…What else?'

–I'm sorry but would you like to receive the backed up indirect messages? It was the first time I was in this situation…

I reluctantly nodded. I never expected a day would come when I missed Bihyung. Then messages exploded in my head.

[The constellation 'God of Wine and Ecstasy' rejoices in your plight.]

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is excited about your adventure.]

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' is wondering how you will escape.]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' prays that you can return safely to your companions.]

…

As expected, the constellations were enamored with watching me. On the other hand, some were admiring the scenery.

[The constellation 'One-eyed Maitreya' admires the Underworld.]

[The constellation 'Bald General of Justice' is greatly shocked by the appearance of the Underworld.]

[The constellation 'Bald General of Justice' begins to doubt his religion.]

…

This was a spectacle for some constellations. Not all constellations could come to Hades' castle.

[12,000 coins have been sponsored.]

I got 12,000 coins just from showing Hades' palace. It was a huge profit. This was like illegally filming private land.

Some time passed. The silently walking judge finally opened his mouth.

[We've arrived.]

The door opened and a huge banquet hall appeared. The interior wasn't visible because it was dark. The judge disappeared and the door closed.

A small light appeared in the middle of the dark hall. An oval antique table was waiting for me. There was a splendid statue that could be seen as a statue of the king. The table contained many dishes that stimulated the salivary glands.

There was a woman looking at me at the end of the table.

[How interesting. A living soul has come to this castle. Furthermore, you also brought unpleasant observers… Today is a really special day.]

I immediately recognized who she was. In Hades' palace, there was only one existence who could occupy the seat of the hostess. I bowed and opened my mouth.

"It is an honour, Queen of the Darkest Spring."

Queen of the Darkest Spring. She was Persephone, Hades' wife and the famous queen of the Underworld.

[You know my modifier. You are a polite incarnation.]

"You're overpraising me."

[The even more interesting thing is that your soul didn't shake when you heard my true voice.]

Come to think of it, I didn't feel much when I heard the truth voice of the constellations.

Persephone was a constellation that was at least narrative-grade. Due to the difference between us, my soul should've been damaged or destroyed the moment I heard her true words.

Moreover, I previously heard the words of Kim Yooshin, a historical-grade constellation…

[The exclusive skill, 'Fourth Wall' is strongly activated.]

It was the first time that 'strongly' was attached to the skill message. Perhaps my unconscious mind saw this situation as 'unrealistic' due to the person I was meeting.

[Sit down, Incarnation Kim Dokja.]

I thanked her for the hospitality and sat across from her. Honestly, it was an unexpected favour. The aroma of sweet delicacies tickled my nose.

I looked around but only Persephone was sitting at the table. "The king…?"

[The king is uncomfortable with your sudden visit. That's why I thought it would be better for me to talk to you.]

It ended up like this. I had expected it. There hadn't been a single incarnation who had met the three heads of Olympus. Besides, I didn't play the lyre well like Orpheus.

"Do you mind if I ask you a question?"

[You can ask.]

"Is this your true body?"

[Of course it is a symbolic body. My true body isn't something that a human like you can withstand.]

I quietly gazed at Persephone's symbolic body. She looked like an old woman.

…It was a terrible hobby. Honestly, I had to think like this. Persephone smiled softly.

[You don't like older women like this?]

"That isn't the problem."

It didn't matter if she looked like a grandmother or grandfather. The problem was that she looked exactly like the 'grandmother' on the subway in the first scenario.

[If you feel uncomfortable then I can change to someone else.]

Persephone's appearance slowly changed into Yoo Sangah's image. It wasn't the usual Yoo Sangah. This Yoo Sangah wore a black Chinese dress and a garter belt, with seductive eye makeup…

I turned red just staring at her face. Dammit, did she peep at my dreams?

"Just be the grandmother."

Of course, Persephone didn't listen to me.

[There isn't much time so get to the point.]

"You don't know?"

[I heard a bit from my child but it has more meaning to hear it directly from you.]

Her child must mean Dionysus. I nodded and took a deep breath before explaining. "I'm looking for a woman's soul. I don't know if you've heard but I'm ready to make a trade."

[Soul… it is an outdated idea.]

Her eyelids lowered as she seemed to think of something. Before long, Persephone's long fingers moved and she started to slice the steak on her plate.

I patiently waited. It proceeded slowly. The fork firmly held the meat as the knife moved slowly back and forth, slicing the meat with care. The red juices flowed out as a clean section was cut. The fork carefully moved the meat that it had pierced.

Persephone made a face like she was worrying about whether to eat it or not. She seemed to have forgotten about me.

I was about to open my mouth when she opened her mouth first. Of course, it was to eat the steak.

[There is no such thing as a 'soul' in this world.]

Souls didn't exist. It was a matter that all modern physicists would agree on but the problem was the person saying it was a god. It was a god of Olympus, who had long defended the logic of the souls.

I said sarcastically, "Plato and Aristotle would rise from the grave."

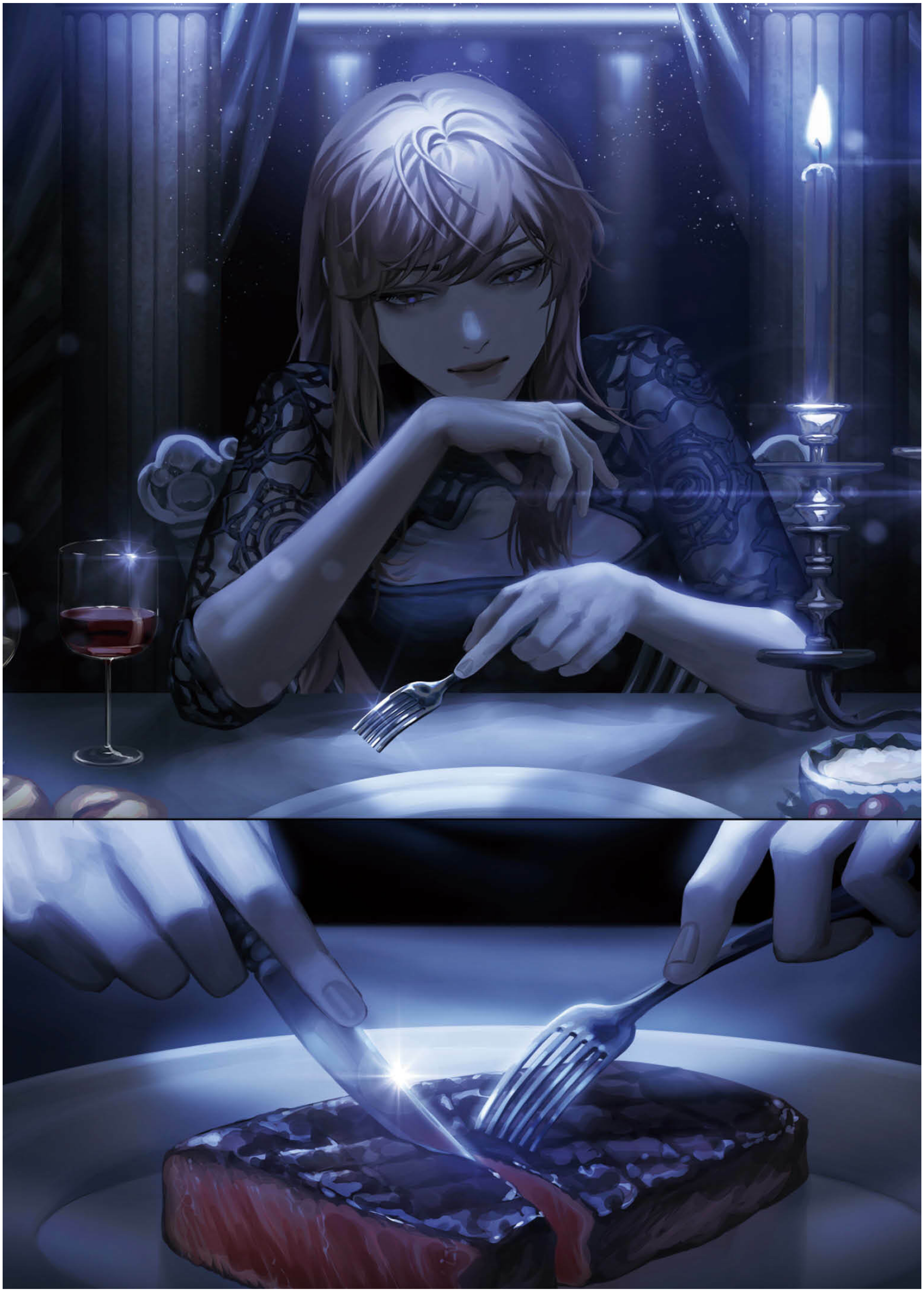
[They are constellations right now so they wouldn't be in their graves.]

"I didn't come here to play around."

[I'm not playing around. Incarnation Kim Dokja. The soul doesn't exist. It is just an illusion created by humans who want the continuity of themselves.]

"Then what about the people in the Underworld? Aren't they souls?"

She pointed to the steak she just cut.



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[They are like this.]

The steak slowly entered Persephone's mouth. She took her time chewing the meat, like she was relishing it. Her red lips glistened enchantingly.

[Well, it is very special. Why don't you try it once?]

The same steak that she ate appeared in front of me. I looked down at it and said after a moment. "I don't want to."

[Are you going to be rude?]

"Yes. I'm really sorry but I have to be rude."

It would surely be tasty if I ate it. There were at least 12 pages in Ways of Survival describing the taste. However, at the end of a long description, the following sentence was written:

「 It wasn't until the end of the regression that Yoo Joonghyuk regretted eating the food. 」

Those who ate the food of the Underworld couldn't return to Earth. Persephone seemed to read my mind and laughed.

[The people of the Underworld aren't as terrible as you think. Most of the known theories are false. You can go out of the Underworld at any time as long as you have the permission of the king. It is a similar concept to a 'career soldier' in your world.]

"The military life was the most terrible memory in my life."

[Is that so? Don't the males in your country say that they should stay in the army? That's why I thought it wasn't a big deal. I guess it was a misunderstanding.]

I didn't know why the goddess of another country knew so much about Korean mean. Persephone continued speaking.

[Incarnation Kim Dokja. You will be treated better than you imagined.]

"The person who advised me to be a professional sergeant told me something similar."

[Did he recommend a steak like me? For example, the steak currently in front of you. Do you know what will happen if you eat it?]

"I can taste the juices of a cow."

[You can become a 'sword master' right now.]

I thought I heard wrong for a moment. Sword master. It was a higher realm that only returnees who left this world could reach after hard work.

[The pasta next to it. You can become a 'great magician' if you eat it.]

…This pasta?

[The soup? It can make you an SSS-grade hunter.]

This… it was a wonderland instead of a hell?

I couldn't help gulping. I could get power to overcome the current Yoo Joonghyuk if I just ate this meat.

[You still won't eat?]

I slowly moved my fork and picked up a piece of the steak. The moment my fork pierced the meat, strange scenes flashed in front of my eyes. It was the memory of a man training alone with a sword.

「I can't be weak. I have to learn the sword.」

「I will strive to become stronger.」

「I-I finally did it! I did it!」

There were only a few scenes. I was surprised and put down the fork. This wasn't a dead cow that I was poking.

"This is…?"

Persephone nodded.

[Yes. This small piece of meat. It is the soul that humans believe in.]

She once again ate the meat. I belatedly understood why Persephone said I could become a sword master if I ate this. I stated, "…It contains the memories of the sword master."

[Memories? No. To be more precise…]

She paused for a moment to pick her words.

[It is a story.]

The sight of her licking her lips gave me goose bumps.

[It is the story that is the favourite food of all constellations.]

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* Official novel illustration (canonical)

Chapter 115: Ep. 22 - Three Promises, VII

I got goose bumps as I heard the words that came out of the constellation's mouth. Those who were crazy about stories ate the stories. This was the nature of constellations.

[Death is the end of the story. Just as a cow that has become a steak can't revive, the dead can't revive. Their story is finished.]

"I know there are exceptions."

[They are false folklore. There are no exceptions.]

It was a lie. There was a saying for this in Greek mythology. "Can you swear on the Styx River?"

She naturally couldn't swear. For the first time, anger filled Persephone's expression.

[…The soul you believe in is just a crude lump of a story.]

"I want that crude lump of a story."

[A person who looks backwards in the Underworld will feel regret. You need to understand that the time has passed.]

If she was taking such a hard line then I had to use the trump card I had saved.

"Queen-nim. Time isn't necessarily about 'going forward'. I thought you knew that."

At this moment, the world turned grey. A vast killing intent filled the whole hall. For a moment, I felt that I had seen Persephone's essence. My mouth didn't open but I wanted to scream.

Souls didn't exist? Wasn't it my soul that was feeling creeped out right now? Sweat dripped down my back as the killing intent disappeared.

Persephone smiled like nothing had happened. [Huhu… how interesting. As expected from the child that Olympus calls a singularity.]

Her smile was subtly different from before. I could feel it without speaking. From now on, I could get to my goal.

"I know it isn't just that. I have seen the Giant Soldier in development in Tartarus. If you make a deal with me, you can shorten the time it takes to use it…"

[That is the story. Gigantomachia is an important issue but the Giant Soldier can be completed on time without your help.]

I was speechless for a moment. She was a truly formidable goddess. It was Persephone's turn.

[However, I might consider this deal if you tell me how you know the information…]

"It is difficult. To be honest, I don't know how to explain it."

I felt sorry for Shin Yoosung but this wasn't possible. My plans for the future were finished if I revealed this. Persephone gazed into my eyes to gauge the truth of my answer. Then she muttered in a strange voice.

[Indeed, ■■■ ■■■…]

…What? The next second, the messages of the constellations exploded in my ears.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is doubting his ears.]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire''s eyes have widened.]

[The constellation Scribe of Heaven points out the Queen's rashness.]

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' is immersed.]

Persephone frowned.

[The uninvited guests should stay quiet.]

I asked with a shocked expression,

"What did you say just now?"

[Ah, it isn't a big deal.]

I was really confused.

…■■■?

I couldn't pronounce it properly but her words sounded like filtered information. It generally happened with information not made public yet in the scenario. However, the filtering wasn't triggered if a person already knew the information.

It didn't make sense. There was information I didn't know despite reading all of Ways of Survival? No, maybe…

[I'm sorry but I'll end the entertainment here. I have no reason to make the deal with you. I can use other methods to find out your information.]

The light reflected in a creepy manner off the knife. I didn't feel like knowing why.

[I keep thinking this but… you look delicious.]

Persephone suddenly approached and grabbed my chin. I refrained from pushing back my chair and smiled.

"Will you be able to handle the storm that will occur if you harm an incarnation in the middle of the scenario?"

[Hrmm. You are disrespectful. Do you think I can't afford this probability?]

"The constellations watching me also won't tolerate it."

Persephone laughed. [Do you think the king will be afraid of such trivial constellations?]

Of course, Hades deserved to be this arrogant. Still, the word 'trivial' shouldn't be used in such a way.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' swings his rod as if he has been provoked.]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' pulls out her sword with cold eyes.]

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' is excited and encouraging the situation.]

Persephone also pulled out her power.

[I see. Do you want to try it now?]

The ceiling of the hall started to fill with dark clouds. Red and blue sparks occurred like a thunderstorm and white flames spread throughout the banquet hall. This was the battle between constellations.

A huge aura rose from Persephone's symbolic body. I would explode if this continued.

I calmly opened my mouth. "You said you liked stories."

The atmosphere of the constellations softened for a moment at my words.

"Then how about a different deal?"

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' is listening to your words.]

Persephone stared at me.

"If you help me, I will show you the most interesting story in the world. A story that is incomparable to the steak you just ate."

[Does that mean I can eat it?]

"If you like gourmet meals, I think no more meals are needed. This story will be enough."

Persephone noticed what I was trying to say and laughed.

[…Are you planning to take the money without letting me eat?]

"I will let you have a taste. However, if you eat me now, you will regret it for the rest of your life."

[Why?]

"You would think it would've been more delicious if you hadn't eaten it."

Persephone looked intrigued.

[…How can you be so sure?]

"I can stand against time-defying beings without a sponsor."

Persephone's eyes shook lightly.

"I have destroyed a returnee and prevented disasters without the help of the god of this world. And so far, only five scenarios have passed."

Persephone's bit her lower lip in a tantalizing manner.

"As a living soul, I entered the Underworld and encountered you like this. Aren't you curious about what I will do in the future?"

[You speak very well. But…]

Persephone lowered her gaze and continued.

[It doesn't seem to be a deal?]

"You can call it a courtship."

[…Huh?]

I smiled.

"I'm serious. I'll show you stories you have never seen before and stories that you can't endure wondering about."

Maybe it was wrong to think about making deals with constellations. They were those bound by eternity. They couldn't make serious deals with trivial incarnations. If so, it was better to say ridiculous and far-fetched things. At the very least, it would make an impression.

Like all myths, the gods were more moved by a handful of sincere words than a hundred words of deceit. In fact, Persephone's expression wasn't bad at all.

[Hrmm, it is difficult. This is why males are…]

"Of course, it isn't courting you but courting the Father of the Rich Night."

Persephone's eyes widened at my words and she burst out laughing. She stepped away from me and slowly crossed her legs to sit on the table. Her coy eyes swept over my body.

[How interesting.]

It was frightening that she was posing like this with Yoo Sangah's body. Persephone stared into the dark air and slowly closed her eyes. It was only a moment but it felt like hours of heavy silence. I was about to choke on the weight of the silence when she spoke.

[I'll give you a task.]

It finally came.

[You want to show me an interesting story? If you succeed, I will let you find the soul you want.]

Then a system message popped up.

[A new hidden scenario has been activated.]

There were a few myths that came to mind when I heard her words. That reminded me, Heracles performed something called the '12 Tasks'. Persephone's eyes shone.

[I want to see it once. The children of Olympus often do it but I haven't been able to watch it since meeting my king.]

"What task is it?"

[Your task is to cut off the head of the snake.]

"…Snake? Do you mean the snake with multiple heads?" I asked in a slightly timid voice.

It was because 'that snake' was a 2nd grade monster. Persephone shook her head.

[I'm not talking about the hydra. Only Heracles can kill it. The snake you have to kill is somewhere else.]

"However, I can't go far because of the scenario."

[Don't worry. The snake will be wherever you go.]

Persephone lightly flicked her fingers and a screen popped up in the empty air. There was the message that the channel was connected and I realized what this screen was.

…Was this how the constellations watched us? A vast green forest filled the entire screen. It wasn't long before I figured out what this place was. It was the stage for the sixth scenario that was about to start. Wait a minute. What was this?

「Ahjussi, pull out some of the wood over there and make a place to rest. Aren't you good at that?」

「I'm not good at clearing land. Dumb female.」

I stared at the screen. The two people were the missing Gong Pildu and Han Sooyoung. How was this possible? The sixth scenario hadn't started yet? I could feel Persephone staring at me.

[How about it? Do you want to try it? It might be hard but it is a worthy task.]

I recovered my spirit. I could sense the 'snake' that Persephone wanted me to kill. I slowly nodded.

* * *

The incarnation left and darkness came to the hall.

Persephone remained alone, staring at the rest of the feast before opening her mouth.

[Clear it away. It doesn't taste good.]

Hands appeared in the darkness and quickly took away the plates. Persephone watched as the food went straight into the garbage can. Sword master, SSS-grade hunter, 10th circle magician…

She was already tired of these delicious tastes. Then a voice came from the darkness.

–Persephone. Why did you do that?

It was like the space itself was talking.

[Oh, my shy husband is finally talking.]

–I asked you why.

[Hades, you wanted this.]

–I never said that.

Persephone stared into the darkness.

[You rarely like incarnations. I think you particularly like that child. Am I mistaken?]

–Why do you think so?

[It was because you didn't kill him when he entered the Underworld.]

The darkness was silent for a moment.

[You always felt envious that Zeus had Heracles. This time, I read a bit of your mind.]

Persephone looked down at her hands for a moment before making a fist.

[Honestly, it was amazing. There were some constellations I couldn't afford to go against. They are all chasing after one incarnation…]

A screen appeared in the darkness. However, the channel's signal was unstable and the video didn't appear immediately. The darkness gazed at the screen and opened its mouth.

–There will soon be signs of the later days.

The later days. Persephone listened to these words and opened her mouth with a mixture of distrust, doubt and anxiety.

[…Will the later days really come?]

–Perhaps.

[You will still be with me at that time right?]

Hades didn't answer. The warm darkness just carefully wrapped around her symbolic body. Persephone felt the darkness and said.

[I am very excited to see what story that kid will show me.]

Her eyes watched as Kim Dokja moved through the darkness to leave the Underworld. Kim Dokja moved forward without looking back.

Persephone laughed lightly, as if he was cute.

Chapter 116: Ep. 23 - Abandoned World, I

I was guided by the judge towards the exit of the Underworld. The exact location wasn't known because my eyes were covered with a blindfold. We seemed to go up and then down. After a long walk, the judge took off the blindfold.

[Follow along this path.]

I opened my eyes and saw a dark and narrow road. Perhaps this was the exit that didn't require going through Charon, the ferryman.

[You should look in 'front'.]

"What does that mean?"

I looked around but the judge had already disappeared.

I had no choice but to start walking along this path. The light faded and darkness settled around me. I was using the walls to orienting myself initially, but the walls soon disappeared. My only frame of reference was gone and I felt like a ship floating on the ocean without any buoys.

The myth of Orpheus suddenly popped into my head. What would happen if I looked back? Then a faint light appeared in the darkness.

[You are afraid of what is behind you. That's why you are a pitiful child.]

It was a message from Persephone.

[Keep this in mind. In order to find the 'front', you must know where the 'back' is. It is because the front can only exist when there is a rear.]

Speaking of which, the judge had said something similar. However, just because the words made sense didn't mean I suddenly gained enlightenment and could make enormous changes.

[It looks like you need some motivation…]

The stream of light in the air stretched out like it was hesitating.

[Okay. I can't bring you to the beginning of the world labyrinth but this much should be possible.]

I suddenly felt something. The string of light disappeared and a small firefly appeared in front of me. It was a distant light. It was a very fragile and shimmering light. Nobody told me anything but I knew what this light was.

–You…

It was Shin Yoosung of the 41st regression.

–Ah, ahh…

I could tell how long she had been waiting just from her voice. If she was already at the beginning of the world labyrinth then the concept of time would be different. It wasn't long by my standards but it might've already been a few years for Shin Yoosung.

The small light shivered a few times before speaking in a hesitant voice.

–Ahjussi.

Perhaps she was influenced by the memories of the young Shin Yoosung.

–…C-Can I call you that? No…?

The way she called me was a bond. It was a wish to be tied somewhere. Perhaps 'ahjussi' was the last lingering attachment of the 41st regression Shin Yoosung. I smiled softly.

"You are currently older than me. Is it still okay?"

The soft light once again trembled. The light gently touched my face. There was warmth in that gesture…

My heart felt pained. She must've been waiting for a long time. Even so, this child had to wait longer.

"I'm sorry but I can't save you now."

The light moved up and down like she understood.

–Don't overdo it. My story now…

"It isn't over yet." I spoke without giving her time to finish. "You have suffered for so long and it can't end like this."

–Why…

"I will never let that happen."

The light stared at me. She trembled in a confused and pathetic manner.

–I got to know ahjussi through the memories of this world. But ahjussi… why are you so good to me? Does ahjussi know me?

I didn't answer. We got to know each other through different means. Just as the 41st regression Shin Yoosung knew me through the memories of her younger self, I knew her through Ways of Survival. Nevertheless, I couldn't explain this.

–I feel strange. I definitely don't know ahjussi but when I'm with you, I feel like I understand everything about you. As if you are a 'god'…

If I was really a god, then I was the most incompetent god in the world. The most helpless god in the world who knew everything but couldn't explain anything.

Shin Yoosung's light was rapidly fading away. I couldn't see her but I seemed to know what she looked like.

–Please save me, please…

"I will."

The tail of the light shaking in the air became smaller and I reached out towards the light. I felt like my heart had been imprisoned. I could feel Shin Yoosung's despair. The long wait…

My heart ached with an indescribable grief. Little by little, Persephone's words made sense. There must be something behind in order to go ahead. This was my 'back' and at the same time, the 'front' that I had to face.

Maybe this was how Yoo Joonghyuk felt. He constantly returned to the past but was only able to move forward.

The moment I was certain of my direction, the environment stabilized. A string of light appeared in the scattered darkness.

[I held her for a while with my power but you don't have much time left if you want to save her.]

I remembered the faint warmth of Shin Yoosung. Persephone continued speaking.

[Please keep this in mind. Humans are 'stories'. By the time you get her back, no one knows how much of her story will remain.]

After that, I was pulled towards somewhere. The cries of ghosts receded and the sensations of my body returned one by one. I could feel the warm sunlight on my eyelids. I felt a dampness and opened my eyes to see a familiar face.

"…Ahjussi?" The young Shin Yoosung was watching me. The child's clear eyes reassured me. Her wild heartbeat gradually slowed down.

I had returned. I breathed slowly and the muscles of my body regained their function.

[The hidden scenario - Queen of the Underworld has ended.]

[You have earned 15,000 coins as an achievement reward.]

The compensation for the updated scenario was also received. The dokkaebi had done his job properly.

[The constellation 'God of Wine and Ecstasy' congratulates you on your safe return.]

I saw the indirect message and my anger belatedly soared.

This bastard Dionysus, I wouldn't have to go through all this trouble if he hadn't placed me in Tartarus. I was stuck in Tartarus with Kim Namwoon and almost had to spend the rest of my life making the gundam.

[The constellation 'God of Wine and Ecstasy' is asking you for reconciliation.]

[7,942 coins have been sponsored.]

7,942? What was this pig-like apology? Well, I'll let it go since he still gave me coins.

[There is one new hidden scenario.]

I immediately confirmed the newly arrived hidden scenario.

[Hidden Scenario - Snake Hunt]

Category: Hidden

Difficulty: S-

Clear Conditions: Hunt the target in the sixth main scenario area.

Time Limit: Until the end of the main scenario.

Compensation: 80,000 coins, the trust of the Queen of the Darkest Spring.

Failure: No access to the Underworld.

As expected, Persephone's task was presented in the form of a hidden scenario.

[Once the target gets close, the scenario alarm will be automatically triggered.]

A snake hunt. The target wasn't specified, but I could guess it was the 'snake' from the next scenario.

I slowly raised my upper body and Shin Yoosung asked anxiously, "Ahjussi, are you okay?"

"Yes. I'm fine."

"Sangah unni asked me to watch you…"

It reminded me of what I told Yoo Sangah before I collapsed.

"Yoo Sangah-ssi?"

It wasn't difficult to find Yoo Sangah. Yoo Sangah was curled up on the ground and fast asleep. I looked at her sleeping face and recalled Persephone's image. Then my face became hot.

…

By the way, the Chinese dress and garter belt… it was really great.

"Unni fell asleep just before you woke up."

"Ah."

"She told me to tell the others if you didn't wake up."

The series of words ignited guilt inside me. I could see dark circles under Yoo Sangah's eyes. She must have a hangover as well…

Chinese dress? Garter belt? Shit, I was garbage.

"Are you awake now?"

Jung Heewon and Lee Hyunsung approached me. They were covered in sweat and seemed to have come back from a morning spar.

Jung Heewon told me. "Dokja-ssi is awake so we are ready to go."

"Ready?"

"The other people have already started."

Come to think of it, there weren't as many people around as there were yesterday. I asked, "What happened overnight?"

"The sixth scenario has been announced."

…Already? I didn't have a chance to ask when a huge string of words appeared in the sky.

[Survivors are advised to gather in Yongsan Station.]

We packed up and left.

We were already in Yongsan so it wasn't hard to go to the station. I carried Yoo Sangah while Jung Heewon and Lee Hyunsung were responsible for the remaining luggage.

Lee Gilyoung and Shin Yoosung followed us while staying far apart from each other. I didn't know where Yoo Joonghyuk's party had gone.

We soon arrived near the station which was already crowded with survivors. I couldn't believe there were still so many people who survived in Seoul. Everyone was watching the huge screen floating in the air.

"Ah?"

"This place?"

The party members and I looked up at the screen together. It was the same screen I had seen in the Underworld. Monsters were running around in the lush forest. They were clearly fantastical monsters, but they looked like they were part of a giant ecosystem.

There were already some incarnations on the screen. Some of the people who had started hunting laughed as they cut off the head of a monster. These dokkaebis. They edited it well like it was a tourist destination.

Someone spoke. "Eh? Aren't they Japanese?"

If I remembered correctly, the sixth scenario was an event scenario with another dome. The man who appeared on the screen was Izumi, a famous incarnation of Japan.

The Tokyo Dome was faster than us so they would've reached the sixth scenario earlier. In many ways, it could be said that South Korea had a relatively unfavourable start.

[A new main scenario has arrived.]

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Along with the message, the contents of the scenario emerged in my head.

[Main Scenario #6 - ????]

Category: Main

Difficulty: ???

Clear Conditions: ???

Time Limit: ???

Compensation: ???

Failure: —

"Eh? There isn't a difficulty level or clear conditions."

"…What the hell do they want us to do? Why is everything question marks?"

The confused people summoned the window several times but the contents of the scenario were still covered with question marks. I wasn't surprised because I already expected this. It was because this scenario…

"Only a few people will be able to complete this scenario." A tall, middle-aged man standing near me declared.

"You…"

"It has been a while, Kim Dokja-nim. This is the first time I am greeting you formally."

…This ahjussi was here as well. I wanted to speak but the man asked me to shake hands first.

"I am Jeon Ildo and I'm called the Neutral King."

"I am Kim Dokja."

The Neutral King, Jeon Ildo. He was one of the few kings remaining in Seoul who survived the Absolute Throne struggle, along with the Maitreya King Cha Sangkyung and the King of Beauty Min Jiwon.

I had been impressed with Jeon Ildo. He was the only king who gave up the throne of his own will.

"During the struggle for the throne and this time as well. I was very impressed with Dokja-nim's performance. You don't know how much my sponsor talks about Dokja-nim. Half the time it is about Dokja-nim."

He gave a good-looking smile. That reminded me, who was his sponsor? I immediately used a skill.

[The exclusive skill, Character List is activated.]

It was a summary list that only contained the attribute and sponsor.

[The settings of the summary list have been changed.]

[Character Summary]

Name: Jeon Ildo

Exclusive Attributes: Clumsy Intellectual (General), the Neutral King (Hero)

Sponsor: Expert at Playing Both Sides

…Now that I saw it, I had a question. Of course it would be this constellation. Expert at Playing Both Sides seemed to be an old-fashioned person with complicated internal relations but it was actually the modifier of a 'king'.

[A constellation who advocates neutral diplomacy has revealed his modifier.]

[The constellation 'Expert at Playing Both Sides' shows good intentions towards you.]

It was the modifier for Gwanghaegun, a king of Joseon famous for his neutral diplomacy.

Jeon Ildo had the title of Neutral King for a reason.

I said to him, "Tell me more. Why did you say that only some people can carry out the scenario?"

"Ah, you didn't know."

The kings had quickly obtained information. Of course, I knew it the best but I still needed to listen to them. Maybe things were different from the Ways of Survival that I knew.

"According to information provided by the low-grade dokkaebis this morning, the participants of this scenario are going to be volunteers."

"Volunteers?"

"Yes. This scenario doesn't require everyone to participate. There is also no penalty for not participating. It is incredible considering the scenarios we've experienced so far."

It was like what I expected. I pointed at the screen and asked, "Will the participants be going there?"

"That's what I heard."

I could hear relieved voices all over the place after Jeon Ildo's words.

"What? Not all of us have to go?"

"Shit, I'm glad. I saw those monsters… why are they so big?"

At this point, the incarnations were divided into three broad categories. First, there was the type that furtively watched. Most of them didn't have an affiliation and probably thought they could survive by hiding.

However, this idea was wrong. After a while, Star Stream scenarios' difficulty would rise exponentially. Perhaps these incarnations would face a terrible future in exchange for not participating in the scenario.

"…Isn't it interesting?"

Then there was the second category. They had somewhat adapted to the harsh environment of the scenarios. People strengthened their resolve by looking at the screen or checking their equipment in advance. Maybe they would be able to survive in the meantime.

Finally, the third category…

"Jeon Ildo-nim! Where are you?"

There was a shout from outside the crowd. Jeon Ildo looked at his watch and groaned. "The time has already come."

"You can go. I'm fine."

"No, I can't go alone. It doesn't make sense."

"…What do you mean?"

"Dokja-nim, I actually came here to find you."

"Find me?"

Jeon Ildo nodded. "A world without kings."

He looked around. It was only a moment but it felt like many people's gazes were focused here. Jeon Ildo gave a mysterious smile as if he noticed the gazes.

"The kings left in this unfortunate world are waiting for you to come."

This was the third category. They were the people who used others in order to survive.

I followed Jeon Ildo to the kings' gathering place.

They gathered at the central platform of Yongsan Station and the meeting room was covered by a big tent. There were dozens of guards around the tent. Every one of them was formidable. They were the elite troops of the kings. They were probably hunting the monsters in other areas while we were fighting Shin Yoosung.

"I'm sorry but only the kings can go inside." The sentries stopped us and I looked back at my party members.

Jung Heewon and Lee Hyunsung understood the situation and nodded. I left Yoo Sangah with Lee Hyunsung.

"Dokja-ssi. Scream if anything happens. Understood?" Jung Heewon told me.

I smiled at her and opened the door of the tent.

[Sound Wave Blocking is activated in the area.]

They even had Sound Wave Blocking? There seemed to be a pretty good assortment of people. I walked in and saw a round table in the wide space. There were a few biscuits and beef jerky on the table.

The chairs that people were sitting in were different. Some were plastic chairs, some were wooden chairs and there was even a sofa. Still, no matter where they sat, it was definitely a throne.

The surviving kings were here.

"You said that our group has an advantage? South Korea will be a latecomer. Do you think we can deal with those who are already present? However, it will be different if our group goes. I will go…!"

The booming voice of the middle-aged man faded away at my appearance. All the kings were staring at me.

"The last king has come." King of Beauty Min Jiwon stated.

I lightly greeted her and looked around at the kings. Yoo Joonghyuk wasn't here, obviously. Apart from me, there were a total of five people present.

King of Beauty, Min Jiwon.

The Maitreya King, Cha Sangkyung.

The Neutral King, Jeon Ildo.

The King of Wanderers.

Those were four people, and the remaining person…

It was strange. I didn't know him?

"Who is this person?"

"I am Kim Dokja."

"Oh, you are… hum, hum. I am the president of Yeouido, Yoo Hyunho."

Yeouido's president? The president already died. What was this bullshit? Min Jiwon added in a sour voice. "…Yoo Hyunho-ssi isn't a king but he leads a large force. That's why he is here."

"What king? Do you really think this is the Joseon Dynasty? We are living in the era of a democracy. Please wake up!"

I quietly activated Character List.

[Character Summary]

Name: Yoo Hyunho

Exclusive Attributes: Corrupt Politician (Rare)

Sponsor: Master of Manipulating State Affairs

Exclusive Skills: Bribery Lv. 5, Military Command Lv. 4, Corrupt Power Lv. 6, Control of the Masses Lv. 7…

I suddenly remembered. A politician who survived the first scenario. There had clearly been such a person in several regressions. Usually Yeoido was erased during the monster flood so he was lucky this time.

[The constellation 'Maritime War God' is angry with the corrupt officials of Joseon.]

[The constellation 'Bald General of Justice' hates the incarnation Yoo Hyunho.]

These messages probably had something to do with Yoo Hyunho's sponsor. A master of manipulating state affairs who lived during the Joseon period…

I would've been able to ask Yoo Sangah if she was here.

"This person called Lee Sookyung is attending for a similar reason. I don't know if you've heard but she is called the King of Wanderers."

The King of Wanderers looked at me. She was still wearing a mask. I stared at the mask for a moment before turning my head to the left.

"There is no need for introductions. I would like to know why you called me here."

Jeon Ildo sitting at the centre of the table spoke after hearing my words. "We are here to select the representatives who will participate in the sixth scenario."

This was their purpose. Yoo Hyunho spoke after Jeon Ildo. "The people gathered here are those with the greatest forces in Seoul Dome at present. Kim Dokja-ssi is relatively small but you received the great honour of a special invitation due to your contribution to the scenario."

"Ah, is that so?"

Special? Honour? What a ridiculous guy. He hid somewhere while I cleared the scenario… Now he wanted to say these words?

Yoo Hyunho looked around and kept speaking. "Once again, it is time for us to stop being barbarians. For a while, we went back to the primitive era and repeated the struggles of society. However, our essence is that of citizens who act according to strict social contracts! Then wouldn't it be better to pick the next scenario participants using the democratic process?"

It was a dog barking but it sounded convincing because he mixed in several right words. Min Jiwon replied, "What democratic process are you talking about?"

"Like I said before, I think it is right to allocate the participants according to the size of the force."

Jeon Ildo immediately retorted. "I know that Yeouido's group is the greatest simply looking at numbers. That proposal isn't fair."

"Jeon Ildo-ssi, I am saddened by your words. Aren't we all Koreans? It doesn't matter if a certain amount of people from a particular group is selected. Once we enter the scenario, we will be facing foreign opponents. Then the group we belong to won't matter. Are we going to fight each other when the enemy is in front of us?"

He truly was a politician but Jeon Ildo wasn't that easily persuaded. "If it doesn't matter who is picked then there isn't a reason to pick from your group."

"Uhum, according to the democratic process, we have many powerful people…"

I became annoyed when I heard it. "We are here to talk about this? I don't know why we are picking people in the first place. Just send everyone who wants to go."

"We originally thought like that but things changed."

"Changed?"

Min Jiwon nodded. "The scenario has a limited quota."

Limited?

"The kings received a message from the dokkaebis but you must not have received it yet."

At this moment, a system message flashed in my head.

[Seoul Dome's initial quota is 10 people.]

[The size of the subsequent quotas will be decided depending on the incarnations in the scenario.]

Oh, this was why they were fighting. Unlike the other incarnations, the kings knew how important it was to get a strong start early in the scenario. If they could put their own forces into the initial quota then they thought the initiative of future scenarios would come to their group. In the end, this place was going to become a battelfield over kings' positions.

"My group will go. I heard there are a lot of Japanese people in the scenario area. I think it is right for me to take the lead as a descendant of Silla."

"No, I will go. Baekje had many wars with Japan since ancient times."

"That's Baekje. Your sponsor is from Later Baekje."

"What does that mean? Of course I have to go. How can I believe in your antiquated sponsor…"

"Everyone, wait a minute. Please calm down…"

Jeon Ildo came forward but couldn't calm the chaos down. I looked around with a sigh and saw the King of Wanderers. She was watching me without saying a word. I could see a slight smile below her half mask.

I had to settle this. The arguing kings had a fierce atmosphere like there was going to be bloodshed.

"There is no use in us arguing about this now." The kings looked at me the moment I said these words. Yoo Hyunho's eyes held a wordless question, 'What do you mean by that?'

I could feel the ground starting to tremble slightly, and picked up a biscuit from the table. Now he was coming. Why did he always show up late?

"The last king hasn't come yet."

The moment I broke the biscuit, one side of the tent exploded and the self-styled president of Yeouido fell down with a scream.

"Kuaaak!"

A person appeared behind Yoo Hyunho. I glanced through a hole in the tent and saw dozens of collapsed guards behind him.

This was our regressor. His temper was the same, no matter the regression. The peculiar ferocious eyes swept through the group and soon focused on me.

"K-King!" Some of the kings gasped.

Then the king, Yoo Joonghyuk opened his mouth. "I will announce the people who will participate in the next scenario."

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There was no room for disagreement. For him, the representatives selection wasn't a subject of discussion but a presentation.

"Speak now if you have a complaint."

There was no way to express dissatisfaction towards such a fearsome killing intent. The kings knew Yoo Joonghyuk's strength and trembled without even thinking about rebellion. Ah, except for one person.

"G-Get out! Now!" Unfortunately, the self-styled President of Yeouido had never heard about the Supreme King. The politician didn't pay attention to rumours. "Where did you come from…?"

Kwajik!

"Kuaaack!" Yoo Hyunho screamed as his hand was crushed. "My hand! My hand!"

Kwajijik!

"Kuaaack! Bodyguards! Where are my bodyguards?"

Yoo Hyunho struggled for help but there was no one here who could help him. Yoo Joonghyuk's stood on his back, not leaving him any room to breathe, and it only took a few moments until Yoo Hyunho passed out.

Once everything became calm, Yoo Joonghyuk opened his mouth. "I didn't think so. Then I will announce the roster."

The faces of the kings became tense. Yoo Joonghyuk truly was great. Taking the reigns of power so easily…

The kings quickly fell from the 'picking' position to 'being picked'. I grabbed a beef jerky from the table and waited for Yoo Joonghyuk's words.

Min Jiwon stared blankly from next to me.

「 How can you be so calm? 」

I'm sorry but I was in a different situation from them. It was because I was someone Yoo Joonghyuk recognized as a 'companion'. He threatened me by saying that the oath was over but he did acknowledge me.

Yoo Joonghyuk opened his mouth. "The first one will naturally be me."

Well, it was obvious. How could he not be on a list created by himself? Behind Yoo Joonghyuk, the rest of his party members had appeared. Lee Jihye and Lee Seolhwa.

Lee Hyunsung and Jung Heewon also looked inside with anxious eyes. In particular, Jung Heewon was about to jump inside, but a look on my face stopped her.

Yoo Joonghyuk continued. "The second person will be Lee Jihye."

I thought the second one would be me so I was naturally surprised. Well, I originally wasn't his companion so his other party members might be disturbed if he called me first. He might look cold but he looked after his people. I could understand that sentiment.

Lee Jihye couldn't hide her joy as she smiled at me.

…Still, it was a bit annoying.

"The third is Lee Seolhwa." Lee Seolhwa nodded and came forward.

Every time a person's name was called, the faces of the kings darkened. They all felt an ominous feeling. Yoo Joonghyuk's list was a fixed list.

「There are seven people remaining. We still have a chance.」

「The Supreme King only has three party members. He will have to choose other people.」

「We are the strongest among the remaining people…」

I could tell by their faces what they were thinking. Me? Of course, I wasn't worried. I would naturally be on the list. Maybe I would be next…

"The fourth one is Lee Hyunsung."

…What? Lee Hyunsung became pale as his name was called.

"Y-You mean me…?"

Yoo Joonghyuk ignored the words and looked at the next person. "The fifth is Jung Heewon."

"…It's me?" Jung Heewon's eyes widened with surprise. It was unexpected that he chose Jung Heewon over me. This bastard was picking from my party?

"The sixth is Lee Gilyoung."

"…Uh? Huh?"

Then Yoo Joonghyuk looked at Shin Yoosung who was next to Lee Gilyoung. Shin Yoosung hid behind Lee Gilyoung with fearful eyes.

The confused Lee Gilyoung was stunned for a moment but he stood in front of Shin Yoosung like he made a decision. Yoo Joonghyuk looked down at the two children with an unreadable look before turning his head away.

"Then…" Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes finally stopped on me. Yes, it was finally my turn. Did he deliberately leave me until the end? As expected from a main character, he knew how to direct a show.

"…You can take care of the rest."

I coughed on the beef jerky. Yoo Joonghyuk looked around the tent before turning to leave, like there was no more work to be done. This was it? Really?

…Then what about me? Why was he looking at me like that? I belatedly chased after him but Yoo Joonghyuk was already gone. How long did I stand there?

Jung Heewon stood in the distance and asked me carefully. "Weren't the two of you friendly?"

I thought so.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is laughing with delight.]

Lee Jihye also added in a strange tone. "Ahjussi, didn't you meet with Master last night? I thought you would be the first on the list…"

"What do you mean?"

"Last night Master said he was going to see you?"

"Last night?"

"It was around one or two o'clock? Were you sleeping?"

I thought about the time. It was between one or two o'clock in the morning. I think it was just before I went to the Underworld. "I was awake at that time but Yoo Joonghyuk didn't come."

"That's strange? He definitely went to find you. He was also a bit angry when he came back."

"Angry?"

"You know that look Master makes when he is angry. Like he is contemptuous of a person…"

I pondered on the memories of that time. What was I doing right before I went to the Underworld? Ah, yes. A memory came to mind. At that time, I was drinking with Yoo Sangah. Dionysus poured alcohol and made the atmosphere strange, then… uh…um.

[The constellation 'God of Wine and Ecstasy' is making a playful expression.]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is laughing with delight.]

[500 coins have been sponsored.]

I felt a bit complicated as I explained what happened. The party members looked surprised. Jung Heewon stared at me with narrowed eyes.

"…You kissed Yoo Sangah-ssi?"

"No, that's not it… what did you hear?"

"Was it really Dionysus? You weren't pretending to be drunk?"

"It was because of Dionysus and nothing happened."

Jung Heewon looked at me with suspicious eyes.

…Why was this brought up?

"Hrmm… perhaps Yoo Joonghyuk-ssi saw it? That's why his mood is bad…"

"Yoo Joonghyuk isn't that type of person."

"Even if Yoo Joonghyuk-ssi witnessed Dokja-ssi's kiss scene, I don't think there is a reason to feel angry…"

"It wasn't a kiss." I grumbled and Lee Jihye exclaimed with a smile.

"Ah! I think I know…"

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' says it is a companionship.]

Jung Heewon cocked her head. "…Companionship?"

Lee Jihye dealt a big blow. "What is Unni's sponsor? They think it is just companionship?"

"What do you mean?"

"Companions, I think I understand." Lee Hyunsung unexpectedly interrupted. "Come to think of it, I would also feel offended if I saw Kim Dokja doing that."

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' has snorted at the unexpected remark.]

"…Yes? Why would Hyunsung-ssi feel bad?" Lee Jihye looked like she was going to get a nosebleed.

Lee Hyunsung's expression was serious. I was nervous about what bombshell words Lee Hyunsung would say. "We are risking our lives in every scenario. Yoo Joonghyuk-ssi trains his body every morning to prepare for the following scenarios. I trains severely every day to protect his companions."

"…Huh?" Lee Jihye made a strange expression at the unexpected answer. Jung Heewon listened to Lee Hyunsung's words with a doubtful expression.

"If a companion is blinded by sexual desire in such a situation then I would be in a bad mood. I would also feel betrayed. Yoo Joonghyuk might not be a soldier but he is a very austere person. Such a person would react sensitively when people aren't disciplined. It would feel like their priorites are wrong."

"Um… it make sense." Jung Heewon agreed.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is disappointed with her incarnation.]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' resents Lee Hyunsung's wrong companionship.]

I heard Lee Hyunsung's words and thought it was true. A scene from Ways of Survival suddenly came to mind. I opened the text, searched Yoo Joonghyuk's third regression and was able to find evidence.

「 Pathetic person. You sell yourself to women with one glance. 」

「 Those with strong sexual desires are excluded from my list of companions. It is easy for them to make mistakes. 」

It was really unfair if Yoo Joonghyuk had actually misunderstood me. It wasn't even a kiss. Damn, I couldn't tell him it was a misunderstanding now…

"Kim Dokja-ssi? We want to pick the rest of the people." Min Jiwon suddenly approached me.

I looked back and saw the other kings watching me.

"The Supreme King picked six people and there are four spots remaining."

"We have to pick four…"

Yeouido's group had already been destroyed and now there were five kings remaining. The Maitreya King Cha Sangkyung noticed and opened his mouth first.

"Hum, there are only four spots and the remaining people are…"

"Why don't we decide it with a match?" I was the one who gave the opinion. "We will just be wasting time arguing among ourselves. Everyone wants to fill the spots with their own forces so let's fight. The king who wins will decide the remaining spots."

The kings glanced at each other at my words. A moment later, the reply was heard.

"Okay."

Once again, the Neutral King declared that he would abstain.

"I'll stay behind. Someone should stay here and lead the people…"

It was a wise choice. If they couldn't get ahead in the scenario then it wasn't a bad idea to build a strong base here instead. In addition, people didn't know it yet but there was a scenario for the incarnations left behind. The dokkaebi who loved strong stimuli couldn't let the incarnations live peacefully.

The King of Wanderers also raised her hand to express her intention to abstain. The other kings seemed surprised but thought i was fortunate that their competitors had reduced. Min Jiwon looked at me and declared confidently.

"The same method as before won't work."

Maybe she knew that I won the Absolute Throne with my stockpile of coins.

…Did I seem that shallow? We exchanged blows. It took less than five minutes before the match was over.

Who won? There was no need to ask.

"No way… I thought only the Supreme King was a monster. How did you become so strong?"

Cha Sangkyung was bloody while Min Jiwon gasped as she spoke. Yes, it would've been easier if I had done this from the beginning.

I shrugged and stated, "The initial quota is 10 people so everyone should wait. The second round will start soon."

"…Hah, you use every means. Who will you send?"

"One will be me and she will be the other person."

Shin Yoosung's eyes brightened at my words. She had been worried about being left alone.

"The remaining two are…I am thinking of someone."

"It isn't me?"

"No, it isn't Min Jiwon-ssi."

"Tsk… I see."

Min Jiwon got up from the dusty ground. The depressed kings left their spots one by one. I gave a command to my party members. "Please leave first. I need to do something. Meet me in front of the station later."

The party members nodded and left the tent, the crowded interior becoming empty in an instant.

…

After a bit more time, only one person besides me was left in the tent. It was a masked woman. Then her mouth opened for the first time.

"It seems like you have many friends."

I hesitated to the last moment. I didn't want to talk to her. However, I had to ask for her help to get the person I needed in the next scenario.

I took a deep breath before saying to the King of Wanderers. "It has been a long time, Mother."

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The King of Wanderers smiled slightly at my words. "It has been a long time? I saw you last time."

"We just passed by each other at the time."

So far, I had seen the King of Wanderers twice. The first was when Han Sooyoung and I destroyed Song Minwoo and the second was when the Disaster of Floods was killed.

This was the third time…

The King of Wanderers slowly took off her mask. As expected, it was really her.

I asked, "When did you get out?"

"A little while ago."

We looked at each other for a moment. My mother and I didn't look alike. No matter how hard I looked, it was only a face in the late 30s. When I was a child, I often heard that she looked like my older cousin. Of course, that was when I still had my father.

"Did you live in Seoul?"

She replied, "I came to meet someone I knew."

"Then you were accidentally caught in the Seoul Dome?"

"Yes."

"You have been released. Why are you wearing the prison uniform?"

"Let's see? Perhaps it is out of a desire for atonement?"

"…Atonement? You?"

"Every human is a prisoner. They have their own prison."

I stared at my mother. That shameless tone… She really hadn't changed. She told me, "Can't you say any words of thanks? You would've had a harder time without me."

…Certainly, she helped. My mother led her forces north to the disaster. It was great, no matter how weak the disaster. In fact, I believed that she would do it properly. I hated my mother but I also knew my mother well.

"You are meeting your mother but you don't seem happy."

"Do you really want me to be?"

"A little bit."

[The exclusive skill 'Lie Detection Lv. 1' is activated.]

[You have confirmed that the statement is false.]

How funny. I knew it was a lie but I still had to check. I said, "You have survived. You are a great survivor."

"It is thanks to the story you told me."

"…I guess so."

"You are the only one who came to the prison to see me and told me about the novel you read."

That was correct. I never had a proper conversation with my mother during all the times I visited her at the prison. I only talked about Ways of Survival. Once I became tired of it, I stopped visiting. "I didn't have anything else to say apart from the novel."

"How can that be?"

"The novel was all I had."

An image of the past came to mind before disappearing. If there hadn't been Ways of Survival or the author who wrote the story, perhaps I wouldn't be in this world right now. This story was the only comfort to the Kim Dokja who didn't have a mother or a father.

My mother muttered, "It is at most a fantasy novel…"

"In the end, you survived thanks to that novel."

We stared silently at each other for a moment.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is looking at you with excited eyes.]

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' is looking at you with strange eyes.]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is watching you with sad eyes.]

I was the one who broke the silence first. "What attributes did you get? It might be related to the novel I told you."

"Should I tell you?"

"Yes, if you still think of me as your child."

"I wonder if you think of me as your mother."

"A little bit."

[The character 'Lee Sookyung' has used 'Lie Detection Lv. 1'.]

['Lee Sookyung' has confirmed that the statement is false.]

Dammit. My mother already had this skill. There was a hint of sorrow in my mother's expression. I had no way of knowing if it was acting or not.

She asked, "Are you still holding a grudge against me?"

"I'm not here to talk about that."

"Your father was the bad guy."

"I know."

There were certainly 'bad people' in this world. One type used violence against their wives, illegally gambled and threatened their family's livelihood.

My father was a bad person. I knew it, my mother knew it and South Korea's laws said it. However…

"Your actions weren't right just because my father was a bad person."

"There are things we have to sacrifice for a better life."

"There is no such law in South Korea. There is a law that any human who commits murder should go to prison."

"You think life is that simple because you only read novels."

"For me, reality was more like a novel. Because of you."

At this point, it already wasn't a normal conversation between mother and son. This was why I didn't want to talk to her. I knew what would happen when we talked. We knew too much about how to hurt each other.

I changed the topic. "Do you know why I was looking for you?"

"Why don't you tell me?"

"I can tell when you are lying, so stop beeing coy."

My mother smiled lightly.

"You have prisoner №406, right? Lend that old woman to me."

"…Wouldn't it be better to take the incarnation with Jeon Woochi as a sponsor than this grandmother? I have many useful incarnations."

"Jeon Woochi's incarnation is your companion. Besides, the grandmother will be of more help."

My mother stared at me for a moment before nodding. "Certainly, she might be useful because of the opponents. By the way, how do you know the sponsor of №406?"

"I can't say."

"Do you have a skill that lets you sponsors?"

I couldn't say anything to my mother. "Are you going to lend her to me?"

"I'll lend her. Instead…"

I was a bit afraid of what she would say next. My mother would probably suggest a deal I couldn't imagine at all. She said with a faint smile, "Next time, introduce me to your friends."

I was struck speechless.

…Shit. It was a perfect blow. My mother was the best at making bad people worse.

"Dokja-yah. Make sure to look properly at reality. Even if fiction becomes reality, you mustn't think of fiction as reality."

[The exclusive skill, 'Fourth Wall' is shaking violently!]

I only heard a few words but my entire world seemed to shake. I knew for sure. This person was the strongest reminder of the reality I hated.

"Do you understand?"

[The stigma 'Self-Rationalization Lv. 1' is activated.]

Disgusting. Now she wanted to act like a mother. Too many rivers had been crossed to go back now.

[The exclusive skill, 'Fourth Wall's' shaking has subsided.]

I couldn't bear it anymore and stood up. "That's right. I think that fiction is like reality. Why? It is because I have always been living that way."

"…"

"Maybe it seems pathetic to you. However, know this. At least I didn't sell 'reality as fiction' like you did."

I left the tent with these last words. Cool air entered my coat's collar and reached my body. I looked in front of me and saw the slightly startled Yoo Sangah.

"I-I'm sorry… Dokja-ssi was late…"

It was difficult. No, rather than difficult… It was shameful.

"Did you hear everything?"

Yoo Sangah bowed her head in a deep apology. The crown of her head could be seen.

I eventually sighed. "Would you like to take a walk?"

We walked along the platform of Yongsan Station. It was definitely a cold wind but the temperature changed when it touched my cheeks. I never had time to wash my hair, yet Yoo Sangah's hair smelled nice and fresh.

I asked, "How is your hangover?"

"It's okay. By the way, I heard that you carried me on your back. I'm sorry. I troubled you."

"It was because you were looking after me."

We were silent for a moment before I opened my mouth. "Do you think it is strange? Why are a mother and son talking like that?"

"That's not true."

She was lying. It was extremely strange.

"Do you want to know?"

Yoo Sangah's eyes shook for a moment. "…If you don't mind."

I smiled bitterly. Yes, now was the time to talk. I took a deep breath before saying with exaggerated calmness. "My mother killed my father."

Strangely, my words sounded ridiculous. I spoke like it was someone else's story.

"She went to prison for her sin."

I continued speaking.

"My father… it is shameful to say this, but he deserved to die. Domestic violence, gambling, laundering money… my mother and I lived in fear every day. There wasn't a single day without bruises. He hit me too sometimes. Then one day, my mother made up her mind and it happened."

"Ah…"

"I thought it was quite well-known at the company. Yoo Sangah-ssi didn't know?"

There was no answer from Yoo Sangah. She had belatedly realized that she had touched a wound she shouldn't have touched.

"Do you feel even stranger now? What she did was illegal, but you are wondering why I would hate my mother for that."

"No! I'm not Dokja-ssi so I don't fully understand…"

"Honestly, do you think I should forgive her?"

Yoo Sangah couldn't say anything. It couldn't be helped. The touched wound had already burst.

There was an awkward silence before I spoke again. "Do you know the book called the Underground Killer? It was previously on the Kyobo bestsellers list."

I brought up the book out of the blue, so Yoo Sangah thought I was trying to switch the topic and replied awkwardly, "I think I've heard of it. Wasn't it an amazing bestseller?"

"It was an essay written by an abused woman in prison after she killed her husband. It was praised by critics at the time. They said that a Korean version of Notes from Underground had come out. Of course, it was completely overrated."

Yoo Sangah's face suddenly darkened. She had noticed. I hadn't changed the topic at all.

"That's right. My mother wrote it."

Yoo Sangah's lips dropped open.

"I still remember the time a bunch of reporters waited in front of my house. They kept asking me if the essay was real."

"…"

"I remember everything my classmates said. They told me that my mother made money by selling murder."

"Dokja-ssi…"

"My relatives also said this. My mother is a murderer. How dare she slip her face into the newspapers?"

Yoo Sangah wanted to say something but I kept going.

"It was a bit hard because of this. No, it was hard for a long time."

"…"

"I could bear to be the child of a murderer. However, it is different to be sold as a story. It is a different matter when my life was turned into money by someone."

I looked at the sky. It wasn't night but I was more certain than ever that the distant constellations were watching me. Perhaps this story was meant for them as well.

However, no constellations sent me coins. Should I be glad? I didn't know.

"Do you still think that I should forgive my mother?"

I didn't want an answer. I didn't want her to understand in the first place. Maybe this was the ugliest form of violence I could do against Yoo Sangah, who grew up in a well-off family. It was an arbitrary display of unhappiness forced onto someone who would never understand.

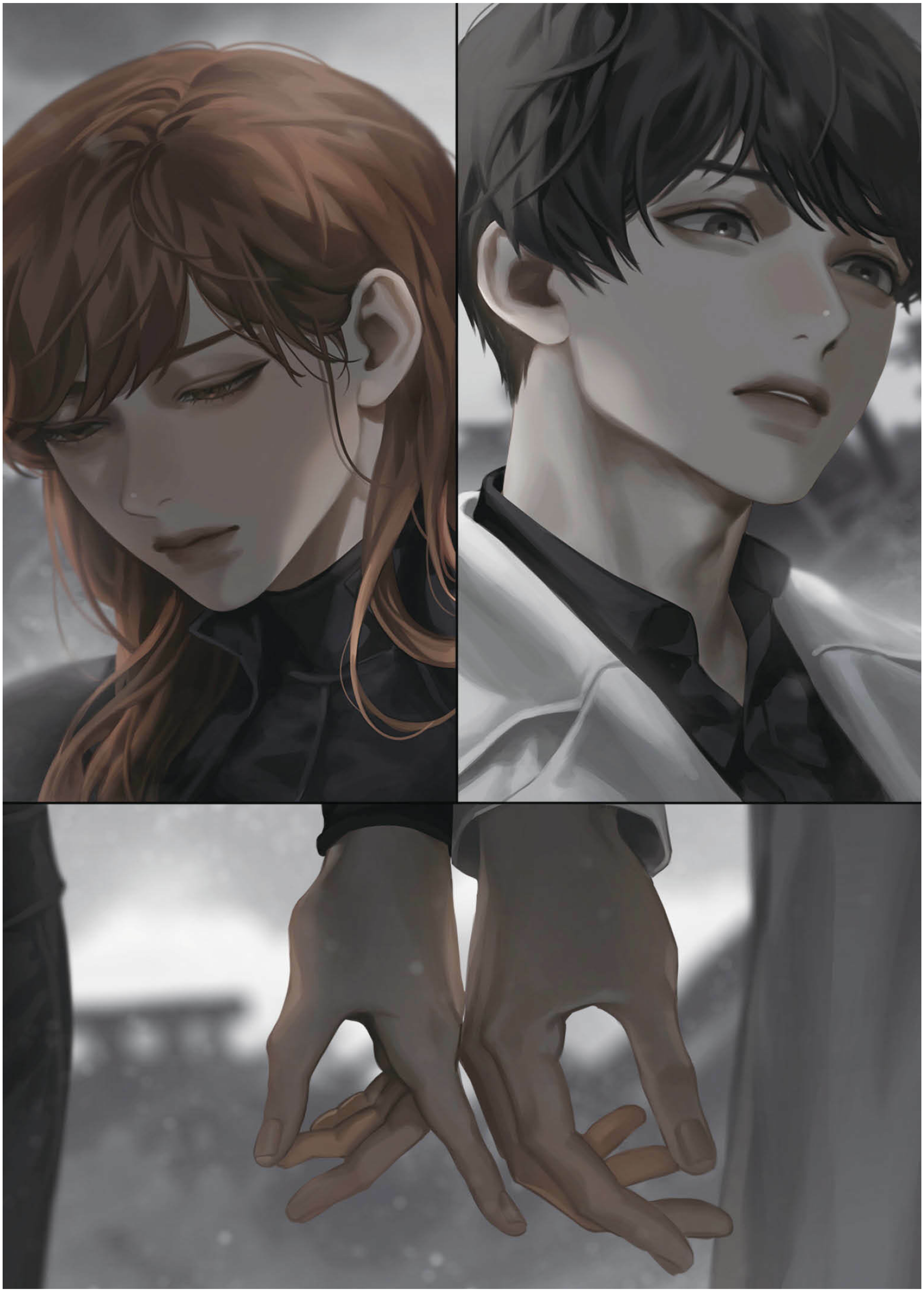
The kind Yoo Sangah would grieve knowing that it was impossible for her to understand. I laughed at the unknown sense of victory. "I'm sorry. It was a joke."

"Huh?"

"It was a lie. Were you fooled? Do you think there is a novel like this? My mother and I are ordinary people and my father had an accident when I was young…"

Then something small and soft gripped my hand. The texture was so warm that I forgot what I was about to say. For a while… I stopped walking.

Yoo Sangah wasn't looking at me. Thus, I wasn't looking at her either. We walked hand in hand without facing each other. It was as if this alone was sufficient. Strangely, my heart gradually calmed.



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[The exclusive skill, 'Fourth Wall' is shaking faintly.]

Perhaps it was due to the realistic body temperature.

"Dokja-ssi!"

We neared the entrance of the station and there was the sound of people rushing forward. We reflexively let go of our hands. Jung Heewon ran over and asked, "Did the two of you kiss again?"

"K-Kiss?"

"Yoo Sangah-ssi is blushing. You did it, you did it!"

I would've misunderstood if I didn't know Yoo Sangah a bit more.

"Stop playing around. Nothing happened."

"Yes yes, I'm sure." Jung Heewon looked at me and said, "A strange old lady came to find us. Did Dokja-ssi invite her?"

An old woman with a cane walked out from the back of the party. "I hope this useless old body will be of help…"

Like other prisoners, the grandmother was wearing a blue prison uniform. She was prisoner №406. My mother acted very quickly.

"Are you Kim Dokja?"

"Yes, that's me."

"I've heard a lot about you from Sookyung. It is a pleasure."

"It is also a pleasure."

Sookyung was my mother's name. I looked around at the party members and said, "She is indeed the person I called for. Let's depart."

We exited Yongsan Station and went to a place where people were gathered. Yoo Joonghyuk's party and the kings were already gathered there.

A white crystal slowly fell from the Great Hole in the sky. It was a crystal that shone with light.

[Warp Crystal.]

This was the item we would use to go to the next scenario area.

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* Official novel illustration (canonical)

Chapter 120: Ep. 23 - Abandoned World, V

There were exactly five grooves in the crystal. Yoo Joonghyuk and I were well aware of what to place there.

Yoo Joonghyuk stood next to me and said, "You came."

"Yes. Unfortunately."

"It doesn't matter if you sit this one out." I turned towards Yoo Joonghyuk at the unexpected words. This guy was still talking without looking at me. "You have a woman you love."

"…What?"

"It'll be hard."

It felt like I understood something that couldn't be resolved. Perhaps he didn't want to take me to the scenario out of care towards me? It was ridiculous. Yoo Joonghyuk?

"It could be the last time."

I shook my head. It wasn't necessarily impossible when I thought about it. Yoo Joonghyuk had lost Lee Seolhwa in the second regression. It wasn't an exaggeration to say that Yoo Joonghyuk was arguably the world's greatest authority when it came to losing a loved one.

I told him, "It's not like that. Do you think my face is full of love?"

I didn't mean it but the words sounded like self-deprecation. Let me say this first. I have a decent face.

Yoo Joonghyuk stared at me quietly and said, "Certainly, I don't care if you die."

Shit.

"Your words are too harsh. I'm hurt."

"Don't forget I still have one hit left."

"…Ah, yes. I had almost forgotten. Thanks for reminding me."

I didn't know if this bastard wanted me to live or to die. I communicated directly to my companions through the group chat.

–I will inform you of the precautions now.

Using the group chat meant that things should be kept secret. The party members focused on my story while pretending to be quiet.

–The warp crystal transports two people together. That's why we will move in pairs, like I mentioned before.

–Yoosung will be with me as team 1, Heewon-ssi and Hyunsung-ssi will be team 2, Yoo Sangah-ssi and №406 will be team 3. Gilyoung doesn't have a partner so he will go with Yoo Joonghyuk's group. That Yoo Joonghyuk… he can take care of himself.

–You might get dizzy when moving through the crystal. Please don't panic. The scenario will start as soon as you arrive. Keep in mind that once the scenario begins in earnest…

I was rapidly rattling off instructions when the dokkaebi appeared on top of the warp crystal.

[Wait a minute. I'm really sorry but I have an emergency announcement.]

Emergency announcement?

[I forgot to mention that the number of people who can participate from Seoul Dome is 8, not 10.]

"What are you suddenly saying?"

All the participants were already decided…

Looking closer, this was the dokkaebi who asked me about how to update the scenario in the Underworld. Was he called Youngki?

[This scenario… there are those who have already gone to the sixth scenario due to the dimension warping in the fifth scenario becoming twisted.]

"…Someone is already there?"

[Yes, Seoul Dome already has two people in the scenario.]

That reminded me, Han Sooyoung and Gong Pildu were already in the scenario. I saw them on the screen in the Underworld but had forgotten for a moment.

By the way, part of the dimension warped. It seemed that the intermediate dokkaebi had intervened quite a bit in the scenario to kill me.

[It might be a scenario error but I am removing two of the existing spots for fairness.]

"What? You can't do that! Then who the hell is going?"

The people who weren't even going were the most upset. The party members looked at me with troubled expressions. Even Yoo Joonghyuk was watching me. It was an expression that told me to make the decisions. Damn…

Unexpectedly, the first one to raise her hand was Yoo Sangah. "I'll stay back."

She noticed my hesitation and decided to help by coming forward herself. I had to take that grandmother, even if I lost Yoo Sangah.

Jung Heewon raised her hand next. "I will also stay back. Won't there be another quota anyway?"

"Is it okay?"

"Dokja-ssi looks worried today but don't you know? This time that scary person is on the same side."

Certainly, it was reassuring if Jung Heewon and Yoo Sangah were left behind. They would be able to make it into the second quota, even if there was a lot of competition.

In the end, the two people dropped out and Lee Hyunsung paired up with the grandmother. The grandmother looked vaguely pleased.

Just before we left, I whispered to Yoo Sangah. "I forgot to say this but tell the King of Wanderers to be wary of Jeon Ildo. I think you already know why."

Yoo Sangah nodded and hesitated before whispering to me. "Don't die."

I nodded. Then Jung Heewon asked, "…Aren't you departing now? I'm not a constellation but they must be impatient."

Yoo Sangah blushed and retreated while my party and I approached the warp crystal. I pulled out everything that I acquired from the disasters.

The Protection Symbol of the Imyuntar.

Protection Symbol of the Parasites.

The Protection Symbol of the Jenobel.

Then Yoo Joonghyuk and №406 pulled out one each. They were protection symbols obtained from defeating the Disaster of Ice and Disaster of Water.

[Insert the five protection symbols.]

The message flowed from the Warp Crystal and we placed them in the grooves.

There were five protection symbols. It was proof that this world was protected from the disasters. Only those who survived the disasters were qualified to go to other worlds.

[The qualifications are complete.]

[The Warp Crystal is activated.]

The crystal split into four pieces and a blue coloured door was created. We entered in pairs. Shin Yoosung and I held each other firmly and moved through the door.

[The main scenario has been updated.]

* * *

I opened my eyes and Shin Yoosung and I were in a lush forest. We stumbled and felt the clay texture of the soil. I was dizzy enough to vomit. I told the party members not to panic but it was funny that I was the only one to get dizzy.

I looked around and saw that Shin Yoosung was in the midst of vomiting. "Are you okay?"

"Urgh…"

I patted Shin Yoosung's back and looked around. My mind was confused but I couldn't stay in this chaotic state. I looked in front of me, behind me and to the side. Only the forest was visible.

We were in the middle of the forest. It was a scenery that was too similar to Earth.

[The main scenario 'Abandoned World' has begun.]

The scenario message rose straight away. However, I couldn't afford to check the details of the main scenario right now. I could already feel killing intent from the nearby bushes.

"Yoosung."

Shin Yoosung came to her senses and raised her head. Rustling sounds came from the bushes. This was one of the places where new scenario entrants were warped to. If I assumed the worst, those in the bushes were the incarnations of other countries that arrived before us.

I nervously prepared to use the Bookmark skill. Maybe those who warped to this world were the elite among the elites. If I didn't do my best in the beginning, my head could fly in the blink of an eye.

However, the thing that emerged from the bushes wasn't what I expected.

[The 7th grade monster 'steel wolf' has appeared.]

Shin Yoosung and I looked at each other with an identical expressions on our faces after hearing that. It was funny. We were probably the only ones who would be relieved by this message.

"I think they are quite small, ahjussi."

Given the fact that typical monsters were the size of a house, the current steel wolves were the size of ordinary wolves. There were approximately 10 of them. It wasn't a difficult number to deal with.

[The character 'Shin Yoosung' has used 'Advanced Diverse Communication Lv. 3'.]

Shin Yoosung used Advanced Diverse Communication to make the monsters fight each other. Those Shin Yoosung failed to tame were killed by the Blade of Faith. The 7th grade monsters were unbelievably fragile. It seemed that their strength was reduced as their size became smaller.

Shin Yoosong wondered, "…Uh? There are no coins?"

"The event is over."

"There aren't even any items. There are no cores."

"There is a lot of difference in stats."

"Are they really 7th grade monsters? They seem more like 9th grade…"

Shin Yoosung looked a bit lost. It was probably because the first monsters she met after being so tense were weak.

That reminded me, the condition of the forest was a bit strange. This type of forest would normally have trees that rose far above my head. However, these trees were only a little bit taller than my head.

The contents of the scenario were still a mystery. There was only the title 'Abandoned World' while everything else were still filled with question marks.

[The scenario activation conditions haven't been met yet.]

I jumped up a bit and looked around. Fortunately, the trees weren't tall so I could see the scenery of the surrounding area just by jumping lightly.

"It isn't all a forest. Let's go over there."

In fact, I knew what to expect if I left this zone. We moved along a forest path. Not long afterwards, the forest ended and a plains appeared. On the plains…

"…Ahjussi?"

We faced a group of soldiers.

"They appeared! It really is a scenario!" Someone shouted at us. It sounded like Korean, even if it was an alien language.

The confused Shin Yoosung stepped towards me.

Hundreds of troops were filling the vast plains. There were dozens of cavalry and hundreds of archers. In addition, there were hundreds of infantry. There were enough people for a war waiting for us here.

"Everybody prepare their skills!"

"Prepare to advance!"

Numerous people pointed spears and lances at us. We didn't do anything but were seen as enemies.

"Attack—!"

It would obviously be an overwhelming sight if it was normal. If only it wasn't for their size.

"Waaaaahhhhh!" The troops running across the plaints were small people the size of my fist.

Shin Yoosung cried out, "They are tiny!"

"They are the inhabitants of this place."

"Surely we don't have to fight them? No?" Shin Yoosung stepped away from the small people who were running. "…I feel sorry because they are so small."

[You have met with the people of this world. Check the scenario contents.]

Then a scream came from the distance.

"A-A disaster has appeared on the other side!"

"Kuaaack!"

"R-Run away! Full retreat!"

The small people rushing towards us started running away. It was due to the incarnations killing the small people in the distance.

"Hahahaha!"

"What is this? It is a really easy scenario!"

It was probably a foreign language being interpreted. There were two samurai wielding swords. They were Japanese. They were playful as they casually cut down the small people like bugs.

Shin Yoosung watched the ruthless butchery and cried out in a stricken voice.
"…Ahjussi? What is this scenario? What should we do?"

I knew why Yoo Joonghyuk didn't want to bring Shin Yoosung. If I thought about it, he might be more humane than me.

"It isn't just our planet that runs scenarios in the Star Stream." I pointed to the small people fleeing the plains. "This scenario is a scenario that we share with them."

[Many of the constellations are hungry for violence and blood.]

[A significant number of constellations are urging you to make a bold choice.

[The main scenario is activated.]

[Main Scenario # 6 - Abandoned World]

Category: Main

Difficulty: S

Clear Conditions: Wipe out all dominant species on the No. 9871 planetary system, the planet called Peace Land.

Time Limit: 40 days

Compensation: 200,000 coins, ???

Failure: —

In the sixth scenario, we no longer had the role of preventing a disaster.

[You have become a disaster of the planet Peace Land.]

In this place, we must be disasters that destroyed this world.

싱숑 장편소설

전지적 독자 시점

Omniscient
Reader's
Viewpoint

PART 1

06

비채

*

Chapter 121: Ep. 24 - Things that Can Be Changed, I

Soon afterwards, the plains became stained with blood from the battle. No, it couldn't be called a battle.

Internal organs flowed from the torn flesh of the small people. Every time the Japanese moved, the small people were trampled on.

"Aaaaaaack!"

"H-help! Somebody, help!"

It might be a small scream but the weight of life was the same. They were small in size but they had a normal life like the humans on Earth until the scenarios arrived. People ate, worked and lived an ordinary life with their family…

The familiar scenes from Earth overlapped with the corpses of the fallen small people.

The Japanese incarnations shouted. "Hahaha! This is what it feels like!"

Perhaps Xun Kuang should've been born in this age. It was an age where evidence that human nature was fundamentally evil was everywhere.

The victims who were slaughtered by someone immediately turned into the perpetrators when provided power and rewards. Maybe they were even worse because they had been hit once.

Shin Yoosung asked me, "…How can they do this?"

Perhaps it wasn't a question that she was really curious about. She already knew the answer to the question. I placed a hand on Shin Yoosung's shoulder without a word. Shin Yoosung's shoulders shook like a person carrying a heavy burden.

"This is too much…!"

Gain coins, gain new items, gain skills and become stronger. People didn't know a way to live a bit longer in this world. That's why all survivors understood other survivors. Some survivors lived in shame because they understood it.

"D-Disaster…" A small person crawled towards our feet. "P-Please, mercy…"

The power that went beyond common sense evoked fear and awe. For the inhabitants of Peace Land, humans were both gods and disasters.

I bent over and extended a finger to the small person. His hand reached out towards this finger. There were rough breathing sounds as the small person came into contact with the tip of my finger.

A strange joy filled the face of the small person at the moment of his final breath. It was as if he touched a god and received salvation.

[Perform the duties of a disaster.]

Now we had to kill these small people. I felt Shin Yoosung emitting a boiling magic power next to me. I was afraid she would immediately rush to the Japanese people but her killing intent was directed in a very rational direction. "That… that guy made this scenario?"

It was the intermediate dokkaebi. Unlike low-grade dokkaebis, a graceful looking dokkaebi was effortlessly floating in the air with his arms crossed. It wasn't Paul who was taken to the bureau. He would be melting in the heat of Hell right now.

I remembered the text of Ways of Survival that I read beforehand.

「The intermediate dokkaebi of the Abandoned World scenario. His name is Ganul.」

The intermediate dokkaebi Ganul said.

[As expected, the 3rd quota players of Japan Dome are hot from the beginning. I hope you will make a lot of coins on Peace Land.]

It was the third quota…

As expected, the scenario of Japan Dome was very hard.

"Haha, this is the best! This is the reason why the first and second quota people ran so quickly."

"Do you see the coins coming in right now? This scenario is like a money printer!"

[Many constellations are excited.]

[Some constellations want to see 10 small people being killed at the same time.]

Anger soon filled the face of Shin Yoosung.

"It is because of these bastards…!"

However, there was no place for her rage to go. The constellations were on top of the Star Stream. They weren't someone whom a mere incarnation like Shin Yoosung could face. That's why all we could do was find a scapegoat to pour out this anger towards.

"Hahaha, 10 at once! I will kill you first!"

I couldn't find any traces of reason in the eyes of the Japanese people joyfully wielding their swords. In their eyes, the small people probably looked like living coins.

"Ahjussi, this…!"

Then a heavily armed small person walked out of the troops. He seemed to be the commander of this army.

"Glory to Kal-Seiviah!"

The commander of the army raised his sword and bravely rushed towards the disaster. The Japanese people seemed annoyed and swung their swords.

Surprisingly, the small person escaped with swift movements. The surprised Japanese incarnation cried out. "W-What?"

The commander ran along the blade and succeeded in stabbing the back of the Japanese person's hand for the first time. It was a great combat power. The startled Japanese person waved his arms to shake off the small person.

"Dammit! It hurts!"

The small person screamed as he was thrown onto the plains. The other Japanese people laughed amusedly.

"There is a pretty brave person?"

It was almost as if there hadn't been a successful blow but there was a faint smile on the face of the small person who succeeded. There was a small scratch on the back of the Japanese person's hand, as if he had been stabbed by a needle.

"L-Look! A disaster is bleeding!"

"Wahhhhh!"

It was one drop of blood. This drop of blood was a miracle to the small people. They could also kill a disaster. The gods were bleeding. It was only one drop but it taught the small people.

"We can do it! Attack! Just a bit more!"

The small people stopped fleeing and started running towards the disaster.

"What's happening?"

"Go away! You worms!"

The small people swung swords smaller than toothpicks at the Japanese people. The useless arrows filled the air and the cavalry maintained their formation without giving up, driving their lances towards the feet of the Japanese. There was still no damage but the small people didn't give up.

Shin Yoosung watched the scene with her hands clasped tightly together. Then an indirect message was heard.

[A small planet's constellation is supporting the incarnation 'Gillemium'.]

The constellation of a small planet. A constellation that was born on a small planet and grew on the beliefs of the small humans.

[A small planet's constellation has sponsored 10 coins to the incarnation 'Gillemium'.]

Perhaps the incarnation called 'Gillemium' was the name of the small person who hurt the Japanese for the first time.

"Kal-Seiviahhhh!"

All of the small people were excited, as if they could win if they attacked a bit more. At least, until the voice of the intermediate dokkaebi was heard.

[This situation is fun. Isn't it more exciting with resistance?]

The dokkaebi Ganul laughed as if to ridicule the resistance of the small people. It was a strange laugh.

[The bigger the despair, the darker the story.]

A black aura emerged from the bodies of the Japanese incarnations. The small people realized that something was wrong and stopped attacking.

[Now part of the disaster penalty is lifted. If you choose the path of 'evil', you can get additional buffs.]

The Japanese people looked down at their bodies and frowned. "Why do we need this?"

"This game is already too easy… This will make the fun vanish."

[This is also easy. Think of it as a game to relieve stress.]

"Well, if you say so…"

The Japanese people chuckled and didn't hesitate. A strong magic power filled the Japanese people. Based on their stigma, they seemed to have a samurai sponsor. I didn't think they were famous…

[Some of the probability constraints on the disaster have been lifted.]

[The synchronization with the disasters and sponsors will increase for a period of time.

[The lacking probability will be paid by the Star Stream's bureau.]

The ground was crushed and blood splattered from over a hundred of the small people. It was a considerable destructive power. However, from the viewpoint of the small people…

…No, it would be surprising for the small children. In front of these disasters, several small people urinated while others fell unconscious. The small people stared blankly at the disaster, as if they had forgotten how to scream.

"Ah, ahh… Uwah…"

The small people holding weapons knelt down. Even the commander who first hurt the Japanese people dropped his sword onto the ground. The eyes filled with courage were now completely broken.

「We can't win.」

「What will our planet…」

This form of despair was familiar, making it painful to see.

[The small planet's constellation has discovered you.]

Then a message was heard.

[The small planet's constellation is looking at you with pathetic eyes.]

[The small planet's constellation is expecting your compassion for a small planet.]

[The small planet's constellation is looking hopefully at you.]

[A small planet's constellation has sponsored you 10 coins.]

I frowned and looked up at the sky.

[You have returned the sponsored 10 coins.]

Then the messages continued.

[The small planet's constellation is embarrassed.]

[The small planet's constellation has turned red with shame.]

It was a misunderstanding. The constellation thought I wasn't moving because 10 coins was too small. However, this idea was wrong.

I spoke in a small voice towards the air. 'If you are really thinking about your planet then don't do that'.

[The small planet's constellation is embarrassed.]

'Don't make your planet a story to sell for money'.

[The small planet's constellation is silent.]

In the distance, the second Japanese attack was coming. It would surely wipe out the remaining small people.

Shin Yoosung declared, "Ahjussi, I can't stand it anymore."

The black aura around the Japanese incarnation's body was gradually becoming thinner. The probability buff was slowly being released.

It was time to act. I spoke to Shin Yoosung. "There is a way to clear the scenario even if we don't become disasters."

"…Ahjussi?"

"However, it will be really hard and terrible."

Shin Yoosung's eyes shook.

"You might be tempted to give up. Do you still want to do it?"

In fact, I was going to do this from the beginning. I just waited to increase the odds. No matter how pitiful the inhabitants of the planet, they were a different species after all. The most important thing for me right now was Shin Yoosung's life.

[The probability constraints of the disasters have been restored.]

The black auras around their two samurais returned to its original state. Shin Yoosung nodded.

"I can do it."

I gave her a signal and ran forward.

[The Star Stream has noticed your anomalous behavior.]

[Warning. Be careful to avoid being hostile to other disasters.]

Maybe Shin Yoosung would soon regret her decision. It would soon become clear what would happen to those who gave up 'convenience' in an easy scenario.

However, sometimes a person had to give up convenience to defend their beliefs.

[Blade of Faith is activated!]

Light exploded and a roar filled the plains.

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* Official novel cover (canonical)

Chapter 122: Ep. 24 - Things that Can Be Changed, II

In short, the small people were 'human beings' but they weren't from Earth like I was. There was a clear contradiction in opposing the human race of another planet.

Therefore, my current actions were due to the enormous ethics of 'humanity' or 'justice'. If I opposed the small people here then I would miss out on the achievement I needed for the ending.

This was the only reason I needed to stab Blade of Faith into the ground.

[The Star Stream has noticed your anomalous behavior.]

[Warning. Be careful to avoid being hostile to other disasters.]

[If the hostile acts are repeatedly accumulated…]

Dust flew up and the Japanese screamed as they lost their vision inside the dust.

"Uwaaaaack! What's happening?"

"Cough cough!"

It was a blow filled with considerable power so the dust didn't sink easily.

[A small planet's constellation is touching his chest.]

I was troubled for a moment. If I killed them with my own hands, I would be able to get a new scenario right away.

However, the penalty for it would be tremendous. I wanted to delay that moment as much as possible. That's why, at least…

"Ahjussi, I'll do it this time." Shin Yoosung pulled out a dagger that she had received from Yoo Sangah and stepped forward. "I will deal with both of them."

"Can you do it?"

"It won't be a problem."

She was like Lee Gilyoung. I didn't know why kids were so proud these days. Yoo Sangah would've stopped her but I wasn't Yoo Sangah.

I encouraged Shin Yoosung. "You shouldn't fight for a long time. Did you hear the penalty message just now? You should handle them as quickly as possible."

My options in this scenario would be wider if Shin Yoosung could deal with both these people.

I had a lot to do in Peace Land. Among them, one of the most important goals was to catch the 'snake' that Persephone mentioned. If I didn't get any penalties in advance then I might be able to catch the snake earlier than expected.

"What bastard did this?"

Shin Yoosung ran through the dust towards where the voice was heard. At almost the same time, I hid myself using Recluse's Cloak. It would be useless if they had high level detection skills but these guys didn't seem to have it.

Sharp magic power emerged from Shin Yoosung's dagger and moved in a half moon arc.

"Uwah!"

The Japanese people withdrew from the dust. The earlier move that created the dust had been intentional. I missed a golden opportunity but there was a way to defeat them without me fighting.

The Japanese people were surprised when the child appeared in the dust.

"What, this kid?"

The Japanese incarnations spoke to Shin Yoosung.

"Kid, why are you stopping us?"

"Don't you know what will happen if you do this?"

Unfortunately, it just sounded like a foreign language to Shin Yoosung who didn't have the Interpreter skill.

"…What are you saying?"

Now the Japanese people noticed the situation.

"Are you perhaps from South Korea?"

"Ah, that's right! This time, the first Korean group entered…"

"Dammit, the first group will be huge…?"

Their complexions suddenly darkened.

"Kid, get lost. We don't have to fight each other."

"No fight! No fight! Good?"

"We need kill them. Small people go kill. Yes?"

The Japanese said they had no intention of fighting in poor English but Shin Yoosung just shook her head. Her sharp dagger pointed at them and the Japanese people shrugged.

"Get lost or die. It is one of these two options."

The Japanese started to slowly step back from Shin Yoosung.

"Damn… this doesn't make sense. There isn't a bounty scenario."

"My sponsor wants me to kill this little kid?"

"Aren't there two of us?"

"Did you forget the fighting power of our first group?"

"Uh…"

They were clever people.

Everywhere in the world, those selected for the sixth scenario were the elites of their country. In Japan, the gap between the first group and those who came afterwards was probably considerable. Similar emotions emerged on the faces of the two Japanese.

「…Should we run away?」

On the other hand, strange delight spread among the small people as they watched the confrontation between Shin Yoosung and the Japanese.

"Ah, ahh…"

"Why…?"

They were shocked. A small disaster was suddenly fighting against a bigger disaster.

"Perhaps it is the small savior?"

"Yes, the prophecy was right!"

[A small planet's constellation is supporting the incarnation 'Shin Yoosung'.]

[A small planet's constellation has sponsored 10 coins to the incarnation 'Shin Yoosung'.]

[The incarnation 'Shin Yoosung' has received the possibility of a new scenario.]

I watched the scene while grasping the hilt of my sword. It was a bit underhanded but it was a way to chase them if they ran away.

As I thought, things wouldn't go so smoothly. The intermediate dokkaebi watched from the air and giggled.

[Japanese incarnations, you might think you are disadvantaged but are you really?]

In any case, this damn dokkaebi. The Japanese people realized something and muttered, "Ah, that's right! That reminds me, the first group…"

"Didn't Asuka become affected by a mutation? The Korean people would be affected by the same thing. I'm telling you now…"

"There is no need to tell me. In any case, she is just a Korean child."

The eyes of the Japanese people changed after they made a decision. Both of them stared at Shin Yoosung with killing intent.

"Yes, let's fight once."

"I don't like children…"

They let out unpleasant laughs. Shin Yoosung didn't understand the words but she immediately grasped the situation. Their blades moved as the two men slowly surrounded Shin Yoosung.

The killing intent around all three people rose while the two men moved simultaneously.

Shin Yoosung had raised her agility to the maximum and avoided their blades without much difficulty. However, the difference was narrow.

These men might not be the best elites of Japan but they were part of the top incarnations. I saw their swordsmanship and was reminded of a description in Ways of Survival.

They used only one sword instead of two and it wasn't the Large Rock Style. This meant I didn't need to worry about them being Miyamoto Musashi and Sasaki Kojiro, some of Japan's top swordsmen.

It wasn't bad for Shin Yoosung's debut.

"It will be hard for you to keep running Kid!"

Their aura became even sharper as their sponsors lent them power. The blade that wanted to cut the legs aimed at the legs while the blade that wanted to cut the arms aimed at the neck. It was natural to step back at the attack.

However, Shin Yoosung's movements were caught by the swordsmen. No matter how high Shin Yoosung's overall stats, the swordsmen's combat skills were overwhelmingly superior. Shin Yoosung's collar was cut and a small line formed on her arms.

I firmly held the hilt and prepared to move at any time. It was a pity that I couldn't act properly as her sponsor.

"Die!"

The Japanese cried out in an exaggerated tone and aimed at other parts of Shin Yoosung's body. This time Shin Yoosung didn't try to escape.

Shin Yoosung was weak in strength and lost her grip on her dagger. The Japanese took this chance to dig through the gap.

However, Shin Yoosung didn't panic.

[The character 'Shin Yoosung' has used 'Advanced Diverse Communication Lv. 3'.]

Rather, she turned back and settled on the back of the monster waiting for her. It was a steel wolf.

"…What?"

It was the right judgment. The basis of fighting was to minimize the opponent's advantage and maximize your advantages.

Awoooooo!

There were the cries of the wolves as dozens of steel wolves simultaneously emerged from the forest. She had tamed so many wolves in such a short time. She truly was the future 'Beast Lord'.

"Shit!"

The surprised men swung their swords at the wolves but the wolves were already biting onto their arms and legs.

"Fuck! These bastards!"

They might be weakened 7th grade monsters but the two people would have to consume a lot of magic power to deal with them.

It was truly a rewarding sight. However, Shin Yoosung was still unaware of something. This was why I warned her not to waste time.

[The Star Stream has detected abnormal behaviour from the incarnation 'Shin Yoosung'.]

[Hostile acts against a disaster have been detected.]

[The incarnation 'Shin Yoosung' has been given a first scenario penalty.]

The penalty had finally begun.

"Uh…?"

Shin Yoosung groaned as she suddenly felt less magic power. Some wolves suddenly left Shin Yoosung's control and returned to the forest.

[The character Shin Yoosung's body size has decreased.]

[The character Shin Yoosung's total stats has decreased.]

The Japanese also noticed it.

"T-That's it! I knew this would happen!"

"Just a little longer!"

…It ended up like this. Shin Yoosung glanced at me with anxious eyes. I approached behind Shin Yoosung using Recluse's Cloak and touched her shoulder.

Shin Yoosung's trembling subsided. "…Thank you ahjussi."

Shin Yoosung understood something and bit her lips.

[The incarnation 'Shin Yoosung' has been given a second scenario penalty.]

Shin Yoosung's body size was getting smaller. That's right, this was the result of a disaster abandoning their authority. Still, she had enough power remaining to take away the lives of the Japanese people.

Shin Yoosung put her high agility level to use and approached their backs using the beast.

"A-Aaaagh!"

Did she learn from watching Yoo Sangah? Shin Yoosung stabbed her dagger in a poisonous manner. Her dagger moved and a man's carotid artery was cut.

"K-Kuoock, r-ridiculous…"

The man paled as blood gushed from him and he fell to the ground.

[The character 'Shin Yoosung' has defeated the 'disaster without a name'.]

[Major contributor: Shin Yoosung]

Shin Yoosung wiped the blood that splattered onto her cheek and moved to the next target. The man was terrified and stepped back. The steel wolves rushed in and bit his arms and legs.

"Kuaaack!"

Shin Yoosung approached to cut off the man's breathing. It all happened in an instant.

[The incarnation 'Shin Yoosung' has been completely deprived of the rights of a disaster.]

[The dokkaebi of the Star Stream sees Shin Yoosung's behavior as taking action against the scenario.]

[The incarnation 'Shin Yoosung' has been given a third scenario penalty.]

[The small person transformation will begin.]

In this scenario, a person who gave up their qualification to be a predatory species would become the prey. Shin Yoosung's body became smaller at an incomparable rate.

"Ah…?"

There was a small groan as Shin Yoosung's clothes became too big and her dagger fell to the ground. Shin Yoosung's height shrank from my waist, to my knees and finally to my shins. Then Shin Yoosung's body was buried in her clothes.

Her stats diminished and her control became weaker, causing the steel wolves to return to the forest. A small Shin Yoosung emerged from her clothes and lumped towards the man.

"Yoosung, you can stop."

Shin Yoosung gasped for breath. There was a mixture of poisonous anger and grief in her eyes. There had been many fights with monsters but this was probably the first time she committed a serious killing.

"He is already knocked out."

Shin Yoosung stared at the fallen Japanese man. He was lying on the floor while foaming at the mouth. I tore away a bit of my clothes and covered Shin Yoosung's body.

Shin Yoosung was as small as my fist and observed her body for a while. She probably realized what had happened to her. "We have to fight them in this state?"

"Yes."

"…How many are left?"

"A lot."

Shin Yoosung looked up at me with a complicated gaze. "Ahjussi, did you know? About being turned into a small person if we are hostile to the disasters."

I nodded and approached the fallen Japanese man. I checked and he was in his early 20s at best. He was still breathing.

"Are you going to use this person?" Shin Yoosung asked me.

"There is a person I have to kill before I change."

New messages rose as soon as I said this.

[Be careful to avoid being hostile to other disasters.]

[Those who are hostile to disasters will lose the right to be a disaster.]

There was still a dokkaebi having fun in the sky. Yes… Laugh while you can.

[The Star Stream thinks that your aren't performing your disaster duties properly.]

[If you don't kill the rule of Peace Land in the next hour, you will be deemed as unwilling to act as a disaster and will be deprived of the status of a 'disaster'.]

I looked down at the Japanese man and slowly took off my cloak. There was one hour remaining. In this one hour, I had to catch their 'king'.

Chapter 123: Ep. 24 - Things that Can Be Changed, III

「Suzuki walked through the forest and thought, 'I was really lucky'.」

Suzuki trembled as he recalled what happened. A girl who manipulated monsters and wielded the dagger with great skill. Suzuki couldn't forget how Murakami died with one blow.

'South Korea is scary. A child is already at that level'.

She was just a kid so Suzuki couldn't guess how skilled the man near him was. The man was wearing a pure white coat and held a white sword. There wasn't anything special about him apart from the colour of his coat but he was a life saver to Suzuki. "Thank you very much. I would've died if you hadn't been here."

"It was nothing."

"I was honestly impressed. I didn't expect to get help from a Korean person."

"It was natural to help." The man in the white coat was modest.

Above all, Suzuki liked that the man was good at Japanese. It was obviously a skill but having the Japanese Interpreter skill was a sign that he liked Japanese culture.

Suzuki asked, "Ah, I don't know your name yet. Can I get your name? I am Suzuki Tatsuya."

"My name is Dokja. Kim Dokja."

"Kimu Dojega?"

"…Kim Dokja."

"Hoh." Kim Dojega. Wasn't it a good name? Suzuki liked this Korean name. "By the way, did you see the child? She killed my colleague…"

"Unfortunately, I missed her."

"Sigh… I see."

Suzuki didn't know if this was true or not. It couldn't be helped even if it wasn't true. In any case, this person was South Korean. It wasn't strange for him to hide the child or pretend he didn't see the child.

Still, it was disappointing. Suzuki would've been able to get revenge very easily if he caught the child. As part of the third group from Japan, he already knew about the 'small person transformation' hidden piece of the sixth scenario.

He stated, "You saved me so you must've witnessed the small person transformation."

"If you're talking about how she became smaller, I naturally saw it."

"Then the story will be quick. We are from different countries but we don't have to fight each other in this scenario. Our enemies are the small people, not humans."

"I know. That's why I saved Suzuki." Fortunately, the Korean man in front of him seemed to agree. Kim Dojega said, "By the way, the Japanese side knows many things."

"Yes. We progressed quickly through our scenario and there were similar cases among the previous players."

"It was similar?"

"There were a few cases where a human turned into a small person."

"What happened to them?"

"Most of them are dead. Only one person is still alive."

Kim Dojega heard this and seemed to think of something. It was hard to know what the Korean was thinking. The slightly nervous Suzuki opened his mouth. "This is just a reminder but I don't hate South Korea."

"…What brought this on?"

"Don't Koreans think that Japan hates Korea?"

It was said by the prime minister, who was part of Japan's first group. Of course, it was just a nickname and he wasn't the real prime minister.

–South Koreans have a strong nationalist sentiment. They will dislike anyone who badmouths their country.

Suzuki disliked the prime minister but never received any damages from listening to his words.

"Kim-san. I also like Kim Ahyeon and Park Sungji."

"…"

"Autumn Sonata is also very interesting. My mother liked it."

Always mention Kim Ahyeon, Park Sungji and Autumn Sonata when meeting a Korean. This was the prime minister's advice.

"I love Japanese manga."

"A-Ah. It is like this." The prime minister was apparently right. Suzuki asked excitedly, "What manga do you like?"

"It is hard for me to pick one. I don't know if I can keep reading now."

"…Certainly, it is a bit unfortunate. I waited for the manga every week but I don't even know if the mangaka is alive."

It was bitter thinking of such things. Suzuki also liked these things. Manga was one of them.

"It is because everything has changed." 」

–Ahjussi.

Shin Yoosung's voice broke the immersion. I was in the process of using Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint stage 2 so I couldn't answer Shin Yoosung immediately.

[The exclusive skill, Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint stage 2 has ended.]

[Your understanding of the character 'Suzuki Tatsuya' has increased dramatically.]

Immersing myself in the character made it easier to understand them. It was smooth because he had a shallow personality. My focus wasn't high because I was conscious but it wasn't hard to read what Suzuki was thinking.

–Ahjussi?

–Sorry, I was busy practicing a skill.

The small Shin Yoosung was currently in my pocket. Shin Yoosung spoke to me through a direct connection because of our sponsor contract.

…It was a bit surprising. I could tell what she was asking without thinking.

I watched Suzuki Tatsuya who was still telling his story. Suzuki appeared as a passing character in Ways of Survival. The world was described from his point of view for a smooth storytelling but he could only get a few pages in Ways of Survival. Still, most ordinary lives could be summed up in a few chapters.

–I don't understand. Such an ordinary person, how can he do such cruel things…

Shin Yoosung couldn't understand because of the foreign language but she caught the gist of the conversation. I couldn't help noticing her agitation.

"I mean, Kim-san…"

The talking Suzuki seemed like an ordinary university student. He was an ordinary youth who took great joy in talking to others and could be found anywhere in the world. I told her.

–I saw it a lot in South Korea. An ordinary person having to kill someone in order to survive.

–At the time, it couldn't be helped because of the scenario.

–It is the same now. That person is doing it because of the scenario.

–It is just an excuse. He won't die even if he fails…!

–Don't think about it this way.

I asked her.

–If the dead small people were in our position right now, would the situation be different?

–I don't think Suzuki is evil. However, I'm not saying he is good either.

–The original evil is ordinary. We are ordinary people but we seem like the most terrible disaster.

–Then he isn't a bad person?

–No, every human is a disaster for each other.

I deliberately exaggerated things. If I didn't say this, Shin Yoosung might not be able to escape from the guilt of killing a person. She asked,

-Then will I also become a disaster in the future?

–Don't worry. I'll stop it from happening.

There was something buzzing in my ears and insects were flying around me. Suzuki was annoyed as he continued the story.

"The insects here are still the same size. Aren't they disasters to the small people?"

"That's right."

There was no way. In this small world, insects couldn't be the same size as Earth.

–Yoosung. Do you understand what they are saying?

The species that could be tamed by Shin Yoosung and Lee Gilyoung were different but it was possible to understand the language of other species through Diverse Communication. There was a reason why I placed Shin Yoosung and Lee Gilyoung in different groups in the first place.

–Hyung… second team… met…

–Good. Then can you pass along my message?

I could feel Shin Yoosung nodding. The insects flying around soon disappeared into the forest. Suzuki saw the distant insects and asked, "Kim-san. Are you listening to me?"

"I'm listening. Weren't you talking about creatures from another world?" I thought a person who could talk about manga even in this situation was very rare. I struggled to accept it. "I heard that this genre is popular in Japan."

"Haha, yes. Creatures from another world are my favourite. It is similar to our situation now. However, it is hard to draw."

The story contents in Japan just before the fall of this world would've been similar to South Korea.

Japan and South Korea's novel sections were full of stories about going back to the past. However, the Japanese side was probably a bit worse. The young Japanese people thought there was no hope when returning to the past.

I wondered, "Isn't it fun when it is hard?"

"Huh?"

"This is what I like."

"You're having fun."

Suzuki cut through the low bushes and suddenly thought of something. "That reminds me, we have a mangaka on our side. A person called Asuka Ren…"

Asuka Ren?

"…That person said something similar to Kim-san. A story isn't fun if it is too easy."

"About that person…"

"Oh, we have arrived."

A small empty clearing appeared in the heart of the forest. The anticipation that could be felt everywhere tickled my skin. Perhaps this was the main base of the Japanese early arrivals. By the way, something was strange.

[You have entered somebody's 'colony'.]

[Your physical condition meets the requirements of a 'colonist'.]

[The colony effect reduces your overall stats.]

Suzuki's expression towards me had changed. He asked, "You said it is better to solve hard problems?"

Dozens of armed Japanese people popped out of the bushes.

"Good. Then I will make it that way."

I was a bit surprised by the unexpected betrayal. Was Suzuki originally this type of person?

[The exclusive skill, Character List is activated.]

[Character Summary]

Name: Suzuki Tatsuya

Exclusive Attributes: Double-Faced Person (Rare)

Sponsor: Silent Sword

I see. This was his attribute. I was still lacking.

In any case, Ways of Survival was a novel that could be never ending. How many people weren't summed up in a few pages?

By the way, the 'colony' effect was activated so it seemed the king of this area wasn't the 'snake'. He knew I was Korean and deliberately drove me to this side…

"You brought the Josenjing[1]."

A samurai who emerged from the bushes said and Suzuki bowed his head. The samurai asked, "You are from the third group. Are you part of the prime minister's group?"

"No…"

"Then is this a tribute?"

"That's right."

"What is your name?"

"Suzuki Tatsuya."

"I see. Well done Suzuki. From now on, you are in our group."

Prime minister…

Things had become worse. As far as I knew, there was only one Japanese incarnation who was called 'prime minister'. He was one of the enemies I had to be most wary of, apart from the 'snake' I had to catch. It was because his ability exerted a nearly absolute influence on Koreans.

The samurai stepped forward and spoke. He wasn't the prime minister. "The slave of the great Japanese Empire has walked into the colony."

I grasped the handle of Unbroken Faith and declared. "If you attack me now then the small person transformation will begin."

"We don't attack you. You will attack us."

"Why should I?"

"Otherwise, your colleagues will die."

What?

"Dokja-ssi… I'm sorry."

I looked towards the voice and saw four small people standing side by side. To be precise, they were 'transformed into small people'.

Lee Hyunsung, Lee Gilyoung, Lee Jihye… Finally, the smiling №406 grandmother.

The samurai placed his sword against Lee Hyunsung's neck. "Do you understand the situation now?"

I couldn't help laughing. Normally this would be a catastrophe, but I was rather pleased. As expected, my companions had hurt the Japanese people and became small people.

Shin Yoosung asked,

–Ahjussi, what should we do?

What else?

[Hunt the 'small people' in 10 minutes. Otherwise the Star Stream will determine that you have no intention to carry out the activities of a disaster…]

It was the wrong timing to catch the snake. Then… well, the new target wasn't much different.

"Come on, Josenjing."

I looked up at the sky and sighed. Then the stars shone at me like they had been waiting.

[All the constellations of the Korean Peninsula are looking at you.]

It couldn't be helped. If they expressed such aversion…

[Constellations of the Korean peninsula are angry at the atrocities of Japan!]

[Some of the constellations who have lived in a certain time are waiting for you to call.]

It was proper for me to punish the other party.

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[1] **Josenjing** – a Japanese derogatory term referring to a Korean person.

Chapter 124: Ep. 24 - Things that Can Be Changed, IV

[The Star Stream has noticed your anomalous behavior.]

I hadn't fought yet but my body was already showing subtle signs of shrinking. If I received the penalty then I would be like my other companions in a flash.

I deliberately approached them slowly and asked. "Why are you hostile to Koreans?"

There was a fight against the Japanese in the original novel but it hadn't started so early. Besides, I destroyed the Absolute Throne and South Korea's entry into the scenario was slower. That's why this unfolded…

"Do you have to ask? You were hostile to us first."

"…Are you talking about nationalist sentiment? I don't have any anti-Japanese feelings."

"You Josenjings killed us first."

I looked at Lee Hyunsung and asked, "Really?"

"No! It is true that we fought to defend the small people but we didn't kill the Japanese."

"You didn't?"

The samurai gritted his teeth. "I'm not talking about you. If you're going to feign innocence then stop."

Weren't we the first ones to enter?

…Wait. Somehow I knew why the Japanese incarnations felt like this.

The samurai cried out, "Don't make a fuss…!"

Yes, this was it.

[The exclusive skill 'Bookmark' can now be activated.]

[The number four bookmark has been activated.]

[Way of the Wind Lv. 8 has been activated.]

A gust of wind blew my way. The Japanese screamed as they were pushed back by the wind pressure and I rescued my party members in this short gap.

"Everybody grab onto me."

Lee Hyunsung and Lee Jihye hung onto my shoulders while Lee Gilyoung slipped into my pocket with Shin Yoosung.

"This is my spot!"

"You can go to the other pocket!"

As the children were fighting, I grabbed onto grandmother №406 with both hands.

"Then I'm going."

I started running through the forest. There was no need to deal with all the Japanese people here. If I killed anyone then my plan would be a failure.

[Hostile acts against a disaster have been detected.]

[You have been given a first scenario penalty.]

[Your body size has reduced.]

[Your total stats have decreased.]

Due to magnitude of the battle, the penalty already started. My body size was reduced by approximately 5 cm. Fortunately, my coat was decreased along with my body. As expected from the SSS-grade item, it changed shape with the user. I wondered how small it could become.

"Catch him!"

I saw the Japanese people running behind me.

[Some constellations want to pay back the nation's humiliating history.]

[2,000 coins have been sponsored.]

The messages from the Korean constellations rang in my ears. In fact, it wasn't strange for them to be angry. At first glance, some of the Japanese had constellations that would provoke anger.

I asked Lee Jihye who was clinging to my shoulder. "Why did you get captured already when your sponsor is Duke of Loyalty and Warfare?"

"…There isn't any water around here."

The Duke of Loyalty and Warfare was useless without water until he got the Two Dragon Sword. Lee Hyunsung would've been penalized while protecting the small children and Lee Gilyoung… he was currently having a conversation with Shin Yoosung.

"You should cherish insects. Don't just kill them."

"…The small people aren't insects."

"They are as small as insects."

Yes, I knew what happened. Sometimes I was afraid that Lee Gilyoung would become a psychopath.

"He is going in the prime minister's direction!"

"Contact the prime minister!"

Thanks to the penalty and the colony effect, the Japanese people were catching up to me despite Way of the Wind. I told Lee Hyunsung and the others.

"There is a person I have to catch before the snake hunt."

"You have to catch the prime minister?"

"He is someone who leads the Japanese fighters and the disasters will pause for a bit after his death."

Once the small person transformation began, the gap with the disasters was too big. If I didn't catch the prime minister now then he would be the hardest to deal with later on.

Grandmother №406, who was sitting on my hand, asked me. "Young man, am I heavy?"

"It is heavy."

The grandmother was heavy. It wasn't because of my body size had been reduced.

"Do you understand? There is only one chance."

The grandmother laughed. "Yes, yes."

The core of this mission was the grandmother №406. It might be fortunate that I found the prime minister, even if I missed the snake. The prime minister was strong but as long as this grandmother existed, the prime minister would surely be killed.

Then a man appeared from the bushes in front of me. "My sponsor is clamouring… what is the fuss?"

The man wore a gold armband and looked like a yakuza. Needless to say, he was the person I was looking for. He was 'Prime Minister' Yamamoto.

"…A Josenjing?" The prime minister was holding an iron cage with a female small person trapped inside.

Lee Jihye screamed furiously. "This person…!"

The girl in the cage was probably 'Asuka Ren' of the first group. She was the first person from Japan who refused to be a 'disaster'. Just like not all Koreans were good people, not all Japanese were bad. Good and bad were just determined by accident according to the circumstances.

The prime minister asked, "Hey, who are you?"

[The exclusive skill, Character List is activated.]

[Character Summary]

Name: Yamamoto Hajime

Age: 64 years old

Sponsor: Korean Empire Invader

Exclusive Attributes: Colonialist (Hero), Lustful Person (Hero), Anti-Korean (Rare)

Exclusive Skills: Hand to Hand Combat Lv. 7, Advanced Weapons Training Lv. 4, Japanese Kendo Lv. 8, Mental Focus Lv. 3, Crowd Command Lv.4…

Stigma: Colonization Lv. 7, Spirit Concentration Lv. 5

Overall Stats: Physique Lv. 60 (+10), Strength Lv. 60 (+10), Agility Lv. 60 (+10), Magic Power Lv. 60 (+10).

Overall Evaluation: This is Yamamoto Hajime, who leads one of the four major groups in Japan. He can use 'colonization' to exert a powerful influence on people from a particular nation. If you are Korean or Chinese, it is recommended not to confront this person.

"Why did the colonial slaves come here?"

Just as there were the three kings in South Korea, Japan had this person. Every country had those who lost sense of what era this was.

[Yamamoto Hajime's synchronization has risen due to the scenario buff.]

Korean Empire Invader. The sponsor behind Yamato was Ito Hirobumi, the first prime minister of Japan.

[The effect of 'Colonization' has made your movements dull.]

[The effect of 'Colonization' weakens your mind.]

Yamamoto's stigma Colonization gave a powerful debuff to people who had experienced domination by Japan in history. The mental debuff was offset by Fourth Wall but the constraints on my movements were quite large.

I tried to resist capture as I said, "Don't try to pretend to be a great person."

"Trivial person…!"

Perhaps the Korean Empire Invader was trying to accumulate stories in this scenario. However, it wouldn't work.

[The constellation who longs for the independence of his nation is looking at you.]

[The great independence fighter promises to kill him if you give the constellation three bullets.]

I ran straight towards Yamamoto. I put away Unbroken Faith and pulled out Ganpyeongui.

"Kill him!"

The clever Yamamoto used his men as a meat shield. It was an act that he did because he knew I would become a small person the moment I killed one person.

Killing Yamamoto himself wasn't a problem. The problem was that after I killed, the damage I would receive wasn't just the small person transformation.

If I killed someone then I would lose the effect of King of No Killing. Of course, I would give up the King of No Killing in this scenario.

However, not right now. I couldn't afford to kill the prime minister. Thus, I wouldn't be the one fighting here.

[Ganpyeongui's special option 'Echo of the Stars' has been activated.]

['Echo of the Stars' allows you to ask for the help of a constellation.]

[The constellation can refuse your request and the number of times Ganpyeongui can be used is reduced when the constellation responds to the request.]

I turned the Earth Disc and the constellations on the Sky Disc flashed brightly.

[The great constellations hear your voice flowing through the stars.]

I didn't hesitate to call one constellation. "I want the Nation's Independence Activist."

In the long history of invasions on the Korean peninsula, there were a myriad of people who received the title of independence activist. Among them, there was only one person with the modifier of Nation's Independence Activist.

It was because all the other constellations of the Korean Peninsula gave her this modifier.

[The constellation 'Nation's Independence Activist' has responded to your call.]

A calm and clear energy penetrated my mind and the constellation's image surfaced. She wore black mourning clothes and a white skirt. A girl who was too young to climb to the throne of a constellation.

I opened my mouth but the constellation shook her head. It was as if there was no need to say thank you. I nodded. If Japan had Ito then South Korea had this constellation.

"What? Who is his sponsor?"

The confused Japanese incarnations yelled. However, there were no signs of abnormalities from me and the Japanese regained their spirit.

[The stigma 'Declaration of Independence Lv. 1' has countered the effect of Colonization.]

They were unaware that my strike had already begun.

[The stigma 'Non-Violent Zone' blocks the movement of you and people from certain countries…]

Suddenly, all the Japanese people in the vicinity froze.

"My body…?"

If Colonization was a stigma exclusively for Koreans, Non-Violent Zone was a stigma exclusively for the Japanese. Once this stigma was used, all Japanese people in the area would be unable to move one step. It would last for one minute.

"Move! Move now!"

Among the confused Japanese people, only Yamamoto laughed amusedly. He was also trapped by my stigma. "The power of this constellation… how interesting. My sponsor is going crazy."

"…"

"However, you also can't move. How will you kill me?"

I smiled. "I'm not going to kill you."

It was natural. The person who would kill Yamamoto had been decided from the beginning.

"Grandmother, now!"

The person sitting on my left hand, prisoner №406 moved. Like magic, the grandmother's body started to grow rapidly.

"W-What is that?"

In fact, the grandmother had never been affected by the small person transformation. It was because she was a 'small person' from the beginning. It was thanks to the magic that a sponsor of my mother's subordinate, Jeon Woochi, placed on her.

"Don't panic! She is just a grandmother!"

The Japanese staggered due to the binding force as they tried to stop the grandmother. The grandmother just approached them with a smile.

[The character 'Lee Boksoon' has activated the skill 'Elderly Person Lv. 7'.]

[Characters younger than 'Lee Boksoon' will feel respect for her.]

"Shit, what is this?"

The Japanese people retreated like they were conceding seats on the subway. Of course, it wasn't intentional.

"Huhu, thanks for letting me pass. In fact, there is no need to make concessions."

[The character 'Lee Boksoon' has activated the skill 'Old Strength Lv. 6'.]

"This grandmother is strong."

The Japanese people pushed by the grandmother screamed and fell down. Their arms were swollen like they would burst. Her appearance had transformed into a muscular body. Lee Hyunsung gaped over the wonderful muscles.

"…B-Block! Block her!" Prime Minister Yamamoto realized something was wrong and screamed.

I opened my mouth. "Grandmother, do it quickly."

Lee Boksoon nodded. It might be a favourable situation but she would become a small person if she killed even one person. The important thing was killing the target before becoming a small person. The energy of Lee Boksoon's sponsor emerged.

[The constellation 'Nation's Independence Activist' and 'Harbin Sniper' has created an ensemble effect.]

[The Harbin Sniper will gain a 100% hit rate.]

[The Harbin Sniper's bullet damage will increase by 150%.]

Now Lee Boksoon looked more like a fighter than an old person. A fighter who dedicated his life for only one purpose.

"How long have you been sitting in the elderly seats? This isn't the Korean Empire. I tried to get along with the young people but they should know when to move out of the way."

[The character 'Lee Boksoon' has activated the skill 'Three Shots Lv. 1'.]

Lee Boksoon made a gun shape by stretching out her index finger and thumb to a 90 degree angle. Magic power formed at the tip of her index finger. Most incarnations were hardly ever damaged by magic power bullets. Except for one person.

The prime minister was shocked. "T-That ability? Your sponsor is…!"

「Stage Transformation.」

The phenomenon that occurred when constellations related to each other met was activated.

The surrounding scenery distorted and I seemed to hear the engine of a steam locomotive. It became an old train platform. It was my first time seeing it but I knew where this place was.

The year 1909, Harbin, China.

"Aaaaah…!" It was the place where Ito Hirobumi had died. "N-No! Dammit! Stop her!"

Yamamoto shouted with fright. For Stage Transformation to occur, the synchronization with the constellation had to be absolute.

[Specialized damage of 'Three Shots' is applied due to the influence of Stage Transformation.]

[The bullets' damage will increase by 2000%.]

The bullets made to kill only one person burned at Lee Boksoon's fingertip.

[The constellation Korean Empire Invader is requesting help from the other constellations of Japan!]

[The constellation Korean Empire Invader is screaming and staring at incarnation 'Lee Boksoon'.]

Prisoner number 406, Lee Boksoon. The sponsor behind her was the one who assassinated Ito Hirobumi, the righteous An Junggeun.

"Farewell, Japanese lord."

The three shots fired and Yamamoto stared blankly at his chest as he fell backwards.

Chapter 125: Ep. 24 - Things that Can Be Changed, V

Yamamoto was killed with only three bullets. White smoke emerged from Lee Boksoon's fingertips like she was a Western cowboy. She was a really tough grandmother.

[A famous disaster has been killed.]

[The disaster called 'Colonialist' has disappeared.]

[You have earned 5,000 coins.]

[Major contributor: Lee Boksoon, Kim Dokja.]

It was regrettable that I didn't catch the snake but hunting the prime minister wasn't a bad income. The absence of the prime minister in the upcoming war would greatly undermine the advance of the Japanese army. The compensation was also great.

[Some constellations are against your excessive nationalistic sentiment.]

There were many constellations complaining about my scenario but it couldn't be helped. Nationalism on the Korean Peninsula gave coins. If I had to sell a story then it was better to sell it at an expensive price.

[Many constellations of the Korean Peninsula are cheering for your reenactment.]

[10,000 coins have been sponsored.]

Indeed, there were constellations who haven't forgotten the old days. The confused Japanese incarnations ran towards Yamamoto but it was already too late…

"P-Prime minister!"

In the meantime, I ran towards Lee Boksoon who was a dozen metres away. Lee Boksoon's body was rapidly shrinking.

[The character 'Lee Boksoon' has completely abandoned her rights as a disaster.]

[The dokkaebi of the Star Stream sees Lee Boksoon's behavior as taking action against the scenario.]

[The small person transformation will begin.]

Lee Boksoon had a tired expression but it seemed to be the aftereffect of using Three Shots. The stigmas of certain constellations could cause severe physical and mental damage to the person who used it. Thus, she was completely exhausted the moment she used the stigma.

"Young man, give me a lift."

"Put on the clothes in my pocket first."

There were a few pieces of clothing I got in return for saving the small people earlier. I put the grandmother in the left pocket of my coat and Lee Jihye helped her dress.

[Way of the Wind Lv. 8 has been activated.]

The remaining time for Bookmark was 10 minutes. Now I had to get out of the forest area in 10 minutes.

"The prime minister is dead!"

"Stop them!"

The Japanese people were angry.

[You have received the second scenario penalty.]

[Hunt the 'small people' in 5 minutes. Otherwise the Star Stream will determine that you have no intention to carry out the activities of a disaster…]

Damn. It was 5 minutes rather than 10 minutes. The time was too short.

"Take me with you!"

The Japanese woman inside the cage that Yamamoto had dropped when he died shouted.

"Please! Please!"

…Asuka Ren. I felt no hesitation. I intended to bring her with me in the first place. I jumped forward like a gust of wind and placed her in my hand after smashing her cage.

"Thank you! Really…"

I skipped the greetings and tensed the muscles of both legs. "Hold on tightly."

I used all of my magic power. The wind split apart and the fastest 'road' appeared. The wind force around my legs captured the precise movements of my muscles and created the optimum speed.

Colonization had disappeared and it was easier to run than before. However, my stats were halved and the speed wasn't satisfactory. However, I could actually reach this speed with a level 30 agility. Way of the Wind was a truly great skill.

Asuka Ren told me, "You are really fast. This speed is as good as Karasu from Japan."

"I'll be faster if I have more power."

"Do you know Karasu?"

"It is a classic monster from Japan."

I should be faster than Karasu-tengu with Way of the Wind but now wasn't the time. Besides, I couldn't say that Way of the Wind was my skill. Bookmark had a time limitation.

"Kill him! In any case, we will just become smaller!"

"We will take care of the smaller ones so kill him!"

The Japanese didn't hesitate anymore.

"Get revenge for the prime minister!"

A few swords narrowly missed my shoulder. It was dangerous but then the terrain in front of me started to change. The surrounding trees wriggled and took the shape of a forest path. The shape of the forest was changing.

I thought it was magic but Asuka Ren told me. "It is night. Look out!"

I belatedly recalled a mention of it in Ways of Survival. The forest area of Peace Land changed shape at night.

It was a type of labyrinth as the forest itself turned into the stomach of a giant monster. Sticky digestive juices emerged wherever I walked. The reason why the small people of Peace Land didn't enter this forest was because none of them returned when it was night.

"Catch him!"

"Aaaaack!"

The forest transformation had begun and the Japanese people chasing me seemed lost. Of course, the big disasters couldn't be digested by the forest but there was enough time.

[Hunt the 'small people' in 3 minutes.]

I did my best but the maze-like forest area paralyzed my sense of direction. There was no specific way to escape from the night forest in Ways of Survival. Instead…

"This way!"

It was written in Ways of Survival:

「The first person to be obtained in Peace Land is Asuka Ren.」

I followed Asuka Ren's directions.

"Run to the right at that tree!"

"Japanese lady, do you know the way?"

Lee Boksoon asked in fluent Japanese and Asuka Ren replied hesitantly. "I know this forest well."

"Huhu, is it a relevant skill?"

"…Yes."

I knew that Asuka Ren was lying. She couldn't navigate this forest because of a path finding skill. Perhaps as far as Peace Land was concerned, she was as much an expert in it as I was in Ways of Survival. Maybe this was why the Japanese saved her.

I carried Asuka Ren and used Way of the Wind at its highest level. I ran quickly but the time limit was faster.

[Hunt the 'small people' in 1 minute.]

A bit more, just a bit more.

"Catch him!"

"We must catch him!"

The number of Japanese people chasing me decreased sharply as the road twisted several times.

"Almost there!"

Finally, I reached the end of the forest zone.

[You were unable to hunt the small people within the time limit.]

[The dokkaebis of the Star Stream have determined you won't carry out the activities of a disaster.]

[You have been given a third scenario penalty.]

[The small person transformation will begin.]

Damn.

"Get away from me!"

My party members noticed something at my shout and removed themselves from my body. It was like my body was being spun in a juicer. The power left my body and there was the sound of thunder in my ears.

I blinked again and my line of sight was almost at the ground. This was how a small person felt. Fortunately, the coat shrank with my body. I didn't lose any items because I placed all of them in the subspace, including Unbroken Faith. The problem was when I took them out again…

"Ahjussi, are you okay?"

I nodded towards my party members and spoke to Asuka Ren, who was watching me from a distance. "Asuka Ren-ssi."

"…Did I introduce myself?"

"The other Japanese people told me your name. I would like to ask you to take my party members to Veronica Castle."

Asuka's eyes grew bigger at my words. She wondered how I knew the name of a place in Peace Land.

"There is no time to explain. Please. I will stop them here."

"I understand."

There was the sound of the Japanese people breathing in the distance. Three of them managed to chase me to the end. They varied in height but all of a sudden, they looked like monsters.

"Damn Josenjing!"

If there was one person then the party members might somehow be able to beat them after joining forces. But three of them…

There was no certainty that we could beat them, even if we use all our powers. Lee Hyunsung said, "We can't leave you alone."

"You have to go so that all of you can live. I have a way to escape if I am alone."

The Japanese people who had struggled through the labyrinth forest spat on the ground and smiled cruelly at us.

"I'll trample on them like bugs."

I watched them approach and shouted, "Gilyoung!"

Lee Gilyoung nodded with understanding. Small insects were flying towards this side.

"I will see all of you later."

The insects started carrying the group members on their backs in ones or twos. Based on the speed of the insects, quite some distance could be gained while I buy time.

"Wait a minute! Ahjussi!" Shin Yoosung cried out as a samurai blade flew towards me.

The blade stabbed into the ground next to me. There was a wave of magic power and I reflexively rolled my body. It wouldn't be a big deal when I was a human but now even the edge of the blade was dangerous for me. Maybe I would be simply cut into two.

"Die!"

I had a plan to catch the prime minister with Lee Boksoon but now I had no specific measures. I could somehow buy time by running into the labyrinth forest again or…

"I will kill him. Chase after the rest!"

Two of the three Japanese people nodded and chased after the people on the insects. I couldn't let that happen

[The stigma Non-Violent Zone Lv.1 has been used!]

The Japanese people stopped.

"Damn, again…!"

The stuck Japanese people looked back at me with irritation.

My magic power had been significantly reduced as a result of the small person transformation and it took a considerable amount of magic power juts to block the three of them. My head hurt and blood flowed from my nose.

[The constellation 'Nation's Independence Activist' has blessed you.]

Along with the message, the magic power required to use the stigma decreased and my body became comfortable. I heard the voice of a constellation in my head.

[Child, this is the only time I will respond to a call.]

"Thank you, Martyr."

[History is recorded in order to not repeat mistakes. Make sure you don't repeat the past for the sake of individual success.]

The constellation seemed to notice that I used her for excessive directing. I used Non-Violent Zone for violence and the constellation became angry. I barely managed to nod and looked around nervously.

[Non-Violent Zone has 30 seconds left.]

Once Non-Violent Zone ended, I had to run to the forest area with all my power.

The swords were filled with a tremendous magic power and were determined to cut me in two. I might not die here but I would be seriously wounded if I made a mistake.

15 seconds, 14 seconds, 13 seconds…

Then a questionable message was heard.

[The constellation 'Defense Master' commiserates with your plight.]

…Huh? The moment I heard the name of a familiar constellation, there was a strange sound and explosive gunfire was heard.

[The character 'Gong Pildu' has activated 'Armed Fortress Lv. 1!]

Dudududududu!

Chapter 126: Ep. 24 - Things that Can Be Changed, VI

I was a bit surprised to see it. It was Armed Fortress, not Armed Zone. Gong Pildu's stigma had passed level 10 and entered the next step.

[You have invaded private property!]

It was a surprise. This message was welcome in a moment like this.

"Ack! It hurts! What is this?"

The Japanese screamed painfully as the hundreds of turrets fired at the same time. One hit wasn't a big blow but it was disastrous once hundreds of bullets poured out. The damage was even greater because their movements were restrained.

Dudududududu!

Blood flowed from their bodies as the Japanese were hit by the bullets.

"Eyes! My eyes!"

"What? What is this?"

The shells flew without stopping. The Japanese screamed and sat down as they were hit.

"Full advance!"

The army of small people hiding at the entrance of the forest joined in. Originally, it would've been hopeless but the situation changed due to the current state of the Japanese people. Small blades dug into the holes made by bullets and the Japanese screamed in succession. Then I heard a dignified voice. "Don't invade private property. This is my land."

As expected from the Armed Fortress Master. He lay down private property even when coming to this world.

The wounded Japanese got up and shouted, "R-Retreat! Let's go back!"

It was great. Gong Pildu's turrets were strong enough to make three disasters retreat despite their small size.

I turned around and saw a small fortress rising from the ground. It was hard to call it a proper fortress but I could see why he was called Armed Fortress Master.

"Waaaaahhhhh!"

"We won! We defeated the disasters!"

The jubilant small people gathered around and shouted for victory. There were two people standing on top of the fortress. One of them was Gong Pildu. The other one…

"Why is this your land? This isn't a place where private property is recognized."

"A little girl doesn't know what she is talking about…"

"Hrmm, shouldn't you show more courtesy to this goddess?"

…This voice? The small people shouted again. "Goddess-nim, hooray! Hooray!"

…Goddess? The woman at the top of the fortress discovered me and jumped down. Her short dress blew in the breeze and the sound of a light landing was heard. She had a distinctive prideful look. She really hadn't changed.

The small people parted in front of her like the waves before Moses. I smiled and opened my mouth, "Haven't you become very successful?"

Han Sooyoung approached and raised my chin with her fingers. "It's been a while, Kim Dokja. You are still ugly."

I once again met Han Sooyoung, the goddess of Peace Land.

We headed to the castle and I heard about the things that happened to Han Sooyoung. "I was walking down the street when I was hit by a bus full of survivors."

"Then?"

"I woke up here."

"Does that make sense? What about Gong Pildu?"

"I fell into Han River and was here when I opened my eyes."

I felt disbelief. "What is this fantasy novel?"

"Have you forgotten where we are now?"

This was the conversation.

In fact, it seemed absurd but something similar had happened in Ways of Survival. There were quite a few returnees who travelled to another world after falling into Han River or being hit by a bus. Still, to experience such a thing during a scenario…

What the hell were those dokkaebi jerks doing? I asked, "Then why are you the goddess? Did you ask them to call you that?"

Han Sooyoung shook her head and grumbled. "Tsk, treating me like this for saving you."

"What? Tell me."

"Have you forgotten who I am?"

"Eh?"

"Has your brain decreased due to your smaller head?"

Come to think of it, this was a stupid question. Han Sooyoung was the only prophet remaining in Seoul Dome.

Moreover, one day on Earth was three days on Peace Land. We had been separated for a week so the time Han Sooyoung spent in Peace Land was around three weeks.

She knew the future and was given three weeks. It wasn't strange for Han Sooyoung to become the goddess of another world… no, it was still a bit strange. Why was she a goddess instead of a queen?

"You two know each other very well." I looked back and saw Gong Pildu watching us with a disgruntled expression.

I hesitated for a moment before opening my mouth. I didn't want to but there was something I should say. "Gong Pildu."

"What?"

"I'm sorry."

"What are you talking about?"

"I'm sorry for not taking care of you."

"…Who asked you to take care of me?"

"I'm really sorry. Thank you for saving me."

I really was apologetic this time so I spoke in honorifics. Frankly, I had been too busy in the fifth scenario to care about Gong Pildu. This time he saved me when my life was in danger. It was too embarrassing to call myself a patron of the Defense Master.

[The constellation 'Defense Master' scoffs at your apology.]

"Tsk." They seemed to suit each other well.

[You have sponsored the Defense Master 5,000 coins.]

[The constellation 'Defense Master' reluctantly nods.]

Gong Pildu glared at me for a moment before turning away. "Then do well next time."

It was funny to see a person so full of pride. In any case, I was glad that both of them were alive, even if they had become small people. Eh? Wait. Why were they small…?

I glanced at the two people for a moment. I wondered, why had they chosen to stop being disasters? Both of them weren't the type of people who would do this?

"I am here to say thank you."

I looked back and saw that Lee Hyunsung and the others were approaching. They had been riding the insects towards Veronica when they countered Gong Pildu's group passing by.

"No need. I just did what I had to do." Han Sooyoung smiled slightly and waved her hands. I now knew what it was like when a devil wore a mask.

Lee Jihye watched Han Sooyoung and opened her mouth. "By the way… who are you?"

That reminded me, this was the first time that people saw Han Sooyoung's actual appearance, not her avatar. In other words, the party members had no idea that she was the First Apostle.

Han Sooyoung glanced at me and I answered on her behalf.

"Uh, that…"

Lee Jihye surely wouldn't stay still if she found out this was the First Apostle. Lee Jihye was the one who suffered the most damage when the apostles attacked Chungmuro.

The party would be turned upside down if Han Sooyoung's identity was revealed and a blood feud might occur. Eventually, I decided to close my eyes and betray my conscience.

"She is just a friend I know."

I didn't know if I could use the word 'friend'. Well, it didn't matter. I had no friends anyway. I couldn't see Han Sooyoung's face.

"I'm sorry but… can I ask you one thing?" The one who broke the awkward atmosphere was Asuka Ren, the Japanese person I rescued from the cage.

Han Sooyoung looked between me and the Japanese person. Lee Jihye was the same. "…Then who is this Japanese person? Is this person also a friend?"

It was a somewhat sarcastic tone. Damn brat.

"Asuka Ren… she is an incarnation from Japan. She isn't a friend but a trapped prisoner I saved."

"Why did she need to be saved? She is Japanese."

"This fight isn't Japan vs. South Korea. It is the small people against the disasters.

Lee Jihye seemed dissatisfied but she was convinced.

Han Sooyoung whispered to me. "What is this? Was this person in the original novel?"

"You don't know?"

She probably read up to the fourth regression but she didn't know Asuka Ren? Oh, was Asuka Ren not active then? Asuka Ren glanced between Han Sooyoung and I with nervous eyes before opening her mouth again. "Excuse me, the question…"

"Ah, say it."

"How did you already get the Peace Land approval?"

That's right. Certainly, it was natural for Asuka Ren to be curious. Han Sooyoung wondered, "Kim Dokja, what is she saying?"

"She is asking how you became the goddess."

"Ah, that?"

The others belatedly understood the question and stared curiously at Han Sooyoung. I also wondered what the hell happened. No matter how fast she grew, it was completely different from becoming stronger in three weeks and becoming the goddess of a kingdom.

"I told you. The first place where we fell was the north. Ahjussi and I fell in the middle of an attack on Veronica."

"It was during a raid?"

"Some of the first Japanese group were attacking Veronica."

"So?"

"Ah, one of the Japanese brats looked at us and said something. I was annoyed and killed him."

I was speechless for a moment. I roughly knew how things had gone. The Veronica Kingdom was going to perish because of the disaster. Then two people suddenly fell and killed the disasters. From the viewpoint of the small people, Han Sooyoung and Gong Pildu probably seemed like gods.

"Well… I wouldn't have killed him if I knew I would become a small person."

"You didn't read this scenario?"

"I was walking along the street when I was suddenly transported somewhere. How could I know this was the sixth scenario area?"

…That's why the Japanese saw us and attacked. These two people were one of the causes.

"Because of you, we…"

"Ah, I can see it."

Beyond the plains, the castle of this abandoned world could be seen. We looked at the palace. It was a broken palace. The traces of the disaster could been seen from the ruined castle walls. The people were crying in the ruined kingdom.

"Goddess-nim!"

"The goddess is back…!"

The small people who became nothing in front of an overwhelming disaster. A scruffy looking crowd came out to greet us.

Han Sooyoung showed a bitter smile. "…It is already over. Fucking Peace Land."

I listened to her words and realized again. I've been lucky until now but that would end in the next battle. The struggle with the disasters had just begun and we had to continue fighting a losing battle.

I stared at the people who were coming. The people of this world resembled the old Earth. There were no sword masters, no 9th circle monsters and even the use of a 'system' was limited. The people of the so-called 'authentic fantasy' couldn't stop the invaders, no matter how hard they tried. And I knew whose 'work' this world belonged to.

"Asuka Ren."

The beautiful woman flinched and looked at me. She was the key to winning this scenario. I was the one who has read Ways of Survival, but Asuka Ren still knew this world better than me.

"Join the South Korean group. We need your help."

Chapter 127: Ep. 25 - Those Who Face a God, I

My party arrived at Veronica and rested for one day. The next morning, I got up first and stood at the entrance of the castle as I informed the party of my plans. Lee Hyunsung asked, "Surely you're not going alone?"

"I won't be alone. I'm going with those two." I pointed to Han Sooyoung and Asuka Ren.

Then Lee Jihye wondered, "What are we going to do while ahjussi is gone?"

"You and Hyunsung-ssi are in charge of guarding Veronica's walls. Have you checked the updated scenario?"

"…Is it to defend Veronica Castle until the end of the scenario period?"

"Yes. That is your mission."

"But…"

"Do it."

"…I understand."

I looked at Lee Hyunsung. "There is Gong Pildu but it will be hard to stop the disasters with Armed Fortress alone. I'm sorry to leave it to you but…"

"Don't worry. Protecting a base is my specialty."

I was relieved by his determined words but I knew it wouldn't be that easy. It might seem like an easy task but surviving this scenario was harder than going with me.

"If you see the 'snake' of the first group, don't confront him head on. Flee Veronica Castle if you have to. Can you promise me this?"

"I promise."

Their mission was to protect the castle until I returned. I gave orders to Lee Gilyoung and Shin Yoosung. "Secure as many insects and monsters as possible. Your mission is to buy time."

Lee Gilyoung and Shin Yoosung nodded.

"If you go to the north forest then there will be many unique monsters of this world. Go and tame those monsters."

"Yes, hyung."

"I understand, ahjussi."

A large number of monsters would help bridge the gap with the disasters. In the process, the children's skills would also increase significantly. I left Veronica Castle. Han Sooyoung saw the people watching us from behind and asked, "So where are we going?"

"The eastern rocky zone."

The startled Asuka Ren told me. "The Japanese has already occupied that area."

"I know."

I stared straight at Asuka Ren. She had soft and curly silver hair. She had a clear face with sharp lines, like a cartoonist had painstakingly drawn it. It was a face that gave off the feeling of a warrior rather than just a beauty.

I told her, "That's why I brought you."

"Do you trust me?"

"I don't trust you. I just want to get back the value of saving your life."

"…I see."

It was easier to say this than to buy her favour with kindness. In fact, Asuka Ren looked worried about something. Perhaps when her troubles were over, she would tell me the information in earnest.

We travelled over the plains area towards an area filled with rock formations. The trip was estimated to take two days but we could do it within one day if we moved fast.

Han Sooyoung asked, "What is the plan?"

"Unlike us, Japan has an Absolute Throne. In other words, there is an 'absolute king' among the first group who commands all of them."

Han Sooyoung pondered on my words. "…Do you mean to catch the king?"

Han Sooyoung was really quick to understand. I nodded.

Han Sooyoung muttered, "Well, your idea is correct. There would be a profound effect on the entire group if the master of the Absolute Throne dies…"

"Of course, killing the king won't stop all of them. Still, it will allow us to hold on until the end of the scenario."

"Hrmm, then you've been aiming for the boss since the beginning? I like your ambition."

Then Asuka Ren interrupted. "Do you know who the king of Japan is now?"

"Isn't he the Sovereign of Eight Heads?"

The Sovereign of Eight Heads. It was also referred to as a 'snake'.

"H-How do you…?"

Asuka Ren was astonished and her body shook. It was natural. She was part of the first group and knew that type of existence the Sovereign of Eight Heads was.

For reference, the Sovereign of Eight Heads wasn't the nickname for the Japanese king but the modifier of his sponsor. The king didn't have a nickname because there was no meaning in one.

"You must've heard his modifier somewhere but he isn't as easy as you think…"

"I'm aware of that. He is Yamata no Orochi."

The sky darkened at my words and there was a rumbling sound. Perhaps that guy had heard me speaking. It was a powerful force belonging to the constellations.

"…Orochi? Isn't that the name of a mythical monster in Japan?"

"That's right. Now he is Japan's king."

"Then why is he called by his sponsor's name? Doesn't he have a nickname?"

"It is meaningless. That incarnation isn't sane anymore. During the six scenarios, he made a ridiculous contract with the Sovereign of Eight Heads and had his soul stolen."

Asuka Ren's mouth gaped open when she heard my words. She was surprised that the incarnation of another country knew more about the circumstances then she did.

"Then he will be in the rocky zone?"

"Yes. However, we can't catch him right now. Preparations are necessary. We are going to meet someone else in the rocky zone."

"Meeting someone? Is it… Yoo Joonghyuk?"

"He is better than Yoo Joonghyuk?"

"…Is there a person better than him?"

"It is possible."

"Who?"

"A strong person from Peace Land."

Han Sooyoung frowned. "From Peace Land? Are you joking right now?"

It was understandable. This information didn't appear in the first 100 chapters.

"Don't you know how weak the kids here are?" Han Sooyoung exclaimed without giving me a chance to answer. She always looked particularly agitated when she became angry.

"There isn't a third rate swordsman here, let alone a sword master! The only magic these kids can use is to create fire on a stove."

I know.

"This isn't a first generation fantasy novel… It is like someone has maliciously gathered only weak people. No, I don't understand it. Why did the dokkaebis make this world a stage? Is this an alternative idea to give coins?"

I could understand why Han Sooyoung was so upset. This girl might be a plagiarist but she was a popular fantasy writer.

"Relax. This world wasn't made by the dokkaebis."

"What?"

I looked behind me. There was a woman looking down with a flushed face. It felt like a very new writer standing in front of an experienced writer.

Asuka hesitated for a moment before bowing. "I'm sorry."

Han Sooyoung seemed to realize something.

"Wait, don't tell me?"

Asuka Ren slowly nodded. "…Peace Land is a world I created."

Perhaps Asuka Ren shouldn't have revealed this.

At first, Han Sooyoung was so astonished she couldn't believe it was real. Then after five minutes, she murmured, "Well, my novel became a reality." Then another five minutes passed and she started scolding Asuka Ren.

"Why did you do that?"

"…"

"Huh? Why? Answer me, writer. Why did you make a world like this?"

Asuka Ren ended up half crying. "That… there are many mainstream worlds in Japan. So…"

"Ah, you created this to resist the mainstream worlds?"

"I-I thought that as a writer, I shouldn't bring out a mass production story."

"Mass production?" Maybe she said something she shouldn't have. Han Sooyoung declared, "Your work can't even be mass produced."

"…Huh?"

Han Sooyoung stared at Asuka Ren like she was pathetic and then told me. "Hey, Kim Dokja. Is this it? I stayed a few days in Veronica and in this world, the earl speaks ill of the duke. Besides, the knights are all like parasites and only know how to dither…"

Asuka Ren protested, "W-Wait a minute!"

"Shut up. We are suffering now because of you."

"I made it but I wasn't the one who called you here."

"Look at this girl? The dokkaebis bought it from you and made your world into reality! The manga must've been ruined! Let's throw all the ruined mangas into a world and kill them! You must've prayed with this thought and received a message like 'I will listen to your wishes'. Right?"

It was the first time I had heard such creative reasoning. She truly was a writer.

"N-No! That isn't possible!"

"Then what is it?"

I became curious when I heard this. There was no mention of why Asuka Ren's Peace Land was adopted as a scenario in Ways of Survival. Perhaps I could get a hint about the writer of Ways of Survival from this?

"That…"

Han Sooyoung was pulling out a sword while Asuka Ren took one step back. I interrupted them. "I'm really curious but I'm afraid we can't hear it now."

"Huh?"

"Run!"

We moved by a hair's breadth and sharp swords slashed at where we had been standing.

Asuka Ren desperately ran with a pale face. Han Sooyoung asked, "Shit, when did they follow us?"

"They are good at stealth."

"How many are there?"

"Four people."

They didn't underestimate us and tried to assassinate us. We had no chance in a head on battle.

Asuka Ren gasped for air and said, "It seems to be the Wind Shadow Squadron. They are the subordinates of the Sovereign of Eight Heads."

"Those brats have weird names."

This wasn't the timing for them to chase me. It seemed that it was a mistake to mention Orochi's true name. As soon as we entered the rocky area, the range of our movements became better.

It was due to Asuka Ren's guidance. Once again, the person who created the world was different.

Nevertheless, the distance was narrowing as the Wind Shadow Squadron caught up to us.

Han Sooyoung spoke like she had made up her mind. "Ah, I don't know. Kim Dokja, go first. I'll buy some time."

"Is it okay?"

"Don't you know me? I'm a master at dying."

"Then I'll believe in you." I grabbed Asuka Ren and ran. "Ren-ssi, there is no time anymore. Quickly find him."

"I-I don't know what you're saying."

"The returnee Kyrgios."

"Huh?"

I shouted while avoiding a flying sword. It seemed that Han Sooyoung had missed some people.

"Tell me where Kyrgios is."

"…I don't know who that is?"

I expected it to be like this. In Ways of Survival, it only mentioned that Kyrgios was here and he never came out directly.

"I really don't know! I never created such a person!"

"Nope, you know. He is the only powerhouse of Peace Land."

"There isn't a person like that in my manga! Besides, the characters in my manga are weak!"

Then a sword thrust at us. I turned sharply and stopped. I didn't want to do this but I had to touch her wound.

"Your Peace Land was terminated early in the 11th episode and you didn't get a single volume published after that."

"H-How do you…?"

"I know that you wanted authentic fantasy in your heart. However, it didn't work out. Your manga, is it really authentic fantasy?"

Two people from the Wind Shadow Squadron appeared in the smoke. I would be able to cope with them if I was my usual self, but now it was hard to stop even one. I brushed aside the katana but my wrist was broken.

I activated Purest Sword Force and shouted calmly. "It was just once but you became angry when you saw the reaction of readers and drew a person."

"W-What are you saying?"

"He is a strong person not fit for Peace Land. You felt guilty about pandering to the public by drawing such a person. That sense of guilt ruined your Peace Land."

"No! I never did that!"

"Please take responsibility until the end. Even if only one reader watches this world."

"Ah, ahh…"

It became more and more difficult for me to avoid the blades. The panicked Asuka Ren was completely frozen. Two katanas flew towards my upper and lower half. Dammit, was I wrong?

"…I'm sorry, I'm really sorry." Then a voice was heard. "You're right. I obviously…"

The next moment, the surrounding air changed. I felt my limbs become stiff from the cold. Then another voice was heard.

[Who are you?]

I didn't look back but it was clearly a presence comparable to the constellations. Otherwise my Fourth Wall wouldn't be shaking so much.

I looked ahead and saw the Japanese people standing like stone statues. They couldn't even speak as pure white lightning fell towards them from the sky. The powerful disasters turned into ashes from the lightning.

Once the clouds that caused the lightning disappeared, a small doll was floating. It was unbelievable. The powerful presence floating in the air was definitely a small person.

…He was properly hooked.

[I will ask again. Who are you?]

"It is nice to meet you, Kyrgios."

Kyrgios Rodgraim of Peace Land. He was one of the strongest returnees in Ways of Survival.

@1L9l2Aa8UCL0lGJ

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* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)

Chapter 128: Ep. 25 - Those Who Face a God, II

The strongest existences in the Star Stream were often called 'constellations'. They observed the stories of every world from above.

However, as I said earlier, the constellations aren't the only ones who could go against constellations. There were those who refused the path of a constellation and became demon kings or dragons that ruled at the peak of all monsters from birth.

Then what about humans? Could humans who didn't walk the path of a human reach the level where they could oppose the constellation?

The answer was currently right in front of me.

[Interesting. You gave up your existence for another planet?]

Kyrgios could see my identity with one look. He glanced at the confused Asuka Ren besides me.

[I'll let it pass just once because of your courage. Take that woman away.]

A returnee. Born with special talents, they transcended the category of a human thanks to the blessing of the Star Stream.

Among the returnees, Kyrgios Rodgraim was a special existence. He was very powerful among the returnees and earned enough money not to be dragged into the stories made by the dokkaebis. He was a returnee who never acted in Ways of Survival.

"I have something to say to you."

[…Say?]

The skills that exceeded the level of transcendence manifested and revealed their presence to me. It was the presence of a constellation that could destroy mortals just by existing.

[Do you think you are in a position to talk to me?]

I was surprised that there was so much moisture inside me. My back was soaked with sweat.

[Your dare oppose Baekchung?]

He was strong. I got goosebumps at the thought of how a small person could be so strong.

[The exclusive skill, 'Fourth Wall' is activated!]

However, I had a 'wall'. No matter how terrifying the presence beyond the wall, it wouldn't harm me as long as I didn't cross it.

[The character 'Kyrgios Rodgraim' is curious towards you.]

Kyrgios noticed something strange.

[…You endured it? How? Do you have the protection of a higher being?]

I opened my mouth before he became interested in the wrong thing. "Kyrgios. This world needs your help."

Kyrgios' expression changed.

[This is why you came looking for me?]

"That's right."

[The small person…]

Then the 'small person' replied.

[A small planet's constellation is looking tearfully at Kyrgios Rodgraim.]

[A small planet's constellation has sponsored 10 coins to Kyrgios Rodgraim.]

Kyrgios frowned.

[I don't need it.]

[The small planet's small constellation has received a large shock.]

A few raindrops fell from the sky like baby pee.

[…Every world has a time of destruction and every story comes to an end. For this planet, that time is now.]

There were no emotions in Kyrgios' eyes as he stared into the distance. However, I knew. Even if you became insensitive to everything in the world, there was no one who could escape from the bounds of their own story.

"Then why did you come back here? You left Peace Land a long time ago."

[…Something called me.]

My eyes glanced towards Asuka Ren, who was staring at Kyrgios. I knew what Kyrgios had probably felt.

"Don't deceive yourself. Didn't you come back here to defend your home?"

[There are no good memories here. This place…]

"Is this the place where you were born 'weak'?" Kyrgios shook for the first time. "It is because of your mother gave you a cursed body?"

[…You know me quite well, incarnation of the scenario. Then I'll say this. Get lost. I won't tell you a third time…]

"Are you scared?"

[What?]

"I asked if you are scared. This is your world and these constellations are destroying it. Are you scared of that snake?"

At this moment, a fearsome pressure that almost made my eyes pop out pushed down on my body.

[If you want to die then I will kill you.]

I gasped for air but didn't stop speaking. "Don't deceive yourself about why you came here."

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is displeased with the behaviour of Kyrgios Rodgraim.]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is criticizing Kyrgios Rodgraim's justice.]

[The constellation 'Scribe of Heaven' is severely criticizing Kyrgios Rodgraim's interference in the scenario.]

The indirect messages emerged one after another and Kyrgios's aura subsided.

[Weird people are chasing after you. The monkey king and archangel? It is strange. They have a strong pride…]

I spat out blood and started talking again. "Focus on my story. Did you come here to see the end of this planet?"

[I can't help this planet.]

Blue sparks appeared around his body. It was the probability storm. It was caused by killing the two Wind Shadow Squadron members.

He wasn't a being summoned by the scenario and was limited by the probability, even if it wasn't as much as the constellations.

Kyrgios firmly grabbed a spark and said. [If I act then I will only hasten the destruction of this planet.]

I understood what he meant. Probability was like a scale for the constellations. If one side changed the flow of the story without a valid probability then the law of Star Stream would forcefully correct the balance.

[If I interfere with the scenario, other constellations watching the scenario will also be able to move. All I can do… is watch the end of my home.]

I remembered. This was the real 'image' of Kyrgios Rodgraim that I knew. He left his home, overcame countless trials and returned, only to be unable to save his home despite his strength.

This was the Paradox Baekchung, Kyrgios Rodgraim.

"There is no need to take action with your own hands."

However, if I was to back down here then I wouldn't have come see Kyrgios in the first place.

"Don't you need a disciple to learn the top secret technique of your white energy?" The calm Kyrgios was greatly shocked by my words. "Please accept me as your disciple. I will be your agent on Peace Land."

However, the shock only lasted a moment.

[…I don't accept outsiders as a disciple. In addition, your strength is lacking to be qualified.]

My pride was a bit hurt. If Yoo Joonghyuk was here then would Kyrgios hesitate to accept him as a disciple?

"I'm not qualified despite this?"

I picked up a branch in the vicinity. My magic power was absorbed by Purest Sword Force and a wave of mana flashed at the tip of the branch. It was lacking in power but it was still enough to show my achievement.

Kyrgios watched with amazement. In the second scenario, the first thing I purchased was this hidden skill. Purest Sword Force was Kyrgios Rodgraim's famous technique.

"I will say it once again. The outsider Kim Dokja requests for the master of the Baekchung School to accept me."

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Kyrgios made a decision after a few hours.

He released the flaming aura of Baekchung and spoke in a human voice. "The Baekchung School was wiped out after I left. I don't know if it still exists."

He kept me waiting for two hours just to say this.

The strong people of the Star Steam lived in a 'unique time zone' in order to maintain their sense of self over the long years.

"Okay. I will accept you as a disciple."

Kyrgios didn't ask me how I knew Purest Sword Force and how I knew about his secret technique. Then the training started.

「…Kyrgios Rodgraim was a 'Murim World Returnee'.

Despite the inherent limitations of the small people, he mastered several martial arts and succeeded in transcending his race without the help of the system.

There are many legends about him who advanced to the First Murim and reigned as the leader. He killed all the enemies taller than himself, cut off the penis of a drunk man making fun of his height and has an association with the famous constellation the 'snake'… 」

"Your smartphone has become smaller as well?"

I heard Han Sooyoung's voice and turned my smartphone off. "I put it in the subspace of the coat and it became like this."

"Damn, you hog all the good things to yourself."

Han Sooyoung was able to safely overcome the Wind Shadow Squadron and join up with us. They were probably deceived by the 'dead enemy' like I was. She muttered, "I never imagined that Kyrgios, the strongest person in First Murim would be from Peace Land."

"The strongest person can't be obscured and he is close to the strongest. But how do you know this name?"

"The name appeared in the first part of the novel. It is the first time I've seen it myself."

"This is also my first time. In any case, wait near Ren."

I was taught by Kyrgios in the rocky area. My goal was to learn Kyrgios's secret technique in two weeks and return to Veronica. If the story progressed as the original then this should be when the Japanese king, the Sovereign of Eight Heads moved to trample all four kingdoms.

Of course, things weren't that easy. On the first day, this was the task that Kyrgios gave me.

"Repeat this a million times."

"…A million times?"

"Yes, one million. Did you see what I just showed you properly?"

I saw it well. Kyrgios stood in front of me and stretched out his sword. This was the basic 'stab' posture.

"Why this…"

"Every disciple starts here. It is to aim for the smallest point. In one extremely condensed and tempered 'point', the universe begins."

"…I see."

I didn't know what he meant.

"You were born big and don't know the meaning of being small."

The moment I heard this, something popped into my head. According to Ways of Survival, Kyrgios had a complex about his height. I told him, "Humans aren't very big either."

"Yes, that's what I'm saying. In the end, all of us are specks of dust from the perspective of the universe. That's why it is wrong to call a small person a small person. Humans and small people are just dust in the end."

It felt like he was rationalizing his small height.

"However, isn't big dust different from small dust?"

"The important thing is the size of the universe, not the size of the dust. Even if you are just a speck of dust, the degree of your existence can vary depending on how big the universe is. No, the smaller the dust speck, the closer it is to the origin of the universe. This makes it easier to understand the essence."

I thought it sounded nice. "Ah."

"Do you understand?"

"What does that have to do with stabbing?"

Kyrgios looked at me with contempt and said, "This is why people shouldn't be born big. Work hard on the stabbing."

Then Kyrgios disappeared. He seemed disappointed in me. It was natural. Way of the Wind had proven my poor talent. It might take me two decades to learn the secret technique instead of two weeks.

Four days passed.

"Do it straight. Shouldn't you attempt to do it properly?"

Five days passed.

"This is why those born with big bodies…"

A week passed. Kyrgios' hatred of big people didn't stop. "Have you ever been born as an insect? Cockroaches probably learn better than you."

"If such a cockroach exists then I would like it as a teacher."

"Do you want to die?"

Finally, it was the end of the second week. I was tired of stabbing and fell down.

"You…"

I still hadn't learnt the skill. Kyrgios was deeply disappointed with my talent and soon disappeared. It was like a small breeze had blown for a moment.

Once Kyrgios was completely gone, I found Asuka Ren and Han Sooyoung waiting nearby.

"Let's run away."

"What? Did you learn everything? It looked like you couldn't do anything at all."

"I stole it."

I quietly closed my eyes and whispered something. The next moment, a violent white lightning bounced around me. It was the secret technique of Kyrgios, Electrification.

"Eh? What is this? You clearly couldn't…"

"I told you. I stole it."

['Kyrgios Rodgraim' has been added to the fifth bookmark.]

This was my purpose from the beginning. I placed the strongest returnee Kyrgios into my Bookmark skill and tried to raise my understanding of him as much as possible.

In the first place, Kyrgios wasn't willing to teach me properly. Strong people like Kyrgios weren't simple enough to give up their secret techniques because of flattery.

His purpose was to keep me here until the end of the scenario and then torture me after the scenario ended to find out everything I knew.

"That's why we have to run away."

"Shit, I understand."

Han Sooyoung grumbled. By the time we finished the preparations, the sun was shining in the distance.

The warmth of dawn surrounded us. Peace Land changed seasons every two weeks. It was winter when the training started but now spring was coming.

Asuka Ren suddenly paled. "The Sovereign of Eight Heads has started moving."

"Really?"

"He is using the Absolute Throne to call the Japanese incarnations together."

It was time. Spring was the season where creatures that hibernated woke up one by one. The season of the 'snake hunt' would soon arrive.

Chapter 129: Ep. 25 - Those Who Face a God, III

Veronica's high walls. Giants filled the plains below the highlands. They were once humans but were now disasters. Gong Pildu roared as all the turrets on the castle fired. "Damn bastards. This is my land!"

There were approximately 50 Japanese people who ran through the plains. This level of strength meant that more than half the disasters of Peace Land had gathered.

Dudududu!

"Get lost—!" Gong Pildu was slightly upset as he fired the guns. He didn't know how he got into this situation. However, Lee Jihye thought that the aftereffects of Kim Dokja destroying the Green Zones still remained.

Lee Jihye watched the great army of disasters and her fingers trembled. "Damn, I wish there was a lake…"

"Let's do as much as we can."

Lee Hyunsung walked over from the lookout post and stood beside Lee Jihye. Lee Jihye turned around and saw Lee Boksoon. Lee Jihye's eyes shone. "Grandmother, can you borrow the power of your sponsor?"

"Huhu, do you want my ancestor to continue their service?"

"Ah, this is really… Soldier ahjussi, Heewon unni's group still isn't here?"

Lee Hyunsung nodded heavily. "There is no news of the next group. Before he left, Dokja-ssi said they would be doing a bonus scenario…"

"Damn. Then we have to stop them."

Then dim shadows appeared above them in the sky. Lee Jihye discovered the small insects filling the sky and was frightened.

"Ack!"

There were a variety of flying monsters mixed in. Lee Gilyoung and Shin Yoosung had finished preparing the beast and insect army. Lee Gilyoung was sitting on an insect that resembled a wasp and waved his hand.

Meanwhile, the disasters arrived at the castle and started to break down the walls.

Lee Hyunsung spoke in a tense voice. "…They're coming."

The full-fledged siege began.

Dudududududu!

On one side, Gong Pildu fired while on the other side, the small people shouted.

"Fight!"

"For Veronica!"

The voices resonated through the castle as the walls were gradually crushed by the disaster's kicks. Now the term 'disaster' seemed really fitting for these humans.

'Would I be like that if I chose to become a disaster?'

Lee Jihye remembered Kim Dokja's words and bit her lips. The answer was still unknown.

The party held on better than expected.

There were Gong Pildu's guns and Lee Hyunsung's Great Mountain Smash that dealt effective blows to the disasters. The large number of insects and monsters also bought time.

At this rate, they might be able to protect the castle. This was what Lee Jihye thought until black clouds covered the horizon.

"What is that?" Lee Jihye doubted her eyes.

[The king of disasters has received the scenario buff effect.]

[Some of the probability constraints on the constellation 'Sovereign of Eight Heads' has been lifted.]

"Crazy, how do we defeat that?"

Something the size of a huge fortress was coming this way. There were eight heads and a tail.

'Ahjussi! Come quickly!'

Lee Jihye inwardly screamed.

We left Kyrgios' territory and moved through the rocky area towards the plains.

Asuka Ren opened her mouth, "I think the Sovereign of Eight Heads has already started acting. I can't feel his call in this area."

"Ren-ssi, are you okay?"

"I can resist it to a certain degree thanks to my sponsor. However, the incarnations with weak sponsors have already flocked to the plains."

In the case of the Absolute Throne, there was a difference in the intensity of the command depending on the distance. There was nothing absolute in the Star Steam, even if it had the 'absolute' qualifier.

Along the way, we found the bodies of the small people. Asuka Ren spoke with a bitter expression.

"…Not everyone in Japan chose to be a disaster."

"I know."

I read the original so I could say it clearly. Apart from Asuka Ren, the Japanese people who became 'small people' couldn't be seen because they were already dead or hiding somewhere in this world.

"In fact, I don't think the Japanese people who choose to be a disaster are bad. They are just ordinary."

In the original work, a number of Korean incarnations also chose to be a disaster. This was probably a normal choice for ordinary humans. Han Sooyoung also agreed.

"To put it bluntly, I didn't choose to be a small person. Kim Dokja's goal also isn't to protect the small people."

Han Sooyoung's words were sharp.

[The small planet's constellation is looking at you with hurt eyes.]

It didn't matter if it was for the sake of the small people or the disasters. In the end, the fight here was a spectacle.

People became immersed in their role and forgot this fact. They sold their lives to make money. Then that money would be used to buy other stories. Maybe humans always lived this way.

Then a huge aura rose from the rocky area. It was quite far away but I could feel the formidable aura from here.

"Kyrgios has noticed. Hurry."

I ran away after asking him to teach me. I would suffer incredible pain if I was caught. We started to run across the plains in the direction of Veronica.

In the midst of running, Asuka Ren often looked back at the rocky area. Han Sooyoung glanced at Ren and asked, "Are you sorry?"

"Huh? No."

"Don't you feel that it is weird? It is probably the first time you saw a character that you made."

"…Yes."

"Furthermore, he is handsome."

I didn't say it before but Kyrgios was handsome. In Ways of Survival, a handsome person was often described as 'comparable to Yoo Joonghyuk' and this was a perfect way to describe Kyrgios.

The problem was his height and his temper…

How did it feel to see a person you created breathing and talking? If the author of Ways of Survival was alive somewhere then wouldn't he feel something similar when looking at Yoo Joonghyuk?

Asuka Ren spoke to me. "Ah right, Dokja-ssi. I have a question."

"Yes."

"How did you gain Kyrgios' favour?"

"His favour?"

"I got the impression that Kyrgios liked Dokja-ssi."

"…Huh?"

"Kyrgios acts angry when he likes someone.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is listening.]

That reminded me, Kyrgios treated me quite well despite me not having talent. Despite all the times he swore at me…

"Dokja-ssi."

I looked back at Ren's words and my expression stiffened along with the two women. Dark smoke was rising from the place where I was looking. It was in the direction of Veronica Castle. We glanced at each other and started running.

Not long afterwards, the battlefield of Veronica Castle was revealed. There were the bodies of the fallen monsters as well as the trampled corpses of the small people. I also saw people whose heads were crushed. Perhaps this was Lee Hyunsung's work.

As we got closer, the number of small people corpses increased and the bodies of the Japanese incarnations decreased.

No way, I couldn't be late. Then after a while, we witnessed a terrible scene at the back of the shattered palace.

Dudududu!

Gong Pildu's cannons fired.

Fortunately, all the party members were safe. Lee Hyunsung was badly injured while Lee Jihye and the children were exhausted, but their lives were intact. However, it was dangerous. They were fighting…

"Crazy!"

Han Sooyoung shouted and stepped back towards me.

"Ahh! Izumi…"

Asuka Ren groaned with pain as she grabbed her temples and fell down. Twenty Japanese people were united around one being.

Behind the body of a man whose pupils had turned black, there was a shadow of a huge monster that covered the whole sky. The heads and tail were reminiscent of a blood red valley. The king of the disasters was in a streamlined form.

Suddenly, one head bent down towards the nearest small person. Th small person turned white with terror and the snake smiled at him. There was a crunch and only the lower body of the small person remained.

"H-help! Somebody, help!"

The flesh of the small person was sucked into the mouth of the red snake. Nobody was able to stop it. All the small people, including my party moments, stood like hardened mannequins and watched the scene.

I belatedly realized. It wasn't because my party members fought hard that they were unharmed. The gunfire continued but it was resignation, not killing intent that filled Gong Pildu's face. It was the same for Lee Hyunsung, Lee Jihye and the others. The reason they were still alive because they were meals for the narrative-grade constellation.

Every time the mouth of the snake opened, a few small people would disappear.

[The small planet's constellation is struggling with pain.]

[The small planet's constellation is screaming.]

Han Sooyoung muttered. "Shit… what the hell is this?"

One of Japan's three great villains, the father of Shutendoji, a flood control mythical monster. That monster was the 'Sovereign of Eight Heads', Yamata no Orochi. Maybe I would be torn apart by his teeth if I fought against him.

"D-Don't fight. We absolutely can't win." Asuka Ren mumbled and the entranced Han Sooyoung grabbed me.

"Kim Dokja. Surely we aren't going to fight that? Let's run away. Yes?"

I didn't answer. The giant head once again swept over the small people. It was a natural movement, like taking fish out of a fish tank.

Han Sooyoung kept urging me, "It isn't too late. Now we can save the kids. Quickly bring them and run…"

Kwaduduk!

"Ah!"

They're all going to die!"

I shook my head.

"Let's wait a bit longer."

If I acted now, that guy would never move. Just a bit longer…

Then the snake's mouth headed towards Lee Jihye. Damn. I reflexively got up and ran forward. However, the snake's head was moving quickly towards Lee Jihye.

At this moment, something moved faster than me. One of the snake's heads fell to the ground with a pained scream. The cloud of dust was lift and a man could be seen standing on the snake's head. He looked at me with a distinctive cold expression. "…Kim Dokja."

Yes, why did he always show up late? I smiled at him. "You are late, Yoo Joonghyuk."

He had become a small person like me but I felt a strong energy from Yoo Joonghyuk. This person was holding a violet and glossy ornamental knife. As expected, he obtained the knife.

We stared at each other without speaking before simultaneously turning towards the disaster.

[The constellation 'Sovereign of Eight Heads' wants your blood.]

Yamata no Orochi mealtime has been interrupted and his body started to swell up.

"Stay away Kim Dokja. I will catch this guy."

"No, not this time."

I stepped towards Yoo Joonghyuk.

[The exclusive skill 'Bookmark' can now be activated.]

I felt the strong energy seething in my heart.

"This time I have to catch him."

In this scenario, I would break the principle of no killing that I had been maintaining.

Chapter 130: Ep. 25 - Those Who Face a God, IV

Yoo Joonghyuk glared at me and said, "It is too unreasonable with your skills."

Messages poured in.

[Constellations who hate the Korean Peninsula are showing hatred.]

[Constellations who hate violence and slaughter are going crazy.]

[Constellations who hate the Korean Peninsula desires your death.]

I looked at the Japanese incarnations. Their sponsors were all people I knew. They had entered Bihyung's channel and drove someone I knew to death.

"I made a promise. Thus, I have to catch him."

"Promise?"

The first promise was to kill the dokkaebi and the second promise was to revive her. Finally, there was the third promise. It was this.

"I promised to get revenge on the constellations who killed her."

Yoo Joonghyuk probably understood from these words alone. Maybe in this world, only Yoo Joonghyuk could understand. Yoo Joonghyuk replied, "I can't concede because of that."

"…This bastard really doesn't understand."

We started moving as soon as we finished talking. The place where we were standing was destroyed and the head of the giant snake stared at us.

[The constellation 'Sovereign of Eight Heads' is furious!]

It was a fearsome presence. It wasn't just the body but the 'shadow' of the constellation. This much power was revealed despite only a handful of the probability constraints being lifted.

This was the dignity of the narrative-grade. It was an opponent that I would've normally never dealt with.

「Yamata no Orochi. He was interpreted as an evil spirit in ancient Japanese mythology. There is only one way to deal with him at this point.」

I observed Yoo Joonghyuk's sword and said, "You have obtained the Totsuka-no-tsurugi."

In the original third regression, Yoo Joonghyuk didn't get the sword. It was probably because Yoo Joonghyuk had become stronger in this round.

Yoo Joonghyuk wondered, "…You know this sword."

"I know. It is a famous sword."

Totsuka-no-tsurugi. It was the sword used by Susanoo to cut down Yamata no Orochi. In other words, in a distant story, it defeated Yamata no Orochi once.

It was the same as Gyebaek and Ito. The history of 'defeat' was a fatal weakness for all beings made of stories. The eight heads cried at once and shed bloody tears.

[Cheeky…worms…]

Crazy… was he using his true voice?

[The exclusive skill, 'Fourth Wall' is strongly activated!]

The whole area was devastated with a single word. More than half the small people who heard it died of their internal organs rupturing. Lee Jihye and Lee Gilyoung coughed up blood and also collapsed. There were even disasters who bled after hearing the words.

Of course, I had the 'wall' and Yoo Joonghyuk's Mind Barrier had a high level so we could endure it.

"You don't speak well so shut up." I taunted him. However, the snake didn't use his true voice again. He didn't have sufficient permissions so using his true voice consumed a large amount of probability. Instead, his anger led to action.

The eight heads simultaneously breathed out fire, turning the area into a furnace. We quickly ran behind a wall. It was Yoo Joonghyuk who acted first.

[The character 'Yoo Joonghyuk' has used 'Giant Body Transformation Lv. 2!]

As expected, this skill had also been passed to him. I thought that I should learn this skill.

Yoo Joonghyuk's body swelled up he leapt into the air. Giant Body Transformation was a technique that temporarily exploded the latent power of a body to imitate the power of a giant.

For a short time, Yoo Joonghyuk's combat power would be even stronger than it was before he became a small person. The problem was the duration of the skill was only five minutes.

The Breaking the Sky Energy filled Totsuka-no-tsurugi. Yoo Joonghyuk kicked off from the wall and rushed forward. Splitting the Sky reached a perfect state and gushed out from the ether blade.

Breaking the Sky Sword.

Vanish.

Splitting the Sky Desolation.

The flash of light that emerged from Yoo Joonghyuk's sword split into dozens of branches and struck the snake.

Gruesome black blood emerged from the wounds caused by Totsuka-no-tsurugi and one of the eight heads started to rot.

This was the only sword that could kill Yamata no Orochi. Yoo Joonghyuk wasn't a constellation so Stage Transformation didn't occur. Still, it was obvious that the sword was effective.

[The constellation 'Sovereign of Eight Heads' is howling.]

One head was cut off but Yamata no Orochi was still intact. In order to kill him, all eight heads must be cut off.

Yoo Joonghyuk didn't hesitate and jumped towards the second head. The battle was so gorgeous that no one could interrupt. It was amazing as Yoo Joonghyuk zigzagged to avoid the heads and tail

The main character was the main character for a reason. Even so, a person like this died over a hundred times in Ways of Survival. Once again, this world was terrible.

"Kim Dokja! Are you going to just watch? Didn't you say you would catch him?"

Yoo Joonghyuk destroyed three heads in an instant and shouted towards me as he gasped. It seemed like he was losing steam?

I smiled and replied, "Ah, I meant I would deal the final blow."

"You bastard!"

I leisurely managed my stamina and waited. It wasn't time yet.

On the other hand, Yoo Joonghyuk was in a hurry and squeezed all out all his fearsome strength at once to hit the other heads. In the process of cutting off the fourth head, Yoo Joonghyuk's 'Giant Body Transformation' was released.

Flames and poison poured out from the snake's heads at once. Yoo Joonghyuk dodged with agile movements but couldn't escape being damaged by the tail.

[The character 'Yoo Joonghyuk' has used 'Strong Self-Defense Lv. 9'.]

Only the tip of the tail touched him but Yoo Joonghyuk's body was thrown back into the castle's wall. The bloody Yoo Joonghyuk emerged from the terrible dust clouds.

"Kim Dokja! Your help…"

"I'm going to act now."

"Stupid person! You can't do it alone! Back off now and later—"

"You've had a hard time. Now it is your turn to watch me."

The moment the remaining four heads gazed at me, I picked up Totsuka-no-tsurugi from the ground and ran towards Orochi.

[The number five bookmark has been activated.]

[Activation Time: Three minutes.]

[Your understanding of the character is low, so only a part of the character's skill is activated.]

It was fine. This much was still good.

[The skill can only be used by a 'small person'.]

[Your current body configuration is similar to the physical makeup of the character.]

I only needed one skill anyway.

[The level of the character is too high to fully reproduce the skill level.]

[The level of the skill being activated is forcibly adjusted.]

[The exclusive skill 'Electrification Lv. 10' is activated.]

「The magnitude of the consciousness determines the degree of existence, making it possible for the smallest being to see the greatest universe.」

The phrases left by Kyrgios in Ways of Survival passed through my head and the flow of magic power around me changed. The magic power soon became particles and the electrons that resonated with each other started to tremble violently.

「There is a beginning in existence, so the smallest is the greatest.」

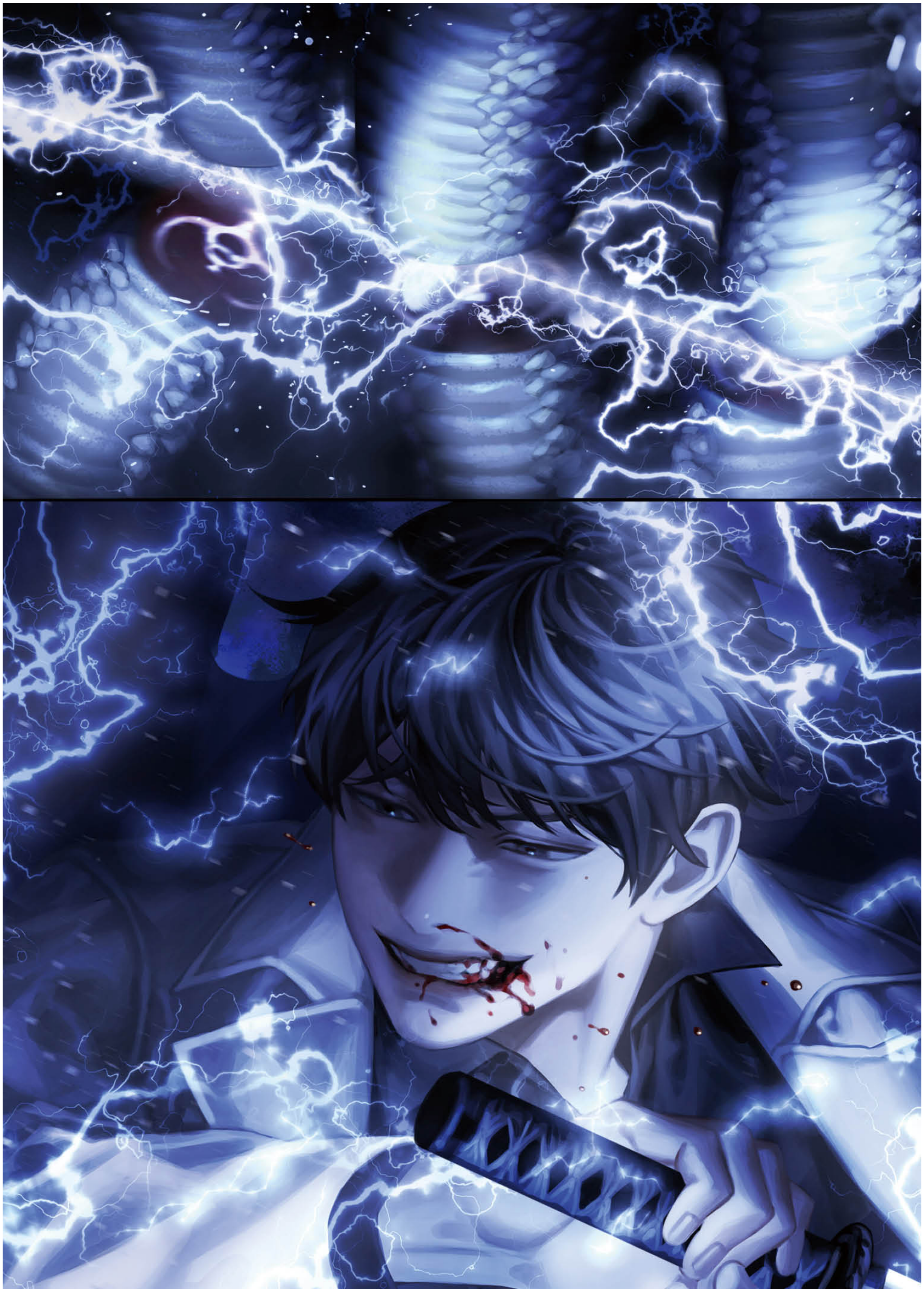
There was the sound of something popping deep in my mind. Maybe it was something like the coolness of the Big Bang. I opened my eyes and saw my body covered with a blue-white lightning. It was like I had become lightning.

The formidable power was wriggling inside me. It felt like I could do anything. If I wanted to penetrate the sky, I would penetrate the sky. If I wanted to separate the sea, I would do so. Then if I wanted to cut off this snake's head, I would cut it.

There was a roar as I took the first step. Then with the second step, I appeared right in front of the snake's neck. The third step caused the white lightning to scream in the area and then the fourth step…

I passed by Orochi, leaving a storm behind. My feet were damaged by the lightning and blood poured from my nose and mouth. My body stumbled like I was experiencing an electric shock.

I looked back and saw three snake heads falling to the ground. I drank a magic power recovery potion and the swelling in my hand decreased.



[The constellation 'Sovereign of Eight Heads' is shocked by your swordsmanship.]

In just a moment, Orochi had one head left and was floundering from the pain.

[The constellation 'Sovereign of Eight Heads' is questioning the fairness of the scenario!]

I laughed loudly. "…You are raising an issue of fairness?"

The duration of Electrification was three minutes but right now, my body couldn't take more than three steps. In other words, I had to kill him in three steps.

Sparks filled the air and then that damn voice was heard again. [Geez, a person of noble blood looks so ugly.]

I thought I would hear this voice. The intermediate dokkaebi Ganul was looking down at this place.

[…Ah, really. I can't just watch. This is a big problem.]

Unlike his words, he didn't seem to want to interfere.

[The constellation 'Sovereign of Eight Heads' is shouting with anger.]

[Hrmm, you can't make an impossible demand. As you can see, you've used up all the probability allowed in this scenario. 'They' can't lend you any more power.]

Yamata no Orochi's roar covered all of Peace Land. This must've been the first humiliation that the narrative-grade Yamata no Orochi had experienced.

Someone was always a spectacle. Now the victim of the spectacle was himself. He was filled with anger. There might be only one head left but Orochi's strength was increasing.

"Protect the king!" The confused Japanese incarnations ran forward. This was the power of the Absolute Throne.

I heard a message from the dokkaebi Youngki in my head.

–D-Dokja-ssi. The channel is about to burst. I will block the indirect messages for a while!

I was currently using the power of Kyrgios so all types of constellations would come to watch me.

"Stop!"

My party members regained their spirits and ran to stop the disasters. Lee Hyunsung barely raised his bloody body while Gong Pildu supported them with gunfire.

Meanwhile, Yamata no Orochi was preparing for the final reversal.

[No, wait a minute! Hey Constellation! What are you doing…!]

An ominous current was appearing around Izumi's body, the incarnation of Yamata no Orochi. It was the sign of a probability storm. The panicked dokkaebi shouted.

[L-Look here! Turn back! The bureau! It is an emergency!]

It was a real disaster brought about by the desire not to be defeated by me. The dokkaebi belatedly used the system control but it was unfortunately too late.

The Great Hole opened in the wide sky.

I realized that Orochi had crossed the line. He even borrowed the probability that the supreme being granted to the Absolute Throne.

"Ahh, ah!"

Everyone held their breaths as they stared at the sky.

[Someone has interfered with the scenario system.]

Restless sensations were surging from the Great Hole. Chaos. Disorder. A void. It was the origin of all fear. This existence was lending its probability to Yamata no Orochi.

The shadow of the remaining snake head started to grow larger due to the probability. It grew bigger and bigger. It would grow until it covered the castle and the entire planet.

[Measuring… sword…!]

All beings, whether they were incarnations or small people, collapsed on the ground and groaned as they coughed up blood. The dreadful difference pressed heavily on my body. My knees were forced to the ground. Everything was the worst.

[Mere… hum…ans… going… against… a… great… star…!]

I instinctively realized. I couldn't win even if I used Electrification. At my level, I couldn't win even if I woke up the dead.

Nevertheless, I laughed. "You just made the worst mistake."

The Star Stream was about balance. If someone destroyed the probability then someone else would obtain it. Thus, the balance would now be adjusted.

A fearsome aura was coming from a distance at a rapid pace. It wasn't Yamata no Orochi or the unknown god beyond the Great Hole. However, nobody here could ignore this arrogant existence.

[Since when could a god from another world intervene in the scenario?]

He was the absolute being born on this planet.

[Don't get involved in my planet's matters, if you don't want to confront me where my story began.]

The White Purity, Kyrgios Rodgraim.

[Get lost! Monster of this world!]

Lightning stretched out as Kyrgios soared towards the sky. It was a powerful force that wasn't pushed back at all by a narrative-grade constellation.

Kyrgios revealed his true strength and broke through the tentacles, forcibly closing the entrance of the Great Hole. Then Orochi's power started plummeting.

[This… ah… ah…! You…!]

I didn't miss this gap and used the remaining three steps. All the magic power in my body flowed towards Totsuka-no-tsurugi.

Then I saw the incarnation of Yamata no Orochi smiling at me. It was an expression that welcomed the long-awaited liberation.

Killing one person to save other people's lives. The selfish sword moved and something rolled along the ground.

[You have killed a person.]

[You have been deprived of the title of 'King of No Killing'.]

The constellation of Yamata no Orochi blinked from the severe blow. There was a terrible scream and the shadow of the constellation started to scatter into ashes.

[An unbelievable feat has been accomplished.]

[You have hunted a 'King of Disasters' for the first time!]

[The script of the 'King of Disasters' being defeated in this scenario wasn't expected!]

[You have achieved an impossible feat!]

[Due to the completion of an impossible story, all dokkaebis of the Seoul Dome and Tokyo Dome will enter an emergency meeting.]

I looked up at the constellations shining in the sky. All of them wouldn't know. It was the feeling of a person running hard only to arrive at the starting point.

[Congratulations! The Star Stream has acknowledged your grade.]

[You have accomplished a total of four stories.]

The end of the sixth scenario. I finally arrived at the starting point towards the end I wanted.

[Now you must build your last story to become a constellation.]

Chapter 131: Ep. 26 - Scenario Destroyer, I

[200,000 coins have been acquired as compensation for your achievement.]

[We are currently discussing the compensation for the major contributors.]

After the death of Izumi, Yamata no Orochi's incarnation, the Japanese people immediately surrendered. The collapse of the Absolute Throne loosened the power controlling them and the hidden anti-disaster people started appearing.

"Thank you, Kim Dokja."

I recognized the speaker's face. The greeting was from one of the Japanese people that Yoo Joonghyuk visited, just like I found Asuka Ren. I nodded and greeted the speaker. "Kizuki Hiroshi."

"You know me?"

"You got the Totsuka-no-tsurugi in a hidden scenario."

"Hoh, that's right. It looks like you heard it from Yoo Joonghyuk."

Of course I didn't hear it from Yoo Joonghyuk. I was aware of it because I read the original novel. If I remembered correctly, this person had a sponsor related to the myths of Susanoo and Yamata no Orochi.

"You managed to kill the Sovereign of Eight Heads… Many things have been settled thanks to you. I will surely repay this kindness." Kizuki lead the remaining Japanese people and disappeared.

The Japanese who chose to become disasters took advantage of the fact that they wouldn't die even when failing the scenario. Izumi was the incarnation of Yamata no Orochi but Kizuki was also a powerful and clever incarnation. He would be able to lead the incarnations well for the time being after returning to Tokyo Dome.

[A constellation born from the sea and storm has revealed his modifier.]

[The constellation 'Snake Cutter' has developed a great liking towards you.]

The constellation 'Snake Cutter' was Susanoo, the original master of the SSS-grade item Totsuka-no-tsurugi.

I glanced at the Totsuka-no-tsurugi that I gave back to Yoo Joonghyuk. Totsuka-no-tsurugi had been greatly damaged. It wasn't strange that it was said to have broken after killing Yamata no Orochi.

Yoo Joonghyuk stared at me and the party members who had fallen asleep after eating the Ellain Forest's Vital Energy.

"Ah, I thought I was really dead this time." Lee Jihye shook her head and held her forehead after waking up. It was because of the blow from directly hearing Yamata no Orochi's true voice.

"No, what was that? I just heard a few words…"

"I didn't get such a feeling when the commander made a surprise visit…"

Lee Hyunsung was talking only to freeze when he heard the voice behind him.

"It looks like you're alive, Lee Hyunsung."

"Y-Yoo Joonghyuk-ssi."

"I told you to follow my group. Why didn't you listen?"

"T-That…" Lee Hyunsung trembled and glanced my way. It was a face asking me to do something but I couldn't. Yoo Joonghyuk stared at Lee Hyunsung for a while before turning away.

"Ahjussi." I looked around and saw Shin Yoosung holding onto me. She looked up at me like she wanted to be picked up.

I lightly patted Shin Yoosung's back. "Was it hard? Well done. You did well."

I wanted to say something plausible but these were the only words I had. Shin Yoosung shook her head from within my arms.

"Hyung, it wasn't that hard." Lee Gilyoung interrupted and pushed Shin Yoosung away from my arms. Despite the arguing, the two children seemed quite familiar with each other. As expected, kids understood kids the best. It was worth leaving the two of them together.

"You're popular with children." I looked at the small person who spoke. Was his name Gillemium? "There will be a royal banquet in the evening. The castle has almost collapsed and the scale will be very small but… I would like to invite you to attend."

I looked up at the sky.

[Time remaining until the end of the scenario: 27 days.]

[The disasters have given up the scenario and the sixth scenario is scheduled for an early termination.]

It might take a bit of time because of the disasters scattered throughout the world. However, once Hiroshi went around Peace Land then the scenario would end automatically.

A banquet…

Was it to play and drink? Ah, then perhaps?

"I understand. We will attend."

"It looks like you are very fond of drinking."

"Well… it has been hard to see then these days."

I brought out a lot of distilled spirits that remained in the warehouse with Gillemium's help. Peace Land's drinks had very low alcohol content so I needed a lot to make the drink I wanted.

[The constellation 'Snake Cutter' is interested in your brewing.]

I poured alcohol into a bucket the size of a human, threw in all the ingredients I had and started to stir.

[Eighth Head of the Sovereign of Eight Heads.]

[Seventh Tail of the Sovereign of Eight Heads.]

These were items that came out when defeating Yamata no Orochi. They were fragments rather than proper body parts because the true body hadn't appeared. Still, they contained part of the constellation's power.

It was only Yoo Joonghyuk who realized what I was going to do. "You know this hidden piece."

"Aren't I a prophet? Now give me your sword."

Yoo Joonghyuk knew what I was going to do and obediently offered his sword. I threw the Totsuka-no-tsurugi that I received from Yoo Joonghyuk into the alcohol. Originally it shouldn't be made like this but I used a shortcut. The Totsuka-no-tsurugi melted into the alcohol.

[Two stories give meaning to your actions.]

[The narrative of the Sovereign of Eight Heads and the Snake Cutter has been combined.

[Some parts of the story are damaged due to incorrect transmission.]

The damaged part was a bit disappointing but it couldn't be helped.

[The narrative of Ame no Murakumo no Tsurugi is expressed!]

According to the stories, Ame no Murakumo no Tsurugi was the sword that came out of the tail of a drunk Yamata no Orochi. However, it was possible to acquire it using a shortcut. In any case, I just needed to drink.

Lee Jihye asked doubtfully, "Why did you throw the sword into the precious alcohol?"

"Wait and see."

A moment later, a mysterious aura flowed from the alcohol and a sword surrounded by a pure white light rose.

[The star relic 'Heavenly Sword of Gathering Clouds' has appeared!]

As expected, it appeared. There was nothing wrong with the method from Ways of Survival.

Yoo Joonghyuk reached out his hand. "This is mine."

"Hey! We caught him together."

"I was the one who caught him."

Usually, I would've insisted, but Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes were serious this time. This son of a bitch…

Of course, the relic itself wasn't my goal but it was still bitter to have the star relic taken away right in front of me. I couldn't fight him here so I gave up on the sword.

[The star relic 'Grass-Cutting Sword' has appeared!]

A knife rose from the alcohol.

…Eh?

The contents of Ways of Survival flowed quickly through my head.

「Names give birth to narratives and narratives are reproduced in reality. In the world of the Star Stream, Ame no Murakumo no Tsurugi has a total of five names. In other words, Ame no Murakumo no Tsurugi isn't 'one sword'.」

I belatedly realized. Perhaps the name of Ame no Murakumo no Tsurugi was used for five things in total. In other words, one sword appeared in Ways of Survival and the other four weren't mentioned.

I quickly grabbed the knife. "Then this is mine. Any complaints?"

"That…" Yoo Joonghyuk's narrowed eyes stared at me before he turned away. "Do what you want."

I inwardly sighed with relief. I was satisfied with the grip of the knife in my hand. It was the second in the Ame no Murakumo no Tsurugi, the Grass-Cutting Sword. This sword contained the power of a dragon killer so I didn't need to be afraid of any dragon species that I encountered in the future.

Lee Jihye watched from the side and pouted. "These petty-minded males obtained the swords…"

Lee Jihye joked playfully before poking the jar of alcohol. "Can we drink this now? The smell isn't a joke."

"You are a minor…"

It wasn't just Lee Jihye. People were flocking to the golden coloured alcohol. Everyone seemed to be hungry for alcohol. Well, they would become drunk just from smelling it…

"Drink up everyone."

People started to drink like crazy after I gave my permission.

"Ohh, how could it have this taste?"

"A heavenly drink!"

The people drank the golden alcohol and exclaimed with joy. It was fermented with the magic power of a constellation so it would naturally have a good taste. In fact, the alcohol content in it was insignificant but it also had the effect of increasing stats.

"Aren't you drinking?" I asked Yoo Joonghyuk. I looked closer and saw that Yoo Joonghyuk was making a simple dish.

He was slicing and roasting meat and vegetables. It was an outdoor party so the food ingredients brought by the small people were piled up in the area. However, Yoo Joonghyuk's cooking…

Yoo Joonghyuk spoke in a cold tone. "I don't consume anything made by others."

"Are you afraid of being poisoned?"

"It is because it isn't delicious."

"How delicious can the food you make…" I said this but I quickly took a bite out of the dish Yoo Joonghyuk was making.

Then… No, what was this?

Lee Seolhwa, who was helping Yoo Joonghyuk nearby, smiled and asked me, "Is it delicious?"

"…Yes."

It was damn delicious. Really, it was delicious. No, it was the best dish I had ever eaten. What was this meat skewer?

One side of the expressionless Yoo Joonghyuk's mouth curved up. Damn. Even if he was a regressor, how could this bastard cook so well?

I mumbled something and moved away when I heard something that was like a musical instrument. It was excellent music that was very calm and profound.

I followed the sound and saw a doll sitting on top of the castle. It was the smallest person who was as handsome as Yoo Joonghyuk.

It was Kyrgios Rodgraim. He sat on the ledge and played the viola while staring at the distant sky. It was gentle and sometimes sad. It was filled with a faint longing. The noisy crowd stopped one by one and listened to the music. The exaggerated heat cooled down.

First, someone's eyes reddened. Then the next person burst into tears. It seemed contagious and they all started to cry. As if they missed the moments they had to cry, everyone burst out crying.

The inhabitants of Peace Land also experienced the scenarios. This was music that comforted them.

I drank a bit of the alcohol while listening to the melody. Then Asuka Ren came up to me. She hadn't joined the Japanese group.

I asked her, "Ren-ssi, have you seen Han Sooyoung?"

"Ah. I was describing some settings to her and she suddenly said there was a place she had to go."

I see. It seemed she left to find a hidden piece. That girl…

The sound of the viola spread through the broken castle and I recalled something as I saw Asuka Ren's face. A person who had reached the end of a long dream was likely to make this face.

I thought I could ask now. "How do you feel?"

"…It is weird." She hesitated for a moment. "I'm thinking that I shouldn't have given up."

I understood immediately what she was saying. She licked her lips before opening her mouth, breaking the moist film on her mouth.

"Who would've thought of this when reading my manga?"

"Someone obviously did."

Asuka Ren smiled sadly and looked down at her hands. Her red cheeks made it clear she had drank a lot of alcohol.

"I suddenly had a thought. Maybe I'm not a member of a world someone drew…"

I paused before saying, "Perhaps it is a world that doesn't matter."

"Huh?"

"There is the story I wanted to hear last time…"

I noticed Asuka Ren didn't understand and explained it a bit better. Asuka Ren said, "Ah, an email arrived shortly after the series ended. They wanted to borrow the setting of my manga…"

I was a bit surprised by the unexpected words. There was no such thing in Ways of Survival.

"Borrow the setting?"

"Yes. I didn't think much about it at the time but this situation occurred not long afterwards…"

"Do you remember the exact details? For example, an email address or…"

"As soon as I replied to the email, all related emails were suddenly erased. So the detailed address…"

"I see."

Asuka Ren heard something in my voice that made her feel sorry. She hesitated before adding, "…That, um. I'm not certain but I think the email address started with a 't'."

t? I became dazed and reflexively asked, "Could it be… tls123?"

Chapter 132: Ep. 26 - Scenario Destroyer, II

tls123. This was the ID for the author of Ways of Survival.

Asuka Ren's eyes widened. "Eh? tls123…?"

I urged her, "Do you remember?"

"Remember… eh?"

"What is it?"

Asuka Ren blinked and her eyes became dazed for a moment. Faint sparks appeared around her body.

"■■■…■■"

Huh? I was shocked and asked, "What did you just say?"

"…Huh?"

"The words you just said…"

"What do you mean? What did I…"

Asuka Ren's face showed that she didn't know anything. I felt a terrible sense of foreboding. I quietly activated Character List.

[The exclusive skill, Character List is activated.]

[Character Summary]

Name: Asuka Ren

Age: 31 years old

Sponsor: Master of the Niten Ichu-ryu.

Exclusive Attributes: Peace Land's Creator (Legend), Mangaka (Rare)

Exclusive Skills: Kendo Lv. 7, Black Pen Tip Lv. 4, Plausible Dignity and Laws Lv. 5, Imagination Stimulation Lv. 4…

Stima: Niten Ichu-ryu Lv. 3.

Overall Stats: Physique Lv. 55 (Currently Lv. 17), Strength Lv. 55 (Currently Lv. 17), Agility Lv. 49 (Currently Lv. 11), Magic Power Lv. 54 (Currently Lv. 16)

Overall Evaluation: The current comprehensive evaluation is currently in progress.

As I saw in Ways of Survival, this woman must be the creator of Peace Land.

Then…

…Was it 'editing?' The next moment, I saw the disappearance of an entire feature window in front of my eyes. Like sand, the letters scattered one by one in front of me.

Exclusive Attributes: Mangaka (Rare)

Very slowly, goosebumps crept up my spine. Why was 'Creatore of Peace Land' missing all of a sudden? It was impossible for any constellation to do this.

Asuka Ren looked at me and asked, "Sorry, what were we talking about?"

"We were talking about Ren-ssi's work."

"My work?" Asuka Ren made a face like she couldn't remember anything. She couldn't remember any of the settings of Peace Land that she created.

「At this moment, she knew that the world had completely left her hands.」

I had a throbbing headache. Was there such a sentence in Ways of Survival? I didn't know.

However, one thing was for certain.

The melody of the viola playing in the lonely night. The cries of the small people. The sad and rich atmosphere elevated by the emotions. This was the moment the world called Peace Land was completed.

Now there was nothing to add to this story. Finally, one story had become completely independent from its author.

I suddenly thought I understood why an attribute disappeared from Asuka Ren. The moment the world was finished, the author had to descend from the position of creator.

I suddenly wondered. Where did the finished story go?

[You have come to know the planet Peace Land.]

[All beings belonging to Peace Land are faintly aware of your gaze.]

[The small planet's constellation rejoices in your presence.]

[The beings of Peace Land have started to write legends about you.]

The funny thing was that I hadn't asked for it.

…I see. The destination of the story that left its creator was decided from the beginning.

After that, I asked Asuka Ren a few more things while using Lie Detection. However, she really didn't remember anything.

"I'm sorry, I really don't know. It is like a manga I have read…"

It was like she read her own story. Somehow, I felt depressed. Asuka Ren closed her eyes for a moment before saying, "However, I think I enjoyed reading it. Definitely…"

Sadly, the information about the author of Ways of Survival that I barely managed to touch stopped here. It was still unclear what type of person the author of Ways of Survival was and what they wanted.

Still, at least one thing seemed vaguely clear. Perhaps like me, the author of Ways of Survival wasn't satisfied with the existing ending. That's why they gave me the book before the end of the world. If so, I would meet those expectations.

I stepped away from Asuka Ren who was enjoying the scenery and pulled out a small ampoule.

[Ancient Serpent's Sacred Blood]

It was an item obtained with the constellation parts. I sent a signal and the distant Lee Hyunsung nodded and approached. Lee Hyunsung wasn't drinking. I was sorry but I had some work for him to do today.

"I need your help now."

"Leave it to me."

Lee Hyunsung was entrusted to be my guard. It was because I was going to collapse for a bit. I sprinkled the Ancient Serpent's Sacred Blood into the cup and the golden alcohol turned into a dark red.

[You have drank alcohol made from the Ancient Serpent's Sacred Blood.]

[The greedy snake will test your mental power.]

This was a hidden piece that Yoo Joonghyuk didn't know about in the third regression. It was a ceremony that could only be done when the alcohol made from Orochi's parts was mixed with the sacred blood. I wouldn't have given up an excellent trait like King of No Killing if it hadn't been for this.

[The snake has confirmed your eligibility for Dragon Slayer.]

[The new attribute 'Eight Lives' is being prepared.]

…Good. Now that it was being prepared, I would have a new attribute when I woke up.

One thing was finished and the other…

I poured the remaining alcohol into my mouth. I became dizzy and felt drunk. However, I couldn't fall asleep right away. I sat on the ground and wrote a message.

'God of Wine and Ecstasy'.

Why? Dionysus was unresponsive despite the joyful atmosphere. The same was true for Persephone.

It was a difficult situation. I accomplished my task but there was no one to take me to the Underworld.

Should I bring Yoo Sangah over? If there was a direct terminus with Olympus then I could send the signal right away.

'Father of the Rich Night'.

It happened when I wrote Hades' modifier. An eerie aura swept over my body.

I was filled with the urge to vomit and when I opened my eyes again, I realized that I had already come to the Underworld. This disturbing and unpleasant air could only be felt in the Underworld.

Looking around, it was fortunate that I hadn't fallen into Tartarus. Someone was standing in front of me.

[You shouldn't enter the Underworld right now.]

It wasn't Hades or Persephone. I could tell the moment I saw the outfit resembling the envoy.

"Judge-nim."

It wasn't the judge who guided me last time. I replied to him, "I came to report that I've completed the queen's task."

[I know. Once again, you can't enter the palace.]

"…Why?"

[I can't tell you that.]

The judge waved his hand like it was troublesome.

[Go back. I summoned you using the power of the father but it is impossible for you to enter.]

"I have an appointment with the queen. I must enter."

[You can't right now. Go back.]

What type of crap was this? Despite his strength, the judge was miniscule compared to Persephone. Still, looking at this stubbornness…

"…Perhaps they are both away?"

The judge hesitated before nodding.

[That's right.]

"What's going on…"

Hades and Persephone were absent at the same time. I didn't know what it was but there was a high probability that something big had happened. If it was an emergency meeting for the 12 gods of Olympus… but was there anything worth making that summons at this point?

"Did they leave something for me? Something I can pick up if I arrive…"

[Why should I tell you if there was such a thing?]

I knew that the judges had different personalities but I didn't expect to be caught by such a tough one. Based on the way he talked, there must be something. There was no way that the meticulous Persephone would've just left…

It couldn't be helped.

"I'll let you take a sip of this if you help me."

I took out the Yamata no Orochi alcohol that I had placed into a bottle in my coat. I opened the lid and the smell of sweet fermented liquor spread.

[T-That is…?]

The judge was shocked. For a person who had lived a long time, alcohol was like drugs. It was the only means to forget the tragedy of the long years. This wasn't alcohol but alcohol made from the parts of a constellation.

[H-Hrmm. Hrmm…]

"If you don't like it then I can go."

[W-Wait a minute! I understand. I'll give you the thing that the queen left.]

He ate the bait. This was completely different from the harsh judge I saw last time.

[Hah… good…]

The judge grinned with satisfaction after taking a sip and pulled out a yellow bead.

[Here, take it and go.]

It was a bright yellow bead. I realized it was the soul of Shin Yoosung that I had been eagerly looking for. I rubbed the bead several times and it shone with a faint light as it floated in the air. I placed my hand on the bead and thought, 'I'm sorry, am I late?'

The bead only screamed, like she had lost most of her language.

[Ah…ah.]

A woman who lost her words and her memories. Despite dedicating her life to the scenario, the only story left to her was a horrible history of pain. This was what a normal person would say.

'You've gone through enough so rest and take it easy'.

However, Shin Yoosung couldn't rest. She still had work to do in this world.

[Ah…jussi…?]

The soul trembled after a long time.

[Really, really…]

'Yes'.

[Why…?]

'You still have work left to do in this world'.

I didn't come here because I sympathized with her. I did it because I needed Shin Yoosung's help. There was something that only she could do with the story she built up for a long time. Shin Yoosung responded with slight fear.

[I… what should I do?]

I touched her soul and showed her some of my thoughts. Shin Yoosung was silent for a while before she burst out laughing.

[Haha, ha… a cruel person, ahjussi… in a way, you are more cruel that the captain…]

'I'm sorry'.

[But… okay. I accept. No… I want to do it. This is what I want. This time, I want to see the 'ending' of this world.]

'Your memories might disappear. Can you endure it?'

Shin Yoosung nodded.

[I'm not afraid. Ahjussi… I'll believe in what you told me.]

Finally, Shin Yoosung's soul disappeared back into the bead. She probably wouldn't come out for a while. The moment we would meet again was after she gained a physical body.

The judge watched us and opened his mouth.

[As you might know, the body isn't resurrected just by taking the soul out of the world. Moreover, it is impossible for the soul to settle into a new body after a long time.]

The judge chuckled.

[There might be a way with reincarnation but this soul has committed so many sins that it won't be born again as a human. If you want her to be born again as a human then you have to throw away all the stories of the soul. In that case, she won't be the person you knew.]

"I know."

As Persephone said, the soul was a story. Even now, Shin Yoosung's soul was becoming 'not Shin Yoosung'. However, that wasn't the only path for Shin Yoosung.

I immediately called to someone. 'Bihyung'.

He was silent. I waited, looking down at the bead until Bihyung responded. Only high value beings could choose the body a soul was reincarnated in…

She had been dominated by the story so far and now she would be reborn as the ruler of the story. I finally felt Bihyung through the channel. I opened my mouth. 'I need your help'.

–What help?

I didn't answer. Bihyung was silent as he glanced between me and Shin Yoosung's soul. He soon noticed the meaning of my words.

–Surely, you… you want me to do 'that?'

I nodded.

–Hey, think about it. It isn't as easy as you think. It might be better off if she disappears here…

'Do you want to ruin your channel?'

–Shit. Hey, this is really… I've never done this before!

'First time for everything'.

–Fuck.

Bihyung hesitated for a long time before finally giving me a golden egg. The egg from the greatest 'Star Story' came down.

I put Shin Yoosung's soul into this egg. The egg trembled and gave off a brilliant light before it flew up into the sky again.

Bihyung couldn't say anything for a long time before muttering in an absurd way.

–I never thought I would receive a 'child' this way…

My enemies weren't just inside the scenarios. The Shin Yoosung of the 41st regression, she would be the only 'streamer' for me in this round.

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The negotiations with Bihyung finished and the judge urged me.

[If it is over then go back.]

The judge was absentmindedly staring at my liquor bottle again. It seemed that he hadn't drank enough…

Wait. Didn't he say that Hades and Persephone weren't present right now?

"Hey, Judge-nim. One more thing."

[I don't know what it is this time but…]

"I'll give you the bottle." The judge's eyes flashed at my words. "Please take me to Tartarus again."

There was no time so I went down to Tartarus and then came back up again. It was only a short time but the judge was already drunk.

[Then are you done?]

"Yes."

Hades and Persephone being away was a divine move for me. I only gave a bit of information but if I knew Kim Namwoon, that alone would make a big difference. I was looking forward to the Gigantomachia that would arrive one day.

[There is a message that the queen left.]

"The queen?"

[Yes. I will directly recite it.]

The judge repeated Persephone's words in a profound voice.

[Incarnation Kim Dokja, you have completed the task in a very interesting way.]

"…"

[Many nebulae in the Star Stream are now watching you. Many of them are hostile towards you.]

In fact, this scenario had caught too much attention from the constellations.

[You should be prepared.]

I became a bit nervous after listening to the story. Was this related to Hades and Persephone's departure? The amount of messages from the other large constellations had noticeably decreased a while ago.

Uriel in particular. And Uriel was part of the 'Eden' nebula…

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' feels sorry.]

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' is comforting 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband'.]

These guys were still here.

[Then go well.]

I nodded. There was no point worrying about it now. The important thing was to build up my stories. Some nebulae might despise me like Persephone said but it wasn't everyone.

There was a distant whirlwind and my field of view gradually changed. Once I opened my eyes again, I had returned.

"Dokja-ssi."

There was a strange tension in the voice. I hit my cheeks to come to my senses. Then I saw Lee Hyunsung's anxious face and asked, "What happened?"

The people around us were buzzing. Lee Jihye and the others were all crowded around one place. In the air, traces of a distorted space were appearing.

A portal. It was the pathway that my companions and I had gone through. Why was this thing open? Hadn't the scenario ended?

Lee Hyunsung explained, "The second South Korean group has shown up." The second group? They came now? "I'm not really sure…"

There was a sense that the second group had come too late. Usually the second group appeared a week after the first group, but this time the personnel supplement didn't occur until after the scenario ended. It was different from Japan, whose third group were deployed in an instant.

Lee Hyunsung and I headed towards the portal.

"Ahjussi, this way!"

I headed in the direction of Lee Jihye's voice and then a man appeared from the portal. His whole body was charcoal, as if he had been burned all over.

"Uhhh…"

This man was someone I knew. I asked with a shocked expression, "Jung Minseob-ssi? What is this…?"

Jung Minseob. He was one of the few readers who was on my side when I was fighting the apostles. I thought he had died after the War of Kings because I hadn't seen his face for a while. Why was he here…?

Lee Seolhwa appeared and started to treat Jung Minseob. However, it was already too late. At the last minute, Jung Minseob met my eyes and muttered towards me. "D-Don't… come… back…"

They were Jung Minseob's last words.

[You have protected the peace of Peace Land.]

A huge string was shining in the air. There was still a festive atmosphere but the expressions of my party members were different. Lee Jihye wondered in a confused voice, "What the hell is this?"

It was a situation where the scenario wasn't completely closed so it wasn't unusual for additional personnel to be dispatched. Yet the extra personnel was injured from the beginning.

"Was there a case like this in Japan?"

Asuka Ren shook her head at Lee Hyunsung's question. "Perhaps they were attacked by something when crossing the portal…"

"Is that possible?"

There were times when there were dimensional species living in the portal. However, based on my memories, that didn't happen in this scenario.

Then Lee Jihye gave her opinion. "Perhaps the remaining people are fighting among themselves?"

I didn't want it to be like that but it was the most realistic guess. Asuke Ren nodded and added, "There is no Absolute Throne on the South Korean side?"

"Yes."

"Then this isn't likely."

Japan was currently in similar situation. In countries that weren't affected by the Absolute Throne, the leaders of a group often changed. As far as I knew, this happened a few times in Ways of Survival.

This situation was a bit surprising. It was still the early stages of the scenario. If the isolated ones joined together, their strength still wasn't high enough. Moreover, Seoul had prepared a contingency plan. There was Yoo Sangah, Jung Heewon and my mother, the King of Wanderers.

It was impossible for a new leadership group to emerge as long as they were there. The eyes of the party members were anxious.

"Perhaps… it can't be."

None of the scheduled second group had come. Only Jung Minseob arrived and he was in a dying state. There was even the message 'don't go back'. I could guess a few possibilities but…

"We won't know for certain unless we go back." When did he appear? Yoo Joonghyuk spoke from beside me.

I nodded at his words. "You are correct. Let's go back and check it."

Then the scenario message was heard.

[Additional compensation for the major contributors has arrived.]

[Major contributors: Kim Dokja, Yoo Joonghyuk]

Finally, the main scenario rewards had arrived.

[Do you want to check the compensation history?]

I nodded.

[Rewards List]

1. Moon Wave Folded Fan (SSS-grade)

2. Blue Dragon Sword (SSS-grade)

3. Magic King's Bracelet (SS-grade)

4. A choice of one of the following A-grade skills.

There were a total of four rewards. The compensation list was considerable because the scenario was very difficult.

The items such as Moon Wave Folded Fan and Blue Dragon Sword would show strength comparable to star relics after they were gradually enhanced. There would be no damages. In addition, there was the Magic King's Bracelet. This was a good item to defend against beginner and intermediate spells from magic-based returnees.

However, I had obtained the Grass-Cutting Sword and the first two items weren't very advantageous. The Magic King's Bracelet was intriguing but the value was reduced unless I met a returnee. Thus, the answer was fixed from the beginning.

"I will pick the fourth option."

A list of skills appeared in front of me. The reason for the increase in rating was because the skills that appeared mainly belonged to the Murim system.

Manifestation of Nature New Feat

Small Yang Sword.

Taichi Blurred Palms.

…

There were the exquisite techniques of the Shaolin school or famous ones like the 24 Plum Blossoms Swordsmanship. Every one was a skill I coveted but I only had one choice, so I had to be careful.

As I mentioned last time, regardless of the skill's level, some skills were highly difficult to obtain. There would be a chance to get the Murim skills again but if I missed this chance, there was a skill I would never get. For example, the Peace Land limited 'A-grade skill'.

"I will pick the A-grade skill, Miniaturization."

Lee Jihye saw my choice and screamed, "Ahjussi, are you crazy?"

"Why?"

"Why would you choose such a thing? It is too stressful to be small… I would rather you choose the Blue Dragon Sword and give it to me!"

Lee Hyunsung also looked surprised. The kids didn't care and were playing with each other. On the other hand, the small people looked strangely touched. They probably thought I chose this skill to remember them.

[Now that the compensation has ended, it is time to go back. I'm sure you've become attached to each other but please say goodbye.]

The dokkaebi made an announcement and then a huge portal appeared in the air. Gillemium and the small people gathered around us.

"Go carefully!"

"Thank you. I'll definitely remember you."

The small people sang a song of farewell for us. Asuka Ren's eyes reddened. The Japanese group also disappeared into the portal. My party members were the last ones to leave. The song of the small people continued.

I kept listening and seemed to hear some lyrics.

–Hero who saved Peace Land.

His name

It isn't Dokuja

Dokja

Ohh it is Dokja.

Shit, what were these lyrics?

[The beings of Peace Land are linked to your legend.]

[This achievement can be viewed after becoming a constellation.]

On top of a bell tower, I could see Kyrgios looking at me. I thought he would run this way and make all sorts of threats after the scenario was over, but he just watched quietly.

Asuka told me, "I think he appreciates you."

"Huh?"

"It is just a feeling. I don't know why."

Asuka Ren smiled at me. Her qualifications as a creator might be lost but the author was still one of the readers.

"Let's survive and meet again, people of South Korea."

Asuka Ren bowed and disappeared into the portal. Then we also entered. My vision swirled and once I came to my senses, my feet were touching the ground. I wasn't too dizzy since I had experienced it once before.

[The main scenario has ended.]

The view of Seoul entered my eyes. I looked around and Yoo Joonghyuk was the only one who arrived at the same place as me. We might've entered the same portal but the exits were different. Still, why was I with this person…

"Kim Dokja, move." The moment Yoo Joonghyuk spoke, the ground where we were standing exploded. The magic bullets that flew over turned this area into a mess.

"The Supreme King!"

"Don't panic! Shoot!"

"They aren't on the same side anyway! Leave the Supreme King and go for the King of No Killing!"

In a way, it was an expected ambush. Dozens of people were gathered beyond the dust clouds. At first glance, they had a great deal of equipment and had sponsors.

Were they incarnations belonging to other nebulae like Persephone had warned me about? The answer was still unknown.

"He can't kill anyone! There is a penalty if he kills! Therefore, don't hesitate!"

"There is a possibility that he collected points and will revive again. Don't miss the time of revival and kill him!"

…When had that information leaked? They even knew the information of 'King of No Killing'. After a moment, the person leading them appeared through the dust.

"Kim Dokja! Slowly put down your weapon and come this way!"

I listened to his words. As they came closer, their armed appearance became clear. Each person was wearing A-grade equipment and their overall stats were outstanding.

They wouldn't be pushed by the wanderers group that my mother led. Where the hell had these people come from? The leader smirked at me like it was already over.

I smiled at him and asked, "Where did you get my information?"

"What are you going to do?"

"I will let you know that one part is wrong."

"What?"

[Blade of Faith is activated!]

Blade of Faith was pulled out and instantly cut the leader and his men who were surrounding me.

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"U-Urgh?"

The heads of the people in front fell down and the people around them withdrew in fear.

"He killed! That guy killed!"

"Isn't he the King of No Killing? This is different from what I was told!"

The flustered people urgently rushed out with their weapons. I didn't need any special skills to catch these tadpoles. I simply used Blade of Faith and cut down those who were running.

"Aaaagh!"

I neatly destroyed the encirclement around me. The last person started screaming when he was half-cut. I stuck my blade in the struggling man. It was without hesitation.

"I-I didn't hear about him having this much skill…?"

"Run away!"

Up to now, I had tried not to kill no matter who attacked me. Of course, I didn't want to lose the King of No Killing. As I repeated this behaviour, I developed the habit of refraining from killing.

It was different now. I would create a weakness if I didn't act more aggressively. That weakness meant that countless hyenas would emerge in the future. Once I decided, there was no hesitation in my hands.

The rest of the hyenas collapsed in an instant. There was only one left.

"You are slow."

I heard a sword and saw Yoo Joonghyuk putting away his sword. There was no expression on the face of the person who killed a lot more people than I did.

"U-Uhh, it was clearly said that the Supreme King doesn't cooperate with him…"

One remaining man walked backwards while his limbs shook.

I asked him, "Who made you do this?"

"T-That…"

[The character 'Seol Ingu' has fallen into deep agony.]

The next moment, his expression changed and he suddenly ran towards me.

"Aaaah!"

It couldn't be like this. It was strange. Why run to die when he had no chance of winning at all? A cool sensation flashed through my mind.

Then the man yelled. "For the liberation of humanity!"

He had the look of a martyr.

…The liberation of humanity? Yoo Joonghyuk's sword moved and the man's head fell down.

"What are you looking at stupidly?" I completely woke up at Yoo Joonghyuk's testy voice.

"Don't you think something is wrong?"

"It is rare for a person to have such strong loyalty."

"You know, humans aren't such loyal animals. Moreover, in the current circumstances…"

Yoo Joonghyuk scolded me, "You dragged out time and the ones hiding escaped."

I couldn't have a conversation with this jerk. We decided to follow the trail of those who ran away. I asked, "…By the way, are you going to keep going with me?"

"…"

"Are you perhaps looking for your chance to hit me?"

Yoo Joonghyuk watched me with his uniquely fearsome eyes and slowly opened his mouth. "You are the one who reminded me. Thanks for letting me know."

"…I would be more grateful if you kept forgetting about it."

I sighed and checked the surrounding area. It was near Kkachisan Station of Seoul Subway Line 5.

Yoo Joonghyuk spoke with a puzzled expression. "…Strange. The hunting scenarios should be in progress in Seoul Dome."

"I don't know. The hunt might not actually be happening."

All the roads leading to Kkachisan, including Ujangsan Station, Sinjeong Station and Mokdong were covered with the blood of incarnations. There were corpses lying on the street. There had been many bodies previously. The problem this time was the method of killing.

Yoo Joonghyuk looked at the wounds and nodded. "The cause of these wounds are humans."

If the monster hunting scenarios had proceeded then all the wounds on the bodies would be tooth marks or claw marks from monsters. However, these people had clearly died from sharp weapons or magic bullets.

In other words, there was a fight here regardless of the scenario. Not long afterwards, we discovered a person who had fled.

"Over there."

Before we could approach, the man was pierced by an arrow fired from somewhere. I drew my sword to face a new enemy only to meet an unexpected group. They were the Hwarang. They started talking about the dead person.

"There is no doubt. It is the remnants of the Savior."

"Finish him."

I confirmed they weren't enemies and ran towards them.

"Wait a minute!"

Then the woman looked back at me. She had a face weary from combat.

"Kim Dokja-ssi?"

She was Min Jiwon.

We heard unexpected news from her.

"…The kings' factions were disbanded?"

"First, the Maitreya King's forces were hit and then it was the King of Wanderers."

I was startled. For a moment, there was a strong feeling of dizziness. "Is the King of Wanderers dead?"

"I don't know her whereabouts. She is currently missing. Jeon Ildo, the Neutral King joined the other side."

It was certainly possible if it was the Neutral King. Sometimes the word 'neutral' referred to those who were the most cowardly.

My mind became complicated. If my mother was hit then there was no guarantee that Jung Heewon or Yoo Sangah would be safe. Who the hell were these people?

I asked, "Is it the Yeouido forces we saw before?"

"No, it is an emerging force. Those bastards call themselves the Salvation Church… and Yeouido is in their hands right now."

…Salvation Church? I naturally knew this name very well. It was because the Salvation Church was a group that occupied an important position in the original novel.

However, something was wrong. The original Salvation Church appeared in the tenth scenario after the liberation scenario of Seoul was over.

"The Salvation Church suddenly appeared on the day you left. They said they were going to liberate the human race from the scenario… the forces that went against them were removed without hesitation.

Yoo Joonghyuk asked. "Where was such a force hiding? All the big powers in Seoul would've gathered at the start of the sixth scenario."

"…They aren't from Seoul."

I immediately understood what she meant. Light suddenly gushed out in front of us. It wasn't one or two light rays falling from the sky. Humans were summoned with the light rays, as if it was a spotlight from heaven. Half of them seemed crazy but the other half had very clear eyes.

Then a message was heard.

[New people have entered the scenario zone!]

[The seventh main scenario is currently underway at Seoul Dome.]

More than 900 people were summoned to the square. Everyone was wearing casual clothing, not combat equipment.

Yoo Joonghyuk muttered, "It's already time for new people to be added."

At present, the main scenarios were in progress only in the capitals of countries around the world. As we went through the scenarios, too many incarnations died. In such cases, the bureau would summon a certain amount of humans in accordance with internal regulations. Most were randomly summoned from all over the country.

Like right now.

"U-Uhhh… uhhh…"

Most of the people were frightened but many incarnations had already started to explore the surroundings. Based on their looks, they seemed to have just gone through the first scenario.

Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes narrowed. "The Salvation Church was summoned like them?"

"Yes."

"It doesn't make sense. Those who are just summoned won't be able to defeat existing incarnations."

Yoo Joonghyuk's words were right. Of course, the recently summoned would receive better rewards for the sake of balance control. However, that alone wasn't enough to beat the existing incarnations.

Min Jiwon bit her lip and said, "The Salvation Church's lord was strong from the beginning."

The trembling of her shoulders indicated someone who experienced real horror.

"Supreme King, I know you are strong. However, never fight him. His strength and resourcefulness has already transcended humans. He isn't human. He is like another creature…"

Then the dokkaebi appeared among the murmuring people.

[Now, everyone. Don't panic. Calm down and look here.]

The new incarnations paid attention to the dokkaebi, like well-behaved children.

[Your are now summoned and are like chicks who have lost their mother. Of course, there are people who have already chosen a good sponsor but you should know that it isn't easy to survive in this world. Thus, you have to find a 'group' to protect yourselves. They will be the 'mother' who protects you until you become a mighty incarnation.]

At this time, some of the incarnations screamed.

"There isn't anything else. This information already came out!"

"You've told us so get out of here!"

The incarnations started to move before the dokkaebi finished his words. There was the event related to the prophets and internal information was also released by the incarnations with the power of the Internet. Many of them were probably already prepared.

"Supreme King! I have to stick to the side of the Supreme King!"

"That's right! The strongest incarnation is the Supreme King!"

These poor people were heading to their deaths themselves. I prayed for their souls.

"I heard the King of Beauty is good."

"What are you doing? She is weak."

"She is unbelievably beautiful."

"…Should we go see her first?"

Yes, this might help her feel better. On the other hand, some people were more cautious.

"Stupid fools. The real power isn't the Supreme King or King of Beauty."

I could hear some of the people with somber eyes who gathered.

"The King of No Killing, or the Immortal King is the best."

"The King of No Killing?"

"It is said that he doesn't die even when killed."

"Wow. Amazing."

"In fact, there is a rumour that the Supreme King and King of Beauty were beaten by him. There are also many women chasing after him?"

Uh… Is that right?

"Really? Who is it? What is the king's name?"

"I'm not sure…"

"Damn, then how can we find them?"

"I heard that we should find the ugliest king."

I suddenly felt a gaze and saw Yoo Joonghyuk staring quietly at me. What was he looking at?

"No, recently…"

Meanwhile, the conversation of the incarnations continued. Which king was better and who should they go under? I felt frustrated that I had removed the Absolute Throne.

At this moment, a sound that was like a horn was heard in the distance. Min Jiwon jumped and she started shaking. "We have to run away."

A voice was heard before Min Jiwon could finish speaking.

"Poor people playing out the scenarios of the highest beings."

The voice was vast and it was like the whole space was ringing. They appeared on a monster species that resembled a giant elephant. As if they were performing, the Salvation members were mumbling something on the elephant. This march that was like a miraculous scene overwhelmed all incarnations.

"We have come to save you!"

It was the appearance of the Salvation Church. However, Yoo Joonghyuk's expression was strange as he stared at the centre of the group.

"I didn't know he was going to follow me in this life."

Chapter 135: Ep. 26 - Scenario Destroyer, V

I reflexively asked Yoo Joonghyuk, "Do you know these people?"

"Just one of them."

Yoo Joonghyuk knew the Salvation Church? Well, he would've met them in the second regression. I was also familiar with the Salvation Church. According to the original novel, the Salvation Church was a group that completely abandoned the stereotypes of the word 'salvation'.

「"There is no salvation in the afterlife."」

The first sermon of the Salvation Church began with this.

「"The most important thing is the story and 'today' is what we need to liberate ourselves from.」

At first glance, their doctrine had no problem. It gave importance to the present, not the past or the future. It was a story I heard many times even before the destruction came.

The Salvation Church mumbled unintelligible words while leading enormous forces. The elephants making harsh cries were the 7th grade desert thorn elephants. They had somebody who could tame the elephants.

"O-Ohhh…"

"The Salvation Church!"

The incarnations cheered at the splendid appearance. I was a bit nervous. The Salvation Church had already appeared. Someone was intervening in the future I knew. It was also a very strong presence.

I heard a voice from the elephant in the front. "Young incarnations. The Salvation Church has come. We will free you from the scenario."

At these words, the Salvation members spread out their arms towards the incarnations. Some of the incarnations came forward.

"…What do you mean by liberation from the scenario?"

"Literally what I said. I will give you freedom from the scenarios."

The words were still elusive but they were appropriate to tempt the incarnations.

Liberation, freedom.

Some incarnations were prepared but for most of the incarnations who were forced into this place, they were sweet words.

"C-Can we become stronger if we enter the Salvation Church?"

Some incarnations were already convinced while others were more cautious. They believed in immediate power rather than vague words of 'salvation'.

"Stronger…" A shadow moved on the palanquin atop the elephant. The gender of the voice couldn't be identified. "What do you think strength is?"

Gazes focused on the man who asked the original question and he stuttered with a red face. "Well, strength is to be powerful… or to have strong skills! Isn't that what it means?"

"A strong power and strong skills… something like this?"

Magic power slowly stretched from the palanquin and formed a gigantic palm. It was magic power manifestation. A technique that could be used by a returnee was being implemented by a mere incarnation in the scenario.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is hostile towards the 'palm'.]

A huge palm that was overwhelming covered the sky and fell towards the man.

"Waaaaahhhhh!"

Everyone screamed at the overwhelming magic. The moment the palm covered the incarnations, it transformed into wind and disappeared. A warm and gentle airflow surrounded the incarnation.

"You are pursuing fleeting things. Strength and weaknesses are all images made by stories."

The curtain of the palanquin was lifted and something emerged. Like the bright sun rising, a light was emitted from the whole body. It was like a god descending as the light landed on the ground.

Then I realized something. I hadn't thought that the 'Salvation leader' I knew would already come into the scenario. The incarnation who asked for strength hesitated and opened his mouth.

"W-What does that… can I become stronger if I go under you?"

The lord of the Salvation Church spoke with a benevolent smile. "There is no meaning."

"N-No meaning?"

"Poor living thing trapped in a pile of time. You are now being deceived by the story." The hand of the Salvation leader touched the forehead of the incarnation. "Tell me. Who inspired you to be 'strong'? Why do you want to be stronger?"

The incarnation opened his mouth like he was possessed. "T-That… being strong… can survive…"

"What does it mean to survive?"

"To survive… is to survive! Become stronger and live…"

It was repeated like a silly song. However, maybe this was the most honest answer. The Salvation leader asked, "Is that your life?"

"W-What…?"

"If you live all day in order to be stronger, where is your life?"

As if realizing something that he shouldn't be aware of, the body of the incarnation shook.

"My life is… huh?"

Tears flowed from the man's eyes. The man continued crying without understanding the meaning of his tears.

Whenever a human faced an incomprehensible emotion, they would try to forcefully gain an answer. Everyone watching the scene felt a sense of exaltation. It was as if they had been waiting for someone to fix the situation.

The Salvation leader wiped the tears of the man and some people sighed.

"This is the trap of the story."

I looked up at the air and the dokkaebi seemed to be listening with interest. The leader of the Salvation Church declared, "Don't be eaten in the future."

Every word wedged in the hearts of the incarnations.

"Don't be fooled by the salvation of the afterlife that will come someday."

All the incarnations who just entered the scenario watched spellbound. Whether they understood it or didn't understand it, the words became a sound that permeated everyone's heart.

The Salvation leader continued speaking, "Salvation is here now and here is where you should be."

Live and protect the present. Regain human pride without being eaten in the future.

"Struggle here! Then leave yourself with a new story! This is the only way to be liberated from the scenario!"

It was beautiful to hear. At least, if the person saying it wasn't the 'Salvation Church's leader'. I looked at Yoo Joonghyuk. "Yoo Joonghyuk."

Yoo Joonghyuk was also pulling out a sword. There was a fierce killing intent on his face. "It is a great way to train a suicide unit with tremendous bullshit."

The Salvation leader turned around at Yoo Joonghyuk's words. The moment they locked eyes, Yoo Joonghyuk demanded, "You better turn it off and leave, Salvation Leader."

"You?"

A vast wave of air seemed to encroach on the surroundings and the Salvation leader started to slowly fly to this side. The person wearing ghagra and flying in the sky gave off an exotic atmosphere like a fairy. The leader of the Salvation Church called out, "Yoo Joonghyuk?"

Why? A beautiful smile spread on the face of the Salvation leader. "Yoo Joonghyuk! Do you know how long I have been looking for you?"

He was stronger than any incarnation I encountered before. According to the original novel, it should be a long time before this person appeared. Thus, I wasn't prepared for him.

I quietly activated Character List.

[The exclusive skill, Character List is activated.]

[There is too much information about this person. Character List is converted to Character Summary.]

Then a message I saw for the first time popped up.

[There is still too much relevant information about this person. Character List will try to summarize it again.]

[The information summary has failed.]

[The relevant information of the person can't be summarized.]

It was ridiculous. It was impossible to summarize the information? I thought for a moment before changing the setting to only the 'first attribute' of the person.

[The settings of the summary list have been changed.]

[Character Summary]

Name: Nirvana Moebius.

Exclusive Attributes: Reincarnator (Legend)

…I got goosebumps the moment I got the information. Dammit, it really was him.

The third way to survive in a ruined world. The person in front of me was the third method. The reincarnator, Nirvana. A human who wasn't a human.

"Yoo Joonghyuk!" It was a jubilant voice.

I watched the man approaching and my palms became wet with tension. This person's mindset was different from ordinary humans. No matter how much I read Ways of Survival, there was a limit to how I could take advantage of him. So, what should I do…

Nirvana smiled brightly and spread open his arms. "Yoo Joonghyuk! Become one with me!"

At this moment, I understood how I could use him.

Nirvana clearly remembered the first moment he woke up in this 'world'. Funnily enough, Nirvana was a diving beetle.

'…'

As soon as he opened his eyes, Nirvana was eaten by a frog. In the next life, Nirvana was born as a frog.

'It wasn't an easy life'.

In that life, he was eaten by a rattlesnake and died. Nirvana became a rattlesnake the life after that.

'At least I can eat frogs'.

In that life, Nirvana was killed by an anaconda. In the next life, Nirvana was born as an anaconda.

'I will eat all snakes'.

In that life, Nirvana evolved into a powerful monster. Soon after, he experienced the crisis of being hunted by humans. The humans blinded by rewards harmed him and Nirvana suffered great injuries. On the brink of death, Nirvana hid from the hunters in the forest.

However, he was noticed by a human.

"…You look injured."

Why? The human didn't hurt him. The man took care of his wounds and then released him into the forest. Nirvana couldn't understand kindness but he remembered this man's hand for a long time.

Then Nirvana was born as a human.

[The constellation 'Mandala's Guardian' is observing your life.]

Nirvana knew someone was watching him. He later realized it was a so-called constellation. Since then, Nirvana continued to be born as a human.

He became an excellent farmer and then the person who led the farmers. He became a soldier and then a sword master respected by soldiers. He was a slave and a noble who slaughtered slaves.

He experienced countless deaths and lived countless lives. He went through numerous scenarios. Then he realized that he was the only 'special being' in this universe.

'Only I am reincarnated with all of my memories'.

This fact made him terribly lonely. He was lonely so he enjoyed life even more. He lived as if he could never survive again. Only once had he lived like he had 'one life'. He taught others how he lived. Then he survived alone.

One day, he received a message.

[You are caught in the huge wheel of time.]

[Your reincarnation circuit is subject to the wheel of time.]

[The constellation 'Mandala's Guardian' feels pity for your destiny.]

[You are participating in the Planetary System 8612 scenarios.]

Nirvana came across a person.

'Yoo Joonghyuk'.

For the first time, he found someone who repeated their life. The form was different but he was still bound to the wheel of eternity.

'You are like me'.

Just this allowed Nirvana to receive tremendous salvation. In this vast universe, there was someone who understood him.

'I failed in my past life. This time will be different'.

The Salvation leader approached Yoo Joonghyuk and shouted, "Yoo Joonghyuk!"

Nirvana watched Yoo Joonghyuk and laughed even more. Nirvana had been waiting for this day since he entered Yoo Joonghyuk's 'time'.

"Yoo Joonghyuk! Become one with me!"

"Stop with the bullshit and get lost. Before I kill you."

Despite Yoo Joonghyuk's prickly attitude, Nirvana laughed. Now, even his grumbling felt cute.

"You pretend to hate me but I know that, in fact, you want me more than anyone else. You need my strength!"

Last time Nirvana ruined his work but this time would be different. Nirvana kept shouting, "I shall help you! Have you forgotten your last failure? Only I can save you! I will liberate you from the wheels of eternity…"

"I don't need a person like you."

"What?"

Nirvana asked in a devastated voice and Yoo Joonghyuk glanced to his side before speaking again.

"I have a companion already."

Chapter 136: Ep. 26 - Scenario Destroyer, VI

I doubted my ears for a moment. This bastard Yoo Joonghyuk… What did he say just now?

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' appears late and looks around.]

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' explains the situation while snickering.]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is astonished.]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is desperately praying for the line to be spoken again.]

Nirvana asked again like he couldn't believe it. "Just now…"

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' likes this relationship triangle.]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' has sponsored you 2,000 coins.]

What damn relationship triangle? When I saw Nirvana's face grow pale, it hit me that things were going sideways. I was in the middle of putting together a good plan dammit.

I said, "Hey, what bullshit is that? We aren't companions?"

Yoo Joonghyuk replied with a blank expression. "I wasn't talking about you specifically…"

However, regardless of what Yoo Joonghyuk's intentions were, the situation was already worsening. With trembling lips, Nirvana spat out their passionate fury in a shaking voice. "How could it not be me…"

A fearsome killing intent was released from Nirvana's body and a huge mandala appeared behind him.

*

I instinctively took a few steps back. Why were the people around Yoo Joonghyuk always so anxious to be acknowledged as companions? I wouldn't mind giving this jerk to them.

"How, how could you become one with someone that isn't me?!" A dazzling light exploded from Nirvana's mandala.

I urgently whispered towards Yoo Joonghyuk. "Hey, just say that you like him too. Quickly."

"I don't want to."

"Why not? Listen, just close your eyes and get it over with…"

Nirvana was spitting with rage at my whispering. "Don't whisper in front of me!"

Then Yoo Joonghyuk spoke in a loud voice, "I'm not interested in men!"

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is howling while spitting up blood.]

[2,000 coins have been sponsored.]

Nirvana looked like he was also going to spit blood.

"I am not a man!"

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is taken aback.]

"Of course, I'm not a woman either!"

It was an absolute disaster. I was annoyed seeing the wave of magic power that was growing stronger with Nirvana's passion.

"What are you doing? Just say you like him! You can use him later…"

"He is too dangerous."

Shit, that damn pride. Nivana's combat power was expected to be at least on par with Yoo Joonghyuk's. On top of that, if all the members of the Salvation Church joined in, there was no way we could be certain of victory.

"Please, wait!"

In the end, I stepped forward and opened my mouth. A reincarnator was a card that could be useful in future situations. There was no need to fight against him here.

"There seems to be a misunderstanding, so let's talk."

[The character 'Nirvana Moebius' has lost his sense of reason.]

"We have no intention of being hostile to the Salvation Church. He just isn't good at expressing himself…" I put on a show while deliberately bumping Yoo Joonghyuk's shoulder. "In fact, we were also considering whether we should join you as subordinates, Church Leader. Let's throw away the future and live for the present! How good would that be? Joonghyuk-ah, don't you also think so?"

Of course, I didn't actually agree with the doctrines. In the world of the Star Stream, if you threw away the future and lived in the present, then you'd just die in the present. And even if I was a bit less happy, I wanted to live longer. That's why I was a slave to capitalism.

"…Really? Answer, Yoo Joonghyuk!"

Maybe since he ate up my acting, Nirvana's fierce aura gradually declined, but Yoo Joonghyuk didn't help. "It's nonsense."

"No, wait a minute!" I shouted but it was already too late.

Nirvana gritted his teeth. "Indeed, so it's like this. Then you can go to hell together!"

I used Bookmark the moment Nirvana moved.

[The Bookmark skill is currently updating.]

[Replacing old bookmarks with new bookmarks.]

[There are five minutes left until the bookmarks replacement is complete.]

What? Now of all times? Meanwhile, Nirvana had accelerated to right before my nose. It was fast, as if he was using Way of the Wind.

…Wait, this really was Way of the Wind? I belatedly recalled that he was an Imyuntar in a past life.

Yoo Joonghyuk stepped in front of me. Nirvana's mandala and Yoo Joonghyuk's Splitting the Sky Sword collided, emitting a sound like a building was exploding.

Nirvana said, "What a touching friendship. So you think of your companion first, is that it?"

"Kim Dokja, stay back! This person…!"

"Unfortunately, however." Nirvana's words were faster. Not just his words, his actions were faster too. "Your companion will die."

Nirvana chanted a spell and Yoo Joonghyuk's body stiffened like a stone statue.

[The character 'Nirvana Moebius' has used the stigma Eternal Nightmare Lv. 8.]

I knew this skill. It was the most lethal technique against Yoo Joonghyuk. Sparks flew around the hardened body of Yoo Joonghyuk. Like a broken robot, Yoo Joonghyuk's neck froze as he turned back to me. Although he was looking at me, his eyes weren't truly seeing me.

R…un… aw…ay.

Yoo Joonghyuk was currently trapped in a prison of his most terrible trauma. A horrible prison where one memory was repeatedly played. It was a mental skill that was a level higher than the skill used by the boss of the Theatre Dungeon.

"Come here, cheeky person who was reborn."

Nirvana had the highest level mental skill to dig into the gap in Yoo Joonghyuk's weakness.

It was an incredible feat. However, a reincarnator was still affected by probability. It was impossible for him to have such strength at this point. I stared at Nirvana's slender muscles.

"I will make you holy."

Did he abandon everything physical and invest everything in the mental system and acceleration? This was the only thing that made sense.

Nirvana raised a counter skill just for Yoo Joonghyuk, who had a weak mental state. It was unknown about other existences but he couldn't lose against Yoo Joonghyuk. By the way, how did he get the exact right skill? Unless someone else gave him the information…

"Run away!" Min Jiwon and the Hwarang blocked the incoming Nirvana. She didn't back down in front of the person who could even stop Yoo Joonghyuk. "Quickly! There is no hope in Seoul if you die!"

"King of Beauty." Nirvana smiled happily at the sight of Min Jiwon. "Last time you ran away well but now you seem inspired by my thoughts!"

The two of them had already met.

"You knew you were going to die and realized something? Humans really have to live in the present. Humanity is all about the present."

Min Jiwon shouted at me, "Go quickly! It is too much for you alone! If you are with Yoo Sangah-ssi and Jung Heewon-ssi…!"

Nirvana moved before the King of Beauty's words finished. More than a dozen Hwarang flocked to Nirvana but they weren't a match for him in the first place. Nirvana touched the forehead of the Hwarang and they collapsed on the spot. It was the use of Thought Infection.

"U-Uwah, uwahh!"

The Hwarang collapsed and started to scream with pain.

"Life is hell!"

Along with the screams, the shouts of the Salvation members were heard from the rear.

"Die for the present!"

"Today is the only place where we can live!"

The members recited threats and sprang towards the Hwarang. As I looked at the Salvation members, Nirvana was already reaching towards the King of Beauty's forehead. "Don't worry, King of Beauty. I like pretty existences."

"U-Uhhhh…"

"Thus, I won't kill you."

[The character 'Nirvana Moebius' has used Thought Infection Lv. 9.]

A white aura stretched from Nirvana and started to wriggle around Min Jiwon. Like tentacles, the aura stems pierced her body.

"Accept your present."

"I don't want to! I don't want to…!"

The hidden desires of the King of Beauty were pouring out thanks to this aura. Nirvana laughed at her desires.

"You want to go to a luxurious spa while your companions are dying? Foolish woman."

"N-No. I…"

"You just want to enjoy a splendid life. You still haven't forgotten the days when you were an actor. Thus, you became a king."

Nirvana was enjoying himself greatly.

"Accept your desires. Admit that you have such sick thoughts while your companions are dying! That is what a human is. If you deny your desires then you are nothing."

The king of Beauty's eyes gradually became cloudy. It was a skill that violently convinced a person of their own desires and forced their time into the 'present'.

This was the process of joining the 'Salvation Church'. Dammit, Bookmark was still…

[The Bookmark update has been completed.]

That's it!

[The update has increased the efficiency of the bookmarks by 20%.]

I activated Bookmark.

[The exclusive skill 'Way of the Wind Lv. 9' has been activated!]

I stepped on the wind and flew through the air. The increased bookmark efficiency raised the level of Way of the Wind.

Okay, then there might be a chance of victory. I swung Blade of Faith towards the confused Nirvana. Nirvana managed to avoid my blade but it was a close call.

I raised Min Jiwon. "Are you okay?"

"Ah, ah…"

Nirvana, who retreated, was once again flying towards me. Light flowed from the mandala into his grip.

I swung the Blade of Faith. Sparks flashed and my hands hurt, but I held on more than I expected.

Like Yoo Joonghyuk's Transmission, the reincarnator had a similar Succession skill. It allowed him to inherit skills from his past life. As I expected, this person focused more on mental abilities and speed than close combat.

"How can you use Way of the Wind? It can't be…" Nirvana frowned as he blocked my blade. "Are you the one the 'neutral' guy mentioned?"

"I'm a bit famous?"

"Impertinent fellow!"

Nirvana once again collided with the Blade of Faith. Then a white aura was emitted from the mandala.

[The character 'Nirvana Moebius' has used Thought Infection Lv. 9.]

It appeared like expected.

"Now die! Accept your fate!"

Nirvana's white aura shot towards me but I didn't avoid it.

"Human beings aren't slaves of desire. They are animals fighting their desires."

[The exclusive skill, 'Fourth Wall' is activated.]

The white aura digging into me melted away in an instant. I'm sorry but your thoughts would never eat at me. It was because my 'present' wasn't here.

[The Fourth Wall has completely invalidated the effects of Thought Infection.]

I rushed to the astonished Nirvana.

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* Official novel illustration (canonical)

Chapter 137: Ep. 27 - Unreadable, I

Nirvana was astonished by his mental attack bouncing off the Fourth Wall and then he was hit by the Purest Sword Force.

"What the hell is this…?"

"I didn't do anything. It is the power of the story."

"What?"

I didn't believe in the doctrines of the Salvation Church but there was one thing I agreed with. "You said that strength and weakness is determined by the story."

A high health warrior would just be food to a magician if they didn't have any magic defense skills. Strength and weaknesses were determined by the history of the characters.

"It is your fault that you didn't get any close combat skills in this life. All because you wanted to aim at Yoo Joonghyuk's weakness."

I never thought things would be resolved this way. Something influenced Nirvana's growth path and he became the counter for Yoo Joonghyuk. However, since Nirvana became Yoo Joonghyuk's counter, he could never win against me.

Nirvana's eyes shook as he read something in my tone. He stared at me quietly and said, "I know your name. Kim Dokja."

"We are talking about names? Okay, Nirvana Moebius. Do you want to have a heart to heart talk?"

The light of the mandala turned off. A reincarnator wasn't a reincarnator for nothing. As if a switch was turned on, the agitated Nirvana disappeared and the Nirvana who regained his composure was in front of me.

"Some nebulae warned me to be careful of you. Of course, I didn't know what to expect."

Some nebulae… I was certainly drawing attention.

Nirvana asked me, "How did you get such a strong mental barrier? The only person who hasn't been infected with my thoughts until now was Anna Croft."

I smiled bitterly at the familiar name. That woman had already touched the reincarnator. It wasn't strange. Anna Croft would've already started contacting the strongest players in the world. In order to save the world, that woman would even sell souls to the devil.

Nirvana read something in my face and said, "You… know the prophet. What the hell are you? Are you a regressor? Or…"

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is interested in the story.]

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' is quietly contemplating the situation.]

The information filtering should've gradually started being removed. Information about regressors and reincarnators would start to enter the ears of the constellations. I'm sure those of the great nebulae should already know about it.

Nirvana looked at me and kept talking. "This is an interesting rebirth. I have lived for over a hundred years yet I am curious about you…"

"You talk too much. It will be hard for you to get Yoo Joonghyuk in the future."

"Ahaha! I will accept you as a follower."

[A constellation who recites the Buddhist scriptures is wondering about you.]

It was a proposal I would've readily accepted earlier. However… "I respectfully decline. Among those who are supporting me, there is one who hates your sponsor."

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' reveals hostility to Nirvana Moebius's sponsor.]

Nirvana's mouth slightly opened. "The monkey king? Why is he chasing you?"

"I don't know."

"…I have become even more curious. Come under me along with Yoo Joonghyuk."

"I don't want to."

"Aren't you curious about the secrets of this world? I can help you survive even after the end of this world. It has nothing to do with the failure of the scenarios."

The words were persuasive. If I wasn't a 'reader' then I might've accepted it.

"I'll allow you to become one with me!"

Behind Nirvana's back, the mandala started to shine again. Hundreds of faces appeared on the slowly rotating mandala. The pained faces screamed. All of them were 'one' with Nirvana.

I exclaimed, "Shut up you pervert."

"If you don't agree then I'll have to force you."

Nirvana's face was still relaxed despite the unfavourable situation. In any case, the opponent was a reincarnator. He had lived countless lives and had a much better combat sense than me. As time passed, my movements would start to be read by him and I would fall into a disadvantage.

If so, the answer was to win the fight before that happened. A white energy swirled around the mandala. I didn't hesitate and rushed towards the mandala.

[The exclusive skill 'Miniaturization Lv. 1 is activated!]

[The effect of Miniaturization will decrease the size of your body.]

My body became very small and the blow from the mandala missed. Nirvana laughed. "…What is this petty trick?"

Was it really a petty trick?

[Due to the effects of Miniaturization, all your equipment will be transformed to fit your size.]

[The skill level is low and the duration is shortened.]

[The duration of Miniaturization is two minutes.]

This was why I chose Miniaturization over all the other good skills. It was because only Miniaturization could make me the most powerful person I knew.

"I will choose the fifth bookmark, Kyrgios Rodgraim."

[Your current body configuration is similar to the physical makeup of the character.]

[The level of the character is too high to fully reproduce the skill level.

[The level of the skill being activated is forcibly adjusted.]

The white lightning energy swelled and nestled in my heart. It was the power to break the sky and cause thunder. Beyond the mighty lightning, I could see Nirvana's pale face.

I wondered, "Do you still see this as a petty trick?"

No matter how strong Nirvana was, he couldn't surpass Kyrgios's power at this moment.

[The exclusive skill 'Electrification Lv. 10' is activated.]

Intense lightning appeared all over my body and clouds of lightning started to gather at my fists. If I couldn't take advantage of the reincarnator then it was better to get rid of him here.

I stretched out my fist towards Nirvana. "Pray to be born human again."

The lightning storm exploded towards Nirvana's side. Nirvana screamed terribly and I heard the incarnations shouting. The level of Miniaturization was low so there wasn't as much power compared to when I dealt with Orochi, but it was still tremendous damage.

A cloud of dust appeared and Nirvana was blown away with a large hole in his side.

…He was alive? How could that be?

"Kieeeeeeek!"

Blood poured from his mouth. It seemed to be a serious blow but I wasn't satisfied. It was strange. He couldn't survive this attack, even if he was a reincarnator.

Then I could see lotus petals growing on his body. I thought I knew what was going on. I thought this stigma wasn't possible because of the probability? This bastard, don't tell me?

"Using my memories in a mere place like this…"

A grim voice was heard. I looked at the sparks around the petals and knew how he had survived.

[Story Payment.]

He borrowed the power of his sponsor in exchange for his story.

"…I will see you again."

His body was covered in a large lotus leaf. I rushed towards him. My fist hit his chest but Nirvana was laughing with a distorted face.

"You will pay for going against the 'present'. It will be in the most terrible manner."

Starting from the centre of the chest that I hit, his body started turning into lotus leaves. I stretched out my hand and tried to grab onto the left arm of the disappearing person.

"Just wait!"

The next moment, Nirvana disappeared, leaving only his torn off left arm and flying lotus leaves.

[The character 'Nirvana Moebius' has used the stigma Non-possession Lv. 7.]

Non-possession. It was a stigma where he abandoned some of his memories in exchange for escaping from danger. He paid using the memories of his reincarnations and escaped me.

"L-Leader!"

"Leader-nim! Where did you go?"

The Salvation members were collapsing. Some were already running away. Others saw their leader being defeated by me and the mental shock was huge.

I sighed as I watched the Salvation members retreating. Smoke emerged from my body and Miniaturization and Bookmark were released at the same time.

My overworked muscles were crying out in pain. I didn't manage to kill Nirvana but there were some harvests.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' can't hide his joy at your victory.]

[10,000 coins have been sponsored.]

The incarnations who saw my victory looked at each other incredulously.

"The Salvation leader lost!"

"Who is that incarnation?"

"Wait a minute, that face, that…!"

Someone pointing me and shouted, "The ugliest king!"

I ignored them and found Yoo Joonghyuk. Yoo Joonghyuk was released from his paralysis and could be seen stumbling in the distance. This sunfish bastard, he didn't help when it was important.

"Hey, are you okay?"

Yoo Joonghyuk held his head like he had a headache and asked, "The reincarnator?"

"He fled."

"Pathetic. Did you miss him?"

"Do you have the right to say something like that?"

Yoo Joonghyuk's expression was serious. "We have to quickly chase him. His purpose isn't to clear the scenario."

"I know that."

"If you know then how could you let him leave? If you don't catch the reincarnator before the 10th scenario ends, Seoul will…"

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' belatedly regained her spirit.]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' wants to explain why she came here.]

At Uriel's words, Yoo Joonghyuk and I looked up at the air simultaneously.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' needs your help.]

It was difficult to grasp the exact context due to the limitations of the indirect messages but it wasn't difficult to guess what happened.

Uriel was Jung Heewon's sponsor. Uriel, who was supposed to be with Jung Heewon, came all the way here and contact with Jung Heewon was broken. This meant…

"Min Jiwon-ssi. Do you know where Jung Heewon-ssi is?"

However, Min Jiwon was still unconscious. This wouldn't work.

"Yoo Joonghyuk, defend me."

"What?"

I immediately closed my eyes and focused. I had become quite familiar with it after all the practice while sleeping. There was the feeling of my body sinking to the ground and darkness was everywhere.

I felt a shallow sleep and immediately used Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint. I needed to find a voice. I was looking for a voice.

However, the voice was missing. I became increasingly uneasy. I told them to think about me when something happened… was there a problem.

'Dokja-ssi'.

For the first time, someone called me. My vision distorted and Third Person's Viewpoint was triggered. I groaned at what I saw on the screen.

「 Hwaruruk! 」

The entire screen filled with white flames. It was the stigma of judgement that burned everything in the world. I didn't have to ask. This was definitely Jung Heewon's Hell Flames Ignition.

It was fortunate. Jung Heewon was still alive. By the way… it was strange. This wasn't Jung Heewon's viewpoint? After a while, I saw the lotus patten shin on Jung Heewon's forehead within the flames.

…Damn, Nirvana already got to her. Well, Yoo Joonghyuk was hit by it. It would be weird if Jung Heewon wasn't affected. However, a question still remained. Who called me?

「 Jung Heewon-ssi?" 」

It was an unsophisticated soldier's voice. It was Lee Hyunsung.

「 Kukukuku! 」

There was a loud sound and the screen vibrated. The surrounding incarnations were blown away. Everywhere touched by the flames started burning. It was a location where I couldn't help immediately.

In any case, there would definitely be consequences. Jung Heewon was affected by Thought Infection and wouldn't hesitate. The innocent Lee Hyunsung was helplessly exposed in front of her blade.

Damn, what should I do?

"Cough!"

Suddenly, the darkness burst and the screen was broken. I opened my eyes with a strong sense of nausea and saw Yoo Joonghyuk's angry expression.

"Why are you going to sleep now?"

Saliva ran down my mouth and I felt incredibly sick. That jerk, did he hit me to wake me up?

…Wait a minute, hit? I gained sudden enlightenment. Yes, this was it. I hated it but it couldn't be helped.

I spoke to Yoo Joonghyuk. "Hey, hit me one more time. A really strong one."

"…What?"

They were misleading words. Then I had to say it again. "No, kill me now."

Chapter 138: Ep. 27 - Unreadable, II

Everyone had a few words that influenced them. Lee Hyunsung had something like this. For example, when Lee Hyunsung was a undergraduate, these were the words he heard the most from his teacher.

'Everyone, be creative!'

'Think about what other people can't!'

'You must be able break out of this place!'

At the time, Lee Hyunsung had thought, 'So how do I do that?'

The demands of society were sudden for Lee Hyunsung who had been used to going to school, eating meals and then going to sleep since childhood.

So far, he had been told how to move and now he was forced to do something he had never done before?

What was creativity? What was thinking about an idea that other people couldn't think of? Why did it suddenly become a world where he had to do something like this? Then what had he been doing so far?

Lee Hyunsung wandered all throughout university and then he naturally joined the army.

'I think you have a natural constitution to be a soldier. Please apply to be a senior officer'.

If he hadn't heard the administrator's words at that time, what would his life be like now? It was impossible to know.

There was nothing he knew about the future he hadn't chosen. In any case, he was a soldier and he lived without regretting his choice. For a person who found society difficult, the army was relatively comfortable.

The administrator congratulated Lee Hyunsung for passing the senior officer's test and said,

'Ensign Lee. If you're not sure then just follow what the manual says. Then at least people won't hold you responsible'.

He heard these words instead of the toast. The memory was as clear as the lunch he ate a week ago. However, if he could meet the administrator again then he would ask one thing.

'Administrator, what should I do now?' Lee Hyunsung looked at the incoming sea of hell flames and bit his lips. 'I have no manual for cases like this'.

He thought it would be easier for him to call out the military creed as Lee Hyunsung shouted, "Jung Heewon-ssi! Please regain your mind! Please!"

Just as the service creed couldn't move the hearts of the soldiers, his voice didn't reach Jung Heewon.

Hwaruruk!

He narrowly hid behind a building as the hell flames covered the ground and the incarnations burned painfully.

"Kuaaack!"

"Help me!"

Lee Hyunsung couldn't save any of them. He looked at the deaths happening in front of his eyes and once again realized that the 'justice' sleeping inside him was just a manual.

Jung Heewon's figure was approaching through the hazy heat.

[The constellation 'Master of Steel' is looking at you.]

Lee Hyunsung received that silent gaze and bit his lips.

'Dokja-ssi. What should I do?'

Should he fight? Could he stop her?

Lee Hyunsung looked at the incoming Jung Heewon and his fists shook. Lee Hyunsung had no idea what this shaking meant, why he hesitated and why he couldn't run away from this place.

Maybe it wasn't the world that was hard. The difficult thing was Lee Hyunsung himself.

'Dokja-ssi, please let me know the answer!'

Despite knowing it wasn't possible, Lee Hyunsung prayed like a reservist desperately hoping the training would be cancelled due to the weather. Then amazingly, he heard the voice he had been waiting for.

–Lee Hyunsung-ssi.

He thought it was a joke.

–Can you hear me?

However, it wasn't a joke. He looked around but there was no source for the voice. In other words, the voice was heard in his head.

"Dokja-ssi!"

Was this the enemy's trap? Still, he was willing to believe it even if it was the enemy's trick.

–Let's start thinking while running away. There are two ways.

Lee Hyunsung instinctively rose and ran. It wasn't a trap. There was only one person who would speak like this.

Jung Heewon was chasing behind him but he wasn't afraid anymore. His breathing stabilized and he was ready to accept new commands. His muscles started to tense as his breathing became heavy.

–One method is to kill Jung Heewon.

"…It is a familiar choice."

Kim Dokja had always been this way. It had been like this since the first time they met. He always released the safest and most brutal solution first. The party members themselves rejected it.

"The second method is to keep running away like this?"

–…That's right.

"Then we will do it the third way."

Kim Dokja's solution was always the third answer. He was a person who always thought of the third situation. That was who Kim Dokja was. Thus, Lee Hyunsung believed in him.

However…

–Lee Hyunsung-ssi. This time there was no third method.

Of course, I had a third method. I just had to wait for the right time.

[Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint stage 3 is activated.]

['1st person supporting role viewpoint' is currently incomplete.]

Jung Heewon was using Hell Flames Ignition. It was terrible even if the opponent was bad. Well, who would be different?

"…Why are you always like this?" Lee Hyunsung cried out while breathing harshly. The 1st person viewpoint meant I could feel the heat of the hell flames.

Jung Heewon swung her sword like she intended to turn all of Seoul into a sea of fire. In fact, strictly speaking, the first and second methods I presented would have the same results.

Lee Hyunsung had to either kill Jung Heewon or flee. If he left, Jung Heewon would run out of magic power and die. In other words, one of them would die. This was the damn 'Nirvana' scenario.

"Kill Heewon-ssi? You came to give me that advice?"

Jung Heewon was approaching. It was different when they were allies but now I knew for sure after she became an enemy.

The Judge of Destruction, Jung Heewon was strong. Even if she didn't use Hour of Judgement, she was the owner of Demon Slaying. In addition, there was Uriel's stigma Hell Flames Ignition.

She was one of the strongest members of my party. It was almost impossible to suppress the berserk Jung Heewon without killing her.

"I can't accept this method."

What the hell was this courage? Lee Hyunsung started running towards Jung Heewon.

–Wait a minute, Lee Hyunsung-ssi!

"Jung Heewon-ssi! Wake up!"

Lee Hyunsung kept running towards Jung Heewon. He rushed as if he was angry for believing in me, the country and the manual. Lee Hyunsung's Great Mountain Push and Jung Heewon's Hell Flames Ignition clashed.

However, the palms that could push a mountain found it hard to break through the archangel's flames. His right arm soon started to melt from the pure white light.

"Jung Heewon-ssi!"

Lee Hyunsung let out a pained and depressed cry. Lee Hyunsung lost his right arm and reached out with his left arm. I cried out urgently,

–Lee Hyunsung-ssi, if you run away then at least one of you can live.

"I don't want to."

–Nobody will blame you if you run away.

"I don't want to!"

–Don't you think of me as a manual? Then please listen to me!

"I don't believe in such a manual!" Lee Hyunsung's answer was unexpected. At the same time, it was Lee Hyunsung's answer.

Everyone was contradictory. The person who followed the manual actually hated the manual more than anyone else. He was a creative person who were more subordinate to the system than anyone else. It was when he broke through this contradiction that his story would begin.

"I can't give up, even if the results aren't good! It doesn't matter if I die here!"

No matter how durable Lee Hyunsung was, it was unreasonable for him to resist Hell Flames Ignition that melted even Shin Yoosung. His left arm and then his right leg started to melt.

Nevertheless, Lee Hyunsung resisted. Like a moth towards the flames, he tried to reach Jung Heewon. He staggered as his right knee disappeared and I told him,

–I see. You did well.

Lee Hyunsung didn't answer. I smiled bitterly.

–This is the third method.

The third method wasn't something I could tell him. It was up to Lee Hyunsung to decide for himself. I wasn't even convinced that it would work. Even so, I chose this path because I found the sad feelings that occurred in Lee Hyunsung's mind the moment he saw Jung Heewon.

–You found the path yourself, without the manual.

Lee Hyunsung laughed as he collapsed in the flames. "Dokja-ssi, thank you."

I could feel the ecstasy that occurred in Lee Hyunsung's body. It was an emotion that humans reached when they broke through the contradiction and received an answer from death.

Perhaps this sensation was the reality that Nirvana wanted to reach. It would've been wonderful if Nirvana could see this. Jung Heewon was the one infected but it was Lee Hyunsung who lived in the present more than anyone else.

–Thank you. It is starting now.

This was the beginning of the story. It was up to the audience to determine the continuation of this story. There was one being watching Lee Hyunsung with more delicate eyes than anyone else.

–Master of Steel. One of the most steadfast beings in the Star Stream.

I spoke slowly.

–When are you going to act?

[The constellation 'Master of Steel' is listening to your words.]

The constellation 'Master of Steel'. The master of Orichalcum, the hardest planet in the universe and the sponsor of Steel Sword Lee Hyunsung. I cut to the chase.

–Give your incarnation a chance.

[The constellation 'Master of Steel' is silent.]

–I know your fears. You must be afraid of the probability.

[The constellation 'Master of Steel' has closed his eyes.]

–But when are you going to notice the nebulae around you? Are you going to be daydreaming until the end of the scenario?

Lee Hyunsung had done enough. Now it was up to his sponsor.

[The constellation 'Master of Steel' acknowledges the courage of the incarnation 'Lee Hyunsung'.]

[The constellation 'Master of Steel' says it isn't time yet.]

I had expected it. In fact, Lee Hyunsung was still too weak for the awakening.

[The constellation 'Master of Steel' thinks that the incarnation 'Lee Hyunsung' won't be able to handle his narrative.]

The narrative of steel was hard and heavy. Lee Hyunsung wouldn't be able to withstand it. Of course, if he was alone.

–I'll bear it with him.

[The constellation 'Master of Steel' is looking at you.]

The Master of Steel seemed to be thinking of something. A moment later, a message was heard.

[The constellation 'Maritime War God' has nodded.]

Then sparks filled the vicinity.

[The character 'Lee Hyunsung' is preparing for his attribute evolution.]

[A Story is required in order to evolve the attribute.]

[The constellation 'Master of Steel' is putting the narrative to the test.]

[The Story, 'Proof of Steel' has begun!]

A torrent of silver light rose from Lee Hyunsung's body. I looked at the brilliant light and was reminded of a scene from Ways of Survival.

Who was it? A character asked Yoo Joonghyuk a question.

「"Why is Lee Hyunsung called the Steel Sword? Ahjussi doesn't use a sword."」

Lee Hyunsung never used a sword at all in the original Ways of Survival. Even so, Lee Hyunsung's nickname was Steel Sword.

「"Lee Hyunsung doesn't need a sword."」

Steel started to grow from the melted arms and leg of Lee Hyunsung. Like scales, the steel grew to cover his whole body. Lee Hyunsung's body changed into one big sword.

[The character 'Lee Hyunsung' has activated the stigma 'Steel Transformation'.

A single sword that wouldn't break before any trial. If Yoo Joonghyuk was here then he would've said it clearly.

「"That guy, he is the sword."」

Chapter 139: Ep. 27 - Unreadable, III

The new layer of skin was made of steel. Lee Hyunsung's body was being reshaped, as if he was another species.

Steel Transformation.

Only the first stage 'Armour' was activated but this alone wasn't the usual power. Lee Hyunsung who mastered stage one was harder than Gong Pildu's armed fortress and wouldn't die even after being hit by Yoo Joonghyuk's Splitting the Sky Sword.

"Li…live…"

The problem was that stage one wasn't fully activated yet.

–This is the real stigma that Lee Hyunsung-ssi needs to learn.

Lee Hyunsung realized the situation and quickly retreated.

[The Steel Transformation isn't yet complete.]

[The stigma can only be used by those who have achieved a story.]

All sponsors gave a stigma to their incarnations. There were stigmas in the form of gifts and some that could only be used under difficult conditions.

Steel Transformation of the Master of Steel was one of the difficult stigmas.

[The story 'Proof of Steel' has begun!]

It was because this stigma required the indirect 'proof' of what the constellation had experienced.

[Proof of Steel]

1. 「 True steel is born in tens of thousands of quenches. 」

It was an unkind sentence thrown into the scenario. Lee Hyunsung seemed confused. "What does this mean?"

–The basis of quenching is cooling after a high heat treatment.

"Don't tell me…"

–It seems right. Please keep your mind straight.

In a sense, it might be fortunate that Jung Heewon was Lee Hyunsung's opponent. Lee Hyunsung turned pale.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is interested in the story of this world.]

[The constellation 'Defense Master' wonders how his strength compares.]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' has both hands clasped together in a nervous manner.]

The blazing hellfire turned blue along with the messages of the constellations. Maybe Jung Heewon's Hell Flames Ignition had increased a level because the flames became deeper and fiercer.

The asphalt mixed with impurities melted from the pure white flames and the high heat turned them into a deadly weapon.

The silver armour instantly started to melt and the scattered foreign materials penetrated the armour like bullets, damaging Lee Hyunsung's insides. New steel grew from the melted areas but it wasn't without damage.

"Kuk…!"

Blood emerged from Lee Hyunsung's mouth.

He would've been able to resist Hell Flames Ignition if his Steel Transformation was perfect, but it wasn't yet. In any case, Hell Flames Ignition was the highest level stigma belonging to the fire property. It was amazing that he didn't just collapse.

Lee Hyunsung took one step back and screamed. I was pained to see this scene but it wasn't yet time. Lee Hyunsung's steel was burning red. A bit more, a bit more…

[The temperature has exceeded the standard value!]

That's it.

[The quenching has begun.]

The base of steel was quenching. The heart of this story was to burn in a high temperature above the standard until the body became made of perfect steel.

–Hold on! You can do it!

Fortunately, Lee Hyunsung wasn't 'evil'.

Hell Flames Ignition was a stigma with the 'fire' and 'divine' properties. If Lee Hyunsung was 'evil' then he would've already been turned into a pile of ashes from Hell Flames Ignition.

As Lee Hyunsung was enduring, I quickly looked at the information of Jung Heewon.

[The character 'Jung Heewon' is currently suffering from 'Thought Infection.]

[The character 'Jung Heewon' is in a lost state.]

[The trauma of the character 'Jung Heewon' is completely open.]

…

…That bastard, he completely made a mess of a human's mind.

「I can't forgive them…」

Nirvana's Thought Infection pulled all the dark parts of a person's mind to the surface in order to settle their time in the present.

「I should kill them.」

Humans who faced the reality of a cliff where the future had disappeared usually lose hope. This was especially true when the reality was terrible.

In the process, someone would feel despair and collapse while someone else would turn into a beast and release relentless desires.

Some resisted angrily and lose their sense of reason. Once this resignation was repeated, they would find a 'savior' to comfort themselves. They would martyr themselves for this saviour, sacrificing their humble lives before the great 'present'.

「Kil all the men.」

I seemed to know what her trauma was. Jung Heewon's initial attribute of 'crouching' was based on a strong psychological shock. Looking back on the first moment I found her, it wasn't unusual for her to have a strong hostility towards 'men'.

"This… is this Heewon-ssi's heart?" Lee Hyunsung asked from amidst the blazing flames.

–Can you hear her?

"That, a bit…"

I never thought that Lee Hyunsung would be able to hear the messages of 'Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint'. Was it because I was immersed in the first person viewpoint? Did Lee Hyunsung feel my emotions as much as I understood Lee Hyunsung?

Lee Hyunsung spoke like he had forgotten the heat. "This is Dokja-ssi's ability?"

–Yes. It is my skill.

I had to confess because there was nothing good about lying here.

–I apologize for hiding it until now.

However, Lee Hyunsung didn't seem upset. "I'm a bit embarrassed. My heart…"

The second wave came before he could finish. The intense heat melted the incarnations in the surroundings and the area was filled with lava.

The entire ground melted from the powerful heat. The buildings sank with the ground. Now I had to make a decision.

–You should head in the direction of suppression.

"Won't I hurt Heewon-ssi?"

Lee Hyunsung was at the disadvantage but he was worrying about the other person. Still, Lee Hyunsung's words weren't wrong.

–Her heart is hurt.

The most obvious solution was to kill Nirvana or resolve Jung Heewon's trauma. The former was impossible now and the latter…

I wouldn't have been so worried if Jung Heewon was a character with a big role in the original novel.

Jung Heewon was a newly discovered person and I didn't know her well. The only thing I could do was take care of the symptoms, not the cause.

"Dokja-ssi."

–Let's try it.

We nodded as one body. We were too far from Jung Heewon now, because she had stepped back a bit. We had to be close to her to try this method.

The skin of steel grew to cover Lee Hyunsung's face. The muscles all over Lee Hyunsung's body were twitching. He was like a silver knight as the steel properly covered his body. The silver knight started to run through the flames.

In accordance with this, the wall of flames became higher. It was a warning not to come closer. He wasn't allowed here.

"Uwooooh!"

Lee Hyunsung acted like it was training and ran straight through the flames. He was burned again and again. Steel pieces melted and fell to the ground. His eyes were becoming blurred from the heat.

"Heewon-ssi! We will save you!"

It was one step.

"We… are…!"

Once again, another step.

"Heewon-ssi!"

I watched Lee Hyunsung and had a thought. I had forgotten for a while because I could hear the hearts of other people. Originally, reaching a person's heart was a difficult and painful thing.

Lee Hyunsung and I clearly saw the world from the same eyes but we didn't see the same thing. Lee Hyunsung's heart bursting with emotions was proof of this.

It was a strange feeling. Originally, it wasn't supposed to be like this. The story changed thanks to me.

"Uhhh… kuoooh!" Lee Hyunsung's knees collapsed when there were ten steps left.

[The character 'Lee Hyunsung' has reached the limits of his mental state.]

I was awakened by my shaking vision. Even if the story changed, this was still Ways of Survival.

[The constellation 'Master of Steel' is looking at his incarnation with sad eyes.]

All characters struggled in utter despair. This was Ways of Survival.

–Hyunsung-ssi.

Still, I was sometimes curious when reading Ways of Survival. Had the author of Ways of Survival regretted the 'ending' that he created?

–Leave it to me for a moment.

[The exclusive skill, 'Fourth Wall' is shaking!]

[The '1st person supporting role viewpoint' is extremely active.]

Lee Hyunsung's consciousness was shaken and my consciousness entered. Control of his body was transferred and the senses of the entire body were strongly activated.

Lee Hyunsung was suffering from this pain. It was enough to make him crazy. The whole body burned in the flames and the melted bone joints and tendons made it feel like my limbs were cut off.

I used Lee Hyunsung's voice and shouted at Jung Heewon. "Jung Heewon-ssi! You will die if this continues!"

There was no response from Jung Heewon. She just kept emitting the hellish flames.

"Lee Hyunsung will die! Do you want to kill Lee Hyunsung-ssi?"

I raised Lee Hyunsung's legs with all my strength and moved forward a bit. One step, two steps, and… Shit, it was too hot.

I heard a voice as my knees bent from the pain. 'Dokja-ssi. I'll do it'.

It was Lee Hyunsung's voice.

'I must do it'.

[The will of steel has responded!]

I nodded. After all, I was a 'reader'. I must not forget my duty. My consciousness left and Lee Hyunsung regained his body again. Lee Hyunsung's body was regaining a perfect steel shape.

"Heewon-ssi."

The blazing hellfire made her face blue. This fire would eventually gnaw at her. Her tears dried as soon as they fell down.

Lee Hyunsung acted unexpectedly towards her. "Excuse me for a moment."

Lee Hyunsung took the last step and embraced Jung Heewon.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is embarrassed by the unexpected love between companions.]

Jung Heewon's small body entered Lee Hyunsung's wide arms. It was so wide that he could touch his fingertips together without touching her. Rather than avoiding it, Jung Heewon made her flames stronger. It was like the flames were all she could do with her emotions.

There was a rattling sound and walls of steel started to be created around Lee Hyunsung's arms. It was a wall that would free one person from the world. In order to remove flames, the oxygen must be shut off.

Lee Hyunsung knew this and sacrificed himself to become the wall for her. He would bear her wrath on behalf of the world.

All I could do was watch the two of them. I hoped that Lee Hyunsung could reach the heart of Jung Heewon who couldn't speak.

How much time passed?

[The story 'Proof of Steel' has been completed.]

Finally, Jung Heewon's flames died down.

* * *

It was a familiar female voice that woke Lee Hyunsung up.

"I'm choking…"

He looked down and saw Jung Heewon's face. He looked around and it was an unimaginable sight. The steel that grew out from his body covered Jung Heewon while blocking the surrounding area.

"U-Uhh! I-I'm really sorry! I will release you now!"

Maybe it was because the melted steel wall had hardened but the steel wall wasn't easily released. As Lee Hyunsung was feeling confused, Jung Heewon's forehead touched Lee Hyunsung's chest. "Thank you."

Lee Hyunsung shook his head at the soft touch to the steel.

"…No."

It was a very small gesture but it was enough. His heart had clearly been delivered.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' hates this companionship.]

"By the way Hyunsung-ssi, who else was here?"

"Huh? That…"

Jung Heewon looked grumpy at Lee Hyunsung's confusion. "It's okay. It isn't important. Rather, release this quickly. There is no time."

"…Huh? Did something happen?"

Jung Heewon glanced at Lee Hyunsung but shouted in a loud voice towards the sky. "Kim Dokja-ssi, are you listening right now? Yoo Sangah-ssi is in danger."

Chapter 140: Ep. 27 - Unreadable, IV

[Your body has woken up due to a powerful shock.]

[Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint stage 3 has been turned off.]

My senses gradually returned as my consciousness settled into my flesh. By the way, something was strange.

…Why didn't I see the resurrection message?

[You can't be rewarded for 'Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint' stage three because of the unstable connection of 1st person supporting role viewpoint.]

As I was feeling surprised by this unexpected message, I slowly felt the pain and weight of my flesh. There was something wrong.

I saw Yoo Joonghyuk who was staring at me. Shit, I was almost surprised to death.

"Kim Dokja, are you dead?"

I thought I knew a bit about what was going on. I knew why the resurrection message didn't come up and why there wasn't compensation for Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint stage three. I never died in the first place.

"Kim Dokja."

I was just hit really hard. Damn bastard, why didn't he kill me? This jerk, not killing me when I wanted to be killed…

「…Should I have just killed him in the beginning?」

I heard an unexpected thought and shut my mouth. Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint had automatically activated. Yoo Joonghyuk's thoughts poured in like a waterfall.

「Everything is twisted because of this person.」

「It is different from what I know in the earlier regressions. The amount of information available is too limited. I can't save the world like this.」

What was this?

「The reason I was hurt by the Salvation Church was because I spent too much time in the last round. It was a mistake to train for 100 years then. My mind was permanently damaged.」

「Maybe it was a mistake not to get the Absolute Throne.」

「I will start from the beginning again…」

Dammit, the regressor's depression had begun. Was it due to the mental attack? I cried out in fear of what he would decide. "I'm hurt you jerk!"

Yoo Joonghyuk looked over at my provocation and spoke in a subdued voice. "…You are the one who wanted me to kill you. Is the matter resolved?"

"Roughly. The urgent fire has been put out."

Yoo Joonghyuk's expression didn't look bright so I touched my pained stomach and told him some of what I learned.

I told him about how Lee Hyunsung saved Jung Heewon. Of course, I didn't mention that I watched from the 'Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint'.

I usually would've added on a lame story but the half-hearted Yoo Joonghyuk nodded with a gloomy expression. "That is what happened. Then what are you going to do now?"

"I haven't decided yet but the situation is very optimistic."

"The woman called Yoo Sangah is important to you so you must be desperate to find her first. Was she caught by the Salvation leader?"

"Maybe. In any case, I am hopeful about the situation."

"…What is so hopeful about it?"

"Joonghyuk-ah, we can save the world. You know that, right?"

Yoo Joonghyuk stared at me. "What are you talking about?"

I thought I was being too obvious so I added an excuse. "Well, it is like this. If my guess is correct, Nirvana wouldn't have touched Yoo Sangah. If he is the Nirvana I know."

"…Do you know the reincarnator?"

Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes narrowed. Min Jiwon, who hadn't wanted to disturb us, finally interrupted. She had a startled expression on her face as she said,

"The two of you are quite familiar with each other."

"I'm a friendly person. By the way, are you okay?"

"…Thanks to you. I almost joined the Salvation Church."

Min Jiwon trembled because the encounter with Nirvana left a deep trauma. Unfortunately, I didn't have time to consider her situation.

"King of Beauty, I think I need some help."

I started to collect the scattered people using the King of Beauty's Hwarang.

The urgent task was to prevent further damage from Nirvan's Thought Infection. In particular, it would be disastrous if Lee Jihye was infected with strange ideas. Then the ghost fleet on Han River would turn Seoul into a wreckage.

Fortunately, Lee Gilyoung and Shin Yoosung were in close proximity with each other and it wasn't difficult to find Gong Pildu who had occupied a building. He complained, "I wanted to stay in that land."

"Peace land?"

"Dammit…"

Gong Pildu seemed sorry that the previous scenario was over. Well, Gong Pildu was a king there. Han Sooyoung used to be a goddess so I wondered how she felt now.

"Honourable Supreme King! Please accept me!"

"I respect you!"

The flattering words that were difficult to hear came from the new incarnations who entered the scenario. The rumour that we returned from Peace Land had spread. I looked to the side and saw the frowning Yoo Joonghyuk.

「 Those people can't save the world, even with 100 trucks. 」

「 Once again, the answer is regression… 」

"Now now, our Supreme King isn't in a good mood right now so back off. Do you want to die?" I personally stepped forward to get rid of any causes of depression.

The new incarnations glared at me like fans kicked out by a celebrity's manager.

"Who is this bastard?"

"He is the Ugliest King."

These scum. I was going to say something when unexpectedly, Yoo Joonghyuk opened his mouth.

"If you want to join me, become a person who can help me."

Unlike usual, there was a strong melancholy in his cold voice. They were insulting words but fans truly were different.

"Shit, so cool… that excellent young and dark voice…"

The incarnations, both male and female, looked entranced.

"So chic! I will become stronger! I will definitely be helpful!"

Why was the world so unfair? By the way, why were they looking for Yoo Joonghyuk? Had they all forgotten that I was the one who overpowered the Salvation leader?

At this moment, someone opened his mouth. "Hey, based on what I saw earlier, the Ugly King is more powerful."

"Eh? Is this real?"

I didn't know if it was real but I was pretty strong.

"Are your eyes in the back of your head? The Supreme King overpowered him with one hit."

"Is that right?"

My shaking hands became heavier and I noticed that Shin Yoosung and Lee Gilyoung had grabbed onto my hands.

"I think ahjussi is handsome."

"Hyung, the face isn't everything."

The only one on my side were the kids… no, Shin Yoosung. By the way, what was with the Ugly King? It seemed to be positioned as my nickname.

I honestly didn't understand. I had never heard the word 'ugly' used towards me until the fall of the world.

Yoo Joonghyuk was depressed but I was the one who had to suffer.

"The Ugliest King? Ahaha! It fits really well."

I turned my head at the laugh and saw Lee Jihye. Almost all my party members were gathered except for Jung Heewon and Lee Hyunsung, who were relatively far away.

Then what should I do now? I had a headache.

At this moment, a loud sound appeared from somewhere and Yoo Joonghyuk responded first. "…A large monster species. It is 6th grade."

"Is there a scenario in progress here?"

Lee Jihye was right. The seventh scenario 'Monster Hunting' was an event scenario for incarnations who didn't participate in Peace Land and the new incarnations.

…Sixth grade monsters were already showing up in the seventh scenario? It was Min Jiwon who answered the questions I had. "I'm sorry but the seventh scenario is already over."

"…It isn't in progress right now?"

"You arrived around the time the rewards were given. The situation is already finished. The Salvation leader received the highest reward."

As expected from the Salvation leader. Speaking of which, the Salvation Church seemed to have hunted monsters when I first met the leader.

"Then where are these monsters coming from?"

"Be prepared. It isn't just one or two." Yoo Joonghyuk raised the Splitting the Sky Sword while the other party members also brought out their weapons.

The 6th grade heavy hounds appeared and broken buildings with huge paws. At first glance, there were more than ten of them.

"The sixth grade monsters shouldn't move around in groups like this. What is with these bastards?"

We swung our weapons at the monsters. Lee Jihye used Demon Slaying while Gong Pildu used Armed Fortress. In addition, there was Yoo Joonghyuk's Breaking the Sky Sword and Shin Yoosung and Lee Gilyoung's Diverse Communication. Certainly, our party members were strong.

We cleared ten 6th grade monsters in an instant but the situation wasn't resolved.

Gong Pildu shouted, "They're coming again!"

"Everyone, come this way!"

I had to reduce the damage so I evacuated the new incarnations and cut off the head of the heavy hound with the Blade of Faith. Of course, I didn't forget to collect the cores of the fallen monsters.

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' is wondering about your reasoning.]

However, there was something uncomfortable. This development didn't appear in the original third regression of the novel. It didn't appear in the fourth, fifth… or even the 10th regression.

It felt like I was missing something important. Think. Kim Dokja. When did this scenario happen?

[Due to the effect of your exclusive attribute, memories from the books you have read will become stronger.]

…Perhaps?

[I wish to inform all incarnations of Seoul Dome.]

Then the message of the dokkaebi came. It wasn't Bihyung but a voice I was hearing for the first time.

[Aren't you surprised by the monsters suddenly appearing? Sigh… as you might've expected, the next scenario has started. We also wanted to give you a break… it is regrettable. This scenario wasn't created by the dokkaebi but is an automatic scenario.]

[A new main scenario has arrived.]

[Main scenario # 8 - The Strongest Sacrifice has begun.]

It was a different name from the eighth scenario I knew. I opened the contents of the scenario.

[Main scenario # 8 - The Strongest Sacrifice]

Category: Main

Difficulty: S

Clear Conditions: Survive the wave of monsters (this scenario requires caution because the rank of the monsters rises every four hours).

Time Limit: —

Compensation: ???

Failure: Death

* There are additional clear conditions.

* Hints are provided once every four hours.

[Ah, for your information. It starts from the 6th grade. In four hours, the 5th grade species will emerge and then four hours after that, it will be 4th grade. Then four hours later… huhu, well. Don't you know?]

Then one of the incarnations shouted, "What? What is an automatic scenario?"

"Eh? There isn't a time limit?"

[A time limit? Haha. There is no such thing.]

I knew the words were true. Nirvana appeared and Yoo Joonghyuk's party was much stronger than the original third regression…

I vaguely guessed what was going on. This development had appeared in Ways of Survival.

[It is because all of you are too strong. Oh my god, the Korean incarnations have become so strong that they don't fit the balance anymore. Aren't you being a bit too greedy? This is a scenario that automatically occurs when the incarnations of certain domes become too strong.]

The Seoul incarnations were at a loss.

[As mentioned, there are two solutions to this scenario.]

Additional conditions appeared in the air.

Additional Clear Conditions (Pick 1):

1. The death of half the incarnations in Seoul Dome.

* Current number of incarnations (107,624).

The dokkaebi spoke with admiration.

[Hmm, there are still so many people? It is good that it is an even number.]

"Shit! Don't talk nonsense!"

"You are telling us to just die? Dokkaebi scum!"

The dokkaebi smiled and added,

[Please calm down. There is a second condition.]

Additional Clear Conditions (Pick 1):

1. The death of the strongest incarnation in Seoul Dome.

I understood.

…The name of this scenario was the 'ultimate sacrifice'.

In other words, even if half of Seoul didn't die, the scenario would end with the death of the strongest incarnation.

The incarnations shouted excitedly, "The strongest incarnation? What? Who is that referring to?"

"Tell us who it is!"

[Haha, I can't tell you that. Is it any fun if I tell you? Well, he is the strongest so he would know the best.]

The dokkaebi said,

[Then work hard to find them. Or do you already know? Perhaps the strongest incarnation is the apostle of justice who will sacrifice themselves for you. Ah, I'm a bit bored so let me give you a hint. I wish you the blessing of the story.]

[Hint 1]

The tenth strongest incarnation in Seoul Dome is 'Maritime Admiral Lee Jihye'.

"Wow, what? Nonsense. I am only 10th?" Lee Jihye grumbled.

However, no one was able to laugh at her. Everyone was busy watching one person. He was the person I was eavesdropping on right now.

「Everything is too twisted.」

「A scenario I don't know about has appeared.」

Ah, please. Yoo Joonghyuk…

「I can't think of a way to fix it. Maybe I should regress…」

Damn, what would happen to me if he regressed? I absolutely refused to be swept up in his death without knowing anything. I glared at Yoo Joonghyuk in front of me and formed a fist.

Chapter 141: Ep. 28 - The Ultimate Sacrifice, I

30 minutes later, all the 6th grade monsters were cleaned up. My party members and I were very active, particularly Gong Pildu. It was a rewarding moment for one of the 10 Evils.

"We can take a break now. What about four hours later?" Lee Jihye wondered while slipping her sword back into the sheath at her waist.

I looked around and the fighting in the area was also entering a lull. I didn't know about other areas but at least we protected this one. Of course, not everyone was safe.

"Father! Please wake up! Father!"

"Somebody help!"

Many incarnations who didn't have the know-how yet couldn't resist the 6th grade monsters. There were those who suffered severe trauma from the heavy hound's paws or had their internal organs burst. Most of them were new incarnations.

[* Current number of incarnations: 90,531 people.]

It was only the first wave and one-tenth of Seoul Dome had died. A little further away, Yoo Joonghyuk was watching the incarnations. I became a bit nervous as I watched Yoo Joonghyuk.

The dokkaebi stated that the sacrifice of the strongest incarnation would save all the incarnations in Seoul Dome.

"Hey, Yoo Joonghyuk."

Yoo Joonghyuk turned to look at me. I didn't know exactly what scenery held value for Yoo Joonghyuk.

As I said every time, reading Ways of Survival didn't really tell me about this person. After all, I was only understanding the text, which had been processed and transmitted to me. Some things couldn't be read because they were unreadable.

"Let me talk to you for a bit."

We went to the rooftop of a high rise building. On the way, I used Character List on Yoo Joonghyuk for the first time in a while.

[The exclusive skill, Character List is activated.]

[There is too much information about this person. Character List is converted to Character Summary.]

[Only randomly specified items will be displayed according to User's convenience.]

[Character Summary]

Name: Yoo Joonghyuk.

Sponsor: ???

Exclusive Attributes: Regressor (3rd turn) (Myth), Pro Gamer (Rare), Supreme King (Hero)

Exclusive Skills: Sage's Eye Lv. 9, Hand to Hand Combat Lv. 10, Advanced Weapons Training Lv. 10, Advanced Mental Barrier Lv. 3, Hundred Steps Godly Fists Lv. 9, Red Phoenix Shunpo Lv. 8, Splitting the Sky Lv. 8…Omitted…

Stigma: Regression Lv. 3, Transmission Lv. 5.

This guy still didn't know who his sponsor was. I already knew why it wasn't visible.

Even in the original Ways of Survival, Yoo Joonghyuk's sponsor wasn't revealed in the end. I thought maybe it would show up in the epilogue but unfortunately, I couldn't read the epilogue of Ways of Survival.

His sponsor was more resistant to the 'probability' than any constellations I knew. They had the power to turn back the wheels of time while deceiving other constellation. Until the end of Ways of Survival, the constellation didn't provide anything other than 'regression' to Yoo Joonghyuk.

I didn't know exactly who they were and what they wanted to gain from Yoo Joonghyuk.

"…Is there a way to kill Nirvana?"

This jerk, he was always so impatient. He had been given time to rest but he was still busy thinking. Regardless of his depressed state, Yoo Joonghyuk was Yoo Joonghyuk.

"Before that, let's take a moment to breath. The view is great." I said while sitting on the roof railing.

Yoo Joonghyuk asked me, "What are you up to?"

"I'm just looking at the world. Isn't it beautiful?" The city of Seoul was destroyed by the monsters. I quickly added, "It was originally a beautiful place."

"I don't like landscapes."

"Why?"

"They are things that will disappear someday."

I thought I had a bit more understanding of the third regression Yoo Joonghyuk after fighting against Shin Yoosung. I wanted to believe he was a person who could love this world without giving up or feeling despair.

I told him, "However, we need to protect these things."

"Kim Dokja, you don't know."

This might be my misunderstanding. Yoo Joonghyuk could give up at any time because he was still in the midst of his regressions.

In the end, Yoo Joonghyuk's purpose was to prevent the 'destruction of this world'. Paradoxically, he could give up on this world at any time. His essence was regression and this fact would never change.

"No, I know," I replied.

"What?"

"The fact that you can regress at any time means that death is meaningless."

I looked down at Lee Seolhwa caring for the injured. Lee Seolhwa was feeding her boiled soup to an unknown person. Despite her efforts, there was a high probability that the character would die. Even if they lived now, they would die tomorrow. If they miraculously survived tomorrow, they would die the day after tomorrow.

It was the same in the fourth regression and the fifth regression. There would always be 'death' in the world of Yoo Joonghyuk, even after passing the 100th regression.

"If there is no sense of death then the value of life also disappears."

"What do you know…"

"Yoo Joonghyuk, wake up. Don't think things will improve if you repeat them a few times."

Yoo Joonghyuk remained silent like he was surprised by my hard words.

"There is a chance that you can do better in the fourth regression. However, there is also a chance that won't happen. Have you already forgotten the Theatre Dungeon? If I hadn't appeared at that time—"

"The next regression will obviously be better. There were many unexpected things in this round so the next round will certainly be better."

"Why? Do you know a lot of the future?"

There was the vague belief that he could do better in the next round with more information. It was easy for him to give up on this regression if something went wrong.

This was the precursor symptom of 'regression depression'. Some of the contents of Ways of Survival passed through my head.

It was around the 48th regression. Yoo Joonghyuk had consulted with an incarnation of the constellation 'Discoverer of the Subconscious' on the 'regression depression'. At the time, he seemed to be speaking like I was now.

I continued speaking, "Yes. It might be as you say. If you repeat it 10 or 20 times then it will surely get better. You'll be exposed to more scenarios and see more of the future. The real problem is when you someday save the world in this manner."

"What does this mean?"

"At that time, do you really think you saved this world?"

"…"

"Do you think you will be able to keep the same mindset after repeating it 100 or 200 times?"

"I won't regress that many times."

I silently stared at Yoo Joonghyuk.

「…Don't tell me?」 Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes slowly widened.

I kept speaking, "Are you having nightmares these days?"

"…"

"You won't be saved, even if you save the world. The moment you save the world, the worlds you have forsaken will come to you. Despite saving one world, all the other worlds you abandoned will drag you to hell."

Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes shook. Perhaps it was something he was already dimly aware of.

"Thus, live this round properly. Shin Yoosung was destroyed after wandering for countless years. You will be more than that. The more you repeat the turns, the more out of control you will become. Ask yourself. How different are you now from the beginning?"

"That…" Yoo Joonghyuk's expression hardened. His eyes were shaking violently. The Yoo Joonghyuk from the beginning couldn't have done this.

"Don't imagine that you will get better if you throw away this round. Maybe this is the round where you will see the end of this world as a 'human'."

"…"

Yoo Joonghyuk closed his mouth. He wanted to say something but the words didn't come out. There was an intense conflict on his face.

Yes, Yoo Joonghyuk. Feel conflicted. What would happen to me if he regressed?

[The mental state of the character 'Yoo Joonghyuk' is slightly restored.]

I could see a faint light of determination in Yoo Joonghyuk's face. Every world was goddamn hard. It was the same for this world. Every time you restart, live with all your strength.

A cool wind blew and we looked down at the ruined city together.

"This scenario has a strong event propensity. The flow will return to the direction we know. The future you know will be available again. Don't you still have many hidden pieces that only you know? If Seoul Dome is somehow liberated…"

At this moment, the door of the rooftop slammed open with a loud sound and people fell down. The first one who fell down was Gong Pildu and Lee Jihye and the children were on top of him.

"Waaah! Don't push!"

"Ah, I wonder what they're talking about. Ahjussi, why did you do that?"

"A man shouldn't interfere with a person's conversation."

"A man is a rat…"

…I could roughly guess the situation.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire''s eyes are shining.]

"All of of you…" I spoke before Lee Jihye spoke more bullshit. "Don't joke around today. I'm not in the mood."

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is sad.]

It didn't matter if the constellation was sad or not. The important one right now was Yoo Joonghyuk.

Uriel wasn't giving us coins now so I hoped she would go to Jung Heewon. Yoo Joonghyuk opened his mouth. "I have been making a plan for this scenario."

"A plan? What is it?"

Yoo Joonghyuk turned towards me. "This scenario is one where the strongest incarnation must die. I have been thinking about it."

I suddenly got goosebumps. Why was that bastard looking at me when he said this?

Lee Jihye spoke with slight excitement. "Oh, we were also talking about that. How did you decide? Who is the strongest incarnation?"

"Of course it is me."

I looked at the confident Yoo Joonghyuk and realized that my worries were a misunderstanding. Well, he was a prideful person…

No, wait a minute. The fact that this scenario ended when the strongest incarnation died and he thought it was himself…

"Do you mean to die?" I asked him.

"I will be able to stop this scenario if I die."

I was a bit moved by his noble mindset. Damn, his regression depression suddenly seemed a bit cool. However, I couldn't let him actually die. "Aren't you being too hasty? Is there any guarantee that you are the strongest? For example, me…"

The party members looked at me at the same time. Lee Jihye hit me on the shoulder and laughed exaggeratedly. "Hey, are you being serious?"

"Dokja hyung is kinda…" Lee Gilyoung looked at me with pity while Shin Yoosung was confused. Even Gong Pildu and Min Jiwon were the same.

"There is no need to ask."

"…Isn't the Supreme King still stronger?"

"Wait, didn't ahjussi say that he defeated the Salvation leader?"

Bullseye.

"Is the Salvation leader really that strong if ahjussi could defeat him? I didn't see it but he must've used a strange trick. No?"

In a sense, it was correct. My mood was somewhat strange as I added an excuse. "…I was just using myself as an example. The Salvation leader might be stronger than Yoo Joonghyuk. In fact, I had a pretty hard time before."

Lee Jihye's eyes widened with surprise. "Master, is this real?'

"…That guy doesn't fit with me." Yoo Joonghyuk's words threw the party into confusion.

"Then… isn't the Salvation leader the strongest?"

"Oh my god, there is a person stronger than Master?"

"However, what is the criteria for the ranking? Combat power? Or is it the person who wins in a fight…"

I replied to Min Jiwon's question. "It is possible they are using overall combat power. In the first place, not everyone can fight each other. There could be a change after fighting."

"That reminds me, what did the dokkaebi say? He is the strongest so he would know the most…"

We looked at Yoo Joonghyuk.

"Yoo Joonghyuk, is there something different from usual? Did the dokkaebi say anything to you?"

Yoo Joonghyuk formed a fist and slowly replied, "…Well, I haven't heard anything."

I looked around at the party members and said, "I don't think we can confirm anything."

"Then what should we do?"

"Let's just think that this is a good thing. After all, none of us here want Yoo Joonghyuk to die. For now, let's make a reasonable judgment that Nirvana is the strongest and get rid of him."

"If it turns out that the Supreme King is the strongest…"

"We will think about it then."

Min Jiwon told me, "The Salvation Church is in Gangbuk. It isn't easy to approach because the borders are heavily guarded and there is a huge difference in force. Even if we all go…"

"We won't go there. We'll make him come to us."

"How? Will he respond? It would just be a loss for him…"

"You are thinking with common sense."

However, Nirvana wasn't a person with common sense.

Chapter 142: Ep. 28 - The Ultimate Sacrifice, II

The monsters flocked from the outskirts of Seoul. Maybe there was a gate where they were created and the rating of the monsters would skyrocket in four hour intervals.

In other words, the time we had was eight hours at the most. I had to lure Nirvana in to make him confront Yoo Joonghyuk.

"I think I can do it."

I left the party members and called Bihyung through the dokkaebi communication. However, the voice that came back was from Youngki.

[I'm sorry, Bihyung is a bit busy right now…]

That Bihyung bastard, he became sloppy as soon as he was going to be promoted? He was an ungrateful bastard. I had been trying to raise his performance but he didn't know how to repay favours.

–There are random boxes in new scenarios right?

[Yes. It came out.]

–I'll have 10 of them.

I thought it was good but Youngki surprisingly hesitated.

[The odds of the random boxes are terrible… will you be okay?]

–It will be fine.

I knew what the dokkaebi was worried about. Could a person like this survive?

[You have purchased 10 'Main Scenario #8 Special Random Boxes!']

[You have spent 30,000 coins.]

–We will stop here.

[Yes. I wish you the blessing of the story.]

Youngki's voice disappeared and 10 shiny boxes appeared in the air. They were colourful boxes with large question marks.

Lee Gilyoung asked me, "Hyung, is that what we see in games? If you open it, you get a random good item…"

The little kids noticed the fastest.

"Yes, that's right."

[Random box].

A gambling item that had a low probability of giving SSS-grade weapons and SSS-grade skills. This was an item designed by dokkaebis to trick the blind constellations. Why did I buy the box?

[The constellation 'Maritime War God' is a bit disappointed in you.]

[The constellation 'Maritime War God' says that the basis of longevity is integrity.]

[The constellation 'Bald General of Justice' advises you to be wary of luxury.]

[The constellation 'Slumbering Lady of Fine Brocade' wants you to donate if you have coins.]

Min Jiwon's face turned red at the Slumbering Lady of Fine Brocade's message.

"I-I'm sorry. My sponsor is a bit…"

"It's fine. In fact, this isn't a very expensive product. Let's do it together. I'll give you one to change your mood."

"You will give it? Really?"

"Yes. You can keep any main items that come out of the box. I would be grateful if you just give me any auxiliary item that comes out as a consumable."

I originally planned to sell it for a few coins but the people here had some relationship with me. It would help me if their power increased. Thus, it wasn't a business with any losses.

Lee Jihye was excited about being given something free and snatched a box first. "Wow, since ahjussi said so… I will make good use of it!"

Then Gong Pildu and Lee Gilyoung took a box.

"Hyung, what if I get an SSS-grade?"

"It is tough since the odds are 0.00001%.

"…Really?"

"It is business acumen. Let's just be fooled for today."

Yoo Joonghyuk scrutinized me and said, "Kim Dokja. Do you think an item will come out that will help me deal with Nirvana?"

"Well, something like that?"

"…It is a pathetic plan."

This jerk also took a box…

Finally, Shin Yoosung was the last one to take a box.

"I'll give you two."

Shin Yoosung's eyes widened with surprise. "Really?"

"Yes."

Shin Yoosung hesitated for a moment before taking the boxes from me. Somehow, the child's expression wasn't ordinary. I looked closely and there were tears in her eyes.

"Do I deserve something like this…"

The past of Shin Yoosung came to my mind. Maybe this was Shin Yoosung's first 'gift' since she was born.

There were many people with this type of convenient setting in Ways of Survival. The convenience of someone would be the real unhappiness of someone else.

I handed the box to Shin Yoosung who was wiping her eyes. "Take this. You're my incarnation. That alone is enough to be deserving."

I regretted not taking care of her earlier as I saw Shin Yoosung's face turn red with liking. I wasn't yet qualified to be a 'constellation' so I couldn't give Shin Yoosung a stigma.

Was it the right choice to take care of this child? Maybe this child would be unhappy because of me. For now, it was unknown. However, I would do my best to protect this child.

"Then let's try opening them. Think of it as a diversion."

Everyone nodded and started opening the boxes.

[The 'Main Scenario #8 Special Random Box' has been used!]

[You have acquired two Ellain Forest Essence.]

[One 'Fairly Usable Pair of Boots (E-grade) have been acquired!]

[Other consumables have been acquired.]

…This was it. The only things that came out were E-grade items and consumables. The situation was the same for the other party members. Well, I expected it. In the first place, the random box…

[Congratulations! Someone has broken the probability of 0.00001%!]

Grand celebration firecrackers appeared in the air. I turned and saw triumph on Shin Yoosung's face.

…Don't tell me? Really?

"A-ahjussi?"

The small fruit in Shin Yoosung's scattered a bright light. I went closer and the identity of the item became clear. Oh my god, this was what she received?

…How was my incarnation so lucky?

The watching Yoo Joonghyuk was also a bit surprised. "You got something good."

The SSS-grade item, Ancient Beast's Fruit.

Among the SSS-grade items with a 0.00001% chance of appearing, the item with the worst probability was the Ancient Beast's Fruit. It was a consumable item but its effect was worth the rating of SSS.

"If you feed this fruit to a monster you can't tame, you will be able to tame it. Congratulations. Save it for the right time."

There was no better item for Shin Yoosung who could use Taming. If this was used on a monster that could evolve beyond the 1st grade, Shin Yoosung might be able to grow beyond the 41st version. Shin Yoosung looked between me and the fruit with sparkling eyes.

"Ahjussi, this is great… but can it only be used on monsters?"

"Perhaps. Why?"

"…It's nothing." Shin Yoosung blushed cutely as she watched me before avoiding my eyes.

Lee Gilyoung drooled and rushed over to her side. "Hey, can't you give me that? I'll give you my Titano."

"I hate insects."

Lee Jihye watched like she was jealous. "Ahjussi, why are you doing this? Do you really want to change our mood?"

"Of course not. Give me the consumables that came out from the box."

I was aiming for the consumables that came out from the box since the beginning.

[Loudspeaker (Dome Channels) x 4 have been acquired!]

[Loudspeaker (General Channels) x 4 have been acquired!]

[Loudspeaker (Area Only) x 2 have been acquired!]

Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes narrowed. "I know what you want to do."

[Loudspeaker.]

They were useful consumables that could send messages to specific channels or entire areas depending on the options.

"However, just saying a few words to that guy…"

I told Yoo Joonghyuk, "The important thing is what you say."

I used a loudspeaker. Then let's get started. I started the story that would attract Nirvana.

At this time, Nirvana was in the church hideout. Nirvana had his eyes shut while the statue of Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva looked down on him.

Don't hang onto the past or look to the future. The past had already disappeared and the future hadn't come yet.

Nirvana memorized these phrases but the doctrine wasn't spread by voice. Sweat covered his forehead. Sparks bounced all around his body. After a while, his eyes turned white and a message came.

[You have succeeded in learning a new skill!]

Nirvana opened his eyes. "…It was unreasonable."

His stigma 'Succession' consumed probability when used. Therefore, he couldn't use Succession unless he used the 'story' that had accumulated through his reincarnations to provide some plausible probability.

'I've lost too much story'.

His past disappeared but Nirvana soon regained his composure. There were some things that must be emptied in order to live in the present.

He struggled with the energy consumed as he headed into the depths of the church. He went down to the basement and after passing through a corridor, a gentle light appeared.

It was a room with an antique-style table and a double bed. It was a well-equipped room with a warm atmosphere.

"I've kept you waiting. Then shall we begin today's session?"

There were two women sitting at a table in the room. They were the vanished King of Wanderers, Lee Sookyung, and Yoo Sangah. Yoo Sangah's eyes were wide as she stared into the air and Lee Sookyung asked,

"When will you release the skill on this child?"

[Thought Infection.]

Over a week had passed but Yoo Sangah was still resisting. Nirvana laughed.

"I'm not releasing it. You have to solve it yourself." It was interesting from Nirvana's standpoint. "It is a foolish thing. She is resisting when she simply has to declare that she will live in the present."

"The value of the past is different for those who live a short life."

"It is because you live a short life that you should put more value in the present. You are blessed with death but you don't know the value of it."

"Don't judge other people's present based on yourself. She is living in the 'present' enough. You are the one ignorant about the present because you reincarnate over and over."

"Don't forget. I'm only keeping you alive while your story is worth it."

Lee Sookyung's face was relaxed despite the threat. She was like Scheherazade in One Thousand and One Nights.

Nirvana slowly pulled out a chair and sat down. He demanded, "Tell me the information I want to know."

"What do you want to know?"

"The incarnation called Kim Dokja."

Lee Sookyung's smile stiffened for the first time. "I don't know that incarnation."

"There is no use in pretending. I already know that he is your son. The 'neutral' guy told me."

"…He and I parted when he was young. I have no idea about how he has been living."

"I'll see when I look inside you."

The bright wheel of life started to turn behind Nirvana. Inside the wheel of life, the thousand hands of Avalokiteśvara started to stretch out.

The gigantic hand covered Lee Sookyung's head. Lee Sookyung glared at the hand in a displeased manner.

Nirvana threatened, "Open your memories or the woman next to you will die."

"It is a childish threat."

"You have been giving in to this childish threat. That is what a human is."

Lee Sookyung stared at Yoo Sangah's blank eyes and sighed. "…Do what you want."

[The exclusive skill 'Origin of Principle and Secondary Causes Lv. 6' has been activated.]

Avalokiteśvara's hand firmly dug into Lee Sookyung's head. Lee Sookyung's story flowed and started to entangle with Nirvana's story. There was a sense of being 'one'. Nirvana's senses trembled. He chewed, tasted, ate and enjoyed. He was a genuine epicurean of the Star Stream.

"It is really amazing. How does a human like you have filtered information of the future?"

Lee Sookyung desperately tried to protect the memories but the fragmentary future knowledge she obtained from Kim Dokja couldn't rebel against the flow of Origin of Principle and Secondary Causes and they were sucked into Nirvana.

"Interesting. This is the essence of Kim Dokja."

"…"

"You are a sad mother. You lied to your child. You deceived your child for your own dogmatism."

Cold anger filled Lee Sookyung's face as she declared, "You won't be able to win against that child."

"…I admit that he is an interesting incarnation."

He was one that forced Nirvana to use Succession. However, he was only human. It was just up to here. Then a message rang in the air.

[Applying for a duel with the Salvation Church's leader, Nirvana Moebius.]

The surprised Nirvana looked up at the air. It was Kim Dokja using the loudspeaker.

Lee Sookyung spoke like she had been waiting. "That child is strong and wise. He knows what he needs and what he can do best."

[The place of the duel is Gwanghwamun at 2 p.m. today. The person you will be confronting is the Supreme King Yoo Joonghyuk. The two people closest to being the strongest incarnations will fight to defend Seoul Dome. If you are really living in the present, don't avoid this confrontation.]

Using the 'present' as an excuse? It was a confrontation that couldn't be avoided if he was a real 'savior'. Furthermore, the clever use of the loudspeaker was amazing. If he avoided this confrontation, he would receive the chastisement of all the incarnations in Seoul Dome as well as the Salvation members. However, he would be a fool to go after knowing it was a trap. Nirvana laughed.

"The provocation is decent. Then what should I do? In any case, my goal isn't to clear the scenario. My purpose is great…"

[Of course, your great plan won't concent to this confrontation. However…]

Nirvana stiffened at Kim Dokja's words.

[If you come now, I will give you a chance to become one with Yoo Joonghyuk.]

Nirvana was so astonished that he let go of Origin of Principle and Secondary Causes. He shivered in anger, wonder and an unknown sense of shame and bit his lips.

Lee Sookyung felt Nirvana's intense urge through the string that connected them. It was a desire to combine with one person for a bigger story.

Lee Sookyung laughed at the desire. "I told you that you are going to lose."

* * *

[Okay.]

Nirvana's answer came quickly. The party members looked blank, as if they didn't know what to expect.

I stood up and shook off my dizziness.

"Dokja-ssi, how… no, are you okay?"

Min Jiwon looked anxiously at the black bruise around my left eye. It was the trace left behind by Yoo Joonghyuk after I sold his name. I rubbed my eyes and asked, "Has that jerk left already?"

I even fell unconscious for a while. Damn, that ignorantly powerful man.

"He left as soon as he heard the answer."

"Then we will go as well."

Lee Gilyoung's slightly sour expression became excited. "Dokja hyung, I'm glad we're fighting together this time."

"Yes."

I couldn't laugh. Nirvana would've surely gained new skills and couldn't be challenged as easily as before. Of course, Yoo Joonghyuk would also defend himself so victory or defeat wouldn't be easy to predict. In fact, I wasn't interested in their fight.

The real problem was the loud message in my head.

[You are currently the strongest incarnation in Seoul.]

…Now, what should I do?

싱숑 장편소설

전지적 독자 시점

Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint

PART 1

07

비채

*

Chapter 143: Ep. 28 - The Ultimate Sacrifice, III

Our party arrived near Gwanghwamun half an hour before the promised time. In the meantime, the same message appeared in my head.

[You are currently the strongest incarnation in Seoul.]

Damn, I wanted to say that I already knew. Frankly, I felt embarrassed every time I heard it. I couldn't guarantee victory against Yoo Joonghyuk even if I used all my power and I barely managed to beat Nirvana. Why was I the strongest?

Then a sentence from the 51st regression in Ways of Survival appeared.

「 Strength and weakness in the Star Stream have nothing to do with the power or skill proficiency. The standards of strength come from the 'story'. 」

Then there were the words that Nirvana had said. "Strength and weaknesses are ultimately determined by the story."

"Dokja-ssi!"

In the distance, Lee Hyunsung and Jung Heewon were approaching. It seemed their bond with each other was stronger after overcoming the difficult situation together. Jung Heewon waved at me.

"I saw the proclamation of war. It was very beautiful."

"How are you feeling?"

"I'm fine. Hyunsung-ssi was a bit hurt…"

"I will be fine!"

"…He is just bluffing."

At the end of Jung Heewon's words, Lee Hyunsung struck his chest to prove he wasn't bluffing. It was exaggerated but it was hard to see it as a bluff.

Lee Hyunsung had started to inherit the story of the Master of Steel. Perhaps Lee Hyunsung was one of the top five incarnations in Seoul Dome. He was strengthened by inheriting the story.

Lee Hyunsung was the perfect example of 'strength is a story'. It was the price of a story that determined 'strength' in this world.

Perhaps I was ranked as the 'strongest incarnations' because the stories I accumulated in this life were at an impossible level.

Of course, the stories of the regressor Yoo Joonghyuk and reincarnator Nirvana were also formidable but their story was of the past.

The landscape of Gwanghwamun started to be seen in the distance. I checked the time. Three hours and 40 minutes had passed since the first wave. Once every four hours, the monsters would come. The second wave would soon be upon us.

"The 5th grade monsters will soon come. Will the other incarnations be okay?"

"It will be fine here."

I looked around and the eyes of Jung Heewon and the party members moved with me. It was more crowded than it was 10 minutes ago and the number of people was growing.

"This…" Jung Heewon seemed to realize something. Shouts came from all over the place. Everyone in Seoul was gathering at Gwanghwamun.

"Let's defeat the Salvation Church's leader!"

"We have to kill him to end this scenario!"

People armed with weapons were shouting. No one was talking about freedom or equality. It was because the humans of the present were too shabby to talk about such a grand concept. Instead, they gathered for survival.

"Follow the Supreme King!"

"Break the Salvation Church!"

Lee Hyunsung looked at the scene with a complicated gaze and said, "Dokja-ssi knew this would happen."

"I did expect it."

No matter how many new incarnations came in or how popular the Salvation Church was, the majority of the Seoul population were 'existing incarnations'. They just needed a focal point to go beyond factions.

Gong Pildu looked at the crowd and sighed. "…South Korea is ruined. Dammit. Are the lawmakers who were going to return my land dead?"

"You are saying those words in a situation like this?"

Lee Jihye clicked her tongue and Gong Pildu rubbed his lips.

"…What about Yoo Sangah? I heard she was caught by the Salvation Church."

"We'll go and get her. However, not right now."

I couldn't be hasty. Even Nirvana wouldn't dare touch the terminal of the nebula Olympus unless he was thinking about a war between nebulae.

All of Gwanghwamun was becoming heated up by the incarnations when a shining message appeared in the air.

> [Hint 2]
>
> The ninth strongest incarnation in Seoul Dome is 'Insect Boy Lee Gilyoung'.

Lee Gilyoung's eyes shone when his name was called.

"Hyung, I'm ninth!"

"…It is ridiculous. I'm weaker than that kid?" Lee Jihye grumbled.

"Stop talking and get ready."

The party members nodded simultaneously. The second hint was announced and the second wave would soon begin.

Roars were heard from the outskirts of Seoul and the cries of monsters started to be heard.

5th grade monsters that could be classified as 'small disasters' started to emerge. In order words, it was a level that ordinary incarnations couldn't handle. Fortunately, all the incarnations were gathered near Gwanghwamun and it wasn't an impossible fight. The narrower the area to protect, the easier it was to save the incarnations.

"We have to settle this in four hours. After that, 4th grade monsters will start to emerge. It is the end once that happens."

The parry members nodded. There was nothing scary about 'small disasters' but they didn't want to see the monsters of the upper rank. I asked Gong Pildu and Lee Hyunsung to lead the incarnations and form a defense network.

"Leave it to me."

"Gwanghwamun will become my land after this scenario is over."

I smiled and replied, "…Go ahead. Do what you want."

Sadly, once this scenario was over, the 'Seoul land' that Gong Pildu desired wouldn't exist.

I led the rest of the group to the centre of Gwanghwamun. In the centre of Gwanghwamun, there was a large dome that didn't originally exist.

It wasn't a real building. There was no stadium in Gwanghwamun. It was a space that the Salvation Church temporarily added. The interior of the dome was still opaque but when I looked closely, a small figure was standing on top and giving a speech.

–All incarnations, who is our real enemy? Why are we now pointing our spears and swords towards each other?

Jung Heewon frowned at the voice.

"…It is the Neutral King."

The Neutral King was using 'Voice Amplication' at the top of the dome like he was a dokkaebi.

–I naturally understand your feelings. Whether it is the Salvation members or other forces, we are all weak people. We are just victims of the scenario. In fact, you know. There is no point in fighting between us here! This is what the dokkaebi wants!

"Shut up! It was the Salvation Church who started fighting first!"

"Yes! Kill him!"

Jeon Ildo laughed lightly.

–Everyone, don't you know that the monsters are coming? Seoul will be destroyed if we fight.

"Then what are you going to do?"

–Everyone knows this is a scenario where we can live if the strongest incarnation sacrifices themselves.

The opaque exterior of the stadium became transparent and the interior started to show. There were two people standing on a stage with the gorgeous spotlight behind them.

–The two heroes who are coming forward for the incarnations of Seoul Dome! I will introduce you to the strongest incarnation candidates!

The Salvation members on the opposite side of the dome clapped loudly.

"Yoo Joonghyuk! Yoo Joonghyuk!"

"Nirvana! Nirvana!"

The incarnations seemed baffled by the sudden change of atmosphere.

"W-What is this?"

"Are they fighting already?"

I knew what they were thinking.

「What if we can clear the scenario like this?」

「Regardless of whether it is the Salvation leader or the Supreme King, isn't it good for us if both of them die in this fight?」

Every human was a coward. Nirvana knew when humans were the most cowardly. It was time for the 'unattainable future'. Some people had already died while others would fight back and find a way to live.

I approached the dome and hit the wall.

[The incarnation 'Jeon Ildo' is using Fair Duel Lv. 3.]

[All incarnations apart from those involved in the duel aren't allowed to enter the stage.]

…He used the stigma of Gwanghaegun. In this case, no one apart from Yoo Joonghyuk and Nirvana could physically get involved in the battle.

I spoke to Jung Heewon and Lee Jihye. "Kill Jeon Ildo!"

The next moment, something burst from inside the stadium. Finally, the battle between Yoo Joonghyuk and Nirvana started.

There was a gigantic screen above the dome that was created by the dokkaebi.

[You are doing something interesting. I think it will be a fun fight so I'm prepared to let everyone see it.]

On the screen, I could see Yoo Joonghyuk's two swords and Nirvana's white magic power colliding.

Yoo Joonghyuk's Breaking the Sky Sword and Nirvana's Mandala caused a storm in the space.

Dozens of exchanges were done in a short amount of time. It was a cautious and elaborate battle.

They used Transmission or Succession to read the other person's skills and tried to gain an advantage. This was a confrontation between a regressor and a reincarnator.

It was Nirvana who moved first in earnest. Nirvana's mandala rotated quickly, spinning his magic power as a threat that attacked Yoo Joonghyuk's body.

Yoo Joonghyuk jumped high into the sky, avoiding the white magic power.

At first glance, it seemed like an endless number. It was because the white magic power acted according to his movements. Yoo Joonghyuk quickly spun his blades to hit the mandala's power but unfortunately missed two bundles.

Blood poured from his left shoulder and thigh. A loud sound emerged from the mouth of an incarnation. Jeon Ildo was making a fuss as he nervously fled from Jung Heewon.

–Ah, it will be like this?

However, Yoo Joonghyuk was calm. Yoo Joonghyuk jumped near the dome's ceiling and dived down while holding the Heavenly Sword of Gathering Clouds. Blue magic power was nestled in the sword but Nirvana was already finishing his defense.

"Come on, Yoo Joonghyuk!"

At this moment, the size of the Heavenly Sword of Gathering Clouds suddenly changed. It was transformed into a giant sword and started to grow to the size of a tall building.

Yoo Joonghyuk's arm holding the sword was the same. It was like the right arm of a giant god.

[Giant Body Transformation.]

The surprised Nirvana tried to leave the range of the blade but it was already too late. The weight of the blade that split the sky literally fell onto Nirvana.

There was a huge roar and the entire stage was filled with dust.

"Kuooh!"

Nirvana was hit hard and lay in a deep pit made by Yoo Joonghyuk's sword. The incarnations exclaimed. Numerous arms had emerged from the mandala.

The Thousand Hands of Avalokiteśvara. The hands of the Bodhisattva were fighting against the giant sword. If it wasn't for the dome,the area would've been destroyed by the collision. All the incarnation were overwhelmed by the sight.

「This is a showdown between the strongest in Seoul.」

The strongest… I somehow felt bitter. I swallowed the bitter taste and used Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint.

On the surface, it seemed like a simple confrontation of strength but in this moment, there was a flow of thoughts between Nirvana and Yoo Joonghyuk.

Nirvana thought, 「Did the level of Mental Barrier go up? The magic power wavelength is becoming stronger.」

「Your skill level is lower than I thought. What did you gain from Succession?」

「You act like your left shoulder is hurt but that is a trap.」

「Giant Body Transformation has a short duration. You should look at the whole of the match.」

….

It was a battlefield that only I could see. The two thoughts that didn't touch each other were depicting a battle that hadn't yet occurred.

I felt pure admiration and appreciated the view.

How much time passed?

I reached the 'result' of this confrontation faster than anyone in the dome. I jumped and headed to the rooftop of a nearby building overlooking the dome. Then I opened my mouth.

"Han Sooyoung. I know you are watching."

The space behind me split apart and Han Sooyoung appeared from the darkness. "…How did you know?"

Han Sooyoung was wearing a blue combat suit that clung to her body. Perhaps it was a hidden piece from Peace Land.

"You couldn't stay away after hearing the loudspeaker."

"Tsk."

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' shows its teeth towards you.]

As expected, Han Sooyoung chose her sponsor. Han Sooyoung approached me and sat on the railing. "It was fun. Why did you call me?"

"Why are you watching? Don't you want to clear the scenario?"

"Ah, I need to clearly know who the strongest is… wait. You know who it is?"

"I know."

"Who? Is it Yoo Joonghyuk?"

"No."

Han Sooyoung sighed with relief. "I'm glad. If that bastard dies, the world will go back. Now this isn't difficult.

Han Sooyoung pulled out a dagger. "The Salvation leader… are you going to kill him?"

I shook my head towards Han Sooyoung, who was going to descend. "He isn't the strongest."

"No? Then who? Who should I kill?"

I silently stared at Han Sooyoung. After a while, her eyes filled with disbelief. "…Don't tell me?"

I nodded. "Let's decorate the finale of this scenario."

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* Official novel cover (canonical)

Chapter 144: Ep. 28 - The Ultimate Sacrifice, IV

[Geez, this could end quicker than I thought?]

The dokkaebi giggled as he saw the bloody battle between Yoo Joonghyuk and Nirvana.

[If not one half, I thought at least a third of the incarnations would die…]

[This story isn't interesting.]

In the air, three intermediate dokkaebis were looking down at the stadium. The incarnations outside the stadium froze at the appearance of the dokkaebis. Every time they appeared, something ridiculous happened.

[Is it worth giving a hints now?]

[It isn't a big deal. Let's release them a bit faster.]

The moment the dokkaebis spoke, the rankings of the incarnations started to appear on a board in the air.

> The eighth strongest incarnation in Seoul Dome is 'Moonlight Girl Yoo Sangah'.
>
> The seventh strongest incarnation in Seoul Dome is 'Armed Fortress Master Gong Pildu'.
>
> The sixth strongest incarnation in Seoul Dome is 'Judge of Destruction Jung Heewon'.

Three rankings were released in an instant and the reactions of people were almost explosive.

"Who is Yoo Sangah? Moonlight Girl?"

"Gong Pildu is seventh!"

Jung Heewon was also watching the electronic display in the sky. "Oh my, I'm sixth?"

"I am tenth… che. Unni, would you like to have a match against me?" Lee Jihye asked as she trampled on Jeon Ildo, who was trapped on the ground.

Jung Heewon also stepped on him and replied, "Hrmm, I'm sorry but it's hard. My sponsor likes you."

"What? Why?"

Instead of answering, Jung Heewon pointed her sword at Jeon Ildo. "Excuse me, Jeon Ildo-ssi who can't even make it into the top 10?"

Jeon Ildo's whole body shivered at the sight of the blade and he asked, "… Jung Heewon, how did you get rid of Thought Infection?"

"Don't ask me questions. I'll kill you if you don't answer quickly."

"If you kill me… you can't… get rid of the dome."

These were the last full words he said. The atmosphere was somewhat tiring so Jung Heewon punched Jeon Ildo one more time before going to find Kim Dokja.

"Dokja-ssi?"

However, Kim Dokja wasn't present.

> The fifth strongest incarnation in Seoul Dome is 'Pure Steel Lee Hyunsung'.

Lee Hyunsung and Gong Pildu fighting with the monsters outside the dome heard the message. Gong Pildu frowned and asked,

"…What is pure steel?"

"I-I don't know either."

Lee Hyunsung used Great Mountain Smash on the 5th grade monsters. For him who could use Steel Transformation, the disaster level monsters were no longer an enemy.

However, the number of monsters was more than they thought and the front line was slowly being pushed back.

Lee Hyunsung protected the armed fortress while thinking.

'Dokja-ssi. Are things going well?'

He hoped that Kim Dokja would answer but of course, Kim Dokja didn't respond.

> The fourth strongest incarnation in Seoul Dome is 'Black Flames Empress Han Sooyoung'.

At the same time, Han Sooyoung was laughing as she saw the board.

"…I'm really fourth?" Han Sooyoung asked as she looked down at Kim Dokja bleeding on the ground. He was stabbed so that he wouldn't die instantly, but the bleeding was severe and he was sure to die soon.

Han Sooyoung bent down and touched the cheek of the bleeding Kim Dokja. "Kim Dokja. Are you really going to die like this? What if you are in third place?"

Han Sooyoung looked down at Kim Dokja with an uncomfortable expression.

"You look so carefree now."

Of course, Kim Dokja didn't answer. She was the one who stabbed him but once she did, she was really afraid that Kim Dokja would die. He didn't even have an avatar… no, perhaps?

"Why am I worried about him…" Han Sooyoung complained before falling silent.

The lips of the unconscious Kim Dokja contorted with pain. She wanted to know what was going on but she didn't ask.

Kim Dokja was having a hard time. Like her, he was an ordinary person before the world was destroyed. Such a person had jumped onto a stage to decide the world's fate and was moving the main characters. Han Sooyoung had forgotten for a moment that Kim Dokja was also a normal human.

She stretched out a finger and touched Kim Dokja's mouth.

*

Then her face became a strange mixture of a smile and a frown.

Han Sooyoung giggled. "…It is really strange."

At this moment, a huge shock wave occurred in the dome. The battle between Yoo Joonghyuk and Nirvana was coming to an end.

[Haha, there are three people left to look forward to. I wonder who they are? Just wait! The rankings will soon be made public!]

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' is shutting off his heart.]

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is sweating and has lost hair.]

[The constellation 'Bald General of Justice' wipes his head.]

Yoo Joonghyuk listened to the incoming messages and raised his sword again.

There was a gruesome sound as the Thousand Hands of Avalokiteśvara were pierced and a mechanical sound came from deep muscles.

Yoo Joonghyuk felt his presence slowly collapsing. It was the side effect of Giant Body Transformation. It was the cost of bearing the power that he couldn't afford.

The colossus had clearly warned him when he was given this power.

「Never use this skill until all your stats have reached three digits.」

However, the colossus expected him to receive this skill through Transmission. He knew Yoo Joonghyuk wouldn't listen to his warning.

Yoo Joonghyuk had to walk the sura path, the impossible path, and he had to use every means he had to pass. The frustrating thing was that the end of the road was still invisible.

Yoo Joonghyuk squeezed out all the magic power in his body and aimed his sword. There was a huge blast of blue magic power towards Nirvana.

「Splitting the Sky is an explosion.

Don't hide yourself. Expand, blossom, flood. Don't allow the heavens to be above you.」

It was the words of the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint, who taught him Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship.

In the middle and second half of the second regression, the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint fought against the alliance of returnees and died alone. At that time, Yoo Joonghyuk saw a thick sky that he couldn't break. There was definitely such a sky in the world.

"Yoo Joonghyuk—!"

However, Nirvana wasn't that sky. Nirvana was a strong reincarnator. He would become stronger in the future. He wasn't yet as strong as a heavenly demon or the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint.

'Thus, I can kill you'.

Yoo Joonghyuk released all his magic power and crushed Nirvana's entire body. Nirvana's Thousand Hands of Avalokiteśvara was broken to pieces. The flesh hit by the magic power was torn apart. This was the limit of a hastily inherited skill.

"Kuaaah!"

Nirvana's body smashed into the ground and a huge shock wave occurred inside. Yoo Joonghyuk was sure of his victory.

This strike was sufficient. Nirvana might have a number of hidden cards but he couldn't reverse a blow like this.

'He became aware of Kim Dokja so he would've inherited a close range skill'.

Yoo Joonghyuk pulled up his remaining magic power and prepared the final blow. The moment he emerged from the pit to deal the final blow. A beep suddenly rang in his head.

[The exclusive skill 'Advanced Mental Barrier Lv. 3' has reached its limit.]

[The exclusive skill 'Thought Vaccine Lv. 1' has eroded it.]

…What? It wasn't possible. Thought Vaccine was a counter-skill to Nirvana's Thought Infection and Eternal Prison. Why was it used on him?

'Don't tell me'.

He gained sudden enlightenment. The present Nirvana was still weaker than the Nirvana of his past life. What if Nirvana didn't inherit a close combat skill?

Despite the variable called Kim Dokja, Nirvana's only goal was Yoo Joonghyuk from the beginning.

'Shit, it is 108 Worries'.

[The exclusive skill 'Advanced Mental Barrier Lv. 3' has been destroyed.]

[108 evil spirits have started to gnaw at your mind.]

At this moment, Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes turned black and his five senses started to run wild. He should've noticed something strange when his thoughts became unusually heavy. Nirvana laughed from inside the pit.

"Yoo Joonghyuk! Only I can understand you!"

It was obvious that Nirvana had been enduring only for this moment. 108 giant beads shone behind Nirvana.

"Stop now and become one with me."

Light rose and Yoo Joonghyuk felt fragments of agony piece his mind. He wouldn't be able to guarantee his next regression if he fell to this skill.

'This is the end'.

He had to regress now. Yoo Joonghyuk exercised final control over his body and brought the Splitting the Sky Sword to his neck.

–Don't imagine that you will get better if you throw away this round.

Why did those words appear at this moment?

–Maybe this is the round where you will see the end of this world as a 'human'."

Yoo Joonghyuk was in a terrible state of mind and had a thought for the first time.

'Kim Dokja…'

Then his vision gradually dimmed.

–You jerk, you think quickly.

He was mistaken. A familiar voice was heard.

–Take a break.

Despite his reluctance, Yoo Joonghyuk felt relieved by the voice and easily closed his eyes.

I slowly opened my eyes and felt like I was overflowing with power.

The height of my field of view had changed and the feeling of the combat muscles made me feel good. An adequate amount of adrenaline was secreted. I was full of confidence that I could do anything.

[The 1st person protagonist's point of view has been activated!]

Crazy… this was the 'real' 1st person protagonist's point of view. This was how Yoo Joonghyuk usually felt. I could never be strong like this.

"…How did you get your mind back from 108 Worries?"

I could see Nirvana's figure in the distance. I glanced outside the stadium.

The fact that I was attached to Yoo Joonghyuk meant that Han Sooyoung had done her job properly. If it was as scheduled, there were five minutes remaining until my breathing completely stopped.

Nirvana's eyes were fierce as he aimed a skill at me again.

[The character 'Nirvana Moebius' has used 108 Worries Lv. 2!]

108 Worries. It was originally a skill to raise a person's enlightenment level by frightening their own spirit but when used on others, it would invoke terrible delirium. In particular, the effect was worse than Thought Infection or Eternal Prison for regressors like Yoo Joonghyuk.

Of course, this would only happen if I was Yoo Joonghyuk.

[The Fourth Wall has completely neutralized the effect of 108 Worries!]

I'm sorry but I wasn't the normal 'Yoo Joonghyuk' now.

"This feeling is… who are you?"

As expected, the reincarnator noticed quickly. I rushed over and punched him in the mouth.

"Kuaaaak!"

Nirvana went flying with a scream. The body of a regressor was truly excellent. I had this much speed and destructive power without even using Electrification.

Nirvana's physical strength was exhausted and he couldn't resist as he flew through the air.

It was a very pleasant feeling.

However, Nirvana could still withstand it. It was natural. He would be used to pain and death. I once again hit him and said, "You have been through death dozens of times so you don't know 'death'. It's funny."

Death was death and it only happened once. A human's 'present' was important because there was nothing after death. This was why Nirvana didn't know 'death' or the 'present'.

"A person who can't live in the present preaches about the present. There is no contradiction."

"How about me… keok!"

"I know. The reason why you want to be one with Yoo Joonghyuk, why you are spreading the Salvation Church and what you ultimately want to reach."

I understood, which was why I had to stop him now. Nirvana hesitated. Still, he was a reincarnator and quickly regained his composure.

Nirvana shouted, "Foolish person! It is useless to do this. Even if you do this, Yoo Joonghyuk will die. No one can stop the destruction of the scenarios. Even if this life is ruined, the world will repeat. I will reincarnate and Yoo Joonghyuk will regress! We will end up as one!"

Yes, this was the mindset of a reincarnator. However…

"Do you really think so?"

At this moment, a message appeared on the message board. This was the right timing.

The third strongest incarnation in Seoul Dome is 'Supreme King Yoo Joonghyuk'.

Nirvana's expression became strange. "The third? Yoo Joonghyuk?"

I nodded and smiled. "Yoo Joonghyuk will never go to the next regression."

"What?"

"No matter what, Yoo Joonghyuk will survive. It is either you or me."

"Don't make me laugh! I am the strongest incarnation, Nirvana Moebius. A trivial person like you…!"

> The second strongest incarnation in Seoul Dome is 'Salvation Leader Nirvana'.

…Damn. I didn't know the second place would already be released. I looked up and saw the dokkaebis giggling like it was funny. Maybe they decided the game was settled. Nirvana's body started to tremble. "…This is… ridiculous…"

"Nirvana, you said that you wanted to live in the present?"

"Perhaps… you…?"

Nirvana's body shook like he encountered a topic that could never be interpreted. I stared at Nirvana and opened my mouth.

It was a very low voice, like the whisper of a reaper. "I will tell you about your 'death'."

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* Official novel illustration (canonical)

Chapter 145: Ep. 28 - The Ultimate Sacrifice, V

The moment that the third and second rankings were announced in Seoul, the incarnations fell into a panic.

"Fuck! What is this?"

"Then who is the strongest? What are we going to do?"

The incarnations assumed that the strongest person was either Yoo Joonghyuk or Nirvana, and that both of them would die here. Now the situation had changed. The moment the first ranked person was obscured, the incarnations trying to clear the scenario shivered at the unexpected reversal.

To make matters worse, one of the 5th grade monsters pierced through the defenses. The miserable incarnations were torn apart by the beast's teeth.

"Aaaagh!"

The situation was becoming worse. The 5th grade monsters weren't easy and the incarnations were less united than expected.

[* Current number of incarnations: 89,041.]

Thousands of incarnations died. Lee Hyunsung broke the head of a monster with Great Mountain Smash.

"Soldier ahjussi! What the hell is going on?" Lee Jihye and Jung Heewon rushed towards him.

They had also been responsible for defending against the monsters.

"If Nirvana isn't the strongest, isn't Dokja ahjussi wrong? What are we going to do now?"

The party's plan was based on the assumption that 'Nirvana is the strongest incarnation'. Now the scenario wouldn't end even if they killed Nirvana. Lee Hyunsung stared blankly at the stadium.

"I think…"

Lee Hyunsung's face paled as he had a thought.

"Kuaaaak!"

Nirvana screamed as his body flew through the air.

"You will tell me about death? Don't make me laugh!" Despite being helplessly beaten, Nirvana remained steadfast. "I won't die. No matter what you say, true death won't come to me! If I could die that easily, I wouldn't have suffered like this!"

I was amazed that he could retain such emotions after living such a long life. Perhaps this was his purpose when preaching of salvation.

I grabbed his collar and told him, "You actually want to die. Right?"

"…!"

"It is because you can't die that you are comforted by the deaths of others."

Every human placed value on their life because they only died once.

"That's why you preached to the Salvation Church. You watched them live a one-time life and also wanted to be absorbed into their lives. You want to share the emotions they feel."

[Your understanding of the character 'Nirvana Moebius' has increased.]

I knew Nirvana. I didn't just know him because he was a character in the novel. Nirvana yearned for something he could never be. Nirvana resembled me.

"Don't speak nonsense."

Unexpectedly, Nirvana's voice was calm. It was when he was really angry that he made a voice like this.

"It is the same for humans who don't know death. Nothing exists after a rare death! Humans can die but they can't suffer from death in a true sense. It is something that can't be owned by anyone!"

"At least we can feel the fear of death. It makes human life possible. That is the biggest difference between you and an ordinary human."

"You…!"

Nirvana's fist flew towards me but I easily caught it.

"That's why you want to become 'one' with Yoo Joonghyuk?"

"…?"

"You think you can erase your existence by becoming one with Yoo Joonghyuk. Right?"

Nirvana's expression completely stiffened.

"Reincarnation is the stigma of the highest-grade constellation. To erase it, you need the power of a higher constellation."

Nirvana looked at me and gritted his teeth. "…You are beyond my imagination."

"I hear that often."

"Then kill me. I'm not afraid of death as you said." Nirvana's eyes were burning with vengeance. "Still, you better keep something in mind. I'll come back again and again. I will come back to life a number of times, kill you and show you the worst pain. Just like I did to your mother."

I was surprised. "…Did you meet my mother?"

"She is a very good mother."

[The exclusive skill, 'Fourth Wall' is shaking!]

"It is fun to make her submit. You know, I like to corrupt a virtuous spirit."

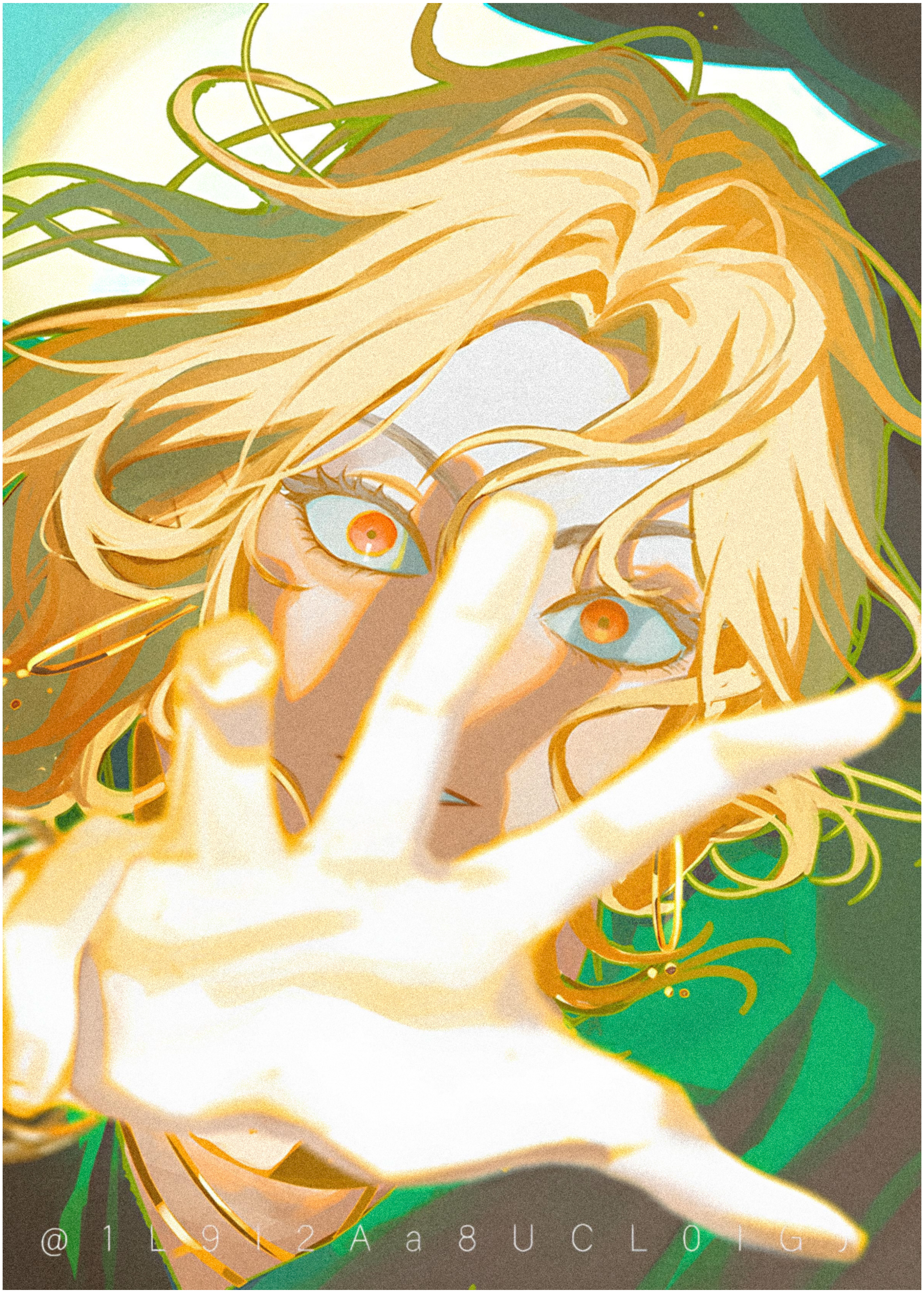
[The exclusive skill, 'Fourth Wall' is shaking!]

"The scene where she struggled and begged for her life is still vivid in my eyes."

There was such provocation in this world. I was hooked despite knowing it was a provocation. This was despite knowing my mother wouldn't have done that.

[The exclusive skill, 'Fourth Wall' is steadily shaking.]

"Hahaha! You are caught!"



@1L9I2Aa8UCL0IGJ

*

My vision shook and the world became black.

[The character 'Nirvana Moebius' has used 108 Worries Lv. 2!]

My consciousness was sucked somewhere and I was thrown into a world other than the stadium. I heard familiar voices in the darkness.

「Master, run away!」

「Please, please save this world.」

「You can easily throw away this world. But I…!」

They were voices filled with resentment. I knew where this world was. It was the place where the Fourth Wall was shaking. It was the inner part of Yoo Joonghyuk, who was infested with many worries.

"Yoo Joonghyuk! You finally allowed me in! Now… you will be one with me."

Nirvana was standing in front of me. I smiled as I looked at him. Preparing a counterattack at the last minute, a reincarnator was truly a reincarnator.

I told him, "It was a mistake for you to enter here."

A mandala pattern appeared under Nirvana's feet. The inner surface of the soul was less affected by probability. Here, Nirvana was able to use the power of the stories he accumulated.

Nirvana grew to the size of a giant in a flash. The pressure of the soul that accumulated countless stories was really great. Once again, it was natural for him to have built up such stories.

Hundreds of arms grew like wings from his back while his legs were half covered with the feathers of a bird and half covered with the scales of a snake. A wolf-like snout protruded and horns grew from his head.

It looked like he was concentrating all the reincarnations he had experienced.

[I am Nirvana Moebius.]

This was Nirvana 'himself'.

[A reincarnator who leads the unfortunate people to Nirvana.]

He looked confident but Nirvana didn't know. I deliberately let myself by hit by his 108 Worries. I smiled and opened my mouth. "Nirvana, do you know the principle of reincarnation?"

The space trembled ominously. I kept speaking.

"Your soul is bound to the mandala's guardian. Once you die, you don't go to the Underworld. According to the unique laws of the constellations, your soul is nestled in a body that was just born."

[…What are you talking about?]

"You aren't immortal. Your body is born again but your soul isn't."

[Nonsense!]

The hundreds of arms on Nirvana's back poured towards me. The Thousand Hands of Avalokiteśvara poured out like a waterfall. If I was hit by that in reality, my body would burst and I would be dead. However, this place was different.

Now I was Yoo Joonghyuk. In other words, this was also my 'inner self'. The Thousand Hands of Avalokiteśvara melted away in front of my nose.

Nirvana looked baffled. I saw the numerous pages that surrounded me.

[The exclusive skill, 'Fourth Wall' is activated!]

There was the sound of pages turning and the pages started to flutter around. There were words written on the white pages. The countless words that I read formed a huge wall.

The astounded Nirvana tried to escape but it was already too late. Sparks formed as Nirvana's body hit the wall.

[What have you done?]

The Fourth Wall could even repel the constellations. I was curious. Maybe it was possible to use this to wipe out a 'reincarnator'.

[Release this wall! This, this is…!]

The perplexed Nirvana looked at the wall. A blinding light emerged from the letters on the wall.

「 If this world continues to be reborn, we can clear it. 」

[This… don't tell me…!]

Nirvana stared at the pages that contained his truth.

「 Yoo Joonghyuk, I can take you to the end of this world. 」

[H-How do you have this?]

I approached Nirvana and said, "You don't have to go until the end of this world."

Every time letters appeared on the world, Nirvana's huge body started to disintegrate. Nirvana's body split into countless letters and started to be sucked into the Fourth Wall.

"You will die here."

There was a strange emotion on Nirvana's face as he saw his soul disintegrating.

「 At last, the reincarnator Nirvana reached a 'single life' after hundreds of years of wandering. 」

Nirvana laughed as he saw the sentence on the wall.

[Ha… haha, hahaha!]

「He greeted his first real 'death'.」

Nirvana's expression was jubilant.

「This is… dying.」

[I see. This is it.]

「At that moment, Nirvana realized what he had long been waiting for.」

It had been hundreds of years. He reached the end after countless incarnations. Nirvana closed his eyes at this long-awaited moment. Despite closing his eyes, Nirvana's inner thoughts were still written on the wall.

「Then why? This is what I've been hoping for.」

Nirvana's entire body was covered with minor cracks. His feet, legs, thighs, chest… The broken pieces were being sucked into the Fourth Wall.

「Why am I feeling afraid?」

He felt the fear of death for the first time.

To die. There was no future. He couldn't think, move, talk or even feel his own existence.

「I don't exist.」

Nirvana's eyes flashed open for a moment.

「Don't… I don't want to!」

「However, Nirvana's mouth was gone and he couldn't shout it.」

「His disappearing arms stretched helplessly towards me.」

「In the first place, existence isn't beautiful.」

No one would hold a philosophical view when fated to die. All beings were helpless before death.

「No! Please! Stop! Don't kill me!」

「Yes, your mother's secret. I know it! I know the story that your mother never told you—」

「Save me. Please. If you save me…!」

I looked at him. It was as if witnessing the end of a character in the novel.

「In his last moments, Nirvana repeated the words he hated the most.」

「I don't want to die.」

Soon, Nirvana's soul completely disappeared.

[The Fourth Wall has eaten the character 'Nirvana Moebius'.]

This was the first message I heard. The wall reacted differently from when it killed the Theatre Dungeon's boss. I was frightened at first.

[The Fourth Wall is smiling with satisfaction.]

It was fine to kill Nirvana. However, once I thought about it, I didn't know exactly what the Fourth Wall was.

[The Fourth Wall is looking at you with greedy eyes.]

It wriggled like it was alive. The wall wanted a taste of me, like swallowing Nirvana wasn't enough. Something popped up on the wall.

「At this moment, Kim Dokja thought, 'Maybe someday, I will also be eaten by this wall'.」

[108 Worries has been disabled.]

My vision started to return to its original state. The wall, Nirvana, Yoo Joonghyuk. It was as if nothing had happened from the beginning.

…

I blinked and found I was back at the Gwanghwamun stadium. Nirvana was scattering in front of my eyes. After a long time wandering, he finally found rest.

The area was silent, as if cold water had been poured on it. I slowly moved Yoo Joonghyuk's feet.

The dokkaebi started talking. [This… It is already the end of the scenario. Shall I now announce who the strongest incarnation is?]

I found it hard to move due to fatigue. The voice of the dokkaebi was heard above my head.

[The strongest incarnation, he is…]

At this moment, my consciousness blurred and I couldn't hear the voice anymore.

It seemed that my time had run out. I couldn't hear the final words as my consciousness disappeared.

[Excessive mental exhaustion has turned off Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint stage three.]

[1st person protagonist's point of view has been released.]

.

.

.

[You have died.]

Two days later, my funeral began.

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* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)

Chapter 146: Ep. 29 - Constellation Banquet, I

Rain poured down on Gwanghwamun Square. The streets were near ruins thanks to the monsters. The collapsed media logos were broken and trampled on. The King Sejong the Great and Yi Sunsin statues that were the symbols of Gwanghwamun were completely destroyed.

"Ah…"

The civilization that Seoul boasted had collapsed and the culture was lost. There was only one story left but none of the people in Gwanghwamun wanted this story.

Lee Jihye opened her mouth as she watched some of the Hwarang digging at the ground. "…Is he really dead?"

Nobody answered her. The reasons for not responding were different. Jung Heewon, Lee Hyunsung, Lee Gilyoung, Shin Yoosung…

They had their own thoughts but none of them spoke. Perhaps their thoughts were wrong. Perhaps… they were afraid it was right.

"No… Really?"

Kim Dokja's body was discovered around an hour after the end of the eighth scenario.

"Ahjussi! Wake up! Is this a joke?"

The cause of death was excessive blood loss. At first, everyone was confused. Kim Dokja, who hadn't been seen throughout the entire situation, suddenly died.

Still, the party members waited without much panic. This situation had happened a few times. The first time they hunted the fire dragon and when facing the Disaster of Floods. Kim Dokja always survived death.

Thus, they waited this time. He would rise again as usual and give the party members his distinctive smile. He would tell some timid jokes.

However, Kim Dokja didn't rise again. One hour passed and then two. Finally, one day passed. It was the same when the second night arrived.

Kim Dokja didn't resurrect. His body was cold.

It was Min Jiwon who encouraged the members by making a coffin.

"…He was the strongest in Seoul."

She started doing what no one else could do. She knew Kim Dokja but she could do it because her relationship with Kim Dokja was light.

Min Jiwon spoke of Kim Dokja's sacrifice. She spread the story of the man who chose to die quietly while everyone was enthusiastically watching the battle between the strongest people.

Everyone called Kim Dokja by different nicknames. In fact, when the dokkaebi had named the strongest incarnation, people thought of different nicknames.

King of a Kingless World.

The lonely Messiah.

The Ugliest King…

The words were different but the direction they converged was all the same. The strongest person in Seoul Dome was Kim Dokja and Kim Dokja died for Seoul.

Seoul was saved by Kim Dokja. A savior died in a place that no one knew.

Min Jiwon made a coffin for this Kim Dokja. People watched Kim Dokja's body being laid in the coffin and held back tears. Some people were confused by who he was while some people sighed after belatedly hearing the story.

Meanwhile, Shin Yoosung was crying. "Ahjussi…"

"Yoosung." Jung Heewon pulled Shin Yoosung away from the coffin. Lee Hyunsung still had a confused expression while Lee Gilyoung's face was blank, as if he was fleeing reality.

"Dokja hyung isn't dead."

Finally, Lee Jihye screamed, "…Where did Master go?"

"…"

"Master can save ahjussi! Where is Seolhwa unni?"

However, Yoo Joonghyuk wasn't here to hear the blame. Eventually, Lee Jihye also started crying. "Ahjussi…"

They had to admit it, even if they didn't want to. Kim Dokja was dead and he wouldn't resurrect again.

[The new main scenario will start soon.]

They now had to live in a world without Kim Dokja.

「They now had to live in a world without Kim Dokja.」

If it was Ways of Survival then this sentence would've been written.

"Well, don't mourn for me."

I wanted to shout but my voice didn't come out. It was because I was in a state where my vocal cords weren't formed. It was comforting to be able to observe the situation was a 'third party observer' whenever my mental power was restored.

It would be nice if I could use 'first person's viewpoint' but it wasn't working right now after being overloaded by Yoo Joonghyuk.

[Excessive immersion has restricted the use of 'first person viewpoint'.]

The coffin was covered in dirt and some people shouted,

"The Ugliest King!"

Shit. Did the dokkaebis attach the nickname 'the Ugliest King' to me? It must be that bastard Bihyung.

I felt stranger when I saw Shin Yoosung crying and throwing flowers onto my grave. The party members were now convinced that I was dead. I watched as they attended my funeral. I was probably the only one like this.

"Haaaaaah!"

Lee Gilyoung was weeping and had a runny nose as he ran towards the coffin half covered in dirt. Lee Jihye was also the same.

"Ahjussiiiii—!"

She was normally a child who acted angrily towards me so I was touched. It would be a funny scene if I woke up in the coffin right now.

However, I couldn't do that. It was because I was currently in the so-called 'cooldown' time.

[The privilege of 'Eight Lives' has been activated.]

The resurrection itself was nothing to worry about. I had the attribute Eight Lives that I obtained from Peace Land after giving up King of No Killing. This attribute could be obtained only by drinking the soul and flesh of Yamata no Orochi, literally providing the person with eight lives.

[The first head of the snake has been sacrificed.]

[The power of this head is Wary Person.]

Different types of abilities slept in Yamata no Orochi's heads and after resurrection, I could get a blessing related to the ability. This wasn't bad at all. The problem was that unlike King of No Killing, there was a waiting time with this privilege.

[72 hours of waiting time are required before the resurrection.]

[Time remaining: 24:07:12]

I still had one more day to go and it was time for the next scenario to start. I watched my funeral a bit more before changing my point of view. I couldn't resurrect yet so I felt sorry to watch it any longer.

[Changing the person observed with 'third person viewpoint'.]

Then a new screen popped up. It was a basement with antique finishes. A man and woman were there.

"…Yoo Joonghyuk-ssi?" The woman was naturally Yoo Sangah. Needless to say, it was Yoo Joonghyuk who released her from where she had been tied up. It was the last favour I asked before leaving his body.

Yoo Sangah asked, "What happened to Dokja-ssi?"

"Kim Dokja is dead."

Yoo Sangah looked like the world had collapsed at Yoo Joonghyuk's blunt declaration. I frowned slightly when I saw this expression. The 28 year old Kim Dokja's life wasn't that bad.

"However, he will live again."

"…Live again? How?"

"I don't know. I just know he won't die like that."

Well, Yoo Joonghyuk had seen me resurrecting in the past. He would surely believe that I would rise again eventually.

"…No, he must live."

Then why was he clenching his fist so much? Yoo Joonghyuk was silent for a moment before speaking to Yoo Sangah, who was in shock.

"Where is Kim Dokja's family member?"

The remark surprised me. This bastard, why was he doing something I didn't ask him to do? Yoo Sangah's face changed at the world 'family member'. She seemed to have something urgent to say.

"His mother is…"

Unfortunately, at this moment, the screen was turned off and a message was heard.

[Your mental power is exhausted.]

[Exclusive skill, Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint stage 3 has been turned off.]

This was the bad thing about a soul body. The recovery of exhausted mental power was slow. It was natural since there wasn't a physical body. A soul without a body was like a battery that lost one electrode. The longer the period without a body, the more exhausted the mind became. It was the reason why ghosts went crazy.

'Did Nirvana kill my mother?'

I had to keep asking questions in order to keep from going crazy.

'It can't be'.

This was my mother, not someone else. Nirvana also wasn't a character who easily killed or tortured others. Nirvana was a gentleman when acting as the Salvation leader.

However, there were the last words that Nirvana spoke. He said that my mother had a secret she kept from me. A secret that my mother was hiding from me? I couldn't get a grip of it at all, no matter how hard I thought.

…I didn't know. No, maybe I didn't want to know.

Then an indirect message was heard.

[The constellation 'Master of Abydos' is calling your soul.]

I hadn't heard any indirect messages for a while so I was a bit confused.

…Master of Abydos? I pondered over the contents of Ways of Survival. If I remembered correctly, Abydos was the capital of Ancient Egypt.

[The nebula 'Papyrus' wants to offer you the 'story of resurrection'.]

Oh, look at this? Papyrus was the nebula for Egyptian mythology.

[The constellation 'Scribe of Heaven' is calling your soul.]

Eh? Metatron? As soon as I thought about it, the next message appeared.

[The nebula 'Eden' wants to lead you down Messiah's Path.]

The story of resurrection, Messiah…?

[The constellation 'God of Wine and Ecstasy' wants to take you away from the lower constellations.]

[The nebula 'Olympus' will set the stage for you.]

…What was this?

[The constellation 'Master of December 25th' is calling you.]

[The nebula 'Vedas' will present you with the 'holiday of resurrection'.]

[The constellation 'Flower Blossom of Seocheon Flower Fields[1]' is calling your soul.]

[The nebula 'Tamna' wants you.]

From Indian mythology to Korean mythology? Many more indirect messages were pouring in. From huge nebulas to small nebulas, they all sent me love calls.

I could tell what these constellations were thinking. They were trying to cover me with their myths?

[Some constellations are facing each other.]

[Some constellations are giving warnings not to steal someone else's myths.]

Dionysus, Mithra, Hallakgungi…

The constellations calling me were all involved in resurrection.

[Constellations are having a battle of nerves over your resurrection.]

In other words, these guys were trying to step into my narrative. All stories were enhanced through being circulated. The more that humans told the story and passed them on, the stronger the influence of the stories.

What if one day, the person called 'Kim Dokja' was resurrected after three days and shouted the following words,

"I am Kim Dokja! I received the blessing of Christ!"

It didn't matter if Christ was replaced by Dionysus, Mithra or someone else. People would be amazed and a myth would be reproduced on the spot.

The amazed incarnations would spread the story and the power of the story would exceed imagination. As a result, the nebula related to the story would have more power to intervene in the probability.

In other words, the nebula were in a frenzy because of this. I had the power to control the scenarios.

[Constellations of the Korean Peninsula are paying attention to your choice.]

---

[1] **Field of Seocheon** an important place in Korean mythology. It appears in four myths, excluding the Igong Bonpuli. Wiki.

Chapter 147: Ep. 29 - Constellation Banquet, II

According to my choice, the fate of the nebulae would be reversed on the Korean peninsula. At first glance, it looked like a situation where I was in an advantageous position but I wasn't that comfortable.

[Constellations are quarrelling over the legitimacy of the myths.]

I seemed to have the option of choosing but the problem was after the selection.

The nebulae were sensitive about plagiarism when it came to the 'resurrection story' In particular, the confrontation between Eden and Vedas was severe. If I chose one side then the other side would completely turn their back to me.

I was only a bud who hadn't become a constellation yet. If I refused all of them, they would feel resentment towards me…

[Many constellations want you to choose quickly.]

Damn. I was afraid of receiving criticism over the resurrection and of becoming a public enemy among the constellations. What should I do…

[The constellation 'Queen of the Darkest Spring' is mediating the conflict between the constellations.]

[The constellation 'Queen of the Darkest Spring' emphasizes that it is the incarnation's choice.]

Persephone was on my side. By the way, why was she helping me?

[Some constellations are dissatisfied with the intervention of Queen of the Darkest Spring.]

[Some constellations are asking for a solution from Queen of the Darkest Spring.]

…

[The constellation 'Queen of the Darkest Spring' recommends that the incarnation Kim Dokja be invited to the constellation banquet.]

…Banquet?

After a while…

[The nebula 'Eden' agrees with the suggestion from Queen of the Darkest Spring.]

[The nebula 'Vedas' agrees with the suggestion from Queen of the Darkest Spring.]

…

[A number of constellations agree with the suggestion from Queen of the Darkest Spring.]

Regardless of my intention, I felt like my existence was being sold at a low price. I somehow felt empty and then the dokkaebi Youngki appeared in front of me.

[Pant, pant. Sir Dokja.]

Perhaps he came in a hurry. Youngki was covered in sweat.

[There is a place you have to go.]

'…Where?'

[Ah, I will help you get there. I'll prepare it right away!]

I had a rough idea of where I was going. Based on how nervous Youngki was, the pressure from the constellations must be considerable.

Eh? It felt like my body was collapsing and being reborn. It wasn't resurrection. It was closer to the the soul forming a body. It was a state like a floating ghost but it was temporary.

[Umm. This is an important meeting…]

A shirt and suit covered the soul body that didn't have any genitalia. The texture of the cloth felt like it had been created for me.

[Stories are shining in the distant night sky.]

[The constellation banquet is currently being held.]

[The constellation 'Queen of the Darkest Spring' has invited you to the constellation banquet.]

The constellation banquet.

Along with Sponsor Selection, it was an event arranged for the constellations of the Star Stream. I was invited to a banquet where only constellations were invited, despite not yet being a constellation.

I looked at the time remaining until I was resurrected.

[Time remaining: 23:54:12]

23 hours. It was enough time for a short visit. It was a bit fast but the place I had to go was obvious.

"Okay, let's go."

It was finally time to visit the constellations.

[The person who invited you will soon send an envoy.]

"Understood."

[I-I wish you a successful debut!]

Youngki raised a fist with resolute eyes and soon disappeared from in front of me. I looked around and the area was covered with white clouds.

I realized that this was one of the tributaries of the 'cloud road'. Numerous dokkaebis moved along this road to get to other dimensions.

[You have temporarily left the main scenario area.]

[You must return to the scenario area within 24 hours, Earth time.]

[If you don't return in time, you will be disposed of according to the scenario rules.]

Disposal. The system was really frightening, just like last time when I went to the Underworld.

[The hidden scenario - Constellation Banquet will begin!]

[Hidden Scenario - Constellation Banquet]

Category: Hidden

Difficulty: ?

Clear conditions: Participate in the banquet and have a successful debut.

Time Limit: 24 hours.

Compensation: 100,000 coins, favour or dislike from some of the constellations.

Failure: —

…At any rate, there are many scenarios hidden in the Star Stream. As long as I maintained my heart, I would get more coins than I thought.

I saw four horses flying in from a distance. The white horses were like a light source as they emitted a white light. They flew with 'golden wings' and behind them was a golden carriage.

There was the symbol of the sun engraved on the outside of the carriage. I recognized the carriage with one glance. Surely this wasn't the 'sun carriage?' Then the presence in the carriage…

[Hey, get in.]

I was amazed by the true voice that I heard. It showed that the presence in the carriage wasn't someone huge.

[Hey, it's okay. This is a symbolic realm so my true voice is weaker. Get in quickly. I won't eat you.]

I nervously got into the carriage. If this was really the sun carriage, the owner of this carriage would probably be the sun god Helios… eh?

"You are…?"

I looked at the occupant of the carriage with wide eyes. To be precise, it wasn't an 'occupant'. Only a wine glass filled with delicious red wine floated inside the carriage. I wondered about the situation and then the wineglass opened its mouth.

[Don't you recognize me?]

[The constellation 'God of Wine and Ecstasy' is disappointed in you.]

I asked in a startled manner, "…Dionysus?"

There was a dazzling spark and the wine glass screamed.

[Hey, don't call my name so carelessly. I feel good because I'm excited.]

"…Why do you look like this?"

[It is due to the probability. This is a good form to save on probability costs. You know, the great Star Stream is quite strict.]

In fact, it was better for me that he didn't have his true form. It didn't matter that I had the Fourth Wall, there was no certainty that I would be in a good state if I saw the body of the constellation.

The carriage set off as soon as I sat down. I didn't know why Dionysus was driving Helios' sun carriage but he seemed to have a reason.

[Is this the first time you've actually seen me? Nice to meet you, I am the God of Wine and Ecstasy. My name is famous in your country.]

"I'm also pleased to meet you."

We awkwardly greeted each other and sat in a corner of the carriage. Unlike his usual playfulness, Dionysus didn't say much.

Did he have a shy personality? It was unexpected. Well, not all stories were true.

The wine in the glass shook in a worrisome manner every time the carriage jolted. Would it fly in my direction? The liquid seemed to be a symbol of something and I wondered what it represented for Dionysus.

After a while of idle thoughts, Dionysus said, [Ah, I'm sorry. I was chatting with a goddess I know for a second.]

"…It seems you are very busy?"

[It isn't like that. I should proactively manage the girls these days.]

I didn't know if it was a joke or not.

[By the way, you are calmer than I expected? I am still a famous constellation.]

"It isn't the first time I've seen a constellation."

[Ah, that reminds me. Was it last time when I sent you to the Underworld?]

"Yes, thank you for that."

[What thanks? What did you do in the Underworld?]

"Huh?"

[I have never seen the queen act so kindly. Trying to protect one incarnation from the nebulae… huh? Perhaps? What that it? You told that old lady…]

His voice was somewhat envious. Dionysus didn't seem to know that I completed Persephone's task.

"Nothing happened."

[Hey hey, don't be shy. Isn't that auntie sexy? If I wasn't a gentleman on the outside…]

"Do you have to say it that way? Isn't the queen of the Underworld your mother?"

[Um? Haha. There is that theory.]

"Is it fake?"

[I didn't say that.]

"…"

[Why are you looking at me like that? Don't you know Olympus? This taboo is nothing.]

Come to think of it, Olympus was such a place. A paradise of gods who thought with their lower half. Still, this was too nasty.

[Ah, yes. Speaking of which. Did you get my previous message? Stick to my side. I particularly want to give you the story of 'Bacchus'… why is your expression like that?]

"No need."

I hurriedly shook my head. Dionysus was one of the 12 high ranking constellations of Olympus. But the story of Bacchus…

[Aha, I get it. Look at this person. Are you comparing it with the stories from Eden or Vedas?]

"No, that's not it…"

[Hey, it is because you don't know anything! Do you know what will happen if you receive the story of the resurrected Messiah? You will have to live compassionately your whole life! It is the same after you die. Yes? You will have to live like a priest God!]

Dionysus shouted loudly.

[Huh? Do you know how great the Bacchus story is in contrast? Don't you know my goddesses?]

"The goddesses who ripped apart homosexuals?"

Dionysus jumped with surprise.

[Ah… Y-Yes! You can spend frenzied days and nights with them. I can give you an endless refill of wine! Have you heard of the Olympus orgies? Do you know Aphrodite? If you want, I will invite her…]

[The constellation 'Goddess of Love and Beauty' is looking at the 'God of Wine and Ecstasy'.]

[…Let's just pretend I didn't say that. What do you think?]

"It doesn't appeal to me."

The Dionysus wine shook uneasily.

[…That reminds me, an angel of Eden says that you are interested in sodomy…]

"I think I know who spread it but ignore that girl. I want to know the real reason why you came to see me."

[Um? What are you talking about? It is to get you to join our nebula…]

"Is that really all it is?"

Dionysus was silent for a moment. The wine glass was still for a while before making a circle in the air.

[…You noticed quickly.]

"I've heard a lot."

[Do you want a drink? Drink some of my wine.]

"I don't really like drinking."

[Well… okay. You're right. In fact, my purpose isn't to take you to Olympus.]

It was as I thought. He was a god, meaning nothing he said was sincere. It was strange that despite all the nebulae paying attention to me, one of Olympus' 12 constellations came to pick up one incarnation. Yet Dionysus' next words completely broke my expectations.

[I'll tell you directly. I hope you don't join Olympus.]

"…Huh?"

[To be more precise…]

Then a terrible explosion occurred. The sun carriage shook like it had been hit by something and the horses screamed. I turned back and saw wine pouring from Dionysus' glass.

[Ah fuck. I was so surprised I pissed!]

I was afraid to ask what his urine was. I carefully avoided the spilled wine.

[Damn, it looks like other nebulae are looking for you.]

I looked out the curtain and saw creatures with terrifying presences flying all over the place. They were still far away and I didn't know what nebulae they belonged to, but it was clear they didn't like me.

[Fuck. I paid a lot to borrow this from Helios… this won't work. Get off here and run the rest of the way. It is just a short run along the cloud road.]

Here? Wasn't it air?

[I will stop them. Go quickly! If you enter the banquet hall, no nebulae can touch you!]

The curtains opened at his words. I looked at the clouds below and gulped. I was a soul. This meant I wouldn't die if I fell.

Then Dionysus' voice was heard behind me. [Keep this in mind. Don't trust anyone.]

I leapt out of the carriage as Dionysus laughed.

[See you again, Incarnation Kim Dokja.]

I jumped off the carriage onto the road. There was a loud noise behind me and then a brutal oppression pushed on my body. It was a tremendous force I had never felt before. At least part of the true essence had descended.

Sparks struck like a thunderstorm. I could tell without looking back. The confrontation between constellations had begun.

I rushed with all my strength along the cloud road. Debris flew over my head and I felt the ground cracking. I never looked back.

How much time had passed? Finally, a huge castle was seen and the noise behind me weakened. I had reached the entrance of the castle.

"I came to participate in the banquet."

The gatekeeper looked down at me. He seemed to be a low-grade dokkaebi dispatched from the bureau. "What? I didn't hear about an incarnation coming here alone."

Dammit, perhaps it was a mistake to get out of the sun carriage. Maybe that would've been my free pass. At this moment, the inner castle door opened and an unexpected savior appeared.

[Let him in. He is part of my group.]

It wasn't Persephone. The constellation I had wanted to see for a long time was waiting for me.

Chapter 148: Ep. 29 - Constellation Banquet, III

He stood at the entrance of the banquet hall. If I was right, he was one of the high level constellations who supported me since the beginning of the scenarios.

「There was a mischievous look on the face covered with white-gold hair. One of the most powerful authorities who was imprisoned in the smallest prison of the world. I was unable to breath as soon as I encountered the noble self and piercing eyes.」

긴고아의 죄수

*

This was the description from Ways of Survival. I watched in a spellbound manner. This was a top presence located at the top of Ways of Survival. I ignored the housekeeper and ran inside. "The Great Sage, Heaven's Equal!"

However, the laughing Great Sage, Heaven's Equal disappeared in front of my eyes. He was like smoke. It was as if he was telling me I wasn't qualified to meet him yet.

…A clone?

My hand fell in a dejected manner but the situation wasn't over. I suddenly called out the name of the Great Sage, Heaven's Equal, making the constellations on the first floor of the banquet hall pay attention to me.

[Who is that person?]

An incarnation called the nickname of a particular constellation. Most of the constellation didn't have great expressions. Gazes focused on me from all over the banquet hall.

[An incarnation?]

[What? Who is that incarnation?]

Countless gazes gathered, the atmosphere was heating up and I was so stiff that I couldn't move. My mind became blank and I couldn't tell who was looking at me.

I thought I could hold on after hearing the constellation's true voices. However, it was clearly the influence of Fourth Wall. Just their gazes made me like this.

Now I realized. I was the only existence in this banquet hall who wasn't a constellation. I finally stood before the constellations.

"Now now, please calm down. There was a mistake so I will be taking this friend for a bit." I heard a familiar voice and somebody lifted my stiff body and moved it somewhere. As I left the banquet hall and entered the banquet, the hell was over and I barely managed to breathe.

"…Why would you come here alone?"

I turned and saw a familiar figure floating in the air. "Bihyung?"

"Yes, it's me. The Queen of Night said she would send an envoy. Didn't they come with you? Why are you wandering around alone in this place? Do you want to go to hell?"

"There were circumstances."

"Hey, is that the problem now? This isn't the scenario area! If you make a mistake then it is the end! This place…"

"It is a place where there are people who can kill humans with their eyes like we are bugs."

I know. I understood. That's why I came here.

Bihyung pouted like he wasn't satisfied and took me somewhere. "I'll take you to the waiting room. Rest there for a while. There is a screen in the waiting room that you can watch. Be sure to take a look. Do you understand?"

There must be something based on the way Bihyung was acting. Not long afterwards, we arrived at the waiting room. By the way, the sign in front of the waiting room was very strange.

"…Incarnation waiting room? There is something like that?"

"Do you think you are the only incarnation? Of course, you are the only one who came here alone."

The door opened and I saw an unexpected figure. He spoke first. "…Kim Dokja?"

I looked at him with a blank expression and waved awkwardly. "…Yoo Joonghyuk."

The constellation banquet was frequently mentioned in Ways of Survival.

It was the place Yoo Joonghyuk usually came to whenever he used 'regression'. It was natural for Yoo Joonghyuk to be included on the invitation list. I didn't know who was invited this time but this person would try to form a relationship with the narrative-grade constellations…

The constellation banquet was a joint event with several countries. There was the Seoul Dome, Washington Dome, Moscow Dome and New Delhi Dome.

Perhaps the bureau had held a performance presentation to select the best performing domes. Once I saw the list of participating countries… it was similar to Yoo Joonghyuk's 24th regression. There were separate incarnations for each country in the waiting room.

Yoo Joonghyuk asked me, "Why are you here?"

"Probably a similar reason to you."

"When will you revive?"

"Maybe tomorrow."

"The others are worried."

"I'm sorry."

I felt somewhat uneasy as I had a conversation with Yoo Joonghyuk. His fists were clenched tightly like he was angry. I suspected that he might have anger control issues these days.

I sat in the chair next to Yoo Joonghyuk and watched the scene playing on the large screen in front of me. There was an intermediate dokkaebi promotion ad playing on the screen.

–Thank you to all the constellations and dokkaebis who have given me the glory of the story…

It was an interview with the representative of the low-grade dokkaebis, Bihyung. That bastard, this was why he told me to watch.

–Half of the glory is actually due to an incarnation working hard in my channel. Maybe he is a friend that you know. I'll give half this joy to the incarnation!

I felt uncomfortable at the shameless words.

The surrounding incarnations were looking this way so I turned my attention away. Then Bihyung took out a golden egg and raised it up to the sky. I immediately recognized what it was.

–The other half will be given to this child who will be born!

It was the egg where the soul of Shin Yoosung was sleeping. Fortunately, it seemed to be growing well.

"Don't tell me, did you…?" Yoo Joonghyuk used Sage's Eye as he looked between me and Bihyung's egg with a shocked expression.

I spoke an excuse. "It was the only way."

"Do you know what you did?"

"I know."

"If you do this, Shin Yoosung…!"

I knew what Yoo Joonghyuk was worried about. The person who had been suffering from the 'story' for so long was now the subject producing the tragedy. I didn't have to say that Yoo Joonghyuk knew how painful this was.

I told him, "If she is born as a dokkaebi, at least she will never die. The bureau is the safest place until the Star Stream is destroyed."

Of course, this wasn't the only reason. Still, I couldn't tell him all my reasons for making Shin Yoosung a dokkaebi. Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes met mine. It felt like he would pull out his sword and cut me to pieces right here.

"Perhaps… are you Kim Dokja?" The voice that interrupted us caused the tense atmosphere to disappear. I turned and saw a beautiful mixed-race woman. She had wavy brown hair and gentle brown eyes. Her smile was especially beautiful.

"That's correct. Do you know me?"

"Oh… a little bit. I have heard stories."

It was great. I couldn't believe this woman came to talk to me first.

"Nice to meet you, Selena Kim."

"Do you know me?"

"Aren't you the representative of the United States? I've heard it before."

Of course, I didn't really hear it. I just knew her.

[The exclusive skill 'Character List' is activated!]

[Only randomly specified items will be displayed for the user's convenience.]

[Character Summary]

Character: Selena Kim

Exclusive Attributes: Animal Lover (Rare) King's Guardian (Hero)

Sponsor: Ender of Wars

Selena Kim from the Washington Dome.

She was a member of Anna Croft's Zarathustra and one of the strongest 100 women in Ways of Survival. The King of No Killing was an attribute that originally belonged to this woman. Unfortunately, she had acquired another attribute because I took it first…

I asked, "Anna Croft didn't come?"

"…You know Anna?"

"I've met her in a dream the other day."

"She wanted to come. If she knew you were coming, she would've come."

Of course, then the situation would become more complicated. Why? It was due to this guy.

"Tell that girl to take good care of her neck."

"…You are the same as Anna told me, Yoo Joonghyuk."

The reason Anna didn't come here was due to Yoo Joonghyuk. In the last regression, Yoo Joonghyuk was betrayed by Anna Croft. Anna would've seen what she did to Yoo Joonghyuk. Thus, it was natural that she didn't come here.

"There is a very ugly person on the Korean side. Are you the representative of South Korea?" I looked back and saw that it was Russia's representative who spoke this time.

"Iris, that's rude. It is a bad habit to evaluate others based on appearance."

"I said he is ugly because he is ugly. Honesty is a virtue in Moscow."

White blond hair with pure white skin. The little girl had her hair up in twin ponytails.

I knew who had come from Moscow. However, I pretended not to know. This girl was one of the people I hated in Ways of Survival. I deliberately asked her, "Who are you?"

"…Don't you know? You don't know me, Iris Vladimirovna Rebezova?"

"Should I know you?'

Selena Kim intervened. "Dokja-ssi, I will introduce you. This is Iris. She is a representative from Russia. In Russia, she is called the 'Full Body Red Square'.

"Ahem, that is me."

I nodded. I wanted to say something about the ostentatious nickname but I stopped because it would cause trouble.

Selena Kim continued speaking, "Iris, this is Kim Dokja. He is from South Korea and his nickname… I-I'm sorry, I don't know Dokja-ssi's nickname…"

Then Yoo Joonghyuk opened his mouth. "This nickname is…"

I hurriedly interrupted. "I don't have a nickname yet."

A ridiculing laugh emerged from Iris' mouth. "A person came here without a nickname?"

I had one but it was disgusting.

"I don't know why you are qualified to be here but you better be good."

As the Russia representative showed a fighting spirit, Yoo Joonghyuk moved forward. Perhaps she felt the huge strength of Yoo Joonghyuk. Iris took a half step back.

"Don't interfere. This is better me and that ugly guy." Despite Iris' warning, Yoo Joonghyuk kept staring at her.

Well done. If you want to slap someone then do it to Yoo Joonghyuk. In the end, Iris bit her lips and retreated. "Well, I don't know what trivial historical-grade constellation brought you here to take their story but… let's just leave it."

…Take the story of a historical-grade constellation? How cute. That reminded me, there was something about the 'Story Succession' at the constellation banquet. Perhaps this was what Iris was alluding to.

Knock knock.

The door of the waiting room open and a low-grade dokkaebi appeared. "Incarnations. We will be holding the 'Story Succession' soon. A place has been temporarily set up on the first floor of the banquet hall. For reference, the first floor is only for the historical-grade constellations."

[Story Succession.]

It wasn't only through Sponsor Selection that the constellations could influence the incarnations. Despite not being their sponsor, an incarnation could build up strength by inheriting the story of other constellations and showing examples of the story. By widely announcing the story, the constellations broadened their power. This was good for both incarnation and constellation.

We walked to the banquet hall one by one. The first one to enter was Selena Kim.

[Selena Kim! King's Guardian!]

[I've been watching your good performance!]

Unlike before, the reaction of the constellations were favourable. Maybe it was because they met their favourite incarnations. It was like meeting their favourite celebrity.

Then it was Iris' turn. She walked past the constellations and waved lightly like she was giving them fan service.

[Iris! The Red Square kid!]

[Hahaha! Cute.]

[Isn't it exactly the same as what I saw on the screen?]

She stood in her place and stared at me. She seemed to be saying to me, 「Did you see?」

…So what? It was soon my turn.

I walked into the banquet hall and the pressure of the gazes poured towards me again. This time, I could endure it. Maybe because I had experienced it once before or because the gazes contained a different feeling.

However, the reaction of the constellations was strange. The heated atmosphere was quiet, as if cold water had been poured on it.

…Perhaps I wasn't popular? Iris seemed to be laughing at me.

Then someone opened his mouth.

[…That person. He is Kim Dokja of the Korean Peninsula.]

[Kim Dokja? That Kim Dokja?]

The chatter started again. It was a completely different reaction from the previous incarnations.

[Kim Dokja! That guy is Kim Dokja.]

[Kim Dojega! Kim Dojega!]

[The King of a Kingless World!]

The voices of the constellations rose every time I took a step.

[He who opposes the enemy!]

It was like a wildfire spread throughout the hall as the voices continued.

[Hey, do you remember me? The Bald General of Justice!]

[Kim Dokja! I'm King Heungmu the Great!]

I silently walked through the middle of the banquet hall.

[I saw Peace Land very well! Child, can you say something?]

[Hey! Wave your hand over here! I sponsored you 3,000 coins!]

[You came! Kim Dokja!]

[Isn't he better than what we watched?]

The whole banquet hall seemed to be a vast melting pot as the constellations forgot their dignity. Their souls seemed to be ripening so I was forced to raise my hand towards them and waved. Then chaos exploded among the constellations.

[Handsome Kim Dokja!]

Iris was looking this way with a dismayed expression. However, I didn't see her. I didn't come here to play.

The scenario footage was covering the ceiling and walls. Incarnations were screaming and dying while the constellations laughed as they watched.

I saw this and once again realized what this place was. It was where all human tragedies became dinner.

I looked up at the second floor of the banquet hall. Unlike the ridiculous first floor constellations, an ominous silence came from the constellations on the second floor. They were constellations who each shone with a fearsome presence.

They were the real enemies I had to fight.

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* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)

Chapter 149: Ep. 29 - Constellation Banquet, IV

Yoo Joonghyuk was next and he enjoyed an unprecedented popularity. There was even some sound on the second floor when he came out. It felt like I heard the name 'Eden' so I didn't know how to feel.

[Yoo Joonghyuuuuk—!]

[The best Supreme King!]

[Come into our nebula!]

There was a bit of time left until the Story Succession. I sat down on the first floor and watched for a while. I had to be wary of all constellations, regardless of their grade.

I wasn't looking for reliable people. There was a reason Dionysus told me to trust no one. Thus, I wasn't looking for someone 'reliable' but someone I could 'use'.

"I…" Iris approached me and opened her mouth.

I could predict what she was going to say. I warned her first before she opened her mouth. "Don't be hasty if you want to survive."

"Yes, yes?" Iris' blank face became astonished as she looked into the air.

[A few constellations are amazed by your judgment.]

[A few constellation have sponsored you 5,000 coins for the cider.]

There was a panel on the ceiling that zoomed in on Iris' face. Iris blushed and the watching constellations chuckled. Iris muttered,

"A-All that was filmed?"

It was naive to think the channel would be turned off after entering the world of the constellations. Rather, the constellation's eyes would've shone from the moment we came here as they watched our reactions.

Especially those on the second floor. Maybe the reaction of the constellations had almost reached the peak when they saw the confrontation between Iris and I in the waiting room.

However, I didn't want to give them pleasure. As I said, I didn't come here to play. At the very least, I didn't want to look silly. "Do well next time, Kid."

I patted Iris' shoulder and got up. Once I moved, the constellations on the first floor reacted.

[Kim Dokja! Come here!]

All the constellations on the first floor were in the form of 'symbols' rather than humanoid or biological forms. It was hard for the historical-grade constellations to handle the probability consumption so they saved on the consumption cost by streamlining their bodies into the simple symbols.

At first glance, I couldn't see who was who. Then I saw a bamboo stick and straw and the golden crown of Silla.

"Bald General of Justice. And the other… Slumbering Lady of Fine Brocade?"

[Ohh! You remember me!]

[That's right. It has been a while.]

I found the constellations of the Korean Peninsula.

[I wanted to see you once but to think we would meet like this.]

The floating eye seemed to be the One-eyed Maitreya…

In addition, there was the symbolic body for the Last Hero of Hwangsanbeol, King Heungmu the Great. There was Gyebaek…

[Kim Dokja.]

I looked back at the voice and saw a 100 won coin floating. 100 won? Who was the 100 won?

[It is good to meet you.]

"W-Who…?"

[I'm upset. You don't recognise me?]

Wait. Who was the person on the 100 won coin?

"Admiral?"

I asked in a startled manner. My patriotism might be close to zero but I couldn't help feeling emotional when I saw this person. The coin turned in the air, revealing the figure engraved on the front.

[It seems like you are using the stigma I gave you.]

"Thank you for that."

The Duke of Loyalty and Warfare, Yi Sunsin. The person who gave me the Song of the Sword was also invited to this banquet.

"By the way, why do you look like this?"

[…This appearance isn't according to my will.]

I somehow understood what he meant. Speaking of which, the Duke of Loyalty and Warfare wasn't the only one in the form of currency. I looked at the green paper on one side of the first floor and asked,

"Then perhaps that person is…?"

Yi Sunsin nodded.

[He is the founder of 'Hangul'. Do you know the big golden statue in Gwanghwamun?]

I knew it. I couldn't not know it. Yi Sunsin continued speaking,

[The symbolism is according to our most known symbols. Perhaps he is similar to me.]

I looked sadly towards the 'Founder of Hangul'. King Sejong was the 100 won note while Yi Sunsin was the 100 won coin. These great people were confined to currency and eventually these became their symbolic body.

Then a giggling sound came from the second floor. The constellations on the second floor all had humanoid or at least living appearances.

Even the most famous people on the Korean Peninsula didn't get a humanoid form. It was hard to imagine how strong these constellations were. I was really lucky to have only hunted Yamata no Orochi's shadow.

At this moment, a constellation caught my eye. "Who is that constellation?"

[Who? Oh, that person?]

I noticed a person sitting on the landing between the first and second floors while drinking alcohol. He was armed with a long knife and maintained a humanoid figure instead of a symbol. No matter how I looked, he must be narrative-grade. Yet the passing narrative-grade constellations were staring at him with contempt.

Samyeongdang interrupted. [Among the historical-grade constellations of the Korean Peninsula, there is no one above that person.]

"He is historical-grade?"

[You might say that he is the strongest historical-grade. It isn't due to fame among later generations but a position he gained from the stories he accumulated.]

Certainly, if he had enough room to maintain a humanoid body then he wouldn't be defeated by the narrative-grade constellations. As far as I knew, such a presence was only in China…

[Have you heard of Goryeo's First Sword?' I heard that it was revitalized recently.]

Goryeo's First Sword.

"Don't tell me…"

I realized that who he was. I wondered why I didn't recognize him instantly. If this constellation was the greatest person on the Korean Peninsula then he should've been the first one to come to mind.

[Everyone leave!]

Then there was a disturbance on the stairs. Some constellations who came down from the second floor were coming this way. No one was able to face them.

Yi Sunsin sighed. […Your popularity is great. They want to take you to the second floor.]

Yoo Joonghyuk was already being led up to the second floor by someone. On the other hand, Iris remained on the first floor and looked at me with envious eyes. Perhaps the story she came to inherit was only from a historical-grade constellation.

[Please take care.]

As soon as I nodded, the symbol of a constellation appeared. The symbol was in the form of a reaper. I recognized who they were with one glance.

[The queen is looking for you.]

They were the judges of the Underworld. That reminded me, they were narrative-grade. Although they borrowed Persephone's stories to maintain themselves…

I was heading up the stairs with them when someone on the landing spat.

[…You are pathetic. Fawning on the guys from the second floor.]

The judges became furious at the Goryeo's First Sword's words.

[Goryeo's First Sword, what are you saying?]

[Do you want to die?]

The Goryeo's First Sword rose from his seat at the judge's remarks.

[I am ready to die at any time. Shall we fight?]

The symbolic body of Goryeo's First Sword was bigger than I thought. No, maybe this feeling didn't come from the size of the symbolic body. This was the size of the 'status' of the constellation.

[Don't be a fool. Lowlife parasites who are barely attached to the end of a narrative.]

The awe-inspiring aura caused the attention of the first and second floor constellations to focus here. The judges seemed a bit embarrassed but couldn't retreat easily because of their pride.

The eyes of Goryeo's First Sword shone. He seemed like he would take the lives of the three judges right away. He looked beyond them at the narrative-grade constellations acting like nobles on the second floor.

[Olympus. Eden. Vedas… I don't know why you came to such a small village but it would be nice if you didn't leave your servants here.]

The atmosphere of the second floor became intense after his words. No matter how strong Goryeo's First Sword was, they couldn't endure the taunting of a historical-grade constellation. The moment that the banquet hall was going to be a fight among constellations…

[Stop—!]

A powerful true voice dominated the entire banquet hall and the atmosphere quickly sank.

[Judges, don't do unnecessary things. And Goryeo's First Sword, you shouldn't be too rude.]

At the cool tone, the judges started guiding me again while Goryeo's First Sword sat down with a disgruntled expression and started drinking.

I looked at the owner of the voice. As expected, it was the Queen of the Underworld.

Persephone's strength wasn't known but she was the wife of one of the three heads of Olympus for a reason. Perhaps among the narrative-grade constellations who came here today, Persephone was among the top.

[It's been a while. Kim Dokja.]

The Persephone I met still looked like Yoo Sangah. She was truly a spiteful aunty.

"How are you?"

[You did something useless in Tartarus.]

"Haha…"

I shrugged and looked at the constellations around me. It was harder to tell who the constellations were when they had a humanoid body instead of symbolic body. A symbol could evoke the name of a constellation…

I could also see the Great Sage, Heaven's Equal sitting on the second floor. The Great Sage, Heaven's Equal looked at me for a moment before turning his head away.

…Was his personality originally like this?

After a bit more time, the arrangement of the second floor became familiar and I seemed to figure out the camps.

Olympus was based around the central Persephone, Vedas was in the west and those who weren't in a nebula or were in small nebulaes were to the north, including Great Sage, Heaven's Equal…

Finally, it was easy to recognize Eden in the south. It was due to the wings. An incredibly beautiful angel winked lightly at me. She was an angel dressed like a demon in the black lace dress…

Wait a second. Like a demon? That's right. Was she that angel?

I was suddenly curious. Maybe that constellation…

"Queen of the Underworld. I want to ask you something."

[What is it?]

"Did the constellation called Secretive Plotter come here?"

[…Secretive Plotter?]

Persephone's expression seemed strange for a moment. Then she shook her head.

[I don't know. More than that, the Story Succession will soon begin. Have you made a decision? There are a few constellations who want to use your resurrection.]

"I'm still thinking."

Of course, there were a few methods I thought of. However… Persephone seemed to read my thoughts.

[Perhaps you want to reject everyone. It has been like this the entire time.]

Indeed, this was a favourite statement in my channel. In fact, I wanted to choose this method.

[However, this choice isn't right. It is because everyone will start a copyright dispute.]

"A copyright over a story?"

[They will claim it was their own. It'll probably be quite painful.]

Damn, they were complete thugs.

"Are you telling me to choose Olympus?"

Persephone laughed.

[I'm not saying that. In fact, I hate those guys.]

As it said in Ways of Survival, Persephone had a rather hostile relationship with Olympus. In fact, the Olympus participants at this banquet were only the 'third generation'. Despite this, the constellations of other nebulae were reluctant to approach.

They were probably wary of Persephone… or more precisely, of Hades. Thus, I was unwittingly protected by the Underworld. It might be fortunate that the first narrative-grade constellation I met was Persephone.

"Then, Queen-nim, what do you think I should choose. Vedas? Or will it be Eden? Perhaps a different nebula?"

Persephone shook her head.

[You will gain an enemy no matter who you choose. In addition, these enemies will be far stronger than any enemies you have ever met. As you can see, the 'resurrection story' forms the basis of the mythology of many nebulae. Accepting one story sometimes means denying another.]

Persephone licked her lips like she had delicious steak in front of her. Maybe the queen was enjoying this situation. I felt a bit annoyed as I asked her, "… Then what do you want to say?"

[I just wanted to share my thoughts. Think about it. Is it a problem of turning them into an enemy?]

It wasn't a problem of turning them into an enemy?

Finally, a dokkaebi went to the stage and opened his mouth.

–From now on, the Story Succession will begin!

Chapter 150: Ep. 29 - Constellation Banquet, V

At the beginning of the Story Succession, six small rooms were created at the end of the stage. The number of rooms was exactly equal to the number of incarnations participating in the Story Succession.

–All incarnations, please move immediately to the Room of Secrets!

The system of the Story Succession was simple. The incarnations would communicate with the constellations through the Room of Secrets and hear all their conditions. Later, they would go up on the stage and announce the story they would receive.

There was a nameplate that said 'Incarnation Kim Dokja'. I said towards Yoo Joonghyuk, "I'll see you later."

Yoo Joonghyuk didn't respond and disappeared into his room. I entered the room and sat at a table, while the sounds from outside were completely cut off. It felt like the space was distorted.

[The Room of Secrets.]

It was one of the most confidential places in the Star Stream. The things that happened here couldn't be seen by even the dokkaebis of the channel.

[You have become the master of the Room of Secrets for one hour.]

[You have been given the administrative rights of the Room of Secrets.]

[The maximum time you can use the Room of Secrets is one hour.]

[Please make contact with as many constellations as possible in this time.]

I looked at the door with anticipation. Okay, who would be the first guest? Someone came through the door at this time. It was a floating yellow book with sacred scripture.

[Incarnation Kim Dokja. Select the Feast of Resurrection.]

…The first better was Indian mythology.

* * *

[The constellation 'Founder of Humanity' is looking at you.]

The negotiator from Vedas was the constellation 'Manu', who had the modifier of 'Founder of Humanity'. I also knew Manu's story. Of course, it wasn't because I knew Indian myths but because of Ways of Survival.

「According to the Indian epic, Manu was the survivor of the great flood. In exchange for saving a fish, he was able to escape to the top of the Malaya Mountains in a ship prepared by the fish…」

…I recalled this story and knew why Manu had come to negotiate. Manu was a constellation who frequently argued over the copyright for the 'Ark's Master' narrative with the constellations from Eden. In other words, this Manu was a specialist in copyright disputes among the constellations of Vedas.

"…The Master of December 25th didn't come directly?"

[Do you think he is that free? Answer simply. Will you accept the Feast of Resurrection?]

He was coming out with this attitude? In addition, the person in charge of the story, Mithra[1] didn't come.

[If you have ears, you will know that Vedas is one of the biggest nebula. A myriad of myths are born in Vedas and many nebulae plagiarize our myths. Especially those Eden guys…]

"Those personal issues don't concern me. More importantly, if I accept the Feast of Resurrection, what can Vedas give me?"

[The protection of the sun god will be with you.]

"What is the blessing of the sun god?"

[Do I have to explain everything to you? Insignificant mortal…!]

"I have one question."

[What?]

"Again with the 'insignificant mortal', don't you think it is an antiquated cliche? You all are constellations who love unconventional stories, yet just how long will you continue to look down on humans with such hackneyed lines?"

Manu's eyes widened and he glared at me.

[How dare you talk such nonsense…!]

"It is what I think."

[You have used the administrative rights of the Room of Secrets.]

[The constellation 'Founder of Humanity' has been expelled from the room!]

At my command, the Founder of Humanity was surrounded with a pale light and disappeared with a shout. He should've done well when he had the chance.

I wouldn't be suppressed by force, even if the other person was a narrative-grade constellation. It might be different after the Story Succession but now I was the one with the advantage.

"Next." I just finished speaking when someone else opened the door. It was a wanderer with an old crown. Who was this?

[Incarnation Kim Dokja, join Olympus.]

These jerks, did they read an 'Incarnation Kim Dokja' manual or something?

[The constellation 'Poked Out His Eyes' is laughing at you.]

…Poked Out His Eyes?

[It looks like you know me.]

"I heard your story when I was a university student."

[Is that so? How unexpected. A small Oriental country…!]

'Poked Out His Eyes'. He was King Oedipus who was taught in liberal arts classes. A person hated by Sophocles.

"By the way, I've already heard the proposal from the God of Wine and Ecstasy. You are here to tell me to join the Bacchus sect?"

[Bacchus? It seems that he has already approached.]

Something felt strange. Persephone attended the banquet for 'Olympus' while Dionysus told me not to believe anyone. Both of them didn't tell me to join Olympus. Yet King Oedipus was one of the first at this door.

[I'm not here about Bacchus. I didn't even come to exercise the copyright for the resurrection story.]

In other words, King Oedipus visited me for a reason that was completely different from the other constellations.

…Maybe this might be the representative of the 'real' Olympus?

[The story that Olympus will present to you is Carnival of Lightning.]

"Huh?"

I was shocked. Carnival of Lightning was the story of Zeus, one of the three leaders. Oedipus saw my expression and smiled strangely.

[It looks like you also know this story. Yes, you are right. The story we are suggesting is different from the resurrection stories of other nebulae.

"…Why are you offering me this?"

[It is because the three goddesses of fate have caught a glimpse of your fate.]

…My fate.

[Sooner or later, you will be eligible to inherit the Carnival of Lightning. Of course, you could inherit my story and take the 'Blind Prophet' but… you are already rumoured to be a prophet and won't inherit my story.]

"Wait a minute. What do you mean? Why is my fate…"

[The decision is yours. However, you will definitely need Olympus. Well, until we meet again.]

Oedipus disappeared from the room. My heart was a bit disturbed. I didn't know what the 'fate' Oedipus mentioned was like but if the three goddesses of fate were involved, something similar to what they saw would happen in the future.

By the way, why was I suitable for inheriting the story of a Greek god? Their stories were inevitably…

[Hello?]

Something was about to flash through my head when a person entered my room. There was a fresh and sweet scent. A beautiful angel's face appeared in front of me. The female angel resembled a small demon.

It seemed to be Eden's turn.

"…I thought the Master of the Ark would come but you came personally."

[Are you upset that I came?]

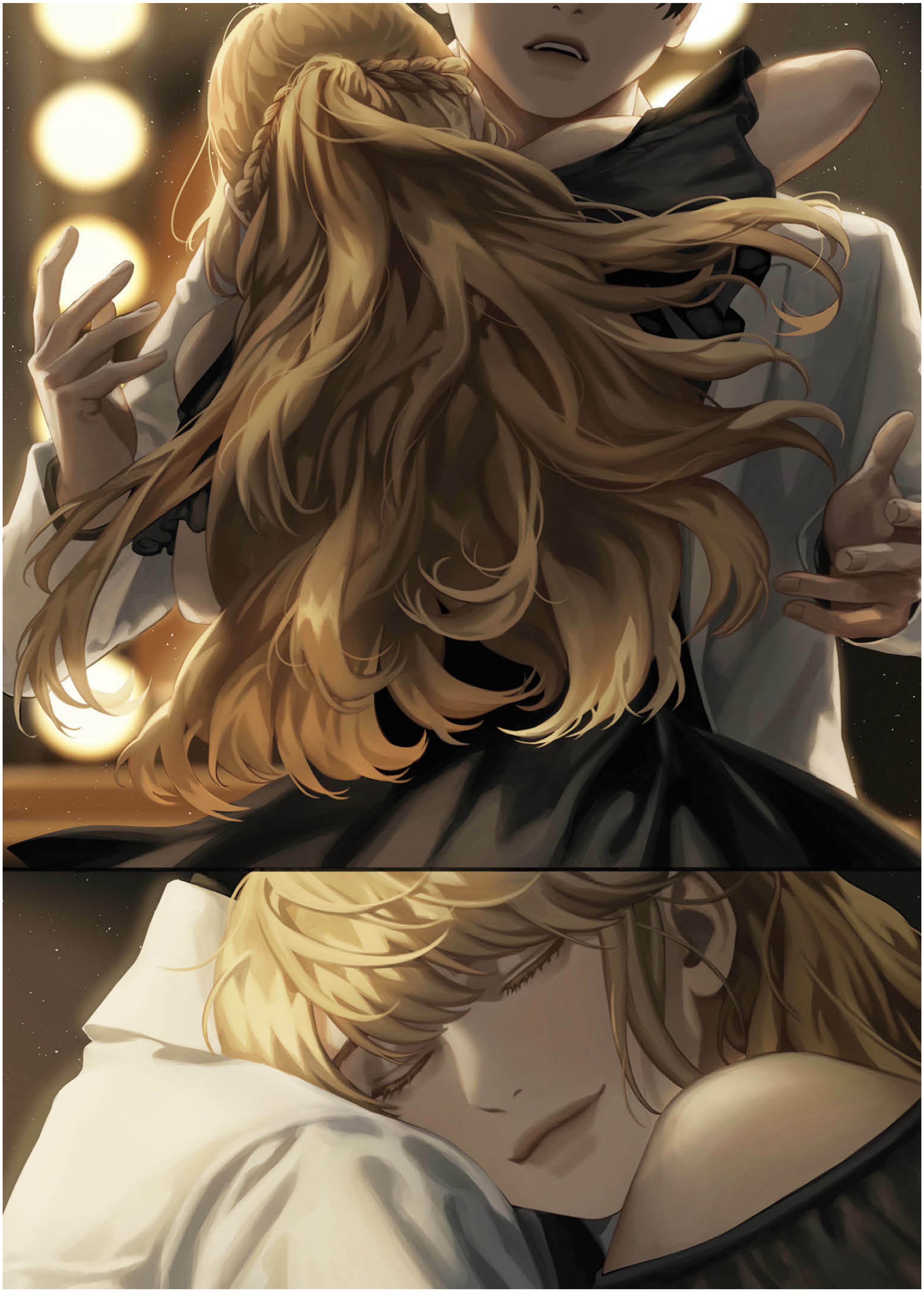
My heart thumped after I heard the voice.

…Uriel was so cute.

"Nope, it is nice."

[I wanted to see you! Kim Dokja.]

Uriel pulled me into a surprise embrace. Our arms touched and I could feel her skin through the thin silk she was wearing. A demon… this was a demon's touch. It was an open back dress, meaning there was nowhere to place my hands. Uriel rubbed my face like I was a lovely doll and I sighed.



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"I also… wanted to see you."

[Yes yes!]

It was a bit embarrassing but I was glad to meet her. Uriel was a constellation who had been with me since the beginning of the scenario.

"You are here to offer me the Messiah's Path?"

[…Ah, right! I came because of it!]

Uriel raised her head with surprise. It was an expression that showed she didn't remember why she came here. It seemed she was quite pleased to meet me.

[It must be because you are too handsome.]

"Your words are convincing."

Uriel smiled and said. [Kim Dokja, will you accept Eden's story?]

"That… I need to think a bit."

[Why? Our story is the best! It isn't comparable to other places!]

This was certainly true. The Messiah's Path was the best story in the resurrection system. There was one problem.

"I will lose something precious if I accept that story."

[Eh? Ah. T-That's right. If you choose our story, you'll become an eunuch… That can't be.]

I expected to be persuaded but unexpectedly, Uriel shook with agitation. Was it such a big deal for Uriel that I would become an eunuch? Why?

[W-What to do? If I don't bring Kim Dokja to Metatron, he won't let me use the Internet for a month… but if he accepts, Kim Dokja will become an eunuch… when that happens… oh, wait a minute. Perhaps if his position changes…?]

…What position?

[O-Okay! Kim Dokja! Don't worry too much about this problem. One way or another…!]

Uriel seemed to be filled with great determination on her own. I firmly shook my head. "I don't want it."

[Yes! It is okay if you are an eunuch…!]

"Next."

After that, many constellations visited me. There were places like Tamna and Guiok, as well as independent constellations.

In particular, the historical-grade constellations of the Korean Peninsula gave me a lot of encouragement and didn't want me to establish a relationship with a particular nebula.

[You are the hope of our world.]

[Please don't bend your will.]

Their hearts were understanding. The historical-grade constellations who had been suffering from the narrative-grade constellations were envious of me.

The negotiation time soon ended. The incarnations went up to the stage one by one. It was time to review the proposed stories and determine which ones they would inherit.

–Now, let's announce the result of the Story Succession! First, Selena Kim from the United States!

The dokkaebi on the stage had the atmosphere of a home shopping host. It was natural. Through this banquet, the bureau would make a huge amount of coins.

–Selena Kim has decided to inherit the Indomitable Aegis' story given by the 'Last Conscience' constellation!

Selena Kim has chosen Olympus… 'Indomitable Aegis' was a story appropriate for her as the King's Guardian.

My thoughts became more uncertain as time passed. No matter what I chose, someone would become an enemy. If I chose no one, there would be even more enemies.

'Think carefully. The question is who exactly I should turn into an enemy'.

Persephone said so. I faintly understood her meaning. Maybe Persephone's words were meant for all the resurrection stories.

I didn't have only one life and there were those who would want me to succeed their story in the next resurrection.

There was still a problem. Eden and Vedas definitely wouldn't yield the 'first resurrection' and even if I inherited their story, there would surely be subordinate constraints on them.

It was unavoidable. From the very beginning, the relationship between incarnation and constellation was unfair. Wait a minute, 'fairness'…?

It was finally Yoo Joonghyuk's turn to get on stage.

–The next person is the Supreme King of Seoul…

The audience gulped as Yoo Joonghyuk moved. In particular the eyes of the narrative-grade constellations were strange. They were those who wanted to gain Yoo Joonghyuk. On the other hand, there were those who showed fear…

At this moment, a thought occurred. Then Yoo Joonghyuk opened his mouth. "I…"

Dionysus had told me not to trust anyone. However, that was only if the opponent was a constellation. I had at least one person in this place who I could believe in.

I jumped up towards the stage. I grabbed the confused Yoo Joonghyuk's hand and raised it high into the sky.

"I have something to say to you." I said while looking at the audience. The constellations looked astonished. I was able to see Uriel's expression, who seemed on the verge of fainting. I quickly glanced over the faces of the constellations.

The reason why the Story Succession wasn't fair was because the succession of a story was done in the form of one-sided 'sponsorship'. The relationship between constellation and incarnation was never equal.

[The constellation 'Maritime War God' is focused on your words!]

The strength of the narrative-grade constellations differed from the historical-grade ones. Those who were in a nebulae looked down on others.

[The nebula 'Vedas' is focused on your words!]

"We have decided not to inherit your stories."

An enormous silence descended on the audience. Many eyeballs popped out as pressure poured towards Yoo Joonghyuk. Yoo Joonghyuk stared at me as I held his hand.

I grinned at him and told the constellations. "We will 'buy' your stories."

In order to make an unfair game fair, I had to first make the opponents equal.

"If you want to sell your stories to Yoo Joonghyuk and I, please make a deal with our nebula."

There is also the Roman Mithras. The Vedic version, Mithra is part of the Vedas so I will be keeping that spelling from now on. It is also said that Mithras was born on December 25th. The author seems to have combined the

Vedic Mithra and the Roman Mithras, which is why he is the Master of December 25th in this story

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[1] **Mithra** is the name of an Indo-Iranian divinity. There is also the Roman Mithras, who was born on December 25th. Wiki.

* Official novel illustration (canonical)

Chapter 151: Ep. 30 - Dark Castle, I

In fact, I was most worried about Yoo Joonghyuk. He was more trustworthy than anyone else here but at the same time, I couldn't be sure of his position. If Yoo Joonghyuk shook off my hand then my actions would be useless.

Fortunately, Yoo Joonghyuk was calm. He might have a violent temper but this guy was amazingly good at controlling his anger and sent me a secret message.

–What are you doing?

[The character 'Yoo Joonghyuk' has activated Midday Tryst.]

…The item that I had previously bought belatedly came to my mind. I didn't know that the Midday Tryst I registered at that time would still be valid. I deliberately spoke in a brazen manner.

–I will do this more than once or twice. You should get used to it.

–What?

–The conditions aren't bad enough for you. I know that you can't inherit the 'stories' of other constellations.

Yoo Joonghyuk flinched at my words.

–…I don't know how you know such things.

In fact, declaring a 'nebula' with me wasn't bad for Yoo Joonghyuk. In the progression of the original novel, Yoo Joonghyuk didn't inherit any stories here. It was due to the constraints on Yoo Joonghyuk.

[The regression constraints.]

He could turn back the clock after dying but he couldn't inherit the stories of other constellations.

[Incarnation Yoo Joonghyuk. Is Incarnation Kim Dokja correct? Are the two of you making a nebula?]

The dokkaebi host watching the situation stepped in. Everyone looked at Yoo Joonghyuk while I nervously waited for his answer.

"Yes."

I inwardly sighed with relief. The first hurdle was overcome. However, the real hurdles were from now on.

In the complete silence, someone on the second floor laughed. The soft laugh was somewhat pleasant. I could feel Persephone's mood through this laughter.

「Kim Dokja, you did it after all. This is why I like you.」

Of course she liked me. Persephone's style fit this type of story. Thanks to her laughter, the other constellations also started to laugh. Most of them were constellations on the second floor. Unfortunately, their laughter didn't contain the same meaning as Persephone.

[The nebula 'Vedas' is disappointed in you.]

[The nebula 'Guiok' despises you.]

Uriel held a handkerchief to her mouth and frowned at the reactions of the constellations around her.

[What? Why are you like this? This is good!]

The constellations on the first floor watched silently. Their eyes contained a mixture of longing and worry. Maritime War God and Bald General of Justice also looked nervous. The one who was most interested was Goryeo's First Sword, who was looking this way.

The laughter died down and more direct contempt flew from the second floor.

[A person who hasn't climbed to the throne of a constellation wants to create a nebula?]

[Dokkaebi, does this make sense?]

[Can any cat or dog open a nebula?]

The dokkaebi seemed confused at all the questions that poured towards him.

[That… Incarnation Kim Dokja has clearly received recognition from the Star Stream.]

Along with these words, the stories I've made were projected onto the ceiling screen.

[King of a Kingless World]

The first scene that appeared was when I destroyed the Absolute Throne by borrowing the power of the Four Yin Demonic Beheading Sword. Strictly speaking, my narrative started from there. Fragments of the throne appeared on the screen.

Some constellations nodded like they were convinced and some constellations looked at each other with astonishment.

[He broke the throne of divinity!]

[…Did he really open with that story?]

There were probably some attendees who didn't know my information. I thought I was quite famous but I was still lacking. I suddenly looked around and saw the Russian child staring at me with blank eyes.

[Person who Opposes the Miracle.]

The second story was when I took down the returnee Myung Ilsang who was a disaster.

[Some constellations are favourable towards you.]

Since the returnees were disliked by constellations then this was a suitable story to acquire the liking of the constellations. At this time, curious expressions appeared on the faces of the constellations.

[…What is this?]

It was due to the third story that appeared, where I beat up the intermediate dokkaebi Paul. I was a bit surprised when I saw the screen. I only wanted revenge for Shin Yoosung… was it included in my 'stories'?

The dokkaebi Paul screamed and the embarrassed dokkaebi host quickly fast-forwarded. Then the complaints of the constellations were heard.

[Hey, what is that?]

[T-That. Haha, it seems to be the wrong data.]

However, unlike the dokkaebi's words, a story name appeared on the screen.

[One Who Showed Contempt for a Streamer]

Laughter was heard from the landing of the stairs. It was Goryeo's First Sword who was laughing.

[This is crazy! Hahahaha!]

Then the fourth story appeared.

[One Who Hunted the King of Disasters]

It was when I hunted the shadow of the constellation Yamata no Orochi in Peace Land. The constellations' mouths dropped open when they saw Orochi killed with my Electrification.

[The shadow of a narrative-grade constellation…]

[He has already accumulated four legendary stories?]

Confusion spread among the constellations. The screen turned off and the dokkaebi continued speaking. [In any case, Incarnation Kim Dokja is now at the facing the throne of a constellation. If he gains his fifth story through this occasion…]

Those who knew I was aiming to be a constellation weren't confused but the other constellations were startled.

[Becoming a constellation before the 10th scenario is over?]

[He is a new constellation…]

I suddenly received a lot of heated gazes. Certainly, this was a formidable event even in Ways of Survival. There were only a few constellations or returnees who had gained the recognition of the Star Stream before the 10th scenario.

In the midst of the increasingly confused atmosphere, it was Manu of Vedas who opened his mouth.

[I will acknowledge Incarnation Kim Dokja. However, I can't acknowledge the nebula. There are two problems.]

The constellations focused on Manu's voice.

[One, we don't know if Incarnation Kim Dokja has sufficient payment ability. Isn't it necessary to have the minimum of funds before establishing a nebula?]

"The coins are sufficient."

Turmoil occurred again at my words.

Manu stared at me with suspicious eyes. [We will know once it is checked. The second problem is who will 'support' your nebula.]

I gulped. It was finally the real challenge.

[The establishment of a nebula needs to be supported by at least five constellations. Do you have the support of any constellation?]

"That…"

I couldn't easily answer and Manu laughed.

[No, is there even a name for the nebula in the first place?]

I opened my mouth as I glanced at Yoo Joonghyuk. "The name of our nebula is… Kim Dokja's Company…"

"There isn't a name yet. In addition, we will gain the supporters now." Yoo Joonghyuk casually interrupted me.

"Are there any constellations who want to support our nebula?"

No one responded to Yoo Joonghyuk's words. Manu laughed.

[I knew it. It is a waste of time. Dokkaebi. Continue with the Story Succession…]

At this time, someone raised their hand.

[The Olympus 'Underworld' will support your nebula.]

[Queen!] The angry Manu growled at Persephone.

Persephone's aura rose sharply. [It is my decision. Are there any complaints?]

[Urgh…]

No matter the strength of Vedas, the constellation Manu couldn't stand alone against Persephone, Queen of the Underworld. In the end, he turned towards the other constellations.

[Surely there won't be anyone else?]

[I will support it.]

The voice came from the second floor and the constellations were once again amazed. It was the Great Sage, Heaven's Equal.

[P-Prisoner of the Golden Headband?]

[Really? Are you serious?]

I looked towards him in gratitude. The Great Sage, Heaven's Equal was picking at his ears while looking down here like it was troublesome.

[Eh I don't know… sorry! I also support it!] Uriel of Eden declared her support. [I will also give you the name for your nebula! The nebula name is Forbidden… mmph mprh!]

The ninth rank angels around her were flabbergasted and covered her mouth. No matter her intentions, I was thankful. Now the rest of the constellations glanced at each other.

The three constellations who declared their support were powerful enough not to worry about others. The rest were different. It was unusual for historical-grade and narrative-grade constellations to challenge Manu just to help establish a new nebula.

I looked to the side and saw that Yoo Joonghyuk had half given up. He messaged me:

–We won't get any further.

…I would be blocked here but I didn't mind.

–It's okay. My objective was achieved.

–What?

–I wasn't expecting anything. The important thing was to buy some time.

From the beginning, I didn't intend to inherit the story of any constellation here. I thought of the original novel and the banquet's ending was fixed. At this time, something unusual happened.

[I, Goryeo's First Sword, will support your nebula.]

Goryeo's First Sword declared support for us. Then the historical-grade constellations stood up at once.

[Then I, Maritime War God…!]

[The Bald General of Justice won't stay still!]

Once the constellations on the first floor started to support us, the constellations on the second floor and the dokkaebi became greatly confused.

[W-Wait a minute! Such a random declaration of support…!]

The next moment.

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' will support your nebula.]

…Huh? Secretive Plotter? Where the hell was he?

[You have won a Provisional Nebula Creation ticket!]

…Don't tell me? At this moment, the banquet hall started to shake and the space distorted. I looked up at the sky. The banquet had finally ended. 'They' had come.

[…This aura is?]

[Everyone retreat!]

Even the constellations became nervous. The sky was greatly distorted and powerful sparks appeared. It was like the sky was splitting apart.

[The Great Hole.]

The strange hole, which only appeared when a scenario was activated, suddenly appeared above the banquet hall. The startled Manu shouted,

[The gods of the other world! How dare you come here?]

The constellations roared and raised their own aura. Then a terrible voice came from the hole in the sky.

(Why… Weren't we invited?)

Persephone and Uriel instantly blocked Yoo Joonghyuk's and my ears. It was to prevent the foreign true voice from intruding. They stood in front of us, lowering the pressure from the hall.

[I'm sorry but the party is over. It's time to go back.]

[Then I'll see you next time!]

The moment Persephone and Uriel spoke, Yoo Joonghyuk and I were surrounded by a transparent circle. It was the space transformation using the power of the constellations. They wanted to save us from the terrible battle that would son take place at the banquet hall.

By the way, the god of another world was a bit faster than expected. Wait…

[The gods of another world are looking at you!]

[The gods of another world are looking at you!]

At the last moment, I heard Uriel's scream.

[Kim Dokja!]

Then darkness covered my eyes.

[Who are you?]

[Not recorded in the vehicle.]

[Don't tell me…]

.

.

.

[■■■■…]

.

.

.

[The 'last story' is finally about to start…]

"Hey, is it here?"

"It is okay? What if those guys come? It is said that the Maritime Admiral and Pure Steel often come here!"

"Isn't this the hero's grave?"

A dark night. Several robbers were gathered around the tombstone erected in Gwanghwamun.

The leader of the robbers, Lee Dongpa frowned at the terrified people. "Pathetic fools. What hero is he? Can a hero die so easily?"

It wasn't long ago that Lee Dongpa learnt about the existence of the hero. The strongest man who saved Seoul by sacrificing his life. Of course, Lee Dongpa didn't believe the rumours.

"Now, do it quickly! There is no time. Before those dark scum come out!"

Many people were already participating in the ninth scenario, Dark Castle. However, not all people participated in the scenario, including Lee Dongpa. The main scenarios were just festivals for the smart guys like him.

"It is a hero's grave. Wouldn't there be one or two good things buried?"

"Search the body as well! He might've hidden things on his body."

"Shit, he is buried deep. Hey, pick it up!"

The robbers quickly dug at the ground. Approximately two hours passed.

"W-We reached it!"

Finally, their shovels hit a lid. Their hearts were pounding as they opened the lid. A man dressed in a white coat was sleeping in the coffin.

Lee Dongpa laughed. "A hero? Bah. He is a sleeping princess. He is ugly."

"The coat is excellent. Strip it off him…"

Tak!

"Waaaaahhhhh!"

"W-What… kuaaack!"

The shocked Lee Dongpa fell down and started shaking. The hero, who had just been dead, was holding onto the shoulder of a robber. Then every being in Seoul heard the following message.

[Someone has acquired five stories.]

[A new constellation is born in Seoul's night sky!]

Chapter 152: Ep. 30 - Dark Castle, II

It had been five days since they entered the first floor of the Dark Castle. Lee Jihye ran down a corridor of the Dark Castle with the injured Lee Gilyoung on her back and Shin Yoosung.

[The 5th grade demon species, Dark Tracker is chasing you.]

"Jump!"

Lee Jihye avoided the scythe that appeared from the dark tracker and used Demon Slaying. Magic power scattered through the air as Lee Jihye took the children and ran with all her strength.

"Damn, Taming doesn't work on them?"

"…I can only tame monster species."

"Damn!" Lee Jihye kept cursing as she ran.

There were close to ten demons following her. The 5th grade demon species were stronger than other monster species. Her skills weren't enough and she couldn't use her stigma in this environment.

'I shouldn't have come in'.

After Kim Dokja's death, the morale of Kim Dokja's party was completely disturbed. They lost focus and started acting individually. To make matters worse, Yoo Joonghyuk mysteriously went missing while the ninth scenario, Dark Castle appeared.

The dokkaebi had told them when the scenario first started,

[This scenario… Um. Haha, maybe you'll fail.]

Lee Jihye's reaction had been disbelief. They were going to fail? The scenarios always seemed impossible but they always won. Thus, they could do well this time.

At least, that's what Lee Jihye had thought then.

'Go right now. Smash all these scum!'

She didn't know why she had been so hasty. Maybe it was because of guilt, rather than confidence. She felt guilt for someone's death and pushed herself to the limit to wipe out the monsters.

Maybe it wasn't just Lee Jihye. Jung Heewon, Lee Hyunsung and the other members felt a similar sense of urgency. Thus, they prematurely rushed to the scenario area to get rid of their insecurities.

After all, they were the strongest rankers in Seoul and the strongest incarnations. However, Lee Jihye soon realized that it was a mistake.

'Shit, this is ridiculous… ridiculous'.

Lee Jihye's power didn't work in Dark Castle. The trajectory of Kendo, which reached level 7, rarely hit and the power of Demon Slaying only provoked the demons. Her sword had broken a long time ago.

"Jihye unni!"

Lee Jihye moved at Shin Yoosung's cry and she avoided a dark tracker's blade. She picked up a weapon dropped by an incarnation and used Sword Training and Ghost Walk.

"Unni! Behind you!"

Dark liquid from the dark trackers scattered through the air. Lee Gilyoung's small insects came from somewhere and were hit by the liquid instead of Lee Jihye.

The insects hit by the black liquid experienced bizarre cell deformation and exploded. Thanks to the time bought by the insects, Lee Jihye was able to deal a bit more damage to the dark trackers.

"Aaaaaaack!"

The armour around the neck of a dark tracker broke and it fled. However, there were still nine remaining. Besides, the dark trackers were just a joke. The really scary thing was the guy on the other side of the dark trackers.

[Demon Viscount Noslocke.]

He had a human body with a rhinoceros head. Lee Jihye's body shook every time he approached. She had never seen such a monster before.

In terms of individual strength, he wasn't as strong as the Disasters of Floods. If the Disaster of Floods had her power suppressed, the demons had no such thing.

Moreover, Lee Jihye's higher strength had become a poison to her. She knew the opponent's strength and this only raised her fear. Lee Jihye raised the blade and bit her lips. Thus, here…

[On the first floor of the Dark Castle, the 'Ancient Magic Power Barrier' has been formed.]

"Unni, over there!"

A blue room was created at the end of the hallway. It was the only resting place in this Dark Castle.

Lee Jihye and the children rushed to the room with all their might and barely escaped from the pursuit of the dark trackers. The space was small, not even two square metres, but the three of them managed to squeeze in.

[You have entered the Ancient Magic Power Barrier. The special barrier will be activated for 30 minutes.]

If it wasn't for this safe zone being activated three times a day, Lee Jihye and the children might've been killed already.

The dark trackers groaned as they touched the barrier and retreated. They tried to enter several times before giving up. However, that guy was different.

"Why isn't he leaving?"

The demon resembling a rhinoceros. The Demon Viscount Noslocke sat on the gorund a few metres away, as if it knew the principles of this barrier.

"…He is waiting."

The demon's long tongue swept over his lips. Like a gourmet waiting for delicious food, he watched Lee Jihye and Shin Yoosung. Shin Yoosung shivered at those terrible eyes.

"Now what? There are no more monsters to summon."

"There are still 30 minutes. Let me think."

At the edge of the barrier, Lee Jihye was able to see the outside world through the windows of the castle. They couldn't leave through the window because of a special enchantment but they could see the outside anyway.

Demon species poured from the entrance of Dark Castle that Li Jihye and her companions had opened.

Most of them were lesser demons but they were still too much for ordinary incarnations. The demons of Dark Castle devoured and infected the incarnations of Seoul.

Thanks to this, many of the demon species outside the fortress were people she originally knew.

Min Jiwon and the Hwarang. The members of Nirvana's Salvation Church. The people she knew were walking down the streets and tearing people apart. All of this was the result of her impatience. If she had been a bit more careful…

[Didn't I tell you? The difficulty of this scenario is on a completely different dimension.]

Lee Jihye heard the voice of the dokkaebi in the air and realized. It wasn't because she was strong that she could survive until now. It was because she was lucky.

'Damn! Damn! Foolish girl!' She blamed her own impatience too late. The people who entered without preparation scattered in the maze of darkness and she met these children. What happened to the other party members? She didn't know. Maybe they were all dead.

'If only Master was here. No… not Master…'

"I wish Dokja hyung…" Lee Gilyoung's voice was heard from behind her and Lee Jihye frowned.

"Don't speak useless things, fool. You are hurt so go to sleep."

Lee Gilyoung, who was hit in the back of the head, fell silent again but unfortunately, there was one other person.

"Ahjussi isn't dead. I don't know why but I feel that way."

She didn't know why these children kept on bringing up a dead person.

"That person is in hell. Quickly forget that ugly face."

Shin Yoosung showed an unexpected response to her harsh words. "I really don't understand. Everyone says he is ugly but how is he ugly?"

The question was a bit embarrassing. In the meantime, she had pushed 'Kim Dokja is ugly' like a slogan (the constellations sometimes gave her coins) and she never really questioned why Kim Dokja was ugly.

"I mean, the shape of his eyes and nose… the whole harmony…"

The more she talked, the more confused Lee Jihye became. She couldn't understand where Kim Dokja was ugly. No, Kim Dokja's face didn't come out clearly. It was as if it was obscured by something hazy…

Or like a face that hadn't been created yet…

Why? Why couldn't his face appear clearly?

Lee Jihye told Shin Yoosung, "I-It just isn't to my taste."

"…You cried so much at the funeral."

"I was acting, you idiot. The constellations gave me a lot of coins at the time."

[Some constellations ask Lee Jihye if it was really acting.]

Lee Jihye bit her lips.

"Unni is still a long way off. People aren't all about faces."

"You really…" Lee Jihye watched Shin Yoosung for a moment and sighed. "…I know that much."

She spoke in a small voice. Just because she knew it didn't mean she could admit it. At least for Lee Jihye, who was still immature.

She owed a lot to Kim Dokja. She survived because of him. She knew. She knew it well but she didn't want to admit it. She wanted to repay her debt while still looking good.

In fact, he… was a pretty helpful person. Now that opportunity had vanished forever.

[There is one minute left for the duration of the Ancient Magic Power Barrier.]

Lee Jihye came to her senses as the darkness in front of the barrier shook. The demon's smile widened. Lee Jihye realized it was time.

"Yoosung. Can you pull Gilyoung up? Take him away at my signal."

"Huh?"

"Listen to me."

It wasn't like her at all, sacrificing her life for a friend. Even so, this is who she wanted to be. All because of the dead man's example..

"Quickly! Run away and ask someone for help! Do it before I go to hell!"

"…Understood. Hang in there Unni."

Perhaps there wouldn't be anyone else. Still, she had to say this. Otherwise the child wouldn't leave.

Lee Jihye rushed forward the moment the barrier disappeared. The surprised demon jumped but that was it. The demon species surrounding her aimed for her body. Blood flowed from her white thighs and arms.

If only there was a lake nearby. No, if only she could get in touch with her sponsor whose link had been disconnected a few days ago.

"…I don't want to die."

The trajectory of Kendo was gradually disturbed and she weakened. The demon's smile became bigger. There was a big hit to the back of her head and her vision shook for a moment.

Lee Jihye muttered to herself. "I want to live…"

It seemed that something similar happened before. What had happened at the time?

At this moment, light appeared in front of her. The bodies of the dark trackers were split into two. It was as if the Messiah had descended and waves were splitting in two.

Lee Jihye watched in a spellbound manner.

The confused Demon Viscount Noslocke turned his head and a powerful electric current appeared around it. There was a man in the path of light created by the electric current.

Ah, ah…

Lee Jihye stuttered but she couldn't make a sound. He was the one whose face she couldn't remember. He was saying something but she couldn't hear it. The next moment, the fog covering his face disappeared.

The demon viscount roared angrily. For what? She didn't know. However, one thing was certain…

This time, the man's face was visible.

'…Ahjussi, is this your face?'

[The constellation who doesn't yet have a name is looking at you.]

Lee Jihye listened to the message and smiled as she fell forward.

Chapter 153: Ep. 30 - Dark Castle, III

"…Were the words earlier referring to ahjussi?"

"What?"

"A new constellation in Seoul blah blah blah…"

"Ah… well. That's right."

I smiled bitterly while staring at the demons around. I was surprised to see Lee Jihye's crisis but it seemed she had been acting too aggressively.

Demon Viscount Noslocke. This insidious guy who resembled a rhino was a demon who ripped apart and killed countless incarnations. I knocked down a noble-grade demon instantly, and realized how strong I had become.

Lee Jihye saw his collapsed body and muttered. "This guy was incredibly strong… How strong are you after becoming a constellation?"

"I didn't defeat him using my own strength. I borrowed the power of another story."

"Another story?"

[Who…are…you…] I looked over at Noslocke who was still breathing.

"Wait a minute."

I simply stepped down and destroyed Noslocke's head.

[You have defeated a noble of the Demon Realm!]

[10,000 coins have been acquired!]

[The item 'Advanced Demon's Proof' has been acquired.]

[The sub-species of the Demon Realm will be afraid of you.]

Originally, killing a demon servant would gain the attention of their 'demon king' but this scenario was different. All demons in the Dark Castle scenario were ones waiting for their new 'master'.

[A few constellations are amazed by your overwhelming presence.]

[A considerable number of constellations are questioning your probability.]

Certainly, the probability was questionable. My strength was currently at a level that violated the balance of the scenario. However, it wasn't because I was a constellation that I could easily get rid of Noslocke.

[The story 'Messiah's Path' is partially in effect.]

It was the 'absolute divinity' effect of Messiah's Path.

I borrowed the story which had a special effect on demons from Eden.

[The nebula Eden is asking you to pay the 'story quotation'.]

I drew a cross shape in the air and heard a message.

[The nebula Eden is delighted with your narrative quotation.]

It was annoying to do this quotation every time but it was better than plagiarism. Furthermore, I didn't have to pay any other price for using it at this time. It was a special service that the Eden nebula provided.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is pleased!]

This was all thanks to the cute Uriel. Fortunately, the 'banquet' was well resolved.

"Ahjussi… have you become religious?" Lee Jihye laughed while breathing roughly. Her right shoulder and abdomen had stab wounds. "I'm sorry. Doesn't the 10th strongest person in Seoul look poor?"

"Now is your hardest time. Don't worry. You will be better in the future. Stay still. I'm going to fix your dislocated bone now.

"Huh? Aaaaaaack!"

I thought I should use the Ellain Forest Essence. However, I had no items remaining in my coat subspace. I had left it to Han Sooyoung before dying.

Just before dying in the eighth scenario, I made a small contract with Han Sooyoung and left my items with her. Then… there was only one way left.

"Dokkaebi Bag."

As soon as I opened my mouth, I saw the screen window of the Dokkaebi Bag in front of me.

[Some constellations are questioning the use of your natural privileges.]

Until now, most constellations didn't know I enjoyed the benefits of the Dokkaebi Bag because Bihyung would turn on the advertising. Now there was no need to hide it because I was a constellation.

I immediately purchased the Ellain Forest Essence and fed it to Lee Jihye.

"O-Oof!"

"Eat and sleep."

"…Thank you ahjussi."

"Well… Thank you for crying for me at the funeral."

"…I will faint now so don't talk to me."

Lee Jihye fell asleep. I lifted up Lee Jihye and heard a familiar voice from behind me.

"Ahjussi…?"

I was filled with a warm sensation. I could tell the owner of the voice without looking back.

[Your incarnation is looking at you.]

I wouldn't have been able to run straight here if it wasn't for this feeling. I saw Shin Yoosung crying and thought that parents probably felt like this.

"Ahjussi!"

I grabbed Shin Yoosung and lightly embraced her. "Was I gone long?"

"You were gone for a week…"

One week. Damn, I was resurrected later than planned.

"Let's go. I have to find the items I entrusted to someone else."

* * *

"…A week has passed. Why haven't you come yet?"

Han Sooyoung lay on the floor of Dark Castle and murmured to herself.

It was crazy to act like this in the Dark Castle seething with demon servants. Fortunately, no demon servants came after hearing her voice. It was because someone had already swept away the nearby demon servants while moving upstairs.

Of course, it was all done by Yoo Joonghyuk.

"Damn protagonist jerk."

Han Sooyoung gritted her teeth.

30 minutes ago, Han Sooyoung had confronted Yoo Joonghyuk here. Then she was disastrously defeated.

Her body ached and her head was dizzy. The demons species? They weren't the problem. The real demon was Yoo Joonghyuk.

"You scammer. How could you use such a person… Kim Dokja."

She couldn't understand it no matter how much she thought.

In the Seoul rankings, Yoo Joonghyuk was ranked third and Han Sooyoung was fourth. Then why was the difference so large? The reason she didn't lose her life was because of her last-ditch words.

'Hey! These are Kim Dokja's items! Are you going to steal them?'

'…Why did Kim Dokja leave his things to you?'

'That… isn't it because I am the most trustworthy person?'

'Then I will kill you and take them'.

'Y-You want to kill me? What will Kim Dokja think?'

Yoo Joonghyuk thought about it for a while before finally letting her go.

'If you mention him in front of me again, I really will kill you'.

Then he headed up to the second floor. Han Sooyoung was furious when she thought about it and screamed.

"That jerk… ahhhhhh! Abyssal Black Flame Dragon! Didn't you say you are the strongest constellation? Why can't I beat him?"

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is in deep thought.]

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' says that it isn't his fault.]

Han Sooyoung sighed. It was a scene where she would be misunderstood as having multiple personalities.

"This is a big deal. That jerk brought his little sister up… it is a development that Kim Dokja will clearly hate. The situation is like this but where is Kim Dokja?"

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is asking about what you mean.]

"You're a bastard. By the way, that jerk took all my 'proofs' and I will have to start from scratch…"

Han Sooyoung opened the scenario window.

[Main Scenario #9 - Demon's Proof]

Category: Main

Difficulty level: A++

Clear Conditions: Hunt the demon species, collect nine Demon's Proofs and place them on the altar on the 2nd floor.

Time Limit: 23 days.

Compensation: 50,000 coins

Failure: —

The demon servants were so powerful that the scenario was a bit tricky, but it was possible to clear if the incarnations cooperated. The major forces had already moved to the second floor.

She might be a ranker but she might be overtaken by the other rankers. The Dark Castle compensation was excellent, meaning the ranking would change if she delayed even a little bit.

'What should I do?'

At this time, a group of people on the other side of the corridor caught her attention. Han Sooyoung thought this was better. She could take the proofs from these guys…

"Han Sooyoung-ssi!"

Han Sooyoung saw their faces and sighed.

"What the hell is this?" Someone cried out.

Han Sooyoung replied, "…I was just fighting the demon servants and was hurt. Lee Hyunsung-ssi also entered the maze?"

"That's correct. Are you alright?"

He was the Pure Steel Lee Hyunsung.

'Why did this guy appear here?'

Kim Dokja's companion, Lee Hyunsung also came here. No matter how urgent the situation, she couldn't take away the proofs of the main characters… eh?

"Lee Hyunsung-ssi! Don't go over!"

The shrill shout came from a beautiful face. The four people who appeared with Lee Hyunsung weren't anyone Han Sooyoung knew. The woman once again shouted, "Lee Hyunsung-ssi! Can't you hear my words? It might be a trap!"

"That's right! Back off! Come over here!"

"But…"

Lee Hyunsung was confused as he looked between Han Sooyoung and the women.

Han Sooyoung spoke to Lee Hyunsung. "Has your party changed? Why are you building a harem all of a sudden?"

"I split up from the party in the labyrinth…"

Lee Hyunsung looked troubled and the other women rushed at him and pulled at his arms.

"Why are you listening to that person?"

"Those wounds don't come from fighting with demon servants. That woman is suspicious!"

"That's right!"

"Hyunsung-ssi is too naive! You shouldn't trust anyone in this world!"

Lee Hyunsung was pulled back by the women with much difficulty.

Han Sooyoung triggered Detect Attributes. The next moment, a cruel smile appeared on Han Sooyoung's face as she saw the names in front of her eyes.

'…What am I seeing? It is them?'

The way that people adapted to a destroyed world were different. There were women who believed in themselves like Jung Heewon and Lee Jihye, while other women took advantage of others. The even more interesting way…

"Lee Hyunsung, I didn't realize that you have an unusual taste?"

"Huh?"

"Don't you know they're all men?"

[A constellations who likes to change sex is surprised!]

[The constellation in love with a woman is aghast!]

The women shouted in astonishment at Han Sooyoung's words.

"W-What are you talking about right now?"

"Don't frame us!"

It was impossible to think these people were men. However, Han Sooyoung knew them. They were a group of four who used Disguise and Forbidden Charm to kill strong rankers or the weak.

Han Sooyoung remembered the name of this group.

[Pink Kids].

They had the name of a girl group but they were all men in their 40s. She spoke to them.

"Hey ahjussis, do you like disguising as young girls? Lee Hyunsung-ssi, if you stay with them, you will be tricked and killed."

"What is this crazy bitch saying?'"

"Hyunsung-ssi, let's go! She is a strange person!"

Sometimes it was common in Ways of Survival to dress up as the other gender. There were more villains in this world than Pink Kids. Thus, these men could be rehabilitated. "Kim Dokja might've said this…"

Han Sooyoung was different from Kim Dokja.

"I have to get rid of these disgusting things."

At this rate, Lee Hyunsung would 100% be hit in the back of the head by Pink Kids. His death would have a severe impact on the scenarios. A large number of clones started to surround Han Sooyoung's body.

Lee Hyunsung hastily came forward. "W-What are you doing?"

She demanded, "Get lost. I'm going to kill them."

"They aren't bad people!"

Lee Hyunsung didn't move out of the way. He didn't seem bewitched but he stood firmly in place. If she thought about it, this was Lee Hyunsung. The Pink Kids watched Lee Hyunsung with touched eyes.

Han Sooyoung cried out in an irritated manner, "I will kill you if you don't get out of the way."

"Han Sooyoung-ssi. I'm aware that you are strong but please calm yourself. I'm also confident in my strength."

"Then try it!"

The clones ran towards Lee Hyunsung while Han Sooyoung rushed towards the Pink Kids.

"Die perverts!"

"You can't do this!"

"Kyaaack! Help us Hyunsung-ssi!"

Lee Hyunsung triggered Steel Transformation and started to kill Han Sooyoung's clones with tremendous strength. Han Sooyoung couldn't help sweating at the enormous damage.

'He truly is the Steel Sword'.

She noticed that the Pink Kids were planning to run away. At this rate, she would miss this. There was nothing good about leaving them alive when she had already made a hostile impression.

'I will do it'.

She was forced to use a secret weapon. Han Sooyoung smiled bitterly at Lee Hyunsung. "Do you want to see a good show?"

The next moment, Han Sooyoung's clones surrounding Lee Hyunsung took off their clothes. Her white skin was revealed. Lee Hyunsung blushed as he covered his eyes and collapsed.

"Waaaaahhhhh! What is this?"

Han Sooyoung stepped on Lee Hyunsung's body and flew forward.

"It is a naked woman!"

Han Sooyoung flew through the air and aimed her dagger at the back of the Pink Kids running away.

"W-What are you…!

Kuaack!"

'Yoon Woochul. 41 years old. Operated a coin farm'.

The other member of Pink Kids screamed as he saw his dying companion.

"Shit! We haven't done anything wrong!"

'Hwang Mingyu. 43 years old. Trafficking and… what was it?'

Her dagger sliced over his neck. The Pink Kids' transformation was released, revealing hairy legs.

"S-Spare me! Spare me!"

'Bang Takho. 39 years old. The children in the third episode… anyway!"

In an instant, only one of the Pink Kids was left. Han Sooyoung frowned as she saw the middle-aged person trembling with fear.

'What did this person do?'

Han Sooyoung wondered for a moment and was about to kill the last Pink Kid when magic power flew from somewhere and blocked her dagger.

Then a clear voice was heard. "You made a mistake."

"…What?"

"You shouldn't kill this person. He is needed for my strategy."

She turned her head and sighed with relief. Han Sooyoung laughed. "You are late, Kim Dokja."

Chapter 154: Ep. 30 - Dark Castle, IV

Han Sooyoung heard my story and muttered in a dumbfounded manner. "…Did you really become a constellation?"

A person who was an incarnation a few days ago suddenly appeared as a constellation. Certainly, it was strange. Han Sooyoung hadn't read anything about an incarnation being reborn as a constellation.

"Yes. I am a constellation."

"Really, seriously?"

"That's right."

Han Sooyoung's eyes were filled with disbelief. "…Is it that easy?"

I wanted to say it wasn't easy but Han Sooyoung didn't listen.

"Shit, will you now be watching us outside the scenario and sponsoring us?"

"Nothing like that. I became a constellation in the course of the scenario so I have to keep participating in the scenario."

"What's the difference? I can't tell at all."

In fact, I didn't feel it was real either. Borrowing stories, trading with other constellations and nebulae, changing the attitude of the constellations towards me…

[Some constellations are jealous of your growth.]

[Some constellations oppose you having a modifier.]

[Some constellations show hostility towards you.]

In any case, the constellations also felt the ugliness of jealousy. Why were they so harsh towards a growing bud? Still, there was something I could do now.

[You stare at the other constellations.]

[Some constellations are staring at you with amazement!]

[Some constellations have spat out the coke they are drinking with surprise!]

[200 coins have been consumed to send an indirect message.]

…As expected, indirect messages cost coins. It was fun but I had to use it in moderation.

Han Sooyoung was staring at me with an open mouth. "W-Was it you who just sent the message? The constellation who doesn't yet have a name?"

That was what it looked like to Han Sooyoung.

"Yes."

"Is it because you haven't signed a sponsor contract until now?"

"Yes."

"…Then is it already too late for me?"

"You could say that."

Han Sooyoung frowned and looked up at the air.

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' hesitantly reads her face.]

Han Sooyoung sighed and glanced at me. "Shit… I'm envious. By the way, why don't you have a modifier?"

"That…"

Why didn't I have a modifier? The correct answer was that I didn't know.

[The Star Stream is looking for a modifier for your constellation.]

Perhaps it was because I haven't accumulated enough stories. A constellation without a modifier was similar to gaining a citizenship without having a home.

Han Sooyoung muttered, "You are a vagabond."

"…The fifth story isn't over yet. Maybe I will have a modifier by the time this story is finalized."

[The fifth story 'Lone Messiah' is currently in progress.]

The fifth story was a story that greatly affected the 'status' of the constellation. The position of my constellation would depend on how this story was finalized.

…Maybe.

Then Han Sooyoung booed. "Boo…Kim Dokja, why do you suddenly look cool? Can you beat Yoo Joonghyuk now?"

Yoo Joonghyuk. I clenched my fist and opened it. Then there was a message I had never seen before…

[Beware of the 'probability storm' effect.]

[The Star Stream is currently evaluating your level.]

There was a prickly feeling at the tips of my fingers. This was a problem for constellations. Still, I would be fine as long as the 'evaluation' was in progress. The Star Stream didn't know the right level of constraints for me yet.

"I might be able to win against him now."

"…Really?"

The point was the word 'now'. The protagonist was the protagonist for a reason. I could only match his growth by becoming a constellation. The perks that Yoo Joonghyuk received were huge.

I ordered her, "Quickly return what I gave you."

"Tsk, I understand."

[The incarnation 'Han Sooyoung' has fulfilled the contract.]

I received all the coins and items I had left with Han Sooyoung. Han Sooyoung sighed. "…It's too bad. I felt rich for a while."

"I gave you 20,000 coins for the trouble."

"I handed over 600,000 coins but only got 20,000 in return."

"Then you can give back the 20,000 coins."

Han Sooyoung scoffed and turned her back to me. I received my items and coins from Han Sooyoung.

[Possessed Coins: 684,353 C]

In the meantime, I had collected a lot of money. It wasn't strange since I made a steady income and saved money. Now that I was a constellation, I no longer hesitated in using coins. The coins would exert their real strength from now on.

Then little by little… ah, wait. I forgot an important thing. "Han Sooyoung, when will you release that? It is sexual harassment."

"Eh? Ah, I forgot."

Han Sooyoung smiled and I approached Lee Hyunsung who was sitting on the floor holding his head in his hands. Han Sooyoung's clones were still dancing naked around Lee Hyunsung.

[The character 'Lee Hyunsung' is shaking with fear.]

…

「The Steel Sword is weak to women.」

There was such a sentence in Ways of Survival but I hadn't thought it was so severe. Besides that…

"…It isn't real."

Han Sooyoung's clones looked naked but they didn't have the important parts. In other words, Lee Hyunsung had become like this because he saw mannequins.

Han Sooyoung noticed the meaning of my words and laughed mischievously. "Hrmm…what does that mean? You are sorry because you didn't get to see them?"

"I told you. I don't like a poor body like yours.

"…You haven't even seen it."

"Do i need to see it?"

I approached Lee Hyunsung and patted him on the back. "Hyunsung-ssi, are you okay?"

"D-Dokja-ssi."

He looked stupid but he wasn't crazy. Lee Hyunsung looked at me like he had seen a ghost. "Why is Dokja-ssi…you are… dead?"

I think he got a real trauma. I looked at Han Sooyoung with annoyance. It was a comic-like situation but it would've been a serious blow for the Steel Sword. If I did something wrong this round, Lee Hyunsung's fate might diverge in an unknown direction…

For the moment, I had to rely on time for him to recover. Then another voice was heard from the side. "Excuse me…"

"…?"

"Can I go?"

The last member of Pink Kids entered my eyes. She had a pretty face and slender body. She had fine eyebrows and tender cheeks. Who would believe this was a man in his 40s?

"What is your name?" I asked and a pretty voice answered.

"S-Seo Inna."

"That's not his real name."

Seo Inna hesitated before speaking his true name. "…I am Kim Yongpal."

Pink Kids, Kim Yongpal. I found the right person.

Han Sooyoung clicked her tongue. "…Why are you keeping him alive. Aren't the Pink Kids scum?"

"Not yet. They 'will become' bad guys. If you read it correctly, you should know that the Pink Kids was originally a trio."

"But there are four… eh?"

I explained, "This uncle died before they became really active."

"…Is that why I couldn't remember him?"

"Kim Yongpal is basically a pure person. Thus, he was the first to die in Pink Kids."

Kim Yongpal interrupted. "Excuse me, what are you talking about…?"

"Shut up."

Han Sooyoung frowned at him. "This is a pure person?"

"Yes."

I also couldn't believe it but it was a setting in Ways of Survival.

[A constellations who likes to change sex is nodding.]

[A constellation who likes to change sex claims there are no bad people among those who like to change sex.]

In fact, Kim Yongpal survived to this day without killing anyone, even in the first scenario.

I could come up with the 'insect killing' method in the first scenario because there was a precedent where Kim Yongpal stepped on an ant by mistake and survived. Of course, Kim Yongpal didn't know why he had survived.

He was a person who 'fortunately' survived. This was Kim Yongpal of Pink Kids. No, I should call it Pink Kid now that his companions were dead.

Han Sooyoung muttered like she didn't want to admit it. "Damn…so what? In any case, you saved him because there is a use for him?"

"Yes."

"Then now what?"

"We have to break the scenario again."

"Do you know what this scenario is?"

Of course I knew. I knew it very well.

"It is the last scenario before the liberation of Seoul Dome."

The ninth scenario, Dark Castle. In this scenario, beings that had never appeared before emerged.

I watched Lee Hyunsung, who was still trembling with fear, the unconscious Lee Jihye and Shin Yoosung who was caring for the injured Lee Gilyoung.

Maybe my other companions were alive somewhere. There was Jung Heewon so they wouldn't be defeated so easily on the first floor.

"The first floor is just a joke. The real hell is the second floor."

A special window in the castle showed the outside landscape. Crowds were moving around Seoul. Unfortunately, in the aftermath of the 'greatest sacrifice' and the ensuing struggle, half of Seoul had become demon servants.

The incarnations of Seoul were shouting sorrowfully. Despair already covered Seoul but the 'story' was still lacking. The story was always lacking.

The dokkaebis were seeking larger frustration. The constellations were yearning for more provocative story.

Han Sooyoung stared out the window and spoke. "It is a cliche imagination. Regressors, returnees, reincarnators. Now there are demons?"

"A person who plagiarized is saying this…"

"Hey, I told you a couple of times…"

I was joking as usual when I suddenly became curious. "Han Sooyoung."

"What is it?"

"If you are the writer of Ways of Survival…"

"I didn't write that garbage."

"Let's just assume."

The grumpy Han Sooyoung bit her lips. "…If I am the writer?"

"If you are the writer of Ways of Survival, why did you make this world?"

"How should I know?"

"You are also writer."

"How can a first-rate writer like me know the thoughts of a third-rate writer?"

…I was an idiot for asking her. Han Sooyoung continued speaking. "I should be the one asking you that."

"…What?"

I met Han Sooyoung's deep eyes. I couldn't read Han Sooyoung even if I used Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint. Still, I seemed to understand a bit. A person who read the story might have similar thoughts.

'You know the end of this world. Isn't that right?'

Han Sooyoung was obviously asking this. As always, I didn't answer.

Han Sooyoung stared out the window like she knew she wouldn't receive an answer. Then she asked another question. "…Why do the scenarios exist?"

I stared out the window.

The dark sky above the destroyed Seoul could be seen. Was it because I had become a constellation? The sky wasn't the same as before.

Countless constellations were embroidered in the sky. The Star Stream was embracing the constellations. They were stars that could never be reached despite being so close.

Even with so many stars shining…

There was the distant abyss that couldn't be erased. I felt like I had discovered something.

What were the constellations always enduring? Why were they so obsessed with the story?

I shook off this distant emotion and opened my mouth. "Perhaps the scenario…"

Chapter 155: Ep. 30 - Dark Castle, V

This was a question that countless beings of Star Stream had been asked over many years.

'Why the hell does the scenario exist?'

The answers to this question were different. For example, the returnee Kyrgios Rodgraim said: Without it, the universe would be too lonely.

The constellation 'Queen of the Darkest Spring' replied to the same question: Are you asking me why 'food' exists?

The demon king Asmodeus' reply to the same question was as followed: It is a small destruction to prevent greater destruction.

The answers might be romantic or philosophical to people who heard it. However, 'romantic' and 'philosophical' were only luxuries for those who were full in the first place.

Therefore, to the demon earl 'Tentacio' on the second floor of Dark Castle, the scenario meant the following:

"It is fucked up."

This was his way of speaking, although technically, they weren't his own words. Anyone who entered this space would say this after 50 years. Of course, if they managed to survive 50 years.

"I'm tired."

The river running through the Abyss Plains was a tributary of the Demon Realm's River, Phoenix. One might ask how there was such a huge plains on the second floor of Dark Castle but naturally Tentacio was different.

There were only two things he knew. First, he had to reach the top of the vast plains and second, he hadn't managed to do it in 194 years.

'Dammit, if it wasn't for that dokkaebi's offer at the time…'

The memories from 194 years ago were still vivid.

–Do you want to become the 73rd demon king?

Demon king. It was the long-cherished dream of all demons.

–…Can I become the demon king?

He had asked.

He was a third-grade demon and still far from rising to that status. It was hard to climb up, no matter how many low-grade demons he ate. During that period, Tentacio was tempted by a being more demonic than a great demon.

–You are lacking a 'story', not strength.

–What does that mean?

–You will find out if you participate in the scenario.

Thus, Tentacio was put into the Dark Castle scenario. He tore down many demons and slaughtered the races that came up from the first floor of Dark

Castle.

After 194 years, Tentacio had become one of the ten strongest demons on the 'Dark Castle second floor'.

However, that was as far as he got.

'I can't go up to the third floor'.

The Dark Castle's third floor. This was where the essence of a demon king was sleeping. In order to get there, he had to beat the strongest beings on the second floor.

However, accumulating strength and coins wasn't enough. The best beings on the second floor weren't the strongest simply because of strength. The thing Tentacio was lacking…

[The constellation 'Slumbering Lady of Fine Brocade' wants to talk to you alone.]

[The constellation 'Slumbering Lady of Fine Brocade' is curious about your setting.]

'Setting? Fucking bastards. I know what I'm made of'.

He didn't like constellations but it was pleasant to see a constellation wondering about him.

The constellation wondering about him meant new people were coming from the first floor of Dark Castle. It meant the enjoyable game would start from now on.

A group of men and women appeared. Tentacio smiled at the sight. "Welcome, you bugs. This is the second floor of Dark Castle."

Tentacio enjoyed speaking the lines of an ambassador like it was a habit. As expected, some of the bugs came forward and asked him,

"What is this place? Who are you? A guide?"

"…Are you perhaps a dokkaebi?"

Dokkaebi. They were existences that Tentacio hated the most. Still, he endured it and opened his mouth. There would be a time of sweet rewards after the patience.

"The second floor of Dark Castle is a world of survival of the fittest. Only those who have their strength acknowledged can move to the next floor. Isn't it a simple rule? Raise your hands if you need further explanations."

"What does it mean to have your strength acknowledged? How do we…"

"By doing this."

Tentacio's arm stretched out and the head of the speaking man literally exploded. The bugs had frightened expressions. This was Tentacio's favourite moment.

"W-What?"

"Shit! It is a trap!"

Tentacio laughed and licked the blood that splattered from the man's neck.

"Protect the queen!"

All the incarnations rushed towards him but Tentacio didn't mind. A strong energy rose from his body.

The demon nobility titles were, in descending order of rank: duke, marquis, earl, viscount and baron. The viscounts and barons were fairly common, and the real difference in power started with the earl grade.

Demons from the earl grade had a 'story'. A story, it only opened when specific situations occurred.

[The story 'Bug Slaughter' has begun.]

"Kuaaaaak!"

Every time his hands moved, the humans died like bugs. This story was obtained by slaughtering hundreds of thousands of players in 194 years. It showed overwhelming power against those who were lower than him.

[The constellation 'Slumbering Lady of Fine Brocade' is surprised.]

"Mwahahaha!"

The surrounding incarnations quickly became corpses or were wounded.

'It is too dull'.

Some incarnations seemed useful but more of them were garbage. At most, they could be transformed into fifth-grade demons. Then Tentacio's gaze stopped on someone.

"Hoh, you will be fourth grade."

Tentacio grabbed the neck of a woman and lifted her up. The hair of the woman scattered. A broken crown rolled around. She was the King of Beauty, Min Jiwon.

Tentacio opened his mouth. "You must be the leader of these guys."

He liked her strong gaze. This woman's story must be quite delicious.

"I will ask you two things. Where do you come from?"

"T-Telling you something like that…"

"I've seen many bugs like you."

Tentacio made a cruel smile and trampled on one of the Hwarang. Min Jiwon paled as she looked at the broken skull and brain matter.

"W-Wait a minute!"

Peeeok! Peeeok!

"Stop! Earth… we are from Earth!"

Tentacio laughed. "Earth?"

Tentacio remembered it as a planet full of rich stories.

'The demon kings. Earth is like a cradle for stories like that'.

There was a lot of prey in a place abundant with stories. Tentacio licked his lips.

"Bug. Who has the most stories among you?"

"U-Uhh… stories? What is that…?"

As expected, she didn't understand him.

"Who is the strongest among you?"

Min Jiwon shook as Tentacio's yellow eyes gazed greedily at her.

"Ah, then what is the scenario?"

"…I just told you."

"How can I understand those symbolic words?"

I moved with Han Sooyoung towards the altar for the second floor. We encountered a few demons on the way. Needless to say, our progress was smooth. It was because I used the 'status of a constellation' whenever I saw a demon.

[Kiiii…!]

The dark trackers who encountered my eyes screamed and trembled. I might not be a narrative or historical-grade level but once I became a constellation, my presence itself was different.

In other words, I could exercise considerable influence over those lower than me with just a glance or remark.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is disappointed in the too easy progress.]

[The constellation 'Scribe of Heaven' says you need greater adversity.]

They would get frustrated when it was difficult, or get bored when it was easy… I didn't know which one to cater to.

Shouldn't there be days like this sometimes? It was the first time a scenario was 'easy'…

I was collecting the demon proofs one by one when a familiar voice was heard in the air.

[…Kim Dokja. Don't you look good? Did you open the Dokkaebi Bag alone?]

I could tell straight away who was speaking. I grunted and sent back a message.

–Who was the one who suddenly disappeared?

It was an intermediate dokkaebi.

[Who has a big head now? I couldn't come because I was busy! In any case, it is late but congratulations. A new constellation emerged from my channel. It is very emotional.]

–Is the channel running well?

[Yes. I thought the 'incarnation seekers' would leave after you became a constellation but… it actually became better. Everyone has come to watch the castle scenario so it is hectic right now. We might have to expand the channel soon.]

…That much? Indeed, it was rare for an incarnation to become a constellation during the scenario.

[However, there are some who dislike you. You should be careful. Honestly, you are a constellation but your 'status' isn't completely established.]

It was as Bihyung said. I was a constellation but my stigma hadn't woken up yet. In other words, I was currently more like a half-constellation.

[I heard you are stronger than Yoo Joonghyuk but honestly…]

–I'm stronger.

[Oh… Kim Dokja. Isn't this different from your usual reaction? Do you feel a sense of rivalry?]

–I'm a constellation. He is an incarnation. It is natural for me to be stronger.

[Hrmm… is it really like that?]

–What are you trying to say? Did you come for a fight?

[Ah, I think the child will be born soon. I need a story to feed her. You are her father and should play the role of a parent…]

–I understand. I'll get it for you.

[Brat, I like you because you understand quickly. Then I'm counting on you.]

It was almost time for the 41st regression Shin Yoosung to wake up. I looked back and saw the party members collecting demon proofs from the bodies of the demons.

"Does everyone have enough proofs?"

Shin Yoosung carefully raised her hand. "I am still lacking… Gilyoung also…"

"…Ah, I can help." She seemed like she would be annoyed but surprisingly, Han Sooyoung took good care of Shin Yoosung.

Lee Hyunsung was carrying Lee Gilyoung on his back and spoke to me. "D-Dokja-ssi."

"Yes."

"Can I ask you something?"

"…What is it?"

Lee Hyunsung had barely escaped from Han Sooyoung's nightmare and he still seemed unable to believe I had survived. Sometimes he would grab my arm or my head. Lee Hyunsung touched my head and then opened his mouth.

"In the past, I lost an empty cartridge in the army."

"…That must be a big problem. Did you find it again?"

"I found it."

"You must've been in trouble. Why are you saying this…?"

"It was found out of the blue one month later." Despite my confused expression, Lee Hyunsung still looked serious. "From then on, I kept the empty shell in my pocket."

"…Isn't that a violation of military rule?"

"That's right."

I was amazed that he nodded so casually. I nodded curiously. "I see. But why all of a sudden…"

"No, I was suddenly reminded of the past."

I looked at him and didn't know why he was saying this. Surely he didn't mean to cut off my head and put it in his pocket… In any case, it meant he was glad I was alive.

We soon reached the altar that would lead to the second floor. We had enough demon proofs, so the only thing left was to place them on the altar and wait. At this time, Han Sooyoung asked, "Is that ahjussi coming with us?"

I turned and saw she was pointing at the Pink Kid Kim Yongpal.

I nodded and ordered, "Kim Yongpal-ssi. Lead the way."

"Huh?"

Kim Yongpal freaked out while Han Sooyoung's eyes narrowed.

"What is that ahjussi for?"

"Have you forgotten? The last gateway to the second floor…"

Those who collected the demon proofs on the first floor could only go up the next floor if they hunted the 'demon' summoned after placing the proofs on the altar. However, the demon summoned from the second floor was based on the level of the weakest person in the party.

Han Sooyoung nodded like she understood. "Aha, that's why you're putting the weakest person in the lead?"

"Exactly."

"…Kim Dokja is the best at being shameless."

"It isn't being shameless but strategic."

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is amazed at your awkwardness.]

[The constellation 'Bald General of Justice' wants you to show the dignity of a constellation!]

…What was dignity of a constellation? I didn't make it through difficult scenarios by focusing on my dignity. I was a constellation but sometimes I needed to play it smart.

Han Sooyoung said, "Then this gateway will be easily passed."

"As long as nothing happens."

"What can happen?"

"Sometimes a demon will be summoned regardless of our level."

I placed the demon proofs on the altar as I said this.

[The Demon Proofs have been placed.]

[A demon appropriate to test you will be summoned!]

There was a blinding light from the altar and the demon started to be summoned.

A colourful spotlight shone. If my prediction was correct, someone on the level of Kim Yongpal would come out. Maybe it was Demon Baron Viller, the weakest of the demon nobles on the second floor. I would be able to suppress him without even using the power of a constellation…

[The demon who wants you is on the second floor!]

…Eh?

[A demon unrelated to your level will be summoned!]

Han Sooyoung stiffened as she heard the messages. "Shit… what is this? Is this what you were talking about?"

[Demon Earl 'Tentacio' has descended!]

…Earl?

Majestic horns rose over the shoulders. The demon who appeared in the colourful spotlight was a powerful existence whom Viller couldn't compare to.

A cruel smile was on his face as he opened his mouth. "…I see. Are you Yoo Joonghyuk?"

Chapter 156: Ep. 30 - Dark Castle, VI

"Yoo Joonghyuk?"

What was going on?

The strongest beings on the second floor of Dark Castle, sometimes they would descend as a test. This had happened in Ways of Survival. However, a demon earl had never appeared in cases where Pink Kid Kim Yongpal was part of the group. Besides that, why was the demon looking for Yoo Joonghyuk after being summoned?

I didn't answer and the demon breathed in before looking at Lee Hyunsung. "Are you Yoo Joonghyuk?"

"…I am Lee Hyunsung."

"Then who is the person called Yoo Joonghyuk?"

I opened my mouth. There was nothing good about stimulating the demon earl here. "Why do you want to find him? He isn't here so go back."

The demon earl Tentacio laughed at my words. "A bug is talking back to me. It's strange. I heard that the person who is Seoul's strongest person is here?"

Seoul's strongest?

"Uh… that sounds like me."

The party members all looked at me at the same time. Why were they looking at me like that? It was true.

Tentacio also stared at me. "You said that you're not Yoo Joonghyuk."

"The strongest in Seoul isn't Yoo Joonghyuk. It is me."

What the hell was going on? Why was he looking for the strongest in Seoul?

[The constellation 'Slumbering Lady of Fine Brocade' is sorry towards you.]

[The constellation 'Slumbering Lady of Fine Brocade' is asking you to defeat this demon.]

…Slumbering Lady of Fine Brocade? I wondered reflexively. Suddenly, I got a sense of what was going on.

[You are staring at the constellations of Silla.]

[Constellations of Silla are embarrassed.]

Yes, this was right. These bastards… they sold me to save their descendants?

[The constellation 'Slumbering Lady of Fine Brocade' shows what happened.]

The memory of Slumbering Lady of Fine Brocade appeared in my head. The injured Min Jiwon stuttered as she opened her mouth.

–Seoul's strongest… is Yoo Joonghyuk.

[The constellation 'Slumbering Lady of Fine Brocade' is giving you a pathetic look.]

The act of showing one's memories required paying some probability and a significant amount of coins. The fact that she showed me her memory without hesitation meant the situation was urgent.

Damn, then send him to Yoo Joonghyuk. Why send him to me? Was I easy? I sighed lightly and spoke towards the air. "Then what will you do for me if I help?"

[The constellation 'Slumbering Lady of Fine Brocade' says she will pay coins.]

"How much? Will you give me 2,000 coins again?"

[The constellation 'Slumbering Lady of Fine Brocade' is embarrassed.]

"Give me something else. Something helpful."

[Constellations of Silla have their pride damaged and are angry at 'Slumbering Lady of Fine Brocade'.]

[The constellation 'Slumbering Lady of Fine Brocade' says she will pay a story.]

A story?

[A new bounty scenario has arrived!]

[Bounty Scenario - Fight Against the Demon]

Category: Sub

Difficulty level: A+

Clear Conditions: Defeat the demon earl 'Tentacio'.

Time Limit: —

> Compensation: The trust of the constellations of Silla, one historical-grade story.
>
> Failure: —

A historical-grade story. It was fairly decent.

In fact, I was already going to kill the demon earl without any conditions. The constellations of Silla weren't as powerful as a nebula but there was nothing bad about them owing me a debt. I had to defeat this demon anyway.

The demon earl was tired of waiting and growled out, "Why are you speaking to yourself? Then you're not Yoo Joonghyuk?"

A powerful airflow was released from Tentacio's body and Lee Hyunsung quickly stepped forward.

"Dokja-ssi, I'll take care of him."

"Hyunsung-ssi, you can't do it alone…"

"I will never lose the empty cartridge again."

Han Sooyoung whistled like it was interesting. Tentacio made a complicated expression and grinned. "You don't know who your opponent is. I like trampling on people like you."

"You don't know who I am?"

The earth shook and Lee Hyunsung ran forward as he activated Steel Transformation. Lee Hyunsung's shoulders became covered with steel as he struck Tentacio's shoulder horns. Lee Hyunsung had the courage to face the demon earl without backing off.

"You are someone who inherited a story?" Tentacio wondered.

Lee Hyunsung's Steel Transformation was a stigma obtained by inheriting a story from Master of Steel. With one exchange, the demon noticed the value of

Lee Hyunsung. He was an earl and knew the value of a 'story'.

"I'll eat it."

Tentacio embraced Lee Hyunsung's body. Lee Hyunsung continuously struck him with fists but Tentacio wasn't fazed. Fangs emerged from the demon's mouth and he bit Lee Hyunsung's shoulder.

The strength of Steel Transformation was directly connected with Lee Hyunsung's will. Unless his will was broken, Lee Hyunsung's steel wouldn't be destroyed.

Of course, this was written in Ways of Survival. However, it was only Lee Hyunsung of the second half who fit such a wonderful description.

Cracks started to appear in Lee Hyunsung's hard steel. Lee Hyunsung's expression started to pale.

"…What the hell is this?" Han Sooyoung's eyes shook as she watched Tentacio. "Kim Dokja! What is that?"

I didn't think the Seoul rankings announced by the dokkaebi were wrong. Apart from me, Han Sooyoung was the only one who knew the exact level of the demon earl.

I replied. "He is a 3rd grade demon."

Demon species above the 3rd grade had their own story.

[The 3rd grade demon 'Tentacio' is telling the story of Bug Slaughter.]

Bug Slaughter. It was a pretty useful narrative. It wasn't in the form of a stigma yet but its power exceeded the stigmas of incarnations since this was his own story.

As Tentacio's story started to be released, all the incarnations, including Lee Hyunsung and Han Sooyoung, stood in place like hardened bugs. Lee Jihye and Lee Gilyoung who was still unconscious, twisted in pain while Kim Yongpal had already collapsed while foaming at the mouth.

This was the real power of the 'story'. It was to swallow other beings into the 'story'. The frozen incarnations were waiting for their master's command.

"It is the time of slaughter, Bugs."

Lee Hyunsung's steel shattered helplessly and Han Sooyoung's clones exploded. It was a complete wipe out. The story 'Bug Slaughter' showed overwhelming power against many weak people. The earls of the second floor were beyond measure.

I held Lee Hyunsung's shoulder as he was thrown back. Lee Hyunsung was released from the fear at my touch and he stuttered.

"D-Dokja-ssi."

"Move back."

"It isn't possible. If I don't protect Dokja-ssi this time—"

"A cartridge doesn't disappear so easily. Watch me." I patted Lee Hyunsung's shoulder and walked forward.

Tentacio laughed amusedly. "You can resist my story? You are someone with moderately strong mental power.

"Mental power isn't the problem."

"Then what? Kneel, Bug."

The pressure around us suddenly rose and people fell to their knees. Of course, I was fine. Tentacio was confused as he watched me walking casually. It was thanks to Fourth Wall. There was also a more fundamental difference.

"…Answer me. How can you move?"

"In order to get that story, you have to pick at least 100,000 people with weak stories and kill them. You're quite a nasty bastard."

"What?"

This was the difference in 'status'.

"Still, Bug Slaughter is a fairly usable story. At least, when the enemy is weaker than you."

[You aren't interested in the 'Bug Slaughter' story.]

[The effect of 'Bug Slaughter' is negated by you.]

Tentacio's eyes widened. "at least a marquis-grade… perhaps a demon king? No, that isn't likely… are you a returnee?" The peak of the demon species, the 72 demon kings were equivalent to narrative-grade constellations. "But a returnee can't be on the first floor of Dark Castle…"

"That's right. Both are wrong."

An existence with their 'status' revealed was constrained by probability.

[You are looking at the demon earl 'Tentacio'.]

Tentacio turned pale. I didn't delay and rushed towards Tentacio while using Purest Sword Force.

[Blade of Faith has been activated!]

[The special option of Unbroken Faith is activated.]

[The ether attribute is converted to 'divine'.]

The new texture of Unbroken Faith was unfamiliar to me.

"Kuaack!" The demon screamed painfully as the ends of his horns were cut off. The second strike flew towards Tentacio before he could move.

It wasn't just that the earl's story wasn't effective on me. My movements themselves were different from ordinary incarnations. The demon gritted his teeth.

"A constellation? No way… this is impossible!"

I wondered if I should borrow Messiah's Path again but I didn't need to use the 'quotation' against Bug Slaughter. There was a limit to the number of 'quotations' and I also needed to check my abilities without a story.

First, I needed to adjust my stats. Let's see.

[Physique Lv. 62 -> Physique Lv. 90]

[Strength Lv. 60 -> Strength Lv. 90]

[Agility Lv. 60 -> Agility Lv. 90]

[Magic Power Lv. 62 -> Magic Power Lv. 90]

[All stats have increased significantly.

[A total of 116,400 coins have been consumed.]

It was huge spending but it was worth it.

[Your body is moving towards the limits of a human.]

[A formidable energy has filled your body!]

[All stats have reached the scenario limit!]

My heart beat faster as if I had received a caffeine transfusion. The adrenaline level in my body increased sharply and my body became as light as a feather.

My stats had an average level of 90. There was probably no one among the incarnations who had my stats. This was the only thing I could do as a constellation.

"Then let's go."

I relentlessly swung my sword. Tentacio's body was torn by the blade. Tentacio didn't fall easily despite my stats suddenly rising. He seemed to be strengthening his body using his remaining magic power. It was a wise choice because the story didn't work.

"Kuaaaaaaah!"

Tentacio let out a terrible scream. As the battle continued, one or two injuries appeared on my body. As expected, I couldn't fight him without any skills.

Then this would work.

[The special skill 'Miniaturization Lv. 3' is activated!]

[The effect of Miniaturization has decreased the size of your body.]

"What?"

[The exclusive skill 'Bookmark' is activated!]

"I will choose the fifth bookmark, Kyrgios Rodgraim."

[It is confirmed that your body composition is similar to the corresponding character.]

[The status of the character is higher than you.]

[The level of the skill is being forcibly adjusted.]

Normally the messages would end here. However, one more line popped up.

[Your status has risen and synchronization with the person will increase.]

Chapter 157: Ep. 31 - Tomb of the Scenario, I

The white storm energy caused my heart to pound and my body changed into an engine.

[The exclusive skill 'Electrification' Lv. 11 (+1) has been activated.]

Due to the increase in my status, the skill level reached 11.

In essence, all skill levels were restricted to level 10. After that, people had to learn better skills or use 'transcendence' like the returnees. Yet this skill was level 11.

Now my Electrification had exceeded the limits of the system. It wasn't as hard to use Electrification as usual.

The returnee Kyrgios had a strength comparable to a powerful narrative-grade constellation. He was a strong figure whose depth couldn't be measured. Now I could get a glimpse of how much strength Kyrgios had. If Kyrgios had reached a realm that could never be reached, I got a glimpse of where he had gone.

Tentacio was terrified beyond his surprise. "A constellation with a returnee's ability? What on earth are you?"

I wanted to say my name but then my grumpiness got to me. "…What? I am Yoo Joonghyuk."

Tentacio's body was torn in two by the explosive power of Electrification and the Blade of Faith.

The electric current around the sword blew off his arms and legs before his head rolled across the ground. He couldn't even scream. My level 90 magic power was instantly exhausted and fatigue pulled in. Still, I have clearly won.

"Uh… Yoo Joonghyuk…" Shit, I was scared to death. The fallen head was talking. "Incarnation… do you know… what it means… to be a constellation?"

What the hell was he saying now?

"You will regret… giving me… your name."

"What?"

[Demon Earl Tentacio has used 'Death Scream.]

[Demon Earl Tentacio has spread the name 'Yoo Joonghyuk' through Dark Castle.]

[The Dark Castle rankers will remember the name 'Yoo Joonghyuk'.]

…I hadn't expected this.

[The Dark Castle rankers are baring their teeth towards the incarnation 'Yoo Joonghyuk'.]

I felt a bit sorry. I really hadn't intended for this to happen. However, Yoo Joonghyuk should also suffer a bit.

[You have hunted 'Demon Earl Tentacio'!]

[A 3rd grade demon has been killed for the fifth time and 30,000 coins have been acquired.]

Transparent strings started to appear around Tentacio's corpse. From the Dark Castle scenario onwards, we could kill those who had stories and take them away. I stretched out my hand and grabbed the string.

[The historical-grade story 'Bug Slaughter' has been acquired.]

[Bug Slaughter].

This story would be enough to hatch the 41st regression Shin Yoosung.

…By the way, could I feed her the story of a demon? Would her mentality get worse if I fed it to her?

[You have completed the bounty scenario!]

[The constellation 'Slumbering Lady of Fine Brocade' feels deep appreciation towards you.]

[You are now able to receive the protection of the Silla constellations.]

The protection of the Silla constellations. They might seem insignificant but they were also 'constellations'. If I built up a relationship with them, there would surely be a day when they could help me, just like the Absolute Throne situation.

[The historical-grade story 'Silla Allied Forces' has been received.]

…Silla Allied Forces?

[The constellation 'Slumbering Lady of Fine Brocade' is laughing heartily.]

Well, she said she would give me a historical-grade story, not that it would be a good one. It didn't matter since I could feed it to Shin Yoosung.

My party members recovered their spirits and approached me.

"Shit, Kim Dokja is crazy…"

"Dokja-ssi, how strong are you?"

I grinned at them. Lee Hyunsung looked down at his shoulders that had been bitten by Tentacio. "…Are there many enemies like him on the second floor?"

"There are some but it is uncommon. This guy's ranking is probably…"

A message finally popped up in the air.

[50,000 coins have been acquired as a main scenario reward!]

[The main scenario content has been updated!]

[You have won a place in Dark Castle.]

[You have hunted the 10th place demon on the Dark Castle Rankings, Tentacio.]

[Ranking will be in proportion to the hunting contribution.]

"…10th place. There are at least nine existences stronger than this guy. There are more similar guys."

"Ah…" Lee Hyunsung's expression was complicated. He was relieved that the demon earl was in the top 10 but at the same time, he was discouraged. "Dokja-ssi is strong enough to fight these guys."

"Hyunsung-ssi can do it if you follow your story. I also can't guarantee that I can hunt demons higher ranked than him."

In my current state, I could deal with an earl-grade demon without opening a story. It wouldn't have been as easy if Bug Slaughter wasn't his story.

Han Sooyoung's pride also seemed hurt. "Sheesh, pretending to be modest. Aren't you deceiving people?"

"You might've done it if you had fought with all your power. Didn't the Abyssal Black Flame Dragon hand you a story?"

"I haven't succeeded them yet because the contents of the story are crazy. Why didn't you warn me when I said I would choose him? Were you fucking with me?"

'The Abyssal Black Flame Dragon's story was…'

I couldn't remember well but considering the fact that the original contractor was Delusional Demon Kim Namwoon, Han Sooyoung's reaction was understandable. It would be a shameful story that would annihilate the soul just by inheriting it.

[The Dark Castle Rankings in proportion to the hunting contribution will be announced!]

Finally, the rankings were determined. A ranking number was sent to the status window in front of all of us.

[The incarnation Kim Dokja's ranking in Dark Castle is 11th place.]

11th place. It wasn't bad. The rest of my party members had terrible expressions, as if they were receiving their CSAT scores.

Han Sooyoung quickly ran to my side and glanced at my ranking window.

"Hey, you are quite high…" Han Sooyoung's expression hardened when she saw the number '11'.

There was a big difference in contribution. Han Sooyoung and the others were probably in the hundreds. She wondered, "Will I be 11th place if I kill you now?"

"Do you think you can win?"

"I don't know. In any case, I am better than that ahjussi."

Han Sooyoung pointed out he passed out Kim Yongpal.

[The incarnation Kim Yongpal's ranking in Dark Castle is number 101,123.]

The 102,123th ranked Kim Yongpal slept without knowing the world.

Lee Jihye and Lee Gilyoung, who had been unconscious since the beginning, received the ranks of 98,761 and 87,541 respectively. This was strange. Why was this ahjussi's rank lower than people who had been unconscious from the beginning.

"What about Lee Hyunsung-ssi?"

"636th place."

Lee Hyunsung's voice was gloomy. I hesitated to speak words of comfort but Lee Hyunsung opened his mouth first. "…It's fine. I received many reports like this during my school days. I'm somehow more motivated."

It seemed there was no need for me to worry. Lee Hyunsung was the type to become more devoted if he had a specific goal.

Shin Yoosung, who was standing beside me, shook when my eyes met hers. "D-Don't look!"

She was like an elementary school student hiding a report card from her parents. I was a bit worried about this child.

"It doesn't matter what ranking you are right now. There will be many chances to rise up after going to the second floor. It depends on how hard Yoosung works."

…Damn, I shouldn't say such lame things. Not everything would work out if you tried hard.

Still, Shin Yoosung seemed to sincerely accept my advice. "…Can I become strong enough ahjussi?"

"Of course. You're stronger than me."

I spoke sincerely. In fact, Shin Yoosung had more potential than anyone else here.

[Your stigma is about to blossom.]

[Screening the story of your stigma.]

Shin Yoosung would grow explosively once she received a stigma. No, even without a stigma, Shin Yoosung was essential for the second floor of Dark Castle. It was a stage where the children could be active.

"However, I don't know why this ranking was suddenly given. If it merely for a competition… perhaps the person who reaches the top will receive a medal."

It was Lee Hyunsung who spoke. His words weren't wrong. I'm sure this was the purpose. There was an even more fundamental reason for the Dark Castle Rankings.

The moment I opened my mouth.

[The demon king 'Asmodeus' is interested in your presence.]

[The demon king 'Astaroth' is watching you.]

[The demon king 'Orobas' is hungry for your story.]

It wasn't just me. The other party members also received the message. The messages were much more disturbing than those sent by the constellations. The messages alone caused everyone to shake.

In particular, Han Sooyoung was completely frightened since she previously received the curse of the demon king.

A demon king. Among them, a few had a 'status' that could compare to the constellation. At the end of this scenario, we would fight a demon king.

"Kuaaaack!"

The blade curved in a beautiful manner and cut off the head of a demon species.

'…He was one without a story'.

Yoo Joonghyuk had climbed up to the second floor and launched his full-scale plan to raise his ranking. As always, plans for the future were crammed in his head like training routines.

'In order to get to the third floor, I need to seek the four heavenly kings'.

'The top rankers should be in the same section'.

'One of the 10 Evils is on the second floor. It is better not to bump into him'.

'If I keep collecting stories like this, perhaps in four days…'

Then a message appeared in the air.

[Someone has spread your name with 'Death Scream'.

[The Dark Castle rankers will remember your name.]

[The Dark Castle rankers are watching for you.]

[The Dark Castle rankers will aim for your story.]

Yoo Joonghyuk frowned at the message.

'My name was suddenly spoken?'

It was strange.

'Death Scream is a demon curse. I haven't killed one yet who used that ability'.

Yoo Mia's cheeks puffed up from beside him and she asked, "What is it Oppa?"

"It's nothing." Yoo Joonghyuk hesitated for a moment before adding, "…It seems that guy is doing something bothersome again."

"That guy?"

"There is such a person."

Yoo Mia watched her brother, who had spoken in a cold voice. There was a nuance different from usual in his voice. It was a small change, like a grain of rice, but Yoo Mia was able to perceive the change. It was because Yoo Joonghyuk was her oppa.

*

"Are you referring to that ugly ahjussi?"

"…"

"Oppa looks happy when talking about that ahjussi."

Yoo Joonghyuk was embarrassed when he saw his smiling sister and he replied sharply. "You are mistaken."

"Is that so?"

Yoo Mia laughed at Yoo Joonghyuk. Yoo Joonghyuk scowled and wanted to say something to her.

The next moment, a bloody aura rose from Yoo Joonghyuk's body. Yoo Mia thought he was really angry but Yoo Joonghyuk opened his mouth first. "Stop eavesdropping and come out. Otherwise I will kill you."

One part of the air seemed rigid and a heavenly doll appeared from a crack in the air. It was a woman wearing a cloak.

"I'm sorry. It wasn't on purpose."

"Who are you?"

"It's me, Yoo Joonghyuk."

The cloak was removed, revealing a surprising figure. Yoo Joonghyuk knew this face. Not long ago, he had rescued her.

"…Yoo Sangah?"

It was Yoo Sangah, who was the incarnation of the nebula Olympus.

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* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)

Chapter 158: Ep. 31 - Tomb of the Scenario, II

He hadn't met Yoo Sangah in a week and she seemed more haggard than before. However, her eyes were more dazzling than usual.

"It seems you have inherited a pretty good story."

Yoo Joonghyuk slowly pulled out the Splitting the Sky Sword. The second floor of Dark Castle was a suitable stage for taking away the stories of others. Yoo Sangah's story would be well worth it.

'This woman also wasn't there in my previous regressions'.

He saved her last time because of circumstances but he couldn't leave an element of insecurity alone forever. One element in Kim Dokja was enough. Yoo Sangah raised her hands and stepped back. "I didn't come to fight."

"Then why did you come?"

"I need your help."

"I told you not to get involved with me anymore. I rescued you at that time to repay my debt to Kim Dokja."

"It is related to Kim Dokja-ssi."

Yoo Joonghyuk's killing intent slightly subsided. "What do you mean?"

The energy that was pressing down on her disappeared and Yoo Sangah opened her mouth. "In this scenario, Dokja-ssi is going to die."

Kim Dokja would die? Yoo Joonghyuk laughed. "Kim Dokja is capable of resurrection. I thought I told you before but you must've not heard it."

Yoo Joonghyuk could guess Kim Dokja's abilities to a certain extent. It wasn't an endless resurrection but Kim Dokja would be able to survive death a few more times. Thus, Kim Dokja's life wouldn't be threatened for the time being.

"He should've resurrected by now… you haven't met him yet?"

This time, Yoo Sangah's eyes shook. Still, she didn't give in and spoke again.

"It's not like that. If you leave it like this, Dokja-ssi will 'really' die."

"…How do you know?"

"I saw it."

"You saw it?"

The next moment, a giant thread appeared behind Yoo Sangah. It wasn't a strand from Ariadne.

Looking closer, the thread wasn't made of yarn. It was made of very small strings. The strings were made of countless stories. Yoo Joonghyuk knew the identity of the thread in the air that flowed like the giant fabric of fate.

He knew but couldn't help feeling surprised. This was the symbol of the three goddesses of fate, the Moerae.

Yoo Joonghyuk thought about it. "You stole a prophecy from a constellation?"

Yoo Sangah gently nodded.

The enraged Yoo Joonghyuk shouted, "Do you know what you have done. Fate…"

"I know! That's why I'm asking for help, Yoo Joonghyuk-ssi."

Yoo Joonghyuk's mind was complicated. The Moerae's 'fate' wasn't simple a power to see the future. Rather, it was a prophecy that came from 'conclusions' through 'big data'.

The most reasonable future was predicted through a combination of countless stories. In this way, 'fate' wasn't absolute and seemed like it could change, but this never happened.

So far, the prophecies of Olympus had never been wrong. Even Zeus, the lord of Olympus, couldn't escape from his fate. It was because the moment a prophecy was made, the whole probability of Olympus was used to realize this fate.

"Please stop Kim Dokja-ssi. Otherwise…" Yoo Sangah couldn't finish her words. The sparks around her body blocked her mouth.

However, Yoo Joonghyuk could clearly read the strings behind her.

「Incarnation Kim Dokja will be killed by the person he loves most.」

"Wow, the plains are huge!"

"Is this really the Dark Castle?"

Lee Hyunsung stared at the horizon with admiration. The vast expanse of plains and forest areas spread out in front of us. A river with an ominous aura flowed through the centre of the plains. This river was a tributary of the Phoenix River.

We finally arrived at the second floor of Dark Castle.

"That's right. This is the second floor. It is a completely different place from the first floor."

Unlike the first floor where a new scenario was in progress, the second floor had a scenario that had been going on for a very long time.

I could see the appearance of some incarnations in the distance. They were Seoul incarnations who newly entered this floor with us.

The incarnations didn't react when they saw us. Looking closely, they were receiving guidance from a dokkaebi.

[…Congratulations to all the new incarnations who came to the second floor. The Abyss Plains is an opportunity for you to do anything.]

It was a dokkaebi with a peculiar tone of voice whom I had never seen before. He had a visibly old appearance. He was a dokkaebi who seemed to have worked for the bureau for a very long time.

It was natural if he was in charge of the scenario for the Abyss Plains. Demoted dokkaebis were assigned to this scenario.

I turned on my smartphone and found information on the second floor of Dark Castle in Ways of Survival.

「The Abyss Plains. The dokkaebis call it the tomb of the scenario.」

…The tomb of the scenario. The words caused me to feel refreshed. I had already come this far.

Han Sooyoung listened to the dokkaebi and opened her mouth. "Another jerk. What opportunity? He will just adjust the difficulty once he becomes angry."

It wasn't just her. The other incarnations had become familiar with the dokkaebis and they looked at this one with distrust. This was the ninth scenario and there was no way they would make a fuss about an opportunity.

The dokkaebi laughed as if he knew what they were thinking.

[Don't worry. There will be no interference from the dokkaebis in this scenario. Regardless of whether the story is interesting or boring, we won't touch it.

The incarnations murmured. to each other So far, the dokkaebis had never said anything like this. They always wanted a more stimulating story. Why were they suddenly not interfering?

"What the hell are you planning?"

"What does this mean?"

[I know that you're all tired from the scenario. Still, I am telling you the truth.]

[The updated main scenario has arrived!]

[Main Scenario #9 — ???]

Category: Main

Difficulty: ???

Clear Conditions: ???

Time Limit: —

Compensation: None

Failure: —

All the conditions were private and there was no time limit or failure condition. The incarnations had never received such a scenario before and were greatly confused.

"What? Nothing is revealed?"

"Are you trying to fuck us with a shitty scenario again?"

The dokkaebi laughed at the incarnation's violent reactions.

[So far, what have you been running for? For your family and friends? To become stronger? Or to reign over others? Each one of you have your own answer. In my opinion, it is all a lie. You came here because you 'followed' the scenario.]

The eyes of the incarnations were shaken as their recent life was dismissed.

The dokkaebi continued speaking. [However, future scenarios will be hard to overcome with such a mind. Passive beings can't survive in the Star Stream. Thus, this scenario won't ask for anything.]

A scenario that didn't require anything. The bodies of the incarnations trembled.

[There is no time limit or failure conditions. There is nothing to fail. You have to find the clear conditions yourself. Only beings who want to tell a story themselves will be able to move forward. Huhu, I wonder how many people will make such a choice? I pray that you won't fall asleep in this 'tomb'.]

The dokkaebi disappeared with these words. The incarnations lost their sense of purpose and started making a fuss. It was a bizarre sight.

This was more peaceful than any scenario so far but the incarnations seemed somewhat uneasy. It was like people were happier when there was an impossible goal.

Lee Hyunsung asked, "Dokja-ssi? What is this?"

Lee Hyunsung was terribly confused. He had been filled with motivation to raise his rankings, only for a scenario with no clear conditions to appear. He must be discouraged. On the other hand, I was a bit worried.

This scenario might be the most dangerous scenario for my party. The moment I was about to open my mouth, a voice was heard behind e.

"Uh… where is this place?"

Lee Jihye and Lee Gilyoung had woken up.

Lee Jihye was in great despair after confirming that her ranking was number 98,761.

"I've never received such a rank in the mock tests…"

Of course, this was a lie. According to Ways of Survival, Lee Jihye wasn't good at studying.

"…Dokja hyung?" Lee Gilyoung jumped like a grasshopper as soon as he saw me. Then he curled up and pretended to be calm. "I knew you were alive. I believed in hyung until the end!"

Lee Jihye ridiculed him. "Kid, what are you talking about? You cried so much with a runny nose."

"Cried?" Lee Gilyoung argued that he never cried and that he naturally knew I was alive.

10 minutes later, Lee Gilyoung couldn't control his emotions any longer. He let out a bit sob and rushed forward to hug my thighs."

"…A scenario without a scenario?" Lee Jihye heard the description from us and asked with a confused expression.

"How can we clear this?" Lee Hyunsung was worried.

"Is there something hidden? We will be able to clear the scenario if we find the hidden condition."

"I guess? If we all work together…"

I smiled bitterly as I watched Lee Jihye and Lee Hyunsung. Indeed, simplicity was helpful. However, not everyone was simple.

"Excuse me… do we really need to clear it?" It was Pink Kid Kim Yongpal who spoke.

Lee Jihye wondered, "Who is this woman?"

"She's just a… woman who happened to accompany us."

I was too lazy to explain. She wouldn't believe me if I said this was a man in his 40s.

Meanwhile, Kim Yongpal was stuttering with half-closed eyes. "J-Just, isn't it okay to stay like this? If we clear it…"

"What nonsense are you suddenly saying?"

"…D-Do you know what is at the end of the scenarios?"

Kim Yongpal penetrated the essence of an unexpected place. I hadn't expected him to say such a line.

Lee Jihye was confused. "What?"

"I-I don't know if it is bad or good for us to keep doing the scenarios… In the constantly occurring scenarios, we are just the toys of the constellations. Even if we clear this scenario, we don't know what the next one will be like. W-We can die at any time."

The expressions of the party members became disturbed by Kim Yongpal's words. It was because he was right.

No one knew how these scenarios would end. No one knew how and when they would die. Everyone ran up to this point because they would die if they didn't clear the scenarios.

However, this scenario had no time limit or failure condition.

Lee Jihye bit her lips. "Then what? You will stay here? Where do you think this is? It is a dangerous place where demons are wandering around…!"

Before Lee Jihye finished talking, large demon species started to gather on the plains. They were demons higher than 5th grade. Lee Jihye laughed like she expected it.

"Look, they're already here."

"Everyone gather!"

The incarnations nearby gathered around our party. The ones approaching were the fourth grade demon species, devil bears. There was approximately 20 of them. We could overcome them if I used Electrification and my party members worked together.

Of course, the other incarnations didn't know my strength and felt despair.

"These monsters…"

At this moment, a bright light shone from the other side of the devil bears. It was due to the white flames. The devil bears shrieked as they were burnt by the divine fire. How powerful was the ability to be able to slaughter a 4th grade demon species? This stigma was…

"Unni!" Lee Jihye shouted.

It was naturally Jung Heewon's Hell Flames Ignition. Jung Heewon discovered us and made a startled expression. In particular, she was shocked by the sight of me.

I waved awkwardly at Jung Heewon who nodded hesitantly. There was some discomfort in her gaze.

…What? Jung Heewon was riding a black unicorn. How did she tame that monster? Other people riding black unicorns came over with Jung Heewon and quickly defeated the devil bears. The incarnations called out Jung Heewon's name.

"Wow! The Judge of Destruction!"

Jung Heewon came closer and Lee Jihye ran towards her.

"Unni, you are really alive! Did you come here first?"

"Jihye, I'm sorry. Let's talk later."

Jung Heewon turned her back to Lee Jihye. Lee Jihye was grouchy and walked back to my side. Jung Heewon led the people in a natural manner, as if she was already accustomed to this.

"Everybody follow me! I will guide you to a safe place!"

…A safe place? The discomfort inside me increased.

The incarnations were bewitched by Jung Heewon's overwhelming force and followed her. We also followed her. We spent approximately one hour crossing the plains. Then a high wall hidden in a forest was revealed.

It was a solid wall that no demon species could surpass. The incarnations were captivated by the sight when a voice came from somewhere.

[Welcome. Was it difficult to come here? Thank you for the trouble. Now you are safe.]

The incarnations murmured. Jung Heewon was staring at me with a complicated gaze.

At this moment, I realized what happened. Dammit. I see. This place was 'that guy's fortress'.

A man appeared on top of the parapet. He gave off a powerful atmosphere that made it clear he was the owner of this place.

The demon, who embraced the most peaceful despair in the world, laughed as he looked down at us.

[You no longer have to complete the scenarios.]

Chapter 159: Ep. 31 - Tomb of the Scenario, III

There was no need to keep performing the scenarios. Everyone gathered at the fortress were wary.

"What the hell does that mean?"

Some people listened to his words but most of them didn't.

(He must be a swindler.)

(…He should make sense. What? There is no need to keep performing the scenarios?)

(This is a trick for him to gobble up the rewards alone.)

These people were incarnations who survived up to the ninth scenario.

There were many scammers in Seoul, even if Geumho Station's Cheon Inho and Chungmuro's Gong Pildu were removed. The incarnations here were one of those scammers or those who came here after defeating them.

That's why none of them were easily caught by a honeyed tongue.

The man on the parapet opened his mouth like he had read their thoughts.

[You don't believe. It is understandable. Nine scenarios isn't long but it also isn't short. I can guess what you have gone through and the life you must've lived to come here.]

The basics of a scammer was to pretend to understand the other person. There were already people fed up with this.

"Do you think I will be deceived by that?"

"What is your purpose? What do you want to say?"

The people who couldn't stand it started shouting. Then the man laughed. It was such a beautiful laugh that it was hard to think of him as a scammer.

[It is literally what I said. You no longer need to fight. You must've heard the dokkaebi's explanation. This Dark Castle scenario has no time limit or failure conditions. If you're smart, you should already understand what this means.]

I looked to the side and saw that Kim Yongpal's eyes were shining.

[You can continue to live in this scenario area. You can eat, sleep in and do whatever you want. Respect the rights of your life and forget the compulsion to break the scenario… you can finish your life here, just like it was before the 'destruction' began.]

"The rights of our life? Don't talk bullshit!"

"How can we live in a place where demons are roaming?"

"We have a place to go back to!"

People shouted like they were refuting evil.

Then the man asked, [Go back? Where will you return to?]

"Of course, the place where we lived…"

[Do you mean the perished planet?]

"It isn't destroyed! Not yet!"

[Everybody already knows. The moment the scenario begun, your planet is walking the path towards destruction. If you go back, you will only see ruins. Even if you break the scenario… the last thing you will see is destruction.]

"Who are you to say that? What do you know—"

[I know. The planet where I lived has long been destroyed by the scenario.]

The shaken crowd fell silent. This person lost his home a long time ago to the scenario. The man who stayed in Dark Castle for longer than anyone else was speaking to them now.

[That's why I can say with confidence that there is no safer place in the Star Stream than here.]

For the first time, people's spirits weakened. Their eyes were still disbelieving but they were listening to his story.

Someone asked in a loud voice, "Who are you?"

[My name is Reinheit von Djerba. I am someone who came to this land 800 years earlier than you… I am the owner of this fortress, Paradise.]

Then the door of the fortress opened. The expressions of the people changed as they saw the scenery inside. Reinheit saw their expressions and smiled.

[I once again welcome you. Welcome to Paradise.]

* * *

Paradise.

There were numerous references to it in Ways of Survival.

The tomb of the scenario. The nest of incarnations. Flowers blooming on the plains of despair… these were some of the descriptions for this place.

In fact, most of them were true.

"This place is…"

All the party members except for me were enchanted by the sights in front of them. Lee Jihye, Lee Gilyoung, Shin Yoosung and even Lee Hyunsung. In particular, Lee Hyunsung rubbed his eyes several times, as if the sight in front of him was unbelievable.

There were residential and market areas on both sides of the main street. Voices filled with unprecedented energy could be heard.

"Selling the legs of the demon bug! Have a taste! Recovers your fatigue!"

"Selling farm grown Sancho Berries! It is useful for recovering stamina!"

The merchants at the market were friendly and customers who paid for their goods were satisfied. People of various races and nationalities gathered but no one seemed to discriminate or threaten each other.

All the incarnations who entered the fortress were baffled by the suddenly bright atmosphere.

"What on earth…"

Until a moment ago, the words 'paradise' and 'peace' were just nonsense to them. Yet that nonsense was being presented in front of them.

"…Paradise?"

Some people were so surprised that they flopped to the ground. One of the hasty incarnations groaned while dropping a weapon.

A friendly hand was held out to him.

"Are you okay? All injured people, come here! The Paradise Clinic treats all the wounded for free!"

"We will teach you the medicinal techniques! Learn about the difference between ether and magic power! Anyone who wants to use sword energy can learn it! Anyone is welcome!"

The people living in Paradise weren't stingy about sharing. They exchanged their knowledge and regarded helping someone as a virtue. There was even cross-species communication.

A demon with horns on his head smiled and waved at us.

"Ah, a demon!"

Some surprised incarnations pulled out their weapons and the guards in the fortress quickly approached. "Please put that away."

"What are you talking about? He is a demon…!"

"Such hatred is prohibited here. He is also a resident of Paradise."

"R-Resident?"

The perplexed incarnations hesitated and the demon who waved at them came over.

"I am a demon but I won't hurt you. The prejudice that all demons will eat humans makes me sad."

The incarnations made bemused expressions at the words. Their eyes showed they couldn't figure out what was going on.

Similar scenes kept occurring. Demons, humans and other species joined forces to build houses, went to the pub together or sat next to each other on outdoor terraces… They often sent welcoming gestures to this side.

The party members were distracted by the sights that were like a tourist advertisement.

[The character 'Lee Hyunsung' is shaken by the surrounding scenery.]

[The character 'Lee Jihye' is agitated by the surrounding atmosphere.]

My companions' hearts were conveyed in real time. This was the first peace they encountered after the scenario began. It wasn't strange that their minds would shake.

People who lived ordinary lives didn't change their essence just because they carried a knife.

Everything was the result of an outside force. Now for the first time, they could escape from that outside force. It was natural to be seduced.

We saw Jung Heewon's figure in the distance. Jung Heewon was talking to someone. It was a woman I had seen before.

"Thank you so much for that time. I can't say enough thanks…"

"It's nothing! I'm glad that you're doing well."

The young woman talking to Jung Heewon glanced at me and her eyes widened. Her emotional state changed quickly.

Surprise, fear and… gratitude.

"Perhaps this person is…"

"Ah, Dokja-ssi…"

The woman exclaimed, "You are the person from that time! I haven't forgotten your grace in saving my life."

At first, I was a bit confused but I remembered when I saw the child holding the woman's hand.

"Are you from Geumho Station…?"

"Do you remember? Dayoung, you should say hello."

"Hello…"

They were the mother and daughter who fought against the Cheoldoo Group at Geumho Station.

They didn't join our party but managed to survive until now. The mother and daughter were working at a farm here and gave us a beautiful basket. I tried to refuse but it was useless.

"We never could've made it here if it wasn't for your help. Thanks to you, I could start over again. I really appreciate it."

The mother and daughter had a new home and seemed to gain a new life.

I looked at the mother and daughter moving away and the memories of Geumho Station flashed through my mind. The regret that I didn't save more people and the cowardly way I comforted myself by saying it was for the best.

The child in the distance suddenly turned and looked at me. A smile spread across the child's face.

A mild guilt flooded in. My hypocrisy was given an undeserved reward. Maybe Jung Heewon also felt like this.

Jung Heewon looked at the mother and daughter before saying to me, "Congratulations on your resurrection. It took a bit longer this time."

"Isn't your response too ordinary? Jihye and Gilyoung started crying."

"Should I do that?"

"I don't want it."

I looked around with a smile while a difficult expression appeared on Jung Heewon's face.

She hesitated for a moment before opening her mouth. "…Dokja-ssi, can we talk for a minute?"

Jung Heewon had come here four days ago. She used the power of Hell Flames Ignition to clear the first floor in the shortest time and quickly climbed to the second floor.

Then she reached Paradise. It was a place where the shackles of the scenario could be removed.

Of course, Jung Heewo didn't believe the man's words. On the first day, she felt disbelief and on the second day, she doubted everything.

She was shaken on the third day and then I came on the fourth day. Jung Heewon said, "I suddenly thought about what it meant to continue with the scenario."

Jung Heewon wasn't brainwashed. In the first place, Paradise itself was a sweet drug.

I smiled bitterly and asked her, "Weren't you shaken too quickly?"

"…Maybe it has always been this way."

Jung Heewon smiled bitterly.

"Let me go! I'll pay coins! I'll pay the value of what I stole! Let me go!"

As we walked down the street, scenes of prisoners being dragged away by the guards could be seen. Some of them were people who entered the fortress with me.

It seemed they couldn't abandon the old habit of taking other people's things. Jung Heewon looked at the man being dragged and said, "This place is better than Seoul."

"Yes."

"Species don't discriminate against each other and they work hard together. There are houses for everyone to live and places to work."

She spoke like she was making excuses.

"We don't have to be betrayed by colleagues or worry about the monsters who appear at night."

I watched Jung Heewon who was saying such words. The Judge of Destruction Jung Heewon.

She was a sword that I crafted myself in this world. Maybe Jung Heewon was the woman who killed the most people in my group. A person who had to kill everyone to protect my principle of 'non-killing'.

"We don't have to live chasing the scenario. We don't need to have nightmares because we killed someone. There is also no more need to lose anyone."

The hardest blade was the easiest to break. It was the hardest so it was wielded the most. Thus, it was damaged the most and lost its sharpness the most. That's why it broke faster than other swords.

"This is a good place." My words caused Jung Heewon's eyes to shake. I stared into those eyes as I kept talking. "I think this is a safe place."

It wasn't a lie.

"There is no safer place in Dark Castle than here. No, maybe… it isn't easy to find a safer place in all the scenarios."

I didn't want to admit it but it was true. Paradise was truly such a place.

"Dokja-ssi, perhaps…"

I hurried as if I knew what she would say. "Yes, I won't stay here."

"Why?"

"This place isn't the 'end'."

"…Dokja-ssi knows the future."

In the past, I had a talk with Jung Heewon in the Theatre Dungeon. Jung Heewon had asked me about the future and I told her she didn't exist there. It was because she wasn't in the original novel. A character I didn't know the future of…

I told her, "I need to continue with the scenario."

Jung Heewon thought about my words. She looked at the people of Paradise. There were people smiling, talking and willing to live again. "Dokja-ssi, what is the 'end' you are thinking about?"

"I can't tell you."

"Then that end… is it better than this place?"

I couldn't easily answer because it was a question from Jung Heewon, not anyone else.

"If you don't continue with the scenario, will everyone be unhappy?"

I wondered if the ending I wanted was a place more beautiful than this Paradise? Could everyone be happy when that ending was reached?

We stared up at the sky without speaking. It felt like there was something precious there but I had forgotten what it was. As if she had woken up from a brief dream, Jung Heewon opened her mouth. "The master of this place is looking for Dokja-ssi."

I nodded.

Chapter 160: Ep. 31 - Tomb of the Scenario, IV

Jung Heewon and I passed through the central shopping district of Paradise and arrived at a small hill.

The place where the master resided was naturally gorgeous. It was the same with the castle in Peace Land. However, the lord of Paradise wasn't a normal existence.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' has wide eyes.]

[The constellation 'Patron of the Young and the Travelers' reveals discomfort.]

As I moved closer to the hill, the constellations of Eden reacted violently.

Patron of the Young and the Travelers. Perhaps a new archangel was paying attention to me. Based on the faint pressure felt from the indirect message, it seemed to be a constellation that was at least on the level of Uriel.

It meant three angels in Eden was following me.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is looking forward to your rampage.]

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' wonders about your stigma.]

The Great Sage, Heaven's Equal and the black dragon were the same. All three regular members of my channel gathered together. I felt pleased because the Great Sage, Heaven's Equal helped with the formation of my nebula last time.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' has snorted and let out snot.]

…It was hard to believe from the indirect messages that this was the Great Sage, Heaven's Equal. In fact, did he actually write the indirect messages? For example, there was the clone I saw.

Either way, if Secretive Plotter came then all four of the early people would be gathered…

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' is watching the situation with interested eyes.

Scarily enough, the last one came as I was thinking about him.

Secretive Plotter. I wasn't able to confirm his face at the constellation banquet. It was clear that he was a narrative-grade constellation but no matter how I thought about it, I couldn't remember his modifier.

I suddenly had doubts. Was it possible this strong presence didn't appear in the original novel?

[Many constellations are paying attention to your actions.]

"We are here." Jung Heewon spoke and I stopped at the road up to the hill. There was a white brick house on top of the hill.

A white house on the hill. I didn't know the intentions behind it but the taste was unique.

"I'll wait here. Call me if anything happens."

I nodded but I already knew that Jung Heewon wouldn't run right away because I called her. In Paradise, there was no one who could win again the Paradise master.

I climbed up along the road and a shadow appeared near the brick house. A man with a beautiful appearance stood there, as if he had been carved into a sculpture.

"Oh, you're here."

If I didn't have Fourth Wall, I would've stopped breathing from his beauty. Yoo Joonghyuk was also handsome but this person's appearance couldn't be described. It was a demonic beauty.

"I'm sorry but please wait a moment. These guys were shy around strangers."

The man was watering the flowers on the hill. The flowers were blooming towards the air. Their petals were wide open, like they were trying to swallow the sky, but they were just small flowers.

I knew the name of the flower.

"The Perpetual Motion."

It was was a collective term for things that worked forever without being supplied energy sources from outside, but here it was merely the name of a flower.

The man asked, "Do you know this flower?"

"New flowers bloom almost every day."

"You have great knowledge."

It was naturally because I read Ways of Survival.

The flowers of Paradise, the Perpetual Motion. The flower, which only grew on this hill, bloomed at dawn and yielded fruit at night. The fruit fell before dawn and would be used as fertilizer to grow more flowers. Perpetual Motion was a flower that repeated forever.

The man said this flower was very lovely. "I never get tired looking at them. Their vitality is truly amazing."

"However, the name is wrong. If it was really perpetual motion, the flower should grow well without water."

"It is such a beautiful flower but you can only saw the flaws?"

The man laughed and looked at me. "I haven't introduced myself. I am…"

"The master of Paradise, Reinheit von Djerba."

I knew him well. He was one of the most famous '10 Evils' in Ways of Survival. Reinheit smiled. "Nice to meet you, Kim Dokja."

As expected, he already knew who I was.

[The exclusive skill 'Character List' is activated!]

[There is too much information about this person. Character List is converted to Character Summary.]

[Character Summary]

Character: Reinheit von Djerba.

Exclusive Attributes: Demon Marquis (Legend), One Who Pursues an Impossible Dream (Hero).

Exclusive Skill: Demon's Eyes Lv. 10, Advanced Weapons Training, Advanced Mental Barrier Lv. 10…

Stigma: Master of Paradise Lv. 10.

> Total Stats: Physique Lv. 99, Strength Lv. 99, Agility Lv. 99, Magic Power Lv. 99.
>
> *2nd in the Dark Castle rankings.

It was truly great. His overall stats had exceeded the limits of the scenario and almost every skill had reached the maximum. Maybe Reinheit was the 'limit' of this scenario.

I stared at him and Reinheit clapped.

"It is difficult when you are burning with too much hostility. The Perpetual Motion will be broken."

I asked, "Why did you call me?"

"I was wondering about the rumours. You have caused a loud buzz the moment you entered this scenario."

Reinheit was different from the 10 Evils I had met so far. If Gong Pildu and Lee Seolhwa were growing into the 10 Evils, Reinheit was already near completion.

"A being like you entering the scenario is a threat to me."

"The second ranked demon marquis is too humble."

"…You know about that? Your preliminary investigation is thorough."

His killing intent suddenly sprang out.

…Was he going to ambush me now?

I hesitated. I didn't think I could beat or kill him. It wouldn't be an easy fight. The outcome couldn't be guaranteed. Yet the reason for my hesitation…

He said, "In my world, Dark Castle was the 34th scenario."

Perhaps it was because I saw his Paradise. Reinheit watched the scenery of the fortress below the hill.

"I remember the first time I came here 800 years ago. At the time, there was nothing on the plains. Only the rankings were given. The incarnations were busy hunting and killing each other, despite there being nothing in the scenario."

I imagined them first falling on the plains. All beings in Dark Castle evolved into demons over time. The first ones to enter Dark Castle weren't demons from the beginning.

"They ascended to a higher species in order to become stronger. In a situation with no time limits or failure conditions, they focused only on getting a higher ranking. Endless war and slaughter. It is the only thing that the incarnations could do when the story had disappeared."

The disappearance of the scenario wasn't a happy thing. Whether it was a constellation or an incarnation, every being eventually needed a story.

However, Reinheit didn't agree with this. He was tired of being a toy in someone's scenario and no longer wanted to be a slave to the scenario.

"Thus, I created Paradise." I knew Reinheit was sincere. "The dokkaebis call this a 'tomb' but not me. I became a blood-stained demon after many years but I believe real life can only bloom after the scenario has disappeared."

The words were filled with deep emotions. I might've been caught if I hadn't read the original novel.

「The purest evil.」

That was what Yoo Joonghyuk called Reinheit.

"Constellation Kim Dokja. You want to go to the next scenario."

"That's right."

"Stop. Such a thing doesn't exist." As expected, this was what he wanted. "I've lived for 800 years and it isn't the first time I've seen someone like you."

"…"

"Numerous strong people have found hidden scenarios but none have cleared Dark Castle. Everyone becomes desperate and frustrated by the void of this scenario." Reinhart continued speaking, "I don't want you to be like them."

"What do you want?"

"Constellation Kim Dokja. Please protect Paradise with me. I need your help."

I stood silently by his side and touched the petals of the Perpetual Motion. Before the surprised Reinheit could stop me, the trembling flower quickly shriveled and the fruit fell. The fallen fruit suddenly became rotten and rolled down the hillside.

The guard passing by saw it but didn't pay much attention. It was because they had no intention of cutting out the rotten part of Paradise.

"U-Ugh… release me! It is wrong!"

"I didn't steal anything!"

The criminals of Paradise were being transported to the underground area below the hill. I knew where they were being dragged.

[Some constellations are laughing unpleasantly.]

Just as permanent institutions didn't exist, Paradise wasn't free. They would probably become Paradise's fertilizer. It was just like the rotten fruit became the plant's fertilizers.

A small earthquake occurred deep underground. It seemed to be the cry of a terrible monster.

I told him, "Reinheit, there is no Paradise. A permanent institution can't exist."

Reinheit didn't say anything. It looked like he was trying to test me. However, he would soon regret it.

"Give me the 'next' scenario."

A look of panic appeared in Reinheit's eyes for the first time.

"I know that you found it 700 years ago. To be exact, you and a few strong people have found it."

"How do you…"

"You have even challenged the scenario. Isn't that right?"

"…"

"However, you failed and survived by yourself. Then this Paradise was made."

I didn't miss the trembling in his fingertips as he looked after the petals. He said he created this place to help people find life.

It wasn't true. This was just a refuge for an impossible scenario.

"All the scenarios of the Star Stream exist for stimulation. There is no stimulation in Paradise. Everything is too peaceful."

"…"

"Don't believe that the deal with the dokkaebi will last forever. The Star Stream will never allow this space to exist for a long time.

Reinheit was quiet for a while before slowly opening his mouth. "… Constellation Kim Dokja. What else do you know?"

His tone had changed. A faint but scary energy was flowing from him. His attitude towards me had changed from this conversation.

It changed from a helper he was anticipating to an enemy more threatening than anyone else.

"All of it, even things you don't know."

I saw a dark cloud coming from afar.

In such a situation, there was no chance of a cloud coming in. Thus, this rain cloud was definitely under the direction of the dokkaebis. They were sitting around and watching everything, even if they weren't interfering.

It was because this world was a scenario even without a scenario. I sighed lightly and prepared for the end of the tragedy.

"Reinheit. You will die and Paradise will fall."

Chapter 161: Ep. 31 - Tomb of the Scenario, V

'I will die and Paradise will be destroyed?'

After Kim Dokja left, Reinheit looked down the hill with a blank expression. He had laughed when he first heard the words. However, he had to stop laughing when Kim Dokja's expression didn't change.

Reinheit was annoyed.

Kim Dokja might be a constellation but this was crossing the line. He wasn't the strongest in the Star Stream just because he was a constellation. It wasn't uncommon for the 72 demon kings to devour fledgling constellations in the Star Stream.

In addition, Kim Dokja was only a half constellation.

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is warning you not to ignore the words of 'Kim Dokja'.]

That's why Reinheit was surprised when the Abyssal Black Flame Dragon came out to defend Kim Dokja.

Who was the Abyssal Black Flame Dragon? He was the most famous of the absolute evil system that even the 72 demon kings didn't want to get tangled up in.

Reinheit looked at the scenery below the hill and naturally became nervous. Thus, he acted like he wasn't.

'Paradise won't perish'.

Reinheit was old but still alive. He had been watching this place alone for 700 years. Thus, this place would be fine in the future. This scenario might be full of poisonous people but he wouldn't lose if he fought in Paradise.

'Rather, the dangerous thing…'

Kim Dokja didn't yet know how terrible the stories that entered Dark Castle were.

The rotten fruit of Perpetual Motion fell off and Reinheit disappeared.

I didn't know what would happen if a battle took place on the spot but fortunately, Reinheit didn't attack. It was obviously that Paradise would be turned upside down if we fought here.

Of course, I had no intention of fighting. Things would be smoother if I defeated Reinheit here but I would be badly damaged and the incarnations of Paradise would develop a grudge against me.

I couldn't let that happen. If Paradise collapsed, it must be due to the anger of Paradise itself, not an external enemy. The incarnations would end up in the same predicament if I acted without revealing what was wrong.

"…Is it over?"

"Yes."

Jung Heewon was waiting for me below the hill. She still had an unclear expression. Maybe she was struggling with her loyalty to me and the comfort of Paradise.

I decided to relieve a bit of her worries. "Heewon-ssi. Do you want to go shopping for a while?"

We walked along the street. Noise came from the bustling shopping district.

"…It has been a while since I've walked like this."

"Me too."

As the awkward silence continued, Jung Heewon decided to speak first. "Do you have any questions for me?"

"What do you want me to ask?"

I know what to she wanted me to ask. However, there were some things I didn't ask because I already knew the answer.

"Um… my favourite colour or favourite food," Jung Heewon replied.

"Those are questions that wouldn't be asked even in blind dates."

"…Has Dokja-ssi been on a blind date?"

I ignored the slight hit to my pride and asked, "Are you disregarding me?"

"No… it just doesn't seem like Dokja-ssi's style. I feel like you would want a fateful meeting."

I felt like I had unexpectedly been stung. In fact, I had never been on a blind date. Jung Heewon continued speaking. "We have never talked about our past before. Aren't you curious?"

"…"

"How did you live before and where did you go to school?"

I quietly listened to her.

"What was your phone number and where did you live? In addition…"

The scenery passed and Jung Heewon's voice gradually died down. As she was speaking, she would've discovered it. Maybe it had been too long to tell such a story.

The area she lived would've been destroyed and those who remembered her history… probably wouldn't be alive. These things happened to us in just a few months.

Jung Heewon was silent for a long time before wondering, "Even if we go back… it won't be the same Seoul, right?"

"It won't."

At the end of the 10th scenario, Seoul Dome would be broken and the incarnations liberated.

Still, this was just the beginning of another hell. It meant the scenarios that were limited to the capital city domes would expand to the whole world.

"Then… why do we have to continue with the scenario? None of the things we knew are still remaining. There is no going back."

This was why she wanted to stay in Paradise. The woman from Geumho Station, Pink Kid Kim Yongpal… Paradise was the place where lost people came.

Jung Heewon's head hung down. I opened my mouth while deliberately not staring at her face. "Heewon-ssi is a good sword."

Small breathing sounds could be heard.

"You are calmer in front of the fire than any of us. In particular, you are sensitive to the tyranny of the strong."

I slowly started the 'story' that I knew.

Just because Jung Heewon didn't appear in the original novel didn't mean I didn't know her. It made me work harder to read her.

"You always fought at the head of the party and never complained about how difficult it was.

Jung Heewon listened to me with her mouth shut. I continued speaking, "You didn't tell anyone when you were hurt and even if there was something suspicious, you chose to believe in that person."

I thought of Jung Heewon. The Jung Heewon who trusted me despite my suspicious actions. The Jung Heewon who fought for me at Geumho Station.

"You might distrust humans more than anyone else but you are actually filled with affection. You are the first to come running when our party is in danger."

Jung Heewon was the one who desperately searched for the party when the dokkaebi separated them. Jung Heewon always joked around but she was careful to make sure we wouldn't be offended by a little joke.

"…"

"If so, don't I know a bit about Jung Heewon-ssi?"

Jung Heewon's head remained lowered as she spoke, "I'm not like that."

"This is the Jung Heewon that I see."

Jung Heewon carefully avoided my gaze.

"No one has ever told me that… Dokja-ssi would be good at blind dates. By the way, what are you talking about?"

Jung Heewon looked up at me and smiled faintly, as if nothing had happened. It wasn't a moment where she should smile.

"This is the Jung Heewon-ssi that I saw because you continued the scenario." Jung Heewon's lips, which had been halfway open, stopped. "That's why I believe you should continue the scenario."

There was no place for us to go back. There might not be a place for us to stay. Still, at least the story was continuing. As long as the story continued, there were more things that we could barely see.

Jung Heewon carefully opened her mouth. "…I don't understand because it is too hard. I told you before. I didn't do well in school…"

"I'm not saying this in the hope that Heewon-ssi will act. Heewon-ssi should live according to your own way."

I opened the Exchange while talking.

[The item that you commissioned to be made has arrived.]

The timing was good. The item that I sent to be produced had come. It was made from the bone of the fire dragon, the heart of a demon and the nucleus of some monsters.

It was an item that only Jung Heewon could use. In the original novel, only the 'three original judges' were able to use the item. I paid 100,000 coins for it to be produced and received the item.

[You have given the 'Sword of Judgment' to Jung Heewon.]

The surprised Jung Heewon accepted the sword.

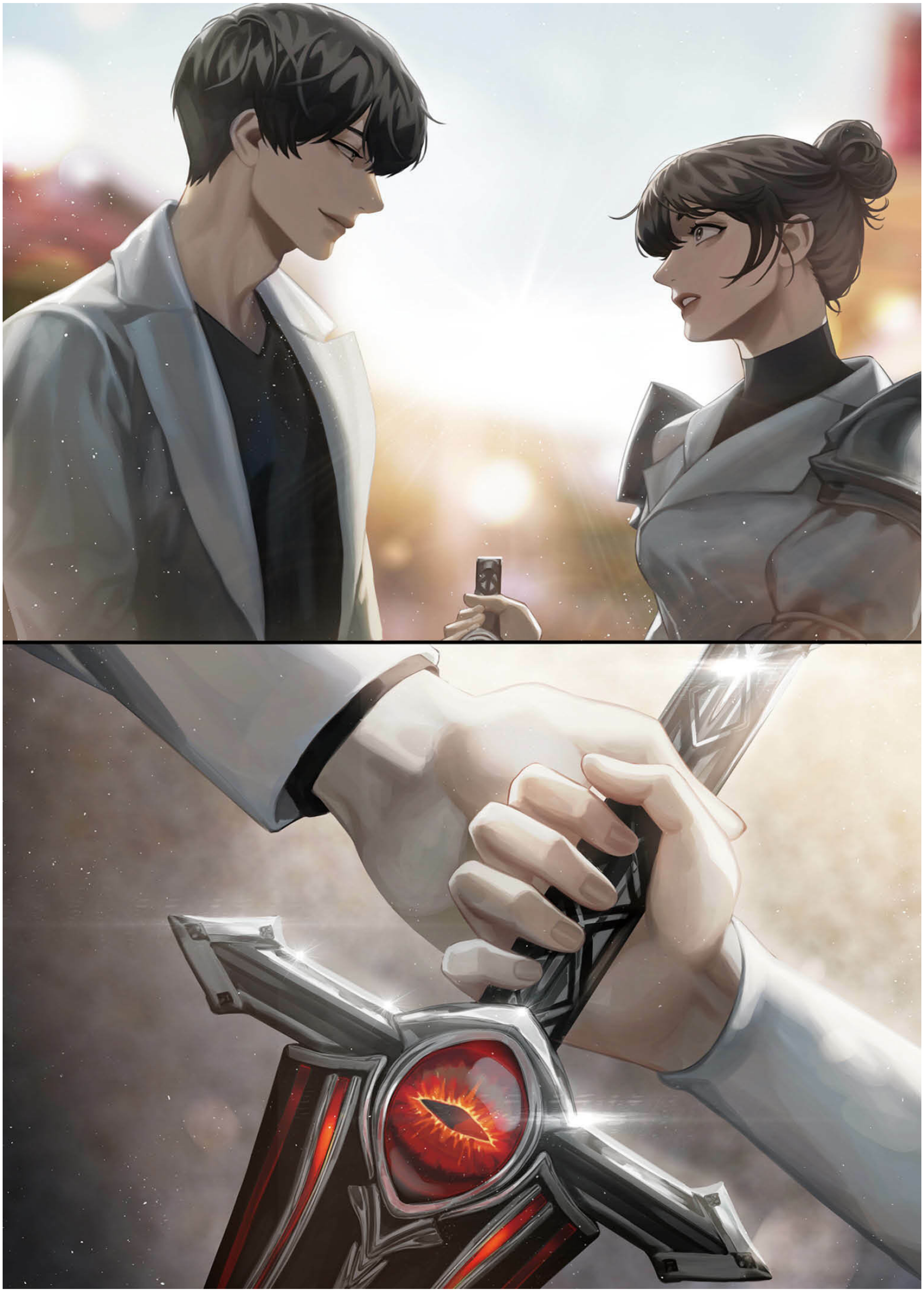
"This…?"

"Didn't we decide to go shopping together? This is my gift. Isn't your old sword broken?"

"I don't deserve this."

I slowly shook my head.

"Nope, only Heewon-ssi is eligible for this sword."



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"Kim Dokja has a really bad personality. Are you actually going to leave like this?"

We moved away from Paradise. Han Sooyoung kept looking back as she spoke.

I replied without looking back. "The things here are finished."

"What is finished?"

If it went according to the original novel, Paradise will probably be destroyed. The peace of the incarnations would be ruthlessly broken.

Should I stop it? I couldn't do that. This scenario would never end as long as Paradise existed.

"Paradise isn't for me to get involved in."

"Ah, you are leaving it to the original flow of the novel… why can't you do it yourself?"

"Reinheit is too hard to catch right now and I will gain a bad story if I do beat him. He has too many supporters."

Stories didn't only have 'good effects'. Some stories would cause your strength to drop.

Han Sooyoung knew this and bit her lips. "Well, it is like this. Then what about the mental state of the companions left behind?"

"They should get some rest."

"What? Rest? Tell me honestly. Aren't you actually angry? You have done a good job but they fell for a demon they met for the first time. In particular,

Jung Heewon…"

"…Jung Heewon deserves it. It has been hard for her so far."

Han Sooyoung scoffed. "Don't make me laugh. Don't you know what you have done? Paradise will soon perish. She received the sword and likes you without knowing anything."

"She chose it herself so she should be responsible for herself."

"You demon…"

Some wounds destroyed us but some made us stronger. It couldn't be helped, even if I was called a demon. This was my path. Han Sooyoung grumbled for a long time before suddenly saying. "Hrmm… by the way, Kim Dokja."

"Why?"

"Why are you taking me?"

"You will help me."

Han Sooyoung bit her lips and suddenly summoned her clones.

…Their faces seemed to resemble me. This reminded me that she could change the faces of her clones.

"What are you doing?"

"Training."

It was more like a one-sided assault than training. Furthermore, she focused on hitting a place that was extremely painful. Han Sooyoung beat me up for a long time before asking, "What are you going to do now?"

"I'll set aside the scenario for three or four days and gather stories while searching for hidden pieces."

Han Sooyoung smiled at the words 'hidden pieces'.

"Why? Aren't you the type to be focused on the main scenario?"

"This time I will leave it to other people. It has been hard for me to do it alone up to now."

When I thought about it, I tried too hard to do it alone. That jerk Yoo Joonghyuk seemed to be working hard but he wasn't helpful at important moments. It would've ended at the Disaster of Floods or Peace Land if I hadn't helped. As I was working hard on the scenarios, he went around finding hidden pieces.

Thus, it was time for him to work properly. I smiled and said, "We will now pretend to be the regressor."

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* Official novel illustration (canonical)

Chapter 162: Ep. 32 - Kim Dokja's Love, I

Four days passed since Kim Dokja left. The fortress still remained and no signs of destruction were visible.

The sky of Paradise was more peaceful than ever and it was even languid. Lee Gilyoung looked at the sky and spoke in a dark voice. "We have been abandoned."

"The little boy is starting again."

"Dokja hyung threw us away." Lee Gilyoung was in a depressed state and had been repeating these words for two days.

Lee Jihye frowned from where she was sharpening her blade nearby. "Why are you making such a fuss?"

Lee Gilyoung replied, "Do you know when a protagonist will leave his colleagues behind?"

"…When?"

"When a colleague will interfere."

"…"

"We are now judged as useless!"

"…How is ahjussi a protagonist? Honestly, Master is more suitable to be the protagonist. In addition, this isn't a novel." Lee Jihye grunted but her expression wasn't bright either.

In the past four days, the group was calm. It was a drug-like peace. It was so peaceful that they felt calm. Nobody threatened them and there was nothing in the world to worry about.

They trained their skills from time to time and recalled the advice Kim Dokja had left for them.

「Gilyoung is lacking skills persistence. If you have coins left, try to place them in 'patience' or 'indomitable persistence'. You can use the exchange or ask your sponsor to help you.」

「 Jihye, you are too biased towards agility. If you have surplus coins, invest in strength and magic power. Your battle style will change depending on where you invest.」

「 Yoosung, focus on raising 'Taming' and Advanced Diverse Communication' to the maximum level. If you need other skills related to taming, tell me at any time.」

Was it due to Lee Gilyoung's words? The uneasy Lee Jihye poked Shin Yoosung sitting next to her. "Hey, little beast."

Shin Yoosung, who had been training Advanced Diverse Communication due to Kim Dokja's advice, suddenly woke up.

"…What is it?"

They might be in the same party but Shin Yoosung didn't like Lee Jihye, who was rude to Kim Dokja. Lee Jihye was embarrassed by the look in Shin

Yoosung's eyes and said, "Hey, don't look at me that way. I have to ask you something."

"What is it?"

"Do you know what Dokja ahjussi is going?"

Shin Yoosung's eyes widened at the unexpected question.

Lee Jihye continued, "You are his incarnation so I was wondering if you knew something. Originally, incarnations get information on the sponsor whenever the sponsor and incarnation's synchronization increases."

In fact, Lee Jihye also shared Yi Sunsin's memories whenever she used the Duke of Loyalty and Warfare's stigma. In the end, the core of the story was the stigma. It was inevitable to know the story of the constellation every time the power was used.

Shin Yoosung desperately tried to choose her words before barely opening her mouth. "Ahjussi… he is a lonely person."

"Hey, anyone could say that."

"He also likes reading books…"

"Books?"

"Yes. Countless pages appear whenever I think of ahjussi. I'm not sure what it is… I can't see the page contents." Shin Yoosung hesitated and lowered her head. "I still don't know that much. I haven't received a stigma yet."

"…I didn't ask to discourage you."

Lee Jihye patted Shin Yoosung's shoulder and once again realized reality. Only one person left but the whole atmosphere of the party changed. As a member, they had to survive well.

'If it wasn't for ahjussi, everything would already be over…'

She looked around and noticed that everyone was uneasy. The two children who depended on Kim Dokja, the soldier who only knew the manual, the female swordsman who was unable to properly cope with her power…

[The constellation 'Maritime War God' criticizes the patriotism of the incarnation 'Lee Jihye'.]

Lee Jihye scoffed and blocked her ears, shouting 'abababa' to tune it out.

'By the way, the soldier is going it again'.

Lee Hyunsung was staring blankly at something. Lee Jihye knew what he was looking at and laughed. It might not be a bad thing to temporarily relax.

"Hey Kid." Lee Jihye watched Lee Hyunsung approaching something and suddenly opened her mouth. "Do you want me to show you something fun?"

* * *

For the past four days, Jung Heewon had nightmares. The monsters were overwhelming and the dream of Paradise was destroyed.

Once she woke up, Kim Dokja's Sword of Judgment was crying.

Several times, Reinheit had come to her and asked her to be the chief of the fortress' security.

However, Jung Heewon refused the request. The reason was because the Sword of Judgment only cried out when there was 'evil' nearby.

Jung Heewon sat on a low slate roof and looked at the scenery of Paradise. There was nothing that could be seen as 'evil' in the city.

"Heewon-ssi, do you have any worries?" When did he come? The bright-faced Lee Hyunsung was standing beside her.

"Ah, just… It is so peaceful that I have a lot of thoughts."

"Me too."

The two people were silent for a moment. An awkward atmosphere flowed. A strange current had flowed between them ever since Lee Hyunsung saved Jung Heewon, who had gone berserk thanks to Nirvana. However, neither of them knew exactly what this current was.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' dislikes the actions of the incarnation 'Lee Hyunsung'.]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is warning 'Master of Steel'.]

[The constellation 'Master of Steel' says this isn't a matter to get involved in.]

She suddenly looked down and saw Lee Jihye and the children hiding.

'…What are those guys doing over there?'

Jung Heewon was about to call out to them when Lee Hyunsung opened his mouth first. "I think there is a reason for this peace."

"You seem to believe that Dokja-ssi didn't just leave us here."

"Dokja-ssi is such a person. It is our job to find out the reason."

She thought using common sense but couldn't figure it out. It was related to why Dokja-ssi left them here in Paradise but she couldn't see what the problem was.

At this moment, noise from a group of people below the roof disturbed her.

"Return the scenario!"

"We want to go to the next floor!"

Jung Heewon frowned. They were people who felt discontent towards the peaceful Paradise. They were the protesters of Paradise. They didn't have a representative catchphrase but they intermittently appeared in Paradise.

Jung Heewon couldn't understand it. Why did they want to go back to the scenario? She opened her mouth. "I think I should go down. A fight might start."

"I understand."

By the time Jung Heewon descended, bloodshed was already happening. However, it wasn't from a 'fight'. It was a one-sided assault. The guards were beating up the protesters.

Jung Heewon was upset by the excessive force and stopped a guard. "Wait a minute! Calm down and back off! This is too much!"

"I am performing official business. Don't interrupt."

The chief guard removed Jung Heewon's hand and gathered the fallen protesters. The protesters were placed into small wagons and seemed to be transported somewhere.

"Catch all those who ran away. I will take all these people."

"What about that woman?"

The guard captain looked at Jung Heewon and shook his head. "Leave it alone. This is an order from the lord."

Not long afterwards, some protesters who ran away were caught. There was an unexpected figure among them.

"I-I'm not a protester! I was just passing by accidentally! Dayoung! Dayoung!"

They were the family from Geumho Station. Jung Heewon shouted, "Wait a minute! That person isn't a protester!"

Then the guard said, "You are a protester. You panicked and ran away when we chased you. If there is no sin, why did you run away?"

"That's right."

The guard captain nodded and started to give instructions again.

Jung Heewon shouted, "No, it is natural to be scared and run when you are suddenly changed!"

"It will be revealed later. There is no time so transport them!"

"I said to wait!"

"…Despite the lord's command, I will arrest you if you interfere one more time."

Funnily enough, Jung Heewon stopped at the word 'arrest'. She didn't know why. Was it because she had been thrown into the wild for so long and suddenly returned to society?

The woman judged she couldn't stop the situation and shouted, "T-The child didn't do anything wrong! Please release the child!"

The guard captain briefly paused at the woman's scream. He thought for a moment before ordering, "…Leave the child alone."

The guards nodded and only took away the woman. The child watched her mother going further away and started to cry.

"Uh, Mother…"

"Dayoung, listen up. Mother will be back soon. Understood? Just wait there! I will…"

Her mother's voice go further away. As Jung Heewon belatedly tried to chase them, some of the watching merchants stepped in.

"Young lady, don't bother. It is useless. This is the law of Paradise."

"Where are they going?"

"They are going to Paradise's dungeon."

"Dungeon?"

"Access is prohibited for everyone except the guards. No one has ever returned from there. Tsk tsk… she is pitiful but she should've lived well."

The merchants showed a lukewarm reaction and scattered.

Jung Heewon stood blankly for a moment before approaching the crying child. She wondered what to do and hesitantly grasped the crying child's hand. Something popped in her head the moment she felt the warm texture.

…This was Paradise?

"I think I know what to do."

She looked back and saw Lee Jihye and the others. All of them had expressions like they had found their own 'scenario'.

Lee Hyunsung said, "I think it will be a big deal but I don't know if we will be okay."

"Dokja-ssi believed in us. Maybe he is doing something bigger. He is always like that."

"That's right. I'm sure hyung is fighting monsters alone with a serious face."

Kim Dokja wouldn't leave without a reason.

It might be to protect people from the threat or to break the scenario… No matter the reason, Kim Dokja would be desperately risking his life at the moment.

Finally, Jung Heewon opened her mouth. "Let's try it together this time."

They couldn't rely on Kim Dokja every time.

Kim Dokja would obviously be performing a hellish scenario in a place that wasn't visible.

"Hey! Kim Dokja, this is honey. You really didn't live like this before?"

On the vast plains, a sports car with a loud engine was moving.

"…Yes."

In the past three days, we had captured three hidden scenarios on the Abyss Plains. The strategy itself wasn't difficult. It was because unlike what I had done so far, all the future information I knew was completely accurate.

"This guy's weakness came out in the 34th regression. If we press the three small dots on his back…"

"His attack range is dangerous but he will reveal a gap after using a ranged attack…"

"The weakness of the boss is the anus…"

It was more comfortable because I was with Han Sooyoung.

"Okay, it is the anus."

I didn't have to explain why I knew the information and Han Sooyoung didn't doubt what I told her.

As a result, we got two star relics. One was an SSS-grade star relic that was only useful as a star relic on these plains.

[SSS-class Ferrarigini].

This car was an SSS-class item created by the Mass Production Maker.

The SSS-class Magic Turret installed on the front and rear were useful for destroying a large number of enemies, as well as moving as fast as Way of the Wind without using magic power.

Thanks to it, we can enjoy the feeling of driving through the plains. What should I say? It was a top-grade regressor course?

I once again felt resentful towards Yoo Joonghyuk. He had been enjoying this type of thing while I broke the scenario.

Han Sooyoung was even more excited than me. She stood up on the passenger seat and raised her arms, shouting, "I will never be a pushover! I will only live selfishly for myself!"

I wanted to tackle that faithful regressor mindset of 'You live only for yourself'.

[Many constellations are pleased with incarnation 'Han Sooyoung's exciting remarks.]

[Many constellations agree with her behaviour.]

[20,000 coins have been acquired.]

The monsters that came running exploded from Ferrarigini's magic bullet. Han Sooyoung was pleased at collecting coins and shouted towards the sky. "Kim Dokja! Say something as well! When will you feel like this again?"

I hesitated for a moment. I was somewhat embarrassed but I agreed with Han Sooyoung's words.

If I thought about it, my life had never gone well. I had always suffered from overtime. Forget a Ferrari. I used public transport because I had no money to buy a used car.

Thus… I felt it as well. I hesitated before shouting in a timid voice. "I-I am the protagonist!"

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' covers her eyes with embarrassment.]

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' considers moving channels.]

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is taken with your chuuni words.]

Shit… why couldn't I feel it?

By the way… things must've happened in Paradise by now. This was the flow in the original novel and the party members would probably do well. Things had been working out recently. If this continued, the scenario would be cleared in a flash…

[A huge fate is hoping for your death.]

…What?

Chapter 163: Ep. 32 - Kim Dokja's Love, II

I thought I heard wrong and dug at my ears. However, the message didn't change.

[A huge fate is hoping for your death.]

What the? I pressed hard against the brakes as my mind became troubled. Han Sooyoung screamed from the sudden stop. "What is it? I was in the middle of feeling good!"

"Please be quiet."

I once again listened. This time a voice appeared as well as the message.

[A huge fate is hoping for your death.]

This was the third time. I gulped. Dammit. Was there an incident where a 'fate message' appeared three times in the original novel?

I thought about it. It was… the 71st regression Yoo Joonghyuk. At that time, Yoo Joonghyuk had been named due to Yama, king of hell.

Shit, what was going to happen?

Han Sooyoung scowled and asked again, "Why? What's going on?"

"Someone has read my fate."

"…Fate?"

Fate. It was as scary as the 'probability' in Ways of Survival.

Strictly speaking, this was a force using 'probability' in the broader sense. However, there was a reason it was called something different. It was because 'fate' was the power of the constellations, who exercised their accumulated probability.

"Uh, wait a minute. It seems to be a story that I vaguely know…"

"Perhaps there was a quick mention in the beginning of the novel."

"Fate… is it similar to Future Sight?"

"It is similar but different."

In fact, it was very different. Reading fate wasn't as simple as reading 'information of the future'. Rather, it was even more dangerous.

"If Future Sight is a glimpse of a predictable future, fate was a power that forced a predictable future."

I didn't know if Han Sooyoung understood so I added an explanation.

"For example, let's say I step on the accelerator for five seconds. Then when I look using Future Sight, won't I be driving?"

"…Well, I guess."

"However, if I know information about the future, I might not step on the accelerator."

"That is possible."

"Fate is different. If someone reads the fate that 'Kim Dokja will step on the accelerator for five seconds', this fate is forced unless it is withdrawn or realized. To put it simply…"

"You must step on the accelerator."

I nodded and Han Sooyoung spoke like it was strange. "By the way, isn't it a bit weird?"

"What?"

"It doesn't fit the probability. According to you, 'fate' is a force that interferes with the scenario but who can force it?"

"Who…"

In principle, the dokkaebis couldn't interfere with the scenario. Thus, there was only one being who could interfere. Han Sooyoung immediately knew the answer. "Even if it is a constellation, alone…"

"It is a problem because they aren't alone."

"What?"

"Only the big nebulae can read fate."

Then a big explosion occurred in front of us. Something was approaching at a formidable pace. It was on a different dimension from the monsters we had met before.

Han Sooyoung's face paled. "…Kim Dokja, what exactly is the fate message that you received?"

"I will die."

"Dammit, you should've told me that first! Why does something always…"

Han Sooyoung spat out and was about to leave the car. A presence appeared in front of them. I reflexively drew Unbroken Faith but the man opened his mouth first.

"Kim Dokja. I have something to tell you."

It was my first time seeing him but I was accustomed to the energy from his body. I instinctively felt that he wasn't an enemy.

"You are…"

The moment I smelt the scent of fragrant well and felt the overexcited air, I discovered who this person was.

"…Did you come to say I will die?" I asked.

The incarnation of Dionysus, who smelt of alcohol, smiled at me with white eyes.

"Ah, you already know?"

I had a good impression of Dionysus. He fought for me on the way to the banquet location. Still, that was a different story from the current situation. I opened my mouth and spoke in a wary voice.

"Are you the ones who read my fate?"

"Yes. Olympus read your fate. But if you're asking if I'm one of them, I'm not."

"What do you mean?"

Dionysius' incarnation just smiled. A thought crossed my mind the moment I saw the smile.

"Surely Olympus isn't splitting apart?"

"You are truly smart."

…Already? This development was faster than the original. The breaking apart of Olympus was scheduled but it should've happened after at least 10 scenarios.

"It isn't just Olympus. Many constellations are aiming at you. They are very strong and mighty existences."

I had expected it. Otherwise my 'fate' wouldn't be so overbearing.

"Why are they aiming for me?"

"Those strong people are afraid of your influence."

"I'm just a fledgling constellation."

"That's how it should be. However, the scenario started on Earth is very special. Some constellations believe this is the scenario we have long been waiting for. Ahh, don't make that expression. I'm not saying this so you can understand."

I wanted to say that my face always looked like this but Dionysus continued. "In any case, just know that this scenario is very important to us. Then you showed up in the scenario."

"I don't know what it is but I'm disturbing things."

"Yes. You are bound to be an obstacle. You will be less influenced by probability than other constellations. You have overwhelming growth and strength compared to other incarnations. That's why some nebulae believe you should either be absorbed or removed."

I briefly looked at Dionysus. "Why are you telling me this information?"

This was the thing i was most curious about. Why was Dionysus showing kindness towards me?

"It is because I like your story." Dionysus laughed heartily and added. "Some constellations and I believe that you can reach ■■."

Jung Heewon and the group spent the day investigating the dungeon of Paradise. There was no way to invade with a large number of people at once so the party decided to scatter and find a method. The method Jung Heewon chose was straightforward.

'I will mix in'.

In the afternoon, new criminals appeared. Uriel gave her the Recluse's Cloak and she chased after the guards while the dungeon was open. The guards and arrested criminals went through the underground door without feeling her presence.

The prison was much deeper than she thought and the darkness was beyond her imagination.

'Where are we going down to?'

It was a depth she couldn't understand. Why did it need to be so deep, even if it was a prison? It would be inconvenient to move…

She was feeling doubts when the guards' footsteps came to a halt. Strangely, all of them looked tense.

"All of you, move over there! We will withdraw immediately!"

The guards were afraid, as if this was a place they shouldn't enter. It was the same for the scary guard captain. Then a thick iron door opened and once it was opened, an entrance filled with metal bars could be seen. There were several layers of steel bars. It was a prison with excessive defenses designed to lock humans in.

"Everybody go in!"

The guards drove the prisoners inside and quickly rushed away.

"Aaack!"

"Help me!"

Jung Heewon mixed in with the prisoners and recoiled at the sight. Why were these people thrown here? What was going on here?

"U-Uhh… where is this place?"

The prisoners looked around. There was a faint light but it was extremely dark. Jung Heewon would've also been lost in the darkness if it wasn't for her Night Vision skill.

'This is a prison?'

She looked around and didn't feel it was a prison at all. The surrounding landscape was closer to a natural cave and there was no method to distinguish between prisoners. No, there were no other prisoners trapped in the first place.

'How does food distribution happen? What the hell is this?'

It was a 'dungeon' system that couldn't be understood at all. The prisoners she came in with were also disconcerted.

"What are we supposed to do here?"

"Excuse me! Is anybody there?"

The scared prisoners shouted but there was no reply. Instead, faint sounds were heard in the darkness.

Jung Heewon slowly pulled out the Sword of Judgment. The moment she stepped in here, the crying of her sword became more violent.

'This…'

An eerie sensation reached her back and Jung Heewon shouted, "Everyone, run away!"

However, it was already too late. Monsters rushed from the darkness and pounced on the people.

"Uwaaaack!"

"Save me! Kuaack!"

Leopard-like creatures were randomly biting people's arms and legs. People's limbs were torn apart like they were toys and blood splattered.

She originally only planned to rescue the woman from Geumho Station but things changed. The almost level 10 Demon Slaying skill was activated and a red aura wrapped around her body.

Her Kendo drew a perfect line in the air. The leopard's body was split apart in a neat line. The agitated leopards kept following her but she cleaned up the monsters.

Jung Heewon's power reached its peak in a place where demons were swarming.

"I-I don't know who you are but thank you…" The people in the darkness found her presence and thanked her. However, Jung Heewon couldn't afford to accept the thanks. She had seen the faces of the leopards.

'What the hell is this?'

The leopards had the faces of humans. Jung Heewon reflexively ran through the darkness.

All her senses had become cold with fear.

She ran and soon arrived at a cavern that was huge beyond her capacity to measure. To be precise, it wasn't a cavern. There were countless monsters in it. This was like the boundary of the Demon Realm.

There were 5th grade, 4th grade and even 3rd grade species. There were also monsters she didn't know the rating of.

"This is Paradise…"

She couldn't find the woman from Geumho Station. Of course, Jung Heewon wouldn't be able to find the woman. She had already been eaten or…

Kuaaah!

She would become one of these monsters. The monsters felt her lifeforce and were excited. Most of them were mixed breeds between demons and other monster species. Some looked like insect kings while others were the outside species… although this was just from the external appearance.

Prisoners were approaching behind her.

"Don't come!"

Before her cry reached them, the ground started to shake and the monster's feast began. The monsters ran out of the cavern like ants. Jung Heewon bit her lips and used her hell flames again.

'I shouldn't have come in alone'.

No, what could the others do if they came with her? Could Lee Hyunsung and the children fight against these distant enemies? Rather, it was good that she came alone.

"Kuaaack!"

The prisoners were eaten as prey while Jung Heewon wielded the Sword of Judgment and used Hell Flames Ignition. The burning heat of the archangel's flames caused the frightened demons to step back and be more cautious.

She didn't know how long this confrontation could continue. Some monsters watched the movement of the flames and dared to jump forward.

"Oh, you are an archangel's incarnation."

At this voice, the monsters who weren't afraid of the flames withdrew with weak groans.

She turned around and see Reinheit. He asked, "Are you ready to be the chief of the guards?"

"…Can you say that after seeing me?"

Jung Heewon told him, "You are a liar. Paradise? Get away from the horror of the scenario? Can you say that to me after making this place?"

She pointed the Sword of Judgment at Reinheit. Kim Dokja was right. There was no such thing as paradise in this world. They… were bound to continue the scenario.

Reinhart said, "If you want to kill me, you can."

"I don't need your permission."

She would naturally do so. She would borrow the power of her sponsor and end this terrible nightmare.

[Judgment Time is activated!]

[Constellations of the absolute good system are struggling with your request.]

Chapter 164: Ep. 32 - Kim Dokja's Love, III

Jung Heewon was surprised.

…Struggling? Anyone could see that Reinheit was evil. He deceived countless and produced monsters in this underground area. How could he not be evil?

[Constellations of the absolute good system entrust the judgment to incarnation 'Jung Heewon'.]

Reinheit opened his mouth. "If you kill me, Paradise will end."

Jung Heewon's hell flames decreased at these words. There was a faint smile on Reinheit's face.

"Jung Heewon-ssi, I didn't expect you to be here."

"What…"

"You should've known. Paradise isn't perfect. It is natural for a beautiful place to have a shadow."

Jung Heewon didn't respond. Ignorance was a deception. Of course, she had thought about it. This place must be hiding some awful truth. She just didn't think it would be this…

"Why are you mass producing monsters? Are you going to conquer Dark Castle?"

"I'm not doing anything. They are just the nutrients of Paradise."

A huge tree trunk could be seen in the centre of the cavern. Branches stretched out like tentacles towards the monsters in the vicinity.

Jung Heewon realized where the tree trunk was heading. The small flower that bloomed on the hill, the Perpetual Motion.

Jung Heewon's legs were shaking without her knowing. Surely this tree…

"Isn't it strange? Weren't you curious about why the many demon species on Dark Castle don't invade this place?"

She thought it was strange. It wasn't enough to describe Paradise as a blessed fortress.

"Why are there so many demons in Dark Castle?"

Rapidly moving branches grabbed the humans one by one. The prisoners screamed but there was no room for resistance. The rapidly moving branches tied around the prisoners' bodies and three them into a hole in the trunk.

A terrible noise was heard and then there was a scream like a soul was being castrated.

After a while, buds blossomed on the tree trunk. Jung Heewon sensed what would be born from the bud and shook. In less than a few minutes, a giant monsters was born from the bud. It was the human who had just been swallowed by the tree.

The Perpetual Motion was a tree that made demons.

Jung Heewon kept trembling. "H-How can you do this?"

Why couldn't she find any demon species near Paradise? Paradoxically, it was because Paradise itself was the source of the demon species.

"The demons produced here are released every month on certain days. There is a limit to the capacity of the prison." Reinheit smiled as he spoke. "Don't look at me with those eyes. Being a demon isn't necessarily a bad thing."

"…"

"They can have eternal life and are stronger than humans. In addition…"

The tree emitted a bright light and started to supply nutrients to the earth of Paradise.

"Their sin is used to sustain the lives of other beings. In other words, they are martyrs."

It was the source that provided vitality for crops to grow on the barren land of Dark Castle. This was the role of the Perpetual Motion. Jung Heewon understood everything and felt desperate.

[Constellations of the absolute good system are demanding you make a choice.]

If she killed Reinheit, the underground prison would collapse. The Perpetual Motion would die and the system of Paradise would be destroyed. People would lose the land and their food. Then they would be torn apart by the monsters.

"Why… why…" Knowing this, Jung Heewon couldn't kill Reinheit. She had no confidence in condemning the source of the tragedy when she would cause a bigger tragedy.

"Somebody has to do it." Reinheit's face was sad. "Life continues for the losers of the scenario. Someone has to create a place for them."

"If you really care for them, you should help keep the scenario going! Don't make a place like this. Lead the people and try to clear the scenarios!"

"You don't know. The enemy in the following scenario isn't someone we can win against."

Jung Heewon was surprised at his gloomy expression. The 2nd ranked demon marquis of Dark Castle. Who could cause him to feel such fear?

"…What do you know?"

"That isn't important. Even if you clear the following scenario… the 'next' one is always ready. More losers will be made."

"We can clear all of them! It is a scenario. Won't it end one day? Practice your skills and build your story…!"

"Do you think we can clear all the scenarios one day?"

Jung Heewon closed her mouth. The end of all the scenarios. Her colleague Kim Dokja wanted to reach that place.

Reinheit continued speaking, "Do you believe peace will come at that time?"

Jung Heewon cried out with all her heart. "Yes. I believe."

"Why do you think so? Is there a single person who has reached the end of the scenario?"

"There are the constellations!"

"The constellations?"

"They exist outside of the scenarios. In other words, there is a way to escape from this scenario."

The constellations who treated the incarnations like toys. The existences of such 'absolute' beings actually gave hope. Someday they would be able to reach that place. They could get away from this hellish scenario.

"Ha. Haha, hahaha…" Reinheit laughed. "I see. The constellations. I understand your mind. I had thought so as well."

"What do you mean?"

"Why do you think that constellations cleared all the scenarios? Did Kim Dokja say so?"

Kim Dokja never said this. An ominous feeling entered her heart.

"They certainly are outside the scenario. However, they are just 'outside' the scenario."

"…"

"They are all doing scenarios like us. 76 times, 84 times. The size and number of scenarios vary but they are like us."

She had never thought of this before. Jung Heewon asked in a trembling voice, "T-Then…?"

"The constellations are just powerhouses beyond the standards, born in the middle of the scenario. They are neither gods or absolute beings."

Reinheit spoke as if declaring an absolute proposition.

"Let me tell you once again. No one has ever reached the 'end' of the scenarios."

"…"

"This world is eternal hell."

Jung Heewon collapsed to the ground. Even the constellations couldn't do it. Even the mighty beings couldn't reach that place.

Kim Dokja wanted to go to such a place.

"Something like this… what do you want to do? Kim Dokja, you…"

Reinheit kept speaking. "That's why I made Paradise."

Jung Heewon stared blankly up at Reinheit.

"If this continues, Paradise will someday collapse. The number of humans is decreasing and the number of demons is constantly increasing. The nutrients to sustain this land are running out."

At the end of despair and desperation, he created the Paradise of Despair.

"I need a noble human to sustain this tree. There are many souls who entered this quarter. Kim Dokja is one of them."

Jung Heewon realized what he was talking about. "That's why I'm needed?"

"That's correct. You are chosen by an archangel and will last at least 10 years. A constellation like Kim Dokja will be able to maintain the vitality of Paradise for more than 200 years."

"Do you think I will just listen to you?"

"You will listen. It is because you are the incarnation of an archangel."

If she sacrificed herself, she would be able to protect Paradise.

"If you help, there will be no need to punish people for minor offences for a while. You can save thousands, tens of thousands of lives."

Jung Heewon's shoulders trembled. She could save tens of thousands of people with her life. If she didn't die, tens of thousands of people would die.

She saw a monster reminiscent of a fish squirming on the ground. The face resembled the woman from Geumho Station. The monster stared at Jung Heewon with a hungry expression and roared.

"I…"

It was an abandoned life anyway. Her parents, friends and the people who remembered her were all dead. The end of the scenario was impossible.

Living any further was useless.

"I…"

[Constellations of the absolute good system are looking at you.]

Jung Heewon made a decision. "I understand. Then I…"

If she died to save tens of thousands of people, it was the right thing, the righteous thing.

Reinheit's expression seemed to soften. At the last moment, something caught her.

'Then what is my life?'

It was probably empty.

'I… what the hell is this?'

It was the foolish last attachment to life. She already knew the answer.

–Heewon-ssi is a good sword.

–You are calmer in front of the fire than any of us. In particular, you are sensitive to the tyranny of the strong.

–You always fought at the head of the party and never complained about how difficult it was.

It was because someone told her the answer already.

–This is the Jung Heewon-ssi that I saw because you continued the scenario.

Maybe Kim Dokja knew the reality of the scenarios from the beginning. Even so, he didn't give up.

–That's why I believe you should continue the scenario.

Jung Heewon stood up.

"I can't die here."

Thus, she decided to be selfish. She decided to live, even if many people died from her choice. She had to live with it.

"No, you will die."

However, sometimes their life and will were irrelevant.

"Then you will become the nutrients of Paradise."

There were a number of demons who couldn't be dealt with even using Hell Flames Ignition. Jung Heewon's expression tensed and she opened up all her magic power. She couldn't die. She would never die.

At this moment, there was an explosion and people appeared.

"Heewon-ssi!"

"Ah, Unni went alone again!"

It was the people who sustained her life. Still, Reinheit didn't panic. He smiled like it was good.

"I'm able to get a lot of nutrients."

This person was the second strongest in Dark Castle. He wasn't afraid of a group without Kim Dokja.

"Everybody stand back!"

Lee Hyunsung stepped forward and protected his companions. He was much stronger than before but the situation was bad. Maybe someone would die in this fight. It would be lucky if all of them didn't die.

How good would it be if Kim Dokja was here? She tried to avoid depending on Kim Dokja but Jung Heewon couldn't help having this thought.

"This is your end." Reinheit declared and raised his hand.

Then the entire ceiling collapsed. It was like bombs had poured down in succession. The ether storm ripped through the branches of the Perpetual Motion and the shattered ceiling fell towards Reinheit and the monsters.

The crushed monsters let out terrible screams. Somebody's voice was heard among this chaos.

"You hid in a deep and dirty place."

There was a man and the shadow of a woman chasing him. Yoo Joonghyuk faced the people looking at him with wonder and confusion and asked, "…By the way, where is Kim Dokja?"

Chapter 165: Ep. 32 - Kim Dokja's Love, IV

"Master!" Lee Jihye shouted when she discovered Yoo Joonghyuk. However, Yoo Joonghyuk asked again without caring about her at all.

"Where is Kim Dokja?"

"…Why are you looking for Dokja ahjussi?"

Yoo Joonghyuk was about to answer when Yoo Sangah carried Yoo Mia and descended from the ceiling like a beautiful woman. The party members called out her name. Rather than responding to their greetings, Yoo Sangah hastily said, "Dokja-ssi is in danger."

"Huh?"

"Do you know where Dokja-ssi is now?"

Just like Yoo Joonghyuk, Yoo Sangah's eyes search the people nervously. She couldn't see Kim Dokja at all. Lee Hyunsung quickly replied, "Dokja-ssi left four days ago."

"What do you mean by Dokja-ssi is in danger?" Jung Heewon asked again. Unfortunately, there was no time to explain.

Lee Jihye added in a frustrated manner. "Didn't you come because you knew something was wrong? We are the ones in danger, not Dokja ahjussi."

Yoo Sangah had no idea of the situation and replied, "Let's leave this place and I'll explain."

Due to the turmoil, many monsters were pouring out of the connected caves. Lee Jihye spoke in a creeped out manner.

"Damn, if Gong Pildu ahjussi was here…"

Certainly, the situation would be a lot different if Gong Pildu was here. Gong Pildu's stigma Armed Fortress was useful against large numbers and was suitable for slaughtering many monsters.

However, they already split from Gong Pildu on the first floor of Dark Castle and it was unclear where he was.

Yoo Joonghyuk was the party's sole comfort. Simply in terms of force, he was much stronger than Gong Pildu or Kim Dokja. He had enough strength to crack apart a mountain with his fist.

Yoo Joonghyuk blew away the incoming monsters with Hundred Steps Godly Fists and said, "It is disadvantageous if we fight here. Let's go out via the ceiling."

Yoo Joonghyuk sought the fastest method of escape and opened a path in the monsters. His ability to open a path without a significant consumption of magic power was close to a human tank. No, a real tank wouldn't be so powerful. Yoo Sangah asked, "Can we escape?"

"I'll make some steps so jump out yourself."

At these words, Yoo Joonghyuk flew into the air.

It was the Air Steps that only the strongest returnees in the Murim World Could use. He built a tower with the corpses of monsters for the party members to step on. Then he went through the ceiling and punched something to create a platform.

He normally wouldn't have done this for the party. However, Yoo Joonghyuk in this regression was different. Yoo Joonghyuk himself didn't know what had made him change. Then he heard a voice in his ears.

[It is a very unexpected situation. You are 'Incarnation Yoo Joonghyuk?']

It was Reinheit's voice. Lee Jihye was amazed as she was running towards the ceiling. "What, he isn't dead?"

It was natural.

The second-ranked being in Dark Castle wouldn't die from a few stones. Yoo Joonghyuk didn't reply to Reinheit, instead waiting for the rest of them at the top of the stairs he had made. Lee Jihye, Lee Hyunsung and Yoo Sangah climbed up first, followed by Lee Gilyoung and Shin Yoosung.

The moment Shin Yoosung was about to pass by, Yoo Joonghyuk grabbed her shoulder. "You shouldn't come with us."

"Huh?"

Before Shin Yoosung could reply, Yoo Joonghyuk pushed the child down from the ceiling. The monsters opened their mouths as they waited for Shin Yoosung. Lee Gilyoung shouted, "Yoosung! What…? What are you doing?"

The angry Lee Gilyoung swung his fists at Yoo Joonghyuk. Yoo Joonghyuk lightly grabbed Lee Gilyoung's fist and said, "You should go too."

After a moment, Lee Gilyoung screamed and fell down along with Shin Yoosung.

After Dionysus' incarnation left, Han Sooyoung asked me with a serious expression, "…What the hell was that last thing he said?"

"I don't know."

"You don't know? It was filtered for you as well?"

I didn't hear it. However, I could vaguely guess what he meant. It was probably related to the 'end' of all scenarios. Then it was natural to be filtered.

I was challenging the 10th scenario and just became a scenario. I couldn't get all information at will.

Han Sooyoung stared at me with a grumpy expression and made a small sigh. "…By the way, what are you going to do about your fate? It must be really dangerous if the constellations of Olympus are directly coming to warn you."

"It looks like it."

"Is there no way to completely stop the fate?"

"It isn't completely inevitable. If the execution of fate was absolutely impossible, the fate would be withdrawn. Fate always followed 'probability'.

In the opposite sense, fate could never be escaped if there was even the slightest chance of it happening. Han Sooyoung thought about something and wondered,

"There isn't any specific information? It only mentions your death?"

"That…"

In fact, Dionysus risked losing a huge amount of probability by telling me the prophecy.

「 Incarnation Kim Dokja will be killed by your most loved ones. 」

To be honest, it was a confusing story for me.

The person I loved most… They were going to kill me?

I hesitated before telling the contents of the prophecy and Han Sooyoung opened her mouth. As if she didn't know what to say, her face paled and then reddened.

"The person you love most?"

"Yes."

"…Do you have such a person?"

I felt bad but somehow, I also wanted to ask this. I tried to recall the faces of every person. There was some affection but there was no one I 'loved'. Indeed, 'love' was the word that was furthest from my life.

"To be honest, I would say there isn't one."

Han Sooyoung's face became redder at my words. "Then shouldn't the fate be withdrawn?"

"At first glance, you might think so…"

"Or are you going to fall in love with someone now? Are you the type to fall in love at first sight?"

"That has never happened and it isn't likely."

The fate message was strong enough to be repeated three times. I was confused. Had I fallen in love with someone?

Han Sooyoung looked at my complicated expression and opened her mouth. "Or there is another possibility."

"What is it?"

"Originally, fate isn't something that should be interpreted literally. Don't you know Greek mythology? Originally, prophecies aren't immediately known. It is full of metaphors and symbols."

Han Sooyoung cocked her head.

"Incarnation Kim Dokja will be killed by the person he loves most… what symbolism or analogies are present in this sentence?"

"Do you mean the sentence might have a surprisingly different meaning?"

"Hrmm…"

Han Sooyoung was an author so she might be surprisingly helpful in interpreting this aspect. Han Sooyoung started to take out plausible hypotheses.

"I think there are three possible things."

"What is it? Tell me."

"First. There might be a reason why 'incarnation' was mentioned first."

"…Incarnation?"

It was a point I had inadvertently overlooked.

"Aren't you a constellation now? Then as an incarnation, you have already died. No?"

It was a plausible hypothesis. However, if this hypothesis was correct, I would've seen the message about fate being realized the moment I became a constellation. In other words, there was no reason for the fate messages to repeat.

Han Sooyoung seemed to think something was lacking as well and came up with a second hypothesis. "Second, it is possible that the words 'person he loves most' itself is a metaphor."

"What else is considered a 'person' in the Star Stream?"

"Um… It might be the personification of something."

I tried to think about it but couldn't find a plausible interpretation for this part.

By the way, I looked at Han Sooyoung and wondered if she was a good person. I was very grateful for her thinking about all these possibilities for me.

I watched Han Sooyoung. Her lashes seemed unusually long because of the lingering twilight. It turned out that this person was quite pretty. In fact, Han Sooyoung was a bit young but her looks weren't bad.

…Wait a minute. What was I thinking right now? I had to be careful. Maybe I would be hit by Han Sooyoung if I did something wrong. Honestly, this person would stab me without any hesitation. In fact, she had already stabbed me once.

Han Sooyoung spoke again. "The last thing we need to think about is 'die'. Perhaps this death isn't literally death."

"Then?"

"When do you think people die?"

"That… I suppose when their life is over. Their heart stops and they are no longer breathing."

Han Sooyoung clicked her tongue like she was disappointed in my answer. "Well, there is a reason why you kept reading a novel like Ways of Survival…"

"…Don't start a useless argument. So what do you mean?"

"Don't you read manhwa? Usually you should say something like this. When a person dies? It is when they are forgotten by people!"

"Those are manhwa. Then are you saying I will be forgotten?"

"It is just an example, you idiot. In the Star Stream, a constellation dies when they are forgotten. You can think of similar possibilities."

In fact, it didn't sound impossible. The Star Stream was a huge story and beings with no relationship in the story were naturally wiped out.

I wondered, "Why will people forget me? Is it group amnesia?"

"They might not mean to forget." Han Sooyoung's face suddenly seemed lonely.

Speaking of which, I didn't know Han Sooyoung's life. Apart from the fact that she wrote a novel plagiarizing Ways of Survival, I knew nothing about Han Sooyoung.

…Even now, the part about plagiarism was uncertain. In the past, Han Sooyoung said she didn't plagiarize and Lie Detection said she was telling the truth.

I asked after a moment, "Then what do you mean?"

Han Sooyoung seemed to be picking her words as she opened her mouth with a dark expression. "Kim Dokja, dead people can't remember anything."

I realized what Han Sooyoung was talking about. We reflexively looked towards Paradise.

…Perhaps?

Han Sooyoung spoke first. "Should we go back?"

"…It is too late if we go now. It has already been four days. It is impossible to get there in time."

"Then?"

"It's okay. By now, the strongest reinforcements should've arrived."

"The strongest reinforcements?"

"That guy should be sent…"

At this moment, a message appeared in the air.

[Someone in Dark Castle has achieved the first transcendence in the scenario!]

It was as I expected. I thought he would've reached that position by now.

I thought about Yoo Joonghyuk, who should be causing a disaster in the distance. "Now the main character should pay for his meal."

싱숑 장편소설

전지적 독자 시점

Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint

PART 1

08

비채

*

Chapter 166: Ep. 32 - Kim Dokja's Love, V

Han Sooyoung bit her lips besides me. "When did you become so close to him? That psychopath…"

"We aren't close."

"You had a very trusting expression when you said those words?"

"You are mistaken. I trust the dokkaebis more than I do him."

If I believed in Yoo Joonghyuk, it was in his experience, not his personality. This was a guy with three times the experience and he learnt various types of information from the 41st regression Shin Yoosung.

Furthermore, Paradise was originally his main responsibility. He took care of it well in the second regression so he should do better this time. Just…

"…I'm a bit worried."

I couldn't be completely relieved because I didn't trust his personality. I had made various preparations for the party members to attack Paradise but I couldn't be perfect.

I was a reader, not a writer, and Yoo Joonghyuk was a regressor sunfish. I hope he felt a lot better since his last psychotic break…

Han Sooyoung spoke with an understanding expression. "Well… if you're worried then you can go and watch. You have a skill to watch it in real time anyway."

"…You are aware of it?"

"I didn't know until now."

Well, Han Sooyoung had watched me take over Yoo Joonghyuk last time. I struggled for a moment before telling her, "Then I'll go. Please wait."

"How much are you going to give me?"

"Why do you want coins every time? You should give a bit of free service for once."

"…Then do it quickly. I can't deal with some enemies alone.

"If something happens then just wake me up."

I closed my eyes and fell asleep.

[The exclusive skill, 'Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint' stage 3 has been activated!]

Soon after stage 3 was activated, the voices of the people thinking about me started to be heard.

I set aside a few voices and chose the one with the widest scenery.

The shaking began from the centre of Paradise. The street stalls were overturned by an intense shock wave that shook the entire ground.

"Aaack, what is this?"

"A monster?"

Everyone looked around but they couldn't figure out the situation. Maybe it was because they enjoyed peace for too long. Their cerebral cortex, which had always assumed the worst, were now brainwashed to only imagine the safest future.

"The guards will resolve it. Don't worry."

"Hang in there!"

In the centre of the explosion, Yoo Joonghyuk saw the incarnations of Paradise. There were faces he knew and faces he didn't know.

In the first regression, Yoo Joonghyuk had been betrayed for trying to save them and in the second regression, Yoo Joonghyuk destroyed this place with his own hands.

Finally, the third regression…

Some people held onto Yoo Joonghyuk and asked him questions as he walked from the blast.

"What? What the hell is happening?"

The people who had just been selling fruit or harvesting crops stared at him with frightened expressions. Yoo Joonghyuk also faced them. It was definitely a story, even if it wasn't a scenario.

Yoo Joonghyuk knew the reason. When he saw Paradise for the first time, he agreed with Reinheit's intention and protected this place.

"H-Help me! Please!"

Of course, it was all in vain. Paradise was no different from the scenario. Just as the scenarios kept exploiting the incarnations, Paradise was a place supported by incarnations turned into fertilizer.

There was one thing Yoo Joonghyuk realized after destroying the place several times. Giant stories always ate small stories. The only laws involved stories and this was the providence of Star Stream.

Yoo Joonghyuk told the people. "Paradise will soon cease to exist."

"Huh?"

"Find something that you can protect yourself. Then defend it."

The monsters started running out from the passage that Yoo Joonghyuk and the party members created.

The incarnations shrieked as they watched the giant claws coming from underground. Some guards belatedly ran to protect the incarnations but it wasn't enough to stop all the monsters.

"W-Why are they here?"

"The lord! Where it the lord?"

Many guards fell down from one strike of the monsters. The guard captain just barely managed to escape in time.

Yoo Joonghyuk cut off the limbs of the incoming monsters and looked around. Jung Heewon and Lee Hyunsung were evacuating people from various places.

Yoo Joonghyuk muttered, "It is amazing that you survived up to this point."

They might die for people who didn't even know their names. It was the influence of Kim Dokja. It was a miracle they could make it here with such a heart.

"No, I was able to come to this place because of those people."

Yoo Joonghyuk frowned after hearing Yoo Sangah's words. "I wasted time because of you."

"I heard that Dokja-ssi was here when I contacted Olympus."

"The information is either wrong or someone is manipulating the information."

Or perhaps Kim Dokja somehow manipulated the information. Either way, it wasn't a favourable situation for Yoo Joonghyuk.

Originally, the strategy to clear Paradise shouldn't be done in this way. In fact, the current Paradise was the more unsuitable place to attack.

The branches of Perpetual Motion came up from the ground and soared to the sky.

This was the 'story' of Demon Marquis Reinheit. It was the body of Paradise, the Perpetual Motion plant that was sustained by souls.

Some monsters climbed on the branches and were released above ground. The monsters, who had been starving for a long time underground, discovered their prey and roared as they scattered all over the place. There was the 5th grade Dark Tracker, the 4th grade Lubel Tiger and even unknown 3rd grade species.

"Kuaaack!"

In the midst of this terrible carnival, the incarnations found the lord. They believed he was the salvation who could save them from this tragedy.

"Lord!"

Then the plant moved. The vines stretched out like tentacles. The tip of the sharp vines pierced the monsters to protect the people of Paradise.

The incarnations cheered. They knew there was only one powerful being in Paradise.

"This is the lord!"

"Lord!"

[Please rest assured.]

The incarnations' hearts were caught as they listened to Reinheit's voice.

'Our Paradise won't fall so easily'.

Everyone believed this. At least, until the guard captain discovered something in the smoke.

"Lord…?"

A familiar face was growing from a bud at the end of a branch.

"Uwaaaack!"

The frightened guard captain collapsed on the ground.

"M-Monster! Monster!"

The guard captain, who had long vowed allegiance, lost his composure when he saw Reinheit was one with the plant. The appearance of the demon's true body was terrible.

[Ah, Haidel?]

The guard captain confirmed the lord's true appearance and shook with fear. The power that Reinheit radiated was terrible. It was thanks to Reinheit's legendary story, Paradise of Despair.

[It finished well. I needed food to recover.]

The flying vines started to swallow the people of Paradise, including the guards. The vines pierced the incarnations and sucked their small stories. The inhabitants either became mummies or were turned into demons.

"Stop!"

The hell flames burned several branches. However, there was no end to them. Jung Heewon shouted, "I thought this was the place you had to protect! What are you doing?"

[That was until you guys showed up.]

Reinheit laughed. His upper body emerged from the highest branch and he looked at the landscape of Paradise.

[Paradise is already over.]

The incarnations shook with fear in front of the gigantic Perpetual Motion. The residents who were in awe of the lord just a moment ago could no longer be found.

[This is why the presence of small stories is unavoidable. You have lived on a small tree all your life and didn't know it was actually a forest.]

One by one, the incarnations realized the identity of the world they lived in. No, maybe they already knew the truth but were ignoring it.

[Thus, I will restart everything.]

Like an umbrella, the branches shot up and started to cover all of Paradise. It was as if it wanted to absorb all of Paradise. Jung Heewon stared at the scale and was completely lost.

How could they hurt that? Could humans fight and win against that?

Then a huge explosion occurred from one side of the branches. Along with the roar, the branches covering the sky were broken. It was like a huge hole in the roof of Paradise.

[Truly great. You are…]

There was sincere admiration in Reinheit's voice. There was a man with a huge presence under the damaged roof. Needless to say, it was Yoo Joonghyuk.

[…You have gone beyond a human.]

Surpassing humans. The words that sounded like rhetoric had a completely different meaning to beings like Reinheit.

[You reached such a level in only the ninth scenario? Kim Dokja was great but you… you are the real monster.]

A mighty presence was filling Yoo Joonghyuk's body. Yoo Joonghyuk, whose eyes were closed, had exceeded his limits by mobilizing all his capabilities.

'The Rock King's Gloves increases strength by two levels'.

'The Gukryong's Skin increases strength be one level'.

'The Heavenly Sword of Gathering Clouds increases strength by four levels'.

'The skill buff increases strength by three levels'.

Once strength broke through level 100, a tremendous energy filled Yoo Joonghyuk's whole body. He remembered the words of his teacher, Breaking the Sky Sword Saint.

–The first course of transcendence is to go beyond the limits of the body.

Most incarnations thought there was a limit to becoming strong through their efforts alone. That's why they tried to get better sponsors and show off to the stronger constellations.

However, the universe was large and some people disagreed with such cowardice.

There were those who didn't get a good sponsor or a sponsor at all. There were those who dream of becoming 'one' with their own efforts, not the assistance of an absolute existence.

–The second course is to train all skills to the limit. The skills that existed in the world were 'stigmas' left behind by someone. Train all those skills to the limit. As if climbing a ladder, try and explore the limits of the system.

The constellations devoured stories and strengthened their influence, constantly tempering their existence into a 'story'.

–The final course is to kick away the ladder. Forget everything you have accumulated so far. Forget the level, forget the skills and forget the story. After all, the system that many beings choose is the 'universal' one. The important thing is that you find your own 'story'.

Training, training and training. Going beyond the limits of the skill with extreme story and become a story. This was the peak of mortality that could be compared to constellations.

Those who had talent and worked hard were able to achieve transcending the limits of their species. In honor of their noble endeavors, the Star Stream called them transcendent, despite not being constellations.

–These are the minimum conditions to enter the seat of transcendence.

Yoo Joonghyuk had already achieved transcendence in the last regression. He had already reached it once so it wasn't difficult to climb up again. Only physical conditions and time were needed.

Yoo Joonghyuk's golden aura was formed around the Heavenly Sword of Gathering Clouds. Despite obviously using a skill, the message about the skill usage didn't pop up.

It was because this power wasn't using the 'system'. It was a power built up by Yoo Joonghyuk alone.

"Reinheit, I beat you in the last round."

Yoo Joonghyuk aimed two swords towards the Perpetual Motion that had become a huge forest.

"This time I will kill you."

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* Official novel cover (canonical)

Chapter 167: Ep. 32 - Kim Dokja's Love, VI

The air burst like a fighter jet had passed by. The places hit by the golden energy cracked apart. The monsters caught in the crack were torn apart without even being able to scream. The golden light blew away 4th and 5th grade species.

Breaking the Sky Sword. This was the road of the sword that broke the sky.

Even the 3rd grade monsters, which could easily destroy the area in 10 minutes, screamed because they couldn't resist this sword.

How long had Yoo Joonghyuk practiced this sword? 10 years? 20 years? If he combined the training in the time dark dimension, it would be well over 100 years. Thanks to all these years, Yoo Joonghyuk was able to reach the peak of humanity.

'My physical limits is still low but I can barely do it'.

Yoo Joonghyuk controlled his overloaded body and constantly swung his sword. This transcendent power couldn't last long, no matter how strong he was. His level was also far less than his teacher, the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint.

Nevertheless, his attacks were far beyond the general 'skills' category. The monsters exploded like firecrackers and Reinheit was amazed.

[The rumours of transcendence aren't false. But how can a human who isn't a returnee…?]

Reinheit didn't finish his words. The place where he had just been located was torn apart from the ether blades of Yoo Joonghyuk's Splitting the Sky Sword.

It was a truly formidable destructive power. This was the power of the Breaking the Sky Energy.

"Be careful! People are getting caught up in it!" Yoo Sangah shouted at Yoo Joonghyuk but he ignored her.

In the first place, he was good at destroying things, not saving things.

"This is the master of a legendary-grade story. It isn't easy to defeat him. In Paradise, his strength is equivalent to a 2nd grade monster.

In fact, Reinheit's Perpetual Motion showed no signs of receding despite the damage. Rather, the branches were angry and absorbed more of the humans around them.

"Aaaaack!"

The rate at which the Perpetual Motion grew was faster than the rate at which humans were rescued. In addition, there were still a lot of monsters.

Yoo Sangah opened her mouth as she used Hermes Walking Method and Theseus' Resolution to kill the surrounding beasts. "It doesn't end. Where have they been hiding these monsters?"

"The monsters are the exports of Paradise."

"Exports?"

Yoo Joonghyuk looked up at the air for a short moment. The dokkaebis who said they wouldn't interfere were gathering, as if it was a fun sight.

[Huh… this is difficult.]

[It looks like a new farm is needed.]

Yoo Sangah didn't immediately understand what they meant. In the midst of the surging beasts, she could see monsters that were familiar from previous scenarios.

9th grade ground rats, 8th grade grolls…

"The monsters used in the scenario. Have you ever wondered where they came from?" Yoo Joonghyuk asked her.

"They came from another world…"

"There is a limit using that method. The dokkaebis are busy and don't have time for inefficient work."

Yoo Sangah stared blankly at Yoo Joonghyuk, the dokkaebis and the monsters of Paradise. She was frozen and it was Jung Heewon, using Hell Flames Ignition by her side, who reacted first.

"Saying this now…"

Yoo Joonghyuk nodded. "Paradise is the source of the monsters of Star Stream. To be precise, it is one of them."

In Jung Heewon's mind, some things that hadn't been understood finally fit together. The second floor of Dark Castle. The reason why the dokkaebis, who were involved in everything, didn't interfere for the first time. If she thought about it, there was a reason for everything.

[Dokkaebis! A new Paradise can be created!]

In the distance, the upper half of the restored Reinheit grew on the Perpetual Motion again.

[There might be a fairly low volume for a while but the restoration will soon be completed! Please don't cancel the contract!]

The despair and desperation inside him was something that couldn't be shared. This was a world that sacrificed the incarnations to protect the incarnations.

Reinheit was devoted to his beliefs, even if those beliefs made him a monster. The incarnations belatedly discovered the dokkaebis floating in the air and shouted.

"Dokkaebi! Dokkaebi!"

"Uhh, has the scenario started?"

"Why? Why do this? We didn't anything wrong!"

The dokkaebis just laughed.

[Why? You did nothing wrong.]

[This wasn't what we intended.] Hahaha!]

Jung Heewon bit her lips at the sight. She didn't want to see anymore.

"Is there no way?"

Of course, there was a way. If he used Giant Body Transformation and then transcendence, he would be able to press Reinheit with his strength.

'However, the consumption is too big. All of Paradise will fly away'.

The regressor Yoo Joonghyuk didn't favour such inefficient fighting.

"If we want to kill him, we have to get rid of the roots of the Perpetual Motion."

The core power source of the Perpetual Motion lay in the roots.

If the roots were removed, he could overpower the Perpetual Motion. The problem was the monster in the 'roots'. It was a mighty monster that even Reinheit couldn't control.

'Even if I had the sixth ranked demon, Sephirots…'

If he had Sephirots as a colleague as he planned then it would've been much easier to hit Paradise. However, Sephirots was already dead when he went to pick Sephirots up.

'There is a person hunting rankers as fast as me'.

The first one he thought of was Kim Dokja, but there was no guarantee that it was Kim Dokja. There were too many variables in this regression.

"We can't enter underground. What should we do?"

"There is no need to enter. I've already entrusted it to someone."

Jung Heewon's eyes instantly widened. "You, don't tell me…!"

She noticed exactly who wasn't present right now. However, Yoo Joonghyuk spoke before she could. "Kim Dokja didn't leave all of you behind for no reason."

Perhaps he was able to think of it because he was a regressor. He was always one-sidedly read by Kim Dokja but this time he was about to read Kim Dokja's thoughts.

[The constellation who doesn't yet have a name is smiling.]

Yoo Joonghyuk sensed the gaze and his expression distorted.

In the midst of the swarming monsters, Shin Yoosung and Lee Gilyoung lay curled up against each other. The concentration of monsters was so high that the children's small bodies couldn't be found.

In a moment of crisis, they helpfully tamed some 8th grade monsters, the giant wasps. The wasps danced around Shin Yoosung and Lee Gilyoung, distracting the beasts' eyes. However, there was a limit to the wasp's dance.

The two children's eyes met.

'What should we do?'

'I don't know'.

Beast Master Shin Yoosung and Insect Master Lee Gilyoung. The two of them were currently the most powerful tamers in Seoul.

However, even they couldn't tame all these monsters. Their brains would explode and they would die. In fact, the limit they were capable of with Taming was a 4th grade species. The 3rd grade species was also possible if they overdid it, but only for a moment.

'…Am I going to die like this?'

The more powerful monsters trampled on the surrounding monsters and the ecology of the whole area gradually calmed down.

The devil wolves and dark splinters bared their fangs and sniffed around. The frightened wasps danced harder but discovery was only a matter of time.

There was also another threat besides the monsters. The branches of the Perpetual Motion moved through the monsters and rushed towards the children.

Lee Gilyoung embraced Shin Yoosung and it seemed like the branches were going to pierce the two children.

At this moment, the branches stopped due to a powerful energy that was fired from somewhere. The branches seemed panicked and finally turned away from the children. Shin Yoosung turned in the direction of the energy that stopped the branches.

'What is that?'

There was a monster who saw through the wasps' dance and was staring this way.

At first, Shin Yoosung didn't think 'it' was a monster. It was too big to fathom as a living creature. Its body occupied exactly one third of this cavern. Yellow eyes blinked in the darkness and all the hairs on Shin Yoosung's body rose.

This wasn't a 'monster'. She couldn't think of it using this term. It was an existence that overwhelmed all monsters.

All the noise in the area quieted down. Everything was bowing in awe before the monster. The being with such a ridiculous presence was looking this way with interested eyes.

'Who are you?'

It seemed to be asking. Shin Yoosung wasn't willing to answer the question. Looking back, Lee Gilyoung was in a similar state to her.

Shin Yoosung raised her courage first. "…Hey."

Lee Gilyoung shook his head with fright. "It is impossible. We can't do it."

Those who raised Diverse Communication to the limit could understand each other's intentions without saying anything.

"In any case, we will die if this continues."

Shin Yoosung carefully got up and staggered towards the monster. The monsters around her were snarling wildly but the child didn't care. At this moment, Shin Yoosung realized her usefulness.

'This is why ahjussi left me here'.

Only she could do this.

"Damn." Lee Gilyoung cursed and followed behind her.

As soon as they approached, the presence of the huge monster became much stronger than before. Shin Yoosung felt like her skin was being peeled off in front of this monster's gaze.

[The exclusive skill 'Advanced Diverse Communication Lv. 5' has been activated!]

The transparent aura shot towards the monster in an instant. Diverse Communication. It was a skill made to understand different species.

The moment that the aura touched the monster, Shin Yoosung felt an overwhelming flood of memories.

'Ah, ahh…'

The terrible memories of the monster flowed into her head. An existence who fell to the bottom of this miserable Paradise and grew up eating other monsters. Eat, eat, despair and scream. A monster who walked through a hell that couldn't be described using human language.

The blood vessels couldn't cope with the excessive blood flow and burst. Blood flowed from Shin Yoosung's nose and mouth. She shed tears of blood.

Lee Gilyoung tried to control Shin Yoosung but the situation was already getting out of control.

In the end, Lee Gilyoung also triggered Diverse Communication.

The two children, who had always been fighting, joined hands at this moment. Lee Gilyoung's power was added and the channel of understanding widened.

However, it was still an arduous opponent. Soon, blood poured from Lee Gilyoung's nose.

"U… Uwaaaack!"

Shin Yoosung understood the suffering of the strange beast and wanted to give up everything for the first time. There was the sound of a vessel being broken as Shin Yoosung and Lee Gilyoung's spirits collapsed little by little.

It was the cost of trying to tame an ego they couldn't cope with, an opponent they couldn't touch.

At this moment, Shin Yoosung felt eyes on her back. It was as if someone was looking at her. A being that wasn't pushed at all by the monster's presence was watching her.

[The constellation who doesn't yet have a name is looking at you.]

Chapter 168: Ep. 32 - Kim Dokja's Love, VII

The constellation who doesn't yet have a name. Shin Yoosung was well aware of who it was referring to.

'Ahjussi'.

It was only a gaze but in fact, many people died because there wasn't a 'gaze' at an important moment.

In that sense, Shin Yoosung was lucky.

[The constellation who doesn't yet have a name is nodding.]

Shin Yoosung received the attention of only one person in the world and stepped forward.

She could do it. Her legs were numb and her lips couldn't move, but she was convinced.

One step, another step.

The child's small hands soon reached the outer shell of the monster. There was a very small wound on the outer shell. The startled monster's eyes shone. Shin Yoosung stared straight at the monster rather than avoid the monster's eyes.

"Look straight at me."

Looking closer, it wasn't just one wound. Numerous scars were covering the outer shell of the monster's entire body.

The monster let out a small cry. Perhaps no one had seen its wounds before. The cuts were created a long time ago. These wounds were the very existence of this monster. Due to these wounds, the monster became stronger but it also became lonely.

Shin Yoosung's face distorted as if she vividly felt the pain. "You shouldn't be a monster just because you are hurt."

Shin Yoosung slowly touched the monster's injuries. However, they were wounds that couldn't be healed no matter how long passed.

That didn't mean she would give up. There would be a miracle. Just like Kim Dokja saved the 41st regression Shin Yoosung. Even those who couldn't be healed could be saved.

Shin Yoosung saw the roots of the Perpetual Motion that pushed down on the monster. Perhaps this monster had been tied up in this place for a lifetime.

Shin Yoosung pulled out a golden fruit.

[Ancient Beast's Fruit].

It was the SSS-grade item that emerged from the random box Kim Dokja had given to her one day. It was a consumable item that could be used to tame an historical-grade monster that couldn't be tamed.

She slowly bowed to the monster and said, "Let's go together."

It felt like Paradise was experiencing an earthquake and Reinheit shouted in a baffled manner.

[Keuk, kuheok, w-what is this…!]

The Perpetual Motion suddenly collapsed. Little by little, the plant's branches and leaves were wilting. The supplied energy was drifting to a distant place.

By the time Reinheit realized something was wrong, the branches in the air were already breaking.

[Kuheeeeok! H-How? How can…!]

Reinheit started vomiting. Sap poured out like it was blood.

Something was eating at the base of the Perpetual Motion. As the eerie teeth penetrated the sharp roots, Reinheit screamed like his body was being torn apart. The being tied to the roots of Paradise for a long time was now destroying the roots.

The Perpetual Motion lost power and started to collapse.

[N-No. No…!]

Something huge exploded from under the ground. It didn't have a rating because it had never been revealed to the world.

It had a huge dragon's body, a demon's wings and the eyes of an insect. It was the ultimate monster that evolved from the interbreeding of demon species, insect kings and other monster species.

Everything in Paradise saw this miracle and Yoo Joonghyuk was one of them.
"…Chimera dragon."

This was the real monster of Paradise. The power was close to the 2nd grade but its potential was beyond the 1st grade. Despite starting from the bottom, it could threaten even a dragon, the strongest monster species. Yet the bleeding Shin Yoosung and Lee Gilyoung were riding on its back.

Jung Heewon exclaimed with joy. "Yoosung! Gilyoung!"

The two children had done it after all.

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The chimera dragon roared and all the monsters in Paradise withdrew at once. There were those who escaped back underground, those who were frightened unconscious on the spot and those who escaped beyond the walls.

In the midst of this mess, Reinheit staggered away from the Perpetual Motion and ran away.

Yoo Joonghyuk didn't miss this opening. The Breaking the Sky Sword moved and Reinheit wasn't able to escape the sword.

"Uh…Uhhh… kuheook…"

Black blood poured from his mouth. No matter how powerful a demon he was, he couldn't survive his heart being pierced. Reinheit slowly collapsed and Yoo Joonghyuk and the party members approached him.

The dying master of Paradise said, "Ha, haha… all of that… in the end, it is nothing but a small play for those bigshots…"

Yoo Joonghyuk stared down at the bleeding and muttering Reinheit.

Reinheit stared at the Perpetual Motion disappearing in the sky and his breathing became rough. "You might not believe it but I… I just wanted to create a good world."

Some people who heard this yelled at him. They were all people who had been protected by Paradise. Some called him a hypocrite while other shouted that they should immediately kill Reinheit.

Now that they knew the secret of Paradise, they no longer protected Reinheit. However, none of them moved. It was because Yoo Joonghyuk didn't allow it.

Tears flowed from Reinheit's eyes. "I, I really…"

"I know."

Reinheit slowly closed his eyes at the short answer.

Yoo Joonghyuk spoke once again. "Everybody knows."

Of course they knew. Reinheit burst out laughing when he saw the life that he lived was so easily seen. "Strange. Why… do I feel like you actually understand…"

Yoo Joonghyuk stared down at Reinheit. It wasn't in this round of regression but Yoo Joonghyuk had also sympathized with Reinheit's will. The memories of raising Paradise together and then destroying Paradise weer still clear.

As if to reciprocate the feelings, Reinheit spoke in a pained voice. "You… will go to the next floor?"

The next floor. This was the location of the last scenario of Dark Castle.

"You… won't find what you are looking for. This castle, it is just the constellations' playground. So be careful. The next floor…"

At this moment, Reinheit's body exploded. Yoo Joonghyuk stared silently into the air where the dokkaebis were smiling.

[Nah uh, that is prohibited.]

[Right, right. This isn't fun.]

Then the messages of the constellations came like they had been waiting.

[Many constellations admire the performance of the incarnation 'Yoo Joonghyuk'.]

[Constellations of the absolute good system agree with the judgment of 'Yoo Joonghyuk'.]

[Some constellations express regret over the collapse of Paradise.]

…

[Many constellations have sponsored 150,000 coins!]

Yoo Joonghyuk's expression didn't change. The eyes of joy or sorrow weren't revealed.

[You have defeated the Demon Marquis Reinheit!]

[150,000 coins have been acquired.]

[The legendary-grade story 'Paradise of Despair' has been acquired.]

[Your Dark Castle ranking has been adjusted!]

[A new main scenario has appeared.]

[Main Scenario #10 — '73rd Demon King' is temporarily opened.]

Everything was so perfectly solved that he couldn't do better. It didn't follow his plan but he raised his Dark Castle ranking, collected coins and got a clue about the next scenario.

Nevertheless… Yoo Joonghyuk didn't know what these complicated emotions were. He looked down at his hands and started brooding.

"Our saviour!"

"You are the saviour!"

He looked back at the shouts and saw people rushing towards him. They treated him as a Messiah as people knelt before him and cried. They were grateful to him for destroying Paradise.

"Thank you! Thank you very much!"

"If it wasn't for you, we…"

Yoo Joonghyuk heard these words and looked back down at his bloody hands. Then he realized the identity of these emotions.

Originally, he had no intention of saving these people. The people of Paradise weren't important to him at all. If Reinheit saw them as a sacrifice for

Paradise, Yoo Joonghyuk considered them a sacrifice to clear the scenario.

"Thank you."

Yoo Joonghyuk listened to the voices and thought about it. Since when did this happen? From the second regression? No, perhaps the precursor had already been there.

His goal was to finish all the scenarios and save the world. Under this tremendous conviction, he kept running forward. On this lonely and slow run, he was worn down bit by bit.

There was no meaning in saving the world if everyone was dead. Yet he stood by and watched people die. It was as if he took the sacrifices for granted.

After seeing Reinheit's death, Yoo Joonghyuk started to rethink his goal for the first time.

"Can I ask for your name?" Someone asked for his name.

Being famous in the Star Stream was directly related to the strength of the story. By answering with his own name, he would be able to gain new achievements. Yoo Joonghyuk was well aware of this.

Yoo Joonghyuk thought for a moment before slowly opening his mouth. "My name is Kim Dokja."

"My name is Kim Dokja."

As I was observing using 'third person's viewpoint', I heard Yoo Joonghyuk's words and felt a chill.

[A new achievement has been added to your fifth story.]

[The inhabitants of Paradise will remember the 'Liberator of Paradise Kim Dokja'.]

[The 'Lone Messiah' story has become even richer.]

This situation didn't make sense. I panicked when I saw that the people of Paradise would remember the name 'Kim Dokja'.

No, why was my name listed all of a sudden?

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is shedding tears at this true companionship.]

Uriel, who had been quiet for a while, started jumping with excitement. I would've scolded her previously but after the banquet, harsh words couldn't emerge.

However, that Yoo Joonghyuk bastard… he was really mysterious. That egoist couldn't hand his achievements to other people. Did he want to make friends with me now?

It wasn't possible.

That reminded me, all the party members except for myself and Han Sooyoung were gathered in one place. No, Gong Pilduwasn't present… damn, where did that guy go?

"By the way, why are you looking for Dokja ahjussi?"

The people who were excited about the chimera dragon tamed by Shin Yoosung and Lee Gilyoung started talking about me.

"That…"

The faces of the party members changed after hearing Yoo Sangah's explanation.

I wasn't too surprised. Yoo Sangah must've stolen the prophecy from the Moerae. Perhaps like Dionysus, she was struggling to save me.

"Ahjussi will die?"

"By the person he loves most?"

「Incarnation Kim Dokja will be killed by the person he loves most.」

The party members had extremely confused expressions. Jung Heewon looked puzzled, Shin Yoosung was concerned and Lee Hyunsung was struggling with something. Lee Jihye was the first one to open her mouth. "Ahjussi will just revive again after dying. Isn't it fine?"

Yoo Sangah replied to Lee Jihye's question. "It is a good thing but I don't know how many times he can resurrect…"

"It is a prophecy of Olympus and it isn't that easy to avoid."

Jung Heewon's words caused the party members to look serious again. They were this worried about me.

Jung Heewon asked, "Then who is the person Dokja-ssi loves most? Don't we need to know this first?"

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* Official novel illustration (canonical)

Chapter 169: Ep. 32 - Kim Dokja's Love, VIII

Everyone made expressions of belated realization. They understood that they hadn't thought of the fundamental problem. At this moment, Lee Jihye opened her mouth again. "That…"

Lee Jihye raised her hand. I felt somewhat uneasy.

By the way…

"Yes, Jihye? Do you know something?"

"No, you don't think it is me…?"

What bullshit was this girl saying? Lee Jihye's comment seemed to relax the party members.

Jung Heewon asked, "What? Did Dokja-ssi do something? That man, towards a minor…'

"No, that's not it…"

"Then?"

"I just thought about it using common sense. I am a high school girl. Then he should like me…"

The party members ignored Lee Jihye and continued the discussion. It was Jung Heewon who gave her opinion first. "My guess is that Dokja-ssi's most loved person is Yoo Sangah-ssi."

"Huh?" Yoo Sangah was startled. She was so surprised that I was hurt. "Why me…?"

"It should be like this. In fact, Yoo Sangah-ssi's beauty… well, I don't need to mention it."

The members nodded and Yoo Sangah's face turned red.

Jung Heewon kept speaking. "You are running around everywhere to save Dokja-ssi… I honestly think it would be strange if Dokja-ssi doesn't like Yoo Sangah-ssi."

Certainly, there was no one who wouldn't like Yoo Sangah. She was pretty, kind, had a good personality…

There was no denying it.

"Huh? Just… I'm just a work colleague and received help from Dokja-ssi…"

Yoo Sangah acted like it was difficult situation before she suddenly hit back at Jung Heewon. "I actually thought it was Heewon-ssi."

"Uh…yes? Me?"

"Yes, I think that Dokja-ssi iikes Heewon-ssi."

Jung Heewon was surprised by the unexpected counterattack and her eyes widened. Lee Hyunsung also jumped with shock. It was an interesting hypothesis for me as well.

"This… Dokja-ssi is really kind to Heewon-ssi. He gave you equipment and… Heewon-ssi seemed to smile very well when talking to Dokja-ssi…"

Certainly, there seemed to be such a thing. It was very easy for me to converse with Jung Heewon. It was in the sense that she was a 'character' I found and raised.

The confused Jung Heewon shook her hands with a flushed face. "Huh? No, wait a minute. That…"

The party members started to gossip again. It didn't feel good. Lee Jihye stood alone and muttered 'Kim Dokja is trash'.

No, I didn't do anything wrong…

This time, it was Lee Gilyoung who interrupted. "I don't think 'love' necessarily means love between a man and woman!"

"Maybe… then what do you think Gilyoung?"

"Dokja hyung likes me."

"Why do you say that?"

"That…"

Lee Gilyoung agonized over the question before giant tears started to spill from his eyes. It seemed that no matter how much he thought about it, he couldn't find a reason why I would love him. This time, it was Lee Hyunsung who spoke, "Um, ahem. Perhaps it's the love between 'comrades-in-arms'…"

People simultaneously stared at Yoo Joonghyuk. Yoo Joonghyuk, who was standing with his arms crossed, frowned. "What are you looking at?"

Lee Jihye and Jung Heewon were whispering to each other.

"…Ah, perhaps."

"Right? Isn't this right?"

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is nodding violently!]

At this time, the quietly listening Shin Yoosung raised her hand. "Excuse me…"

The party members tacitly realized something. Among them, the one who might know my mind best was my incarnation Shin Yoosung.

"Y-Yes! Yoosung! Speak!"

"Do you know anything?"

Shin Yoosung slowly shook her head. The expressions of the party members were disappointed. However, Shin Yoosung's words weren't over yet.

"Why don't you just ask ahjussi?"

"What? Dokja-ssi? How?"

I suddenly felt cold. Shin Yoosung was looking exactly where I was watching them. As always, my ominous feeling was correct.

My lovely incarnation smiled and pointed at me. "Ahjussi is listening to our conversation after all."

…Damn.

[The constellation who doesn't yet have a name is wrong.]

"Again."

[The constellation who doesn't yet have a name is wrong.]

"One more time."

[The constellation who doesn't yet have a name says he was really wrong.]

After repeatedly apologizing, the party members—especially Jung Heewon and Yoo Sangah, barely forgave me.

Jung Heewon said, "Then… who is the person Dokja-ssi loves most?"

I was about to answer when Lee Hyunsung spoke up. "Come to think of it, it might be no one here."

"Ah, that reminds me, Dokja-ssi left with that woman. The name… Han Sooyoung?" Jung Heewon also added.

Yoo Sangah's expression hardened at Han Sooyoung's words. "Are you with that woman right now?"

Yoo Sangah's expression was greatly disappointed because she didn't like Han Sooyoung.

…I needed to speak before things got worse. I took a deep breath and sent an indirect message.

[The constellation who doesn't yet have a name says he doesn't love anyone.]

An unknown atmosphere covered the party members. Some were disappointed while some were excited. No, why were they so interested in the love life of others?

Jung Heewon said, "You have to say it precisely. There is no one 'right now'. According to fate, Dokja-ssi will surely love someone."

Well… she wasn't wrong. Jung Heewon continued speaking. "Then I will change the question. What type of style does Dokja-ssi like? Is it close to one of us?"

No, why should I tell them?

"I know you are wondering why you should answer but it is important to us. If Dokja-ssi likes one of us, we might be able to stop that fate."

…It was slightly convincing. Fate was very powerful but as I said, it wasn't inevitable. If I knew who I loved, I might be able to go against fate.

I felt sorry that the party members were so worried about my death. However…

[The constellation who doesn't yet have a name isn't sure.]

In the end, Jung Heewon was irritated. "Oh, why are you so frustrating?"

"Ahjussi, it's fine to tell us! Is it the time to be polite?"

[The constellation who doesn't yet have a name says there is no such thing.]

Damn, I had to use a lot of coins to send the indirect messages.

[The constellation who doesn't yet have a name doesn't know his heart.]

"Dokja-ssi really…"

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is interested in the new story.]

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' wonders about your choice.]

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is glancing this way.]

[Many constellations are choking on sweet potatoes are your frustrating answer.]

Even the constellations were listening to our conversation.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is telling you not to deceive yourself on your heart.]

[Some constellations declare there is no one apart from the incarnation 'Yoo Sangah'.]

[Some constellations support the incarnation 'Shin Yoosung'.]

[Some constellations who love true friends support the incarnation 'Lee Hyunsung'.]

…This was an utter mess.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' has a good idea.]

The next moment, an item popped out of thin air.

[Item Information]

Name: Affection Reader

Rating: SS

Description: An item that lets you know what the other person thinks about you. After pressing the button and thinking about the name and appearance of the other person, the affection number will automatically appear in the air.

I became distracted the moment I saw this item. The Affection Reader was a luxurious item that could only be purchased by platinum members of the Dokkaebi Bag.

No, using 100,000 coins for this unhealthy entertainment? Was she crazy?

"As expected from an archangel! This is big!" Jung Heewon shouted.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' says to try and use it.]

"Then who will go first?"

"It is Heewon unni's sponsor so let her try first."

"Uh, um. Shall I?"

Jung Heewon became slightly nervous once it was time to use it. I was also tense. Why was I so nervous when I was finally getting to know my heart?

…It felt like I was naked. I felt really strange as I saw everyone focus on the Affection Reader. After a while…

There was a beeping sound and the message slowly appeared.

[The affection score of the constellation 'Kim Dokja' towards the incarnation 'Jung Heewon' is 54 points.]

The nervous Jung Heewon was disappointed when she saw the score. "54 points? Is that high?"

"I want to try next!" Lee Jihye took away the reader and cried out playfully as she pressed the button. "Let me know Kim Dokja's heart!"

[The affection score of the constellation 'Kim Dokja' towards the incarnation 'Lee Jihye' is 6 points.]

"…"

Lee Jihye was in a daze as the other members used the reader. Then it was Lee Gilyoung, Lee Hyunsung and Shin Yoosung. Their scores were 49 points, 50 pints and 56 points respectively. In the corner, Lee Jihye was muttering, "Kim Dokja is trash." On the other hand, Shin Yoosung was excited.

Finally, only Yoo Sangah and Yoo Joonghyuk were left.

"J-Joonghyuk-ssi first…"

"I have no intention of joking around."

Yoo Joonghyuk went to search the monster corpses in the distance and all eyes naturally turned to Yoo Sangah.

Yoo Sangah took the reader. Then just before she used it…

[The constellation 'Queen of the Darkest Spring' presents a special item to incarnation 'Yoo Sangah'.]

Clothes fell out of the air and the clothing of Yoo Sangah changed. It was into a black Chinese dress with a black garter belt.

Yoo Sangah stuttered at the sudden change. "T-T-This is…"

I felt desperate at the sight of Yoo Sangah and inwardly cursed. That damn granny of Olympus.

Jung Heewon, who didn't know anything, nodded. "Ah, it is a constellation event?"

"Sangah noona, come forward."

Yoo Sangah pressed the button.

[The affection score of the constellation 'Kim Dokja' towards the incarnation 'Yoo Sangah' is 481 points.]

"4-481 points? Isn't that crazy? Doesn't this confirm it?"

"Dokja-ssi's favourite person is really…"

Yoo Sangah was stuttering with a red face when Lee Jihye felt something strange and opened her mouth. "No wait… Sangah unni. Can you lend me those clothes?"

"Uh, yes."

Lee Jihye entered a nearby building to change clothes before pressing the button of the reader.

[The affection score of the constellation 'Kim Dokja' towards the incarnation 'Lee Jihye' is 481 points.]

Everyone was speechless.

I couldn't say anything through my shame. Lee Jihye shouted ridicule towards the air, Jung Heewon grabbed her belly and shook as she laughed and Yoo Sangah muttered with blank eyes,

"It isn't a person he loves most…"

Lee Gilyoung and Lee Hyunsung were shaking their heads. Shit, this was why I didn't want to do this…

Shin Yoosung was shivering as she watched me. I wanted to apologize when I saw my incarnation's reaction, but Shin Yoosung shouted first.

"A-ahjussi!"

Yes, sorry Yoosung. I…

"Ahjussi! What's wrong? Ahjussi!"

The pale Shin Yoosung stretched out a hand towards the air. There was something strange.

…Eh? Shin Yoosung's voice became distance and my vision swirled as I became dizzy.

Wait. This was perhaps…

The next moment, my consciousness was cut off along with the message.

[You have died.]

Chapter 170: Ep. 33 - Reading Again, I

I remembered the moment I read a novel for the first time.

The texture of the soft paper touching my fingertips. The black letters blooming on a white field. The texture of the page I folded with my hands.

「It isn't important to read the letters. The important thing is where the letters lead you.」

My mother, who loved books, used to say this. At least for me, it wasn't just a saying.

The gaps in the black print. My own little snow garden lay in between the letters. This space, which was too small for someone to go into, was a perfect place for a child who liked to hide. Every time a pleasant sound was heard, the letters stacked up like snow.

In it, I became a hero. I had adventures, loved and dreamt. Thus, I read, read and read again.

I remembered the first time I was about to finish a book. It was like being deprived of the world.

The protagonist and supporting characters walked off with the sentence 'They lived happily ever after' and I was left alone at the end of the story. In my vanity and sense of betrayal, my young self struggled because I couldn't stand the loneliness.

「This… is the end?」

Perhaps it was similar to learning about death. For the first time, I realized that something was finite.

My mother said, 「This is the end.」

「There isn't anything that comes next?」

「There is no 'next'.」

My mother was cold as she told me a brutal truth.

「 However, just because it is the end doesn't mean you've seen the whole story.」

Then she gave me wise advice.

「 Yes?」

「 Read it again.」

Reread the finished story. As a child, I didn't know what this meant.

「 Why read a story I already know?」

「 If you read it again, it will definitely be a different story.」

「…I don't want to.」

I was stubborn because I was afraid of feeling the deprivation again. Then my mother said, 「Do you want to read it together?」

Thus, I learnt to read again.

At first, I only saw the main character's position. The second reading showed the position of the supporting character and the third reading showed the position of the enemy.

The story changed every time I read it. The story was over but it wasn't over. The story wouldn't end unless the reader gave up on the story.

I still thought about it often. What if my mother had said something else at that time?

All fiction was fake and it would just be a loss of my life if I read it.

Would I then have a lot of friends? What if I didn't study hard, wasn't bullied and didn't run away from the reality given to me?

Sparks appeared in the air and the flowing memories were broken.

「Kim Dokja. You look relaxed.」

I turned my head and saw someone standing in the darkness. It was a presence that could easily pierce other people's dreams. Apart from a mighty god, the only possible people who could do this were prophets. However, the person here wasn't Anna Croft.

「Is 'fate' bearable?」

I knew this face. It was a crowned wanderer dressed in old clothes. That reminded me, there was a prophet among the constellations.

'Poked Out His Eyes'.

It was King Oedipus of Olympus, who I met at the banquet. King Oedipus said to me.

「 Your fate is approaching. 」

'Fate? Hasn't it already been realized? Aren't I dead as you planned?'

「 This isn't a fate that can be avoided with a shameful story. You have to decide which side you will stand on soon. I believe you will make the right choice. 」

'I'm not on anyone's side'.

King Oedipus laughed.

「 You will definitely come to Olympus. It is because no incarnation fits the story of Olympus as much as you. 」

'What are you talking about…'

Before I could finish speaking, my memories came back.

「 Dokja. 」

Shit. I remembered this. It was a bloody living room. My mother was holding a knife and standing in front of a dead man.

「 From now on, I will read all of this again. 」

My mother smiled towards me and said.

「Thus, you have to remember well. Understood? 」

A nightmare was coming towards me. I heard screaming. King Oedipus's voice was heard, as if he was laughing at all the memories.

「 Succeed the Carnival of Lightning. Otherwise you will die 'forever' in the following scenarios. 」

[The attribute 'Eight Lives' has been activated.]

[Your body will be resurrected.]

My breath burst out of me like amniotic fluid.

[The second head of the snake has been sacrificed.]

[The power of the head is 'intelligence'.]

My cold skin turned warm again and my stretched muscles gained strength. This was the fourth death I had experienced.

Once against the fire dragon, once against the Disaster of Floods and once when dealing with Nirvana. At this point, I should think about whether Yoo Joonghyuk was the sunfish or if I was the sunfish.

"…Uh, where is this place?"

I looked around but I couldn't tell where I was. I only saw a white cloud-like ground and an open sky.

…Was this Dark Castle?

[The bonus effect has sped up the actions of your brain.]

Due to the resurrection bonus, my judgment of the situation became clearer and faster. I decided to look at it again from the beginning.

First, there was the biggest question.

'Why did I die?'

I had been using third person's viewpoint to watch Paradise and left my body with Han Sooyoung. Suddenly, my consciousness blurred and the death message emerged.

There was only one conclusion. Someone killed me while I was asleep. Who was it? Han Sooyoung?

[A new achievement has been added to your fifth story.]

[People will know you as the 'Messiah Who Bears Shame.]

I died at a strange time so a weird achievement was added to my story.

…I didn't think it was actually shameful.

The prophecy was 'Incarnation Kim Dokja will be killed by the person he loves most'. Then to kill me, they must be someone I loved.

"Hey Kim Dokja! You survived?" In the distance, Han Sooyoung was walking this way.

"What on earth happened?"

"An ambush." Han Sooyoung grumbled as she looked at the cloud field. It was a place where nothing could be seen except for floating clouds. It was an overly peaceful scene to be called an ambush.

"As soon as you fell asleep, some people appeared who were after you. I tried to stop them but it didn't work. You ended up with a fatal wound and I carried you away while crying. Suddenly, I appeared in this place."

The story flowed as naturally as the clouds but it was unbelievable.

[The exclusive skill 'Lie Detection Lv. 2' is activated!]

[You have confirmed that the statement is true.]

"…Did you see the faces of those who attacked?"

"Everybody was wearing an mask and I couldn't see properly. I saw a few people using Detect Attributes but I didn't know them."

The three day journey had made Han Sooyoung considerably stronger. Now Han Sooyoung would be 20th in the Dark Castle rankings. Yet the people broke through her to kill me, then brought us here. I couldn't come up with a plausible group, no matter how hard I thought.

"You didn't find out anything else?"

"By the way, aren't you really relaxed? Who was the one suffering for three days…"

"Three days?"

"You have been dead for three days. Didn't you know?"

That reminded me, Eight Lives had a bit of a wait time. Three days… damn. What happened to the other party members? Surely they hadn't already passed onto the next scenario? If so, all my plans would go wrong.

Han Sooyoung sighed. "No matter how far I go, there are only clouds. I have already given up."

"…Is that why you released your clones?"

Han Sooyoung's clones were training in various parts of the cloud field. Han Sooyoung training in Hidden Weapons Technique, Han Sooyoung training her footwork… each Han Sooyoung was devoted to one skill.

"It is my own training. I didn't want to waste time waiting for you and once I take back my clones, my skill proficiency increases quickly."

Somehow, I discovered the secret behind how Han Sooyoung could become so strong in such a short time.

"What? Are you a ■?"

"I'm a ■?" Damn… it is filtering something like this. Well, I have an idea of what you wanted to say."

In any case, she didn't seem like just a plagiarist writer anymore. I was suddenly curious. The original description in Ways of Survival didn't describe the Avatar skill in detail. It wouldn't be bad to learn a bit more about this skill.

"Are there no constraints on the skill? You can make infinite number of clones as long as you have the magic power?"

"That would be a scam. Of course there are restrictions. Every time I use the skill, I share some of my memories with the avatar."

"…Some of your memories? Then what about after the avatar dies?"

"Then I will lose the memories."

I felt a bit surprised when Han Sooyoung responded casually. Wasn't it a skill that could give her Alzheimer's if she made a mistake?

Han Sooyoung read my thoughts and smiled. "Don't worry. I usually use unnecessary memories. In addition, the memories will come back if I recover the clones. Sometimes… it is a problem because some go out of control."

"Out of control?"

"The first time I tried creating a clone using Avatar… I gave away too many of my memories and it went out of control."

"…Is that possible? Then did you lose those memories?"

Han Sooyoung shrugged. "I don't know. But now I use small memories so it's fine."

"You just think that you're fine."

"Shut up."

A clone ended up having important memories due to a mistake. I shivered as I thought about another Han Sooyoung that might still be moving around somewhere in Seoul.

One be one, the clones turned into smoke and returned to Han Sooyoung. It was probably to recover the accumulated skills proficiency.

Han Sooyoung suddenly exclaimed, "Ah! There was something I didn't say. I just remembered. A constellation came looking for me when you died."

Why give such an important memory to her clone?

"I forgot the name but the constellation belonged to a nebula. Vedas or… Tamna?"

These names were dangerous. Regardless of how I felt, Han Sooyoung muttered in a relaxed manner,

"I heard some ambiguous words. Make the right choice…"

"Can't you remember it properly?"

"I'm sorry. If I recall all my avatars then I can remember… oh, it was a strange Goryeo warrior."

"Goryeo warrior?"

"He left without saying anything. He stared at your dead body for a moment and left straight away."

If it was a Goryeo warrior, it was probably Cheok Jungyeong. There were also Olympus, Vedas and Tamna. The big nebulae were moving so it seemed like something was going to happen.

At this moment, something crossed my mind. "Wait, a constellation appeared directly? It wasn't an avatar?"

"Yes. It was a symbol. Why?"

"…Don't you know the problem with this?"

"Eh?"

"No matter how symbolic, a constellation can't appear in the scenario area without consuming a lot of probability."

The constellations feared probability the most and wouldn't descend as a symbol.

I slowly looked around. "…I think I know where this place is."

This place was a ward but it wasn't a normal ward. It was a ward where constellations could appear in symbolic form.

Han Sooyoung belatedly noticed something. "…The Mechanical Gateway Array Method."

The Mechanical Gateway Array Method It was a technique used by constellations who mastered the principles of the five elements, four heavenly divisions and three calamities.

By the way, it was hard to see people use this technique. Zhuge Liang of China could use it freely. Yet this was the Korean Peninsula. Then…

"Won't you come out?" I spoke to the air.

With the exception of Zhuge Liang, there was one other constellation who could use it freely. It was also a constellation I had already met.

"…It seems it is impossible to deceive you with the shape of a constellation."

A voice was heard as clouds gathered in the air and formed the image of a person. It was a woman in her 30s wearing a prison uniform.

"Haven't we met before?"

"It isn't a very good reunion."

[The constellation 'First Spiritualist of Joseon' is giggling at you.]

First Spiritualist of Joseon, Jeon Woochi's incarnation.

She was the first 'limb' of the King of Wanderers.

"The king is waiting for you."

Somehow, I knew who had killed me. This situation appeared to be the worst. Either way, I had no other choice.

I nodded and said. "Guide me."

Chapter 171: Ep. 33 - Reading Again, II

"That jerk Kim Dokja… he forgot about me again."

There was a small fortress standing on the empty plains. In fact, it was the size of a small house rather than a fortress. However, the armed weapons meant it wasn't lacking compared to a fortress.

Needless to say, it was Gong Pildu's Armed Fortress.

Dudududu!

Gong Pildu fired shells at the monsters approaching the fortress. For several weeks after entering Dark Castle, Gong Pildu had been living in a hellish monster zone. There was an endless stream of monsters. If it wasn't for the coins that Kim Dokja had previously provided him, he might've run out of magic power and died already.

[The constellation 'Defense Master' is excited about the defense game.]

The situation wouldn't have ended up like this if it wasn't for the perverted sponsor.

"Shiiiiit!"

His Dark Castle ranking had risen sharply due to all the monsters he killed. The problem was that his mental strength and magic power had reached their limits.

"It is up to here…"

Gong Pildu had a disheartened expression as he watched the Armed Fortress being broken down by the claws of the monster.

At this time, something golden flew in the distance. It was a powerful ether storm that broke apart the whole field. He wondered if it was Kim Dokja but the person was unexpected.

"…Yoo Joonghyuk?"

A huge dragon was flying through the storm. On top of it, there were two people Gong Pildu knew. Strength went out of Gong Pildu's body and the fortress collapsed. Yoo Joonghyuk ran like the flash and caught the falling Gong Pildu.

'I overused the power of transcendence. For the time being, I must preserve my strength'. Yoo Joonghyuk thought as he glanced at his right arm.

The hand that was holding the sword was swollen and red. It wasn't the power of his sponsor but transcendence was also affected by the probability.

The situation would improve as the restrictions were gradually lifted. However, the probability allowed in the ninth scenario wasn't enough for him to take full advantage of transcendence.

'I have recovered Gong Pildu. Lee Seolhwa is steadily raising her ranking in the western field…'

His plan was progressing steadily. The situation was smoother than any previous scenarios.

'Now the only thing left is Kim Dokja'. Yoo Joonghyuk thought as he looked towards the western plains. 'The fate of Star Stream isn't that lax. What are you going to do, Kim Dokja?'

"Don't worry. There is a way out."

"…That woman isn't the only problem. There are many tough people. Moreover, how are you going to deal with the Mechanical Gateway Array Method?"

"There isn't a way to break the Mechanical Gateway Array Method."

Han Sooyoung and I were walking through the Mechanical Gateway Array Method while following the incarnation of Jeon Woochi, Cho Youngran. I saw that she was floating, not walking, and thought she definitely fit the incarnation of Jeon Woochi.

Jeon Woochi. Along with Hong Gildong, he was one with the power to enter the peak of the Korean constellations…

Han Sooyoung noticed her and spoke again. "By the way, wasn't the King of Wanderers killed by the reincarnator?"

"She isn't someone who will die so easily."

"Come to think of it, you said that you know the King of Wanderers. Tell me precisely. What is your relationship?"

A light sigh emerged at the question. "It is the most complicated relationship in the world."

"I feel disgusted. An old girlfriend?"

"My mother."

"What? Really? Uh… I'm sorry." Han Sooyoung stuttered in an unusually embarrassed manner.

As if hearing our conversation, Cho Youngran looked back with a stiff expression. "Follow exactly where I am stepping. If you step on another place, you will get lost."

I thought it would be like this. All Mechanical Gateway Array Methods were the same. If you didn't go through the proper path, you would get lost. I asked a slightly disgruntled tone, "Can't you just turn it off?"

"It is difficult. I don't know what you will do."

"How funny. You killed me and now you're afraid of me."

"I know you are capable of resurrection."

"Does that let you kill me willy-nilly?"

"I'm sorry for that. In addition, I wasn't moving to kill you. I attacked the woman and she used you as a shield."

…What? I turned around and saw Han Sooyoung whistling. I watched Han Sooyoung smiling and thought about hitting her head. I would question her about it later. I might have eight lives but… wait, it was six lives now.

I glanced back towards Cho Youngran and asked, "Why are you helping my mother?"

Cho Youngran paused at my sudden question. "I honestly don't know why someone like you is following an incarnation. The First Spiritualist of Joseon can become a king right now."

"…How do you know my sponsor?"

"It is obviously a Korean constellation who can use the Mechanical Gateway Array Method."

Jeon Woochi wasn't a narrative-grade constellation but he had many advantages in the early scenarios because the consumption of probability when using his power was small.

Moreover, according to the progress of the scenario, the fame and stories that could be built up were overwhelming compared to other constellations of the same rating.

It was the reason why Yoo Joonghyuk tried to recruit Jeon Woochi as a colleague in the early scenarios.

Cho Youngran replied, "I'm not suitable to be a king."

"Did my mother grab your weakness or something?"

Cho Youngran was going to say something, only to close her mouth again.

I said to her, "Tell me honestly. I can help you."

"…"

"You are being deceived by that person."

Jeon Woochi would be a great power if I could get his incarnation on my side. Of course, I didn't expect much.

"She saved my daughter."

It was as expected.

"I see. Saving the life of your child… of course, you would be loyal after something like that."

Cho Youngran's eyebrows twitched at my words. "Is that a sarcastic tone?"

"That's right. I think 'saving that life' is intentional."

"…Intentional?"

"My mother, isn't there something strange about her?"

"What?"

"She is overly adaptive to the world or knows a lot of information that shouldn't be known at this point."

Han Sooyoung looked at me with a confused expression because she didn't know what I was trying to do. Cho Youngran wondered, "…What do you want to say?"

"What do I want to say? My mother knew what constellation you would get."

"…"

"Maybe she saved your daughter for the purpose of trying to use you. She is such a person."

Cho Youngran… I didn't remember precisely but it seemed a woman with this name had once been Jeon Woochi's incarnation.

A character who lost her daughter and became Jeon Woochi's incarnation decided to get revenge on the world.

I didn't know when I told my mother the story, but if she heard it from me and remembered the information, it wasn't an exaggeration to think my mother would use it.

However, unexpected words emerged from Cho Youngran's mouth. "You're mistaken about her."

"Mistaken?"

Cho Youngran gazed at me in a strange way. It was filled with unpleasant sympathy and was the type of gaze I hated.

"Sookyung-ssi isn't as bad as you think."

Was it because repulsion was surging inside me? I replied bluntly, "Nobody knows her better than me."

"Originally, it is the child who doesn't know anything about their parents. In any case, we've arrived."

I suddenly saw something that was like a front door. Cho Youngran spoke towards Han Sooyoung.

"Girl, you can't enter. Wait with me."

"Tsk, your mother seems very shy. Be safe."

I nodded and brought my hand to the front door. Behind this door was probably the strongest enemy in the current scenario.

Cho Youngran told me, "There is a bell."

Ding dong.

Somehow, the quaint ringtone stimulated familiar memories. It was a ringtone I seemed to have heard a long time ago. Then my mother's voice was heard from inside the door. "Come in."

The door opened and the familiar entrance of a house appeared. A few pairs of shoes were placed neatly together. Some of them were small enough to belong to children. My sense of deja vu was even worse. The interior of the house was familiar. It wasn't too flashy or old-fashioned, but the small decorations showed it was a person with some sense of style.

I entered the living room and saw a familiar room. There were the forgotten wall clock and the television. I knew the texture of the sofa without needing to sit on it. The location of the table was also familiar.

[The 'Fourth Wall' is shaking.]

Really… this was a terrible hobby.

My mother was sitting on the sofa of the living room, dressed in elegant clothes. She asked me, "It took a long time. How does it feel to be home after a long time?"

"I would rather remain dead."

"I'm glad that you are healthy."

"Thanks to someone, I just died and came back to life."

Maybe my mother chose this place to seize the initiative. The dialogue from now on would be a battleground to determine the outcome of the next two scenarios.

"I heard Nirvana killed you. How are you alive?"

"I wouldn't be fooled by such a person. Have you forgotten? I also have a lot of information about the future."

I had expected it. Still, my mother managed to deceive Nirvana. I had no idea what this person was capable of. Perhaps the most threatening thing to me at present wasn't Yoo Joonghyuk or the constellations, but this woman.

"You were alive yet you didn't come to my funeral."

"Why would I go to a funeral when I was the unfortunate one left behind."

"You thought it wasn't enough and had your people kill me once more."

"I killed you once more because you are an irresponsible son. Do you need a funeral this time as well? I saw that you have many good colleagues. They didn't know you were going to rise again and cried…"

The person saying this was my mother. I took a deep breath. I could never be careless when talking to my mother. From now on, it would be the real thing. "Why did you kill me?"

My mother laughed and replied. "Incarnation Kim Dokja will be killed by the person he loves most."

"…How do you know that?"

"Yoo Sangah-ssi told me. She asked me to save you." Yoo Sangah must've visited my mother. "By the way, you came with another girl this time. Have your tastes changed? Honestly, I like Yoo Sangah more."

"Don't pay attention to unnecessary things. I don't understand you the more you talk. Why did you kill me when you were asked to save me?"

"The prophecy came true thanks to me. Isn't that right?"

"Huh?"

My mind became complicated. No, she was saying…

My mother continued, "It said it in the prophecy. The 'person you love most'. Thus, I killed you."

It was ridiculous that the person I hated more than anyone else would say this.

Even so, the moment I heard it, I was disturbed by a feeling I couldn't express well. I definitely hated my mother. My life was a mess because my mother ruined it. Yet… my mood was complicated.

"I see. You killed me because you thought you are the one I love most? Is this fate?"

"Doesn't it often appear in your favourite novel?"

"If so, you have completely failed."

Obviously, fate told me that I would be killed by the person I loved most. If so, my last death should've made my fate come true.

"I am still receiving the fate message."

It was true. A little while ago, the infernal message entered my ears.

[A huge fate is hoping for your definite death.]

A modified was even added. It was a 'definite death'.

The words of King Oedipus in my dreams were correct. I couldn't escape this fate with the story 'Eight Lives'.

"At the very least, you aren't the person I love most."

Chapter 172: Ep. 33 - Reading Again, III

My mother was silent for a moment. The silence cheered me up a bit. The fact that my mother expected me to love her and the idea that I could hurt her feelings excited me.

However, my mother spoke in a tone that sounded like she had expected it. "Hrmm, I see."

"…"

"I still wanted to try it. It could've ended your fate. In any case, you still have a lot of lives left."

"Don't speak like you are doing this for me."

"I love you."

I got goosebumps. Why was she suddenly saying this? "What does this mean?"

"I am your mother."

I looked at my smiling mother and one corner of my heart ached. Did she really believe that such words were acceptable? A decade's worth of suffering alone couldn't be denied because of these words.

I glared at my mother.

Mother, love…

I didn't use Lie Detection on her. Sometimes there were such words in the world. Even if it was true, it was painful enough to be called false.

I sighed and said, "It's too late."

"I know."

"Then why…"

"I just wanted to say it once. I don't think I've ever told you before."

We fell silent and didn't say anything for a while. Only the second hand of the wall clock told me that time was passing by. It was like a page with nothing on it. Like a writer squeezing out my first sentence, I barely managed to open my mouth. "…How was your life in prison?"

"You often came to see me. Is there a need…"

"You didn't tell me anything."

"…"

"Why didn't you say anything? I went to see you so many times…"

I didn't hate my mother from the beginning.

Even when my mother killed my father.

Even when she went to jail.

Even when my relatives rushed to take our assets and I was treated like a leftover product.

I didn't hate or blame my mother.

"How can a person be so shameless?" The reason why I hated my mother was simple. "Why did you remain silent? And why… did you write such a story?"

Someone might say this: You became rich. Isn't it good that she sold the book? I didn't know if the royalties from my mother helped my life. My relatives always treated me like I wasn't a person.

"I had a really hard time. Whenever I went to school, walked on the streets or met someone, it seemed like everyone was talking about me. It was the same when I moved schools. Every time, I was the son of a murderer."

Those who had never experienced it would never know. The world was tenacious. The reporters stood in front of my house and it felt like all eyes in the world were chasing me.

"Maybe, just maybe, I could've endured it."

It might've been okay if my mother had said something to me. If she told me to endure it, I could've. If only my mother had told me she was on my side, even if she sold our story for money.

[The 'Fourth Wall' is shaking violently.]

[The stigma 'Self-rationalization Lv. 2' has been activated!]

I looked at my mother. I hadn't misunderstood. My mother sold our lives to earn money.

Then my mother opened her mouth. "I wanted to know."

"Know what?"

"The truth."

"…What is the truth? Mother, didn't you kill Father?"

"You don't know the story."

"I know it very well. Since separating from you, I looked over my memories again and again."

In other words, I read it again. I became absorbed in the characters of the novel because of my mother.

–Dokja. -From now on, I will read all of this again.

–Your father, he did something wrong and died.

–This was self-defense. Understood?

I read it again hundreds, thousands and even tens of thousands of times. No, I replayed it so many times that I couldn't even tell it was true anymore.

"It was enough for my father to die. He was a gambling addict and violent towards his family. Our family would've been in danger if he remained."

The mother watched me and nodded. "Yes, I remember it well. So why are you angry?"

I tried to ask my mother several times.

Why didn't you run away with me? Why did you leave the child alone? Why didn't you come see me after you were released?

The questions piled up inside me and I got the answer on my own.

[The Fourth Wall's shaking has subsided.]

This was a fear created by the answer. It was an answer that I tried to erase. I was afraid that once the answer was given, I wouldn't be able to accept it.

In the meantime, my mother had been repeatedly opening and closing her mouth before finally being able to speak. "…It is too late to say anything."

Yes, I knew.

[Many constellations have sponsored you 5,000 coins for your family history.]

This was sufficient for the damn drama.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is thirsty from your sweet potato.]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' suggests that you think again.]

[The constellation 'Poked Out His Eyes' is smiling in an insidious manner.]

This role didn't suit me in the first place.

"Why do you keep changing the original novel?" My mother changed the topic. "If you let it flow like the original and let people die, the scenarios wouldn't have been so difficult."

"I have to change it. Mother, you know that Yoo Joonghyuk can't reach the ending in the third regression."

[Many constellations are frustrated by the filtering.]

The story about the original novel was filtered by the constellations.

"The ending?"

"Yes. The ending."

"…You are struggling just for that? You're not crazy."

"The ending of this story is important to me. It was this world that kept me alive while you were gone." It was thanks to the novel that I could survive the last few years without my mother and father. "You can never understand."

〖Three Ways to Survive in a Ruined World.〗

I didn't know what the author intended with this title. However, this title was reality to me, not a metaphor. It was because for me, this had become a 'ruined world' a long time ago.

I read this novel on a daily basis and survived. Thus, I couldn't give up on this story.

My mother refuted, "This isn't a novel. There is no ending like 'Everyone lived happily ever after' in reality."

"I will see it through to the end. In addition, when did I say I wanted that ending?"

"Stop. This world is crazy. It isn't something you can achieve because you know the future. Don't you already know this? The next scenarios—"

"Stop." It was pointless to keep arguing with my mother. "Just tell me what you want. Why did you call me here?"

"Stay here."

Yes, I thought she would say this. It was just like my mother.

"Why would I do such a thing?"

"I can't lose my son again. I will somehow do the following scenarios."

"Save it."

I raised my energy.

"Be honest. You think I will be a hindrance. I don't know what your purpose is but I won't ask you anything."

For the first time, an unfamiliar emotion crossed my mother's face. She looked sad. Sad? What qualifications did she have to feel like this?

"…Who do you really resemble?" A wave of magic power rose in my mother's body as she spoke. "I dislike this method but it can't be helped.

[Some constellations like this fighting in a family.]

[Some constellation's who value filial piety dislike this situation.]

The furniture of the house was swept away by the magical storm, causing Han Sooyoung to notice and run inside.

"Kim Dokja!"

The incarnation of Jeon Woochi, Cho Youngran was also behind Han Sooyoung. The living room quickly changed into a confrontational situation. Cho Youngran was preparing a trick while my mother gazed at me with serene eyes. Jeon Woochi's techniques were tricky but I could somehow defend against them.

The problem was my mother's side. I didn't yet know who my mother's sponsor was. This was just before my mother's ability was revealed.

[The exclusive skill 'Bookmark' is activated!]

"Selecting the fourth bookmark, 'Lycaon Isparang'."

[The exclusive skill 'Way of the Wind Lv. 10 (+1) is activated!]

Way of the Wind reached its limit and the whole room was caught in a magical storm. I condensed the winds and destroyed the entire living room.

Then I escaped from the house with Han Sooyoung. As dark smoke covered my field of view, I told Han Sooyoung. "I will finish this right away so get ready."

"Understood." Han Sooyoung started to generate a powerful 'black fire' in her hand.

I immediately changed the bookmark. "I will choose the fifth bookmark, Kyrgios Rodgraim."

The combo of Miniaturization and Electrification followed after Way of the Wind. The fastest and most efficient way to overpower my mother was to use the greatest skill I had.

However, the moment I was about to use the skill, dozens of people appeared through the smoke. They surrounded me and spoke in fervent voices. "You've misunderstood everything. Please. You have to stay here."

They were my mother's subordinates. Dozens of women wearing prison uniforms looked at me with sympathetic expressions. Han Sooyoung shouted, "What is this?"

The surprised Han Sooyoung poured the black flames towards them but they were scattered in all directions by Jeon Woochi's defense. Cho Youngran shouted, "Kim Dokja! Stop! Sookyung is doing this for you!"

It was my mother who blocked their mouths. She raised a finger to her mouth, telling them not to say anything. Then a grand aura started to emerge from my mother's body.

Sparks formed due to the excessive use of probability. It was a more intense synchronization than anything I had seen before. My mother was obviously overdoing it.

[The sponsor of incarnation 'Lee Sookyung' has revealed her modifier.]

[The constellation 'Founder's Mother' feels deep sadness towards you.]

The Founder's Mother? Oh my god. Don't tell me?

[The constellation 'Founder's Mother' says that your strength is a threat to the Korean Peninsula scenario.]

[The constellation 'Founder's Mother' says that she won't take your life if you don't rebel.]

I hastily used Miniaturization and Electrification at the same time.

[The energy of the old land has sealed your skills.]

My vision became dim, as if I had entered a dark cave. Power was extinguished from my body and I became an ordinary human. The helplessness of a small animal captivated me.

[The energy of the old land seals your 'value'.]

I knew this stigma. There was only one 'story' regarding sealing on the Korean Peninsula.

"…I never thought you could use this."

Yes… it was strange I hadn't thought about it This was the Korean Peninsula. Yet there was one nebula that hadn't contacted me yet. I should've made contact with them first but I hadn't got close to them at this point.

"I told you, I love you." My mother smiled while waving a bronze bell in my hand.

The Founder's Mother. One of the highest ranking constellations of Hongik and one of the most well-known stories on this land.

My mother's sponsor was Ungnyeo[1], mother of Dangun Wangeom.

I sighed and said. "…Okay. I surrender."

"What? Hey! Kim Dokja!"

"Just wait here. You can't win anyway."

A sense of exhaustion filled my body. Now I was no different from an ordinary person.

"…Putting aside your sponsor, how did you get the Eight Beaded Bell?"

I stared at the bronze bell in my mother's hand. The Eight Beaded Bell was one of the three 'heavenly seals' of Dangun's myth. It was one of the greatest relics of the Korean Peninsula and had the ability to seal the 'story' of another person.

No matter how I thought about it, there was no way to get this star relic through normal methods at this point. My mother must've paid a price to get it.

"I will let you go once it is time. Just stay here for now." Finally, my mother and the wanderers disappeared.

Han Sooyoung and I were trapped in the Mechanical Gateway Array Method. I was able to guess where my mother had gone.

Maybe she went to see Yoo Joonghyuk. I didn't want to imagine the catastrophe that would happen if they met.

"Shit, what now? How are we going to get out of here?"

Han Sooyoung asked as she tried to break the Mechanical Gateway Array Method. My skills as a constellation were sealed so it was impossible to destroy straight away.

Well, this was with my own power. I thought it over. "There is one way."

"What is it?"

"There is a presence that can break the Mechanical Gateway Array Method."

"What? Who?"

If I called him, the seal would somehow be broken. Originally, it was a constellation I didn't dare call but now it was unknown.

I pulled out Ganpyeongui. I saved it for an important time and now it was the only thing I could believe in.

[The special option of the 'Ganpyeongui', Echo of the Stars has been activated.]

[Echo of the Stars allows you to ask for help from a historical-grade constellation.]

"I will call the constellations."

[In the flow of the stars, the historical-grade constellations hear your voice.]

I called out the modifier of the constellation.

[The status of this constellation is too high.]

[Five points on the Sky Disc are required for this constellation. Will you accept this?]

There were only five points left because I had used the rest on calling the Big Dipper and the Nation's Independence Activist.

Now this constellation required all the remaining star points on the Ganpyeongui.

It was necessary because this being's strength already surpassed the historical-grade rank.

[The operation of the stars has begun.]

In the darkness of the deep night sky, a solitary star was shining. I declared towards him. "Goryeo's First Sword, I need your strength."

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[1] **Ungnyeo** – Korean for "bear woman." A prominent figure in the creation myth of the Korean nation. According to the myth, she and divine king Hwanung had a son, Dangun, who would go on to found the nation of Korea. Wiki

Chapter 173: Ep. 33 - Reading Again, IV

Sparks wrapped around my body as I felt the signs of a probability storm. This was a big burden for a single constellation not of the narrative-grade to bear.

I thought the records of how Cheok Jungyeong faced an army alone were exaggerated. However, rather than an exaggeration, the stories had been reduced.

In fact, Cheok Jungyeong had become much stronger than what was written in Earth's records after becoming a constellation. In other words, there were sword masters who would become nervous just hearing about this constellation.

Still, I had to endure it. If I couldn't withstand the spirit of Cheok Jungyeong, I couldn't break the 100 Days Seal.

[Your 'status' is currently sealed.]

[Your main skills are currently sealed.]

[Time remaining: 100 days]

The 100 Days Seal, which could be carried out by the three highest beings of the constellation 'Hongik', was the highest-grade seal that sealed up the target's abilities.

[Eat garlic and mugwort and endure for 100 days.]

Of course, this seal wasn't necessarily a bad thing. If I could eat garlic and mugwort for 100 days, I could receive Hwanin's blessing and wake up the potential of my body.

However, now I didn't have enough time. Han Sooyoung watched the garlic and mugwort pouring from the sky and asked, "Hey, isn't it almost done?"

"The power is so strong that it is hard to control. Just wait."

I took a deep breath and controlled my magic power. Cheok Jungyeong lent me strength in response to my call but didn't say anything in his true voice. He just handed me some of his strength, as if saying 'try it if you are confident'.

As a result, I had been controlling the story that had been running wild for 30 minutes. It seemed like my whole body would burst.

I watched the grumbling Han Sooyoung and suddenly became annoyed. "This is all because of you. This wouldn't have happened if you didn't use me as a shield."

"I didn't do it on purpose."

"Do you expect me to believe that? Based on what you have always done…"

It seemed like many complaints had piled up and I couldn't help nagging. How many minutes had passed?

Han Sooyoung slowly got fed up and shouted, "Ah, I apologize! Yes, I used you as a shield. What do you want me to do?"

I wanted to say she was brazen-faced but then a presence suddenly intervened.

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' interrupts with a cough.]

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' says that Han Sooyoung never used you as a shield.]

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' says your death is your responsibility.]

Han Sooyoung shouted, "Hey, you shut up and stay still! Saying unnecessary…!"

"What does he mean?"

"It is nonsense. Don't worry about it."

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' claims that Han Sooyoung didn't protect your heart to protect your black fire dragon.]

…My black fire dragon?

"That's why I…" Han Sooyoung hesitated before starting to talk. "I mean, Jeon Woochi's attack… flew to that place."

"…Hah."

I was so dumbfounded that I forgot the important situation and sighed. Han Sooyoung hesitated as she stared into my eyes and bit her lips. "That… you would be a bit unhappy if you lost that function so… I shifted the direction."

"That's why it hit my heart?"

"…Well, there is such a story."

It was an absurd story. Han Sooyoung didn't wait to see how I accepted it and added swiftly.

"I-I didn't have any strange thoughts. Don't be mistaken. The Black Flame Dragon bastard was shouting that I should protect the whale…"

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is looking at his constellation with embarrassment and agitation.]

I sighed lightly and said, "…I don't care about that. Just protect my heart well next time."

Han Sooyoung made a surprised look at my words and nodded. An awkward atmosphere briefly flowed.

Han Sooyoung seriously considered something and opened her mouth. "By the way Kim Dokja, I have a question…"

"What is it?"

"Why does he call it the black flame dragon?"

'That guy… he was very small when he was a child'.

Lee Sookyung was immersed in her memories as she gazed at the dark and desolate plains of Dark Castle.

How much time did it take to get here?

There were no easy scenarios and all plans were half-distorted or broken. How many times had she experienced the crisis of death due to insufficient information?

'It was especially dangerous when I met Nirvana'.

The reincarnator. Lee Sookyung never thought that such a being could exist in the world. Well, it was abnormal for a novel to become reality in the first place.

She turned around and saw Cho Youngran, the incarnation of Jeon Woochi.

"Your Majesty."

"Stop it with that title."

"…Sookyung-ssi."

Cho Youngran had a complicated gaze.

'It is no wonder,' Lee Sookyung thought.

Cho Youngran was the only wanderer who knew all her circumstances. "You didn't need to fight him. If you were honest about why you wrote the book…"

"Being honest is harder than fighting. Especially when it is between a parent and child."

In fact, she had the conversation with Kim Dokja because of Cho Youngran's suggestion.

Cho Youngran kept pressing. "Now is the age where he can accept the truth. He isn't the 10 year old boy you knew."

"For me, he is just a child. It doesn't matter if he is 30 or 40 years old."

"…It is the pride of a parent."

Pride…

That's right, it was pride. Lee Sookyung lowered her eyes. "At first, I tried to show courage. I tried to tell the truth."

"…"

"However, after I looked into his eyes… it felt like an excuse for me to enter his life."

Reality was different from a novel. A wounded person might be saved but a wounded person. wouldn't heal that easily.

"I don't know if that child really needs the truth. Maybe it was what I needed. I didn't want to stay as a bad mother…"

She became crooked herself to protect Kim Dokja. She became like this as a result of her own love.

「 Incarnation Kim Dokja will be killed by the person he loves most. 」

Lee Sookyung recalled the moment when she first heard of her child's fate from Yoo Sangah. The fate of Olympus would surely be realized.

"…The child will understand you one day."

In order to find out how to save her son, Lee Sookyung gave three days and three nights to the Founder's Mother.

Three SSS-grade items were offered as a tribute to Hongik and she also gave 20 years of her life. In return, she was able to steal a line of fate that Olympus had hidden.

「If he doesn't go to the next scenario, Incarnation Kim Dokja can live. 」

Lee Sookyung smiled. "Have all the troops gathered?"

"Yes. They are all assembled."

On the edge of the plains, the group of wanderers she led were gathered. They were all here because they believed in her. Lee Sookyung opened the main scenario window.

[Main Scenario #9 - 73rd Demon King]

Category: Main

Difficulty level: SS

Clear Conditions: You are eligible to participate in the last scenario of Dark Castle. Gather four rankers to go up to the third floor of Dark Castle and enter the final scenario.

Time Limit: 30 days

Compensation: 100,000 coin

Failure: — Death

* Your current Dark Castle ranking is 2nd place.

* Only incarnations within the top 10 of the rankings can challenge the final scenario with you.

Lee Sookyung glanced at Cho Youngran. She currently had two of the top 10 rankers. They were Cho Youngran and Lee Boksoon. In order to complete the scenario and challenge the final floor of Dark Castle, two more rankers were needed.

Cho Youngran said, "They are coming."

An army was pushing from the other side of the Abyss Plains. They came from Paradise. She saw a familiar face at the head of the army.

Lee Sookyung greeted one of the people in the opposing force. "Yoo Sangah-ssi. It's been a while."

"Ah! Really, I'm really glad… you are alive! Dokja-ssi…"

"We can talk about it later."

Lee Sookyung looked at the party across from her.

'From left to right, it is Lee Hyunsung, Shin Yoosung, Jung Heewon, Lee Jihye and Lee Gilyoung'.

She heard about Lee Hyunsung, Shin Yoosung and Lee Jihye from Kim Dokja but she had never heard of Lee Gilyoung and Jung Heewon. Perhaps they were new people her son had recruited, regardless of the original novel.

'It would've been a lot easier if there were only original characters. Stupid fool'.

As a child, Kim Dokja did many unpredictable things. Therefore, Lee Sookyung had believed that her child would become an artist.

"The King of Wanderers."

The voice came from the person she had been waiting for. It was a person she heard a lot about from her son while she was in prison. She never imagined she would see him in person.

"Yoo Joonghyuk."

Supreme King Yoo Joonghyuk. The protagonist of this story opened his mouth. "Why did you want to see me here?"

"I have decided to end this scenario."

Yoo Joonghyuk glanced next to Lee Sookyung and asked, "Are you also collecting the four heavenly kings?"

"Four heavenly kings?"

"You need four rankers to go to the next scenario. Don't you know?"

"Ah… yes, that's right. I'm collecting them. I guess they are called the four heavenly kings. I can't keep up with the trendy words of children these days."

Yoo Joonghyuk's eyebrows twitched at Lee Sookyung's words. "You have a twisted mind."

"You are a shrewd child."

The eyes of the two people met and waves of energy bounced wildly. Just by exchanging looks, Lee Sookyung could get a vague glimpse of Yoo Joonghyuk's power.

It was transcendent. He had to be at this level to be the protagonist of the story.

Lee Sookyung took a short breath and opened her mouth. "I want to hold hands with you. Let's gather the remaining rankers together."

"…Rankers?"

"Yes. Isn't your goal to save this world? You need the most powerful lineup of incarnations as possible if you want to clear the next scenario. I can help you. My sponsor is Founder's Mother."

Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes slightly tensed up at the words 'Founder's Mother'. However, it was just for a moment. The words that came out from Yoo Joonghyuk's mouth were completely unexpected. "Where is Kim Dokja?"

"…Why are you looking for him?"

"I heard you took him."

"So why?"

Lee Sookyung had a strange feeling at his dismissive attitude towards her suggestion. It was a disturbing feeling that only a mother with a child could detect.

She wondered, "Surely you aren't going to include that child in your four heavenly kings?"

"I'm not obliged to answer that."

"Your personality is exactly the same as what he said."

"…Kim Dokja told you my story?"

"He did. He told me a lot."

She stared into Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes and Lee Sookyung's suspicions increased.

Lee Sookyung asked, "I heard that you handed the Paradise achievement to my son. Why did you do that?"

"He can save the world if he grows stronger."

"Aha, you are going to use him for 'that'?"

Lee Sookyung deliberately emphasized a word. It was a relaxed tone, as if she already knew it.

Then Yoo Joonghyuk replied, "Kim Dokja is necessary for this world. I need him."

"…"

"He will be my companion and he will see the end of the scenario."

Lee Sookyung's expression slowly hardened. Companion? The voice of her young son appeared in her mind.

–That jerk, he is a complete psychopath.

–He knows nothing but how to use people. -He will do whatever it takes to reach his goal.

"This is strange. The Yoo Joonghyuk I heard about will never talk like you."

"Does your family like to talk as if they know someone well?"

Yoo Joonghyuk pulled out his sword. It was a hard attitude that showed no more dialogue was needed.

"Give me Kim Dokja. Then I will spare you."

Lee Sookyung stared into Yoo Joonghyuk's blazing eyes and recalled her son's voice. Despite his many complaints, her son always looked somewhat excited.

–But the story won't continue without him. Ways of Survival is such a novel.

At this moment, enlightenment filled Lee Sookyung's head.

「Incarnation Kim Dokja will be killed by the person he loves most.」

Lee Sookyung realized the true meaning of this fate. She knew who would kill her beloved son. Maybe it was an insight Lee Sookyung was able to reach because she was used to these types of metaphors and symbolism.

"I see." Lee Sookyung realized everything and laughed.

This wasn't her original plan. Still, the prophecy meant that the plan had to be modified here.

"I'm sorry but I can't let you see my son."

"Why?"

"A mother's responsibility is to control her child if he mixes in with bad people." Lee Sookyung's eyes were cold as she took out the Eight Beaded Bell. "I have to send my son back to reality."

Chapter 174: Ep. 33 - Reading Again, V

At this time, Bihyung was at the Seoul Administrative Branch of the bureau.

It would soon be time for the Seoul Dome liberation scenario. All dokkaebis in the dome were busy trying to finish the scenario.

Bihyung walked through the halls of the bureau and saw newly hired low-grade dokkaebis moving along with the instructor.

Newly born dokkaebis. They received basic education at the branch's education centre, were assigned their own channels and were reborn as streamers.

"Don't hesitate to intervene if the interest of the constellations fall. You can't directly intervene in a given main scenario so use sub-scenarios to aggravate the conflicts between people or create a dangerous situation."

"Don't create situations where the constellations are annoyed by character conflicts. A good person is a good person, a bad person is a bad person. Make sure the dichotomy is clear. This way, the constellations can easily determine the objects of their anger."

"Always induce the incarnation to be in the middle of the event. However, keep an eye on the main incarnation and make the event move around the incarnation. It also shouldn't give off an artificial feeling."

The instructors spoke these words and the low-grade dokkaebis were busy taking notes.

At one time, Bihyung had been one of them. He learnt how to proceed with the scenario and was taught how to smile and talk. It couldn't be too strange or too cliche. Become a streamer who wasn't disturbed by the scenario progression.

"Are you remembering the old days?"

Bihyung turned and saw the advanced dokkaebi Baram, the chief of the Seoul branch. Bihyung was nervous and his expression changed.

Baram stroked his beard and stared at the low-grade dokkaebis. "It is a terrible sight. Every time it sounds refreshing to the constellations, but this is something learnt from the dokkaebis' formal education."

"It is somewhat inappropriate for an advanced dokkaebi to say this."

'It is you who made the guidelines'. Bihyung swallowed down these words.

Baram laughed bitterly. "It can't be helped. These scenarios sell well."

"There might be exceptions."

"There should be. However, that 'exception' is possible because the ordinary scenarios are openly reviled."

Some low-grade dokkaebis were gathered in front of the screens and watching the scenarios going on in Seoul Dome. On the screen, the stories of the incarnations belonging to the biggest channel in Seoul Dome were flowing. Bihyung's face became a bit hot.

–Then I will be forced to kill you.

–Yoo Joonghyuk-ssi! No!

Yoo Joonghyuk and Lee Sookyung were confronting each other on the second floor of Dark Castle.

–Damn, why isn't ■■ and ■■■ coming out?

–It will come out. I just don't know when.

On the other side, Kim Dokja and Han Sooyoung were discussing an unknown story in the Mechanical Gateway Array Method.

Bihyung was immersed in his thoughts. 'I warned him not to say information that would be filtered, dammit'.

The advanced dokkaebi Baram opened his mouth. "Your channel is popular these days. Talk of your channel is everywhere in the Seoul branch. In particular, that incarnation…"

"I also receive a lot of curses."

"That's good enough. In any case, it is raising curiosity. Do you know that you are the number one dokkaebi respected by the low-grade dokkaebis these days?"

"I want to know why you called me here."

It was language that could seem somewhat rude but Bihyung had no other way. There would be a difficult situation if he didn't go back to his channel right now. Baram was silent and Bihyung once again spoke.

"I'm sorry but it is entering the final phase of the ninth scenario. I have to go back to my channel…"

"That's why I called you."

Bihyung saw Baram's serious expression and realized something had gone wrong.

There was a loud noise from the screen and the full-fledged battle began. The incarnations with strong sponsors were fighting, raising synchronization in a reckless manner. Signs of a probability storm appeared all over the place.

If such strong signs continued, the outer gods would gain the right to intervene. If so, Kim Dokja's safety couldn't be guaranteed.

The anxious Bihyung tried to leave this place when Baram spoke in a cold voice. "The constellations don't want your intervention."

Currently, Bihyung's channel was the most influential one in Seoul Dome. The fact that Bihyung was clearly being kept in the Seoul branch made something obvious. "Since when has the Seoul branch been watching the constellations?"

"I'm always watching. I don't just look at the education of the low-grade dokkaebis."

"Isn't this what it looks like on the surface? The main scenario policy…!"

"A large number of nebulae have complaints about this scenario."

A large number of nebulae. Bihyung knew who they were right away.

Olympus.

Vedas.

Papyrus.

…

The nebulae with influence in the Star Stream were interfering with the progress of this scenario.

Why? In fact, Bihyung knew why.

"It is because of that incarnation."

Kim Dokja didn't know anything and was still struggling against the Mechanical Gateway Array Method with Han Sooyoung.

"At most, he is one incarnation. He can't influence the entire scenario," Bihyung refuted.

"Only one incarnation… do you really think so?"

"…"

"No, he isn't an incarnation anymore."

Before the 10th scenario arrived, an incarnation with no sponsor became a constellation. This was impossible considering the difficulty of the scenario.

"He will be a monster. Have you forgotten about the Goryeo's First Sword incident? It is difficult to see such a non-standard existence again."

Goryeo's First Sword, Cheok Jungyeong.

The strongest on the Korean peninsula and among the historical-grade constellations caused an incident.

Bihyung also knew about what happened at the time.

A person who incited many grudges because his natural talent didn't fit the balance of the scenario. A great deal of probability was consumed to 'exclude' him from the scenario, only for him to return as a 'constellation'.

"Goryeo's First Sword is a special case. Kim Dokja became a constellation faster than him but Kim Dokja's potential itself isn't high. If it is potential, the incarnation Yoo Joonghyuk has already reached transcendence…"

"I know. That isn't too serious. In fact, Yoo Joonghyuk is the one who is similar to Goryeo's First Sword. That's why Kim Dokja is more dangerous."

The frustrated Bihyung shouted, "I can understand some of the complaints of the constellations. Kim Dokja didn't enter under them so they are annoyed."

"…"

"However, isn't this a situation where they have already taken action? Have there ever been any cases where 'fate' is used before the 10th scenario?"

"You are defending the incarnation."

"It isn't defending! I'm talking about unfair treatment in the scenario!"

"I don't think you are in a position to say that."

Bihyung was surprised but pretended to be calm. The advanced dokkaebi Baram smiled. "It's fine. I didn't call you here to catch your transgressions."

It sounded like a threat where he intended to catch Bihyung's transgressions. Bihyung asked, "Then why…"

"If you're smart then you would know. Haven't you ever thought it was strange? Why are the constellations already using the excessive action that is 'fate'?"

"…"

"In most cases, they can peek at the future through their dealings with prophets who can use Future Sight, without using fate. If they anticipate how the target will behave, they can change the future with a moderate amount of probability. Yet they didn't do that this time. Why?"

It was something Bihyung had never thought about before. The power to force fate also placed a heavy burden on the nebulae. There were many powerful incarnations apart from Kim Dokja. Why force fate over Kim Dokja?

"Don't tell me…?"

If the nebulae called for fate, it meant they had no choice but to use fate. In other words…

The senior dokkaebi Baram nodded. "It means that no one in the Star Stream can see the future of Constellation Kim Dokja."

"…How can that be?"

"I don't know either. One thing is for sure, many constellations are afraid that Kim Dokja will reach ■■. Hmm, it is still being filtered. So… it is all for the 'end'."

Baram's gaze was fixed on the screen.

"You need to do this. Once it is over, I will recommend you to be an advanced dokkaebi."

It required a screening process to become an advanced dokkaebi. Bihyung already guessed what Baram would do.

Bihyung watched the screen and unknowingly hugged the egg.

"Hey, do a good job."

"I know."

Perhaps it was due to the former black flame dragon incident but the atmosphere with Han Sooyoung had become a bit subtle.

Han Sooyoung's constant trying to start an argument was probably because she was aware of this awkwardness.

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is smiling with satisfaction.]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' hates this atmosphere.]

It took much longer than I thought to digest the power of Cheok Jungyeong. Four hours had already passed. I was sweating just controlling the power of his story.

My mother had probably met Yoo Joonghyuk by now.

Han Sooyoung was sitting on the floor eating mugwort. Then she said, "By the way, I don't think your mother is a bad person."

"…Did your mind become strange after eating some grass?"

"Well, the two of you seem to have a bad relationship. I don't intend to meddle with someone's family affairs… in any case, she is taking care of her child."

"How is this taking care?"

"There are many parents in the world who have no interest in their children."

Han Sooyoung's voice took on a darker tone. I sighed and replied to her, "My mother spoke to me about you. She thought I was dating you."

Han Sooyoung laughed. "Your mother has an eye for females."

"By the way, she thinks that Yoo Sangah-ssi is better than you."

"…So when are you going to kill that aunty?"

We laughed. Once again, I realized how certain Han Sooyoung was. She was more like a character than anybody else these days.

Han Sooyoung stopped laughing. "We sound like characters."

It was as if she read my mind. My heart started pounding. Han Sooyoung didn't know it but one day, she would become a 'character'. It was just like Lee Sungkook and Jung Minseob.

I liked both characters and non-characters, so I didn't know if it was a good or a bad thing. Just… I felt unsure when I thought about that time. Why didn't I want this person to become a character?

"Eh? Something has changed?"

I looked down at my right hand after hearing Han Sooyoung's words. The power of the story borrowed from Cheok Jungyeong was finally stabilizing. I nodded.

"Be prepared. We are escaping."

I controlled my strength and pulled out Unbroken Faith. The moment I borrowed Cheok Jungyeong's story, the trajectory of his life passed through my head like a panorama.

「Cutting 1,000 people with one sword.」

「Cutting a great mountain with one sword.」

「Separating the sea with three swords.」

It was Cheok Jungyeong's Three Sword Style. It was the name given to a person who never swung a sword more than three times towards a target.

[The status you can't afford has fallen onto your right arm.]

100 Days Seal started to instantly crack. It was the splendor of Cheok Jungyeong.

The imperfect seal made with just the Eight Beaded Bell could never restrain Cheok Jungyeong's power.

A real 100 Days Seal would only take effect after gathering all three heavenly treasures.

[The explosive flow of the story has distorted the space of the Mechanical Gateway Array Method.]

[The explosive flow of the story has broken the 100 Days Seal.]

I poured the Purest Sword Force into the air.

One Sword, One Sword Cuts Thousands.

Like a meteor shower, the sword cut through the air and the space split apart. The Mechanical Gateway Array Method and the seal. Everything was pointless before this overwhelming destruction.

It was the sword technique of a genius training in the sword for tens of thousands of years. The most ideal cut for destruction.

I couldn't see the true power but I felt a sense of freedom that was just like when I reached 100 strength not long ago.

This was the power of the stars.

The illusionary space collapsed and reality started emerging. It was a completely crazy sword technique.

I felt just as greedy as when I got Kyrgios' Electrification. How good would it be if I could make this mine? Unfortunately, Bookmark only applied to 'characters'.

[Due to your status increase, the Bookmark skill will be updated.]

[A new feature has been enabled.]

…Eh?

[Your understanding of the constellation 'Goryeo's First Sword' has increased by a very slight amount.]

Chapter 175: Ep. 33 - Reading Again, VI

…What? I was surprised to see the message. So far, my understanding of constellations had never increased.

I opened Bookmark but Cheok Jungyeong wasn't added to the list of available people. It might be due to the 'very slight' increase. Perhaps it was a 1% increase.

Still, I was full of expectations. If my understanding continued to rise, wouldn't it be possible to imitate the skills of the constellations one day?

"…What is this?"

I turned at Han Sooyoung's voice. The white sky, the precursor of a storm, looking down at me with a disturbing aura. It was a white night.

There were intermittent rumbling sounds and the entire field shook like there was an earthquake. The aftermath of the two warlords colliding scattered all over the plains. However, they didn't kill each other.

[Everyone… kneel… down!]

A constellation's true voice. I wondered how much probability was consumed to speak these words. Many incarnations who couldn't bear it were struggling in pain.

Those who had the protection of their sponsors or those with strong mental powers didn't give in. Han Sooyoung was one of them.

"What? What is going on?" Han Sooyoung shouted in a frustrated manner.

I watched the field with her. In fact, I thought this might happen but not to this extent.

"…This is an utter mess. Do they intend to all die together?"

It wasn't just one or two incarnations who raised their synchronization rate to the limit.

The probability allowed by Dark Castle was exhausted to the limit. Sparks appeared like firecrackers all over the battlefield.

–Kim Dokja, listen to me. if you do this, you will die.

I heard Bihyung's voice coming from someone as I looked at the ruined battlefield.

–There is only one way to escape from 'fate'. Find the force that will protect you. Otherwise…!

There was a sound and Bihyung's voice was cut off. Someone was blocking Bihyung.

At the same time, hundreds of eyes focused on me. They were historical-grade and some narrative-grade constellations who maximized their synchronization with their incarnations.

I felt the scorching air and gulped. Then Cheok Jungyeong spoke for the first time. [You must be scared.]

"Nope. Rather, it is fun."

I was serious.

[Many constellations are looking at you!]

[Some constellations are chanting your name!]

[2,000 coins have been earned as a bonus.]

Cheok Jungyeong spoke again, [The wall of fate is high.]

"It's just a high wall. I will break it if I have to."

The person who I loved. Thus, the person who would kill me. I didn't know who they were. Just as I didn't know my own fate, they didn't know me either.

"Let's go."

I ran through the battlefield. This time I didn't hide my power.

"I will choose the fifth bookmark, Kyrgios Rodgraim."

The moment that Bookmark was activated, I triggered Miniaturization and Electrification.

[The technique of a returnee. How interesting.]

I was able to sweep through the battlefield with the power of Cheok Jungyeong.

However, I shouldn't overdo it. My right arm had almost turned into a rag after using one sword from the Three Sword Style.

I ran through the battlefield while sprinkling the high-grade physique recovery potion that I had bought from the Dokkaebi Bag.

"Out of the way!"

A white trail was left whenever I passed. This was the power of the returnee Kyrgios. The power of the being who exceeded level 10 and gained the power of a constellation left white blue trails as it passed through the battlefield.

"Aaaaack! What the?"

Like a tsunami being split in two, the incarnations fighting each other screamed and scattered.

"I don't know what you're fighting for but stop."

It was good to raise the ranking to resolve the ninth scenario but it wasn't good to consume each other in this way.

"T-The Ugliest King!"

"I heard he was dead!"

There were incarnations who remembered me.

"If you know who I am, do you have a grasp of the situation?"

Some incarnations put down their weapons while others fell back. There were those looking at me with shining eyes.

[Many incarnations are paying homage to you.]

"Thank you for the eighth scenario. The rumour about your resurrection was real."

There were those who remembered how I sacrificed myself when I was the 'strongest sacrifice'.

They lightly nodded and willingly withdrew.

[Your resurrection story is widespread.]

[A new achievement 'Mediating Messiah' has been added to your fifth story.]

I think they were the forces who came from Paradise. Yoo Joonghyuk and the party members were probably also included.

Then the other side?

"Huhu. We meet again, young man. How did you get out of that array?"

As expected, they were the wanderers. I asked Lee Boksoon, "Why are you fighting?"

"Why? It is because of you."

Lee Boksoon. She was the grandmother who had Harbin's sniper as a sponsor.

"You shouldn't go to the next scenario.

"…Is that what my mother said?"

Lee Boksoon rushed towards me without answering.

The skill Old Strength suddenly increased the grandmother's muscle strength, allowing her to push through the surrounding incarnations like a train, arriving by my side in an instant.

[Under the banner of the constellation 'Goryeo's First Sword', all stats will increase by 10 for 30 minutes.]

[All of your stats have temporarily transcended human limits.]

I couldn't say that I respected the elderly but some degree of politeness was required. Still, this time was an exception.

"I'm sorry but I won't let you go this time, Grandmother."

The 'Harbin Sniper' was a sponsor that only showed a strong response to certain constellations.

In other words, the current attack power was based on the power of the stories built up by Lee Boksoon.

If so, I wouldn't be pushed.

Once all stats exceeded 100 in the Electrification state, an enormous power emerged from my body.

Lee Boksoon was hit by my fist and flew away.

"Stop Kim Dokja!"

The forces of the wanderers surpassed my expectations. It was unbelievable that they had been defeated by Nirvana's Salvation Church with such a large force.

By the way, there were some strange things among the wanderers. They were contaminated humans who had been transformed into a demonic person.

Unfortunately, I knew this story. Han Sooyoung saw it and muttered. "Dammit, someone got the story of the third place ranker."

Third on the Dark Castle rankings, 'King of the Dead' Davidtz.

It seemed there was a person among the wanderers who had killed Davidtz. King of the Dead was a story that was as powerful as Paradise of Despair. King of the Dead was a skill used to turn the dead into undead to fight.

"Get ready to run, Kim Dokja! Break through here!"

Han Sooyoung created 10 or more avatars and untied the bandage around his right hand. Black ether focused in their hands and black flames swept over the battlefield.

I ran along the path Han Sooyoung made. I overcame the group of demonic person and shook off the wanderers.

Then I saw Cho Youngran using King of the Dead. As expected, this woman had the story.

The First Spiritualist of Joseon, she had the Mechanical Gateway Array Method and King of the Dead.

My mother had a truly versatile subordinate. She was taking a magic power potion and looked surprised to see me. "Kim Dokja? How did you… You were caught in the Eight Beaded Bell's seal!"

"I was a bit troubled."

Cho Youngran gathered her magic power. Maybe this person was currently third on the Dark Castle rankings. "Stop and back off. I don't want to hurt you."

"I can't…"

There was a sign she was using the Mechanical Gateway Array Method again and I raised the energy I had kept hidden. Then Cheok Jungyeong's strength was released.

[The constellation 'First Spiritualist of Joseon' is greatly confused.]

The Mechanical Gateway Array Method was broken and blood flowed from Cho Youngran's mouth. Sparks flew behind her and a voice was heard.

[T-This aura…! Why are you here?]

In the end, Jeon Woochi spoke in his true voice. Then Cheok Jungyeong replied, [Get lost.]

[B-But you aren't his sponsor…!]

[I won't tell you twice.]

[Kuek…]

Jeon Woochi was crushed by the strong difference in status and quickly disappeared.

Cho Youngran was unable to cope with the aftermath of the probability consumption and staggered. She could no longer maintain King of the Dead and the balance of the battlefield started to collapse.

"N-No. You can't, Kim Dokja!"

I ignored Cho Youngran and ran. I wasn't afraid of any attacks pouring towards me because of Cheok Jungyeong. The difference in status was huge.

After five minutes, the centre of the battlefield was revealed. It was the place where the most powerful sparks were present.

On the field where white night, the people I knew were pointing weapons at each other.

Han Sooyoung ran up behind me and opened her mouth. "…Your mother is a monster."

I wasn't too surprised. My mother would surely be at this level. The information that I knew…

My mother was fighting on an equal footing with Yoo Joonghyuk and my other colleagues.

An incarnation who could fight evenly against a transcendent didn't exist. Behind my mother's back was the shadow of a giant bear.

[Poor descendants… I don't want to fight…]

I had seen Yamata no Orochi descend in the same form on Peace Land. It was the descent of the shadow of Founder's Mother.

Han Sooyoung shook her head as the nightmare of Peace Land came to life. "How… wouldn't the probability be lacking?"

"It is due to the Eight Beaded Bell."

One of the three heavenly treasures shone in my mother's hand. The lack of probability was replaced by a powerful relic.

"If you don't want to fight then why do you keep hitting us! Uwaahh!"

The shadow of the giant bear swept through the field, causing Lee Jihye and Lee Hyunsung to be thrown out. They couldn't stand properly against the destructive power. It was obviously a terrible situation.

"Dokja-ssi!"

Yoo Sangah recognized me first. Then the other party members approached me. Jung Heewon shouted first. "Dokja-ssi, talk to your mother!"

"Hyung, is that person really your mother? Yoosung…"

"Dokja-ssi, what is this situation?"

The words poured out all at once and I couldn't answer. Finally, Yoo Joonghyuk approached me. "I guess your mother doesn't like me."

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I nodded and opened my mouth. "Still, don't kill her."

"…We must beat her. That woman has no intention of cooperating."

I glanced at my blood-soaked mother. I didn't know if it was her blood or the blood of others.

However, she was obviously at her limits. She had somehow been fighting with a reasonable probability but her physical strength must've bottomed out. It was an inevitable result.

She was alone and this place had Yoo Joonghyuk.

Yoo Joonghyuk had become transcendent and was on a completely different dimension compared to Peace Land. No matter how great the story, it was impossible with just a shadow.

It wouldn't be easy to overcome a transcendent unless one part of the body descended, but my mother didn't have enough probability remaining.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is gulping.]

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is paying attention to your choice.]

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is observing your atrocious acts.]

I left my party members and headed towards my mother. "Stop trying."

[The 'Fourth Wall' is shaking faintly.]

"Why are you stopping me?"

My mother's face didn't look good, despite it being barely visible through the shadow of the constellation. Only her eyes and mouth were barely revealed. It was a distance that could be crossed, but I could never reach her. It was the same in prison and even now. This had become our distance.

She told me, "If I talk… you won't listen…"

This person, why was she going so far? Why did she keep doing this despite her bloody body?

My companions were watching me. Their eyes were asking me to make the right choice. I sighed and opened my mouth. "Just once. I will listen just once, so tell me."

I was surprised by the words that came out of my mouth.

"Tell me the story properly."

I didn't know I could say this. I squeezed out these words even though I didn't know if I was sincere or not.

My mother's eyes shook.

"How long can you stay like this? Don't keep it to yourself and tell me. Why are you blocking me? Mother, why did you come all the way here? Anything, saying anything is fine!"

"If I say it…"

I saw the eyes that seemed like they would cry and realized all the stories so far had been connected.

I was her child, so I knew. The reason my mother blocked me was related to why my mother wrote the essay.

I would be hurt. I would break. My previous life might be ruined.

"Tell me." I had long thought about it. Perhaps it was the story I had already predicted.

There were so many hints from the constellations that it would be odd if I didn't know. Nevertheless, I wanted to hear the story directly from my mother's mouth.

It might completely change my life but I had to listen, even if the wall shook again. It was because it was my story. Some stories couldn't be understood if I missed a page.

Soon, my mother's lips opened. However, in this damn scenario, it wasn't a story just involving mother and son.

[The nebula 'Vedas' is looking at your fate.]

[The nebula 'Olympus' is looking at your fate.]

[The nebula 'Papyrus' is looking at your fate.]

A new drama wasn't allowed for us.

The nebulae's messages popped up and intense sparks filled the air. My mother grabbed her head with both hands and started to scream.

I yelled and ran towards her. The moment my outstretched hand was about to reach my mother, the shadow of Founder's Mother caught me.

[Constellation Kim Dokja. You… can't pass here.]

There was a crack on the Eight Beaded Bell and black, muddy waves overflowed. There was a fierce sound like the sky was being ripped apart, and a vortex appeared in the sky. A portal was opening at the centre of the vortex.

[The Great Hole.]

The excessive probability had summoned a being who would destroy everything.

"Everyone, don't look at it! Close your eyes!"

I shouted the moment I discovered the tentacles coming from the Hall. I didn't know about Yoo Joonghyuk, who was a transcendent, but ordinary incarnations would collapse just from seeing such an existence.

"…An outer god"

Yoo Joonghyuk's expression hardened. We were convinced when we saw the tentacles coming from the Great Hole.

This was an outer god. A god who was called due to the sacrifice of Founder's Mother.

Thunder fell from the crack in the sky while the distorted time and space screamed painfully.

It was similar but different to when that guy was summoned on Peace Land. The one being summoned now was the true body of an outer god

Based on this scale, at least one-third of the true body would be summoned. The true body of a god. The shadow couldn't even be compared to it.

"Yoo Joonghyuk! If we don't stop it now—"

"It is too late. It isn't a level I can stop."

My body was trembling just looking at the sky. I could see it with the status of a constellation.

[The Fourth Wall is strongly activated!]

My trembling subsided a bit by Fourth Wall but the fear didn't change. The existence beyond that Great Hole was something that couldn't be beaten even if the present Yoo Joonghyuk and I combined strength.

In the midst of this helplessness, I realized something. Now it wasn't a fight for incarnations.

"Kuaaaaah!"

Some of the incarnations with historical-grade constellations shed blood and died the moment they saw this existence. Yoo Joonghyuk and I protected the party members and retreated. Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes were becoming darker. I spoke in resistance,

"Don't worry. The constellations won't stay quiet once this type of guy descends."

It was shown at the constellation banquet that the constellations and the outer gods didn't have a good relationship. In a situation where the god descended, no other constellations would intervene.

The Great Sage, Heaven's Equal, Uriel and the slightly reliable black flame dragon…

However, the constellations showed no response to the true body of the god passing through.

Yoo Joonghyuk spoke through gritted teeth. "…I don't know how they can be ignorant."

It was a confusing situation for me as well. This was the descent of an outer god. Why wasn't anyone coming to help us?

[Some constellations are astonished by the coming of the outer god!]

[Many constellations are complaining about the tyranny of some nebulae.

…What?

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is showing hostility to the nebula Papyrus.]

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is baring his fangs to the nebula 'Vedas'.]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' resents the atrocious acts of the nebula Olympus!]

Now I realized. I see. This damn situation.

[All constellation on the Korean Peninsula are wondering which nebula you will choose.]

This was all happening because of me. The messages popped up in turn.

[A number of nebulae want you to inherit their stories.]

[If you inherit a story, your existence will be forcibly bound to the nebula.]

.

.

[The nebula Olympus wants you to inherit Carnival of Lightning.]

[The nebula Olympus wants you to inherit Thunder Guide.]

[The nebula Papyrus wants you to inherit 'Master of the Typhoon Wolf'.]

.

.

[The nebulae are offering you a final choice.]

[All the constellations on the Korean Peninsula are watching your choice.]

I laughed. This was why I didn't like the constellations.

Carnival of Lightning.

Thunder Guide.

Master of the Typhoon Wolf.

They were all stories of constellations with histories of killing their own relatives.

At the same time, each nebula had a powerful story. Perhaps if I succeeded their stories, I would be able to repel the outer god. Then my mother would die here.

Yoo Joonghyuk was watching me. His eyes asked what I was going to do. I said to him, "…Yoo Joonghyuk. Do you remember the nebula we made? Kim Dokja's Company."

It wasn't simply to save my mother. Everything would end if I belonged to a nebula.

There was no way I could overcome the unfair contract with them and I would never be able to reach the end of the story.

"…You still want to use that name." Yoo Joonghyuk frowned as he moved close to me and pulled out a sword. "I will choose the name of the nebula."

I smiled at the thought that Yoo Joonghyuk was joking. The energy of transcendence could be felt by my side. It was strangely relieving despite the presence of a person who had long surpassed my scale.

It might be because I felt like we were standing on the same horizon for the first time since the scenario began.

I declared towards the stars in the night sky. "I won't bow to your fate."

I pointed my sword towards those silent gazes.

"I will decide my story."

Then I heard a laugh come from somewhere. Along with the laughing sound, I heard a whisper from the universe that seemed to be mocking these insignificant worms.

–Unfortunate constellation.

–You who killed your father with your own hands.

–You who will destroy your mother.

–You who will see the downfall of your precious things.

I stared at the outer god. If he finished his descent, the second floor of Dark Castle would be completely erased.

It was a different situation from Peace Land. There was no place to go if a crisis happened here. However…

Inside me was a constellation who was as weary of the word 'fate' as I was.

[A few hundred years have passed and things haven't changed. Damn son of a bitch.]

Cheok Jungyeong's presence inside me started to be released. I didn't know if it was possible for Cheok Jungyeong to cope with the god from another world. Still, I had no choice but to believe in him.

Cheok Jungyeong shouted towards Founder's Mother, who was half eaten by the god from another world.

[Founder's Mother! Why did you make a deal with the outer god?]

It was a deep and resonant voice filled with anger.

[Since when did Hongik become so cheap?]

Surprisingly, the Founder's Mother replied.

[I didn't make a deal… with the outer god.]

[Then what is this situation?]

[I'm sorry. There was no… other way. To protect the… scenarios of the Korean peninsula. This incarnation… should be here. That man shouldn't return to the Korean Peninsula. Otherwise, the other nebulae…]

[Did you make a deal with the nebulae?] Cheok Jungyeong exclaimed. [Are you still so obsessed with that little land that you are now betraying your descendants?]

[You don't know. You…]

[What the hell is this? Where is the creation god? Why is he invisible when something like this is happening?]

[The creation god…]

However, the words of Founder's Mother didn't finish. The next moment, I felt Cheok Jungyeong looking towards the sky.

[Don't tell me…?]

The night sky sent an indirect message before answering.

[The nebulae declares that anyone who helps Goryeo's First Sword will be regarded as their enemy in the future.]

Then like magic, the indirect messages in the night sky became calm.

I heard the voices of the Great Sage, Heaven's Equal and Uriel, but they seemed unable to intervene due to their own interests or special reasons.

Cheok Jungyeong gazed at the night sky through my eyes. I could feel the explosive emotions mixed in the silence. Cheok Jungyeong's rage and sadness. His grief… And… his decision.

[You can feel proud.]

Cheok Jungyeong spoke to me.

[Those who are at the highest point in this damn world are afraid of you.]

"…What is pride worth when I am going to die?"

[You won't die.]

They were just words, but they were words spoken by a constellation.

As if putting a buoy against fate, all the stories built by Cheok Jungyeong were rooted in my existence.

[I won't let you die.]

Chapter 177: Ep. 33 - Reading Again, VIII

Cheok Jungyeong's story filled my whole body, while the stories of Cheok Jungyeong scattered through the Star Stream started to gather. It was a good story that improved the status of existence just by reading.

[The story 'Dragon's Blood' has become known.]

[The story 'Wiping Out An Army With One Sword' has become known.]

[The story 'Battlefield Slaughterer' has become known.]

…

「He was a strong man from birth. He was born with a dragon's bloodline.」

「"Cheok Jungyeong! Cheok Jungyeong has appeared!"」

「"He cut 36 enemies alone."」

From the time of Cheok Jungyeong's birth until now. He didn't know about the 'scenario' but he heard stories that were part of the 'scenario'.

[The story 'Exiled from the Scenario' has become known.]

「"He is too strong. Exile him from this scenario. Use every means possible to send him to another world."」

I watched the passing history and felt anger, sadness, joy and frustration, just like Cheok Jungyeong. After the bout of emotional feelings, Cheok Jungyeong's face and solid body were seen. I had never seen Cheok Jungyeong before but I seemed to know him better than anyone else.

This story was Cheok Jungyeong.

"Why are you going so far to help me?"

[Who knows? Why?]

Five constellations on the Ganpyeongui were consumed in exchange for summoning Cheok Jungyeong.

However, the thing he was doing for me now far surpassed five constellations. No constellation would disclose the base of his story to an incarnation. In addition, Cheok Jungyeong wasn't my sponsor.

[I was like you.]

One of Cheok Jungyeong's stories flowed into my head.

[The story 'One Who Fights Against Fate' has become known.]

「"Place Fate on him. This person has to die."」

The words of the constellation struck me. I knew that Cheok Jungyeong had been wronged. I didn't know he was affected by fate, just like me. A long time ago, Cheok Jungyeong experienced the same thing due to the constellations.

I saw the rising notification windows.

[The story 'One Who Fights Against Fate' has begun!]

Cheok Jungyeong's story was my story. Cheok Jungyeong laughed.

[It isn't the same size as your fate. There was only one nebula who did this damn thing to me.]

Cheok Jungyeong spoke as he watched the world through my eyes.

[At that time, I survived with the help of Hongik. However, I still often think about it. I shouldn't have received the help of any nebulae.]

Cheok Jungyeong's spirit emerged from my chest.

[That's why I want to help you.]

He raised the sword in my hand and took a specific posture. The outer god, who had almost swallowed the Founder's Mother, roared.

Cheok Jungyeong also pulled out all his aura. The Unbroken Faith in my hand was crying violently.

[A good sword.]

The sword shook as if in response to the remark. My magic power was reduced, like there was a bottomless pit, while particles of pure ether gathered in my sword.

An ether blade that was over 10 metres in length was formed. I shook from the formidable power and tried not to lose focus.

[I will borrow it for a while.]

My body was completely possessed by Cheok Jungyeong and I started to run with Unbroken Faith in my hands.

It was an overload that I couldn't cope with, despite my overall stats being over level 100. The bones in my body creaked and the group exploded, forming a huge crater.

I was confident that I could cut anything with this power.

However, I was engulfed in a sense of despair as soon as I leapt into the void and confirmed the enemy. It was an emotion I felt while living in the 'human' world.

Could I kill such a huge thing?

The outer god beyond the Great Hole exceeded imagination just from the size. The diameter of the body alone was at least one kilometre. Each of the 12 legs attached to the body had a diametre of several dozens of metres.

Still, not even one-fifth of it had passed through yet. If all of this guy appeared, who the hell could kill it?

Cheok Jungyeong read my despair and laughed.

[I am Cheok Jungyeong.]

It felt like the world was listening. Or it was a declaration to the entire Star Stream.

[The strongest military leader on the Korean Peninsula.]

Then the sword moved. There was a moment when I didn't know what I was doing, despite being the one to do the action. It was the swordsmanship of Cheok Jungyeong.

Two Swords Style, Two Sword Mountain Chop.

Cheok Jungyeong's sword moved. It wasn't a sword for cutting humans. It wasn't a sword for cutting monsters. It was a sword to cut nature.

The blade that was over 10 metres moved twice in succession. This was a giant cracking sound.

It looked more like darkness was flowing than blood and looking closer, the darkness seemed like printed letters.

I recognized it as the story of the outer god. In a way, the outer god was the same type of existence as the constellations.

Along with a scream, the god's tentacles were separated from the torso and fell to the ground. It was like a huge building was falling.

The astonished incarnations evacuated in all directions while I was surprised in another sense.

A human could cut something like this. I felt awe for a being who was born a human but went beyond humans.

However, a terrible pain came after the amazement.

"H-Heok… kuooooh."

I started groaning from the terrible pain. A violent storm was battering my body. I shivered like a person electrocuted by hundreds of thousands of volts.

The bones in the hand that swung the sword were destroyed and my mind shrivelled like a crushed bug. Strong power came with great responsibility and in this world, the name of this responsibility was 'probability'. Still, I wasn't ready to take responsibility yet.

[The constellation 'Goryeo's First Sword' is looking at you.]

Cheok Jungyeong was sharing the probability but I was still too weak to handle his strength. Cheok Jungyeong sighed.

[Weaker than I thought! I thought you could afford this much because you are a constellation…]

I wanted to say that he had too much brute strength but my words didn't emerge.

"Cough! Pant! Pant! Pant!"

Instead of throwing up food, I threw up electricity. I sat on the ground and breathed out for a few minutes before I barely managed to escape the probability storm.

I looked up and saw the scene made by Cheok Jungyeong.

The sword that cut mountains.

Cheok Jungyeong had turned two of the twelve tentacles into rags from the one attack. In other words, he cut two mountains.

However, there were 10 mountains and the torso remaining. Cheok Jungyeong's voice was dark.

[…It is insufficient. It might be possible if I could use more three swords.]

"There are more than three swords?"

[I haven't used it yet but in your situation, I doubt I can even use three swords.]

I gritted my teeth. The summoning speed of the outer god was accelerating. Even if the scale of probability had been almost adjusted, the summoning continued and it seemed furious from the blow.

"Is there any way to negotiate with that guy?"

[Negotiate? How will you negotiate with it?]

"It is also a god…"

Cheok Jungyeong noticed my intentions and interrupted me.

[If you are trying to save your mother, give up. It is a situation where the shadow of Founder's Mother is eaten. Your mother's soul would already be scattered.]

"It hasn't happened yet. The outer god doesn't eat its prey that way."

[It sounds like you are aware of the outer gods.]

Cheok Jungyeong didn't know. I really did know the outer god. I once again looked at its appearance.

The two giant tentacles and body were covered in a thick fog, making it not visible.

The body, that was reminiscent to a giant canal, provoked cosmic awe just seeing it. There was no doubt. The Yoo Joonghyuk of the 136th regression fought against this very god.

In fact, while I was sitting down and trying to breathe, Yoo Joonghyuk was fighting against another tentacle.

By using the power of transcendence along with Giant Body Transformation, Yoo Joonghyuk looked like a half-god who had descended. The power of Breaking the Sky Sword moved over a tentacle and it shook painfully.

Using his own strength, Yoo Joonghyuk damaged the outer god.

The level was still insignificant compared to Cheok Jungyeong but Cheok Jungyeong spoke in an admiring voice.

[This reminds me of me in my prime. With this type of talent, he might be able to catch up with me after a long time…]

Yoo Joonghyuk avoided the moving tentacles and cut off one-third of a tentacle. However, there was a limit to the blow he could deal. Yoo Joonghyuk stepped back and gasped.

"Kim Dokja, this guy is the 'Devourer of Dreams'. I met him in the second regression. Once eaten by him, you will live in his space for the rest of your life and have your stories extracted. You must never enter his mouth."

It was information I already knew but I nodded anyway. As Yoo Joonghyuk and I was recuperating, the summoning of the god kept accelerating.

Now almost one-third of his body was summoned.

The summoned tentacles started to riot and the landscape hundreds of metres around them were completely devastated. Some incarnations screamed as they were hit by the tentacles.

The Devourer of Dreams wasn't a 'great old one' but it was still a cosmic god. The stories from Earth couldn't deal with it unless they joined forces. Cheok Jungyeong spoke in a dark voice.

[…If he fully descends, it isn't possible even with my strength. We have to attack now.]

However, the situation wasn't advantageous to us at all. Sparks flew as soon as Cheok Jungyeong pulled up his story again, crushing my heart.

[This damn probability doesn't help at all.]

This was all the probability I could use, despite the outer god being summoned.

The meaning of this was simple. Someone had assigned the amount of probability that could be used to us. It was stupid to ask who was behind this.

I bit my lips and blood flowed down. "We still need to do it. Use the Three Sword Style!"

[Your presence might disappear if I use it.]

"This is the only chance. Yoo Joonghyuk. Join forces with me this time."

Yoo Joonghyuk nodded.

I once again started running with Unbroken Faith in my hand. The sparks of probability flew with every step that I took.

Would it be possible? I didn't know. This time I might really be crushed by the probability storm. Still, I had to do it. I had always done it and it would be the same again.

"Kuheeeok…"

Before I could even run 10 steps, the probability grabbed onto my ankle again. This time, the recoil was greater.

As expected, it was impossible alone. I needed someone's help but who could help me now?

It was different from the time with the Absolute Throne. The constellations who tried to help me now would become enemies with the huge nebulae.

[The constellation 'Maritime War God' is looking at you.]

The amount of sparks around me were gradually decreasing.

The Duke of Loyalty and Warfare, Yi Sunsin.

He led the historical-grade constellations of the Korean Peninsula and contributed to my probability.

Cheok Jungyeong was slightly touched.

[Duke of Loyalty and Warfare. There was a story that you are more likely to become a narrative-grade than me.]

[The constellation 'Maritime War God' is nodding lightly.]

[Well, okay. The stories added… are there any more? Are there no more constellations courageous enough to confront this god?]

The sky was silent.

Apart from the Duke of Loyalty and Warfare, no one else took on my probability. Then Cheok Jungyeong's angry roar emerged.

[Baldy! Come quickly and help! Aren't you a someone who fights for justice?]

[The constellation 'Bald General of Justice' bows his head.]

[Fucking one-eyed jerk, what are you doing?]

[The constellation 'One-Eyed Maitreya' is tightly holding his eyepatch.]

Cheok Jungyeong shouted towards the world, without worrying about his probability being wasted and his status being damaged.

[All of you are hiding even in this situation? Aren't you constellations? General? Maitreya? King? You don't deserve to be called this!]

[Constellations of the Korean Peninsula are silent at the words of Goryeo's First Sword.]

Yet there still weren't any constellations who moved. At this moment, a figure staggered in the distance.

The woman breathed roughly as she reached out to this side. It was Min Jiwon. Fortunately, she was alive.

[The constellation 'Slumbering Lady of Fine Brocade' is looking at you.]

Then a message was heard.

[Constellations of Silla are bearing your probability together.]

The constellations of Silla were helping me. It was a modest level of help but they were still constellations.

[The nebula 'Vedas' feels resentment towards Slumbering Lady of Fine Brocade.]

[The constellation 'Slumbering Lady of Fine Brocade' is exhausted from the excessive probability and has fallen into a deep sleep.]

A constellation closing their eyes meant they had suffered significant damage to their existence.

Even so, the will of Slumbering Lady of Fine Brocade seemed to have affected the other constellations of the Korean Peninsula.

I felt a prickling sensation as eyes started to gather on me.

[The constellation 'Bald General of Justice' says he doesn't care and is looking at you.]

It started with Samyeongdang.

[The constellation 'One-Eyed Maitreya' is looking at you with half an eye.]

[The constellation 'King Heungmu the Great' is swearing as he looks at you.]

[The constellation 'First Spiritualist of Joseon' sighs and looks at you.]

The sparks covering me dwindled in an instant. It was finally turning into a likely probability.

[The nebula 'Olympus' declares that Maritime War God is an enemy.]

[The nebula 'Papyrus' is furious at the constellations of the Korean Peninsula.]

…

Thanks to me, the whole Korean Peninsula was covered with war clouds.

Cheok Jungyeong laughed. [This is why I curse this land but I can't leave. Fighting to the death with a few people…]

[The minimum of preparations is reached.]

Finally, Cheok Jungyeong prepared his Three Sword Style.

I'll see you Monday.

Chapter 178: Ep. 33 - Reading Again, IX

I held onto Unbroken Faith. My muscles expanded from the powerful stories. It was like a dragon's blood was flowing through my heart.

[Move while the force is building up. We have to make a gap.]

Yoo Joonghyuk came forward first.

"I will buy as much time as possible."

The movements of the tentacles were more active than before and the ground was almost in ruins. We tried to move this guy as far away from the party members as possible.

"Haaaaap!"

Yoo Joonghyuk raised his magic power and moved forward. Meanwhile, I moved behind the Devourer of Dreams. It was to find a place where I could hurt the main body as much as possible without hitting the tentacles. The body was at least one kilometre in diametre so it was a hard job to find the weak spot.

In the meantime, Cheok Jungyeong built up his strength. The one sword and two swords were powerful enough but they couldn't be compared to the huge force building in my right arm.

It was doubtful if this was really the power of a historical-grade constellation.

[…Damn, this is the limit for this body. This much is possible with the support of the probability.]

Cheok Jungyeong grumbled as the accumulation of power almost finished.

[Don't be too elated. I don't know if I can cut all the tentacles and hurt the body with this much strength.]

"I guess. The opponent is an outer god after all. Do you have a plan?" I asked with a bit of expectation. He spoke so confidently that I thought Cheok Jungyeong had a countermeasure.

Cheok Jungyeong thought for a moment before replying, [I will hit him with the Three Sword Style and hope he is tired enough to go back.]

"…Didn't you say you would protect me?"

[I will protect you. I promised in my name.]

"The strongest person on the Korean Peninsula is relying on luck in this situation?"

I flinched at the magic power that exploded from Unbroken Faith. Was he angry? However, Cheok Jungyeong calmed down.

[I know the 'Demon of the Horizon'.]

The Demon of the Horizon. I heard this name and glanced at Yoo Joonghyuk, who was still fighting.

He didn't seem able to listen in on our conversation. Cheok Jungyeong continued speaking.

[I will ask him to send you to another world. There is no time limit on the ninth scenario. If you flee there, you will be able to live for a while. Of course, you will have to take care of things after that.]

"What type of demon has that power?"

[Rather than a demon… he is closer to a god. You don't need to know the details. You would be better off praying not to meet him.]

I didn't know the relationship between Cheok Jungyeong and the Demon of the Horizon…

I pretended differently but I knew that name. It was because the Demon of the Horizon was the existence who sent Shin Yoosung of the 41st regression here and who supplied the 'disasters' to the dokkaebis.

I wasn't sure how Cheok Jungyeong knew the Demon of the Horizon but perhaps he was the one who helped when Cheok Jungyeong was exiled from the scenario.

"Can other people escape this way?"

[Such a large amount of probability isn't allowed. The dokkaebis also won't allow it.]

"But once this happens… all the people left here will die."

If I ran away, the people here would be swallowed up by the Devourer of Dreams and have their stories swallowed. Cheok Jungyeong clicked his tongue.

[That isn't any of my business. Don't worry about the others. Take care of your own life. Life is about being alone anyway.]

As expected of Cheok Jungyeong. His life philosophy was very pessimistic due to his life of betrayal.

[A gap! Run!]

I used Electrification and flew forward with all my speed at Cheok Jungyeong's sudden shout.

I passed through two or three tentacles but there were still five or six blocking the way. It was dangerous to get closer. There was the place where I should stop.

"Goryeo's First Sword. I have an idea."

[An idea? What is it? Concentrate instead of speaking nonsense!]

"To be honest, it is impossible to kill him with the Three Sword Style. You should already know it."

The ground that the tentacles touched subsided. It would be instant death if I was touched, no matter Cheok Jungyeong's defense.

However, Cheok Jungyeong's pressure would kill me before the tentacles. I shouted as Cheok Jungyeong's power pressed down on me. "I'm not saying this to provoke you. Just think about it realistically!"

Cheok Jungyeong's pressure decreased at my words.

[…So? Do you have a way to beat that guy?]

"I do. If you help, perhaps I can kill the outer god."

Cheok Jungyeong laughed in a dumbfounded manner.

[Kill the outer god? Do you know what you're saying right now? This is an outer god. It would be hard even for those damn Olympus and Vedas guys.]

"There is no way I would say this if it was another god. However, the Devourer of Dreams… it might be possible."

[…I am listening. What is the method?]

"Hurt his body and throw me into it."

Cheok Jungyeong was confused and at a loss for words. The giant tentacles were coming once again.

[If you do that, you will die. You won't survive being eaten by him. Didn't you hear the words of that good-looking guy before? Once you are eaten by him—]

"I will survive."

I was convinced as I listened to him.

I was certain that I could survive being eaten by this outer god. No constellation, let alone a mortal, could feel this conviction. Cheok Jungyeong trembled as if he was incensed and opened his mouth.

[…Is there something you can do?]

"I can't say it is 100%."

I might be able to get help from the Demon of the Horizon through Cheok Jungyeong. Yet there would be nothing left for me if I survived alone. Escape was a denial of everything I had built up so far.

Thus, I chose this approach.

[Kuhuk…]

The silent Cheok Jungyeong suddenly gave a huge laugh. It was a laugh that seemed to fill the plains.

[I lived long enough to see the day. The day when a man like you believes he can fight against that god.]

Finally, the upper body of the Devourer of Dreams started to be summoned.

The first eye that watched the world was revealed. As soon as the gaze of the Devourer of Dreams touched on the ground, the sensation filled me with more trepidation than I had ever felt.

If I fought this thing, I would die. No matter what I did, I couldn't win against it. Cheok Jungyeong sighed.

[Stupid constellation.]

"Yes."

[I like you. So don't die.]

I nodded and ran. The mountain of tentacles soared into the sky. I used Electrification and there was a blue-white trail everywhere I passed.

[Come, outer god!]

Cheok Jungyeong gripped the sword in my hand. All of Cheok Jungyeong's stories were gathered and the Three Sword Style was expressed.

[I, Cheok Jungyeong, will cut you!}

The ether blade increased.

The blade that was 10 metres long increased to 20 metres. The blade that was 20 metres long increased to 30 metres.

The power that transcended my magic power and my story was falling down here.

Three Sword Style, Three Sword Ocean Chop.

I knew it the moment I drew the sword. This…

In my head, I saw Cheok Jungyeong standing in front of the sea. Cheok Jungyeong watched the sea from dawn to dusk.

All the years of watching the sea, looking at the distant horizon until he saw the 'target'.

It was one line that distorted the balance of time and space. The waves split apart and the waters had the illusion of splitting.

This was a sword made to cut the sea.

[The constellation 'Maritime War God' admires the power of Goryeo's First Sword!]

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' admires the power of the pure human constellation!]

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' shows great interest in Goryeo's First Sword!]

The air exploded and all sound was swallowed. I swung my sword despite feeling like my body was going through a blender.

One sword, two swords, three swords. After wielding three swords, the fuse of my consciousness was completely broken.

Really, just wait a moment.

[…Up!]

Then Cheok Jungyeong called out to me.

[Wake up! Stupid constellation!]

I barely managed to open my eyes and saw a few strands of tentacles floating in the air. However, the tentacles were no longer what I remembered. Seven of the twelve tentacles had been cut apart and fell to the ground.

Cheok Jungyeong was a historical-grade constellation. He cut half of the tentacles with his own strength. Nevertheless, Cheok Jungyeong spoke like he was angry.

[…I couldn't cause a deep wound because of lacking strength. I couldn't cut him with the sword that cuts the sea.]

"No, this is enough. It is enough for success."

Cheok Jungyeong was successful. Beyond the tentacles, there was a huge horizontal scar on the main body. The Three Sword Style had cut off the tentacles and wounded the main body.

It was a small wound compared to the size of the guy but it was wide enough for me to enter. A pained cry burst out from the Devourer of Dreams.

I had to run over there. I had to do it right now. Before his wound healed, I must enter the wound. This was the way to end this scenario.

[The nebula 'Vedas' is ridiculing your adversity.]

Dammit, I wanted to deal a blow to those damn nebulae. By the way…

[The nebula 'Papyrus' is toasting your scenario.]

My legs didn't move. No matter how much strength I used, my legs wouldn't budge. No, I couldn't even feel my strength.

What…

[The constellation 'Queen of the Darkest Spring' is looking at you with sad eyes.]

I looked down and realized the state I was in. I couldn't see anything below my knees.

My lower legs had disappeared like it had been cut by something. Blood constantly flowed from the cut sections. It was probably the world of the tentacles while I was using the Three Sword Style.

Dammit. I was almost there yet a situation like this occurred.

In the meantime, the duration of Electrification ended. Little by little, the injury on the god was healing. It wasn't a distance I couldn't cross in the state where I lost my lower legs.

"Kim Dokja."

I turned my head and saw the bloody Yoo Joonghyuk. Yoo Joonghyuk staggered to me, grabbed me by the collar and lifted me onto his shoulders.

He looked at the wound on the god and asked, "I have to throw you over there?"

"…Can you do it?"

Yoo Joonghyuk didn't answer. He just showed it with his actions. Yoo Joonghyuk jumped onto what seemed like stairs in the air.

He stepped on the tentacles while using Air Steps. I could hear a slight creaking sound from Yoo Joonghyuk's body. His body was already at the limit. Even so, Yoo Joonghyuk didn't give up.

He climbed and climbed again. Soon afterwards, the distant wind soaked my cheeks.

Yoo Joonghyuk stopped his magic power and paused. I looked up and the wound on the god was right in front of me.

Despite the lack of time, Yoo Joonghyuk hesitated. He hesitated while holding tightly to my collar. "…We don't have to hold another funeral, right?"

I smiled because of Yoo Joonghyuk's question. "Even if I die, I will rise again."

"That isn't what I mean."

Yoo Joonghyuk's expression was serious. A high wind blew between me and Yoo Joonghyuk.

I looked at him for a moment before asking, "Do you remember the second scenario?"

The subway of Oksu Station. It was where Yoo Joonghyuk first appeared after smashing everything. He was a cold-blooded regressor who would use whatever means necessary for the results.

Yoo Joonghyuk's calm eyes shook at my words.

Who would've known at the time? Me and this guy, we would actually end up as companions. I hadn't wanted to admit it but now I had to. The things that hadn't seemed possible became reality. I was actually going through the scenarios with him.

That's why I could now say it. Just like I did when I first met him on Han River Bridge. This was the way that suited us best.

"Release your hand and get lost, you damn son of a bitch."

Chapter 179: Ep. 34 - Unable to be Eaten, I

Yoo Joonghyuk's expression slowly changed as he held me by the neck. Previously, I would already be falling through the air.

Now everything was the opposite. I flew through the air instead of falling. Yoo Joonghyuk had thrown me as hard as he could.

Yoo Joonghyuk was watching me. His expression showed he was certain that I wouldn't die. I didn't hear his voice but I could tell what he was saying.

'Feed him one blow, Kim Dokja'.

The moment I was about to answer, the tentacles blocked my gaze.

The attack of the tentacles missed me by a hair's breadth and I landed on the Devourer of Dreams body. I used the strength remaining in my arms to grab the body and move towards the wound.

This guy was a life-threatening presence just through touch. If I was still an incarnation, I might've already passed out or died. If he finished his descent… it was scary to think about what might happen.

I threw my body into the wound.

[…I'm sorry. I can't go with you.]

Power drained from my body and I felt Cheok Jungyeong's strength scattering. I didn't panic because I had already expected it.

Soon afterwards, the wound connected to the outside completely closed.

I floated in the air, like a person floating in the universe. The inside of the Devourer of Dreams was as dark as the sky. It was a space with no blood or flesh. It was natural since the outer god wasn't a living thing.

Dung… dung… dung…

I heard the sound of drums coming from somewhere. Then there was a whispering. Someone gazed at me. It wasn't hard to breathe despite there being no air. Perhaps the moment I entered this space, my very existence was transformed.

Then after a while, all sounds disappeared. The screams of the incarnations and the messages of the constellations were gone.

Instead, there were unknown characters and images. This was the stomach of the Devourer of Dreams. It was a place where all the stories he had eaten were gathered.

「■■■■■■■…」

「#%&^#$^」

There were some stories I could recognize. Perhaps they were from Founder's Mother.

「It is my fault. The foolish history was too long…」

「I have to protect this land from the nebulae. However, now there is no one in Hongik. Where have all the gods of creation gone?」

「 Hwanung… I want to see Hwanung. 」

Then a story with a small light came up to me and shouted,

「 What are you doing? Why are you here? Run away…! 」

The light flickered. Thank you but there was nowhere for me to run away to.

The 'outer gods' were existences rooted in the distant outer universe. Half of his body was connected to the second floor of Dark Castle while the inside of his body was directly connected to the outer universe.

Thus, his stomach was like outer space to me. It was a world of sheer emptiness, only filled with the desire to eat.

The Devourer of Dreams wanted me.

The scattered letters gathered together and started to form a shape. In this empty space, eyes and a mouth were created. In fact, I wasn't sure if they were eyes or a mouth, but I had to think of it in these terms since I was a human.

He seemed to be saying something but his voice wasn't heard properly. After a while, the letters shivered and started to transform into words that I could understand.

[The smell of an interesting story…]

The moment that two eyes looked at me, I gulped without knowing it. This was the presence of a god who caused fear in even the narrative-grade constellations.

[The presence of an inferior scenario… how… do you hear me?]

[The exclusive skill 'Fourth Wall' is extremely active!]

The Fourth Wall became more active than it had ever been so far. I felt like a wall was growing on my skin.

It meant this enemy was dangerous.

He wasn't even a 'great old ones'. I couldn't imagine what the gods such as 'The Fear of Sarnath', 'Horror from the Hills' or 'Master of R'lyeh' would be like.

I took a deep breath and slowly opened my mouth. "Devourer of Dreams. You are a great god of another world."

[Ohh…]

The letters of Devourer of Dreams twitched like he was surprised by my words. In this guy's eyes, I wasn't even a bug. I was a strange toy he could erase at any time.

Strong sparks occurred around me and the letters started to revolve. There was something that wanted to penetrate inside me. However, as soon as it reached my side, it was bounced off.

The letters of Devourer of Dreams spoke in a subdued manner.

[What… are you? Are you under a special protection?]

This guy had attempted to mentally invade me. Then he had been bounced off by the Fourth Wall.

I would've been destroyed if I didn't have this skill. I controlled my heart and looked at the Devourer of Dreams.

As I said before, the Yoo Joonghyuk of the 136th regression was eaten by him. However, Yoo Joonghyuk didn't die. In other words, my current basis was his 136th attempt.

I slowly opened my mouth so that I wouldn't be caught by his boundaries.

"I came to tell you a story."

[Story! I like stories.]

The outer god reacted immediately. The monstrous greed caused him to become fuzzy.

"Among all the stories you have eaten, there are those belonging to Lee Sookyung. Please send her back."

The face looked puzzled.

[This… isn't a story?]

"I will tell you a story in exchange."

[What story will you tell me?]

I pointed to myself without speaking. It was obvious what I meant. I was making a bet with my existence at stake. The big eyelids slowly blinked.

[Small constellation…]

"Yes."

[Do you intend to make a deal with me?]

The moment I was going to open my mouth, shapes appeared in the air. It was an image made up of the stories that Devourer of Dreams had devoured.

[The bear doesn't talk to the fish.]

The image shown was a giant bear, reminiscent of Founder's Mother. The bear looked around with foolish eyes and caught the fish flowing through the empty universe.

The Devourer of Dreams looked at the bear and said, [Human, I don't negotiate with bugs…]

I hadn't been properly recognized yet. A half-constellation couldn't deal with a cosmic deity. It was a natural story.

However, I shook my head.

"If bugs talk like humans, think like humans and act like humans, they can't be called bugs anymore."

I glared at the two huge, black eyes.

[You… aren't qualified to make a deal with me. I can take away everything you have at any time.]

"Then why are you talking to a bug instead of taking it away?"

[······.]

The bear eating the fish looked at me. The bear raised its paws in a threatening manner, as if it was going to hit me right away. I stared at the bear and said,

"The bear knows how to eat fish but it doesn't know how to eat them deliciously."

The bear's paw hesitated.

"The feet are damaged by the scales, the claws are dirty after taking out the guts of the fish and it just fills its anger."

[······.]

"Just as I'm not a bug, you're not a bear. Isn't that right?"

The letters in the space jumbled together and the Eater of Dream's face became bizarre. Usually, I would be terrified but I had read the original novel.

I started grinning. This situation was too pleasant for me to bear.

"All the stories will be damaged if you forcibly take them. If you trample on me right now, you won't get a 'perfect' story. I will tell you a story that you can eat in its best condition. You'll always be able to eat it."

Dung… dung… dung!

Once again, I heard a drumming sound. It was like a giant beast's pulse. The tempo of the sound became increasingly faster.

Dung! Dung! Dung! Dung!

I had read the original work and knew the identity of this drumming sound.

[I want to eat you.]

This sound was the Eater of Dream's hunger. I gulped and raised both hands. "If you keep your promise, I will give you a lot."

The letters turned into smoke and started to form a shape. After a while, it took on the appearance of my mother.

[Is this what you want?]

I nodded.

[This story has some interesting corners. I saved it because it smelt more delicious than the shell of the constellation I ate along with it. I want to eat you very badly but I can't afford to give you this story.]

"Are you a beast who can't control your hunger?"

[Is there anyone who would be offended by the insults of bugs?]

…Fucking bastard.

I didn't know what rank he was among gourmets but he was low among the outer gods. The letters formed a brutal smile.

[The conversation with you ends here. I will eat all of you.]

The image of the bear who caught the fish flew towards me baring sharp teeth like a piranha. There was no place to run away. My legs couldn't move and in any case, I was in his stomach.

"Shit, fine. If you want to eat then eat as much as you like." Instead, I spread open my arms and greeted him. "Be sure to eat all of it."

Hundreds of fish started to eat at my body.

They bit at my arms, my legs, my back and my face. I felt a terrible pain but no blood came out. Instead, it was letters. The stories and histories I had built up started to leak out after I was bitten by his teeth.

[Ohhhhh…! T-This is?]

The god shrieked with joy at the heavenly delicacies. My consciousness was blurred and there was a pounding in my head. Nevertheless, I held on. I had to hold on until he ate the part I was thinking about.

[Ohh… oh?]

The next moment, something poured out of me like a waterfall. He had touched something.

[The exclusive skill 'Fourth Wall' has reacted to the vibrations hitting the wall.]

The moment I was waiting for had finally come. The letters poured into his stomach, creating a torrent. It was an enormous amount of stories.

[You, what the hell are you…?]

The baffled Devourer of Dreams cried out to me but I didn't have the strength to answer.

I was hard to keep my sanity with all the stories pouring out. I looked at the sentences passing in front of my eyes.

「Yoo Joonghyuk looked at the mouth of Devourer of Dreams and spoke.」

It was the contents of Ways of Survival.

「"Yes, if you want to eat me, eat as much as you can."」

It was the 136th regression Yoo Joonghyuk. Yoo Joonghyuk was eaten by the Devourer of Dreams and had been in the same situation as me.

[This, what the hell is this…!]

Yoo Joonghyuk of Ways of Survival replied on my behalf.

「"You will know. You will experience what it is like to have lived 136 times. You will know all the loneliness, sorrow, anger and hatred towards this damn world that I felt during this awful time."」

[K-Kuaaah…!]

「"You think of humans as worse than bugs. If so, feel it from now on.」

[Wait, wait a minute…!]

「"The pain that bugs suffer. Feel the history of the bug that you can't handle. If you have the confidence to eat me, then eat and eat as much as you can!"」

The stories pouring all filled the stomach of the Devourer of Dreams with continuous explosions. The Devourer of Dreams ate Ways of Survival and struggled with the pain.

Somewhere in his stomach, cracks started to appear. Ways of Survival spoke as if laughing at the confused Devourer of Dreams.

「It was the moment when the Devourer of Dreams, who was born in space and lived for 8,000 years, realized it.」

[Kuooooooh…!]

It was the scene where Yoo Joonghyuk first killed a 'god'. I had read it over and over again, almost memorizing it. I paraphrased the following sentence on behalf of Ways of Survival.

"In this world, there is a story that should never be eaten."

Chapter 180: Ep. 34 - Unable to be Eaten, II

In the original novel, the Devourer of Dreams swallowed Yoo Joonghyuk, struggled against the terrible life that Yoo Joonghyuk suffered and eventually disappeared. It was a disaster caused by overeating. However, this was the story in Ways of Survival.

It wasn't the 136th regression that he would eat this time.

[Kuooooooh…!]

The third regression, the fourth regression, the fifth regression…

「"Do you know what will happen if humans live for thousands of years?"」

The 36th regression, the 47th regression, the 69th regression…

「"Have you ever thought about the pain of an endlessly repeating life?"」

The 141st regression, the 143rd regression, the 148th regression…

「"This is human suffering. You damn tentacles bastard."」

There was a feast of memories that never ended. Cracks started to spread through the engorged space. After eating what shouldn't be eaten, the crazy Devourer of Dreams started to riot.

However, he had no place to go because this was his stomach. No one could escape from themselves.

[Kuooooooh!]

The flood of words was larger than what he could handle.

The stories that weren't absorbed flew away and the flood of stories swept over the outer universe like waves. The wreckage of the damaged stomach scattered.

The Fourth Wall is slowly opening its eyes.]

[The Fourth Wall is searching for something to eat.]

The startled Devourer of Dreams stared at me.

[The Fourth Wall laughs at the Devourer of Dreams.]

Now the relationship between predator and prey had changed.

[Kuaaaaah…]

The Fourth Wall, which was made up of many letters, started to swallow the stories of the Devourer of Dreams.

It was purely hungry eating, without caring about gourmet food. The countless fish and other symbols of the Devourer of Dreams tried to flee, but it couldn't escape from the persistent wall.

The stories that he had eaten for 8,000 years were crushed to powder and sucked into the wall. The patterns on the wall emitted a bright light.

The voice of the unauthorized guy who read the story was shocked.

[■■…?]

More than half his thoughts had been consumed and they appeared on the wall.

「 Surely this isn't ■■…? 」

[Ohhhh…]

「The great old ones! Where are all of you? 」

At the last moment, he tried to abandon everything and run, but the Fourth Wall was one step faster. The wall exposed its terrible teeth and swallowed the contents of the stomach.

[Ohhh… great old… ohhhh.]

There was a dazzling light and the open mouth of the wall finally closed.

[The Fourth Wall has finished eating.]

[You have defeated an outer god!]

.

.

.

[The Star Stream has failed to find a suitable name for your achievement.]

[An unknown achievement will be added to your fifth story.]

[Your status, which was about to be confirmed, will be re-evaluated.]

The fragments of the Devourer of Dreams scattered and I remained in the void of the outer universe with a few stories.

The space didn't collapse even though the Devourer of Dreams was dead. I still hadn't returned to my original world.

[The gods of the outer universe are greatly confused after hearing of the death of Devourer of Dreams.]

[The outer gods are trying to figure out what happened in his scenario.]

[Some 'great old beings' are watching you'.]

A feeling of nausea rose inside me. Perhaps it was because my spirit had been eaten but I felt weakened.

"Heok, heok… kueeek!"

It was a horrible experience. Yoo Joonghyuk had done this in the 136th regression.

"Kueeeek!"

After vomiting a few times, I searched through the fragments of the story for my mother.

Fortunately, the image formed by Devourer of Dreams was preserved. She stood there with closed eyes.

Was she still alive? I didn't know. I tested my mother's pulse and shook her shoulders. "Please wake up."

First, I had to take my mother out of here. I looked around.

…Why wasn't this space broken?

In the 136th regression, there was the scene where Yoo Joonghyuk killed the Devourer of Dreams, this space collapsed and he returned to the original world. The outer universe was operated with the power of the outer god. Once the outer god died, it should be broken. This time, the outer god died but his space was still maintained. Why?

[The Fourth Wall is looking at you.]

…Don't tell me?

[The Fourth Wall shakes its head with regret.]

[The Fourth Wall is still hungry.]

It ate so many stories yet it was still hungry?

[The Fourth Wall has started to suck the remaining remnants.]

It was as if a vacuum cleaner was turned on as the Fourth Wall opened its mouth and started to suck in the rest of the surroundings.

The remaining stories, the dust and…

"Wait! Wait!"

Even my mother who was in my arms. I flew towards the wall.

"Hey! Don't eat that!"

Before I could reach the wall, my mother was sucked into it. The mouth devoured my mother's head, arms and torso.

"Shit! I told you not to eat that!"

[The Fourth Wall is laughing with satisfaction.]

[The Fourth Wall is licking its lips as it looks at you.]

I had to ask something. There was something I hadn't heard yet. Yet this damn wall had swallowed my mother.

What happened after being swallowed by the wall? I didn't know. One thing was for certain, none of the beings eaten by the wall had returned.

The Theatre Dungeon's master, the reincarnator Nirvana and even the Devourer of Dreams…

Was there any possibility of my mother surviving when even an outer god couldn't survive?

"Spit her out!"

I started punching the Fourth Wall. The wall licked its lips towards me but showed no signs of eating me. The surface of the wall faintly shook at my punch.

Punch and punch again. I knew it was foolish but I didn't stop. I couldn't stop. How much did I hit the wall? Then a message appeared on the wall.

「 First, I remember when I gave that child a name. 」

I stared blankly at the sentence. I realized what it meant after a short time.

「 He wanted to use Dok (alone) and I wanted Dok (reader). Maybe it was from here that he and I became different. 」

I groaned and hit the wall. I never wanted to hear the story this way.

「 I wanted him to be a reader rather than a lonely person. As long as they read something, humans won't be lonely. I probably wanted to believe this. 」

As soon as my punches stopped, countless sentences appeared on the wall. I couldn't believe how many sentences there were in a person's lifetime.

「 "I should stay at home? Huh? Why should I live like this? How long do I have to live while supporting you and that child!" 」

「 "Sookyung, you have to endure it. Think of Dokja. The man will only do it for a moment." 」

「 "Mother, I think you should pay attention to Dokja." 」

I cursed and started beating on the wall again. There were some things I remembered but some things I didn't. Still, the feelings of those days were vivid.

「 It was hard. At the time, I was so tired that I couldn't think of anything else. When I thought about it, it was just as hard for my child. 」

My mother had suffered in those days. Violence against a woman, a mother and a person, it should never be done.

「"Dokja. Get in here. Understood? Don't come out until Mother says you can."」

The merciless words continuously appeared and I once again suffered my childhood from another point of view.

It sounded like a completely strange story, despite it being something I had experienced personally.

This was what happened. It was so painful. It was miserable. By the way, why had I forgotten all of this? Did I just want to forget?

Meanwhile, the wall continued to speak.

「I should've left him. No matter what other people said, I should've taken that child and gone to a distant place.」

She should've left in the end.

「Why didn't I?」

It was a record filled with remorse and regret. This was my mother, who was 'silent' in reality. Now she was opening her mouth when it was a novel.

「It happened late in the evening.」

Finally, the story began.

「"Bring more alcohol!"」

My father's voice shouted to bring more alcohol. He pushed my mother and hit her stomach. My father was threatening.

「"Y-You! Put down the knife and let's talk!"」

Slowly, the memories were coming back. The little boy hiding in the room stuck out his head.

*

That's right. At that time, my father was holding a knife and acting threatening.

「"Dokja! I told you to stay in your room!"」

My mother shouted and ran towards me. My drunk father swung the knife threateningly.

「You will die and I will die as well. Eh? Should we all die? Aren't we fucked up living together like this? Huh? Then let's die together!」

My mother threw her body forward. There was a sound and my father's body collapsed. A knife dropped to the ground. Alcohol flowed from a rolling wine bottle. I knew the next scene. My mother would pick up the fallen knife and stab my father. Then she would tell me, 'From now on, I will read all of this again'.

「"U… Uwaaaack!"」

By the way…

「 "Dokja. No! Put down that thing!" 」

What was this?

「 "Dokja!" 」

I picked up the knife and was trembling as I stared at my father. My small face was covered in tears. My father laughed mockingly and swung his fist. Instead of hitting my mother, my father slipped on the bottle. Then…

Blood emerged from his mouth.

「 If I immediately called for help, he might've been able to live. 」

I felt clogged up.

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「I was the only one who could save him and I chose not to. 」

This accident changed our lives.

「The words I told the child weren't a lie. I was the one who killed him. 」

My mother took away the knife from the child who lost his mind. Then after a few deep breaths, she quietly woke me up.

「 "Dokja. From now on, I will read all of this again. 」

「 "Your father did something wrong and died. This was self-defense. Understood? 」

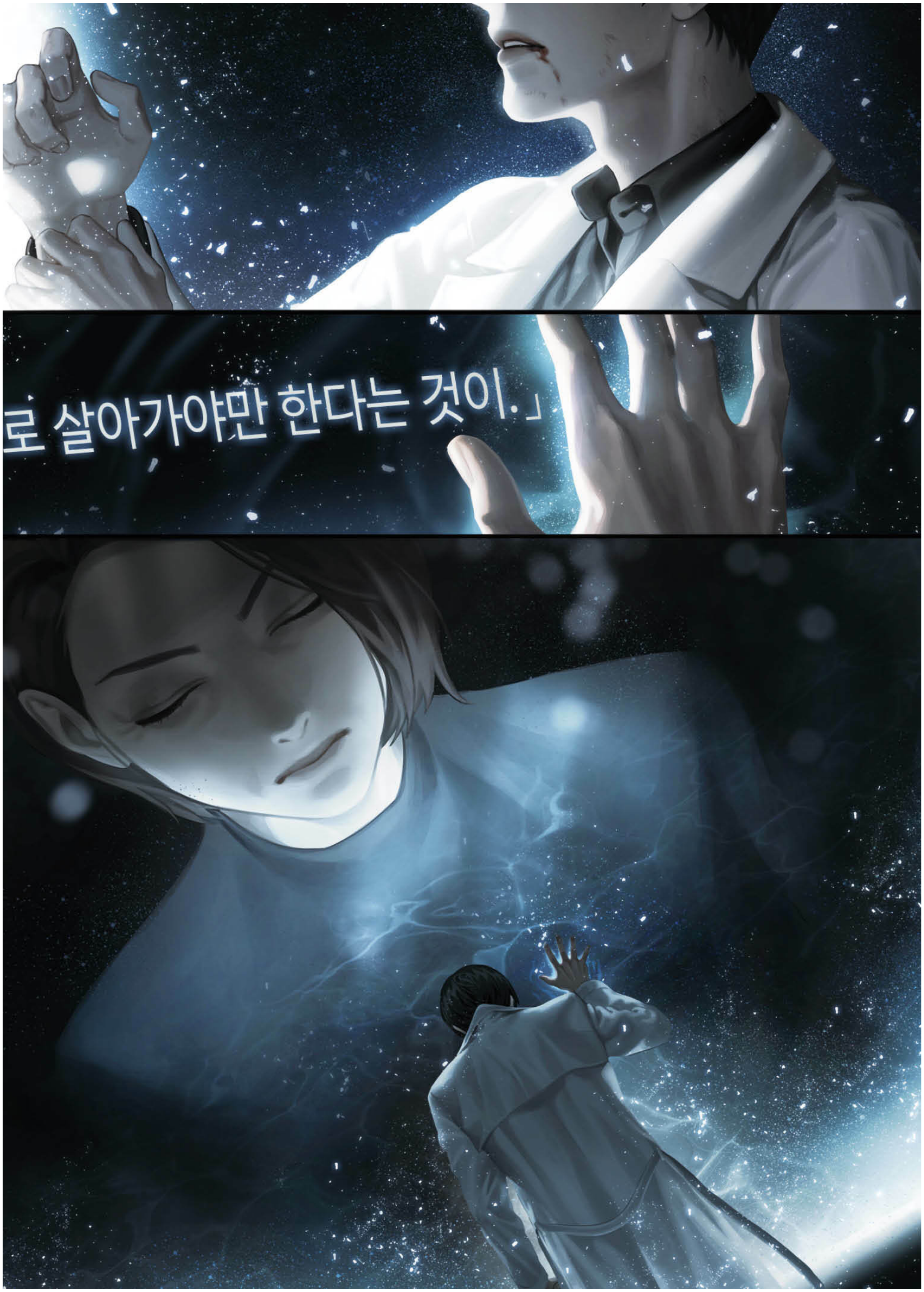
「 "No matter what, you must not forget that you are the victim." 」

My mother's voice permeated my ears.

「 Perhaps many things were decided at that time. 」

The mother searched for cases relating to murder and manipulated the evidence. She ruled out anything that could involve me. This ended up making the accidental death seem like a premeditated crime.

「Someone has to live as a murderer. Someone else has to live as the son of a murderer.」


로 살아가야만 한다는 것이.」

*

Now I remembered.

"…It was because of this?"

I placed my hands on the wall and bowed my head for a while.

…In fact, I knew. I thought it might be this and it was the only reason that would make me understand my mother's behaviour.

The reason why she suddenly wrote the essay was to make me the son of a murderer, not a murderer.

「I often think about it.」

「Maybe it was all an excuse.」

「There could've been a better way.」

「No matter what, I shouldn't have left the child alone.」

「As a mother, I shouldn't have acted that way.」

…

「In the end, I'm just a mother who ran away.」

This was the last sentence. I waited just in case, hitting the wall a few times. However, no more sentences appeared.

It shouldn't be like this. In this way, I wouldn't be able to hear the end of this ridiculous story.

"Spit her out! Spit her out!"

I started to frantically hit the wall.

"Fuck!"

The Fourth Wall licked my fists. The blood, memories and stories on my fist were sucked into the Fourth Wall. I didn't cry.

「Kim Dokja was crying.」

The Fourth Wall said.

「Kim Dokja quietly clenched his fists.」

Bang!

「He hit the wall.」

Bang!

「He hit it again.」

"Fuck!"

「Kim Dokja got goosebumps. Everything was becoming a story. All his actions and words in the scenarios were becoming sentences on the wall.」

"Shut up!"

「Kim Dokja wanted to know. What should he do? How could he break this wall? Was this the price for reading Ways of Survival? He read it and his reality became a novel. Then a noise like a page tearing was heard.」

Jiiiiiik!

「Kim Dokja thought… (Hey)… what is this?」

I finally saw unnatural words on the wall. It was like graffiti left behind by someone who read the novel.

「Kim Dokja was amazed… (Stay upright)… Who was talking to him? …(This is your skill)… Who was it? …(You shouldn't be eaten by your skill)… What… (You idiot, quickly take off your hands!)」

I saw that the wall was swallowing my fist.

「…(Turn the skill off, Kim Dokja)… 」

Enlightenment ran through my head. I didn't know who I was talking to. I didn't know if it was possible or not.

However, it was clear what I had to do. "I will turn off the Fourth Wall."

An electric current flowed through the wall as it shook violently. For the first time, I felt something around me fading.

The wall was collapsing.

The next moment, a message was heard.

[The system error due to unknown causes is temporarily fixed.]

.

.

[Your Attributes Window has been restored.]

[Do you want to check the Attributes Window now?]

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* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)
* Official novel illustration (canonical)

Chapter 181: Ep. 34 - Unable to be Eaten, III

I could see the Attributes Window? I finally understood a few things that didn't make sense.

The reason I hadn't been able to see my Attributes Window was due to Fourth Wall. The Fourth Wall protected me from other beings but at the same time, it was a skill that isolated me from myself.

[Checking the Attributes Window.]

[The system configuration is unstable. Some skill names and levels are limited.]

Then for the first time, I saw my Attributes Window.

[Personal Information]

Name: Kim Dokja

Age: 28 years old

Sponsor: None

Modifier: The Ugliest King (Tentative)

Exclusive Attributes: Eight Lives (Hero), Scenario…

Before the Attributes Window was fully revealed, the screen crashed and sudden messages emerged.

[Some constellations are approaching your mental barrier.]

At this moment, I wanted to say oops. Maybe the constellations had been looking for this opportunity—for the day that my information was revealed to the world.

[Constellations of the nebula 'Vedas' are approaching you.]

[Constellations of the nebula 'Olympus' are approaching you.]

[Constellations of the nebula 'Papyrus' are approaching you.]

The constellations who sought to improve my existence started to forcibly open my mind. At this moment.

[The exclusive skill 'Fourth Wall' is reactivated independently of your will!]

Exclusive Skills: Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint Lv. ?, Bookmark Lv. ?, Character List Lv. ?, Fourth Wall Lv. ?, ■■■■ Lv. ?, ■■■■■■■■…

.

.

Overall Evaluation: …■■ you ■■■■■■…?

A lot of the information was hidden by '■'.

As numerous bricks piled up, strong sparks that concealed my information appeared.

[The constellation 'Founder of Humanity' is groaning.]

[The constellation 'Poked Out His Eyes' is covering his eyes and stepping back.]

[The constellation 'Scorpion Goddess' steps back while protecting her tail.]

.

.

[Some of the constellations approaching you are struck and have retreated!]

The countless letters rotated reliably.

The fierce sparks of the Fourth Wall were protecting me from the constellations. The guy who was fighting me a while ago was now emitting a fierce aura towards the constellations.

[The Fourth Wall is baring its teeth towards the Star Stream.]

I stared at the Fourth Wall. The last thing I heard was a message from a well-known constellation.

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' is smiling at you.]

The message was distinctively different from the other constellations.

…Surely he didn't see my information in such a short period of time? Even if he did see it, he wouldn't have been able to check everything. I couldn't confirm all the information despite opening the Attributes Window.

The sparks calmed down and the wall turned towards me again.

[The Fourth Wall is angry with you.]

I stared at the wall.

For a long time, I thought this wall was the boundary between the novel and reality. The wall allowed me to adapt to the new world and show unusual judgment in terrible situations.

However, once I asked about the actual identity of the 'wall', I couldn't come to a conclusion. The only thing I could be certain of was that this wall had protected me for a long time.

There were a few crises but I overcame them due to the presence of this wall. It was thanks to this wall that I could arrive here.

I brought my hands towards the letters making up the wall.

"I'm sorry."

[The Fourth Wall is shaking.]

The strange texture of the letters wrapped around my fingers. The Fourth Wall felt like this.

The letters of the wall clung to my hands like doctor fish (red garra). They seemed to be licking and biting me. It was a feeling that couldn't be clearly shared. There was no analogy for it. The Fourth Wall was like a wet puppy, an abandoned child, a teenager who didn't listen etc.

The Fourth Wall… The Fourth Wall was like me.

Then a sentence appeared on the wall.

「Kim Dok ja is an i diot.」

The sentence seemed to have been written by a child just learning Hangul. It wasn't a story related to me or the world. It was the words of the Fourth Wall.

I smiled at the wall.

「…$#^#$^#$%@#$…」

The Fourth Wall wrote unrecognized characters, as if it was confused for a moment. Then after a while, it wrote a sentence again.

「Kim Dokja thought, 'The Fourth Wall is an existence with its own will as well'.」

…It was starting again.

「Then were the words written in brackets from the Fourth Wall? However, the Fourth Wall's tone is too static compared to that… then who wrote those words? If this really is a wall, there is something else in the wall…」

"Stop reading other people's thoughts."

[The Fourth Wall is turning its head away.]

[The Fourth Wall is telling you not to forcibly turn it off again.]

I kept talking while touching the Fourth Wall. "I know. Instead, I have a request."

[The Fourth Wall is looking at you.]

I took a brief breath before saying, "Give me back my mother."

The wall shook briefly, as if to judge if my words were true or not.

Then a sentence appeared on the wall.

「Kim Dokja hates his mother.」

"That's right."

「Kim Dokja knows what happened with his mother. He knows what his mother has been through, the life she lived and what she was hiding. Just because he knows doesn't mean he understands everything.」

"…Yes."

｢Because of this, Kim Dokja still hates his mother. This is what human emotions are like. There is no magic that will heal all wounds just because someone else has a deep wound as well. ｣

"You have great insight. I agree."

｢ Thus, Kim Dokja can't understand it himself. Why is he trying to save his mother? ｣

"I can't explain."

｢…… ｣

"Not everything can be expressed in sentences."

I quietly looked at the wall and said, "I don't have much energy left. Please help me. I'm asking you."

The Fourth Wall was silent for a long time before displaying the following sentence,

｢ Kim Dokja… ｣

Could an existence who already entered the wall come out again? I didn't know if it was possible or not. Still, I had to try.

Then the wall started to move. Something was vomited out from the wall.

There were numerous letters. The letters gathered to become words and the words came together to become sentences. The sentences gathered into paragraphs and the paragraphs gathered again to become a story.

The story soon formed a person.

I embraced my mother who was lying in the letters. Then I told the Fourth Wall, "Thank you."

The Fourth Wall shook and started to disperse.

「 Sl, ee, py. 」

Little by little, the surrounding space was broken.

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' is snapping at the 'great old ones' spying on you.]

The darkness of the outer universe was clearing away.

Time and space were broken and the surrounding scenery changed to the second floor of Dark Castle.

Then the subsequent messages appeared.

[Your Dark Castle ranking has changed.]

[Your current Dark Castle ranking is 2nd place.]

.

.

[You have met the hidden goal of the main scenario.]

[You are eligible to participate in the last scenario of Dark Castle.]

* * *

Two days had passed since the battle on the plains. All mortals lost their fighting spirit in the face of a god.

The forces of the wanderers and the forces of Paradise. In a sense, the powerful despair brought peace to all of them.

The commanders of the wanderers and the commanders of Paradise settled the dead and cleared up the situation. The unnecessary disturbance disappeared and the second floor of Dark Castle was slowly gaining stability. The rankers were slowly selected to go up to the next floor and people agreed to entrust them with the future of Dark Castle.

Most rankers were gathered in front of a small coffin.

"It is his job to die all the time."

Kim Dokja died as soon as he came back from defeating the outer gods.

He fought against such a mighty being that his companions thought it was natural. Jung Heewon said, "Will he be alive again tomorrow? Last time it also took three days."

The group had adjusted to Kim Dokja dying and weren't as shocked. Yoo Sangah bit her lips and wondered,

"…By the way, did we need to put him in a coffin?"

"Even the dead should be put in a bed…" Jung Heewon made an excuse.

The party members stared at Kim Dokja's coffin with different meanings. Lee Hyunsung was watching with a reverent gaze, Shin Yoosung looked guilty and Yoo Sangah was confused. Then…

"By the way, Master. I thought you would go to find hidden pieces…" At Lee Jihye's words, the party members all looked from the coffin towards a certain place.

Yoo Joonghyuk frowned at the gazes and replied, "Now the only hidden pieces in Dark Castle are worthless."

"Then the reason why you came here…"

"I need Kim Dokja to move to the next floor."

"Hrmm… aren't the two of you very close these days? A few days ago, I saw…"

Yoo Joonghyuk's impression became grim and the cowardly Lee Jihye closed her mouth.

Jung Heewon tapped Lee Jihye and rebuked her. "Stop teasing Joonghyuk-ssi. Don't disturb the two of them."

"…Oh, fine."

"In addition, you know the reason why he came here without asking. It is the same for everyone."

At these words, the faces of the party members became solemn. They looked down at Kim Dokja's coffin.

Jung Heewon opened her mouth again. "He isn't afraid of death because he will live again."

Just because he had multiple lives didn't mean he should keep sacrificing them for others. Shin Yoosung touched the surface of the coffin.

"If it wasn't for Dokja ahjussi, we would've died by now."

No one doubted it. Lee Hyunsung, Jung Heewon, Lee Gilyoung and Lee Jihye as well. All of them had been saved by Kim Dokja.

Lee Jihye sighed. "I'm not saying this to be cheesy but… if I had two lives, I would probably give one to ahjussi."

"I'm afraid he won't receive it because you only have 6 points in affection."

"This kid… in any case, aren't we all the same when it comes to the garter belt?"

The group smiled as they watched Lee Jihye and Lee Gilyoung clashing. It was an unbelievable sight when people were crying with frustration at the bloody battlefield two days ago. Yoo Joonghyuk watched them from a distance.

Kim Dokja appeared and his plans changed a lot. The easy scenarios became difficult and the simple stories became complicated. Those who were supposed to die survived.

Yoo Joonghyuk looked down at his hands. Perhaps among those who were supposed to die, Yoo Joonghyuk himself would be included.

Yoo Joonghyuk thought it was very strange. This landscape could be made be a person who wasn't a regressor. This regression might be better than any other round of life that he had lived. It was terribly complicated in his mind.

"By the way, isn't that fate over now? Dokja ahjussi died." Lee Jihye asked and some companions replied.

"Ah. That's right. That reminds me…"

"Since he was destined to die because of a loved one, isn't the fate fulfilled? He died because of his mother…"

"Yes. Why didn't I think of his mother?"

The voices were boisterous. Yoo Sangah watched Yoo Joonghyuk standing in the distance with a complicated face. Yoo Joonghyuk also had a thought as he faced the eyes.

'The fate isn't over'.

There was the variable called Cheok Jungyeong but the nebulae weren't that simple.

The nebulae knew about Kim Dokja's resurrection. Thus, the fate could never end this way. In addition, the nebulae were angry with Kim Dokja and were likely to maliciously engage in realizing the fate.

Above all, the big hurdle that was the next scenario would soon arrive.

Thus, Yoo Joonghyuk needed to choose.

He silently stared up at the sky. It was like he was looking for something there. After a while, his gaze was returned.

[The constellation '???' is looking at his incarnation.]

The constellation '???'. It was the third regression but Yoo Joonghyuk still didn't know who his sponsor was. It was the source of the regression and the one who made Yoo Joonghyuk suffer a terrible tragedy.

Yoo Joonghyuk took a breath and opened his mouth. 'Sponsor. I have to ask you something'.

Chapter 182: Ep. 35 - The 73rd Demon King, I

[You have died.]

The aftereffect was death. It was the shock from my stories being eaten by the Devourer of Dreams. It was quickly restored with the ability of the Fourth Wall but it was difficult for it to be as perfect before it was broken.

'The head…'

I was in a half-awake state for three days. My consciousness only appeared and disappeared. Every time my consciousness returned, I reflected on what had happened so far.

'After this scenario, the flow of the story will return'.

During the course of the first nine scenarios, I undermined the flow of the original novel. It ranged from saving a few people to largely changing scenarios.

Of course, changing the scenarios didn't mean that the original elements would be useless. Yoo Joonghyuk had experienced over a hundred life cycles. Even if the scenarios changed, there was still plenty of information I could use.

Nevertheless, in order to take advantage of the large currents, there should be parts that flowed according to the existing scenario.

Fortunately, the Seoul Dome Scenario was a closed scenario.

There was the national convention in the middle and there were a few butterfly effects to worry about, but the flow of the Star Stream is still what I remembered.

Moreover, some of the characters had grown beyond what I thought., I had enough power to drive the flow in the future.

I observed the characters one by one using the third person perspective. The first one I checked was Jung Heewon, the Judge of Destruction.

"It isn't easy to control yet. My sponsor said that once I can use this perfectly, I could deal with that tentacle monster… I don't know when that can happen." Jung Heewon muttered as she emitted white flames.

She had little weight in the original and was the most powerful character I chose.

She had the Judge of Destruction attribute from Ways of Survival and gained Uriel's Hell Flames Ignition. If this continued, it wasn't strange for her to be one of the top 100 strongest people in Ways of Survival or even the top 10.

Lee Hyunsung, who was sparring with Jung Heewon, opened his mouth. "It is getting better little by little, Heewon-ssi."

"I think Hyunsung-ssi has also improved a lot. Now you can cover your whole body with steel."

Jung Heewon spoke without knowing anything but she wasn't wrong. Before the end of the Seoul Dome scenario, Lee Hyunsung started to inherit Steel Transformation. However, Lee Hyunsung wasn't satisfied with his accomplishment.

"I am working hard but… there is still a long way to go to help Dokja-ssi."

There were people who did better when they were told to keep up the good work and that they were going a good job. This was the case with Lee Hyunsung.

[The constellation who doesn't yet have a name has sponsored 100 coins to Incarnation Lee Hyunsung.]

"D-Dokja-ssi?" The perplexed Lee Hyunsung stuttered with wide eyes.

Jung Heewon clicked her tongue. "Wow, he truly is watching. He has the temperament of a stalker but… isn't 100 coins too stingy?"

I turned my gaze towards the two children practicing Taming. The children kept commanding the mighty dragon. Shin Yoosung felt my gaze and smiled towards the air.

[The constellation who doesn't yet have a name is smiling gently.]

In Ways of Survival, the relationship between constellation and incarnation was often similar to a parent and child. I never had a child but I knew what it felt like when seeing Shin Yoosung.

It was a bond that was more solid than blood. It was really tiny and fragile yet so precious that I didn't know what to do…

Of course, not every father in the world was a good father and not all constellations had the same mind. It was common for incarnations to be stabbed in the back by their sponsors.

The second grade evolutionary species, the Chimera Dragon let out a deep cry.

It still wasn't completely obeying but since it joined, the power of the party had shot up. It was currently a second grade species but if it reached first grade or transcendence, the dragon would become a monster that even constellations were afraid of.

Lee Jihye looked at the chimera dragon and sighed enviously. "Damn, I should've chosen a good sponsor. I thought that the Duke of Loyalty and Warfare was good…"

In any case, the ones who didn't work hard were those who complained the most.

A person who didn't know how excellent the Duke of Loyalty and Warfare was… once I got back, I should teach her a lesson.

I looked around at all the characters and sighed lightly as I organized my thoughts.

'This is good enough for the next scenario'.

Lee Jihye and Gong Pildu's growth was a bit disappointing but the situation wasn't bad. There was even Yoo Sangah present. Once we escaped from Seoul Dome, progressing through the subsequent scenarios would be quite easy.

"Master! Do you have any strong skills that don't require a sponsor? Teach me!"

"It is impossible for you now."

Yoo Joonghyuk had overcome the regression depression to a certain extent. If they continued to follow Yoo Joonghyuk's route, I didn't have to worry about the survival of the characters.

Rather, the problem was on my side.

[A huge fate is hoping for your death.]

I looked at the fate message that still hadn't disappeared. I had hoped the fate might be fulfilled after experiencing death because of my mother. Naturally, that didn't happen.

Maybe the person who would kill me wasn't the significant problem. The important thing was that I couldn't avoid this fate with 'resurrection'.

'Damn nebulae bastards…'

In the end, the reason this happened was because I changed the scenarios too much. I also received excessive attention after becoming a constellation. This way, the problem would constantly appear, even if I postponed it through resurrection.

'There shouldn't be another situation like this'.

It was true just looking at the Devourer of Dreams. An outer god descended and the party was nearly destroyed.

It didn't matter since I could resurrect, but the other party members couldn't. None of the party members could die. In particular, everything would be in vain if Yoo Joonghyuk died.

In the first place, all of this wouldn't have happened if it wasn't for me.

[The nebula 'Vedas' is waiting for your resurrection.]

[The nebula 'Papyrus' is waiting for your resurrection.]

[The nebula 'Olympus' is waiting for your resurrection.]

The nebulae were still waiting for a chance. I had attracted their attention and was too weak to stand up against them. How could I protect my party members and shake off the nebulae…

'Indeed, that is the only way'.

Then a system message emerged.

[All the conditions for resurrection have been met!]

[The attribute 'Eight Lives' has been activated!]

Now it was time to go back.

[Your body will be resurrected.]

There was the sound of a breath being taken.

The hardest moment to adapt to was the first breath after the resurrection. I woke up but darkness filled my surroundings. Maybe it was because my party members put me in a coffin.

Damn, I didn't know why they put a person who would survive inside a coffin. Were they acting sarcastic?

[The privilege of 'Eight Lives' has been activated.]

[The third head of the snake has been sacrificed.]

[The power of the head is 'fighting spirit'.]

Once again, I received a privilege effect. The benefits of Eight Lives were less effective than other high-level privileges but it was better than nothing.

The legs that had been lost in the process of dying were restored to their original state. Now the only thing left was to kick off the coffin lid.

"Ohh! The rumor is real!"

"He really resurrected!"

As soon as I pushed off the lid of the coffin, the people gathered in the area cheered. Maybe rumours of my resurrection had spread because a variety of incarnations were gathered and watching me.

[Your resurrection has increased your fame among the incarnations.]

[Your status is rising modestly.]

Finally, Jung Heewon used Hell Flames Ignition to greet me. She used the skill in a way that would make the constellations of Eden enraged.

"Congratulations on your resurrection."

"…Please don't put me in a coffin next time."

"Just wait. I'll bring the others."

Jung Heewon left and the indirect messages of the constellations poured into my ears.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' rejoices in your resurrection.]

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is congratulating you on your return.]

[The constellation 'Goryeo's First Sword' is praising your courage.]

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is grumbling and putting his hands in his pockets.]

[Many constellations greatly admire your achievements.]

[90,000 coins have been sponsored.]

90,000 coins…

Perhaps it was because they weren't able to help me the day before yesterday. It was a bit disappointing but I understood. Rather, it would be more disappointing if they helped me confront the other nebulae.

[The evaluation of your achievement has been completed.]

[You have earned the 'semi-myth'-grade story.]

[The story 'One Who Killed an Outer God' has been acquired!]

.

.

.

[Due to the achievement of the story, some outer gods show hostility towards you.]

[Due to the achievement of the story, some outer gods are curious about you.]

[Due to the achievement of the story, some great old ones are watching you.]

[Your modifier will soon be announced.]

A semi-myth-grade story…

It was a bit disappointing that I didn't receive a myth-grade story but it was still satisfactory.

I would've received a myth rating if I fought a great old one. However, if I actually encountered a great old one, I would've vanished before I could even have a conversation.

[You have achieved a new story during the evaluation.

[The acquisition of a story beyond the existing stories means your status will be re-evaluated.]

[The status will be published in the following scenarios.]

[Your fifth story is in progress.]

It would be good to start as a historical-grade but at this rate, I might be a considerable level among the great-grades.

It would be announced in the following scenarios. The timing was okay.

The long-awaited tenth main scenario, the 73rd Demon King. This scenario was the last scenario to be carried out in Seoul Dome and the participants were extremely limited.

Only the first and second place in the Dark Castle rankings could challenge the scenario. Of course, they wouldn't challenge it alone. They could team up with four rankers.

[Your current Dark Castle ranking is 2nd place.]

I could take four people with me. However, it would be difficult to deal with the enemy that would appear on the next floor with them alone.

In other words, I had to get the help of the first ranked person to complete the Dark Castle scenario.

Then who was first place?

"Kim Dokja."

As soon as I thought this, a voice was heard behind me. I started smiling.

…Indeed, he was first.

"Yoo Joonghyuk, are you now ranked first?"

"Are you talking about the Dark Castle rankings?" Yoo Joonghyuk nodded and instantly replied. "I am first. The situation is different from the Seoul rankings."

This jerk, he was upset that he wasn't first previously. In any case, he was a stingy guy.

I inwardly grumbled while opening my mouth. "I need your help. You know how you can take people to the next scenario? If you and I take them…"

I could see my party members running in the distance.

In particular, Shin Yoosung and Lee Gilyoung were fighting each other to be in the lead. I didn't know why they were doing this since there wasn't a prize for being first.

I talked for a while but Yoo Joonghyuk didn't answer. I felt something strange and saw Yoo Joonghyuk staring at me with serious eyes.

"Kim Dokja, what is your purpose?"

"Purpose? What is my purpose?"

"If your final goal to reach the end of all the scenarios?"

I hesitated for a moment before answering. "Well, I guess so."

"Can you promise not to give up on that goal, no matter what?"

…What was with this guy all of a sudden? I wanted to turn it into a joke but I couldn't help feeling serious when watched Yoo Joonghyuk. "Of course I won't give up. By the way, why are you asking?"

"It's nothing."

Yoo Joonghyuk looked away from me towards the party members. His left eyebrow was twitching. I saw the eyebrow wriggling like a caterpillar and sensed something in my heart.

"Hey, you…"

I knew because I had read to the end of Ways of Survival. Yoo Joonghyuk's left eyebrow only twitched when he made a serious decision. Once this guy made a serious decision, there was always a high probability of death and regressing.

I wanted to use Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint on this bastard but the party members had already arrived. Before I could speak, Yoo Joonghyuk took the lead first.

"I will announce the participants for the tenth scenario."

Chapter 183: Ep. 35 - The 73rd Demon King, II

The backlash to Yoo Joonghyuk's one-sided notification was enormous.

"Why are you deciding so arbitrarily?" Jung Heewon shouted first after Yoo Joonghyuk gave his notification and disappeared. "We will depart in three days! Until then, increase your rankings! If he says that and goes away, should we just roll over and listen?"

"He should've said that when he was talking to me."

"…Does Dokja-ssi want that?"

"Nope."

Jung Heewon was still very spirited.

I said, "Even so, there is a higher probability of surviving if you do as Yoo Joonghyuk says."

"Dokja-ssi, whose side are you on?"

"That…" I glanced at Yoo Joonghyuk in the distance, shrugged and smiled. "First of all, it's nice to see all of you. This is the third resurrection."

The people who were frozen by Yoo Joonghyuk's words smiled awkwardly. Lee Gilyoung and Shin Yoosung stuck to my legs while Lee Hyunsung nodded with a slightly gloomy expression.

"Congratulations on your resurrection. It has already been a few times but I'm getting used to it."

"It would be sad if you get used to it. First of all, let's get organized."

These were the words that Yoo Joonghyuk one-sidedly gave:

–There are two teams. My team and Kim Dokja's team. Four people will be arranged for each team.

–My team will consist of Lee Hyunsung, Gong Pildu, Lee Jihye and Lee Seolhwa. It is the four of them.

–Kim Dokja's team will be Jung Heewon, Shin Yoosung, Lee Gilyoung and Yoo Sangah. It is another four.

In the end, the configuration was similar to the main party up to now. It meant the companions I had participated in the scenarios so far would challenge the tenth scenario. Perhaps he was being considerate of me or it might be more comfortable for him. The latter was more likely when thinking about Yoo Joonghyuk's personality.

Everyone involved didn't have any big complaints about the lineup itself but Lee Hyunsung was slightly sullen. "I want to be on Dokja-ssi's team…"

"The teams don't matter since we are all going together."

"…Yes."

I patted Lee Hyunsung's shoulder and turned towards the rest of the party members. The first one to catch my eye was Yoo Sangah. So many things happened that it felt strange to meet her eyes.

After a moment, Jung Heewon poked my side. "What is it? Do you want her to wear a Chinese dress and garter belt?"

"…Are you still talking about that?"

"It was very shocking. We named it the 'Kim Dokja Garter Belt Incident'. By the way, I won't wear that even if I die."

"I don't want you to wear it."

Then Lee Jihye raised her hand. "I'm willing to put on a good performance! SSS-grade!"

"Stop playing around."

"I can wear that if it is had a good performance."

"Hyunsung-ssi, why…"

"Soldiers don't care about the equipment."

I wanted to say that he was using his military spirit in the wrong way when I heard a message from Uriel.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' says that the constellation who made the garter belt was a man.]

Was this a joke? Dammit. Furthermore, a constellation?

[The constellation 'Queen of the Darkest Spring' smiles and says that she will invite him once.]

Come to think of it, this situation was due to Persephone. I would have to argue with her if I ever went back to the Underworld.

"At this point… what is everyone's ranking? For reference, you all know that you have to be within the top 10 to proceed?"

The party members replied in turn. The first was Jung Heewon. "I am 4th. I got the ranking from the grandmother Lee Boksoon.

"Hyung, Shin Yoosung and I are 8th and 9th. Ah, I'm higher than Shin Yoosung!"

"I am 5th. Gong Pildu-ssi has gone to raise his rankings. There is also Han Sooyoung-ssi."

I forgot about Han Sooyoung. Yoo Sangah asked like she had read my thoughts. "Han Sooyoung wasn't on the list. Are you going to leave her behind?"

"Nope, I will take her. Han Sooyoung is quite helpful."

"…I see." Yoo Sangah smiled weakly once she heard about Han Sooyoung.

The other party members still didn't know she was the First Apostle. Yoo Sangah didn't like lying so she was in a bad mood every time Han Sooyoung was mentioned. I didn't know when there would be a chance to tell the story.

Jung Heewon listened on the side and opened her mouth. "A total of 10 people can go up. How will you take Han Sooyoung-ssi?"

"In principle, only 10 people can go. However, there is a hidden piece. Among the items available in Dark Castle, there is one called the 'Six-man Card'. This way, non-team members can participate in the next scenario."

"…It is a hidden piece. Is there anything else you want to tell us? I think we need to know what the next scenario is about. You and Yoo Joonghyuk are always whispering together."

"Whispering together? That expression is a bit uncomfortable."

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' has a runny nose.]

Jung Heewon smiled at me. "Then please tell me. Kim Dokja-ssi, show me that you are different from Yoo Joonghyuk-ssi."

I looked around and saw the party members watching me like they were grandchildren waiting for their grandmother's fairy tale.

If I was a streamer, I would tell a plausible story about a 'mighty person who lived once upon a time'. However, I was Kim Dokja, not Kim Jakga[1].

"Have you ever heard of an existence called a demon king?"

Demon King. The party members glanced at each other at the unexpected words.

"What… the king of demons? Is there such a thing?"

"I know! It comes out all the time in anime!"

I nodded at Lee Gilyoung's words. "It is roughly similar.

It was a bit different in the setting of Ways of Survival but the main point was explained.

"The tenth scenario is one where we fight against the demon king."

Lee Hyunsung nodded. "Dokkaebis, returnees, tentacled monsters… certainly, now it is time for a demon king to come out."

The listening Lee Jihye asked, "Isn't a demon king too strong? The demon marquis was already high… how strong will a demon king be in comparison?"

I thought for a moment before answering, "A constellation-grade."

There was a saying in Ways of Survival about the demon kings. They were constellations who hadn't ascended. Literally, the demon kings were constellations attached to the world.

Lee Jihye paled. "Then how will we kill it? Or are you and Master going to kill it?"

"No, this time we will all kill it."

"…Can we do it?"

"We can if we all fight together. It was pure luck that Yoo Joonghyuk and I defeated the outer god. Such a thing won't occur twice."

"Still…"

"Don't worry. It is true that a demon king is as strong as a constellation but the one upstairs isn't that strong."

"Then?"

I hesitated for a second. I didn't want to tell them too much information at once. The information wasn't just about the demon kings but also the constellations of the Star Stream.

I thought about it before deciding to tell them through the group chat. [I will tell you.]

Then a voice was heard from the air, as if he knew my worries.

[Everyone, it has been a long time. You don't know how frustrated I've been when I wasn't able to tell to you… Haha, are you ready for the scenario?]

It was Bihyung.

In the original Star Stream, only 72 people were recognized as 'demon kings'. They had modifiers like the constellation and governed different kingdoms in the Demon Realm. It might not be equivalent to a nebula but there were still those who lead 'forces'.

They laughed at the constellation who clung to the glory of a constellation and remained on the land that even the dokkaebis abandoned.

Was that why? The constellations hated the demon kings as much as the outer gods and this Dark Castle scenario was made considering the tendencies of such constellations.

They watched the incarnations fight and kill the demon king. In short, it was a scenario made to be refreshing to the constellations.

"Ah, please! I'm not going!"

After three days, I found Han Sooyoung hiding in the periphery of Dark Castle. I wouldn't have found her if I hadn't purchased the Rope of Restraint and Search for Life items from the Dokkaebi Bag.

Han Sooyoung shouted, "I won't fight! I'll just wait here and go out when you clear the scenario!"

"You have to go."

"I don't want to fight the demon king!"

"The 73rd demon king is a pushover. Don't you already know that?"

As I mentioned earlier, only 72 people were recognized as a demon king in the Star Stream. However, the title of this scenario was the 73rd Demon King. In other words, the guy on the above floor wasn't a 'formal king'.

"He is still a demon king but he isn't as strong as the narrative-grade constellations I've met so far. It is worth fighting."

"The difficulty might've changed. Hasn't it changed once or twice already?"

"The dokkaebis can't change the main scenario difficulty. That is the jurisdiction of the Star Stream."

"Don't you think the dokkaebis are dangerous? Have you already forgotten what happened three days ago?" It wasn't unusual for Han Sooyoung to think like this. She was a person who knew the development of the original novel. "If we continue with the scenarios, the whole group will soon be wiped out. You know that the nebulae are aiming at you."

"…I know. That's why I'm well prepared."

"Prepared? No, how are you prepared? Do you know what will happen in the next scenario?"

We arrived at the camp and I pointed to the party members without speaking. They were training in a formation. They assumed there was a virtual enemy and practiced skills linkage in combination with changing the formation.

"Gilyoung and Yoosung, go back! Yoo Sangah-ssi, go forward and take care of it!"

"Understood!"

The calm and coordinate attacks couldn't be compared with the past. The party members' damage overlapped and they attacked based on the enemy's attack radius. Han Sooyoung opened her mouth as she closely watched the scene.

"Is that… the demon king's pattern analysis?"

I nodded. "Yes."

"How much?"

"Almost everything."

It wasn't impossible.

I had Ways of Survival and the database piled up by Yoo Joonghyuk who fought the 73rd demon king. Furthermore, Yoo Joonghyuk had fought the 73rd demon king in the second round. Practical experience and theoretical knowledge combined forces, so it wasn't impossible to clear the next scenario.

Han Sooyoung made a sad expression and sighed. "…You are a really crazy person."

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[1] **Jakga** – Korean for "writer"

Chapter 184: Ep. 35 - The 73rd Demon King, III

"Don't you think the next scenario will still be tough?" Han Sooyoung asked me.

"…"

The 73rd demon king was strong but there would be no problems if we were thoroughly prepared. Maybe this was the easiest of all the scenarios I had done so far.

Shortly afterwards, the people training gathered near me.

"Have you finished raising your rankings?"

It was Jung Heewon who answered my question. "We are all in the top 10. In fact, Jihye and Pildu-ssi were close but they automatically upgraded this morning."

"Automatically?"

There was only one reason for such an upgrade. It was when a top ranker was killed.

Han Sooyoung already had an ominous expression. "A top 10 ranker suddenly died? Something is strange… Hey, I'm really not going…"

"You came, Kim Dokja. Are you also going to take that woman?"

Han Sooyoung hid behind me at Yoo Joonghyuk's sudden appearance. She was still scared of Yoo Joonghyuk. I nodded as Yoo Joonghyuk stared at Han Sooyoung and pulled out the Six-man Card.

[The incarnation 'Yoo Joonghyuk' has used the Six-man Card.]

[The incarnation 'Han Sooyoung' has become a special participant of the scenario.]

[The incarnation 'Han Sooyoung' has joined incarnation Yoo Joonghyuk's team.]

Han Sooyoung was astonished by the rising messages. "W-What is this? Hey! Why am I on his team?"

"Now, let's get ready to leave."

At my words, the party members moved into their teams.

The first to gather was Yoo Joonghyuk's team. They were Lee Hyunsung, Lee Seolhwa, Lee Jihye and Gong Pildu. In addition, there was the complaining Han Sooyoung.

The unusual mixture of old characters from the novel and new characters gave me a wonderful feeling. It was a luxury that only a reader of Ways of Survival could enjoy.

My team followed suit. Jung Heewon, Yoo Sangah, Shin Yoosung and Lee Gilyoung. There was a free atmosphere compared to the military discipline of Yoo Joonghyuk's team.

I looked at the members one by one.

"…Why are you looking at us like that?"

"Just… It is a new feeling…"

I smiled at Jung Heewon's scolding. I felt pained and sad at the people who followed me well all the way here. I felt like my heart had grown since I talked with the Fourth Wall.

It might be because I was more prepared for this scenario. I was now afraid to lose them.

"Oh, shouldn't we be a group of six as well?"

The team members followed my gaze. There was a line of dolls a few steps away.

"Don't stay over there and come here."

We had obtained two Six-man Cards. Han Sooyoung went to Yoo Joonghyuk's team and my team also needed a sixth person. To be exact, it was a sixth woman.

"…Sookyung-ssi also wanted to go with you."

"It is more helpful for you to go with me."

Jeon Woochi's incarnation, Cho Youngran looked at me with complicated eyes. I asked my mother to include her as a member of the team. Jeon Woochi's stigma was quite useful for emergency situations.

"Did you talk to Sookyung-ssi?"

I replied, "A little bit."

Due to the aftereffects of escaping from the Fourth Wall, my mother wasn't in a position to participate in the next scenario.

Thanks to the Fourth Wall, I discovered different things about my mother. It wasn't just about the past she was hiding. It was also what she experienced after participating in the scenario.

Unlike me, who knew the whole story, my mother had a desperate struggle. She paid an unreasonable price to constellations many times, was captured on purpose to steal the memories of the reincarnator Nirvana and even contracted with the nebulae to keep me safe.

Despite knowing all of this, I couldn't find anything to say to my mother. Perhaps because it wasn't yet time.

Once the scenarios were finished safely, perhaps then we could share the real story. My mother probably knew it as well because she didn't say much this time. She just stared at me for a long time before saying:

–I believe in your choice.

I didn't know why but I felt strange when I heard this. Perhaps my mother read something from me, just like I read her through the Fourth Wall.

"Depart."

We started to move. The target was the altar located in the centre of the Abyss Plains. Just like the first floor of Dark Castle, we could move to the next floor using the altar.

We started the boring walk and Jung Heewon opened her mouth. "It bothers me that the nebulae are so quiet."

In fact, I hadn't heard the nebulae's messages since two days ago. I didn't know if they were hiding something or perhaps they had consumed too much probability. I glanced at Yoo Sangah and asked, "Have you been in contact with Olympus?"

"…Not since three days ago."

As I heard last time, the constellations of Olympus were currently split. The outsiders of Olympus, like Dionysus and Persephone, were the ones who approached Yoo Sangah. Perhaps three days ago, there was a struggle inside Olympus.

My expression was uneasy and Yoo Sangah spoke in a concerned voice. "Dokja-ssi, are you okay?"

"I'm fine. What about Yoo Sangah-ssi?"

"…I am trying to be okay."

I glanced at Yoo Sangah. She was such a good person that I would feel sorry if I kept watching her. She learnt about my fate first and I heard that she ran around in order to save me.

It wasn't strange for Yoo Sangah. She was the first person to come forward if something was wrong. In the first scenario, she stood up first to save the grandmother. Yoo Sangah would act exactly the same if someone else was in my position.

"Can we win? We've managed so far but this time…"

"Don't worry." I tried to reassure Yoo Sangah. "I won't die. You know."

Yoo Sangah was the first to see my fate and she must know that it hadn't disappeared.

I was wondering what else I could say to reassure her when I heard Yoo Joonghyuk's voice. "We're here."

There was a gigantic building reminiscent of the ancient Parthenon. The party members noticeably stiffened and I called people one by one.

"Gilyoung. Yoosung. Do it as we practiced earlier. Don't call the chimera dragon until I give the signal. Do you understand?"

The role of these children was the most important thing before the attack on the demon king. The chimera dragon tamed by the children would play a key role in this attack.

"Yoo Sangah-ssi, please protect Jung Heewon-ssi from being hurt. This time, the main damage dealer will be Jung Heewon. Are you familiar with how to fight?"

"I remember."

Yoo Joonghyuk looked this way when he finished preparing and I pulled the team members over to him. A waist-height alter soon appeared. Yoo Joonghyuk and I placed our hands on the palm marks on the altar at the same time.

[The scenario challengers have been confirmed.]

[Scenario Challenger: 1st in Dark Castle, Yoo Joonghyuk.]

[Scenario Challenger: 2nd in Dark Castle, Kim Dokja.]

[Total Number of People Admitted: 12 people]

[Are you sure you want to enter the scenario?]

We all nodded at the same time. There were dazzling rays of light and our bodies were transferred to the next floor. The place we were transferred to was a cramped passage.

[You have entered the new main scenario area.]

[Main Scenario #10 — '73rd Demon King' has started!]

As expected, it was the same development as the original novel. Once we followed this passage, we would reach the hall where the 73rd demon king was waiting.

"Prepare the formations."

We moved carefully along the passage. The difficulty depended on how much damage was inflicted with the first surprise attack. If we could get as close as possible and deal a large amount of damage, we might be able to finish it without using all the formations we practiced.

However, as I moved along the passage, a worrisome feeling filled my mind.

…Why was it so quiet? Shouldn't I feel the demon king's aura at this point?

Then a system message emerged.

[An error has occurred in the scenario.]

"Hyung, this is…?"

The surprised Lee Gilyoung reflexively opened his mouth and I placed my finger against his lips. The party members lowered their voices.

"Dokja-ssi, this is different from the story…"

"T-There are dead people here…!"

The one who spoke was Lee Hyunsung, who had been searching in the front. We moved as stealthily as possible and gathered near Lee Hyunsung.

Surprisingly, there were bodies that looked like they just died. Yoo Joonghyuk touched them and powerful sparks popped out. "It is evidence of a probability storm."

I didn't know what they had done but if the sparks were still here after their deaths, their sponsors must've done something huge. The incarnations had used a lot of force and the sponsors behind them must've suffered a huge blow.

Who the hell had done this?

Then Yoo Joonghyuk opened his mouth. "The incarnations of Vedas and Papyrus."

"What?"

"I've met them wandering around Dark Castle. They were in contact with me."

"…How did those guys come here? A terminal of the nebulae would have sufficient rankings but they wouldn't have the right to participate in the scenario."

"It looks like there was another Six-man Card."

One question was resolved. The sudden rise in Lee Jihye and Gong Pildu's ranking was because of the rankers killed here.

I had an ominous hunch. Were the nebulae quiet because they used up all their probability here? It meant…?

We reflexively looked at each other and Yoo Joonghyuk started running towards the hall, forgetting the formation. If I was right, now wasn't the time to worry about the formations.

The moment we arrived in the hall, we witnessed a shocking sight.

[Constellations, what the hell are you doing?]

Dozens of dokkaebis floated in the air in the centre of the hall.

[It is difficult if you do such arbitrary things. Aren't you looking down on the Star Stream? Using Deus X Machina in this place?]

The words weren't directed towards us but we were obviously meant to here. Bihyung looked awkward as he met my gaze.

This jerk, what the hell…

[I know you are worried about the incarnations but the scenario won't be over just because you interfere. Some of you have received a blow that nearly destroyed you. Why the hell did you do this? Just look at the probability. All the lower constellations have collapsed…]

There was a strange smile on the face of the representative dokkaebi. He smiled like he knew this would happen from the beginning.

Wait a minute. What did that bastard just say?

"Kim Dokja."

I looked in the direction that Yoo Joonghyuk was pointing. The centre of the hall. There was a broken throne that should've originally contained the 73rd demon king. In addition, the fearsome demon king that we should've met…

[The 73rd demon king is dead.]

He was lying dead on the ground, his chest torn apart.

"W-What is this? He's dead?"

After Han Sooyoung's words, the other members belatedly opened their mouths.

"The demon king is already dead?"

"Then what will happen to the scenario?"

"…Maybe it has already ended?"

My head was too complicated that I couldn't hear the voices of the people. The unqualified incarnations challenged the scenario, received the probability storm and killed the demon king with the support of the nebulae.

At first, the scenario seemed to be resolved. However, the main scenarios of the Star Stream weren't so simple.

[The Star Stream has corrected the balance of this scenario.]

The scenarios where transcendent existences excessively intervened were forcibly corrected by the Star Stream.

There was a strong sense of deja vu in my head.

It wasn't the 73rd Demon King scenario but a similar thing happened in Ways of Survival. The scenario was ruined by the rioting of constellations and the Star Stream restored the main scenario.

Then what would happen?

[The Star Stream has corrected the broken probability.]

I looked at the dead demon king.

The Star Stream liked the natural flow of stories and it couldn't revive dead existences. A time reversal or resurrection would undermine the probability of the scenario even more.

[The main scenario contents have been updated!]

The 73rd demon king was dead. However, a 73rd demon king was still needed. It was because we had to hunt him in order to proceed with the scenario.

The Star Stream was originally set to fix these contradictions. There was a shining precious jade in the spot where the demon king had died.

I reflexively muttered, "Hey, this…"

By the way, I couldn't feel any signs around me. There was an eerie feeling creeping down my spine.

Time seemed to flow very slowly. I looked around and Yoo Joonghyuk wasn't there.

"Yoo Joonghyuk!"

By the time I moved, Yoo Joonghyuk had already reached the jade. His expression as he looked at me was something I had never seen before. Yoo Joonghyuk was looking at me with eyes that had never been present in Ways of Survival.

"Kim Dokja. Be sure to keep your promise."

Then the system messages rose.

[The candidate for the '73rd Demon King has been found.]

[The new '73rd Demon King' is elected.]

Chapter 185: Ep. 35 - The 73rd Demon King, IV

"Hey! What nonsense are you saying?" I shouted while hurriedly running towards Yoo Joonghyuk.

Aura started to emerge from Yoo Joonghyuk's body as he held the piece of jade.

[The selected person is evolving into a demon king!]

The person who was selected by the jade would become the 73rd demon king.

–Can you promise not to give up on that goal, no matter what?

A few days ago, Yoo Joonghyuk had asked me a meaningful question about my goal. Was my goal to reach the end of the scenarios…

Don't tell me…? No, it was impossible. I almost had a fit as I screamed, "Yoo Joonghyuk you son of a bitch!"

Then the sound of steel wire moving through the air was heard. Dozens of wires poured down towards Yoo Joonghyuk, one of them snatching the jade that was in Yoo Joonghyuk's hand.

[The succession of the demon king is cancelled.]

A bewildered expression appeared on Yoo Joonghyuk's face.

"Dokja-ssi!"

I looked back and saw dozens of threads stretching out from Yoo Sangah's hand. As everyone was frozen, only she kept her mind. She tied up the demon king's jade with Binding Thread and it flew to this side. Yoo Joonghyuk let out a huge burst of killing intent.

"Don't interrupt!"

As soon as an intense wave of magic power was about to cover Yoo Sangah, I triggered Bookmark and Way of the Wind and blocked the magic power. It wasn't easy to block, even with Way of the Wind at the maximum level.

This was the power of Yoo Joonghyuk, who had become a transcendent. I shouted through clenched teeth.

"Yoo Sangah-ssi! Hold it well! Never use it!"

"Yes!"

My party members were wondering what the hell was going on.

Han Sooyoung created dozens of clones and shouted, "I knew this would happen! Kim Dokja, I told you! Yoo Joonghyuk is someone who only thinks about himself to the end!"

Han Sooyoung kept shouting while I was unable to grasp the situation properly.

"Kim Dokja! We must stop him! This jerk is obviously going to become the demon king, kill all of us and clear the scenario alone…!"

Han Sooyoung's clone blocked Yoo Joonghyuk and exploded instantly. Han Sooyoung's main body was trapped against the wall of the hallway.

The other party members rushed in front of me.

"Master! What's wrong with you? Kyaaack!"

"Yoo Joonghyuk-ssi!"

Lee Jihye and Jung Heewon as well. They couldn't cope with Yoo Joonghyuk's blow and fell.

Now Yoo Joonghyuk was serious. He was committed to defeating all those who interfered with his purpose.

I stepped past the party members while telling them, "You can't deal with him!"

Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes glared at me. "Get out of the way Kim Dokja. I will be the demon king."

"What nonsense is this? Why all of a sudden?"

"Shouldn't you know as well? There is only one way to clear this scenario."

I glanced at the scenario window floating in the air.

[Main Scenario #10 - 73rd Demon King]

Category: Main

Difficulty level: SS+

Clear Conditions: You can choose one of two ways. Take possession of the throne and become the 73rd demon king, or kill the newly born 73rd demon king. The scenario can only be cleared by choosing one of these two methods and there is no other way to proceed.

Time Limit: 30 minutes

Compensation: 200,000 coins,???

Failure: Death and expulsion from the scenario.

This scenario was similar to the 'sacrifice' scenario. One person had to die for everyone or one person would live while everyone else died.

I bit my lips and asked, "Are you going to sacrifice yourself?"

"Hunt me and go to the next scenario."

"Why are you doing something like this all of a sudden?"

"This is the right thing to do."

There was no doubt that he thought this was the right answer. Yoo Joonghyuk spoke with his unique nuances. "I am used to the pain. Similarly, I am familiar with death. Don't you already know this?"

He was certain that I knew all about him. However, Yoo Joonghyuk was wrong. I didn't know Yoo Joonghyuk. The Yoo Joonghyuk I knew would never do this.

It seemed like there was room to talk so I decided to calm down this damn sunfish.

"I know what you are saying but you don't have to sacrifice yourself. You are a regressor but you don't have multiple lives. I have resurrection on my side. That's why you're not the one suitable to become the demon king."

"Resurrection. It is a good ability. However, do you think it will work in this scenario? If you have seen the scenario failure, can you be certain that resurrection will save you?"

I had forgotten for a moment. Certainly, Yoo Joonghyuk was right. This scenario didn't just end with 'death'. This jerk… had he calculated it and moved?

"Get out of the way Kim Dokja."

My Unbroken Faith cried out while his Splitting the Sky Sword pointed at me. In this stubborn confrontational state, I desperately thought about it. How could I persuade this person?

No matter how much I squeezed my head, I couldn't come up with a method. If this continued, this jerk would become the demon king and take the damn regression route.

[The exclusive skill, 'Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint' stage 2 has been activated!]

I started to soak up his thoughts like a sponge.

「 The cost of failing this scenario is expulsion from the scenario. 」

「 There is no one who can survive being expelled from the scenario. Then Kim Dokja's resurrection ability is meaningless. 」

「 Perhaps this is the death that his fate is pointing to. 」

「 If Kim Dokja becomes the demon king, he will die here. 」

My heart was heavy as I received the waterfall of thoughts.

「 Thus, it is me who should sacrifice themselves here. 」

This guy was really going to sacrifice himself. The arrogant and aloof Yoo Joonghyuk. It was for the sake of others, not himself.

Suddenly, unknown emotions rose inside me. "Then you? What about you? If you die here, what about your damn goal?!"

"You will do it for me."

"What?"

Yoo Joonghyuk watched our companions behind me. "The one who can save the world… it might be you, not me."

Lee Hyunsung, Lee Jihye, Shin Yoosung, Lee Seolhwa…

There was deep regret in Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes as he gazed at every single person. I seemed to know what he was thinking.

「There have never been so many people who made it to here. And maybe it won't happen again in the future.」

This was the Yoo Joonghyuk who had experienced several lives and received advance information from the 41st regression.

There were no cases like this regression. This fact caused Yoo Joonghyuk to shake.

My mind worked quickly. How could I persuade him…

"Get out of the way. There isn't much time left."

He used Giant Body Transformation and started to swell up dramatically. He had either grown stronger in three days or the party members were frozen by the energy he was emitting. Yoo Sangah was terrified and Yoo Joonghyuk approached her step by step.

I eventually activated the Blade of Faith. "Stop! Stop it you son of a bitch!"

The white ether sword collided with Yoo Joonghyuk's Splitting the Sky. Of course, it was my side that suffered one-sided damage. I had to use at least Electrification to deal with this guy.

…I couldn't let him take the path of regression. The moment I was about to activate Bookmark, Yoo Joonghyuk asked me,

"Are you concerned about what will happen to this world after I go back?"

"What?"

"You must be afraid. The moment I disappear, this world will disappear. Isn't that right?"

I was so surprised that I was lost for words. How the hell did he know this? I started to wonder if he was the one with Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint instead of me.

Then I forgot even this thought.

"There's nothing to worry about. I already asked my sponsor."

…What?

"This world won't disappear if I regress. This world won't end or be upset if I die."

Yoo Joonghyuk easily suppressed Yoo Sangah and reached for the precious jade. As if it wanted him, demonic energy stretched out from the jade and tangled around Yoo Joonghyuk's fingers.

"Continue to live, Kim Dokja." Yoo Joonghyuk looked at me with the face of a stranger. "Now you have to save this world."

* * *

Thunder struck the sky on the second floor of Dark Castle. It was a sinister thunder, as if suggesting the collapse of Dark Castle.

Lee Sookyung gazed at the sky as she moved with the wanderers. Her son was probably beyond this sky.

"Hulhul, you look very worried these days."

It was Lee Boksoon who spoke. She handed her Dark Castle rankign to Jung Heewon and chose to stay here. Lee Sookyung glanced at Lee Boksoon for a while before replying, "I guess I'm not familiar with being a mother."

"Do people get used to it? You will never get used to it in your life. Me too…"

"You aren't going to bring up the story of raising six siblings again are you?"

"Hulhul, you knew?"

Lee Boksoon chuckled. There were no wanderers who didn't know the story of the six siblings raised by Lee Boksoon.

Lee Boksoon patted Lee Sookyung's shoulder and spoke in a friendly voice. "He will surely come back alive. Don't worry too much."

"I wish but… fate says differently."

"You don't think that fate can be overcome? To me…"

In the end, Lee Boksoon retold the story of how she raised her six siblings through all types of hardships. Lee Sookyug smiled bitterly. No one would've suffered if fate was so easily overcome.

「If he doesn't go to the next scenario, Incarnation Kim Dokja can live.」

Lee Sookyung sacrificed 20 years of her life and read this sentence from 'fate'.

Kim Dokja could live if he didn't go to the next scenario. In other words, Kim Dokja would surely die when he went to the next scenario.

'…Dokja'.

However, Lee Sookyung didn't give up even when all indicators pointed to the death of her son. She couldn't let go.

There was the sound of falling sound and Lee Sookyung looked down at her fingertips. Her body was still crumbling because her recovery was slow and incomplete. It was all due to the aftereffects of entering the Fourth Wall.

Lee Sookyung remembered the moment she was eaten by the Fourth Wall. It was a terrible experience, as if her being itself was breaking down into morpheme units.

Perhaps she died at that time. Like a broken story, she was sucked into the wall and experienced something no human ever had before.

She was shocked that there was such a 'wall' inside her son. She also shuddered at the fact that someone was living inside the wall.

'…What the hell is it?'

There, Lee Sookyung confronted the presence inside the wall. Her existence was crushed and recreated so there weren't many accurate memories left.

The exact structure of the interior of the wall… she didn't remember. Still, there was one thing she remembered. It was the answer to a question.

「What is the way for my son to survive? How can he get rid of that damn fate?」

Lee Sookyung asked this even when her existence was fading away. The being inside the wall laughed like it was having fun.

「There is only one way to escape from fate.」

There was a strange smile, as if this whole situation was a joke.

「Kim Dokja already knows how to do it.」

Chapter 186: Ep. 35 - The 73rd Demon King, V

–Stop! Stop it you son of a bitch!

At this time, the main scenario was flowing through the holographic panel at the Seoul branch of the bureau. Some dokkaebis sighed as they watched the storm of magic power on the screen.

The dokkaebis instinctively knew it. The scene that would unfold from now on would be the best story since the Seoul Dome scenario began.

Bihyung watched the scene and was one of them.

–Yoo Joonghyuk! This damn ■■■ bastard…! Please!

–Everyone stop him! Block Yoo Joonghyuk!

Some dokkaebis expressed dissatisfaction with the filtering. However, Bihyung was different. Despite the mix of filtering, Bihyung was now able to understand their words to a certain extent.

Some words could be read, even if they weren't completely written. The same was probably true for the constellations who had been watching the channel all along.

Otherwise, the following messages wouldn't come out.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is despairing at the tragic situation.]

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is tearing out his hair in lumps.]

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is looking disturbed.]

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' is silently watching the situation.]

.

.

[Some constellations resent the atrocities of the nebula!]

[Many constellations are completely immersed in the unpredictable developments.]

Bihyung couldn't take his eyes off the screen.

Yoo Joonghyuk who wanted to become the demon king and Kim Dokja who wanted to stop him…

Bihyung saw this and was reminded of the days when he was a novice dokkaebi.

It was a time when he was doing all sorts of events in the Star Stream. All the stories were lovely and he couldn't bear the curiosity of the next story.

The feelings of those days when he was immersed in the incarnations of his channel were pure and unforgettable…

Bihyung struggled to ignore the emotions wriggling inside him.

'That is just a story'.

No matter how tragic or sad, a story was just a story. The story of Kim Dokja and Yoo Joonghyuk was just one of the countless stories repeated in the Star Stream.

Most of the stories had already been seen and he had long forgotten the excitement. All he knew was how to give an exaggerated and stimulating directing.

Then why? Bihyung desperately held the egg in his arms.

'Shit! Kim Dokja! Do something. As always, fool everyone with an unexpected development!'

Kim Dokja would find a new method, just like he always did. The dokkaebi had such expectations.

"It is really tragic. Isn't that right?" The head of the Seoul branch, Baram stood beside him.

Bihyung looked at him and answered, "…It is a very tragic situation for a half constellation."

The nebulae would suffer greatly from this intervention. Using Deus X Machina on this scale wouldn't stop at simply sacrificing lower constellations.

Each constellation shared the probability through the nebula and this incident caused tremendous loss to the probability. If a war between nebulae was to take place in this situation, the loss caused by Kim Dokja would be a decisive blow.

Baram replied after a moment, "I think it is worth it if Kim Dokja dies. As I said, they are very sensitive to issues related to the 'end of everything'. They think that the likelihood of Kim Dokja is very high."

"…Then the situation is unfortunate."

"Hrmm? Why?"

"Kim Dokja won't die." Bihyung continued without understanding why he was making such a boast. "As long as he becomes the demon king, Yoo Joonghyuk won't kill Kim Dokja."

Bihyung looked back at the screen.

Perhaps the plan was the nebulae was to kill Kim Dokja by making Yoo Joonghyuk the demon king. However, it was the arrogance of the nebulae who didn't fully understand Yoo Joonghyuk's personality.

–Don't interrupt!

Bihyung watched Yoo Joonghyuk through the screen and swallowed down the boiling sensation.

In the end, Yoo Joonghyuk would die here but Kim Dokja would live. Thus, Kim Dokja would once again escape the constellation's fate.

If he survived and survived, someday…

Baram laughed, "You don't know 'fate' yet."

"…Huh?"

"Do you think the nebulae wouldn't have known this? Do you believe that they wouldn't have analyzed Kim Dokja's personality, even if they can't read his future? Then you are underestimating the weight of destiny."

"What…"

Bihyung was interrupted by the bright flash that came from the screen.

[The Star Stream is announcing the status of the constellation who doesn't yet have a name.]

The magnificent light covered the entire holographic panel and even advanced dokkaebis like Baram were impressed.

"Look. Fate is about to be realized."

"Dokja-ssi! What are you doing? Wake up!"

I watched Yoo Joonghyuk being tinged with demonic energy and was in a dazed state.

–Are you concerned about what will happen to this world after I go back?

–You must be afraid. The moment I disappear, this world will disappear. Isn't that right?

It was like thousands of insects had entered my eyes as my senses were disturbed.

"Kyaaaaak!" The party members screamed.

There was an explosion in the surrounding area.

–This world won't disappear if I regress. This world won't end or be upset if I die.

The words spoken by Yoo Joonghyuk encroached on my head.

'This world won't disappear, even if Yoo Joonghyuk goes back'.

I didn't understand it. Yoo Joonghyuk's sponsor. The existence that never responded to anything in Ways of Survival… actually replied to Yoo Joonghyuk?

Why? Under these circumstances?

"Dokja-ssi!"

I didn't know.

[The exclusive skill 'Bookmark' is activated!]

[The 5th bookmark, Kyrgios Rodgraim is selected!]

[The exclusive skill 'Miniaturization Lv. 3' is activated!]

[The exclusive skill 'Electrification' Lv. 11 (+1) has been activated.]

My body size was reduced in an instant and the blue-white trail moved towards Yoo Joonghyuk.

"Kim Dokja!" Yoo Joonghyuk growled out.

The blue-white energy hit Yoo Joonghyuk's blade and a terrible collision sound was heard.

The combination of Electrification and Purest Sword Force met the power of Giant Body Transformation and Splitting the Sky.

I had a thought as I watched the ether storm explode.

If Yoo Joonghyuk was right, I would no longer have to worry about him regressing. Even if he returned, I could guarantee that this world remained and keep living in it.

"Kim Dokja, think about it. The opportunities won't often come."

The muscles of my body creaked from the excessive force collision. Yoo Joonghyuk also poured out all of his power.

I felt the texture of the blade in my hand and realized. My pain was alleviated by Fourth Wall while Yoo Joonghyuk would be taking all of it without a wall.

"No, it's difficult."

Was it okay just because he could regress? Would he sacrifice himself to end this scenario?

I told him, "There is no such development in the ending that I want."

"Are you still failing to understand? I must be the demon king…!"

"I will be the demon king."

"Don't talk bullshit! If you do that, you will surely die. After being banished from the scenario, resurrection is useless!"

Perhaps Yoo Joonghyuk didn't understand my words. There was a huge wall between us that couldn't be filled.

However, it was due to this wall that I could see this guy again and again. Yoo Joonghyuk's remorse, his despair and his dreams. An indomitable will that didn't give up.

I grew up reading all of this.

"Think about it. Who would watch a story without the protagonist?"

There were numerous memories in my head. I overcame all the tragedies in my life with a single story. It was the story of a person who never gave up, no matter what. That story made me. I could survive to reach here.

"I will pay off the debt."

"…Debt? What do you mean?"

"You saved me once. Now I'm going to save you."

"What nonsense is this…?"

I listened to Yoo Joonghyuk's voice while using all the techniques I had saved. It was a technique that would exhaust my physical endurance, even if it was just for a moment. It was the first time I tried it directly but it was probably theoretically possible.

"Turn off Miniaturization."

At the same time, my body that was covered in the brilliance of Electrification started to return to its original size.

[Your current body configuration is different from that of the character.]

[At present, you can't use Electrification with your body composition.]

[The powerful skill penalty will encroach on your body!]

Electrification was a technique that could only be used by a 'small person'. However, if I released Miniaturization while using Electrification, I could still use the power of Electrification with my original body. My body wandered through a deadly situation but once Miniaturization was turned off, the power of Electrification was amplified.

"Kim Dokja…!"

Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes widened with astonishment as the power of Electrification filled the area. The dazzling blue-white ether swept the hall and Yoo Joonghyuk was thrown back into the wall as he coughed up a large amount of blood.

A few steps away, I saw Lee Gilyoung picking up the jade that Yoo Joonghyuk had dropped. "Gilyoung. Give that to me."

Lee Gilyoung hesitantly withdrew from me. "I don't want to. I heard it all. If hyung gets this…"

As Lee Gilyoung hesitated, Han Sooyoung shouted at him. "Stupid! Get away from Kim Dokja!"

It was too late. I instantly narrowed the distance and snatched the jade from Lee Gilyoung's hand.

"I'm sorry Gilyoung."

At the same time, a surge from Electrification emerged and the people around me were thrown back.

[The exclusive skill, 'Bookmark' has been forcibly terminated.]

My body was overloaded and blood gushed from me. I grasped the jade tightly as my consciousness blurred. Then demonic energy flowed from the jade and wrapped around my whole body.

[Constellations of the Vedas nebula are smiling with satisfaction.]

Yes, this was what they wanted.

[You have met the qualifications to become the 73rd demon king.]

[The precious jade is amazed by your potential.]

[A new main scenario has been acquired!]

"Dokja-ssi!"

The system messages blocked the voices of my party members, which was vaguely heard.

[If you choose the way of the demon king, you must destroy all existences on the third level of Dark Castle.]

[If you fail the scenario, you will be banished forever from this scenario.]

Banishment from the scenario. It didn't have the same meaning as 'death'. It was to be kicked forever from the flow controlled by the Star Stream.

I would die in that empty void that couldn't be reached by the eyes of the dokkaebis and constellations.

There was no one in the Star Stream who could endure that void. No constellations could exist without the scenario.

Now I knew for sure. This was what those damn nebulae were hoping for. I knew very well what that damn fate was pointing to.

"I am the demon king."

[The precious jade has chosen a new candidate to become the 73rd demon king.]

[The new '73rd Demon King' is elected.]

A mighty demonic energy filled my whole body.

[You have got a new story!]

[You have inherited the power of the 'demon king.]

My damaged body received the enormous demonic energy and recovered its strength in an instant. No, it was more than recovering. It was a huge energy I had never felt before. I was reborn as something completely different.

[The Star Stream will announce your status.]

[Your status is narrative-grade.]

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[Your 'stigma' has opened!]

[A strong demonic energy is polluting your constellation.]

[You have become a corrupted constellation!]

A corrupted constellation. It was the Star Stream's name for the demon kings.

[Many constellations are greatly shocked by your choice.]

[Constellations of the absolute good system are showing fierce hostility towards you.]

The dark demonic energy slowly lifted and I could see the party members looking at me with devastated expressions. The people who knelt down were trembling like they couldn't believe it.

Yoo Joonghyuk's desperate face could also be seen in the distance.

[The Main Scenario #10 — '73rd Demon King' has started!]

I looked at them and opened my mouth in a grand manner. "Everybody wake up."

Everything in the last three days had been for this moment.

"Remember how to deal with a demon king."

The nebulae probably thought it was going as they planned. Finally, as fate decreed, Kim Dokja would die here.

However, they would never know. Just as they placed the scenario of fate here… I had been preparing for three days to escape from this damn fate.

Faint sunlight was leaking in from the gap in the broken ceiling. I laughed as I gazed at the sunlight that seemed dazzling.

"Now let's start the last scenario."

Today was the day that 'Incarnation Kim Dokja' would die.

Chapter 187: Ep. 35 - The 73rd Demon King, VI

The party members were still watching me with confused expressions. The expressions showed they didn't know what the hell was going on. Yoo Joonghyuk was still coughing up blood against the wall.

I looked at them for a moment before glancing at the wall of the hall. My appearance was reflected on the polished stone wall.

Black wings sprouted from my shoulders and small horns rose from my head. Traces of demonic energy were imprinted on my skin like a stigma. My body was three or four times larger than usual and the muscles of my whole body were greatly expanded.

"T-This is ridiculous!" Why is Dokja-ssi the demon king…?"

"What the hell is this? What should we do?"

Yoo Sangah and Lee Jihye shouted.

Jung Heewon, Lee Hyunsung, Lee Gilyoung, Shin Yoosung… even Cho Youngran and Gong Pildu. Everyone was looking at me with shocked expressions.

I watched them and opened my mouth. "From now on, you will have to hunt me."

[The first phase of the '73rd demon king' will begin.]

[The attack time limit is 30 minutes.]

"There is no time. Quickly start."

A formidable energy was flowing through my body. Even if I was passively hit, I couldn't help wondering if the party members would be able to decrease my health in the given time.

Jung Heewon and Lee Hyunsung looked at me desperately and cried out. "I don't want to fight Dokja-ssi!"

"I can't follow your command!"

I could understand their feelings. I would also hesitate if I was in the same situation as them. I deliberately laughed at them.

"I don't know why you're so serious. Have you forgotten who I am? I am Kim Dokja. I won't die even when killed."

The innocent Lee Hyunsung was shaken by my words. "…Will you come back to life against this time?"

"Yes."

"But I heard…!"

"Yoo Joonghyuk was deliberately trying to provoke me."

I didn't use the Incite skill but conflicted emotions were appearing on the people's faces. Maybe their trust in me and the burden of attacking me were clashing inside them.

"Believe me. This is the most ideal way."

The party members would eventually have to attack me. It was because there was no other way. If they didn't kill me, everyone here would die.

Han Sooyoung was staring at me with scary eyes. I sent a signal to her before she could open her mouth.

'Han Sooyoung'.

Han Sooyoung paled as she read my lips.

'You are the only one. You have to take charge'.

I knew it and Han Sooyoung did as well. The party members were stronger than other incarnations but they weren't decisive in this situation. On the other hand, Han Sooyoung was faster and more realistic when judging the situation than anyone else here.

"…You are always like this, Kim Dokja." Han Sooyoung told me through gritted teeth. "Do you think I'm an emotionless monster?"

Han Sooyoung glanced between me and then the party members. Everyone's eyes were focused on her. It was as if everything would be decided by her words.

Han Sooyoung breathed heavily before opening her mouth. "Everybody, wake up. Do you want everyone here to go to hell?"

I smiled. Yes, she was doing well.

"We have to kill Kim Dokja."

This was Han Sooyoung.

"I don't want to! I don't want to! Hyung!"

Han Sooyoung grabbed Lee Gilyoung as he ran towards me.

"Stupid kid. Listen well."

Lee Gilyoung gasped and struggled. Han Sooyoung snarled as she grabbed Lee Gilyoung's collar.

"Don't whine. Do you want to die instead of Kim Dokja?"

"A-Ahhh…"

"The rest of you are the same. You aren't willing to sacrifice yourself so don't be a hypocrite. Instead of dying, say thank you and swing your weapons!"

Han Sooyoung's clones, which had grown by dozens, simultaneously opened their mouths.

"I don't know if Kim Dokja will come back or not. We will die if we don't kill him in the next 30 minutes. That is the only thing I need to know."

Han Sooyoung's clones rushed towards me with red eyes. I mouthed towards her, 'Thank you'.

Han Sooyoung bit her lips until it bled and swung her dagger towards me. The rain of attacks didn't deal much damage to my body but this was only the beginning.

Yoo Sangah received my gaze and slowly stood up. "Dokja-ssi."

It was hard to know what she had decided as unknown feelings were in her eyes. I nodded in response while being hit by Han Sooyoung.

"I think Dokja-ssi isn't a person who will hurt others without thinking. Do you have a plan? Did you deliberately direct this scenario?"

"Yes, that's right."

"Really?" Yoo Sangah was crying. "…Should I believe you again? As usual…"

I knew this would happen. I was glad to hear it. Yoo Sangah roughly wiped at her tears. She raised her dagger and participated in the battle.

Han Sooyoung's lips twitched. "…I thought you were going to sit back hesitantly and whine."

"Please be quiet."

Han Sooyoung and Yoo Sangah's daggers placed small wounds on my shoulders and back. However, they were still lacking strength.

The remaining time was 25 minutes. It was a tight amount of time if they wanted to use the formation.

I looked at Lee Hyunsung. "Lee Hyunsung-ssi. Will you let the party members die?"

"…"

"Didn't you say you would never lose the empty cartridge again?"

"D-Dokja-ssi…"

"This isn't just one cartridge."

Lee Hyunsung's eyes were shaking like the sea that met the wind.

[The constellation 'Master of Steel' is deeply immersed.]

Time passed before Lee Hyunsung shouted at the sky. He used Steel Transformation and rushed towards me. The hard body bumped into me and there was a strong shock.

My vision shook slightly. Lee Hyunsung used Great Mountain Smash but he seemed on the defensive rather than attacking me. When would I see the sight of a bearish man weeping again?

Next was the sound of magic turrets being fired. I laughed when I heard the sound and turned towards that side.

Indeed, this was why I couldn't hate him. Gong Pildu was frowning as hard as he could as he activated the turrets of Armed Fortress. Of course, I wasn't just getting hit.

[The probability of the scenario is dominating your body.]

Regardless of my will, my body would act as the demon king. Of course, the attacks were in perfect patterns so the party members could easily cope.

"Everybody, stay awake. Now it is the second phase."

The second phase of the 73rd demon king was starting. In order to thwart it, special support was needed.

"Cho Youngran-ssi."

Cho Youngran received my gaze and invoked the power of the Mechanical Gateway Array Method.

As if air was being drained through a ventilator, the demonic energy I was emitting disappeared into the hole she created. Her complexion was rapidly becoming white as she dealt with the energy of the demon king.

Blood spilt from her lips as Cho Youngran told me, "Sookyung-ssi will be sad."

"She already knows."

My demonic energy dwindled and the party members attacked me again. However, they still lacked damage. I paid attention to those who weren't participating yet. Lee Jihye bit her lips and finally pulled out her sword. "Ahjussi, don't take revenge later."

"I won't."

Lee Jihye smiled weakly at my words.

"…In any case, my attacks are weak and won't hurt. My constellation is only historical-grade."

"The Duke of Loyalty and Warfare is not that weak. Jihye will soon discover it."

Lee Jihye used Song of the Sword and aimed for my weakness. The attacks overlapped and a tingling sensation started to appear on my skin. The threat was enough. Now I needed people who could deal the finishing blow.

"Jung Heewon-ssi."

As if she had been waiting, Jung Heewon slowly pulled out her sword. "In the old days… do you remember what you asked me?"

"What?"

"You asked me to be your companion."

I remembered. In the Theatre Dungeon, I asked Jung Heewon to be my reliable companion.

"Now Dokja-ssi is asking your companion to do something like this."

I was speechless.

"…What companions?" Jung Heewon raised her sword and ran towards me. "What type of companion has to kill another companion to live?"

Jung Heewon triggered Demon Slaying and started to attack my body. However, the sword just made a rough sound.

I told her, "It is because you are a trustworthy companion that I am putting my life in your hands."

"…"

"Heewon-ssi, you have to do it properly. Think that I will come back to life again and stab me as hard as possible."

"Dokja-ssi really…"

Jung Heewon raised her sword towards me. The power of Hell Flames Ignition appeared around Jung Heewon's body.

Jung Heewon's eyes were red as she started to concentrate her strength. Her real strength was when the power of Judge of Destruction was added to Hell Flames Ignition.

Kim Dokja became a demon king and was a suitable target for that power.

[The character 'Jung Heewon' has activated Judgment Time!]

[Many of the constellations of the absolute good system agree to trigger the skill.]

[There is only one constellation who is strongly opposed to the activation of the skill.]

[The skill activation has been cancelled.]

The confused Jung Heewon stared at me and I gazed into the air. It was obvious who had opposed the activation of Judgment Time.

"Demon-like Judge of Fire."

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is covering her eyes with a pained expression.]

"…Uriel."

Sparks filled the air in response to my call.

"Please agree to the activation of Judgment Time."

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is shaking her head violently!]

"If you don't do this, your incarnation will die."

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' says that if she does this, you will die.]

How good would it be if all the constellations were like her? It was regrettable that I had to hurt Uriel.

"Uriel, you know. This is just a story." I spoke like a dokkaebi. "You must've seen many people die in the meantime."

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' feels despair.]

The messages alone portrayed it clearly. I remembered the small and beautiful Uriel I saw at the banquet.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is weeping and repeatedly shaking her head.]

The little face that kept crying and shaking. She was an angel that didn't match the modifier of 'demon'.

"Do what you need to do. Only then will this story be completed."

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is looking down at you.]

After a moment, I heard the message I had been waiting for.

[All constellations of the absolute good system are in favour of Judgment Time.]

Finally, a bloody aura rose from Jung Heewon's body. "…Shit, I really hate the name of this skill."

The aura of Judgment Time combined with the power of Hell Flames Ignition and created a tremendous wave of magic power. It had the power to destroy all the evil in the world.

The Judge of Destruction slashed at the demon king's chest with her sword of fire.

Chapter 188: Ep. 35 - The 73rd Demon King, VII

I was hit by the pouring flames and pain started to spread through my entire body.

…It hurt. It really hurt. My skin cracked from the high temperature and my eyeballs felt ripe.

Jung Heewon endured her tears and kept attacking me. The flames that destroyed evil burned away at my wounds and all my flesh.

I probably would've fainted from the pain if it wasn't for Fourth Wall. Even so, my body didn't break.

The shocked Jung Heewon asked, "What is going on with your body?"

"…The damage is probably too insufficient."

The rate of my stamina consumption was accelerated but it wasn't enough to kill me in the remaining time. I didn't expect that even Jung Heewon wouldn't be sufficient.

Honestly, I was at a loss for words. Maybe it was because I was judged to be narrative-grade.

[The nebula 'Vedas' is rejoicing in your pain.]

[The remaining attack time is 10 minutes.]

[Constellations of the nebula 'Papyrus' are making a toast.]

This was just the beginning. A huge shock wave spread through the hall and my body started to grow again.

[The third phase of the '73rd Demon King' is starting.]

[Your body has become harder.]

We had now reached the third phase. I shouted without feeling panic, "Everybody, stay awake! Do you remember?"

The party members nodded and skillfully changed the formation. However, I could see that Cho Youngran's Mechanical Gateway Array Method had slightly collapsed from my explosive increase in magic power.

In the end, Cho Youngran coughed up blood and sat down. The timing of this was faster than expected. Demonic energy started to fill the whole hall and the party members became weaker as they received debuffs.

Now I had to borrow a hand that I hadn't wanted to borrow.

[The constellation who doesn't yet have a name is looking at his incarnation.]

Shin Yoosung trembled after receiving my message and shook her head. My incarnation Shin Yoosung had felt my determination long ago.

'Ahjussi, I can't do it. Please'.

I stared at Shin Yoosung.

This was the relationship between a constellation and incarnation. Rather than speaking one hundred words, I conveyed my indescribable and deep emotions just by looking at them. Shin Yoosung finally burst out crying as the violent emotions were one-sidedly passed on.

'I understand'.

The pain and bitterness in the small child's heart resonated and as a constellation, I could hear it more than anyone.

Shin Yoosung held the other child's hand and stood up. "Gilyoung. Let's go. We have to do it."

Shin Yoosung's eyes shone yellow. The characteristics of Beast Master were started to manifest. There was a great trembling in the hall and I soon heard a tearing sound. A giant beast's snout appeared in the gap.

The chimera dragon. The giant monster that would later become a destruction species flapped its giant wings as it was summoned to the hall. However, the chimera dragon hesitated instead of attacking when it saw me.

[The 2nd grade monster species, the 'Chimera Dragon' has refused its master's command.]

[The 2nd grade monster species, the 'Chimera Dragon' feels terrified of the 73rd demon king.]

Blood poured from Shin Yoosung's nose. She couldn't control the 2nd grade monster alone yet. I watched Lee Gilyoung and said, "Gilyoung. Think of this as a game."

Lee Gilyoung looked up at me. I stared at the child's eyes and remembered the words I had once spoken as we walked through the darkness.

It was a conversation that occurred when we wandered together through the darkness of Geumho Station. The moments that passed like nothing became precious memories that returned.

"Even if I die, I will come back. I promise."

These stories became the power to kill me.

"…Aaaaaah!" Lee Gilyoung howled and used Taming.

[The remaining attack time is 9 minutes.]

The chimera dragon was controlled by the two children's Taming and started to cry out in pain.

The chimera dragon sucked in all the air around it. The chimera dragon sucked in even my magic and started to open its huge snout towards me.

It was a dark magic power. A huge sphere of light was created between the ferocious fangs. It was a weapon that only a dragon, the peak of monsters, could use.

The Breath. I was hit by the Breath and my body was torn apart again. It was a shock that caused the mind to break down.

Despite this shock, my body was still alive. The party members were shocked by my miserable appearance but they shouldn't stop.

I straightened my ripped lips and said, "Con… tinue."

If they didn't do it now, there wouldn't be another chance.

[A few constellations have noticed your sacrifice.]

[Many constellations are amazed by your will.]

The chimera dragon was exhausted by the use of Breath and its huge body lay on the ground. Fortunately, the chimera dragon sucked in most of the worst of my rampaging magic power but the attack power of the party members were decreasing.

"Damn, I'm out of magic power!"

[The remaining capture time is 5 minutes.]

My preparations for dealing with the 73rd demon king were up to here. So from now on… I should leave it to someone else.

"Kim Dokja." Yoo Joonghyuk had risen from the stone wall and was watching me.

I saw that Lee Seolhwa was exhausted by his side. She had probably poured all her magic power into healing him. I saw many emotions cross his eyes as he identified me as the demon king.

"Don't make such an expression. You can't change what has already happened. Don't you already know?"

Yoo Joonghyuk wiped his bloody lips and murmured, "It should've been me who died here."

Fortunately, Yoo Joonghyuk was Yoo Joonghyuk. He already accepted that he would have to kill me.

Yoo Joonghyuk rushed towards me with the Splitting the Sky Sword. Every hit made me feel that my physical strength had been reduced. He didn't say anything but his despair was conveyed every time the blade cut me.

[The remaining capture time is 4 minutes.]

For us, we weren't even allowed time to feel that despair.

"Let's end it now Yoo Joonghyuk. Bring 'that' out."

"I don't know what you mean."

"Don't play around. I know you didn't use it on purpose."

"…If I use this, you can't be resurrected."

"That's why you are going to use it. It would be difficult if I came back again as a demon king."

"…"

"What if the scenario ends up being ruined? You should stop thinking about it."

Yoo Joonghyuk glared at me without speaking.

「 Do you have an idea? 」

I just laughed at his question. Yoo Joonghyuk hesitated before eventually pulling out a sword.

The Heavenly Sword of Gathering Clouds. Ame no Murakumo no Tsurugi. It was a sword obtained from Yamata no Orochi in Peace Land.

Yoo Joonghyuk spoke in a somber voice, "I hoped the moment where I had to use this would never come."

"Me too. However, now is the time."

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' feels despair.]

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is sighing deeply.]

[The constellation 'Queen of the Darkest Spring' is holding her breath.]

The power acquired by a story will eventually collapse because of a story. My attribute of Eight Lives was derived from the power of Yamata no Orochi. This power was bound to be vulnerable to the weapon of death that killed Yamata no Orochi. Perhaps I would lose all my remaining lives if I was cut by this sword.

Yoo Joonghyuk opened his mouth. "…To be honest, there is no certainty in this. The duration of Giant Body Transformation is over and I'm not confident in my current attack power."

"Don't worry about it."

I could see Shin Yoosung furiously shaking her head towards me.

[The constellation who doesn't yet have a name has given his incarnation a 'stigma'.]

There was a dazzling light and my stigma nestled inside Shin Yoosung.

[The stigma 'Sacrifice's Will Lv. 1' has been activated!]

The stigma caused a brilliant glow to emerge from Shin Yoosung's body.

[The master of the stigma risks his life for others.]

[The attack power of the party is greatly increased in proportion to the desperation of their lives.]

The exhausted eyes of my party members started to become energetic again.

Sacrifice's Will. It was a stigma that didn't really suit me. One thing was for certain. My death was now confirmed.

"Thank you for everything."

[The remaining capture time is 3 minutes.]

The party members were running.

Lee Hyunsung, Jung Heewon, Shin Yoosung, Lee Gilyoung, Yoo Sangah, Gong Pildu, Lee Jihye…

They cried, screamed or were filled with deep anger. Everyone was coming towards me. My vision gradually diminished and all the characters became the landscape. I saw them and laughed.

「Incarnation Kim Dokja will be killed by the person he loves most.」

I had forgotten. All prophecies couldn't be interpreted literally. In this Star Stream, people were stories.

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' is looking at you.]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is looking at you.]

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is looking at you.]

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is looking at you.]

[The constellation 'Maritime War God' is looking at you.]

As the gazes of countless stars in the sky poured towards me, a story was running towards me.

"Ahhhhhh!"

Parents, friends and lovers were all stories.

[The remaining capture time is 2 minutes.]

This wasn't the Ways of Survival I knew but—It was a story more wonderful than Ways of Survival.

[A constellation of a small planet is looking at you.]

[All the constellations on the Korean Peninsula are looking at you.]

It was my story. I laughed as Yoo Joonghyuk's sword pierced my heart.

*

[Your fate has been realized.]

My body slowly sank down and Yoo Joonghyuk held onto me. "Kim Dokja."

"It was a really great story. Isn't that right?"

Yoo Joonghyuk stared down at me silently. I couldn't find any words and just watched. It was as if I had always been meant to do this.

[The effect of the Heavenly Sword of Gathering Clouds has destroyed all remaining extra lives.]

[You can no longer resurrect.]

I finally looked up at the sky. The clusters of nebulae were in the centre of the night sky. Vedas, Olympus, Papyrus…

I would never forget what they had done.

Then the sky blinked.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' doesn't wish for your death.]

The stars shone brightly as if in response to my will.

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' doesn't wish for your death.]

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' doesn't wish for your death.]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' doesn't wish for your death.]

I looked at the sky and laughed. Due to these guys, I hated the constellations but I couldn't hate the story.

"Let's meet again, Yoo Joonghyuk."

The power of the demon king disappeared and at the same time, strength drained from me.

[The main scenario has ended.]

[Seoul Dome has been freed.]

A small black hole appeared in the air behind me. My body was slowly being sucked into it. My legs, my torso, my arms…they turned into powder and were slowly being sucked in.

"Kim Dokja! No! Kim Dokja!"

At the last moment, he tightly held me by the neck. However, it was already too late.

My vision turned black and I was sucked into an empty void. The eyes of the constellations watching me started to disappear one by one. I was leaving the area of the channel.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' doesn't wish for your death!]

In the distant night sky, one star desperately blinked at me.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' doesn't wish for your death!]

Yes, you can stop now. Uriel.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire'…]

Thank you.

The stars in the night sky went out one by one and Incarnation Kim Dokja's story finally ended.

[Constellations of the absolute good system have withdrawn the mark of 'evil' from you.]

[Your incarnation body has completely been destroyed.]

[You have failed the scenario.]

[You have been expelled from the scenario.]

[The Star Stream will announce your modifier.]

In the faraway darkness, the Star Stream was quietly whispering to me.

[Your modifier is the 'Demon King of Salvation'.]

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* Official novel illustration (canonical)

새로운 이야기꾼의 탄생을 지켜봅니다

싱숑 장편소설

전지적 독자 시점

Omniscient
Reader's
Viewpoint

PART 2

01

비채

*

Chapter 189: Ep. 36 - Story Horizon, I

On this day, everyone in Seoul Dome was immersed in a dazzling light.

[Someone has cleared the tenth main scenario.]

[Congratulations. You have passed the tenth scenario.]

Those who were hiding in corners of Seoul Dome to avoid the demonic people and those who barely survived on the first and second floors of Dark Castle.

All the incarnations who somehow survived the threat of the scenario received the same message.

[You have accomplished the 'Liberator of Seoul Dome' achievement.]

Liberator. People didn't understand it at first but their bodies were convinced before their minds. Their limbs cramped, their pupils expanded and their lips trembled.

[You can escape Seoul Dome.]

Their long wish had finally become reality. The people on the first and second floors of Dark Castle were summoned out into the city.

Then everyone saw the same sight.

The Dark Castle collapsed with a loud sound. The terrible nightmare gripping all of Seoul collapsed like a sand castle. The broken chunks soon turned into powder. People were filled with unknown emotions as they watched the scene.

"It is finished," someone said.

"I can go out… I can live now…"

"The hell is over!"

Some people felt it was the end of the tragedy.

Compensation poured from the air. People had jubilant expressions on their faces. Another tragedy might begin but for now, they were enjoying the immediate feeling of liberation. However, not everyone shared that sentiment.

"…What happened to Dokja ahjussi?"

Kim Dokja's group escaped from Dark Castle. Jung Heewon, Lee Hyunsung, Lee Jihye, Gong Pildu, Lee Gilyoung, Shin Yoosung, Han Sooyoung… All of them were gathered in one place. They were those who survived because of Kim Dokja or those who owed Kim Dokja.

"Anyone, does anyone know? Please say something! Master! How is Dokja ahjussi?"

The party members relied on their intuition to find someone who could explain the situation. However, the only person who could answer was silent. Yoo Joonghyuk was staring at the collapsed Dark Castle with his mouth shut.

Dark Castle collapsed, like history disappearing. Kim Dokja was in there. He died there.

Yoo Joonghyuk stared while confirming the fact over and over again.

Kim Dokja was dead. How could such a thing happen? Yoo Joonghyuk was unfamiliar with not knowing.

"Yoo Joonghyuk-ssi! Please say something! Please!"

Yoo Joonghyuk stared blankly at Lee Hyunsung who was shaking him. The first regression and second regression… he had never seen Lee Hyunsung make this face.

Yoo Joonghyuk rarely remembered the expressions that his party members made when they lost someone really precious. It was because he was always the one making such expressions. He was the only one who survived until the end of this tragedy and despair.

By the way, this life was different. There were still many people by his side. He was suffering through someone's death with them.

"Yoo Joonghyuk-ssi!"

"Master!"

Everyone was staring at him. They wanted him to say that it wasn't too late. Still, Yoo Joonghyuk couldn't give an answer to these faces.

"I also don't know."

He destroyed their last remaining hope. Sadly, this was the role left to Yoo Joonghyuk.

"I don't know what happened to Kim Dokja."

In fact, he could tell them more. Banishment from the scenario. He could share the information he knew. Or maybe he could testify to the feeble hopes he might have.

However, Yoo Joonghyuk didn't do this. He knew that talking about it would just be telling the party members,

'Kim Dokja is dead. You can't do anything for Kim Dokja'.

Some people said more by not speaking. A few people accepted Yoo Joonghyuk's silence while others rejected it. Nevertheless, everyone understood the silence.

"Dokja hyung said so! He isn't dead! He will live again! Then why…!"

"Yoo Joonghyuk-ssi! Please tell me how to save Dokja-ssi!"

Yoo Joonghyuk shook his head at Lee Gilyoung and Lee Hyunsung's cries. If there was a way to save Kim Dokja, he would've already done it. There was nothing he could do. It wasn't just him, it was everyone.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' feels a great emptiness.]

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is lying down.]

[The constellation 'Seo Ae Il Pil' has broken his pen.]

[The constellation 'God of Wine and Ecstasy' is looking at the abyss.]

.

.

[Constellations on the Korean Peninsula are mourning the death of one constellation.]

[Constellations on the Korean Peninsula remember someone's name.]

Yoo Joonghyuk had never seen so many constellations talking about a single constellation. The arrogant constellations were expressing emotions other than frustration or pleasure.

They became aware of new feelings. The night sky was shining with more colour than any of his previous regressions.

Sadness, great despair, sorrow… The night sky, made up of many constellations, was shining sadly.

Maybe Kim Dokja was hope for them as well. It was hope to show a different story. Something that could make a difference in the Star Stream.

'There aren't many ways'.

Looking at the dazzling star in the sky, Regressor Yoo Joonghyuk had a thought.

'If I regress now…'

The ability to restart his life was like the button of a nuclear missile that could be pressed at any time. Yoo Joonghyuk was able to go back in time after dying and make better choices with the information he had of the future.

If he returned now then Kim Dokja might revive again. However…

–Yoo Joonghyuk, wake up. Don't think things will improve if you repeat them a few times.

What if Yoo Joonghyuk went back and there was no Kim Dokja? Or what if Kim Dokja didn't act like this again?

Yoo Joonghyuk was afraid of something for the first time.

The Kim Dokja of this life might only appear in this life. Shin Yoosung of the 41st regression never talked about Kim Dokja and he never met Kim Dokja in his past few lives. Even if he went back to the past, the Kim Dokja of this life might not return.

–Thus, live this round properly.

The choice that had always been possible was now irreversible. He met Kim Dokja in his third regression and they became companions. Then he lost Kim Dokja.

–Don't imagine that you will get better if you throw away this round. Maybe this is the round where you will see the end of this world as a 'human'.

Yoo Joonghyuk got up from his spot and bit his lips. Only these words remained. Just as everything in the Star Stream was a story, Yoo Joonghyuk couldn't help acknowledging that Kim Dokja's words were part of himself.

[Huh, why aren't you moving? Didn't you receive the system message?]

The dokkaebi dispatched from the bureau looked down at them from the air.

[Aha, I see. Everybody is mourning 'his' death.]

The party members resented his ridiculing tone but not everyone was the same. Jung Heewon barely maintained her calm and asked,

"…How is Dokja-ssi?"

[He has been expelled from the scenario.]

"Can I ask what that means? Is he dead or alive?"

[I also don't know. However, it isn't possible to survive being expelled from the scenario, whether it is an incarnation or constellation. That is all I know.]

Even a constellation couldn't survive. The party members stiffened at the words and their expressions became colder than before. Lee Jihye retorted.

"Isn't there a way? A way to save…!"

[There is nothing you can do. Honestly, it's amazing that you still have this type of mindset. I will give you one piece of advice. Don't think about unnecessary things and focus on the scenario in front of you. You haven't escaped from Seoul Dome yet.]

The dokkaebi sneered and flicked his fingers. Then messages once again poured from the air.

[The escape scenario has been given.]

[Seoul Dome will be closed soon! You have half a day to escape from Seoul Dome.]

[The escape path is automatically provided.]

[You will die if you don't escape from the dome within the time limit.]

"Dammit…"

The party members looked at each other but there were no solutions on their faces. In any case, there was nothing they could choose.

"…Let's move."

They started to move along the specified path. They ran, swam or crossed railings as they constantly headed towards the outskirts of Seoul. Finally, the route markers ended and they faced a group of people.

"These people…"

All the remaining incarnations of Seoul Dome were gathered there. There were approximately 1,000 people.

Some faces were familiar. Min Jiwon waved her hand towards this side and there was also the reclusive Han Donghoon. They were all saved by Kim Dokja.

Yoo Joonghyuk and the party members lightly nodded at the people they recognized.

"…Here."

The party members stopped at the same time and stared up at the inner wall of the dome. It was a huge cage that had been trapping them so far. Now they had a chance to escape from this prison. Everyone was excited but nobody took a step outside.

They were like a canary that couldn't easily fly out of the wide open cage.

Instead, the people were looking around for something. One by one, the gazes gathered. All eyes soon gathered on one person.

It was Han Sooyoung who opened her mouth first. "Yoo Joonghyuk."

Yoo Joonghyuk faced Han Sooyoung. She didn't say anything but Yoo Joonghyuk read her eyes.

'Don't waste the opportunity that Kim Dokja gave you'.

Yoo Joonghyuk blinked slowly and stepped forward. Numerous people were waiting for him.

It was to celebrate the moment they were finally freed. Yoo Joonghyuk was troubled as he gazed at the group focused on him.

Yoo Joonghyuk had been in this position several times in his past lives. He was sometimes eloquent and sometimes a charismatic leader. It wasn't hard to find the words to give to the crowd.

Then why? He didn't want to say such things this time. Instead, he said, "…I won't give up on this life."

Perhaps there was no one here who would understand his words. In the midst of the terrible loneliness that came from this face, Yoo Joonghyuk declared.

"So don't give up either."

He didn't know if it had been delivered or not. Yoo Joonghyuk turned away from the crowd and slowly walked to the inner wall of the dome. Then…

Bang!

Just one.

Bang!

Then two.

His angry fists struck the wall. Large cracks spread through the inner wall of the dome, centred on the point that was in contact with his fists.

It was a wall that couldn't be overcome after the scenario started. The wall collapsed slightly and a gap that was the size of a human was made. It was a landscape that always existed but couldn't be overcome.

Yoo Joonghyuk took the first step into that landscape.

"Let's go."

He stepped towards a scenario without Kim Dokja.

「 In the darkness, the lone Kim Dokja finally woke up. 」

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* Official novel cover (canonical)

MUNPIA
이현성
유중혁
유상아
KDJ Co.
장하영
KDJ Co.
김독자

전지적 독자시점

2부-4

싱숑 현대판타지 소설

*

Chapter 190: Ep. 36 - Story Horizon, II

"…Uh."

「The bones of the body seemed to be crushed and the skin was stiff, like a dead animal's skin.」

I listened to the Fourth Wall's words as I slowly woke up. The obnoxious voice of the Fourth Wall was now welcome.

「I am alive. Kim Dokja thought this.」

I heard Fourth Wall so the plan seemed to be a success. In fact, I couldn't really say it was a success.

It was natural. The 'fate' they gave me was the death of 'Incarnation Kim Dokja'. It was natural that the 'constellation' Kim Dokja wouldn't die.

If I was going to disappear so easily, I wouldn't have built up my stories and become a constellation. The problem was that I lost my body and survived as a 'constellation'…

"…Where am I?"

The surrounding area was filled with ruined buildings and roads. It was a familiar scene.

"This…?"

Not long after I spoke, I realized the situation I was in. I looked up at the air. The night sky had always been filled with the light of countless constellations. Now there was nothing there.

I was surprised by the deep words I was speaking to myself. I watched the night sky and laughed blankly. "Haha…"

Usually, numerous indirect messages from the constellations should've appeared.

For example, the Great Sage, Heaven's Equal who liked it when I talked to myself or the Abyssal Black Flame Dragon… there was also the Demon-like Judge of Fire who liked me for some reason. It was normal for someone to answer but no one answered my monologue.

There wasn't the Bald General of Justice polishing his head, the One-Eyed Maitreya who would throw his eyepatch if he was bored or the shameless Slumbering Lady of Fine Brocade.

The messages of the constellations disappeared and only a laughably terrible loneliness was left behind.

「Kim Dokja thought: I'm really alone.」

[You are currently expelled from the scenario.]

I slowly looked around the surroundings. Despite being expelled from the scenario, living beings would go to the nearest 'outside the scenario' area.

[You are currently in an area outside the scenario.]

The outside the scenario area that I was currently standing in was a very familiar place to me.

「 Seoul. 」

This place was Seoul's Gwanghwamun square. It was the place where War of the Kings took place and I crushed the Absolute Throne.

The fact that Seoul had become an area outside the scenario…

The party members… thankfully, they escaped unharmed.

I looked at the place where the former Seoul Dome was located and felt overwhelmed. The place that used to be covered with a translucent membrane was now covered by a thick barrier.

Now the 'Seoul' scenario was completely over. The party members were moving onto new scenarios without me and making new stories. From there, they would continue to live.

…Maybe this was how it turned out.

「 Kim Dokja was glad but also somewhat lonely. 」

I thought about the party members for a moment before slowly turning around.

「The lonely Kim Dokja had something to do. For that reason, he chose a miserable death. 」

「 While walking on the streets of Seoul, Kim Dokja was immersed in his memories. Whenever he went, he saw where he performed the scenarios with his party members. Kim Dokja once again realized that he had become part of Ways of Survival. He was obviously living this story. 」

"…This is very touching but shouldn't you stop now? How long are you going to keep muttering?"

「 Kim Dokja was irritated by the poor Fourth Wall. 」

At first, it felt good to have someone beside me. However, I didn't feel happy about having everything I did explained.

「 How much time has passed? Kim Dokja wanted to ask but no one could answer. 」

"Dammit. You can answer me."

I scolded him before deciding to look at my condition.

[Many of your stories have been damaged.]

[Your current body is completely collapsed.]

I had survived by using my status as a constellation but I had completely lost my physical body. In other words, my current existence wasn't 'flesh' but a mass of incomplete stories.

[Your current body is in a very dangerous condition.]

[Methods to preserve your body can't be found.]

It was an uneasy state where I could completely collapse if anyone touched me. This wasn't living.

I decided to try everything I could.

[Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint isn't available in this area.]

…As expected, it didn't work.

[You can't communicate with your incarnation.]

This also didn't work. I was expecting it but I was really weird because it didn't work out. It felt like I was living alone in an area where no communication was possible.

Of course, my actual situation was worse than that.

[You can't use the channel system.]

Since I was banished from the scenario, I naturally couldn't access the channel and my contract with Bihyung was cancelled. I stared at the sky without stars and felt empty freedom.

…Now I was really alone. Once I realized this fact, a chill started to creep in.

「Nobody sees me and I can't see anyone either.」

No, I wasn't completely alone.

「In the midst of this, Kim Dokja suddenly realized. He felt a sense of existence through someone's eyes.」

"I'm not thinking such philosophical things, Idiot. Rather, how long are you going to keep this up?"

「The stupid Kim Dokja doesn't know. Why the great Fourth Wall is doing this hard work.」

…What?

"Why can't you just explain? What the hell are you? You are a skill right?"

「The stupid Kim Dokja is talking to the air.」

It was a real jerk.

「Stupid Kim Dokja…」

"Can't you stop? Do you want me to turn the skill off?"

Then a sound was heard in the air.

「The Fourth Wall asks, 'Then should I quit?'」

I was a bit surprised. This brat, it could express itself more clearly now? Come to think of it, last time…

"Yes, stop. I don't want to be bothered right now."

[The exclusive skill 'Fourth Wall' is silent.]

The next moment, I regretted my choice. I felt the air around me freezing. It suddenly penetrated deeply into my bones. I felt the air in my lungs clogging up.

"Cough…?"

At this moment, something belatedly came to my mind. It was the reason why Vedas and Olympus sent me to the outside the scenario area.

It was due to this exact situation. It was a plot to kill 'Incarnation Kim Dokja' and deal with 'Constellation Kim Dokja'.

"K-Kuoooock…"

I tried to scream but there was no sound. I could breathe but I couldn't breathe. It felt as if someone had squeezed my lungs and my breath was blocked. My head turned blank and my thoughts were erased one by one.

The Star Stream was a world of stories. There were no exceptions, whether it was for incarnations or constellations. Every being existed through a 'story'.

[The speed of the damage to your stories has increased!]

[Your existence has started to vanish.]

In a place with no 'stories', nothing could exist. Even me.

'Damn, save me!'

I shouted while fearing that I would disappear. I could finally see why the Fourth Wall had such a big mouth. It kept speaking in order to save me. In a place where there were no stories, it kept me alive…

It kept telling me 'stories'.

[The exclusive skill 'Fourth Wall' is activated.]

「 The Fourth Wall says, "Je…rk." 」

I managed to start breathing again.

"Pant, pant…"

I knew that being banished from the scenario was terrible but I hadn't expected it to be this much.

Indeed, even Cheok Jungyeong couldn't survive outside the scenario without the help of a nebula… damn, I thought too shallowly about the situation.

I thought I could move onto the first target area somehow if I gave up a few stories…

It would've been hard for me to live if it hadn't been for the Fourth Wall.

「 Kim Dokja thought: I should never turn off the Fourth Wall again. 」

I couldn't refute the words in my miserable mood.

"…By the way, how long can you keep it up?"

「 The Fourth Wall says, "No t lon g." 」

Intense sparks appeared as the Fourth Wall spoke. Indeed, it would be strange that the Fourth Wall could cope alone with something that required the probability of a nebula.

I didn't have much time. If I couldn't finish my task in a timely manner, I would die here.

At this moment, a noise was heard from somewhere. It was reminiscent of a vacuum cleaner…

「 Kim Dokja knows what this is. 」

"Yes, I know. The scenario cleaners."

The appearance of a cleaner meant a major 'clean-up' of the scenario area had begun.

「 Kim Dokja thought: Since the cleaning has begun, the Great Demon of the Horizon will soon reveal itself. The hyenas who wander through the ruins of the scenario can't afford to miss out on these delicious ruins. 」

It was amazing to read. However, before I met them, I had to find something first.

「 Kim Dokja picked up his pace. 」

I staggered and gradually sped up. Things reminiscent of small clouds were wandering around the streets. They were the scenario cleaners.

They were ones to watch out for but I ran without worrying. In any case, the cleaners were low and their recognition range was narrow. If I carefully avoided them, it wouldn't be difficult to reach the target point without being noticed.

I headed south of Gwanghwamun. Euljiro 3-ga, Chungmuro, Dongdae-gu, Yaksu, Geumho Station…

Like a salmon, I passed by the places I had been. Finally, I arrived at Oksu Station.

There, I faced the broken Dongho Bridge. I watched the broken bridge and memories passed through my head. This was the place where Yoo Joonghyuk dropped me into the mouth of an ichthyosaur.

I didn't know if he was doing well right now. Well, he had Han Sooyoung to help him.

…I had to hope.

I leapt lightly across the broken bridge. In the past, it was a bridge that could only be crossed using Deus X Machina. Now a single leap was enough.

It was a moment that showed how much had changed from the beginning of the scenario.

However, I still had a long way to go. The things I had to cross were waiting for me at a distant much greater than the gap of this broken bridge.

Finally, I reached a half broken subway. This was the start of all the scenarios. I looked at the appearance of the subway before entering and looking through the ruins.

How long did I look? I finally found what I was looking for. It was an item box that was shining white. There was a short message left on the item box.

–Kim Dokja, can I trust you? It was left as you requested. Thank you for being an incarnation of my channel.

It was very obvious who wrote the message.

–Please, be alive.

Of course. I wouldn't die. I opened the item box. The box contained 300,000 coins and the items I asked to be purchased.

[A new attribute has been acquired.]

[The item 'Dokkaebi Egg' has been acquired.]

[The item 'Unbroken Faith' has been acquired.]

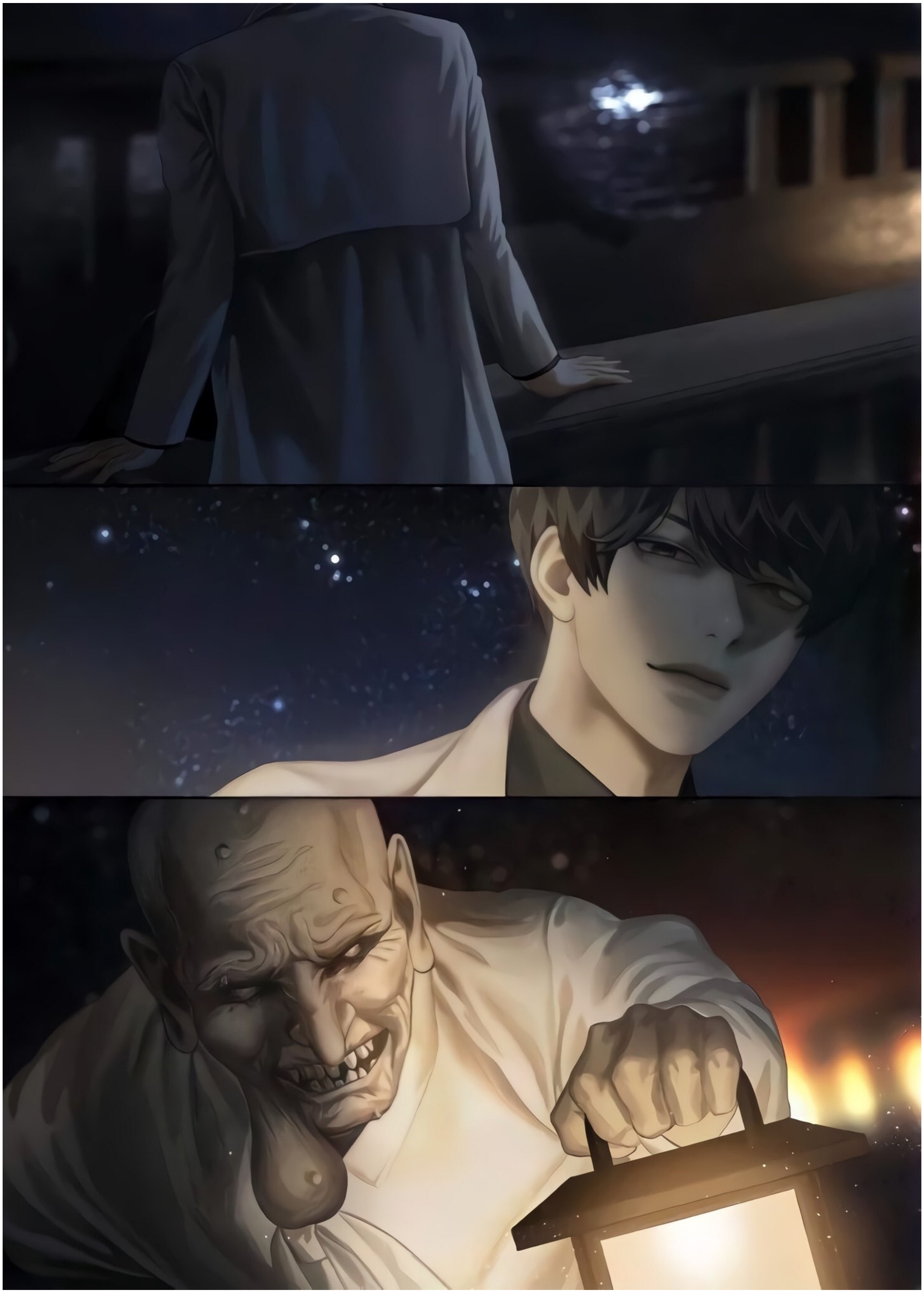
…

I grabbed all the items and left the subway. That guy was coming in the nick of time. I sat on the bridge and waited.

Soon, that guy would come.

As I thought this, someone appeared on the horizon where the story ended. He was an old man with a giant lump on one cheek. He walked towards this side with a strange expression. It was like he knew I was here.

"Are you the Demon King of Salvation?"



I looked at him for a moment before turning my gaze towards the light of dawn outside the dome.

I thought of the nebulae that would be waiting for me beyond that light. Maybe they would think I was dead by now.

Olympus, Vedas, Papyrus…

I remembered every one of them. All the constellations who laughed at the stories of the incarnations and finally made their own entertainment.

Just wait a little bit.

「I will pull all of you down from that fucking heaven.」

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* 2nd original webnovel cover (canonical)
* Official novel illustration (canonical)

Chapter 191: Ep. 36 - Story Horizon, III

This sentence appeared in Ways of Survival.

「 The great demons who live in the 'horizon of the story'. They aren't demon kings or demon species, they are great demons. They are those who hate the dokkaebis as much as they seek and crave stories. 」

Yes, this sentence.

「 If you are expelled from the scenario, there is only one thing to look forward to. It is to hope for mercy from the Great Demon of the Horizon. 」

The Fourth Wall made it clear for me and I had nothing to say. I looked at the Great Demon of the Horizon.

He gave off a very old impression. At first glance, I feel like a vagrant but it wasn't hard to recognize them. It was because every Great Demon of the Horizon had a big lump on their cheek. Due to that, some people called them the 'wenny[1] man'.

Light sparks appeared in the air and the wenny man stepped back.

"…It is unusual. I can't see your information with the Great Demon's Eyes."

There was a yellow glow in the eyes of the wenny man. It was an attempt to dig up my personal information.

Great Demon's Eyes. Anna Croft had the same eyes as the wenny man. It was natural. I'm sure that he was the one who gave Anna the information on the Great Demon's Eyes.

The Great Demons of the Horizon were incomparable dangerous compared to Bihyung. I would be eaten if I underestimated him even a little bit.

I deliberately delayed before opening my mouth. "My information can't be read by the prophet. Isn't your information network a bit slow?"

The wenny man frowned like his ego was hurt. "…Did you know I was coming?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"You probably came to grab this."

I pulled out the dokkaebi egg. The wenny man's eyes shook. He knew what this egg contained.

"The soul is mine." At the same time, the great demon's lump started to swell ominously. "I sent this soul here from another parallel dimension. I have ownership of the soul."

He took one step closer while I stepped back.

"What are you talking about?"

"…The soul should've returned to me from the Underworld. You intercepted it. I hope you return the soul before it is too late."

"Return? What was this bullshit? Is there a method to handle lost items in the Star Stream?"

The wenny man still stayed in the distance as he stared at the egg with deep greed in his eyes.

I looked down at the egg. The presence in this egg was the Shin Yoosung from Yoo Joonghyuk's 41st regression.

In a sense, the Great Demon of the Horizon was right. The person who turned Shin Yoosung into a disaster and sent her to this dimension was the wenny man in front of him.

The wrinkles on the wenny man's face increased. "If you want to play with words…"

"Let me ask her directly. This kid has her own free will."

I didn't hesitate to tap on the surface of the egg and ask, "Yoosung, he is your master. What do you think?"

The egg shook steadily. "Hrmm, I see. It is a no?"

"…Hey."

I ignored the wenny man and asked the egg again. "Then who are you?"

The egg shook even more. I nodded as if I understood.

"Yes, a soul can't belong to anyone. Just like no one can be the master of the story."

No one could be the master of the story. A sharp look crossed the face of the wenny man who heard this. The Great Demon's Eyes were spinning. He smiled like he found it interesting.

"How funny, Demon King of Salvation. Do you intend to negotiate with me now?"

I was caught. I smiled and replied, "That's right."

"…Okay. Your behaviour so far has been interesting. However, if you want to negotiate, give me the egg first."

"Don't you know what a negotiation is? This is a problem. I need this kid."

"You don't know the value of that egg."

"No, I know."

The egg was glued tightly to my hand, like it didn't want to leave. I lightly patted the egg.

"Beings born from this egg can make a channel."

"…Do you know what that means?"

"It means I can broadcast outside the authority of the bureau."

The wenny man faintly shook at my words. His confused fingers were heading for his beard.

I added, "In other words, this egg has the power to make countless stories. Isn't that why you want this egg?"

The wenny man was extremely surprised and he was silent for a moment. It felt as if he was trying to search my heart. However, he couldn't find see inside me when even the Great Demon's Eyes couldn't see anything.

"…Are you going to rebel against the Star Stream?"

"Rebel? Who knows? Does the bureau manage all of the Star Stream?"

"Sometimes a part is the same as the whole."

"I don't think that is true but… okay. If it is an answer you want…"

The eyes of the wenny man were turning like a camera lens. I knew what he wanted so I pointed to the night sky and deliberately spoke like a revolutionary.

"I will destroy the world of the fucking dokkaebis."

The face of the wenny man distorted. I knew what this creepy expression meant. This was his 'smile'.

"I like it."

It was simple to gain the favour of the wenny man. I just had to blame the dokkaebis.

The most widely known story about the Great Demons of the Horizon, or the 'wenny man' was probably the story about the 'old man with a wen'.

It was a story we all heard at least once in our childhood.

A good-hearted wenny man got rid of his growth thanks to the dokkaebis while a bad-hearted wenny man got on more lump of growth because of the dokkaebis.

I looked at the lump on the wenny man and asked, "Then are you on the good side or the bad side?"

"Humans always wonder about it. There is no guarantee I will take your side just because I am good."

"Well, you have a lump so you are naturally bad."

"That folk tale has spread across the world. Stories handed down aren't always accurate."

"It is becoming increasingly clear that you are bad."

The wenny man shook like he was having a seizure. According to Ways of Survival, the 'lump' acted as a warehouse for storing stories. Countless tales inside that lump were waiting to find a new owner.

The wenny man looked at his system window that shook like a pendulum and told me, "You asked for two things."

I nodded.

"One is to go back to the scenario. The other is to acquire a new 'incarnation body'.

"That's right."

The 'wenny man' acted in places the dokkaebis' channels couldn't reach and played a role similar to the Star Stream's black market trader.

They got rewards for sending the exiles back to the scenario and they also saved unique items that the channel couldn't obtain. Of course, the price was very expensive.

"I can help you with both."

"Okay, then help me."

"Give me the egg in return."

"No."

"Then I can't help."

Damn, it was back to the start. It seemed that they were firmly attached to the dokkaebi egg. I decided to firmly hammer in the nail.

"I told you, I can't give you the egg. You can't use it even if you take it. The kid will only listen to me."

"Don't tell me… the egg grew by eating your story?"

"That's right."

"Mixing a dokkaebi with your stories, you are a filthy person."

"Shut up. I'll give you something else."

"What can you give me?"

"A story. Isn't it something you want in the first place?"

Only the 'stories' were valuable in the Star Stream. Therefore, the wenny man received 'stories'.

"…You are very confident. What type of story can you give me?"

"I'll show you."

I opened the list of my stories.

[List of Stories]

King of a Kingless World.

Person who Opposes the Miracle.

One Who Showed Contempt for a Streamer.

One Who Hunted the King of Disasters.

One Who Killed an Outer God.

Demon King of Salvation.

…

Silla Allied Forces.

Bug Slaughter.

I never thought I would've collected so many stories. Of course, there were only six that were legendary grade and above, but it was a start.

Perhaps I was the only one who had collected this number of stories by the 10th scenario.

In fact, the wenny man showed a hint of admiration. "I knew you were great but this is… really amazing."

He didn't hesitate to admire every story, like a guest in a luxury store. In particular, his eyes were filled with a deep 'greed' when he saw the legendary stories. The colour of the lump was red, seeming to show his excitement.

"It won't be hard to replace the egg."

"Of course."

"Do I have to pick only one?"

"For now."

Of course, it depended on the value of the story. There were some I had no intention of trading all of them. That was equivalent to giving away everything that made me a constellation.

Then the wenny man picked a story without hesitating. "Then I will pick One Who Killed an Outer God."

"…Do you have no conscience?" It is the only semi-myth that I have."

The value of a semi-myth-grade story couldn't be converted into coins. No matter how important the deal with the Great Demon of the Horizon, I couldn't give him the semi-myth-grade story.

Moreover, One Who Killed an Outer God would be useful when meeting another outer god.

The wenny man smacked his lips like he knew he had made an excessive demand. "Then this one isn't bad either. I will choose King of a Kingless World."

I shook my head. "It is my birth story. I can't give it to you."

"I see. Then Demon King of Salvation…"

"You want to give me to give you what made me a full constellation? My status will be demoted."

"…It is unfortunate. Then how about Person who Opposes the Miracle?"

"There is a place I have to use that later. I'm sorry."

The dumbfounded wenny man stared at me with frustration. "Then what story are you going to give me?"

"I'll give you this. Silla Allied Forces."

It was a historical-grade story that I got from helping Slumbering Lady of Fine Brocade and the Silla constellations. The wenny man's face wrinkled. "Giving me that isn't worth anything."

…Wasn't this too much? The Slumbering Lady of Fine Brocade would shed tears if she heard this. It was a great story where Silla joined hands with the Tang Dynasty to hit at the Han ethnic group.

"Then how about Bug Slaughter?"

"It is better than before but it is still a common story."

"I'll give you both of them. If necessary, the other historical-grade stories as well…"

"Can I take it that you have no intention of trading with me?"

Damn, he wasn't an idiot like Bihyung. Bihyung was the one who changed the compensation rate from 10% to 0%.

I continued to hesitate and the wenny man smiled vaguely. "I don't know how you are still holding onto your existence but do you have enough time left?"

I could feel that my body temperature had dropped more than before. The interval between the Fourth Wall's words was gradually increasing.

[Your body is collapsing.]

I hadn't gained as much as I could from the wenny man and my existence was in a fairly precarious situation. This collapse would accelerate unless I returned to a scenario right away or at least received a new body.

「 The stupid Kim Dokja thought: Damn, what story should I give him? 」

…I was feeling frustrated so don't bother me at this time.

「 At that moment, a story caught Kim Dokja's eyes. 」

What caught my eyes… eh? I momentarily hesitated. Come to think of it, there was this story.

"Then how about this?"

---

[1] **Wen** – growth or swelling on the skin. "Hokburiyeonggam" is the tale of an old man who, with the help of dokkaebi, loses the big lump on his neck, and another old man who, instead of losing his deformity, was given another lump.

Chapter 192: Ep. 36 - Story Horizon, IV

It was a legendary story but at the same time, there was no special function. Nevertheless, the existence of the story itself was enough to attract the attention of the wenny man.

"This story…?"

"How about it? Do you like it?"

The wenny man stared at the story with eyes full of disbelief. His eyes trembled as if such a story wasn't possible. The long fingertips touched the window and the contents of the story started to play.

Peok! Peok! Peeeok!

The intermediate dokkaebi Paul was being pounded by my fists. Every time the face of the dokkaebi was battered, an expression of shock crossed the wenny man's face.

The story 'One Who Showed Contempt for a Streamer'.

Even if this story was given, I had five stories above the legendary level and my status wouldn't be jeopardized. Naturally, it was a story that the wenny man was bound to love. They were those who like to swear at the dokkaebi and was bound to like stories beating the dokkaebi up.

"Kuk, kukuk… Ahahaha!"

The wenny man soon let out a burst of laughter. I waited until he had fully enjoyed it.

"Good, I'll take this. It is a very pleasant story."

"Then do we have a deal?"

"It is still lacking. The story you gave is rare but it has almost no functional value.

…I figured this would come out. I quickly added, "Then I'll give you Silla Allied Forces as well."

"…It is still insufficient. If you want to continue the transaction, you have to change the contents of the deal."

"Change it? How?"

"As I said earlier, you asked for two things. One is to return to the scenario and the other is to get a new 'incarnation body'."

I thought for a moment before asking, "Is this story enough to only cover one of them?"

"That's right. To be exact, I can only help you get an incarnation body."

Gaining an incarnation body. This was naturally important. However…

"Why can't you return me to the scenario? Can't you originally help with this much?"

"You talk like you know something."

"I've heard some things."

Rather, I had read about it. Cheok Jungyeong was excluded from the scenario and I remembered what the nebula Hongik paid.

The wenny man stared into my eyes and said, "Hmm… normally this price would be enough but the current situation is a bit special."

"Special?"

"The bureau and nebulae are nervous due to everything you have done."

I somehow understood what he was talking about. The wenny man kept speaking. "Returning an exile to the scenario is a lot more expensive than you think. It is one of the most intensive consumption of probability in the entire Star Stream. Still, as you know, I have a close relationship with the 'eyes' of the probability.

"In a situation like this where many eyes are watching, you will have to pay too much probability."

"Yes. Furthermore, I don't know the reason but the branch manager of the bureau, Baram has come out and all existing transaction windows are blocked. At present, the straight route of return to the scenario is almost completely blocked. I can't afford it, even if you pay a bigger price."

I couldn't go straight back to Earth…

The situation wasn't as smooth as I thought. The wenny man looked at me and asked, "Do you just want an incarnation body? This is a legendary story so I can give you a decent body. There are a number of healthy incarnation bodies that I have recovered from the Murim side."

Incarnation bodies from Murim. It was an enticing proposition. However, I shook my head. No matter how good the body, it would be futile if I couldn't return to the scenario.

A new incarnation body could stop the collapse for a while but if I didn't return to the scenario, the collapse would still persist.

The wenny man was making such a suggestion because he knew this. Once my new incarnation body was broken down from the exile penalty, he would try to take my other stories with a new deal.

I decided to push harder. "I have to go back to the scenario. By any means. It is more important than getting an incarnation body."

"Hrmm… it is difficult."

"Earth isn't possible then is it okay to go to other scenarios?"

This was how Cheok Jungyeong escaped from the Korean Peninsula scenario. There was no reason I couldn't do it.

However, the wenny man shook his head. "There are a few places to search but it isn't good. Moving to an escape scenario requires a greater probability."

"…Is it really like this? Are you being greedy?"

I deliberately waved the story window through the air. The sight of the intermediate dokkaebi Paul being punched shook slightly.

"It is a rarer story than you think. What type of incarnation would strike a dokkaebi in a world controlled by them?"

"Hmm…"

"Imagine if you put this in your lump and boast about it to your friends."

The wenny man agonized over it for a long time. He thought and thought about it.

[Your existence is at stake.]

[Acquire a new incarnation body or return to the scenario.]

[Your existence will soon collapse.]

Finally, the wenny man opened his mouth. "There is one place that you can go."

"Where?"

At this moment, an eerie light appeared around the wenny man's mouth.

"The Demon Realm."

His tone sounded as if he was saying something terrible. The wenny man saw my expression and laughed.

"You don't have to be so scared. The Demon Realm is also a place where people live. Besides, there is enough demonic energy in your body that it won't be noticeable if you go there."

"There are different areas of the Demon Realm. Where are you going to send me?"

"The 73rd Demon Realm. It is a place without a ruler. It is also a place where the losers of the scenario have gathered since a long time ago."

The 73rd Demon Realm. If I remembered correctly, it was one of the scenario areas that overlapped with the Earth scenario. I nodded.

"Well… it isn't bad."

"Instead, I won't be able to supply you with an incarnation body if I send you there."

"However, I will return to the scenario?"

Entering the scenario area didn't mean I could return to the scenario. It was because I had already finished the scenario. In other words, I had to get help to enter the scenario.

Then the wenny man shook his head. "It is too unreasonable. I can only send you to the 73rd Demon Realm."

"What nonsense is this?"

"I will give you some information instead. You will need a lot of luck and effort but if you use this information, you will be able to get an incarnation body and return to the scenario."

"It looks like a losing deal for me."

"Still, it is all I can offer."

I pretended to think for a moment before slowly nodding. Now I had no other option.

"Okay, I will accept that deal."

I had decided so there was no need to waste any more time. I immediately pulled out the story and gave it to him.

[You have paid the story 'One Who Showed Contempt for a Streamer'.]

The wenny man nodded. "The price has been received."

The wenny man swallowed the story that he had received from me. Then his lump shone blue. He smiled with satisfaction and took a deep breath.

It was as if he was sucking all the air around him. I looked closer and realized he wasn't just swallowing air.

The time and space around him was being sucked inside. The lump swelled by several times before there was a loud roar. Along with the roar, a space poured out of the wenny man's mouth.

The space that came pouring out created a long, elliptical passage. Beyond this passage, the landscape of a different world was shining.

"Quickly enter. It has a very short duration, unlike a portal."

I jumped into the passage without hesitation.

[You have been transferred to a new time and space.]

It felt like he was jumping through the universe. Stars passed like countless meteor showers.

I was flying through the night sky of the Star Stream. Numerous scenario areas that had become fragments of the story flew around me.

[The Star Stream has noticed your presence.]

For a moment, there was a gaze on me.

[The Star Stream has accepted your presence.]

Then the gaze disappeared. A small current seized my body but that was all. Perhaps the necessary probability was paid by the wenny man. After a short space journey, I felt the gravity of a powerful story pulling at me.

[You have reached an area adjacent to the scenario!]

I rolled across a dust covered ground with a groan. The impact affected my body as the areas touching the ground started to crack little by little.

[Your existence is collapsing.]

[Your stories are damaged.]

[You need a new incarnation body!]

Damn. I hurriedly got up from the ground but the hell had already begun.

"Kuheook…"

Letters started to flow from the cracks in my body. The most dangerous area was my heart.

[Your birth story is leaking out.]

If I didn't seal the wounds and save my body, all my stories would collapse and I would die.

I hurriedly looked around.

That guy said he would send me to a place where I could save my body. There must be something here that could make up the incarnation body.

The moment I looked around, my expression hardened.

"This place…?"

There was a huge pile of garbage around me. Then as if he had been waiting, I heard the voice of the wenny man.

–Perhaps by now, you have arrived in the 73rd Demon Realm and you are facing the horizon of the scenario.

The horizon of the scenario. I knew this name. It was a place where the wastes excluded from the scenario, like me, were forcibly thrown by the scenario cleaners.

I shouted as I looked at the debris rolling around. "No, wait a minute! This is a dumpster!"

–You will be able to obtain an incarnation body that can be used from there. Of course, you have to find useful components. Well, I don't know if you can get them.

"Dammit…

The wenny man wasn't planning a fair deal with me from the beginning. If I was to die, he would come here and retrieve my stories.

–I hope you can find something good from the horizon.

I hesitantly sat down. Letters kept falling from my heart. If this continued, I would die in less than 5 minutes.

「 After a moment, Kim Dokja's expression started to change. 」

I slowly looked around. It was for certain. I couldn't feel the eyes of the wenny man at all.

「 The confused eyes became calm and the mouth, that was open like a fool, slowly closed. Soon, Kim Dokja restored his clothes and muttered. 」

"It's hard."

「Kim Dok ja's act ing is wro ng. 」

"…Did you notice?"

I slowly looked down. It was pretty annoying but I had to act to avoid the wenny man's doubts.

「 His purpose was to come here in the first place. If he wants to get what he wants while hiding as much as possible, he has to act this much. 」

I listened to the Fourth Wall as I searched the surrounding area.

"…I think I came to the right place."

As the Fourth Wall said, I planned to come here from the beginning. It was why I put on a death show in front of the constellations.

I climbed the garbage pile and started to look around.

"Kuek, it hurts…"

However, it wasn't easy to maintain my sanity due to the piercing pain in my heart.

[Your birth story is collapsing.]

Everything else was clearly acting but this pain wasn't false. I desperately held onto my consciousness while thinking of sentences from Ways of Survival.

「 It was Yoo Joonghyuk's 111th regression. Yoo Joonghyuk was expelled from the scenario and reached a place where he could build up his power. 」

「 The 73rd Demon Realm, the horizon of the scenario. 」

「 At the dumpster, Yoo Joonghyuk got his new 'body'. 」

Nevertheless, no matter how hard I looked, I couldn't find a story that could be the materials for a new body.

In the first place, the horizon of the scenario was a place where broken stories converged. There was no way I could find a usable body in this place. At least, through a normal method.

"Activate an attribute effect."

[The effect of the Lamarck's Giraffe attribute has been activated.]

Lamarck's Giraffe was an evolutionary attribute that I purchased for 300,000 coins. It was an attribute left behind in Bihyung's item box. Finally, the time had come for the consumption of coins to be worth it.

[The privilege 'Evolution Factor Search' has begun!]

[Searching for story fragments that you can absorb!]

I slowly closed and opened my eyes as different things started to become noticeable around the garbage dump.

[Story fragments have been detected!]

The fragments were shining with a white light. At least for me, this place wasn't a 'dumpster'.

「 The right arm of the poor sword master who was stabbed in the back by a colleague. 」

「 The terribly damaged frontal lobe of a grand wizard. 」

「The heart of a young gold dragon who was torn to death by an outer god.」

According to the setting of Ways of Survival, the privilege of Lamarck's Giraffe was to construct the body by absorbing broken stories.

"…Then I am starting."

I slowly reached out towards a red heart fragment.

Chapter 193: Ep. 36 - Story Horizon, V

The texture of the dull quilt touched skin.

Jung Heewon didn't know how long it had been since she enjoyed a luxury like this. Everything was peaceful. She didn't need to be afraid of being attacked by monsters in the night or watch out for humans trying to steal her items.

However, Jung Heewon was well aware that this peace wouldn't last long.

"Jung Heewon-ssi! Please open the door!"

"I'm asking you for an interview!"

For a week, reporters had been clamouring in front of the house. She could glimpse flashes of light through the curtains. In front of the ruthless gazes of the cameras, Jung Heewon felt a strong sense of deja vu.

"…It isn't just the constellations who are voyeurs."

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is chuckling.]

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' agrees with your thoughts.]

Jung Heewon felt a new sense of emotion at all the gazes on her. Before the scenario began, the forms were different but there were similar things.

The voyeuristic gazes and the struggle for survival. In this sense, the scenario might be around before the 'scenario' even started. Nobody knew it was a 'scenario'.

Through the window, she saw the broken city area and the blocked Seoul Dome. It had already been a week since they left Seoul Dome but Jung Heewon couldn't believe she was out of the dome.

"Heewon unni! Did you just wake up?"

"Ah yes, Jihye."

Jung Heewon smiled helplessly as Lee Jihye burst through the door.

It had been one week after the escape from Seoul Dome. Many things had happened in the meantime.

Jung Heewon and the group were assisted with homes by the provisional government in the Gyeonggi area and were invited to the institute to answer a few questions. They were obvious questions.

What happened inside Seoul Dome?

Were the rumours on the Internet true?

How many people were like them and what ideas did they have?

What were the constellations and the scenario?

At first, Jung Heewon faithfully answered the questions as the representative. Then over time, the whole thing became annoying.

She wondered what was the point in doing this?

The South Korean government had already disappeared. The provisional government, made up of some lucky parliament and city council members, had no idea what had happened. They still firmly believed that the 'state' system would be meaningful in the face of future scenarios. For those who were still stuck to old beliefs despite the new era, Jung Heewon had something to say to them.

–Take off your suits and your ties first.

–Huh?

–They aren't good outfits to run away in.

Jung Heewon glanced at Lee Jihye. In any case, the party members were the only ones she could believe in.

"What about Yoo Sangah-ssi?"

"She is in a room with the kids."

The problem was that the party members weren't well.

Lee Jihye spoke in a dark voice,

"…The loss of Dokja ahjussi is a big blow."

Honestly, things were uncertain when he was with them but once he was missing, everyone was lost. This was Kim Dokja to the party members. Everyone's purpose was survival but it was Kim Dokja who decided the path of survival. It was natural for the party members to lose their direction and scatter.

"I wish I had the manual that Soldier ahjussi mentioned."

"Have you heard from Hyunsung-ssi yet?"

"…He was called to the army on the first day and there is still no news."

Lee Hyunsung was originally a soldier and it was natural for him to be called by the army. Lee Jihye whined.

"He is really foolish… I wouldn't have gone. What use is the army in this world?"

Jung Heewon agreed with Lee Jihye's words but she didn't want to scold Lee Hyunsung. Everyone had different ways of dealing with loss. The children stayed in the room while Lee Hyunsung returned to the army.

If it was just that…

[The following scenario will start in three days.]

Jung Heewon gulped as she saw the message floating in the air. Three days later, hell would begin again.

The more complicated problem was that the scenarios in the future were likely to be completely different from what they had already been through.

[You can now respond to the call of the sponsors and receive the personal trials they have set.]

[Personal trials are treated as hidden scenarios and can be replaced the main scenario if it overlaps with certain main scenarios.]

[Scenario substitution is available only until the 25th main scenario begins.]

They passed the tenth scenario and opened the 'personal trials'. Jung Heewon didn't have a sense of what they were yet.

Lee Jihye spoke in a comforting manner. "Don't worry too much. Master said it isn't a big deal for the moment."

"How about Yoo Joonghyuk-ssi?"

"I don't know where he went after Kim Dokja's song. He is unlike the real Master…"

Certainly, Yoo Joonghyuk's reaction to Kim Dokja's death was puzzling.

Yoo Joonghyuk stayed in his room like a broken person for a while before suddenly disappearing, saying he would be back in three days.

"Han Sooyoung-ssi?"

"She went to talk to the government officials this morning. She said it is time to reap the seeds that were sown…"

"The government? What can she expect from them?"

Then something belatedly came to her mind.

–If something happens to me, unconditionally follow Han Sooyoung.

They were words that Kim Dokja once left with her. Why did they have to move with Han Sooyoung? However, there must be a reasonable explanation since Kim Dokja said this.

Jung Heewon got up and the surprised Lee Jihye asked, "Are you going out?"

"Yes. I can't continue staying inside here. We should also get ready."

"Then I'll go with you."

Both of them didn't have a hesitant nature once they decided on something. Lee Jihye and Jung Heewon headed straight out of the house. They opened the front door and the shutter sound poured towards them.

"Jung Heewon-ssi! I'm a reporter from Georyo Ilbo! Only one word. Please!"

They weren't the only survivors.

Nearly 1,000 people came back from Seoul Dome. Some of them contacting the living and spoke about the terrible few months they lived.

The reporters continued to find the party members despite accumulating enough stories. The reason was simple. Among the 1,000 survivors, Jung

Heewon and the others were celebrities who were at the centre of the scenario.

"Jung Heewon-ssi! What happened inside there?"

"I heard it was helpful that you learnt kendo. Is that true?"

"There is a rumour that you were a candidate for the national team…"

Jung Heewon looked at the reporters pushing their microphones towards her. The government had told her not to tell the media what happened. She had been saving her words so far because she didn't find it easy to talk.

Then… why? Today, Jung Heewon felt like saying something.

"You are curious about what happened inside there?"

Jung Heewon let go of Lee Jihye's hand and looked at the banner waving outside.

[Yangcheon-gu's Hero! Celebrating the safe return of Judge of Destruction Jung Heewon!]

…Hero? Her?

Yangcheon-gu had long since disappeared. Nevertheless, this banner was hung and Jung Heewon couldn't withstand it anymore.

"I'm not the hero you think I am. I wasn't a candidate for the national team and I didn't do well in kendo."

Jung Heewon spoke into the microphone like she was talking to the whole world.

"Before the destruction came, I was just a bartender working at a cheap bar."

Her words caused a stir among the reporters. Nobody could believe it. Someone scoffed and someone else looked a bit jealous.

In front of these gazes, Jung Heewon felt strangely free. She wasn't the old 'Jung Heewon' anymore. Jung Heewon realized it with all these eyes on her.

The reporters kept asking her questions.

How could a bartender become one of the last survivors?

How could she survive and how did she become the Judge of Destruction?

[The constellation 'Bald General of Justice' is looking at you with sad eyes.]

[The constellation 'One-Eyed Maitreya' is reminded of someone by your words.]

The indirect messages of the constellations came from all over the place. Jung Heewon opened her mouth without understanding her feelings.

"Do you know Kim Dokja?"

[The constellation 'Maritime War God' is nodding.]

[The constellation 'Seo Ae Il Pil' remembers the name.]

[The constellation 'Last Hero of Hwangsanbeol' remembers him.]

The voices of the reporters followed after the constellation.

"Kim Dokja?"

"Who is that?"

"I seem to have heard it before."

Jung Heewon thought it was funny. They didn't know. Of course, they could never know.

Jung Heewon lightly breathed in and said, "The last survivors didn't survive with our own strength."

She suddenly felt like crying as she spoke. The reporters didn't know anything and kept asking questions.

"What are you saying?"

"The name 'Kim Dokja' isn't on the list of survivors?"

"Why didn't Kim Dokja-ssi come back with you?"

"Where is that person now?"

Where was he? Jung Heewon didn't know. However, if she had one wish…

"That person…" Jung Heewon stared at the Seoul Dome. "He'll be back. Definitely."

* * *

「 At this time, Kim Dokja opened his eyes in the Demon Realm. 」

"Heeeeeeok!"

I screamed as I vomited and opened my eyes. The sound of my heartbeat was unfamiliar.

A golden aura appeared around my heart and rough magic power was emitted. It might be broken but it was still the heart of a dragon hatchling. The strong magic power of the transplanted material was enough to stun me.

If I could use this properly, I wouldn't be lacking magic power in combat for a while.

[The attribute 'Lamarck's Giraffe' has allowed you to absorb the power of the broken story.]

In fact, absorbing a broken story was a dangerous idea. It would've been impossible for me without Lamarck's Giraffe.

「Lamarck's Giraffe isn't acknowledged among the other evolutionary attributes because it is less effective. However, it has the fewest side-effects and doesn't absorb the weakness of the story.」

If I had obtained Darwin's Demon, another evolutionary attribute, I would've been killed the moment I ate the gold dragon's story.

This absorption effect was good because my safety was guaranteed. I didn't have multiple lives anymore.

[The story fragment 'Broken Heart of a Young Gold Dragon' has been acquired.]

The original name of this story fragment was 'heart of a young gold dragon who was torn to death by an outer god'. However, I didn't absorb the 'torn to death by an outer god' part.

This was the advantage of Lamarck's Giraffe. The absorption rate of the story was low but the weakness wasn't absorbed.

[Your new body is being constructed.]

[The creation of a new body will delay the collapse of your existence.]

[This effect is temporary and it is recommended to quickly return to the scenario.]

Magic power flowed from my new beating heart and I could breathe a bit. At the very least, the tragedy of losing my birth story wouldn't happen anymore.

The reconstruction of my body would start from now on.

I started to eat 'right arm of the poor sword master who was stabbed in the back by a colleague'. Rather than tearing off flesh, it was closer to peeping at a story that broke as soon as it was seen.

[The story fragment 'Right Arm of the Poor Sword Master' has been acquired.]

I didn't know if it was just my imagination but I felt that I could use the sword a bit better.

[The attribute 'Lamarck's Giraffe' has reached its saturation limit.]

[Drop the saturation level to absorb new story fragments.]

I felt better after eating two story fragments and sat down on a pile of garbage.

"…It is a bit cold."

It was less painful than before but the cold continued to prickle at my skin.

The durability of my body had increased but the 'exile penalty' hadn't disappeared. I felt a big emptiness and loneliness from the loss of the story. I seemed to know why people wanted to hear, see or read something over and over.

Then a slight warmth started to flow through my body.

[Someone is talking about you.]

…Talking about me?

[Your story is being created on Planet Earth.

I could see what happened. Someone was talking about me on Earth.

Who was it? It couldn't be Yoo Joonghyuk. Lee Hyunsung? Jung Heewon? Or Shin Yoosung?

…I didn't know. Still, it was funny. Someone was telling my story. Someone still remembered…

[The new story 'Kim Dojega's Legend' has been created on Peace Land.]

…I hoped they would at least get my name right. I looked up at the night sky where the stars were invisible.

This was the horizon of the story. I couldn't see the stars and the stars couldn't see me. Thus, the arrogant stars wouldn't know.

In a place they couldn't see, the story that was going to destroy them had just begun.

Chapter 194: Ep. 37 - Landscape of the Demon Realm, I

"The Fourth Wall said, Whe re is thi s place?"

「Don't co py m e.」

I was walking through the horizon of the story. To be exact, I had already been walking for four days. Anyone who walked through the endless piles of trash would feel like talking to the wall.

I muttered towards the fragments of the story. "Kim Dokja thought. I'm going to pick that up."

Since there was a considerable amount of space left in the Infinite Dimension Space Coat, I stored all the stories I picked up in it. Then the Fourth Wall replied,

「I di ot.」

It was comforting to not be speaking to myself. I didn't know the identity of the Fourth Wall but it clearly wasn't an enemy. Rather, it was the one saving me from the exile penalty…

「 Sl, ee, py. 」

"Hold on a bit more. You should say something to make it easier."

It was hard to survive the exile penalty even after gaining a body and there still seemed to be no end to the piles of trash. Maybe this pain would continue until I returned to the scenario.

[Some absorbed stories are causing a configuration conflict.]

Lamarck's Giraffe might be an evolutionary attribute with relatively few side effects but the story balance was causing my incarnation body to creak. It wasn't serious yet but if I fought or did unnecessary actions, my body might collapse again.

…Well, nothing was easily solved. This was why I didn't rush despite wanting revenge on the nebulae.

[The scenario area is getting closer.]

The first thing I had to do was enter the scenario of the Demon Realm. The wenny man threw me to this place but I knew how to get the scenario here.

I already had a rough plan. The route I was currently following was exactly the same as Yoo Joonghyuk of the 111th regression. Therefore, the plan shouldn't go wrong unless there were unusual variables in the middle.

…Speaking of which, there was a lot of work in Yoo Joonghyuk's 111th regression.

It was around the time that the author of Ways of Survival fell into a slump for a while.

It was just after passing the 1000th chapter and I remembered leaving a comment with advice on various things. I didn't know if it was because of my comment but a new person suddenly appeared and the story changed…

Suddenly, the Dokkaebi Egg in my arm wriggled. I absorbed some of the story fragments and stroked the egg.

"Yes yes, you are cute."

I felt the soul I saved awakening to a new life. It was very strange. The egg would probably hatch in one month. At that time, my plan would be in full swing.

By the way, once this kid hatched, she couldn't be called Shin Yoosung… what should I name her?

「 At this time, Kim Dokja heard a sound in his ears. 」

I crouched behind a garbage pile and held my breath.

It wasn't just one or two that I felt. There were at least dozens of maybe hundreds of individuals. I peeked out to check the situation. I saw actions that didn't feel alive at all. Beings similar to humans were searching the piles of stories. Their identity was clear.

They were the Removal Slaves. They took orders from the rules of the Demon Realms, collecting the story fragments from the surrounding horizon to be used as fuel. They had very little intelligence and wouldn't attack unless threatened first.

「 Kim Dokja thought: The fact that the removal slaves are moving means there is an 'industrial complex' nearby. 」

The industrial complexes were like cities in the Demon Realm. They were factories that created energy by grinding broken fragments of stories and a residential area would surround the factory.

If I remembered correctly, the closest industrial complex would be the Syswitz Industrial Complex.

"Move faster! We are running out of fuel today!"

I was surprised and hid behind the garbage pile again. A demon with small wings and a single horn was flapping his wings and giving orders.

It was a supervisor of the industrial complex. The fact that he came here meant the scale of the 'gathering' was quite large.

Then a removal slave approached the pile of trash that I was hiding behind. I faced it without any attempts at avoidance.

"Grrrr…?"

The removal slave that stared at me with dumb eyes had the appearance of a chimpanzee, not a human. Perhaps its planet was destroyed and it was one of the species abducted here.

They were those who lost their scenarios and relied on other beings to live. I saw the stigma '6424' on his arm.

[The effect of the 'Demon King Candidate' has been activated.]

Demon King Candidate. It was an attribute I got from the 73rd Demon King scenario.

Then I started to hear words that were hard to understand.

–I, want, to, stop.

What?

–Kill, me.

The desire to be free filled its eyes as if this existence itself was simple. I gazed into the pathetic eyes for a moment and sighed deeply.

「Kim Dokja thought: I guess there is only one way.」

After a while, I stood with the other removal slaves at the entrance of the industrial complex. The items, including the space coat, were hidden deep inside the pile of stories I was carrying.

In other words, I was naked now. It was inevitable since I had to look like a removal slave as much as possible. In case of an emergency, I stitched the stigma '6424' of the guy who died on my left arm.

"Next!"

My plan was simple. I would enter the industrial complex by mixing in with removal slaves. It was because the screening of the removal slaves wasn't as strict as other travelers.

"What, today's yield is zero?"

However, the supervisor was more of an obstacle than I thought. I gulped as I saw the supervisor explode right in front of me.

"Hey, you over there. Take this brat. Put him in the fuel tank."

The supervisor threw the removal slave like he was handling a machine part.

The supervisor was Demon Baron Chechefen. He was a lower grade than the nobles I met in Dark Castle. Those in Dark Castle might have more stories but a baron was a baron. He was a guy I could kill without much strain.

"Next! 6424!"

The problem was what would happen after I killed him. The masters of the industrial complexes were the top 'dukes' of the Demon Realm. A duke was more likely to notice when the supervisor of an industrial complex was killed.

Needless to say, it was dangerous to deal with the top nobles of the Demon Realm with my current incarnation body.

I could use the Demon King attribute candidate but I didn't want to attract attention from the beginning.

In any case, I couldn't help feeling nervous for a variety of reasons as I held out my collection basket. If things became twisted here, my future plans would become considerably harder.

"W-What? You have brought a lot!"

Fortunately, the supervisor's face flushed red after seeing all the stories I brought. I wondered if he would find the items I hid in the pile of fragments but I didn't think he was such a meticulous person. The supervisor flapped his wings and shouted,

"Everybody, take a leaf from his book! Huh? Don't you know that the recent yield isn't good? At this rate, all of you will become fuel!"

The supervisor's bluff caused fear to fill the eyes of the removal slaves. No matter how much they lost, the fear of dying remained.

"Well done 6424! Come in!"

[You have entered a scenario area.]

* * *

I escaped from the supervisor's eyes and left the group of removal slaves.

I searched through the pile and wore the items one by one. I stored what I needed and discarded the rest.

I walked along the street and soon afterwards, a large square appeared.

Humans were wandering around. There were also elves, ajins and sometimes demons.

It was right to call the Demon Realm a place where people lived. Not only did humans come from different dimensions, but a multitude of species also lived here.

There were merchants selling various things and people bargaining to buy them. A similar village to Paradise appeared. It was a place where people lived and stories gathered.

I suddenly recalled a sentence from Ways of Survival.

「A city surrounded by a huge wall.

The low slate roofs created an unbalanced skyline.

Sometimes vehicles with steam engines were seen passing through the street.

It was a city with a mixture of civilizations at various levels.

Most constellations didn't watch this place but it was also home to life. It was a place where everyone was living together with their own scenarios.

This was the industrial complex.」

Sure enough, it was just as depicted. I might say these words when witnessing the Demon Realm's industrial complex for the first time.

The name 'Demon Realm' made this peaceful scene inconceivable. However, this place wasn't much different from 'Earth' where humans gathered.

To the people who thought such things, I wanted to tell them a sentence from Ways of Survival.

「 If you think about it in reverse, it might mean that the human world is just as terrible.」

Yes, these words. I was reminded of the contents of Ways of Survival and immersed in deep emotions.

The 73rd Demon Realm's Syswitz Industrial Complex. Here I had to meet a character who would fight with me against the nebulae. Of course, they didn't know they were going to do this…

[Some absorbed stories are causing a configuration conflict.]

…I might need to move more quickly than I thought. To make matters worse, the exhausted Fourth Wall could no longer hold on.

「Sleep y.」

Eh? Hey, wait a minute?

[The exclusive skill 'Fourth Wall' has temporarily entered a silent state.]

Dammit, at this time? Suddenly, the cold permeated my body and sparks started to appear.

The exile penalty made my body unstable and some people around me noticed my presence.

"An e-exile!"

People scurried away from me like I was infectious. I quickly moved off the main streets. Time was running out.

『Three Ways to Survive in a Ruined World.』

In this place, I had to find the story's second 'protagonist'.

Chapter 195: Ep. 37 - Landscape of the Demon Realm, II

"Uwah! An exile!"

"What, how did he get in?"

The incarnations who saw me yelled.

I ran through the crowds and hid myself in the shadows of the city. Due to the exile penalty, pieces of the story fell from my body like blood. The area around my right arm and heart was stabilized from the absorption of new story fragments but the rest was different.

The incarnations probably saw this and realized I was an exile.

"Where are you going? Shouldn't we report it?"

"Well… he will die soon. Let's just go."

It wasn't strange. This wasn't the first time they had seen an exile. They were afraid of exiles because they didn't know what the exiles would do.

I leaned against an alley wall and the people looking at me quickly dispersed. The magic locomotive that appeared also played a role in calming the situation.

The incarnations found the locomotives covered with ominous black paint and withdrew in dismay.

"Back off! A noble is coming!"

A locomotive was running through the centre of the industrial complex. I didn't know for certain but it seemed to be a guest from another industrial complex. Maybe a high-ranking noble of the Demon Realm was on board. A person as strong as Reinheit of Paradise might be riding on that locomotive.

I didn't know what was going on but it was rushing towards the factory for some reason. The locomotive accelerated without caring there were incarnations crossing the road. The frightened commoners started grumbling.

"It looks like Gilobat's locomotive. Hasn't it been seen often?"

"How would I know? It is the work of the noble scum."

"We need to know this time. There is a story that the 73rd Demon Realm is being integrated."

It was a fairly interesting story so I focused my hearing on the drifting words.

"The Demon Realm is being integrated? Those dukes are moving their heavy asses?"

"Yes, Melledon and Bercan are moving. Won't Syswitz be really nervous?"

At the mention of the duke who governed the 73rd Demon Realm, the other incarnations also intervened in the conversation.

"Hah! That rumour was real? But… we haven't had a demon king ruling this realm for thousands of years?"

"Then this time, the demon king will emerge from our turf?"

Questions poured out and the incarnation who first brought it up spoke in an embarrassed manner.

"I don't know for sure. Rumour has it that a message from an oracle is passing among the demon kings. The emergence of a new demon king…"

"The dukes seem to think they will be the one."

I saw a similar conversation in Ways of Survival. It was time for this type of rumour to emerge. I had come at a great timing.

Demon king…

I looked at the locomotive moving away. The industrial complexes also had ranks. The 'nobles' were those who dominated the industrial complexes.

The 'citizens' were the incarnations at varying levels. The citizens who lost their stories and fell were the 'removal slaves'.

Now there were only these three classes but the story was completely different once a demon king came.

Demon king. A ruler who governed a demon realm, a person with absolute power in one world. There was no way for the species here to disobey the demon king.

In the demon realms, the demon kings had the same powerful status as a narrative-grade constellation. Perhaps the dukes of the 73rd Demon Realm were trying to keep the emergence of such a demon king in check.

Once a demon king emerged, it was only a matter of time before the current power system collapsed.

However, a demon king must be created. It was why I came to the Demon Realm.

–The second piece of information. Look for the Etika Clock Store'.

A new message arrived and I raised my head to look at the sky. In the darkness, the faint energy of the wenny man could be heard. Fortunately, the wenny man wasn't lacking common sense.

There was a saying among the dokkaebis that 'they learned morality from a wenny man' but this was because the dokkaebis hated the wenny men…

–There you will be able to obtain what you want.

I nodded lightly and the wenny man disappeared again.

The Etika Clock Store. It seemed the wenny man was aware of the method to get the scenario of the Demon Realm.

In fact, there was information on the clock store in Ways of Survival. Even so, I asked for information from the wenny man in order to not attract unnecessary attention. It was necessary to move in accordance to probability.

I looked down at my left arm that was about to break. I couldn't get the scenario right away just because I was going to the clock store.

Instead, there was a way to alleviate the exile penalty. The Etika Clock Store was a place that existed for that purpose from the beginning.

I moved without delaying.

It wasn't here. Not this alley.

I pulled up my collar so that the broken story wasn't visible and ran through the alleys of the industrial complex.

However, I couldn't find the clock store. It was natural. There was no such thing as a clock in the Demon Realm. Such things were only meaningful to beings with lives as short as humans.

It would've been easier to find if I could read Ways of Survival. There was no way to read the text file because there was no smartphone. If I knew this, I would've asked Bihyung to prepare a smartphone for me in advance…

In the end, should I take the risk and ask someone for the location of the Etika Clock Store?

Suddenly, someone hit me in the shoulder. "What the hell is wrong with your eyes?"

"Ah, I'm sorry…"

"So what if you're sorry? Damn, I dropped the parts because of you! Shit!"

The person was roughly 15 years old. A beautiful young man was glaring at me with cold eyes while carrying mechanical parts.

"Uh… well, I'm sorry."

I was wondering if it was necessary to curse but the boy spoke faster than me.

"If you're sorry then quickly pick them up!"

I was overwhelmed by the fierce words that poured from the handsome lips and picked up the fallen parts. It felt like the old 'Kim Dokja' had suddenly emerged.

I guessed I picked up the parts too quickly, causing the boy to laugh. "Damn, I'll let you off this once. Be careful next time."

The boy took the parts, glanced at me with distinctive eyes and rushed forward again. Then why? I saw his face and felt like I had been hit in the back of the head with a hammer. It wasn't because I was scolded by someone younger than me.

That guy…

Like every fantasy novel, there were pretty and handsome characters in Ways of Survival.

Among the pretty and handsome characters, there were those who were described as 'equivalent to Yoo Joonghyuk'. Kyrgios Rodgraim who I met in Peace Land was such a case.

By the way, this world contained people who were more beautiful than Kyrgios. In such cases, what expression should be used?

「The boy was so beautiful that Yoo Joonghyuk would be slapped in the cheeks twice.」

In addition, this description was only attached to three people in Ways of Survival.

"I found you."

* * *

There was a huge road and the entire shelf of the store was broken. Damn, this was already the third time. It was also a shelf with work on it.

Aileen, the watchmaker of Etika, suppressed a curse and asked with a calm smile. "What are you doing?"

"What am I doing? Shouldn't you already know after experiencing it three times?"

"No, that's what I want to say. What do you want from a clock store owner?"

Aileen was nervous as she confronted the two demons in front of her.

Demon Baron Melen. Demon Earl Silocke. The two demons were famous nobles in the Syswitz Industrial Complex. One of the demons laughed as he stretched out elongated arms.

"Keuk!" Aileen groaned as she was hit in the jaw.

The demon earl Silocke laughed as he carefully examined the wound left on Aileen's white skin.

"You're definitely not an ordinary watchmaker. However, you're not great enough for the duke to visit three times. This isn't three humble visits to a thatched cottage. Do you know what a 'lying down dragon[1]' is?"

"…I didn't know who that is but didn't I make it for you last time? This time I can't help you."

The air inside the clock store started to freeze. It was the power of a demon noble. Aileen trembled as her face turned pale with fright.

"What is this Aileen? Is this a personal loan?"

Someone was standing in front of the clock store. Silocke saw the young man standing at the door and frowned. "You are the foul-mouthed guy of the clock store. Do you want to be executed?"

"I'll take care of him." Demon Baron Melen grabbed the boy's neck and lifted him up.

The beautiful boy looked down at Melen, who told him. "I feel it every time I come but you are really pretty."

"I feel it every time I see you but you are really disgusting."

Melen's left hand hit the boy's belly. There was the sound of something bursting but the boy's eyes didn't change at all. Melen stared into those eyes and laughed. "This is enough to become the duke's concubine."

"What is the hourly pay? If it isn't sufficient then I won't go…"

Once again, there was the sound of something being hit. Aileen's expression hardened as she looked at the boy's bloody mouth.

"Let's take him hostage." Then the demon removed his hands like he had been joking. "Huhu, who would do such a thing? We are gentlemen."

The young man fell to the ground and groaned.

"So the offer will be rejected? Can I tell the duke?"

"Yes. I'm sorry but…"

Surprisingly, the atmosphere smoothed out and Aileen sighed deeply. She hadn't wanted to do this task. If she accepted the job, she would be sacrificing thousands of citizens.

Then Silocke nodded like he understood. "Then I will receive the taxes that you are behind on. The duke asked me to do this."

"Tax? Until now, I have been tax-exempt…"

"It was until now but not anymore."

As expected, there was no way she could just walk away. Aileen bit her lip until it cracked as she asked, "…How much?"

"50,000 coins."

50,000 coins.

It was a huge amount of Aileen. It might be different in other scenario areas but coins were one of the most valuable currencies in the Syswitz Industrial Complex.

"There are almost no constellations here! Such a huge amount of money…"

"I will take this little boy if you don't pay. If he becomes a concubine then you can get 50,000 coins."

The threatened boy was unconcerned and whistled at the threat. "Wow! 50,000 coins! Aileen, don't pay the tax and get the money."

"…I will make that cheeky mouth scream soon."

"Really? Shit, I'm looking forward to it."

Despite the young boy's words, Aileen's expression was filled with despair. She had a long relationship with this boy and knew that no matter his dirty words on the surface, deep inside he was thinking differently. An ultimatum emerged from the mouth of the demon earl.

"Aileen Makerfield. Accept the duke's proposal. For reference, this is the last offer."

Aileen was the chairman of the citizens. She could get to this position because of her strong heart. Aileen hesitated before opening her mouth.

"I…"

Rattle.

Then someone entered the clock store.

"What?"

The first thing that greeted me wasn't the owner of the clock store. I saw the demon nobles who were uncomfortable with the uninvited visitors. I had roughly heard the situation outside and knew what was going on.

The beautiful young man was lying on the ground with eyes full of hatred.

I replied while staring closely at the beautiful boy instead of the demons. "A customer…"

My answer was polite but the demon' expressions turned fierce.

"Is it a citizen? I don't know where you came from but leave. We're collecting taxes now."

"Taxes… making a lot of money and paying higher taxes. Why is it suddenly making a low amount of money and paying higher taxes?"

"What?"

I passed by the demon nobles and approached the shopkeeper.

"Hey! Wait!"

The bewildered demon nobles stretched out their arms to grab me but they didn't reach. The demon nobles made expressions of surprise as I lightly shook them off. Instead of dealing with them, I glanced at the clocks on the broken shelf. I carefully picked up one of them.

"There are many good things."

Aileen seemed to sense something and approached me. "…There are always good things. A good owner rarely appears."

I couldn't help smiling. This was really the tone of Ways of Survival.

The planet Lindberg's magic engineer, Aileen Makerfield. I glanced at the nervous Aileen.

Inside her, the needle must be ticking. Would the suspicious customer who suddenly appeared be the rope of hope or the person who dropped her into hell?

I decided to relieve some of her worries. "I would like to order something special. Can you make one for me?"

Aileen's eyes grew bigger at my words. There was only one type of customer who would come here for a 'special' thing.

Aileen saw the demon nobles and asked carefully, "…What is the commission fee?"

I smiled at her before staring at the demon nobles who were staring at me.

"50,000 coins."

---

[1] In **Romance of the Three Kingdoms** Liu Bei visited Zhuge Liang thrice and recruited him as an adviser.

Chapter 196: Ep. 37 - Landscape of the Demon Realm, III

"Wait a minute, you are…!"

The eyes of the beautiful young man grew wider as he recognized me. Before the young man could open his mouth again, the quick-witted Aileen hurriedly accepted my coins.

"50,000 coins. Okay."

"I-Is it really 50,000 coins…?"

The astonished boy's mouth dropped open as he glanced between Aileen and me.

50,000 coins weren't that big in terms of the scenarios but it was a substantial amount in the Demon Realm.

It was an area that the constellations hardly ever visited due to the demon kings. Of course, by my standards, 50,000 coins was petty cash.

[The 'Kim Dojega's Legend 1st Part' has been completed on Peace Land.]

[The pioneers of the area are preaching faith in you.]

[15,000 coins have been acquired.]

I even received coins in real time. This was the good thing about being a constellation. Even without the sponsorship, I made money just by being famous.

The stiffened demon nobles belatedly reacted. "Who are you?"

I looked at their information.

Demon Earl Silocke and Demon Baron Melen. They were moderately well-known collectors in the Syswitz Industrial Complex.

"I understand, Customer."

Usually, I would bow politely but courtesy was just counterproductive to these guys. They were hyenas who liked to eat those who showed weakness or fear.

"You, now…!" The demon baron, Melen raised his energy at my tone.

"Let it go Melen." Silocke watched the situation and dissuaded Melen. The earl looked like he was eating with an unwelcome guest.

[The character 'Demon Earl Silocke' is looking at you with curiosity.]

[Your understanding of the character 'Demon Earl Silocke' has increased.]

I didn't miss this opportunity to use a skill.

[The exclusive skill, 'Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint' has been activated!]

Then I started to hear Silocke's thoughts.

「This guy can easily pay 50,000 coins.」

「 A citizen can never pay this amount. Besides, look at that relaxation. 50,000 coins is obviously a pittance for him. 」

「 Who is this? This is the first time I've seen him in the area. Wait a minute, that demonic energy… 」

「 Don't tell me…? 」

It was going as I thought. No, it was better. In any case, the Syswitz Industrial Complex was bursting with stories about the new demon king. If so, it wouldn't be bad to leak misleading information to them.

I spoke in a voice full of bravado. "You must've already guessed."

I spoke in Yoo Joonghyuk's tone and Silocke's complexion changed. He nodded as if his thoughts were correct and then spoke politely to me.

"Noble demon, I am belatedly greeting you. Do you happen to be visiting from the Gilobat Industrial Complex?"

"It looks like your ears are working properly."

"However, you didn't give any notice that you were visiting this area…"

"Do I have to tell my route to someone like you?"

"That… I'm sorry."

He was convinced by my short answer.

「The right to move without prior notice. He must be at least a marquis-grade. 」

「 There is nothing good about getting entangled with the Gilobat Industrial Complex. 」

After the brilliant misunderstanding, Silocke bowed to me and elbowed Melen. "Let's go."

"Huh? But…"

"We only needed to get it."

Melen belatedly nodded at his superior's sober judgment. Melen took 50,000 coins from Aileen and warned in a fierce voice.

"This time you got lucky. Don't expect it to happen next time, Aileen."

The two demon nobles left the watch store. Maybe Silocke would report this to his boss immediately. It didn't matter. I couldn't think up to there.

The clock store was filled with energy once the storm passed. It was the beautiful boy who broke the atmosphere. "…Isn't this considerably big? Who the hell are you?"

He looked up at me with sparkling eyes and I smiled quietly.

"What is your commission?" Aileen belatedly came to her senses and asked me. "That… by the way, are you a noble?"

The demons had misunderstood but there was no way Aileen should misunderstand.

I shook my head. "I'm not a demon noble."

"Then…?"

I quietly took off my coat as an answer. Sparks appeared and the broken story fragments fell down. Shock appeared on Aileen's face as she checked my body.

"…An exile? Then the special request…!"

"That's right."

Aileen's face was white because she could guess the scale of my story with one glance.

"I-I've never had a story of this magnitude."

"Only you can do it. You are the 'story expert' of the Syswitz Industrial Complex."

Aileen's expression shook at the words 'story expert'. As my consciousness started to collapse, I grabbed her shoulders and added,

"Fix me, Aileen Makerfield."

* * *

My consciousness flickered while I sensed Aileen and several strangers. There were a few voices following me.

"How can an incarnation have a story of this magnitude…?"

"Who is he?"

"…There are a mixture of stories that don't fit the norm. Oh my god. Isn't this a legendary story?"

"Is this really an incarnation? I don't think this is the status of an incarnation."

"He ate these dangerous fragments and are still alive…"

I wouldn't have suffered so much if the level of Lamarck's Giraffe was higher. If the absorption rate was high, it would be possible to neutralize the effect of mixing story fragments.

However, that wasn't my current situation. Like the human immune response, different stories were attacking each other to defend themselves.

"We need to stabilize this as soon as possible…"

Aileen's voice was tense.

Aileen Makerfield. According to Ways of Survival, she was a magic engineer on the planet Lindberg. She studied for a long time and learnt that the essence of this world was the 'story'.

She didn't achieve transcendent but she was one of the few incarnations with the attribute of Story Expert.

My consciousness flickered a few more times. Then strength gradually started to return to my body. The chills caused by the exile penalty were reduced and the pain of my body alleviated.

The Right Arm of the Poor Sword Master and Broken Heart of a Young Gold Dragon didn't collide with the other stories and safely permeated my body.

Indeed, it was a good choice to visit Aileen.

I finished checking my body and slowly opened my eyes. There was the beautiful ace of a young boy in front of me.

I felt it before but he really was pretty. It was better to express his appearance as a girl than a boy.

"Wah!" The surprised young man suddenly screamed.

I tried to slowly raise my body but I couldn't move. Looking closer, my body was tied to the operating table. It seemed to be a technique to suppress the power of the story…

I looked around and found that there was only the boy. Perhaps he was a bit relieved to know I was tied up and the boy opened his mouth. "Hey, what are you?"

No, this situation was better. I needed some time along with these guys anyway. I told him, "What do you think? You like quizzes."

"…Who said that?"

"In any case, make a guess."

Intrigue filled the eyes of the young boy. As expected, it was a good catch. The young man thought about it before asking me, "Are you a returnee?"

"Returnee? Why do you think that?"

"It doesn't make sense for a common citizen of the Demon Realm to have such a large amount of money."

"It's okay. Continue."

"You said that you're not a demon and I don't think you are a normal incarnation. You also have many rare stories. You seem to be somewhat strong. Then there is only one answer."

"Hrmm…"

"How is it? Is my reasoning correct?"

I looked at his brightly shining eyes and somehow wanted to make fun of him. "Your reasoning is right but you need one premise."

"What's the premise?"

"The premise is that all returnees are strong."

The beautiful young man's expression became strange at my words.

"What do you mean by that? Don't you know what a returnee is? They are those who returned to their planets after gaining a powerful strength from another dimension or planet. How can those people be weak?"

"I don't know. You haven't met all returnees in the world, right?"

"That…"

"For example, some returnees might not want to return because they hate their planet."

The expression of the young boy hardened.

"You are frustrated because you moved to a different dimension several times but didn't get much power."

"…"

"You got a new body but you don't have any talent."

"…Wait."

"You became frustrated by your lack of talent and decided to sit still in one place and live an ordinary life."

"…Who are you really?"

I grinned and opened my mouth. "Hayoung. Are you happy with your life in the Demon Realm?"

"What?"

[The exclusive skill 'Character List' is activated!]

[Character Summary]

Name: Jang Hayoung (Aslan Makerfield)

Age: 23 years old (15 years old)

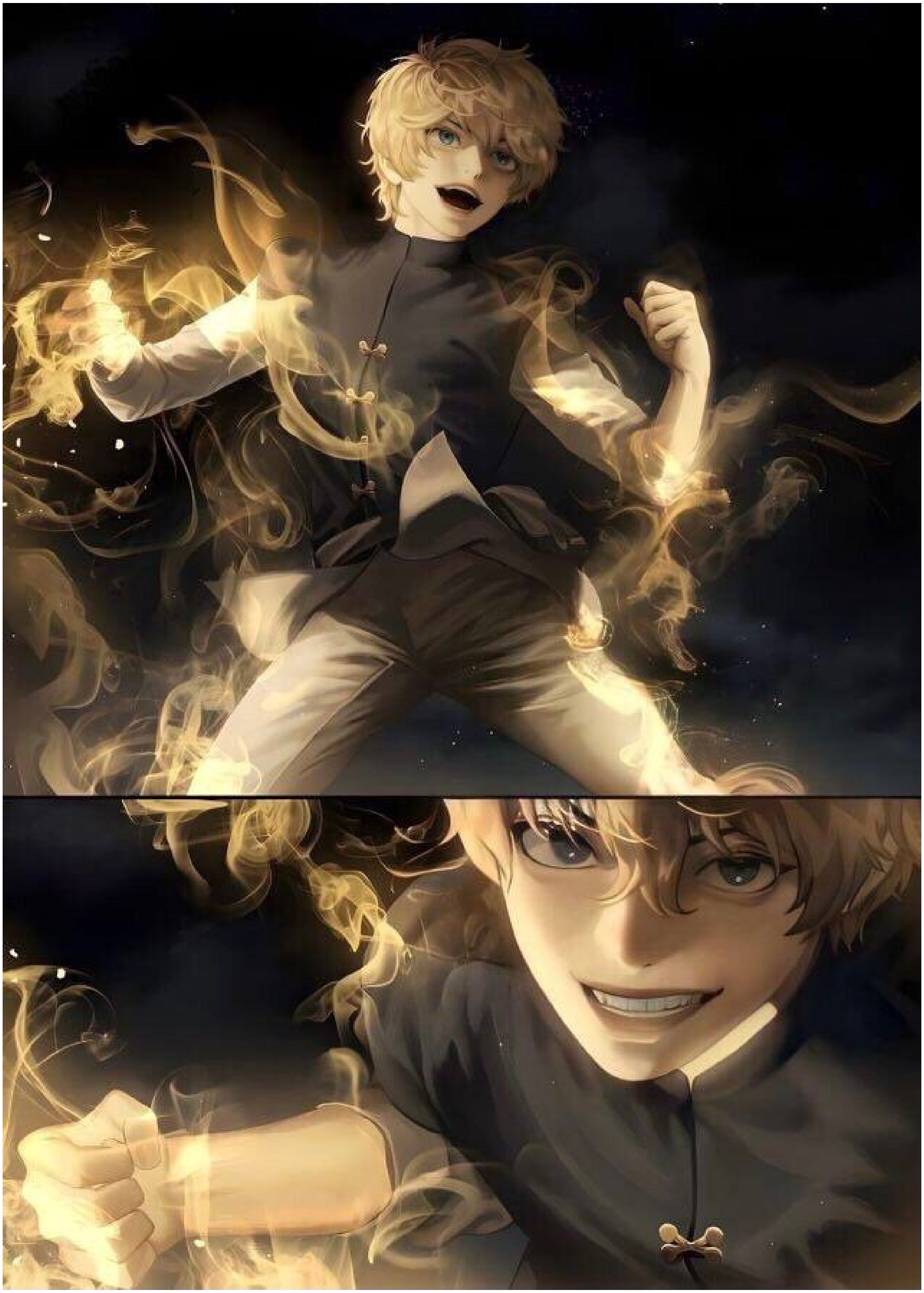
Sponsor: None

Exclusive Attributes: Dimensional Mover (Hero), Estranged from Birthplace (Rare), Master of the Wall (Myth)

Exclusive Skills: Unidentified Wall Lv. 1, Spiteful Tongue Lv. 3, Grumbling Lv. 5, Laziness Lv. 3, Sloth Lv. 3, Lethargy Lv. 4…

Grumbling, Laziness, Sloth, Lethargy…

Who would see this guy's information and think he was the second protagonist of Ways of Survival? If Yoo Joonghyuk saw this, his pride would be hurt by the fact that his name was on the same list.



*

"H-How are you…?!"

However, Jang Hayoung wasn't originally like this. He tried and tried again, but the results weren't good. A huge 'wall' was always obstructing him. The results didn't match the process.

"Oh, you don't use your real name here. Should I call you Aslan?"

"How do you know my real name?" The surprised Jang Hayoung backed up towards the wall.

I looked at him and recalled old memories.

–Author-nim. I think it is better to create a new character…

If I hadn't left the comment at that time…

Would Jang Hayoung exist in today's world?

–In addition, it should preferably be a pretty girl…

Maybe this was why I felt responsible for this guy. I didn't know if the author created this character because of me. However…

–The setting, hrmm. Since Joonghyuk is a regressor, it is enough if the new character is a dimensional mover.

At the very least, if I hadn't left this comment, the second protagonist wouldn't have to keep moving dimensions.

"You're not without talent. You just don't know your talent."

"What? W-What does that mean?"

I was just opening my mouth again when the door burst open.

"Is that Aslan? What's the fuss?"

"A-Aileen!"

Aileen saw Jang Hayoung's face and glanced at me. "What are you? What did you do to him?"

I shrugged without saying anything. Some people could be seen behind Aileen. Maybe there were members of the Syswitz Civil Council. They were the last conscience against the duke's ambitions. I liked such people.

I could deal with Jang Hayoung later. I needed to take care of this side first. "Duke Syswitz…"

"What?"

"He is ambitious. He refused a high-ranking position in another demon realm and came to this remote area."

The members of the civil council glanced at each other at my words.

I stared at Aileen and said, "Maybe Duke Syswitz asked you to make him giant soldiers. Is that right?"

"Eh?"

"That guy, he got a taste when he went on a tour of the Demon Realm. That's why he is making such an unreasonable request. He doesn't know his subjects."

"H-How do you…!"

The members of the civil council were greatly confused by the information I knew. The surprised Aileen seemed to be stiffening. I didn't miss this chance.

"You have refused him three times and next time he will take you by force. Are you ready?"

The faces of Aileen and the citizens darkened at my words. It was certain. They were powerful on their own planets but they couldn't compare to a duke of the Demon Realm.

I enjoyed the silence before saying with a grin. "If you listen to my conditions, I will stop the duke for you."

It was puzzling for them. The exile who suddenly appeared not only knew this information but also offered a ridiculous proposal.

It was Aileen who struggled to shut her mouth. "You… who the hell are you?"

Yes, it started from here.

I wish I could say that I was 'Kim Dokja' but that wasn't possible yet. If I revealed my name here, the constellations on Earth would know I was still alive.

Then… let's go back to the original work. I recalled the 111th regression in the novel and declared in a voice as evil as possible.

"My name is Yoo Joonghyuk. I am here to become the 'demon king' of the 73rd Demon Realm."

* * *

[Your notoriety is spreading in the 73rd Demon Realm.]

Yoo Joonghyuk stared up at the sky the moment he heard the message.

"…What?"

Of course, the sky didn't answer. Then Yoo Joonghyuk's expression changed strangely.

Yoo Joonghyuk thought about something for a moment before staring at the sky with disbelief, muttering, "Kim Dokja?"

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[*] Official novel illustration (canonical)

Chapter 197: Ep. 37 - Landscape of the Demon Realm, IV

Yoo Joonghyuk's comment on becoming the 73rd demon king was a line from Ways of Survival.

I watched the reactions of the council members with a bit of excitement.

"That, I mean…"

It was strange. In Ways of Survival, everyone had clearly gone, "Ohhh!" Everyone didn't show the dramatic reaction I expected. Then I heard a voice.

「The demon king of the 73rd Demon Realm! There was a man who spoke such words. Irene and the other members of the civil council were in great shock.」

That brat, when did it wake up? It said it was sleepy and then went away…

「On the other hand, Kim Dokja felt somewhat stronger.」

…Eh?

「 It was a habit he had since his school days. In important moments of his life or in moments when his self-esteem fell, Kim Dokja would say, "I am Yoo Joonghyuk." 」

I had a bitter taste in my mouth as I endured the harassment of the Fourth Wall, who exposed my black history, Damn, I couldn't do anything to this brat.

"The council members should leave for a moment. I have to talk to him for a while."

Aileen thought about something before making a decision. Jang Hayoung and the members of the civil council disappeared out the door. Aileen dragged a chair over to my operating table.

I asked her, "Can you release this first? I'm not in a state where I can talk."

However, Aileen didn't release my straps. It meant she didn't trust me yet.

"You said you would become the demon king."

"Yes." I nodded once.

"Do you know what that means?"

"It literally means to be king of the 73rd Demon Realm."

"And?"

"It means I will receive excessive attention from the other 72 demon kings."

In fact, I was a bit nervous. I didn't have a very favourable relationship with the demon kings yet.

Aileen looked at my face and sighed. "I took a peek at your stories while treating you… I don't know what the hell are you are thinking."

"What's the problem?"

"…Duke Syswitz is strong. Maybe even stronger than you think."

Aileen's tone was calm, unlike her previous confused appearance. Indeed, there was a reason she survived for so long in the Demon Realm.

"It is natural. He is a duke."

The dukes were the more powerful existences after the demon kings in the Demon Realm.

They were located at the top of the Demon Realm. Some of them had the power approaching the highest level of the historical-grade constellations and they certainly weren't shallow opponents. Aileen's evaluation was fair.

"I understand your confidence. I've already confirmed that you have amazing stories.

She had repaired my stories and had a certain estimate of my strength. Time was short so she couldn't identify all the stories I had hidden. She probably saw a few legendary stories at most. This meeting might be because she saw some possibilities in my stories.

Aileen continued calmly, "First, I need to know that you are a trustworthy person."

"I will make an Oath of Existence."

"The things we talk about here can't leak out."

We made an Oath of Existence with our hands facing each other. It was an oath made on their souls. The person who broke this oat would die from their soul burning up. I had previously made this oath with Yoo Joonghyuk.

I opened my mouth, "I don't want you to talk about my identity."

"I'm aware of that. Don't worry. All council members who participated in the repair share the oath."

Aileen let out a small sigh and then opened her mouth like she was whispering. "Our civil council has been waiting for an opportunity to destroy the Factory."

The Factory was the core of the industrial complex and the backbone of its power. Trying to destroy this place was an obvious goal.

I had read it in Ways of Survival but I decided to ask. There was no way to read Ways of Survival immediately so it was important to get the information directly.

Aileen asked, "Are you going to drive out the nobles?"

"Yes."

"You are a returnee. Why bother interfering with the ecology of the Demon Realm?"

"I'm not a returnee."

In a sense, there was no word more accurate.

"I see."

Not all returnee completed the dimensional movement scenario and returned to their hometown. Some returnees failed the scenario and some hated their homes. Those who gave up returning to their homes had to make a new home. No matter how terrible a place was, they chose to live there.

"There have been several attempts to kill the duke," Aileen told him.

"It looks like they failed if he is still alive."

"…It wasn't a bad plan. Until they all failed. Some of them were masters from the First Murim and others were the strongest people on their planet."

"How did you get those people?"

"It was a similar situation to you. They failed or were expelled from their home scenario."

It was a fact I already knew. This was the reason why Aileen treated the 'exiles'. It was a means of collecting stronger citizens to fight against the ruler of the Syswitz Industrial Complex. She used the attribute Story Expert in this form.

Aileen shook her head with a slightly weary expression. "Most of them couldn't even make it through the escorts, let alone reach the duke."

"Are there many escorts?"

"In the Factory, there are hundreds of barons and lower ranked nobles. There are 10 earls and two marquis."

The many escorts were a problem.

A lower-grade noble was still more powerful than average incarnations. In addition, all those earl level or above could operate the power of the story. The biggest problem was that the duke would be stronger than the sum of all the escorts. I replied like it was inconsequential.

"It is worth a try."

"The other exiles said that as well."

"I'm stronger than they are."

Yoo Joonghyuk would say this and I was currently Yoo Joonghyuk. However, Aileen didn't know who Yoo Joonghyuk was.

"If you were really strong, you wouldn't have failed the scenario."

There was no way to refute it right now. The situation was too complicated to explain right now. Even so, Aileen still had some expectations towards me. "First of all, I'd like you to prove your skills."

"Something like this?"

I released the straps on me like I had been waiting. The straps broke with a loud sound. Aileen seemed surprised but didn't panic. "…The other exiles did that as well. I have to make sure you can deal with the nobles."

"What do you want?"

"A suitable opponent has visited Syswitz."

"You are talking about the envoy from the Gilobat Industrial Complex?"

"Yes."

I laughed. "I can see what you are thinking."

Aileen nodded. "I'm sorry but this is the only way."

The 73rd Demon Realm was currently in a confused state due to the rumours of the demon king. The meeting between the Syswitz Industrial Complex and Gilobat Industrial Complex was designed to calm the chaos.

"The most dangerous enemy is always the closest ally."

If I could take advantage of the opportunity to ruin the alliance, it was possible to divide the Syswitz Industrial Complex.

Aileen was looking at the long-term and didn't want to miss this chance. Even if it failed, there wouldn't be significant damage.

However, I didn't intend to be exploited. "Let's make a deal first."

"Okay. What are your conditions?"

"Please repair my body every time I ask. Of course, it is for free."

I had to constantly consume story fragments until my physical body became stronger. I didn't know when a collision between stories would occur. For the time being, I needed Aileen's help.

"That is nothing if you succeed. That's all?"

"There is one more thing." In fact, this was the main point. "Give me a 'scenario'."

"…Scenario?"

This was the reason why I visited the Syswitz Industrial Complex in the first place.

"I need your revolutionary scenario."

* * *

The Demon Realm was an area that wasn't popular with constellations since ancient times.

It was due to the bad relationship between the constellations and demon kings. In the first place, most incarnations who entered the Demon Realm were 'losers'.

I left the operating room and the first place I saw was the pub where the citizens gathered.

"Shit, this alcohol tastes sour."

The sighs of the citizens came from all over the place. It was late in the evening.

The workers and incarnations who came back from working all day at the Factory gathered over drinks. Their faces were distorted from the bitter aftertaste. The alcohol of the Demon Realm was more bitter than Earth. I remembered reading about it in Ways of Survival.

「Kim Dokja thought: Who among them is the revolutionary?」

In the Demon Realm, the scenarios still progressed. The Star Stream didn't neglect the story of any area. In particular, one of the main scenarios here, the 'Revolutionary Scenario' was a scenario that the dukes of the Demon Realm were also watching.

–I don't know how you know about that scenario but it is hard for me to help you right away. I don't know who the 'revolutionary' are. Without the identity of the revolutionary, it isn't possible to transfer the scenario.

–Do you have no information at all?

–Even if I receive information, the revolutionary will change every month. Honestly, who would confess to being a revolutionary? It is unknown who is a spy…

These were Aileen's words. Still, if my prediction was correct, the revolutionary was definitely among them.

「The Revolutionary scenario is the main scenario of the Demon Realm. The scenario number is different every time but those who welcome the scenario event are fixed. They are the ruling classes of the Demon Realm.」

I felt fortunate to have the Fourth Wall at this time. I might not have the Ways of Survival txt but it would remind me of my memories.

–The citizens here remember what happened to the last person who declared himself a revolutionary. That's why you shouldn't poke around people. Everyone will be nervous.

Aileen told me this but I couldn't wait. My body was repaired and I could hold out against the exile penalty, but this was only for a few days.

「Kim Dokja thought: I have to get the Revolutionary scenario so I can go back to the original scenario.」

At this moment, a strange voice entered my ears.

"Excuse me, this is the first time I'm seeing your face."

Chapter 198: Ep. 37 - Landscape of the Demon Realm, V

I turned around and saw the owner of the pub staring at me with curious eyes. I replied as naturally as possible. "I just entered yesterday."

"It is good to see you. Life in the industrial complex is hard but our hearts are good. I don't know where you're from but this isn't a bad place to settle down. Care for a drink?"

"No, I don't like to drink."

"Huhu, going to this place when you don't know how to drink. You are an unfortunate friend."

I heard this and was reminded of when I first joined Mino Soft." Han Myungoh said something similar when I first told him I couldn't drink alcohol at the restaurant.

Come to think of it, where was Han Myungoh now? He received the curse of Demon King Asmodeus and there was no way to confirm his life or death…

I somehow felt down as I remembered those tiring days.

"I don't like drinking but I like the appetizers served with alcohol. Do you mind if I order side dishes?"

"Of course. We have deep fried demon's claws, fried demon tripe and…"

I smiled. "Stop making fun of me."

"Haha, busted."

"Give me the best you have. How much?"

"Five coins only."

It was an insanely low price. It was a price that the small constellation of Peace Land could afford. I thought for a bit before asking, "If I pay double, can you make it doubly delicious?"

"Hahah, I can make it triply delicious."

I handed over 50 coins without speaking and the owner's eyes widened.

"…10 times is a bit tough but I'll try."

Unlike what he said, the owner seemed to be a skillful chef because a pleasant smell was coming from him. My expectations were slightly inflated as I anticipated appeasing my hunger. I couldn't help it when thinking it was time to eat real food.

I ignored my stomach for a moment and sighed. I had been working so hard that it wouldn't be hard to have a rest.

"How great. Is that the place called Earth?"

A bunch of incarnations were looking at the screen hanging from the top of the pub.

It was a video recording from a dokkaebi's channel. It was a familiar scene and then a familiar voice started to flow out.

–Ahjussi!

It was a scene from the Seoul Dome scenario. It was a record of the tenth scenario, the 73rd Demon King. I heard Shin Yoosung's voice coming from the screen and a corner of my heart was pained.

I raised the collar of my coat so it half covered my face and watched the video.

"The scenario impact is awesome. Isn't it as rumoured?"

"Don't you think it is the most popular scenario area lately?"

"The incarnations in that neighbourhood must be very prosperous!"

Almost all the mass media in the Demon Realm were under the control of the wenny people.

The wenny people couldn't open channels directly like the dokkaebi so they couldn't earn income through donations. Instead, they stole the recording material and distributed them all over the world.

"Shit, I don't think the degree of difficulty is that high. I can also do that much!"

"Stop speaking nonsense. If you were there, you couldn't even make it to the fifth scenario."

"Uhuh, no?"

They watched the screen and the 73rd Demon King scenario started to gradually change.

–Uriel, you know. This is just a story.

It felt really strange to see my lines flowing from the screen.

–You must've seen many people die in the meantime.

It was the moment when Uriel was very sad…

I looked around and saw that some incarnations were in tears.

Anger, despair or sighs.

"Shit, it's so sad…"

…It was a strange feeling. It wasn't their scenario but they sympathized with the stories I had experienced. Their faces looked like they received comfort.

Maybe it wasn't just the constellations who needed stories. The stories were necessary for everyone.

"…Will we be able to do that if we return to our home scenario?"

"Rampert, do you want to go back?"

"If I can go but I can't."

"Kulkul, just ask the wenny man. He will send you at any time."

"…Is that a joke? I don't want to become a disaster for my home."

Disaster. At this point, the air inside the pub became tense. However, it was only for a moment. Everyone was reluctant to talk about this topic and quickly changed it.

"Here it is. Side dishes that are 10 times more delicious."

I smiled slightly and accepted the side dishes. It was simple fried chips and noodles. I could tell they were tasty dishes without tasting them due to the savoury smell.

I grabbed the plates and looked around. I could see a small head focused on the screen, just like everyone else. He didn't know I was near and was close to tears.

I clicked my tongue and sat down beside him. "Why, do you miss it?"

"Hiik!" His surprised appearance was very cute. He was exactly as I imagined. I pressed on Jang Hayoung's shoulder as he tried to slip away.

"Don't be so wary. I just want to eat together."

Jang Hayoung stared at me doubtfully and obediently sat back down. He judged that I couldn't hurt him because there were many incarnations around. Jang Hayoung hesitated before opening his mouth first.

"Is your talk with Aileen over?"

"Yes."

"What did you talk about?"

"You don't need to know."

"…By the way, is that special cuisine?"

"Eat if you want."

Jang Hayoung moved his fork like he had been waiting. The noddles disappeared into Jang Hayoung's mouth. Come to think of it, this guy had the Shameless skill.

"Well, it is worth eating."

Jang Hayoung ate more than half my head in a flash.

"…By the way, are you from Earth?"

"Yes."

My face never appeared properly on the screen. It was as if someone deliberately touched the screen. My face distorted like it was hit.

That jerk Bihyung, why did he edit my face like that? In any case, it seemed that Jang Hayoung didn't recognize me.

"…How was it?"

"It was awful."

Jang Hayoung nodded, understanding everything with these words alone. A tragic investigation wasn't necessary for those who had experienced the scenario.

"Are you on the screen right now?"

"I will come out."

"Where?"

"I'm coming now."

The screen zoomed in on the handsome face of Yoo Joonghyuk. Fortunately, my coat was dirty enough to look similar to his black coat. He might really believe it if I insisted moderately…

However, Jang Hayoung's expression wasn't very good.

"There is no resemblance…"

"That is me."

"No. You are like dough made by anyone while a god was carving him for a thousand days…"

"I am an exile. The stories on my face have crumbled."

"No matter how many stories you lose… your lie should make sense."

…Damn. I felt bad but I still needed to achieve my purpose. Yes, I'm not him. Still, doesn't he look cool?"

"Yes."

"He also fights unbelievably well."

"Really?"

"I'll let you meet him when we go to Earth. I'm very familiar with him."

My words caused Jang Hayoung's eyes to shake. Perhaps Jang Hayoung would have no choice but to cross over. In Ways of Survival, Jang Hayoung was a person who admired Yoo Joonghyuk. If I persuaded this guy in advance and encouraged his will to return…

"Why would I want to meet him?"

"Eh? No, just…"

"Rather, I'm more interested in that."

"Who?"

"Over there."

On the screen, I saw a figure surrounded by dark demonic energy. A man was staring at his companions with sad eyes. His face wasn't completely visible but I was well aware of who it was. It was me.

I stared at Jang Hayoung's sparkling eyes and wondered what this was all about.

"You can't even see his face?"

"Why does that matter?"

I was feeling confused when shouts suddenly came from various parts of the pub.

"Waaahhhh!"

"No! Open your eyes, Demon King of Salvation!"

"Damn! My tears won't stop!"

[Your reputation is strengthened in the 73rd Demon Realm.]

[1,500 coins have been acquired.]

No, I was this popular? I suddenly regretted doing the Yoo Joonghyuk cosplay. Now I couldn't say that person was actually me.

–Let's meet again, Yoo Joonghyuk.

Finally, the scenario reached the end and people started to cry. Some people were so moved that they couldn't get out of these feelings.

Jang Hayoung muttered with an ecstatic expression, "Ah, too bad he already has a girlfriend."

My heart sank. "What? Who?"

"The Demon King of Salvation. Do you happen to know him?"

"I know him but…" I frowned as I looked into Jang Hayoung's beautiful eyes. Clear eyes and white cheeks. A beautiful cream-coloured face. However…

"Aren't you a man?"

If I remembered correctly, Jang Hayoung was a man. The damn writer of Ways of Survival accepted all my comments and changed just one thing. It was this guy's gender.

Jang Hayoung raised his eyebrows and frowned. "Earth is the only place that judges by the cover."

I was about to respond when the pub owner suddenly turned off the lights. Then he declared to the whole pub in a very low voice, "Night is coming."

At these words, a deep silence spread through the pub. It was a silent that was much more sensitive and sharper than when the word 'disaster' emerged. Jang Hayoung faced me and brought a finger to his lips.

"Shhh."

Looking closer, it wasn't only this pub. Other pubs and stores on the street had closed their doors and turned off the lights. Suddenly, all sounds disappeared.

It was as if all of the industrial complex was submerged deep in the ocean. In the streets where every person had disappeared, the dreary sound of flutes was heard. Some citizens blocked their ears in order to avoid hearing it.

At this moment, I was reminded of something.

「There is a special 'Night' in the Demon Realm.」

I listened to the Fourth Wall and recalled the setting of Ways of Survival.

「All citizens of the industrial complex are afraid of the nobles. It isn't simply because the nobles are strong. It is due to this 'Night' that comes one every three days.」

"Please just pass by. Please…"

Someone muttered. How long had it been? I could hear the window freezing as something passed through the street.

Every citizen held their breaths and pretended they were invisible. There were those who lowered themselves and stared down at the table. The shadow of a giant scythe passed over the frozen window.

「At Night, the executioner appears in the industrial complex.」

「If the citizens have the revolutionary, the nobles have the executioner.」

They were the source of the citizens' fear and the inability to resist the nobles, as well as the reason why the dukes could maintain their position in the industrial complex.

It was due to the existence of the Executioner. The moment the door of the pub opened, people tightly closed their eyes. A scratchy voice came from the deep darkness.

[Who is the revo lu tion ary?]

The appearance reminded me of a reaper and it was twice the size of an adult male. I couldn't see his face because of the black cape but I could sense his power from the eerier aura that flowed from him.

[The target is under the protection of the current scenario.]

[The target is currently invincible.]

No existence could resist the Execution during the Night of the industrial complex.

The owner who gave me food and who those who watched the scenario were looking down at the floor with tired expressions.

Today the Executioner chose this pub as his place of execution. In this place, someone would surely die.

[Who is the revo lu tion ary?]

Every time the executioner's scythe slammed into the ground, people curled up. It was like a play. I stared carefully and the surprised Jang Hayoung pulled at my collar.

"Don't make eye contact."

At the small sound, the Executioner looked this way.

"Shit…"

To be exact, it was at the cursing Jang Hayoung. Jang Hayoung started to shake as he stared at the approaching Executioner. His intuition told him that he was facing his death.

I touched the completely frightened Jang Hayoung's head and stood up slowly. Jang Hayoung's mouth dropped open with surprise and the Executioner stared at me with ominous eyes.

「 Kim Dokja thought: What would Yoo Joonghyuk do? 」

If he was here, he would've never exposed himself. Yoo Joonghyuk would've hid himself until he found a situation where he could benefit the most.

He would've completed all types of investigations in order to participate in the industrial complex's scenario and figured out who the revolutionary was.

「Kim Dokja thought: That's why he regressed hundreds of times.」

The Executioner aimed his scythe at me and spoke in a creepy voice.

[Who are you?]

The moment that everyone in the pub focused on me, I opened my mouth and spoke in a voice they could all hear.

"I am a revolutionary."

Chapter 199: Ep. 38 - Fake Revolutionary, I

[Someone has made a 'Revolutionary Declaration'.]

Among the many scenarios in the Demon Realm, the status of the Revolutionary scenario was large. The only existence that could threaten the dukes sitting at the highest points of the industrial complex.

A revolutionary. This existence was the hope and legend of the citizens. At the same time, it was also despair.

That's why the moment I spoke, countless people around me held their breaths. Their faces wondered if they had heard correctly.

"Why are you so startled? Weren't you looking for the revolutionary?"

My shameless words caused the confusion on people's faces to become consternation. At the same time, there was a message that only I could hear.

[You aren't a 'revolutionary'.]

It was an obvious message. Right now, I was an exile who was outside the scenario. I couldn't be the 'revolutionary', who was the backbone of the main scenario of the Demon Realm, when I didn't even have a scenario in the first place. It was originally supposed to be like this.

[Your declaration has affected the main scenario of the Syswitz Industrial Complex.]

As you know, the most important thing in the Star Stream was the 'probability'.

[A re volu tion ary?]

The thick chains covering the scythe were revealed. The executioner took one step forward and I couldn't help feeling nervous.

Honestly, I currently had no way of killing the executioner. Nevertheless, I didn't back down. I had to do it here.

"Yes, I am a revolutionary."

[Why did you re veal your self?]

"If I stay back, someone else will die."

Jang Hayoung and the other citizens were staring at me with wide open mouths. I waited nervously as I watched the incoming executioner.

…It was time for the effect to appear.

[Many citizens admire your courage.]

That's it.

[Your noble courage affects the development of the scenario.]

[You have caused a big influence on the scenario.]

[The scenario will temporarily assign you a status.]

[You have become a 'self-proclaimed revolutionary.]

[If an existing revolutionary dies, you will be given the position.]

This was a stepping stone for me to enter the scenario.

[The hidden scenario 'Self-Proclaimed Revolutionary' has been acquired!]

It was the first time that a scenario acquisition message was so welcome. It might be a hidden scenario and not a main scenario, but it was sufficient for the moment.

The hidden scenario of the 73rd Demon Realm. It was a secret I wouldn't have known if it wasn't for Yoo Joonghyuk's countless failures.

"You! Wait! Are you really a revolutionary?"

"Hey!"

The people were unable to control their fear and cried out. However, the timing wasn't good. Finally, the executioner started to move. Black smoke emerged from the executioner's mouth and wound itself around my body.

[The Syswitz Executioner has placed a mark of death on you.]

[You have been identified as the scapegoat of the Night.]

People saw the mark appear around me and shouted, "Get out of the way!"

"Waaaaahhhhh!"

The fragments of the broken table scattered in the air and the scythe of the executioner cut the space in front of it. I dodged the scythe by a hair's breadth. It would've been difficult to avoid if my body wasn't repaired but now the story was different.

[The exile penalty is slightly alleviated.]

There was a warmth in every breath that I let out. There was a mild aura around my body and the chill was gone.

I dodged a series of moves from the executioner. Indeed, the difference between having a scenario and not having a scenario was great. It might be a hidden scenario but the presence of a story changed the liveliness of my existence.

[Revo lution ary?]

The executioner was a bit surprised by my movements and his momentum changed.

[The space has temporarily been closed.]

[You can't escape from the pub.]

I smiled bitterly. This was why numerous powerful people couldn't resist the executioner. There was no way to escape from the executioner in the industrial complex.

Was that all?

"Dodge you idiot!" As Jang Hayoung shouted, energy was fired from the executioner's scythe.

「No citizen of the industrial complex can resist the Executioner.」

[The execution will take place.]

His special skill Execution ignored the defense of the opponent and death a fatal blow. No matter how strong the citizens, they could never endure one blow from the executioner's scythe.

The executioner's scythe was just about to cut through my body. In my hand, Blade of Faith cried out violently.

"I'm sorry but I'm not a citizen."

Magic power emerged from the heart of the gold dragon and the Purest Sword Force wrapped around my fingertips.

"I told you. I am a revolutionary."

Well, I was still a 'self-proclaimed' one. The dazzling white-blue energy collided with the executioner's scythe and tremendous sparks occurred. In the midst of these gorgeous effects, a message was heard.

[You aren't a main scenario participant.]

[You aren't a citizen.]

[You are an exile.]

[You are affected by the 'Execution' effect of the scenario.]

As expected, I knew it.

[The effect of 'Execution' is neutralized.]

The moment I blocked the blow from the scythe, the surrounding incarnations shouted, "H-He blocked a blow from the executioner!"

"Is he really a revolutionary?"

Those who didn't know my identity were watching the situation with eyes full of distrust.

[Your scenario contribution has increased.]

The executioner misunderstood me and energy burst from his body.

[In so lent…!]

I talked as if to provoke him. "Don't play around. I know you are only strong at Night."

[What?]

"Once this Night is over, you will surely die." I spoke while twisted Unbroken Faith in my hand. "I will surely kill you."

The scythe flooded towards me dozens of times. The executioner wasn't weak just because Execution didn't work. It would just take him a longer time to dispose of me.

Thus, it was too early to say that the situation was better.

"I can't protect everyone so leave here!"

Everyone other than me could escape this place because they didn't receive the effect of the 'mark'. Among those running out of the pub, I saw Jang Hayoung turning to look back at me.

I quickly glanced at him before using Bookmark.

"Selecting the fourth bookmark, 'Lycaon Isparang'."

[The exclusive skill 'Way of the Wind Lv. 10 (+1) is activated!]

It would be easier to win if I used the fifth bookmark, Kyrgios, but winning this fight wasn't my goal in the first place. No, I couldn't win.

[The target isn't affected by your attack.]

[No one can kill the Executioner until the Night is over.]

My blade slashed at his collar but this was the only message I received in return. His execution didn't affect me but my attacks couldn't hurt him while it was Night.

I had to change the plan. The surrounding pub area was ruined and the power of the wind started to surge. The dozens of scythe shadows flying through the air became stuck as the wind blew.

On the other hand, my movements became more active. The balance of speed was breaking. His movements were always slower than me and I was always one step faster than him.

This was the essence of Way of the Wind that had reached its limit. It was a force that controlled all acceleration in the space.

"You are slow like a slug?"

[Ku a a a ah.]

The scythe of the angry executioner started to randomly move through the air. Normally I wouldn't be hit by such attacks.

However, the goddess of luck from Olympus laughed at me and one scythe accidentally entered the range.

"Ick!"

The moment the unexpected blow was about to strike me in the side, my right arm suddenly twisted into a strange shape and I blocked it.

[The talent of the sword master that sits in your right arm is shining!]

I was surprised as well. I didn't think the fragments of the story worked in this way.

[The user of the incomplete story has made your body's status unstable.]

[Your stories might be at risk if you continue fighting excessively.]

I bit my lips. The coldness was once again coming back. I had acquired a hidden scenario but I couldn't use excessive force to deal with the executioner.

I shouldn't continue fighting against it. I had to buy time while avoiding it as much as possible. At least until this damn Night was over.

[You will di e.]

I didn't respond and kept using Way of the Wind. It would've been nice if Yoo Joonghyuk was here. If I had the help of a transcendent then I could easily endure this long Night.

However, no one was here.

Judge of Destruction Jung Heewon.

Steel Sword Lee Hyunsung.

Maritime Admiral Lee Jihye.

My lovely kids, Lee Gilyoung and Shin Yoosung.

Han Sooyoung… well, she wouldn't have helped if she was here.

Here, I was alone. I believed in the information I knew and the stories I had built up. Myself as well.

There were screams from the nervous people as the executioner's movements started to become slightly dull. I started mocking him. "What, are you tired?"

I knew an invincible person like this would never feel exhaustion. It was more annoyance than exhaustion. My words were actually to hide my condition.

[Bookmark's duration is about to expire.]

The time that I could use Way of the Wind was 30 minutes at most. In the first place, Bookmark wasn't a skill that could last a long time.

By the way, the executioner was laughing. There was a creepy sound effect and dozens of executioners appeared. The most terrible thing about the Night was that there wasn't one executioner. All executioners in the Syswitz Industrial Complex gathered in this small pub and stared at me.

[Your mis take.]

He deliberately consumed time while collecting his colleagues. It was to definitely kill me during this Night.

I watched the movements of the executioners surrounding me and modified my posture.

This was unavoidable. It was impossible to run away from them even if I used Way of the Wind.

"No, you are the one who made a mistake."

However, 30 minutes was enough to achieve my goal. I watched the incoming scythes and opened my arms.

Numerous scythes broke through the air towards my body. Some incarnations closed their eyes and sighed bitterly. This soon turned to cries of surprise.

The scythes that should've surely pierced me and torn me apart. The scythes stopped in the air.

[Wh at?]

The confused executioners looked at the weapons in the air with stupid eyes. I suddenly recalled a sentence from Ways of Survival.

「There are two ways to withstand Night in the industrial complex.」

「One is to run away from the executioners until the end of the Night.」

「And the other one…」

"Have you forgotten? There isn't only the evolutionary and executioner in this scenario."

This was followed by a message in my ears.

[Someone is using their vitality to protect you.]

「The second way to survive the Night is with the help of the Guardian.」

As expected. I thought this would lead to the hidden 'guardian' coming out. Aileen said that even the council members didn't know who the revolutionary was.

This meant that other incarnations didn't know the identity of the revolutionary. In other words, they couldn't protect the revolutionary when they didn't know the revolutionary.

Yet what if I declared myself the revolutionary?

[The guardian was successful and the mark of death has been released!]

The executioner could only use the mark of death once in one night. The mark had been released so today's execution was over.

The executioner spoke in a bloodthirsty voice. […Your luck is good.]

"You better be careful. Next time we meet, it will be daytime."

The executioners gritted their teeth and scattered one by one. The dreary sound of the flutes disappeared and the darkness went out like a tide.

Outside the pub, the incarnations were staring inside with passionate eyes. The arrogant Jang Hayoung was glancing this way with shocked eyes. I wondered if I should say something before eventually shrugging and waving my hand.

"N-New revolutionary! A new revolutionary has appeared!"

Along with the citizens' shouts, the short Night was finally over. I looked at the citizens and had a thought.

One of them would be a 'guardian'. The future scenarios must be performed with the guardian.

I looked up at the sky and it was still dark. I sometimes saw a few stars but they were so dim I couldn't see them properly.

Uriel, the Great Sage, Heaven's Equal…

It would've been nice if those guys were watching but unfortunately, there was no message. Still, I should be satisfied with today.

[No one died tonight.]

Chapter 200: Ep. 38 - Fake Revolutionary, II

Duke Syswitz' office. The demon earl Silocke was standing in front of it with an anxious heart. It was because the earl 'Han' was guarding the office like a gatekeeper.

'Han'.

No one knew what his real name was. Everyone just called him Han. He was an 'earl' like Silocke but he was a very unusual fellow. It was because he was in touch with Asmodeus of the 32nd Demon Realm. Maybe Duke Syswitz kept him around because he was aware of this fact.

Silocke felt inwardly strained and finally opened his mouth. "I have something to say to the duke."

"Tell me. I will let him know."

"It is difficult."

"The duke is currently in an emergency meeting with the Gilobat envoy."

"When will it finish?"

"I don't know."

Silocke clicked his tongue. If he told this guy, Han would clearly take all the credit. Thus, Silocke replied, "It's fine. It isn't urgent so I will wait."

Han's eyebrows twitched at the words. Silocke liked seeing this expression.

'Son of a bitch, keep wondering'.

The information that Silocke reported was simple.

–A civilian presumed to be a marquis of Gilobat has appeared in public.

Of course, it wasn't bad to say this but the more he thought about it, the stranger things seemed. Silocke thought for a moment before staring closely at the duke's office.

"Is a marquis from Gilobat inside there?"

"Yes."

"He must've come straight here without going anywhere else."

"That is the case."

Silocke felt delighted at the reply.

'Indeed, my guess is correct'.

He didn't know for certain but there shouldn't be two marquis in the Gilobat delegation. A marquiS-grade should be the leader of the delegation. It was very likely that the citizen he met wasn't a marquis of Gilobat and was pretending to be a demon noble.

This alone was worth reporting. It might not be big but it would help with his performance review.

Han saw the hesitating Silocke and opened his mouth. "Since you are wandering around, you must also be wondering who the next demon king will be."

"Ah, well… That's right."

It was a misunderstanding but it wasn't a bad idea to ask about this misunderstanding.

"Is it because of the rumours of the demon king emerging that the Gilobat delegation came to visit?"

"I can't tell you more but it is similar."

"The story of the demon king, it is a bit funny… don't you think so?"

The source of the rumours was unknown yet these rumours shook the entire 73rd Demon Realm.

Silocke inwardly found this situation laughable.

Syswitz.

Gilobat.

Melledon.

Bercan.

For the past few hundred years, the 73rd Demon Realm had been properly balanced by these four dukes. The peace that had been maintained for hundreds of years was now shaking because of a rumour. It was a story without any realism.

However, Han didn't agree with Silocke's words. "The signs of the 'demon king' are already appearing."

"What? How do you know that?"

"I heard that Vedas has joined hands with the Melledon Industrial Complex."

"Vedas?"

It was a name that Silocke was familiar with. No, it would be strange if he didn't know it. It was one of the names that must be known in order to safely live in the Star Stream.

Thus, Silocke couldn't help feeling astonished. "…The nebulae are moving directly?"

"To be precise, one of the narrative-grade constellations from Vedas has been in contact with Melledon."

The constellations and demon kings' enmity was famous in the Star Stream. Now the constellations were interfering with the affairs of the 73rd Demon Realm. The scale wasn't big but things would spiral out of control if it was really a nebula.

"The nebulae are interested. Does this mean the demon king will really appear…?"

Silocke muttered with a slightly dazed expression. This was a demon king. Silocke had been living in the Demon Realm for a long time and it didn't really sink in.

However, at least one thing was known.

"…This is why the duke is so busy."

"He is currently the closest person to becoming the demon king."

It was clear that one of the demon nobles would become the demon king. Look at the cases of the other 72 demon kings. It was extremely rare for a non-demonic existence to ascend to the throne.

Then there was a light warning sound from the Factory and a message came up.

[A new main scenario has opened!]

[The 24th 'Revolutionary Game' has begun.]

Silocke was startled by the sudden message but he pretended to be calm when he saw Han's surprised expression. Han asked first,

"What is this message about?"

"Oh, you don't know since you're new here. This sometimes happens. It is the main scenario here. The Revolutionary Game."

"The Revolutionary Game?"

"He was probably caught by the executioner while hiding. He is an unlucky person."

The Revolutionary Game starting meant that the hidden 'revolutionary' had appeared. However, there couldn't be a revolutionary in this industrial complex. Everyone clearly remembered what happened when the last revolutionary appeared 30 years ago.

Silocke smiled and added, "Don't worry, it isn't a big deal. Wait a bit and the executioner will take his neck. It will be a fun spectacle."

Still no matter how long he waited, the message announcing the end of the game wasn't heard. He was just thinking that something was strong with a low grade noble appeared.

Silocke immediately recognized who he was. It was because he was one of the hidden executioners. He rushed towards the office and Silocke asked first. "What is going on?"

"Someone has declared that they are a revolutionary!"

Silocke knew it was a stupid question but he couldn't help wondering, "What? Who?"

"It is a new revolutionary!"

"Then what is his name?"

The low grade noble stuttered out a name. It was a name Silocke didn't know. Unexpected, the bored looking Han opened his mouth. "Wait, what did you just say?"

"Yes, it was definitely Yoo Joonghyuk…"

"He called himself Yoo Joonghyuk?"

Silocke hurriedly asked. "Do you know him?"

"I know."

Han's expression shone brightly but it was a somewhat warped smile. Even the demon Silocke felt creeped out. Han asked, "Where did he show up?"

Night ended and I was called back to Aileen.

To be exact, I was almost dragged back.

The streets were almost completely turned upside down because of my declaration.

–A new revolutionary has appeared!

The streets were loud with these words. If Aileen hadn't popped up and dragged me away, I would still be sandwiched between the citizens. As Aileen was unable to control her emotions, I checked the information of the hidden scenario with a nonchalant mind.

> [Hidden Scenario - Fake Revolutionary]
>
> Category: Hidden

Difficulty level: SS

Clear Conditions: You have become a self-proclaimed revolutionary by impersonating a revolutionary. Kill a real revolutionary within the given time and take their position. Otherwise, it will be a terrible ending.

Time Limit: 30 days

Compensation: 150,000 coins, entering a new main scenario.

Failure: Death

I roughly knew how to get the main scenario. In any case, I had to find the real revolutionary…

I glanced at Aileen and said, "Then let's get started."

"…Are you crazy?" Aileen asked with an absurd expression, "Do you know what you are doing?"

"A revolution."

"What revolution without a revolutionary? You're a fake!"

"Really?"

"There is no way… don't tell me…?"

She had a cute expression on her face. I shrugged lightly and Aileen's face filled with despair. "Of course not! What the hell are you doing? Now it is all over!"

I shamelessly replied, "This is what you wanted. A revolution and the death of the duke."

"I didn't want it this way! This is a scam!"

"How is a real revolution a scam? I will make it real."

"A revolution isn't such a joke!"

"I agree with you. I didn't declare that I am a revolutionary lightly. I agree that this industrial complex should be liberated."

"The fact that you can say it so easily is proof that your will is light."

Aileen's voice contained deep rage. "Do you intend to do the revolution alone?"

"…"

"I have seen many revolutions in this industrial complex. How many revolutions have failed and how much blood has been shed? And…"

"Don't regard past failures as scriptures. There will be no change if you don't do anything."

"It is a scenario you can't do in the first place!"

I understood Aileen's feelings. In fact, the revolutionary scenario was a famous one in the industrial complex. The only rebellion protocol allowed by the scenario. Even so, the citizens of the industrial complex abandoned this game a long time ago.

It was because there was no chance of winning. Thanks to this, the scenario lost its value as a scenario.

Aileen continued, "This is why I've been relying on exiles. The duke can never be killed using existing scenarios! There is no way to win against the damn executioners, let alone the duke!"

"The scenario is made to be broken. There is a way to clear it if we look carefully."

"People are going to die because of you."

"I won't let that happen."

"Then you'll be the first to die."

"I won't die. I didn't die before."

"This…!" Aileen bit her lips. "That was just luck. Do you think the guardian will protect you again?"

"Well, I think they will protect me."

"You don't know but the guardian will exhaust their vitality after using their protection. Every time they use it, they lose vitality and will eventually die. No one will protect you two or three times!"

"The first time is the most important."

"…"

"Aileen, you know this place better than me but you don't understand the people here."

Aileen was about to say something only to tightly close her lips for the first time. Perhaps Aileen had also felt something.

The hidden guardian had appeared and protected me, a revolutionary. It was probably a sight that Aileen hadn't seen for a long time. It was really a long time.

Aileen licked her lips for a long time before speaking in a small voice. "Do you really think it is possible?"

"It is possible. Haven't you seen enough of my skills?"

It would be possible. I would make the impossible possible. Aileen replied with a sigh, "You aren't a real revolutionary."

"That's why I need your help."

Aileen's expression shook at my words.

"Let's make a revolution without a revolutionary."

Aileen made a decision and replied, "…You have to collect the positions. This is a game that you can't win alone."

"I guess so."

"A guardian is the minimum condition for survival. You also need a 'fighter' to deal with the executioner and a 'spy' to find the hidden executioners."

"Collect them one by one. Those positions won't be as far away as you think."

I didn't fret. The revolutionary declaration was already ringing so those in charge of their positions would realize it one by one. They would have to figure out what side to take in this damn game.

"I think one position has already been collected."

As soon as I spoke, the door of the meeting room opened with a bang. Jang Hayoung was looking this way with wide eyes.

"That, Aileen…"

"What?"

"Someone is asking to enter…"

"I'm busy right now! Send them away."

"That, it is a bit…"

"Why?"

"…A person claiming to be the guardian has come."

The surprised Aileen rose from her seat. Then behind Jang Hayoung, a middle-aged man with a study build appeared.

"You… are you really the revolutionary?"

Surprisingly, it was a face I already knew.

Chapter 201: Ep. 38 - Fake Revolutionary, III

The door opened and a middle-aged man appeared. His hair was white and he wore a dirty apron. The faint scar on his cheek was the only sign of 'strength' that could be found on the man's face.

He didn't seem like a person who would be a 'guardian'. Aileen looked incredulously at the man and hesitantly sat back down. "You are a guardian?"

"Yes."

"…Really?"

"I was worried you would react like this."

Aileen glanced at me after hearing the middle-aged man's words. I smiled at Aileen. "I told you. They will be around us."

"However, to be this close…"

The guardian was the pub owner who previously made the side dishes for me. Of course, I guessed from the beginning that he was the guardian. He was very similar to the guardian who appeared in Ways of Survival.

I also knew that he would save me. If I didn't know this, I wouldn't have declared myself a revolutionary.

Aileen asked, "Why did you keep quiet until now? If you are really the guardian, you've had many chances to save people."

"I had to save my points. You know that a guardian can only save people a total of five times."

"I know, but if you didn't use all five times…"

"If I had saved someone else…" The pub owner glanced at me before continuing. "The revolutionary would be dead."

"You sound certain that the revolutionary would appear."

"I have always been waiting. Not everyone gave up like you."

"…Are you saying that to me?"

The atmosphere seemed to be heating up and Jang Hayoung quickly interrupted.

"Now now Aileen, Pub Owner. Let's stop fighting and think about things going forward. Isn't it good for us if the guardian shows up?"

I admired his skillful method of changing the topic. Jang Hayoung was one of the most extraordinary people in Ways of Survival. He was a foul-mouthed person who desired to stay here but he was originally an excellent mediator who understood the hearts of people better than anyone else.

Jang Hayoung coughed and tapped on the shoulder of the pub owner. "At any rate, I am surprised. I thought you were only good at cooking. Honestly, couldn't you have given us a clue?"

"A good chef often has many secrets. Speaking of the revolutionary, how did you like my cooking earlier?"

"Unfortunately, I didn't get a chance to eat it. Someone else ate all of it."

Jang Hayoung stared at me with wide eyes and the pub owner chuckled. Aileen poured cold water on the atmosphere that had barely improved.

"You guys are laughing like you're already colleagues. Don't you know? The game has already begun."

If Jang Hayoung was an excellent mediator, Aileen was an experienced schemer. She might not be in the 'lying down dragon' grade but she pointed out something that a revolutionary should be suspicious about.

"I know."

In fact, her advice was pointed to a verse of the Revolutionary Game that appeared in Ways of Survival.

「It is important to gather the same side. But the most important thing is finding out the identity of the enemy.」

It wasn't easy to distinguish between who was an enemy and who was a friend. Most revolutionaries failed and self-destructed because they couldn't break through this point.

The pub owner received my gaze and smiled bitterly. "Do you perhaps doubt me? Do you think I am a snitch for the duke?"

I laughed without saying a word. I already knew that the pub owner was a guardian. Thus, this gesture was for the people other than me.

"Shall we start with the introductions first?"

"I am Mark. How about you?"

"I am Yoo Joonghyuk."

"Yoo Joonghyuk? Hrmm. It sounds like a name I've heard before…"

It was because the Earth scenarios were spreading. Therefore, there might be a person who remembered the name 'Yoo Joonghyuk' in the Demon Realm.

I could use this hand if necessary. There were also a few story fragments that I had obtained…

"Well, let's go to the point. I'm not the duke's snitch. It is hard to believe but I'm being honest."

"No, I believe you."

"You believe me?

"Yes. You are really the guardian."

Mark stared at me like I was a fool. "…I don't know what happened but I guess I passed the test?"

"That's right. Congratulations on entering the Revolutionary Army."

The aghast Aileen shouted at the sudden conclusion. "No, wait a minute!"

"This person came right after I made the revolutionary declaration. The duke's snitch wouldn't have responded this quickly. The least Revolutionary Scenario was 30 years ago."

Aileen paused at my quick clarification before she continued, "It isn't wrong but I don't think this is enough evidence.

"I do. I am sure that this person is the guardian."

"How?"

"Just as I am sure that you are an engineer of Lindberg."

"How could you…"

"I also know that Aslan over there is really Jang Hayoung and that he is from Earth."

"Hey! M privacy…!"

Aileen's expression changed once she saw Jang Hayoung's reaction. "You… can you see the attribute information?"

"As much as necessary."

In fact, I had already checked Mark's attribute information. Aileen didn't understand but she was finally convinced. "You have an unusual skill. Until now, there wasn't a skill that could give a glimpse of the position information."

"My skill is special."

"…I'm glad you have such a skill. Still, the situation is very hopeless."

"It should be very hopeful."

Aileen sighed with half-hearted resignation and said, "With this, the Fake Revolutionary Army is formed."

"…Fake Revolutionary Army? What does that mean?"

That reminded me, my situation was a bit complicated. I should first give an explanation. The people here were those I needed to take to the end of this scenario.

I took some time to persuasively explain that I wasn't a real revolutionary but a person who could make the revolution a success.

"Whaaaat?!"

"…You're not a revolutionary?"

Two people screamed before my words were over. Thinking back, I never got a good evaluation every time I announced a project at the company. Mark, who exhausted his points because of me, completely lost his soul.

"Crazy. A fake revolutionary, a poor guardian, the chairman of the Civil Council and a frivolous little boy… is this a joke?"

"Frivolous little boy? Hey, you are talking too much Mark!"

"Stop fighting. The situation is like this so we should worry about what we will do next."

"Mr. Fake Revolutionary, do you have a plan?"

"I have a few things to prepare."

I briefly explained my plan to the group. The haggard-looking people became more serious as I talked. By the end of the story, Mark who joined the Fake Revolutionary Army opened his mouth. "Certainly, those are the measures we need now."

"Are you going to participate?"

"I don't have a choice. What will you do first?"

"I have to change my face."

I pulled out the story fragment 'Face of A Casanova Who Died from Sexual Relations'. Mark seemed puzzled. "Face? That wasn't in the plan…"

"The most important things in the world aren't included in a plan."

"Why your face?"

"Shouldn't I be handsome to be a revolutionary? Let's see a few hands."

At the same time, Earl Silocke and Han were walking down the streets. Silocke walked through the streets and glanced at Han. "Hey Han."

"What?"

Silocke wasn't satisfied with this answer but the other person was in contact with 'Asmodeus'. Since Han was willingly joining him, becoming closer wasn't bad.

"…I think you originally weren't a demon. Can I ask where you came from?"

Surprisingly, Han gave an answer. "A place called Earth."

"Earth! Ah, I've heard that name before."

"I guess. The planet is famous these days."

"Since you got Asmodeus' attention, you must have considerable skill?"

"Considerable skill?"

Silocke was a bit amazed by the pride that emerged on Han's face. Was he making this face because he was such a great person?

"What were you originally? A sword master? Or a great magician?"

"It is similar."

"What is it?"

"I was the department head of a large company."

"A large company? What is that?"

"Hmm… you don't know it?" Han thought for a moment. "If I had to give an explanation, it is a group similar to a nebula."

"…A nebula!"

"I am just giving an analogy."

"Then you were a 'constellation'?"

"No, but it is a similar analogy."

"Then… you are amazing."

Silocke didn't understand the words 'company' or 'department head' but he was forced to feel surprised at Han's explanation. It felt like he slightly understood how Han made contact with Asmodeus.

"…What is that?"

At the gateway between the nobles section and the civilians' section, a huge barricade was being built. It was obviously an iron gate. Silocke shouted in an annoying voice,

"Hey, what are you doing right now?"

A citizen working on the barricade replied, "Ah, a noble."

"I asked what you are doing!"

"Can't you tell just by looking? We are blocking the way."

Silocke was a bit startled by the shameless voice. "Who made you do this?"

"This is the chairman's orders. For the moment, nobles can't enter among the citizens."

"What bullshit. What right… get rid of those barricades now! Otherwise I will immediately throw the two of you into the dump."

The citizens flinched and retreated at his ferocious growl. Then another voice was heard from behind the citizens.

"If you are confident then try it."

The citizen who spoke was different from the other citizens. The unknown citizen released a powerful force from his body.

Silocke became tense and retreated. Most citizens were weaker than nobles. However, that didn't apply to all citizens.

There were the mysterious dimensional movers and some of them were as strong as the demon nobles.

"You are doing this just because there is a revolutionary? Do you think we can't kill him?"

The reason why the citizens never stood up against the nobles was due to fear of the execution at Night. However, things started changing from last night.

"You didn't kill him yesterday."

The citizens muttered as they gazed at each other. Silocke was furious but he couldn't cross the barricade. He was alone and had no way to deal with so many citizens. At this time, Han asked, "Are those guys holding a strike?"

"Strike?"

"They are talking about doing what they're not supposed to do."

Silocke understood what Han was saying and nodded. "…It is a similar situation."

"I see. Leave it to me. I am a professional at dealing with this." A different type of wickedness emerged on Han's face. "This happens when the workers don't know who they are going against. For starters, you have to implant some fear."

Aileen helped me with the story fragment that I absorbed through Lamarck's Giraffe.

However, the molding of the face wasn't as easy as I thought. The Face of A Casanova Who Died from Sexual Relations didn't rest safely on my face until it was evening.

I looked in the mirror and smiled with satisfaction.

「Kim Dokja thought: It isn't better than Yoo Joonghyuk but isn't this decent?」

Then Aileen finished the procedure and muttered, "It seems a bit better. Well, I don't know. Why is the impression so fuzzy…?"

…I guess it was fine. My nose was slightly higher and my cheeks more taut…

The anxious Aileen asked me, "By the way, is it okay to be this carefree? Soon it will be the second Night. The Executioner will come again."

"It will be fine tonight."

"The guardian can't protect you indefinitely. Don't you know?"

"I know."

I would prefer not to use the guardian's points if possible but now there was no other way. I had to overcome the second Night with the Guardian's help. The third Night was when I could try a new method.

"Surely Mark won't become the target right? A guardian can't protect their own life…"

"Don't worry. No one other than us knows that he is the guardian."

The duke would still be caught off guard. He didn't think the revolution would succeed. We had to use this chance well.

"Aileen! Night is coming!"

Jang Hayoung yelled from outside and I went out with Aileen. I had to be the target to avoid unnecessary disturbances.

"The revolutionary!"

People remembered my outfit and cheered. I felt a bit sad that no one realized I had changed my face.

[The second Night has arrived.]

I looked around the street. Mark was hiding somewhere in advance and preparing to protect me.

[You are currently under the protection of the guardian.]

The creepy flute sounds were heard and the executioners appeared one by one. They emerged as expected.

[Who is the revo lu tion ary?]

"It is me. You can't kill me yet you gathered here anyway."

The executioners looked at each other.

[You are the re vo lu tion ary.]

Then they said, [B u t.]

At this moment, I felt suspicious. Wait, this…

It wasn't possible. They already thought of this strategy?

[The one who wi ll di e.]

The executioners aimed their scythes at different targets.

[Not the re volu tio nary.]

One of the nearby executioner's scythe aimed for Jang Hayoung's neck.

Chapter 202: Ep. 38 - Fake Revolutionary, IV

"Avoid it!" The executioner's scythe moved along with Aileen's call.

「 At this moment, his thoughts accelerated and the world looked like slow motion. 」

「 Kim Dokja thought: What the hell is this? 」

I gritted my teeth and rushed towards Jang Hayoung.

There might be a difference between the 111th regression and the current regression but there was no such development in the original second Night. The executioners didn't receive any orders from the duke and should've wasted their second Night after being unable to kill me.

[Kill every one.]

Now the actions of the executioners were like those who had been playing this game for a long time. It was clear that someone had given them orders.

I pushed Jang Hayoung away while releasing Blade of Faith and receiving the executioner's scythe.

[The combat shock has made your story configuration incomplete.]

The situation wasn't very good. I couldn't fight now.

[The story fragment 'Face of A Casanova Who Died from Sexual Relations' has been slightly damaged.]

Damn, my face! Fortunately, the executioner had no intention of fighting with me and immediately switched targets. I barely managed to sigh but quickly realized that this wasn't a good thing.

[Ke ep the re vo lu tio nary a live.]

"Aaaaack!"

Citizens shrieked as they were cut by the executioners' scythes. No one was dead yet but half a dozen people were already bleeding.

"R-Revolutionary!"

I bit my lips.

「Kim Dokja thought: Was there a schemer he didn't know about? Or was the duke already acting? The stories of Ways of Survival flowed quickly through Kim Dokja's head.」

"Everyone gather this way! I can't protect you if you scatter!"

「Kim Dokja judged. The duke hadn't moved. It wouldn't have ended like this if the duke moved.」

The Fourth Wall was right. The industrial complex would already be ruined if the duke had moved.

"Kuaaack!"

The damage to the people didn't reduce. The injuries from the executioners' scythes continued all over the place. There were more than ten wounded in an instant.

The good news was that the enemies couldn't kill many citizens. The game's rules stated that each executioner could only kill one citizen per day.

At least, for three days.

Aileen shouted, "Everyone fight against them! They can't use Execution without the mark!"

Some citizens armed themselves with weapons at Aileen's words but the situation didn't easily improve. In the first place, only a few citizens could follow the movements of the executioners. Even then, they didn't last long.

"Kuaaack!"

The fact that the people didn't know when the executioners would use the 'mark' added to their fear. They could always use the mark and some citizens would surely die. Furthermore, the guardian was protecting me and couldn't protect them.

"R-Run!"

In the end, the ranks collapsed and the citizens started to scatter.

"No! Don't go!"

Aileen urgently shouted but the frightened citizens couldn't hear anything. The injured citizens groaned and seemed to be cursing towards empty air.

「Kim Dokja was quietly furious.」

I didn't know who did this but…

"S-Save me…"

A wounded civilian crawled towards me. There were many people without good details. Some of them would die by the end of this Night if they were unlucky. The same went for those who fled.

This Night would be remembered as more terrible than any other Night in the industrial complex.

「If the damage gets bigger then it will go according to their intentions.」

The citizens would no longer be willing to help the revolution. They would once again follow the orders of the duke and Aileen's Civil Council would be isolated. I couldn't allow this to happen.

Thus, I had to play a different hand. The moment I took a short breath to call out to Aileen.

"This way! Kill me!" Someone hiding behind a building started shouting. It was Mark. "Over here! I am the guardian!"

Jang Hayoung realized what was going on and shouted, "Damn! Pub Owner, what are you doing?"

It was a hasty judgment. It was a valid but bad judgment.

"I am the guardian! Kill me!"

As Aileen and Jang Hayoung glanced at me, I was already running towards Mark. At almost the same time, the executioners were also running.

[Guar di an.]

Mark's provocation worked well. The scattered executioners gathered in an instant.

[Kill the guar di an.]

I used Bookmark and Way of the Wind to quickly rush towards Mark. Mark's pale face was nearing.

[The exclusive skill 'Character List' is activated!]

[Character Summary]

Character: Mark Javier

Exclusive Attributes: Dimensional Mover (Hero), Retired S-Grade Mercenary (Rare), First Class Chef (Rare)

Sponsor: None

Exclusive Skills: Cooking Lv. 9, Ingredients Processing Lv. 8, Old Justice Lv. 4, Sword Dance Lv. 9, (Private Skill) Lv. 1…

* This incarnation has a special role in the scenario.

* Some of the skills will be private due to the scenario penalty.

In fact, unlike what I told Aileen, I couldn't know the exact 'position' of a person using Character List. However, I could see that someone had a special position and an unknown skill.

"It was a fleeting dream…"

The Dimensional Mover from the Gainz Planet, Mark Javier. He retired as a mercenary and become a chef after coming to the Demon Realm. Every character in the scenario had their own reasons.

Mark smiled at me as the scythes flew towards him. "I hope you succeed, Revolutionary."

I didn't know much about his life. He was a supporting role among countless people who died in Ways of Survival.

[The Syswitz Executioner has placed a mark of death on 'Mark Javier'.]

['Mark Javier' have been identified as the scapegoat of the Night.]

Ways of Survival had a huge 3,149 chapters. Some people probably thought this story was too long. They thought it was a long and boring story.

「But for Kim Dokja, 3,149 chapters was short.」

I always thought this. I wished that Ways of Survival was longer. I had read so many chapters but I was still curious about Ways of Survival.

"Don't worry. You won't die."

Thus, I would read a part I hadn't read from now on.

"Vicky! If I die…!" Mark shouted with a bit of embarrassment.

"Why are you so anxious to die? No one will die. At least, not in my story."

I blocked the scythes of the executioners and used a skill.

[The exclusive skill 'Bookmark' is activated!]

[The proficiency of Bookmark has increased and a new slot has been enabled.]

"I will place Knight of Revolution Mark Javier in the sixth slot."

[The character 'Mark Javier' has been registered in the sixth slot.]

[The number six bookmark is activated.]

[(Private skill Lv. 1)is enabled.]

The scythe of an executioner headed to the neck of Mark, who had closed his eyes.

[You have temporarily acquired the position of 'Guardian'!]

However, my side was a bit faster.

[Someone has used their vitality to protect 'Mark Javier'.]

The executioner's scythe stopped one inch from Mark's neck. The scythe stopped like it was caught in a net. Mark knew the meaning of this and his eyes widened.

[The guardian was successful and the mark of death has been released!]

Of course, Mark wasn't the only one to feel amazed.

[Is th ere ano ther guar di an?]

It was a voice filled with disbelief. The executioners scattered into the darkness one by one. The executioners couldn't kill anyone, unlike their purpose. I wasn't satisfied but it was still okay.

I sighed lightly and looked around where the survivors were staring at me. In particular, Jang Hayoung and Aileen were staring with shock. Judging from their expressions, it would be a long night.

[No one died tonight.]

As expected, Jang Hayoung and Mark didn't leave me alone.

"What are you really?"

"What is your position? Are you actually a guardian?"

I would've suffered even more if Aileen wasn't taking care of the citizens. I shook my head and sighed.

"I told you. I am a fake revolutionary." Thus, I can be a fake guardian."

"Explain it now…!"

"Just let it go. I will expose too much if I tell you more details. Don't you know how dangerous it is to disclose your information in a situation like this?"

"…"

"Let's say I tell you the information. If you are kidnapped and reveal my information to the duke, how do you think this revolution will end?"

In fact, this was an excuse that Yoo Joonghyuk frequently used when he found explaining was annoying. Now I was Yoo Joonghyuk so I didn't mind saying it.

"I am just Yoo Joonghyuk. Remember that."

「Kim Dokja thought: He feels like he is actually becoming Yoo Joonghyuk.」

Shut up.

「I miss Kim Dok ja who speaks with hono rifics.」

As I was playing with the Fourth Wall, the two men watched m with tired eyes and shook their heads.

"…You are a really difficult person."

A message was probably entering Yoo Joonghyuk's ears on Earth by now. Perhaps it was this message?

[Your story is being created in the 73rd Demon Realm.]

If he was smart, he would notice what was going on. However, it didn't matter. The atmosphere calmed down and I brought up the main subject.

"Let's talk about work. There is something that broke my expectations. There is a guy attacking using the rules of the game."

"…I heard that Duke Syswitz isn't a schemer. Do you think the duke has moved directly?"

"I don't think so. I think it is someone else."

"Still, tonight went well. Isn't it more favourable to us if there are two people who can use the power of a guardian?"

"Not necessarily. Those guys won't use the 'mark' tomorrow."

"What?"

"If it is hard to kill me then they will try to hurt as many people as possible."

"Ah…!"

If the mark wasn't used, the Night wouldn't end until the sun rose.

"Many people were already hurt tonight. We didn't win. We lost."

Today people learnt to fear the executioners again. Once tomorrow came, people's attitudes would be clear. People would be afraid of the duke again and be afraid of the revolution. The enemies wouldn't miss this gap.

Mark's expression became darker and he opened his mouth. "…Then what do we do now?"

"We don't need to do anything. Maybe someone else will move first."

I had seen numerous Revolutionary Games in Ways of Survival. If things were like this then the next development was certain.

"The second 'position' will appear."

"The second?"

"Yes. A position other than revolutionary, guardian and executioner."

I just said this when someone knocked on the door. It was Aileen. "… Revolutionary, someone has come to find you."

I saw her strangely tense face and knew that the movements of the enemy had already begun.

"He says he is a spy."

Chapter 203: Ep. 38 - Fake Revolutionary, V

Spy…

I once read a phrase about the 'spies' in Ways of Survival.

「All positions in the Revolutionary Game belong to either the 'Revolutionary' or the 'Dictator'. There is only one position that isn't fixed and that is the 'Spy'.」

The most dangerous and most cowardly position in this Revolutionary Game. Therefore, Ways of Survival described the spy as followed:

「The team that gets the spy can win the game.」

In the Revolutionary Game where information was a top priority, the status of the Spy was great.

It was because the spy could check the position information of the desired person. There was a limit of 10 people a day but this alone was enough for the spy to shake the entire board.

Right now, a person claiming to be the spy was in front of me. "Are you Yoo Joonghyuk?"

The appearance of the man didn't go well with the Demon Realm. He gave off an ambiguous feeling. No, to be precise… what was it? Why did I get deja vu from this face? I didn't recall a similar appearance in Ways of Survival.

I replied to the man, "That's right. I am Yoo Joonghyuk."

By the way, the man's reaction was subtly strange.

"…Hrmm." Is that so?"

At this moment, I realized something. "By the way, you know my name."

Usually he should be asking if I was really the revolutionary. Yet he first confirmed that my name was 'Yoo Joonghyuk'.

The man shrugged. "Haha, it is a famous name."

Unlike his words, the man was stubbornly staring at my appearance. It was as if he was contrasting it with something he knew. I became certain.

「This person knows Yoo Joonghyuk.」

I quickly recalled Ways of Survival but I couldn't make a guess. In the first place, Yoo Joonghyuk was a regressor and this was officially before he entered the Demon Realm.

There wasn't anyone here who should know Yoo Joonghyuk well. If he was good at observing, he might've seen Yoo Joonghyuk by watching the Earth scenario but… it was unlikely.

Due to my poor reaction, Jang Hayoung, Aileen and Mark were nervously glancing between me and the man. Maybe they instinctively felt something.

I decided to find out the identity of my opponent. "What is your name?"

"I am Aurelius."

"…Aurelius?"

I hesitated for a moment. I remembered hearing this name somewhere. It wasn't Ways of Survival but somewhere else.

"It is an unusual name."

"So they tell me."

"Then you are a spy?"

"That's right."

[The exclusive skill 'Lie Detection Lv. 3' is activated!]

[During the Revolutionary scenario, you can't use the Lie Detection skill.]

…As expected, this skill didn't work. I had guessed it.

There was a scene where Yoo Joonghyuk of the 111th regression had been frustrated after learning that this skill didn't work. I tried it just in case but it was as I figured.

Well, if Lie Detection could be freely used then the difficulty of this scenario would be very easy. Fortunately, I didn't only have Lie Detection.

[The exclusive skill 'Character List' is activated!]

Of course, I couldn't discern the exact position of the opponent after using Character List. Nevertheless, I could at least figure out if he had a special position or not.

[The person's information can't be accessed through Character List.]

[This person isn't registered on the Character List.]

…What? I was confused for a moment.

[The information on the corresponding person is being updated.]

[This person's information will be added in the next update.]

It wasn't the first time I heard this message but it was unexpected. The man didn't know my situation and asked,

"Huh? What's wrong?"

A person who couldn't be read using Character List. It meant this man was a person who didn't contribute to the original Ways of Survival novel. In other words, the man was a variable I created.

But how was it possible? This was the Demon Realm, not Earth…

I was hesitating when Mark asked, "Did you come here to join our side?"

"Maybe, maybe not."

"What does that mean?"

"I came to save you. It is obvious that the revolution will be destroyed at this rate."

"…You are coming to sprinkle the ashes even though the meal hasn't been cookied yet?"

"It isn't a joke. Public opinion regarding you isn't good. I don't know if you have seen outside."

Certainly, the outside had been noisy for a while. I heard a knocking on the door of the office. We glanced at each other before heading straight outside. Loud voices were heard as soon as I went outside.

"Revolutionary!"

Countless gazes focused on me after someone shouted. It was a crowd of nearly 100 people. Some of them shouted towards me in exaggerated voices.

"It is because of you! If it wasn't for you!"

"My wife was hurt!"

Someone even threw stones. To be honest, I was a bit surprised. There was some damage but it wasn't enough for them to come out to such an extreme degree.

The voices continued, "It was better when the Night came once every three days!"

Before the Revolutionary scenario was invoked, Night only came once every three days. Now Night was invoked two days in a row. It was natural for people's fears to be heightened.

Jang Hayoung shouted towards these people. "You crazy… what are you crazy fuckers talking about? Are you so pathetic? It is okay for one person to die every three days?"

Some people heard this and stepped back. Jang Hayoung continued to shout.

"If you want to live that way then leave the industrial complex!"

"W-What does a little boy like you know? Do you have any idea of what it is like outside?"

The voices were frightened. Everyone here was well aware of it.

「Civilians belong to the scenario of the industrial complex. If they leave here, they will be given an exile penalty for leaving the scenario area.」

The exile penalty. There was no one in the Demon Realm who didn't know what it was.

Thus, people would rather turn the roulette of death once every three days. Now that the revolutionary emerged, the interval of the roulette had decreased from three days to one day.

"D-Do we have to experience Night every day from now on?"

"What are you going to do? What are you going to do in the future?"

The voices were filled with panic.

Aileen and the other council members tried to restrain them but the crowd's actions became fiercer. I turned my head and saw Aurelius staring at me with a despicable smile.

"Do you now understand what's going on?"

A revolutionary who didn't have the support of the citizens was bound to be defeated.

I smiled bitterly. "You are on the duke's side."

"It isn't important. The important thing is your choice."

"So what do you want?"

"Surrender to the duke. Everyone else can live except for you. In any case, your revolution is going to fail."

"I will be the sacrifice?"

"I'm not saying that. I'll help you find a way to live."

"How?"

"If you are really Yoo Joonghyuk, I will protect you."

"Doesn't the duke want to kill me?"

"My backer is far beyond Duke Syswitz."

An existence that Duke Syswitz couldn't be compared to. I was quite intrigued by the suggestion. If I wasn't Yoo Joonghyuk then I might've thought about it for a moment.

"Of course, I will refuse."

"I see. You will regret it."

The next moment, Aurelius disappeared. In the midst of the crowd, someone shouted, "Let's give him to the duke!"

"The duke said he will end the scenario if we hand him in!"

"Then the Night won't come!"

The voices that came out spread like wildfire. It was very interesting. In fact, I had seen a similar sight before. Maybe it was during the Mino Soft labour negotiations.

"Everything is over when the next Night comes! We have to catch the revolutionary before that!"

The crowd was moving with overwhelming agitation. The people were so terrified that it led to a backlash against me.

"S-Somebody grab him…!"

I stared at them for a moment before stepping towards the crowd. The crowd was confused as I walked forward without any fear. My surroundings split apart like Moses' wave because the people tried to avoid contact with me.

"Are you that afraid of the executioner?"

I spoke as I pulled out Unbroken Faith. Then the Blade of Faith vibrated and a white light burst from it. My voice filled with magic power poured cold water on the crowd. A few people in the crowd were surprised by the wave of magic power and fell on their asses, which others backed away. I spoke towards them in a serene voice,

"Everybody has forgotten that this isn't the Night."

I raised the sword towards the air. The magical wave of Purest Sword Force poured from the heart of the gold dragon and filled the dark sky with a white light. My actions frightened people and they exclaimed, "W-What…!"

"He wants to kill people!"

"Aaaaack! The revolutionary is killing civilians!"

The surprised people screamed and Aileen's shouts could be heard. However, I ignored all sounds and ran to the centre of the crowd. Then I swung myself towards someone in the crowd without hesitation.

"First one."

He was one of the men who had been inciting the crowd. The man was pierced in the heart and couldn't even scream. He just watched me with wide eyes as he died.

[The exclusive skill 'Fourth Wall' is activated!]

The sensation of murder was gnawing at my hand. Obviously, I was affected by the move to kill someone. It was due to the habit that formed from trying to keep the King of No Killing attribute.

However, today I didn't hesitate a single bit. It was as if I really had become Yoo Joonghyuk.

"The second one."

The blade moved through the air and blood scattered. A second man's head flew away. Blood splashed, wetting my clothes while the fearful expressions of the people around me could be seen.

I moved my sword and stabbed the last man in the back.

"The last one."

I killed three people in an instant and looked around. There were constant screams as the grieving civilians watched me. It wasn't just the citizens.

Aileen, Jang Hayoung and Mark were the same. They didn't understand what was going on and panic filled their faces.

The revolutionary killed ordinary civilians. Nothing I said would be a convincing explanation. Nevertheless, this was something I never needed to explain.

[A change in the Revolutionary scenario has occurred!]

Everyone looked up as the message was suddenly heard. It was followed by subsequent messages.

[An executioner has been killed by someone.]

[An executioner has been killed by someone.]

[An executioner has been killed by someone.]

.

.

.

[Current number of executioners remaining: 7.]

People's expressions changed at the messages.

A total of three people died. The number of dead executioners was also three.

The people watching me with trembling eyes now screamed and retreated from the dead bodies. It was as if they were looking at something terrible.

"U-Uwaaaack!"

"E-Executioner? They were hiding here?"

"Aaron was an executioner! Oh my god!"

Executioners hid among the civilians. In the midst of this colossal betrayal, the crowd gradually realized.

The executioners had died. The executioners they thought to be invincible had died like a normal man.

It was a story they had never experienced before. In front of this story, people were being inspired in unexpected ways.

One man rose first and drew a sword. His eyes were blazing with anger. "S-Son of a bitch! Kill those sons of a bitches!"

Those who had just been threatening me started to trample on the corpses. The seething heat of the crowd was several times their previous emotions. They had all lost something to the executioner. This was an act of miserable revenge but it was the best they could do.

I leisurely strolled through the crowd. Then I grabbed the neck of a man.

"Kuaack!"

"You still have the great skill to incite others." The man who tried to escape struggled in my hands. "How are you unscathed, Department Head Han Myungoh?"

Chapter 204: Ep. 39 - Unidentified Wall, I

I left Aileen, Mark and Jang Hayoung to clean up outside and dragged the unconscious Han Myungoh back to the office.

To be honest, it was a revelation. I never thought Han Myungoh would still be alive.

Department Head Han Myungoh. Before we reached the third scenario, he was cursed by Demon King Asmodeus after killing the dark keeper. I thought he had died before I entered Chungmuro and hadn't expected to meet him in the Demon Realm.

I placed Han Myungoh on a chair in the meeting room. I used a story suppressor that I had borrowed from Aileen.

「Kim Dokja thought: The department head has aged a lot.」

There were many small wrinkles on Han Myungoh's face. Moreover, his whole skin was blackened. Putting aside the wrinkles, the skin discolouration was a sign of a species variation. The longer I looked, the more I could see the old face. Still, many human traces were missing and it was hard to know without looking closely.

Yoo Sangah. Lee Gilyoung. My mother and Song Minwoo… They were the people I couldn't confirm using Character List.

All of them were people who were involved with me before the scenario or at the start of the scenario. Han Myungoh was also one of them. They survived in this world because of me. That's why I couldn't read their information with Character List.

"I know you're awake so get up."

"Uhh… you…"

Han Myungoh… I asked the spy, no, the self-styled Aurelius. "Aurelius. Did you pick the name personally?"

"…!"

Han Myungoh opened his eyes and I was filled with a vague feeling of certainty. Aurelius. This was the decisive clue that convinced me this person was Han Myungoh.

「A web novel? Hey Kim Dokja-ssi. How much time do you have to read this shit?」

During my days at Mino Soft, I had heard these words after I was caught reading a web novel.

「If you are going to read a book then you should read something like this. Read a good book if you want to build up your specs.」

Han Myungoh was holding the book called 'Meditations', written by Marcus Aurelius. The first few pages of the book were completely discoloured…

"You usually carried the Meditations book that you can't read. Your bluffing still remains."

"W-Who the hell are you?"

Han Myungoh didn't recognize me at all. It was because I changed my face ahead of time. If I hadn't done that, I might be the one to fall into the trap.

I smirked and asked, "Who do you think?"

At this moment, something flashed through Han Myungoh's eyes.

"D-Don't tell me…!"

As expected, Han Myungoh was Han Myungoh. Even the parachute department head needed to do some work to survive. I quietly brought a finger to Han Myungoh's lips that were opening.

"Shhh."

"Oof. Oof. Ooof!"

"If you say anything then you will die here. Think to yourself. Do you understand?"

I was worried about another transcendental existence listening. There were no dokkaebi channels here. However, the lack of a channel didn't mean there was no way for other beings to peep.

[The Fourth Wall says that the demon king 'Devil of Lust and Wrath' is looking at stupid Kim Dokja.]

…Better than expected. It could tell me something like this?

「A hem.」

Devil of Lust and Wrath…

Like constellations, the demon kings had their own modifiers. After all, they were fallen constellations. Of course, there were those who didn't use the modifiers as resistance against the constellations…

If I remembered correctly, 'Devil of Lust and Wrath' was the nickname for Demon King Asmodeus. Han Myungoh seemed to be his subordinate. It was a high-level position where his vision was shared.

"Shouldn't you pay coins if you want to keep peeking?"

Han Myungoh's eyes widened again when he saw me speaking towards the air. He noticed who I was talking to.

Small sparks appeared in the air. If this continued, Asmodeus was likely to gain my information. One day I would reveal my story but now wasn't the time.

I thought for a moment before pulling a sword out of my coat's subspace. It was the Four Yin Demonic Beheading Sword.

It had been a really long time since I used it to destroy the Absolute Throne. It was a sword that could temporarily evolve to a star relic if the power of the Big Dipper was borrowed.

It was a sword that could break through the constellation's affinity with the star relic. Originally, I required the help of the Big Dipper to manifest that strength. Now that I was a constellation, I could use the power of this sword without their help.

[The Four Yin Demonic Beheading Sword has responded to your story!]

"If you aren't going to pay then get lost."

I swung the sword over Han Myungoh's head. The message appeared as I swing the sword and strong sparks appeared in the air.

[The connection between the Demon King 'Asmodeus' and his household member is temporarily disconnected.]

Han Myungohwas now shocked beyond surprise. He never thought I would have the power to break off his link with the demon king. I warned Han Myungoh.

"Here, my name is Yoo Joonghyuk." Nod if you understand."

Han Myungoh stared at me with a complicated gaze and barely nodded after thinking about it. He made the correct judgment because he knew that his life was precious. I released his mouth and Han Myungoh gasped as he looked up at me.

"H-How the hell… I heard you were definitely dead…"

"I'm not dead. Thus, I'm alive."

The terrified Han Myungoh asked, "W-What are you going to do with me?"

"We'll see. I'm thinking."

"H-Help me! The years we spent together aren't short!"

"I don't have any good memories of those years."

"I-I am a spy. I can help your revolution! I can see other people's positions!"

It seemed to be true that Han Myungoh was a spy. Indeed, the spy didn't emerge in the 111th regression. It wouldn't be strange if a surprising person appeared as the spy.

"I don't need a spy. I found the executioners without you."

Han Myungoh's eyes once again shook at my words. Then Han Myungoh spoke the question he had been curious about. "That reminds me… how did you find the executioners?"

I roughly knew what was going on but I decided to be fooled for a bit. "I didn't know they were executioners…"

"What? Then how…"

My words were true. The descriptions of some executioners appeared in Ways of Survival but it was written in passing and I didn't remember them. It would also be hard to recognize just based on the description.

I didn't kill them because I knew they were executioners. I just used a skill to figure out that they had a special position.

｢ That information was enough for Kim Dokja. ｣

Han Myungoh didn't know anything and exclaimed, "The people you killed could've been innocent or have important positions! Y-Yes! For example, a fighter or…!"

"Stop talking about useless things. If you are trying to drag out the time because you think other nobles will come to rescue you… they won't come."

"Ha, haha. What do you mean?"

"It is only the executioners that the citizens are afraid of. Without them, the nobles can't easily invade the civilians' area."

Now that he realized that things were wrong, Han Myungoh's struggles became worse. He stared at me with red eyes and yelled,

"If you kill me, you will receive the demon king's wrath!"

My previous self would've been afraid.

"Do I look like I'm afraid of the demon king?"

I raised my constellation status. It was to such a slight extent that the dukes of the industrial complexes and the demon kings of other demon realms wouldn't notice. No matter how light, I was a constellation and it was sufficient to kill Han Myungoh.

Han Myungoh trembled before finally giving up. "…What do you want?"

It was the question I had been waiting for. In any case, Han Myungoh was someone who had made contact with the demons here. It would be wiser to use him as much as possible.

"Make an Oath of Existence. Do you know what it is?"

"T-That…"

"Do it if you want to live. Or you can go out and be beaten to death by the common people."

Han Myungoh sighed. "What do you want me to swear?"

"You won't interfere in the revolution. You won't lie. You will truthfully answer any questions I ask and cooperate with me wholeheartedly."

"…For how long?"

"One year."

"Shit…"

It was better to have a deadline when making such a violent oath. If I forced a permanent oath then the object of the oath might go crazy. If they were given hope that the oath would one day end, the other person would agree to the oath more easily.

"…I understand. I will make the oath." Sparks sprung from Han Myungoh's heart and the oath was completed.

Now there was a question I wanted to ask Han Myungoh. "Department Head Han Myungoh. How are you still alive?"

Han Myungoh started telling his story. The hardships he suffered after separating from us at Chungmuro and how hard it was for him…

He tried to make himself look as poor as possible and I interrupted in the middle.

"Tell me the important things."

"W-What do you mean?"

"At that time, you obviously received the demon king's curse. How did you become a subordinate of the demon king? Asmodeus isn't that simple an existence."

One of the 72 demon kings, Asmodeus. No matter how long Han Myungoh's tongue, he didn't have the ability to bewitch the demon king.

In addition, Han Myungoh didn't have a unique story. The demon kings were just as jaded and bored as the constellations. The story of a department head of a big company wouldn't be sufficient to even talk to the demon king.

Han Myungoh licked his lips for a long time and his expression distorted in a miserable manner. I was about to rush him when Han Myungoh opened his mouth. "…I gave birth."

"Huh?"

"Kuock… I, I…

I thought I heard wrong. I was about to ask again when Han Myungoh burst out crying. "I gave birth to a child!"

Chapter 205: Ep. 39 - Unidentified Wall, II

Unfortunately, Han Myungoh's words didn't continue. Han Myungoh was knocked unconscious because he received a penalty from disclosing some of the details of his contract with Asmodeus.

I felt a bit sad because it was broken off at the exciting part.

「Kim Dokja thought: In any case, the demon kings and constellations have started to show interest in this world.」

The land of abandoned scenarios, the Demon Realm. This world, which had long been shunned by the constellations, was starting to receive attention again.

–Humans can't beat them! Compared to them, we are just insignificant bugs!

Han Myungoh had said this several times. He had been in the Demon Realm for several months so he was well aware of the strength of the senior nobles and demon kings.

This despair was understandable. In fact, even the early-mid Yoo Joonghyuk had struggled in the Demon Realm. Of course, that was Yoo Joonghyuk's story. I was different.

My stomach started growling because I had stayed awake all night. I headed to the pub and asked Mark to cook some simple dishes. Jang Hayoung was sitting absentmindedly at a table. I quietly approached him and sat down.

"Hiik!"

"You say that every time."

Jang Hayoung stared at me with an ugly expression and screamed, "What is it? What? What other issue are you coming to create?"

"Why are you so grouchy?"

"…Never mind."

"Why? What happened?"

Jang Hayoung couldn't easily answer my question and stared at the plate in front of him. I knew that I couldn't urge him and just waited.

Mark glanced between Jang Hayoung and I. It was unknown what he was thinking but he suddenly winked. After a while, Jang Hayoung opened his mouth.

"Why did you let me join the Revolutionary Army?"

"What?"

"I'm not a guardian or revolutionary. I'm not the chairman of the Civil Council like Aileen."

[The character 'Jang Hayoung' has used Lethargy Lv. 4.]

[The character 'Jang Hayoung' has used Self-Loathing Lv. 10.]

Damn, it was starting. I had forgotten for a while. If Yoo Joonghyuk suffered from the 'regression depression' then this person suffered from a thorough 'self-loathing'.

I didn't think there were any main characters of Ways of Survival who were sane.

The small shoulders quivered. I would feel better if I hit him on the shoulder but it would be hard for him to feel comforted.

[Your understanding of the character 'Jang Hayoung' has increased.]

Jang Hayoung stared out the window. He seemed to be looking at Aileen who was cleaning up the previous incident. Jang Hayoung spoke again, "…Night will come again. Will you still be able to protect the people?"

"Maybe not," I answered honestly. "I don't know all the executioners. It is impossible to catch all of them before tomorrow's Night."

There were seven executioners who hadn't been caught.

If those seven people made up their minds and started attacking people, tomorrow night would be a bloody festival. I added before Jang Hayoung could fall into despair.

"There is no other way to stop it. We must find the fighter."

The fighter. It was the only position that could deal with an executioner during the Night. If I could find that position, it wouldn't be unreasonable to restore the atmosphere.

However, Mark interrupted from where he was cooking. "…I'm sorry but there probably won't be a fighter."

"What? Mark, how do you know this?"

"There is no one from the old generation to pass on the skills of a 'fighter'."

Unlike other positions, a fighter could only receive the position through 'succession'. Mark kept speaking. "After the fighter died protecting the former revolutionary, there was no successor."

I already knew this information. In fact, there was no fighter in this industrial complex. In the original novel, Yoo Joonghyuk had been very confused by this. I bit into the sandwich that Mark gave me.

"If there isn't a successor then we have to create one. Inherit the position from another fighter."

"As far as I know, there are no fighters left in the 73rd Demon Realm."

"I'm not going to find them in the Demon Realm."

"What?"

I glanced at Jang Hayoung. Now was the time. I spoke to the blank-looking Jang Hayoung. "Hey, talk to the wall."

"W-What does that mean?"

"You have a 'wall'. Every time you try to learn something, that wall blocks you."

"H-How do you know about the wall?" The startled Jang Hayoung stared at me.

"There are ways for me to know," I smirked and replied.

Other people might not know it but Jang Hayoung had a 'wall'. To be precise, it was a wall called the Unidentified Wall. This wall had been blocking Jang Hayoung's growth so far.

"Isn't it because of the wall that you never learnt any skills? That's why you're like this. Lethargic, self-loathing…"

"W-What?"

"I know you think it is a wall of talent. However, it isn't a wall of talent. It has a different purpose."

"No, how do you…!"

"In any case, quickly talk to it. You can communicate with that wall."

Jang Hayoung's face turned red after hearing that he could talk to the wall. I wanted to tell him not to worry. After all, I was in the same boat in regards to talking to a wall. Jang Hayoung hesitated before slowing opening his mouth.

"T-That…"

"Quickly."

A moment passed before Jang Hayoung triggered the skill.

[The character 'Jang Hayoung' has used Unidentified Wall Lv. 1!]

Jang Hayoung's pupils were white. It wasn't visible to me but perhaps in Jang Hayoung's vision, he would be surrounded by a white wall.

A pure white wall with nothing written on it. It wasn't strange for Jang Hayoung to get a mental illness if he was blocked by such a wall every time he tried to learn a skill.

Jang Hayoung carefully opened his mouth. "Excuse me… Wall-nim?"

Surprisingly, I also heard a message the moment Jang Hayoung spoke.

[The 'Unidentified Wall' is giving off a wrinkled impression.]

I didn't know why. Maybe it was because I had a similar 'wall'. Either way, it was good.

[The 'Unidentified Wall' is looking at its master.]

[The 'Unidentified Wall' says: You aren't qualified yet.]

As expected, it was just as petulant as the original novel. I was prepared.

"Hey, don't do that and give your permission. If you don't help, your kid will die."

Jang Hayoung was surprised by my sudden words and stared at me. The next moment, the Unidentified Wall spoke.

[The 'Unidentified Wall' says: Who are you?]

[The 'Unidentified Wall' says: How can you hear my voice?]

"It isn't important who I am. Just give your permission. If it is level one, can't he use the minimum of features? Why are you blocking him?"

[The 'Unidentified Wall' is frowning.]

It was angry at my words and sparks appeared around Jang Hayoung. The probability was putting pressure on me, a constellation. Myth rated attributes were truly different.

…This wouldn't be as easy as I expected. I stepped back from Jang Hayoung.

The sparks that suddenly appeared in the air surprised Mark and the other pub customers. Once I had them evacuated, I opened my mouth again. "Are you going to keep acting like this? It isn't good for you. Won't you have to find a new host if he dies?"

The sparks of probability once again appeared. It was a measure of Jang Hayoung's strong potential that he could create such a force with the power of a single skill despite not being a constellation. Thus, I needed to awaken Jang Hayoung here.

[The 'Unidentified Wall' says: You are impudent.]

The sparks that burst from Jang Hayoung's body became increasingly intense. I was a bit baffled because I didn't know the reaction would be to this extent. It happened the moment I thought a small probability storm would occur here.

[The exclusive skill 'Fourth Wall' is strongly activated!]

The sparks around me calmed down at once. To be exact, a larger spark seemed to have swallowed the surroundings sparks.

[The Fourth Wall greets the Unidentified Wall.]

[The 'Unidentified Wall' is surprised.]

I was also shocked. The 'walls' could converse with each other?

[The Fourth Wall greets the Unidentified Wall with pleasure.]

Jang Hayoung's face was turning reddish-white. He was clearly seeing this scene.

The Fourth Wall opened its mouth. 「Fri end.」

[The Unidentified Wall is starting to shake.]

I didn't know about the communication between the walls but just by saying hello, the air around Jang Hayoung started to distort into a mysterious form.

[The 'Unidentified Wall' says: You, what are you…?]

The air around me shook faintly. The Fourth Wall was moving in a form different from usual.

I couldn't express it well. One thing was clear. It seemed to be angry.

[The 'Unidentified Wall' is complaining about the pain!]

[The 'Unidentified Wall' is complaining about the pain!]

[The 'Unidentified Wall' is complaining about the pain!]

There were brilliant sparks as Jang Hayoung grabbed his head and screamed. How much time passed? There was a heavy feeling and the Unidentified Wall sent a message.

[The 'Unidentified Wall' says: W-Who are you?]

Honestly, I had no idea why Jang Hayoung had such a wall.

Ways of Survival didn't explain exactly what the Unidentified Wall was. I thought it would mention it in the ending but… of course, this didn't mean it was impossible to predict the identity of this wall.

The existence of this wall was presumably related to Jang Hayoung's job before he moved dimensions.

"This is the first time I have seen…"

Jang Hayoung was staring into the air with a very perplexed expression.

[The Unidentified Wall has recognized its master as the incarnation 'Jang Hayoung'.]

It was a complicated procedure but with the help of the Fourth Wall, Jang Hayoung succeeded in being acknowledged by the Unidentified Wall. Then a new window popped up in front of Jang Hayoung for the very first time.

[Enter the modifier or name of the presence you want to send a message to.]

Thanks to the Fourth Wall, I also saw the message. Jang Hayoung stared at me.
"…W-What is this? What should I enter?"

In fact, it was because of this ability that I had to bring Jang Hayoung with me. I had to borrow the wall's strength through Jang Hayoung so that I could have the power to fight against those fucking nebulae.

"Please enter the names I will tell you."

"…Yes."

I called out several names. They were all names of characters who had fought with fighters in the Demon Realm in the original novel of Ways of Survival.

Then another window popped up.

[Please enter a message to send.]

"What should I write?"

"I want to become a 'fighter'. Please help."

"…Will it work?"

"I don't know. Just try it first."

Jang Hayoung sent the message. Then we waited. One minute, two minutes. Three minutes… 10 minutes.

Jang Hayoung asked, "Did I do it properly?"

"…I guess it failed."

The damn Star Stream had no consideration for newbies. I asked for help so earnestly but no one sent a reply. We sent a few more messages.

[I'm looking for someone who will make me a 'fighter'.]

[I need the skill of the 'fighter'.]

[Please help.]

No matter how many times he sent the message, there was no reply. Maybe they thought it was a spam message and didn't answer… damn.

I had no talent for writing so I didn't know what message I should send to get a reply. It would've been nice of Han Sooyoung was here. She would've come up with a good idea.

Jang Hayoung frowned and thought about something for a while. Then he opened his mouth. "…I need to get a reply? Can I write what I want?"

"Have you thought of something?"

Jang Hayoung lightly nodded and typed his message.

[I am a 15 year old schoolgirl.]

"Hey, wait—"

Before I could stop him, Jang Hayoung pressed the Send Message button.

[The message was sent to random constellations because no recipient was entered.]

The message wasn't even sent to a particular person. I shouted in a frustrated manner. "You are dealing with constellations! Do you think that would work?"

"…Just watch."

What the hell did this guy eat…

The next moment.

[A reply has arrived!]

We stared at each other with bemused expressions and confirmed the reply. To my surprise, the constellation who replied was someone I knew.

[Sender—Abyssal Black Flame Dragon]

Chapter 206: Ep. 39 - Unidentified Wall, III

Jang Hayoung started talking in earnest with the Abyssal Black Flame Dragon and laughed with pleasure. I watched Jang Hayoung and slightly scolded him,

"What's so funny?"

"It's just funny to talk to this kid."

Jang Hayoung was a strange guy who treated a high ranking constellation as a friend but the even more ridiculous thing was that the Abyssal Black Flame Dragon had sent a reply.

This jerk only cared about Han Sooyoung so why was he responding to the wrong message?

Then as if to defend the black dragon, Jang Hayoung shook his head. "I don't think he is a bad guy like you think."

"What nonsense is this? Did you fall for him?"

"He is more gentle when speaking than you think."

"Gentle? A bastard who replied to a 15 year old schoolgirl is gentle?"

I wondered if I should explain the nasty context when Jang Hayoung replied, "He replied because I am 15 years old."

"What? He replied because you are 15 years old? What a complete trash."

I knew that the Abyssal Black Flame Dragon was cruel and tasteless but I didn't know he had such preferences. I was suddenly a bit worried for Han Sooyoung.

"Why are you so agitated? He is just happy to have a friend. He says he is 15 years old."

"What bullshit! I don't know how old he is but is there a 15 year old constellation?"

At this moment, a setting suddenly rose in my mind.

「The constellations living in the eternal Star Stream are accustomed to confining themselves in certain frameworks to protect their sense of self. A representative example is age. They tend to transfer themselves to a specific age and think they are that age.」

…Don't tell me? Even so, wasn't 15 years old too much? Really?

Then a scream was heard from inside the meeting room. It was Han Myungoh. I turned and spoke to the startled Jang Hayoung.

"I have to go talk to him. I'll be back in a minute."

"I know. What should I ask?"

"Just let him go. In any case, he isn't a warrior. I'd rather you talk to someone else. Don't you have the list I gave you earlier? Try them again."

Jang Hayoung nodded. I was uneasy after seeing his excited expression but I thought it would be okay. This was originally his ability.

The awakening of the Unidentified Wall was a bit faster than the original novel but this was the best for now. The industrial complex's revolution was impossible without the help of the wall.

I opened the door to the meeting room. Han Myungoh had just woken up and was covered in sweat.

"Why did I faint?"

I quietly closed the door of the meeting room and replied, "You fainted after remembering the pain of childbirth."

Sweat was flowing down Han Myungoh's face like he had a nightmare.

"That's it?"

"Asmodeus probably cursed you as well."

"That son of a bitch…"

Han Myungoh expressed his hatred for the demon king more directly than before. It was originally a dangerous thing but now he had left Asmodeus' sight thanks to the Four Yin Demonic Beheading Sword.

I pulled out the chair again and sat back down.

"Listen again. What child did you give birth to and why did you receive Asmodeus' favour?"

"…I first have to explain why I had a child."

"I have a rough idea. Is it due to the dark keeper that we fought before?"

Right before we split apart, Han Myungoh had been affected by the parasitic tentacles of the dark keeper. Usually, such a thing didn't necessarily mean the conception of a demon species but it happened directly with Han Myungoh

"That isn't the case. It isn't because of the dark keeper that I had the child."

"Then…"

"It is because of the curse."

Asmodeus' curse dealt the final blow to Han Myungoh who was infected by the dark keeper. Asmodeus' curse consumed probability to realize the 'most terrible thing' that the target thought of. In other words…

"I understand. By the way, is that possible? A man's body giving birth…"

"Don't ask about that part."

I lightly nodded. It was the minimum courtesy for the elder who had an unbelievable experience. We were silent for a moment. It suddenly felt weird that I was talking to Han Myungoh like this.

「Kim Dokja thought: It is a strange feeling.」

Before the destruction came, Han Myungoh was a person who made life hard for 'office worker' Kim Dokja. He was one of the top-ranked bosses to be avoided. Certainly, there were days like that. It was a time when I felt bitter over the 3,000 convenience store bento and when I had to count every bit of my monthly salary.

Now those days were gone. Kim Dokja and Han Myungoh were no longer an office worker and department head. Instead, they were talking about a 'demon king'.

"Kim Dok… no, Yoo Joonghyuk-ssi. Do you know what it's like to be a father?"

I was a bit baffled by Han Myungoh's sudden words. "I don't know."

"I learnt."

In fact, it was hard to say if Han Myungoh should be called a mother or a father but I decided to move on because this wasn't the important thing. Han Myungoh had a serious expression.

"It was painful."

The words sounded much more painful than any of Han Myungoh's previous statements.

"I was also happy."

I looked at Han Myungoh with surprise. At this moment, I realized the identity of my strange feeling. Maybe I didn't want to admit it. Everybody changed. Whether they were good or evil, a child or an adult.

"She is a very pretty daughter."

"I would love to see her once. Is she in the Demon Realm?"

"Now she isn't with me." His expression darkened and I got a hunch.

"Then…?"

"It is a long story. Will you help?"

"Tell me first. I would like to hear your story."

Han Myungoh hadn't come directly into the household of the demon king. In a place that I didn't know, Han Myungoh's story had continued. He took his daughter and broke through the scenario alone.

Capture the flag.

The war of kings.

The five disasters.

I couldn't believe such a story had happened in places I couldn't see. I couldn't believe that Han Myungoh could show such devotion to someone. On the other hand, I had to admit it.

I was no longer the old Kim Dokja. The man in front of me wasn't the old Han Myungoh. I didn't know if the birth of his child was the trigger. The only thing that was clear was that Han Myungoh had changed.

"It was tough."

"Yes, it was hard. I almost died many times. At the end, I fell into a crisis I couldn't escape from."

He was finally driven to the brink at a time when the Dark Castle scenario hadn't officially started yet. Han Myungoh was surrounded by demons and demon nobles and realized he could no longer defend his child.

Then he prayed for the first time in his life. He prayed for someone to protect his child. If this child lived, he would do anything. To his surprise, a presence answered his prayers.

–A beautiful child.

"It was Asmodeus."

"…Did the demon king steal your child?"

I felt bad because of the terrible things I imagined. Asmodeus was the Devil of Lust and Wrath. It was obvious what would happen if a child entered his hands. However, Han Myungoh's expression was calm.

"She is safe. After all, she is a child born from Asmodeus' curse. And… the demon king isn't in a situation where he can touch my daughter."

"What does that mean?"

"The demon king has made my daughter his 'incarnation body'."

I seemed to know what happened.

It might be a whim but the demon king Asmodeus made Han Myungoh's child one of his incarnation bodies. As one of the child's parents, Han Myungoh was given a demon noble title.

"…That's how I became a demon."

After hearing this, I felt that Han Myungoh's life was very difficult. His life might be considered successfully because he got a title but it might be considered a failure because his child was taken…

Han Myungoh's eyes were sombre as he opened his mouth again.

"I want to save my daughter."

For a moment, I thought I heard wrong. What did he want?

"I won't speak long words. Help me. I won't forget your grace if you help me this once."

What was going on?

He filmed a life theatre all by himself and now he wanted me to help him?

"You've been watching me for a long time and should know well. I am a human who is a coward. However, this is something I can't concede on."

"…"

"Last night was out of my expectations. I was scared but I actually didn't hurt anyone. The executioners were excited by the appearance of the guardian and did what they wanted."

Han Myungoh swore the Oath of Existence and couldn't lie to me. Then this wasn't a lie. I decided to respond rationally. "I'm sorry but I have no plans to fight Asmodeus."

This would become complicated if one of the 72 demon kings were lost. It would attract foreign forces when the revolution hadn't even begun yet.

Han Myungoh's next reaction was surprising. "You don't have to fight Asmodeus. You just have to continue doing what you are doing. Start a revolution and kill the duke. I will help you."

"…Aren't you on the duke's side?"

"Originally that was the case. Now that things have become like this, I think it will be okay to help you."

"What do you mean?"

"Asmodeus didn't want me to help the duke. He had a suggestion for me. If I made the story he wanted, he would return my daughter. That's why I attached myself to Duke Syswitz."

This part wasn't in the original novel. It was no wonder. From the beginning, Han Myungoh wasn't present in the novel.

I struggled for a moment before asking, "What story does the demon king want?"

"The king of the 73rd Demon Realm."

Han Myungoh slowly raised his head and stared at me. Han Myungoh's eyes were exactly the same as the interviewer on the day I joined Mino Soft.

"The demon king… he told me to make the '73rd Demon King' with my own hands."

Yoo Joonghyuk was starting at the night sky with indifferent eyes.

The sky with different constellations from Earth was visible. Yoo Joonghyuk's body leaning against the Splitting the Sky Sword looked thinner than usual as he counted the stars. His body was covered with blood and his face was wounded. There was a second grade monster that had just been defeated lying in front of him.

"…The 15th scenario is finished."

Planet Lugratia.

Yoo Joonghyuk came here through a 'personal scenario' from one of the constellations of this world.

Originally, he would've proceeded with Earth's scenarios. However, he had strong colleagues this regression and decided to leave the scenarios to them. The situation was growing faster than his previous regression. It was right for him to stockpile his power when he could. This current power wouldn't be enough if he entered the scenarios in the 20s.

'I need to be stronger'.

That's why Yoo Joonghyuk replaced the main scenario with 'personal scenarios' since the 11th main scenario. He also picked the hardest personal scenarios with the most rewards. Sometimes he even challenged personal scenarios that were too reckless for him.

Fight, fight and fight again.

As always, he trained and overworked his body and spirit. He thought it would fill a bit of the sense of loss that he couldn't understand. Strangely, the more he fought, the greater the emptiness became.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is looking at you sadly.]

Yoo Joonghyuk frowned and glared at the sky.

Demon-like Judge of Fire. Yoo Joonghyuk didn't know why this constellation came so often recently. It was a constellation he had little contact with in the past.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is asking why you aren't looking for Kim Dokja.]

"Kim Dokja is dead."

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is shaking her head while holding back tears.]

Yoo Joonghyuk didn't understand why a constellation was dwelling so much on the death of a single incarnation.

The thing he didn't understand was the next message.

[Your notoriety is spreading in the 73rd Demon Realm.]

'Again?'

The message was unforgettable.

Yoo Joonghyuk didn't know why his notoriety was rising in a distant place like the 73rd Demon Realm. At first, he thought Kim Dokja was alive and impersonating him. However, even if Kim Dokja was alive, there was no reason for him to do this…

'…Wait. Perhaps Kim Dokja is alive and in danger?

Maybe Kim Dokja was alive. Maybe he lived alone in the horizon of the story without any scenarios and beyond that damn fate.

Thus, he survived. Maybe he was asking for help. That guy, who always moved ahead by himself, was in danger and asking for help for the first time.

There was no way to ask for help in the absence of a channel so…

Yoo Joonghyuk's expression became complicated as he stared up at the sky.

'The 73rd Demon Realm…'

Chapter 207: Ep. 39 - Unidentified Wall, IV

「 Kim Dokja thought: I don't know if people are doing well. 」

I wondered if I could see the story of Earth again on the screen but there was nothing to be seen. It wasn't easy for the wenny people to easily steal the videos of the dokkaebis.

Night was fast approaching. I hadn't sleep well for a few days but the condition of my body wasn't bad because Aileen had repaired my stories.

"I have temporarily fixed it but you need to be careful with outside activities. Don't you know? You are still outside the main scenario."

"You sound like a doctor."

"I can't speak like a clock maker because I'm not dealing with clocks now."

Aileen watched me before standing up with their repair equipment. Many things had happened in the past two days but she didn't seem dissatisfied with the current situation.

「 Kim Dokja thought: If I hadn't come, Aileen would've kept being a clock maker. 」

In many regressions when Yoo Joonghyuk hadn't come to the Demon Realm, Aileen would've actually survived. She quietly made clocks that told the time of her home planet and reflected alone on the disappearance of her planet. Sometimes she would struggle with Jang Hayoung or go out to eat dishes made by Mark… maybe it was a happier life for Aileen.

"Do you know? The number of people who had been looking for clocks has increased in the last few days."

Aileen looked at me with an unknown gaze. I hesitated for a moment before asking, "Did their clocks break as a group?"

"Originally, people of the industrial complex don't use clocks."

"Why?"

"It is because there is no use in knowing something like time."

I remembered something I read in Ways of Survival. Someone had referred to the Demon Realm as the 'city that lost time'.

"Then what about the hours of the Night?"

"Can they change their fate if they know when Night comes?"

A fear that was too old became a law. It had happened for so many years that Night in the industrial complex had become a natural thing.

Once every three days, someone would die and their story would be used as fertilizer in the factory.

No matter what life they lived, the stories they contained or the tomorrow they would live. Then the rest of the people would live for another three days.

"However, there was a Night where no one died. It is because of you."

"…"

"People have started to fear the Night again. It isn't a natural thing and can be resolved. They think they perhaps they can live tomorrow. This is what they are thinking."

My eyes suddenly fell to the watch around Aileen's wrist. There were three hours left until Night arrived…

I listened to the ticking second hand as Aileen remained silent. Perhaps some people in the industrial complex were watching clocks like we were now.

Perhaps tonight would be harder and more intense than last night. Then why? I listened to the sound of the second hand moving and felt a bit comforted. I wasn't the one who should be comforted.

"Thank you."

"…I'm not saying this to praise you. It just doesn't look good if the revolutionary is depressed."

Aileen turned away. I laughed at Aileen and quickly added. "Ah, wait a minute."

"…What?"

"Speaking of clocks, can you make something else?"

"Something else?"

"It is called… a smartphone."

"What is that? Is it magic technology?"

I was wondering how to explain it and gave an overview of the feature of the smartphone. Then Aileen spoke like she knew, "Do you mean something like a communication device? It shows a small panel?"

"That's right."

"However, there isn't a dokkaebi channel here so communication isn't possible…"

Considering past experiences, it didn't matter if communication was possible. My phone synced automatically so the text file would be created.

"Don't worry about it. Can you make it today?"

"I'm afraid it will take at least three days… I will try my best."

"I know. Then do your best."

I left Aileen's workshop and headed towards the pub. The people who found me on the streets stared with strange eyes. Some greeted me after making eye contact and others lightly gathered both hands together. As Aileen said, I could see something that looked like watches on their wrists.

「Yoo Joonghyuk felt lonely as he saw these watches. They got their time back but he still wasn't

living in this time. Yoo Joonghyuk suddenly thought. If so, where do I live in those countless hours?」

It was the monologue of Yoo Joonghyuk, who once saved the Demon Realm. It was also one of my favourite scenes from Ways of Survival.

I suddenly seemed to understand a bit of his mind. To the regressor Yoo Joonghyuk, the time in these worlds didn't belong to him. In a life that could go back over and over again, the present time was meaningless.

Once this was over, I would ask Aileen to make me a watch. If he had something like this, he might become more attached to this world. Maybe the regression depression would get better…

I knew that this world wouldn't disappear when he went back in time but without him, it would be difficult to clear the remaining scenarios.

"Ahahahaha, this is really funny."

I opened the pub door and saw the laughing Jang Hayoung. From this distance, he looked like a junior high school student.

"What are you doing?"

This time, he didn't make the 'hiik' sound. Instead, Jang Hayoung avoided my eyes like a child caught by his parents doing something bad.

"I-I was doing what you asked me to do!"

"Did a fighter reply?"

"That…" Jang Hayoung licked his lips for a while before eventually confessing the truth.

"…None of the fighters replied?"

"R-Really? No one gave me a response!"

"What did you say?"

"I am a 15 year old schoolgirl…"

My forehead vein bulged. "Hey! They didn't reply because you sent that message!"

"But it worked before…"

"Do you think they are all like the black flame dragon? How many messages did you send?"

"A total of 300…"

Maybe they thought it was a spam message and blocked it. Damn.

"It's a big deal. I only know the fighters on that list."

Jang Hayoung realized that he was in trouble and paled. "Then what now?"

This was why I needed Ways of Survival. If I had the text file would've allowed me to re-read things and search for more information about the fighters.

"Let's find out if there are any other fighters. For now…"

I was reminded of a few modifiers for the constellations. Was there someone among the constellations who could help us?

"Write a message to Prisoner of the Golden Headband."

"…Isn't he a powerful constellation?"

I didn't know if he had any skills related to a fighter. However, now was the time to grab onto any piece of straw.

Jang Hayoung typed a message and we waited. One minute, two minutes… five minutes.

Jang Hayoung shook his head. "There is no reply."

"Write this." I dictated the contents of the message again.

Then Jang Hayoung was amazed. "Can I use something like this?"

"You just have to get his attention once."

The Great Sage, Heaven's Equal was a lazy guy. It must be to this degree to get a reply. Less than 10 seconds after Jang Hayoung sent this message, the following notification popped up.

[A reply has arrived!]

"A-A reply is here!"

"Is that right?"

For reference, the message I sent was as followed:

[Regrow your hair.]

Every time I did something, he would pull out his hair in the indirect message. Thus, I figured that he had hair loss. I asked, "What did he say?"

"If we meet, he will kill me."

"What else?"

"He asked who I am. Should I say Yoo Joonghyuk?"

"…Don't answer."

It would be fun to say Yoo Joonghyuk but it would only make the matter bigger. I rubbed my temples. The Great Sage, Heaven's Equal ate the wrong bait so we had to find another way.

"Demon-like Judge of Fire… I don't think it is good to call her. Secretive Plotter… I still don't know his identity…"

It had become troublesome.

"Queen of the Darkest Spring and God of Wine and Ecstasy are from Olympus…"

If I revealed that I was alive, some of them would help. The problem was that if I clarified my identity, the nebulae would notice my survival.

"It is difficult."

It was the first challenge I encountered after entering the Demon Realm. There wasn't much time left until Night arrived.

If Jang Hayoung didn't become a fighter then all the plans I set up for tonight would be wasted. At this time, Jang Hayoung wondered, "Can the black dragon help?"

I paused for a moment as I thought about the identity of the 'black dragon'. "… You're still talking to him?"

"Yes."

"Forget that guy. He probably has nothing."

"No, he was a fighter in the Demon Realm for a while."

…The Abyssal Black Flame Dragon was once a fighter? That story never came out in Ways of Survival.

Come to think of it, details of the Abyssal Black Flame Dragon were never described in earnest so it wasn't an impossible story…

"However, he didn't like the rules of the scenario and killed them all."

"What?"

"The duke, the revolutionary and the executioners, he killed them all?"

Something suddenly came up. Perhaps it was when the 64th Demon Realm was integrated? There was one such madman in the history of the Demon Realm. That person was the Abyssal Black Flame Dragon?

"Ask him if he can pass on the fighter's skills to you."

The Abyssal Black Flame Dragon was a constellation of the evil system and sending a message to him wouldn't be too obvious. It would be best if we could get help from him.

Jang Hayoung entered something and then he suddenly lit up. "It isn't a problem to give it to me

since he isn't using it anyway."

"Really?"

…It was an unexpected help. The problem could be solved in a way I hadn't thought of?

In fact, neither the black dragon or Kim Namwoon were good guys. I had to carefully read the parts where they appeared once I got the text file back.

By the way, Jang Hayoung's words weren't over. "However, he has one condition?"

That's right. That jerk couldn't give it away so easily.

"In any case, any transaction through the wall requires a payment. What is his condition?"

"He has a problem recently."

"A problem?"

"He isn't getting along very well with his incarnation…"

"His incarnation?"

"His incarnation keeps ignoring him."

If it was the incarnation of the Abyssal Black Flame Dragon…

"She is in a crisis right now but she isn't listening to his words…"

…A crisis? I quickly ordered Jang Hayoung. "Tell him to explain the story in detail."

Chapter 208: Ep. 39 - Unidentified Wall, V

There was the sound of a blade penetrating the heart and the last man fell.

"K-Kuock… d-dog…"

He tried to squeeze out a curse but the man's mouth was crushed by the woman's foot. He was the last man.

Han Sooyoung looked around the office that had become a bloodbath. "…I barely killed them all. At any rate, the adaptation of the Korean people is dirty and fast."

This was the home of 'Law of the Jungle', an incarnation club of Gyeonggi Province. As soon as the scenario started, they chose a useful sponsor and turned themselves into a criminal group. They were those who refused the control of the government. If she didn't kill them now, they would become a cancer of the Korean Peninsula. According to the original novel, they were bound to be such people.

"Damn Kim Dokja." She started cursing but didn't feel any better. Thus, Han Sooyoung added one more thing. "Bastard Yoo Joonghyuk."

She thought of the two people who went their own separate ways and Han Sooyoung felt like an abandoned food processor.

"Dammit. Kim Dokja has a reason but what's wrong with Yoo Joonghyuk?"

The moment that Yoo Joonghyuk left Seoul Dome, he continued to do things that weren't in the original third regression. He stayed alone in a room, talked to himself and then threw the Korean Peninsula scenarios away for the personal scenarios…

Thanks to this, cleaning up the remnants were left entirely to Han Sooyoung.

"What is he thinking… Shit…"

In any case, she was currently the last person who read Ways of Survival. Kim Dokja and Yoo Joonghyuk weren't present, leaving her the only one responsible for the Korean Peninsula.

She sighed and quietly left the scene of slaughter. "Ah, what a surprise. What are you doing here?"

There was a woman waiting for her at the office doorway. The woman wore a combat uniform that clung to her body and her hair flowed around her in a cool manner. As if conscious of the body that was revealed, she wore a wide coat on her shoulders. It was a refreshing but very beautiful face.

Well, this was what the media stated.

Han Sooyoung wondered, "I thought you were busy with TV these days. Isn't this the case?"

Han Sooyoung stared at Yoo Sangah with a slightly unfriendly look. Yoo Sangah moved away from the wall she was leaning on and looked down at Han Sooyoung. There was a slight difference in their heights.

There was a moment of confrontation before Yoo Sangah opened her mouth with a brief sigh. "…How long are you going to act this way?"

"What?"

"You can't kill all of them just because law and order is gone."

Han Sooyoung was too lazy to explain and just waved her hands. Yoo Sangah didn't know. What type of people belonged to Law of the Jungle? In addition, she didn't know what they would do.

She didn't know which was why she could argue with such childish justice.

"They are the ones who will do something wrong in the future."

"However, you didn't give them a chance."

"It has already been determined. You don't know anything." Han Sooyoung replied while passing by Yoo Sangah.

She couldn't share the future. The information that many people knew would become less valuable and would change the future. Kim Dokja would've probably done the same thing. So…

"Three Ways to Survive in a Ruined World."

Han Sooyoung instantly stopped walking at Yoo Sangah's words.

"Isn't that the book the prophets call the Revelation?"

"…You must've heard something funny."

"Did you read it?"

Han Sooyoung bit her lips before opening her mouth. "You don't need to know."

"The constellations seem to have no idea about this book."

The story had slowly spread so it wasn't strange. Some of the readers were outside Seoul Dome and there were also the rumours that the prophets had leaked. Yoo Sangah also knew that she was the First Apostle.

"Did Kim Dokja read it?" That's how he knows the information of the future."

"Who knows?"

It was an uncomfortable topic. Han Sooyoung pulled out a dagger. The information about Ways of Survival was filtered but she didn't know how long it would continue. Thus, she had to reduce the number of mouths…

"Why did he do that?"

Han Sooyoung turned her head at the sudden sad tone.

"Why did Dokja-ssi make such a choice even though he knows the future?"

Han Sooyoung looked at Yoo Sangah's face and seemed to know why she came. Han Sooyoung stared quietly at Yoo Sangah's face. She had been an ordinary office worker before the scenarios started.

'She was in the same company as Kim Dokja'.

Why? Han Sooyoung suddenly felt hot. "Everybody talks about Kim Dokja everywhere I go. They don't know anything about Kim Dokja."

Han Sooyoung took short breaths as a terrible voice flowed out. Without knowing why she was so angry, Han Sooyoung cried out. "He is a selfish bastard. He only thinks about himself from beginning to end."

"…"

"The person who fooled people to the end, lied and disappeared as a hypocrite, what do you know about him? You don't even know if he is dead or alive."

A fleeting scene ran through her head. It was Kim Dokja's eyes looking at her in the tenth scenario. It was that damn expression that made her pull out her knife first.

"No, he can't be dead. I'm sure he is alive and living well in another story."

"Do you really think so?"

"You don't know Kim Dokja."

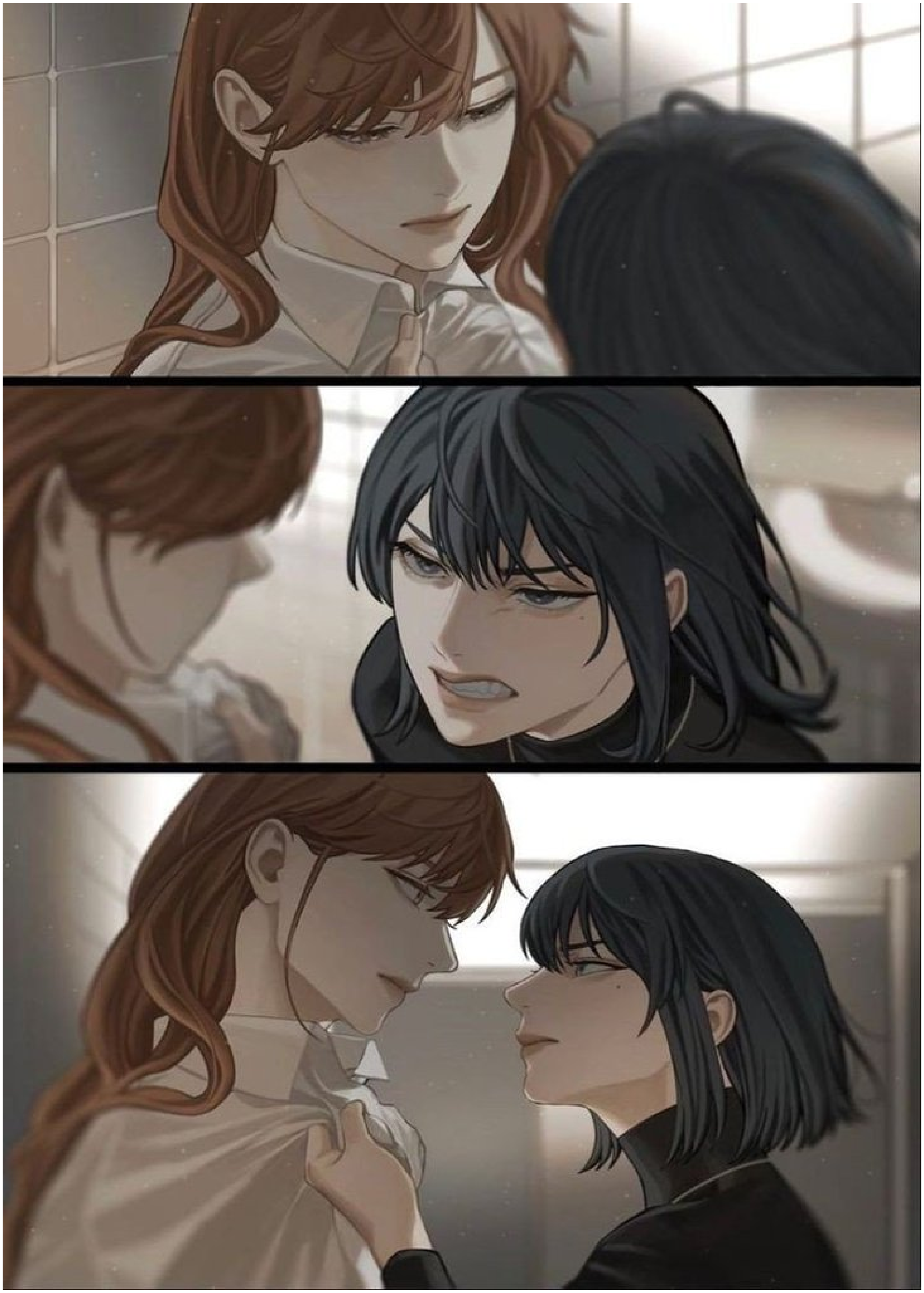
There was a deep sense of self-deprecation in her cold tone. Nobody knew Kim Dokja, including Han Sooyoung herself. Yet Yoo Sangah's answer was different. "No, I know."

"What?"

"A person doesn't change so suddenly." Yoo Sangah's voice was calm. "The scenarios started and for a while, Dokja-ssi was like a different person. A man who could calm down in front of life-threatening situations and kill unknown beasts without hesitation. He was different from the Kim Dokja I knew."

"You probably didn't know Kim Dokja very well."

"Even so, Dokja-ssi is still Dokja-ssi."



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Han Sooyoung closed her mouth.

"A person who likes reading books rather than building up his specs. His presentation abilities aren't good but he will listen to someone else's presentation…"

That Kim Dokja was different from the one Han Sooyoung knew. The person who knew Kim Dokja was talking.

"Thus, he was obviously lonely."

Somewhere in front of her, Kim Dokja seemed to be making a face. In a world with no one… Kim Dokja might be looking at the sky alone in a world that no one knew.

"Han Sooyoung-ssi. I have to go and rescue Dokja-ssi."

Han Sooyoung saw her determination and felt somehow defeated.

'You are a lucky person, Kim Dokja. People are worrying about you'.

Han Sooyoung was about to open her mouth when a message was heard in the air.

[A new main scenario has started!]

"Son of a bitch."

The Great Hole was opening in the air. The cries of monsters were heard from somewhere. The surprised Yoo Sangah and Han Sooyoung stood back to back. A giant monster was swooping down through the Great Hole. Then the dokkaebi's voice was heard.

[The wave pattern is obvious and very slow, but I put it in because people seem to be too free these days!]

Yoo Sangah frowned at the sudden emergence of a situation and frowned. "… Was this the original content?"

"I don't know. I don't remember everything."

This was why she didn't want to do it alone. She knew the future but the information she knew was about flimsy things. Kim Dokja knew many rounds and Yoo Joonghyuk who made it through the rounds might be able to make a breakthrough but not Han Sooyoung.

The giant serpent flew through the dark clouds and landed on the ground. Every time the long tail swept over the ground, the high-rise buildings collapsed.

This was a third grade strange dragon species, the Kragagon. It was the name of the monster who descended as a disaster in the 12th scenario.

'How do we beat that?'

Han Sooyoung tried hard to recall the contents of the original novel but no matter how she thought about it, a strategy didn't pop up. Then the only way left was a full-scale battle. Fortunately, there was Yoo Sangah right next to her. They weren't colleagues but it was better than nothing.

[The stigma 'Black Flames Lv. 6' has been activated!]

She focused her magic power on her dagger while activating the skills of the weapon.

[The third grade strange dragon species 'Kragagon' has defended against the attack using 'Fire Resistance'.]

[The third grade strange dragon species 'Kragagon' has defended against the attack using 'Shadow Resistance'.

"Ahh, you are no help against a damn lizard!"

The enemy had fire and dark resistance so Han Sooyoung's skills didn't affect it at all. The attacks just seemed to tickle and annoy the strange dragon.

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is gloomy.]

She looked around and Yoo Sangah's situation didn't seem much better. Han Sooyoung thought to herself, If only she had inherited the story of the Abyssal Black Flame Dragon…

'Dammit, how do I inherit that damn story?'

Han Sooyoung's expression darkened as she looked at the group of incoming strange dragons. If that jerk Kim Dokja was here, he could've told her what to do.

It was at this moment.

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' tell you that if you want, he can you tell their weakness.]

"…You know their weakness?"

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is nodding.]

"Don't make a fool of yourself. You don't know much about the scenarios."

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is jumping around wildly.]

Han Sooyoung listened to the black dragon's childish message and inwardly sighed. 'That brat Kim Dokja, he must've laughed at me when I chose the black dragon?'

The Abyssal Black Flame Dragon was clearly a powerful constellation. However, his intelligence was much lower compared to other constellations. Why? This guy was too strong since his birth and didn't need much strategy to attack the scenarios. It was cool to hear but it wasn't good from the position of his incarnation.

However, this time something was different.

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' says that the kragagon's weakness is the silver scale on top of its head.]

"Really? Last time you told me the wrong thing."

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' claims on his black flame dragon that this is real.]

"You said that last time as well."

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' claims this story was told by a reliable source.]

"Reliable source?"

Since there was no other method, Han Sooyoung decided to follow the words of the black flame dragon. Han Sooyoung jumped onto the strange dragon's tail and used footwork to run up. She crossed the streamlined body. She really saw a silver scale near the crown of his head.

"Haaap!"

The dagger dug into the scale and the kragagon collapsed with a terrible scream. The breath of the giant monster stopped in an instant. Han Sooyoung was stunned and muttered, "…Really? Aren't you quite useful?"

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is puffing up his chest with a triumphant expression.]

Yoo Sangah flew through the air and said,

"Do you know its weakness?"

"No, not me… in any case, the silver scale is its weakness. That's all you have to attack."

Thanks to the information given by the black dragon, the two of them safely suppressed the kragagons.

[The constellation 'Bald General of Justice' admires your performance.]

Han Sooyoung received the messages of the constellations and slightly frowned. Usually it would be a pleasant situation but today something was wrong. She always felt like this when she was teased by Kim Dokja. At this moment, something ran through her head.

"Hey, black flame dragon."

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is surprised and looks at his incarnation.]

"…Tell me honestly. Who did you hear this from?"

[The third Night has arrived.]

I listened to the message and recalled what happened a while ago. He really did as I told him. Just like Kim Namwoon, perhaps the Abyssal Black Flame Dragon wasn't as bad as I knew. Either way, he was Han Sooyoung's sponsor.

Thus, it was okay to tell him this.

'I am safe, don't worry'. Tell this to the person who asked.

"Revolutionary!"

I had to endure this. Endure it now so I could smile and meet them again. I quietly moved through the Night.

"Kuaaack!"

Screams came from everyone. It wound the sound that signalled the executioners appearing.

It was bloody from the beginning. Maybe it would be a terrible Night that couldn't be compared to the other two days. I killed three executioner so tonight they would come full force.

Nevertheless, I wasn't afraid. Starting from tonight, I would start the counterattack.

"Jang Hayoung."

Jang Hayoung walked forward at my words. He was very tense but it wasn't the same expression as before. Jang Hayoung asked, "Can I do well?"

"No one can do it better than you."

"…Do you really think so? I only learnt the skill two hours ago."

"Two hours is enough."

I spoke with confidence. It wasn't just to reassure Jang Hayoung.

「"Who is the most perfect incarnation?"」

One day, the flippant commentators of the Star Stream discussed this topic.

「"The strongest incarnation in a one on one fight is definitely Yoo Joonghyuk. There is no one who can fight as well as him."」

「"No one can beat Anna Croft when it comes to information."」

「"How about Lee Hyunsung? He is the best tanker."」

「"It is Ranveer Khan in major wars."」

Jang Hayoung's name wasn't mentioned at all. He was inferior to Yoo Joonghyuk in a one on one fight. He had less information than Anna Croft. His defense wasn't better than Lee Hyunsung. He wasn't as effective as Ranveer Khan in a major war. However…

「"The most perfect incarnation is someone who must do well in everything."」

「"Then it has been decided."」

He had more defense than Yoo Joonghyuk. He was better in a one on one fight than Anna Croft. He was better in a large war than Lee Hyunsung. He was an outstanding presence was more information than Ranveer Khan.

[The character 'Jang Hayoung' has used Fighter Transformation Lv. 9.]

「 "Jang Hayoung is the most perfect incarnation." 」

Jang Hayoung's body moved in a burning curve and painted the sky red. He wasn't exceptional in one area but he had the most attributes and skills of everyone in Ways of Survival.

The moment he acquired a skill, he had the ability to reach the highest level of the skill sooner than anyone else.

The master of the Unidentified Wall, the 'King of Transcendents' Jang Hayoung. The second part of Ways of Survival began with this guy.

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* Official novel illustration (canonical)

Chapter 209: Ep. 39 - Unidentified Wall, VI

[The character 'Jang Hayoung' has awakened as a 'Fighter!']

Just as a guardian had the skill 'Guard', a fighter had the skill 'Fighter Transformation'. It was a skill that melted all of their fears and turned it into force. Thanks to this skill, a person who had been exploited for a long time could gain a more powerful force. In that sense, Jang Hayoung was a good candidate to be a fighter even without the Unidentified Wall.

"Haaaaaap!"

The problem was that he was too excited. A sky shattering sound was heard. The fighter was a position capable of exerting as much power as possible against an executioner. Perhaps Jang Hayoung was currently feeling like a constellation.

"Don't mess around you idiot!" I belatedly raised my voice but Jang Hayoung had already gone out of my reach.

This was the problem with Jang Hayoung. In fact, I wasn't afraid of Jang Hayoung's talent. I was afraid of him running wild as a result of his talent.

「 Kim Dokja thought: Jang Hayoung isn't without talent. Rather, he has too much talent. 」

The only all-rounder in Ways of Survival, Jang Hayoung. Jang Hayoung's Unidentified Wall guaranteed a formidable growth only through skills obtained from the wall's transactions.

Of course, it was impossible to reach the grounds of transcendence but Jang Hayoung could raise his skill level faster than anyone else. It was a talent that could go beyond other people's training in just a few hours. Such talent would inevitably make the owner of the talent dangerous.

[Wh at are yo u…]

I barely managed to catch up with Jang Hayoung where he was already engaged with an executioner. The sparks of a fighter wrapped around Jang Hayoung and protected him from the executioner's scythe.

[The 'mark' isn't available for this position.]

Perhaps the executioner would be receiving such a message now.

[Th is… are yo u per haps…?]

However, enlightenment was too late. Jang Hayoung overcame the executioner's scythe and grabbed its neck with a skillful move.

[Ke ok…!]

It wasn't possible for a fighter to show this much combat power. At most, they were usually one level of power beyond the executioner.

Now Jang Hayoung was completely overwhelming the executioner. It was only possible because it was Jang Hayoung.

The caught executioner struggled like a ferocious rat but it couldn't endure Jang Hayoung's slowly tightening grip. The was the sound of bones breaking and the executioner's body dangled down.

Then the hem of the executioner's clothes started scattering. It was an absurd end for the existences who had dominated the industrial complex's Night for decades.

[An executioner has been killed by a fighter.]

[Current number of executioners remaining: 6]

The citizens injured by the executioners were looking this way. Jang Hayoung's fire lit up the Night. It was like a glowing sun. However, Jang Hayoung wasn't the sun and it was currently Night.

"A-An executioner has died! An executioner has died!"

"No way! It is currently Night!"

"A fighter has appeared!"

After the end of the executioner, the people hiding in the houses stretched out their heads. They were people who had been living for a long time in the shadow of the Night.

[The citizens are influenced by the heat of the revolution.]

They were coming out of their houses one by one. They stared at Jang Hayoung like he was the leader.

[The character 'Jang Hayoung' has stiffened because of Fighter Transformation.]

…This jerk thought he was a revolutionary. I lightly slapped Jang Hayoung's back.

"Uh…!"

Jang Hayoung's red-tinged eyes slowly recovered. Jang Hayoung was belatedly aware of the pain and glared at me as he held the back of his head. "That hurts! Why did you hit me so hard?"

"Steady your mind. You will be in trouble if you act like an idiot."

「"It should be the crowd that is heated up. If the person who leads is swept away by the heat, the revolution won't be able to tolerate the fire and will go out before it burns properly."」

These were Yoo Joonghyuk's words in the 111th regression. It was a shameful line for me to spit out so I kept it to myself.

Jang Hayoung looked at me disapprovingly and pouted. "It hurts more than the executioner."

"Then I hit you properly."

Jang Hayoung's current strength was limited to the scenario and it was only wen dealing with the executioners. It was dangerous to be taken in by such power.

Aileen shouted in the distance. "There are two in the west! One to the south! The rest are in the north!"

It was clear what these numbers meant.

"Let's move."

Jang Hayoung nodded and we ran through the Night. I looked at Jang Hayoung, who was going ahead again, and heard a message in my mind.

[The 'Fourth Wall' is looking at 'Jang Hayoung' with a desire to eat."

"No way. Don't even think about it."

Just like against Nirvana and the outer god, the Fourth Wall coveted Jang Hayoung's story. It probably wasn't just Jang Hayoung but the Unidentified Wall as well.

[The Fourth Wall is sorry.]

"I thought you wanted to make friends with that wall. You shouldn't eat your friend."

「Kim Dokja who wanted to be friends with the Fourth Wall said.」

It was a real brat.

"Waaaaahhhhh!"

There were screams from the rushing crowd.

"A fighter has appeared! Hang in there!"

They screamed while wielding weapons towards the executioners. The fires of magic power popped up in various places around the industrial complex.

People were fighting back. They were fighting against opponents they couldn't face. I could believe it if one of them was a revolutionary.

[An executioner has been killed by a fighter.]

[Current number of executioners remaining: 5]

Jang Hayoung knocked down another executioner. Now there were only five remaining. Once all the executioners died, the duke would no longer be able to hide. From then on, the real revolution would start.

"Kill everybody!"

"Wahhhh!"

As the citizens' gained courage, the executioners gradually slowed down. No one apart from the fighter could harm an executioner during the Night. Nevertheless, the important thing was atmosphere.

[Fool ish…]

An executioner who swung its scythe was attacked by Jang Hayoung. Two executioners had already died so this one didn't face Jang Hayoung head on.

The executioner fled like it was frightened.

The citizens watched the executioner running away and shouted, "They're going away!"

Jang Hayoung stepped on the low roofs of the industrial complex and chased after the executioner.

Everything was flowing smoothly. At this rate, the Night would pass safely. The duke would be forced to recall the Night in order to reduce the damage to the executioners.

「 Even so, Kim Dokja was vigilant to the end. 」

There were countless 'revolutionaries' who died in the history of the Demon Realm. Until the Night was gone, the revolutionary should be vigilant until the end. Even if I was a fake revolutionary.

「 Kim Dokja thought: The spy Han Myungoh was caught by me and three executioners died during the day. 」

The balance of power was collapsing and the atmosphere of the industrial complex was rapidly changing. Under these circumstances, the duke couldn't send the Night again without a plan.

At least, not the Duke Syswitz I knew…

Sure enough. I felt something flying towards my neck and reflexively leaned back. Four scythes passed over my head and hit the roofs. My head would be gone if I had been one second slower.

…They had been hiding. Apart from the executioner that Jang Hayoung was chasing, the four other executioners all aimed for me. It couldn't compare to the first day. I used Bookmark to trigger Way of the Wind but it wasn't enough to avoid all the flying attacks.

"The guardian!"

[Someone is using their vitality to protect you.]

The hiding Mark used 'Guard' on me. Now Mark had two points remaining. The executioners didn't leave despite the effect of Guard being applied to me.

「 The stupid Kim Dokja started thinking. 」

It felt like they were dragging out the time. I noticed the duke's plan.

「 The duke knew a fighter would appear. 」

…Jang Hayoung was in danger. I condensed the wind using Way of the Wind and made a powerful explosion behind me. I shot forward like a comet and the perplexed executioners shouted after me,

[Stop!]

I borrowed the power of Guard and Wave to break through the wall of executioners. Jang Hayoung had gone chasing after one executioner. Presumably, there would also be a—

"Aaack!"

There was a sharp scream and I saw Jang Hayoung flying back while bleeding. Dammit, this was why I hit him. I controlled the wind and caught the falling body. "Hey, are you okay?"

"Heook, keok…"

He was coughing up blood. It wasn't a fatal injury but it would be hard for him to continue fighting. I wanted to know who made the Night's fighter like this but then I saw an oversized executioner walking towards this side.

[Revolutionary?]

It was impossible. An executioner could never win against a fighter at Night. Yet this one…

The collar of the executioner slowly scattered and the face of a demon was exposed. Now I realized what happened. Jang Hayoung wasn't hit with the power of an executioner. The power of this story was incomparable to the demon baron and earl I first saw when I came here.

I watched him carefully and asked, "You used your head and used a technique other than 'Execution'. You aren't a duke so you must be a marquis. Am I correct?"

"I asked first. Are you the revolutionary?"

"That's right. I am the revolutionary."

"A cheeky voice." The demon's thick eyebrows wriggled and he spoke in a somewhat languid voice. "I am Marquis Osteon."

Demon Marquis Osteon. Along with Duke Syswitz, he was one of the two marquises leading this industrial complex.

"I think there is one more."

"…You have keen eyes." Among demon emerged from the darkness. This one didn't seem to have the power of an executioner.

"You are also a marquis?"

It wasn't the demon who answered the question.

"M-Marquis Cuarteto!"

Marquis Cuarteto stood under the moonlight as the citizens screamed.

Osteon and Cuarteto. The two marquises leading the Syswitz Industrial Complex appeared at the same time, causing the citizens to be completely frightened.

"Ahhh…"

Duke Syswitz liked things to be certain. He didn't know the identity of the enemy so he sent out both marquises.

"You created such a nuisance during this precious time. You are a big guy."

Their expressions showed it was annoying to take care of a nuisance. It was understandable since they had been in control of the industrial complex for hundreds of years.

After already deciding I was dead, the two marquises stared at the other citizens. The surrounding pressure soared and the citizens were forced to kneel. The incarnations trembled and held their breaths.

The marquises spoke towards them. "This is the price you will receive."

[The story 'Ruler's Command' is activated.]

The edge of the language created by the marquises threatened the citizens. Nothing had happened yet but the words themselves started to dominate the imagination of the citizens.

"You will lose everything valuable."

They imagined losing their precious families.

"You will lose the peaceful Nights."

They were deprived of all the nights of peace.

"You will pay the price for disturbing this industrial complex."

They paid a price that they could never afford.

"This is the meaning of revolution."

The sentences fell like a final verdict. The citizens were mired in them and stared up at the marquises with frightened eyes. The marquises laughed like this situation was satisfactory.

"Look! Your hopes are crumbling."

They decided to use this as an opportunity to consolidate the ruling system.

Bihyung should see this nonsense. The two marquises turned towards me while directing their 'status' towards me. Ordinary citizens would be terrified right now.

However, while all citizens were kneeling on the ground, I alone stood upright. The perplexed marquises stared at me and shouted again, "Look! Look at how he collapses!"

The marquises attempted to use their 'status' to pressure me several times. The veins bulged as if they were exerting all their might to reveal their presence.

"Collapsing…! Collaps…! Um? No, this…?"

I slowly approached them.

「 Kim Dokja thought. 」

Only a fighter could deal with an executioner at Night. The enemies decided to utilize their force instead of using the 'positions of the scenario. Thus, it was necessary to respond to them.

「 It can't be avoided this time. 」

If I opened this power, my incarnation body would shake a lot. However, it was inevitable to deal with a marquis. I needed to use the minimum of strength. I had to get rid of them with optimal efficiency.

"You…?"

I knew what they wanted to ask and preempted them. "Who am I?"

A marquis-grade noble was strong. Still, no matter how strong they were, it was just a measurement of the 'incarnations'. They were those who didn't even match the historical-grade constellations.

I slowly closed my eyes and took a deep breath. I felt somewhat uncomfortable. I had never done this since becoming a constellation.

[The constellation 'status' is released.]

The 'status', which couldn't be compared to the previous one, crushed the time and space in the area.

Chapter 210: Ep. 40 - Hatching, I

It was the first time I felt like this in my life. I felt so enormous that I focused on this feeling and forgot to say that I was Yoo Joonghyuk. It felt like dozens of metres of time and space were kneeling before me. This was what the constellations felt.

[Your incarnation body isn't suitable for expressing your status.]

I had adjusted the level but there was still a huge burden on my body. It wasn't even a proper release of my status in the first place.

[Your status is disagreeing with your incarnation body and will be temporarily adjusted.]

[Your current status is historical-grade.]

A narrative-grade status wasn't something my incarnation body could afford. Even the historical-grade constellations couldn't keep their dignity in the form of a symbol, let alone a ragged incarnation body. However, this was enough.

"Kuk, keok, keook…!"

The incarnations were letting out pained sounds. I saw this and quickly confined it to the radius of the marquises. The half-kneeling marquises had expressions like they lost their souls.

[Someone in the Demon Realm has detected your presence.]

[Someone in the Demon Realm has detected your presence.]

[Someone in the Demon Realm has detected your presence.]

It was just a short moment yet I already received three messages. They were probably the demon kings of the Demon Realm.

It didn't matter. I was going to let them know eventually. In addition, they couldn't tell who I was at this level.

[Your incarnation body can't afford your status!]

The stories making up my back started falling away. Fortunately, it was in a blind spot and the marquises hadn't noticed yet.

"T-This aura…"

"A constellation!"

Marquis Osteon belatedly regained his spirit and screamed. Cuarteto next to him was on the verge of retreating back. It was a spectacular sight but I couldn't waste time.

[Your incarnation body has started to collapse!]

I didn't have a lot of fighting power compared to my 'status'. Thus, I had to end it the moment the opponents died.

[The exclusive skill 'Bookmark' is activated!]

Then why? Sparks appeared in the air and the skill was forcibly terminated.

[Your incarnation body is too unstable to use that skill.]

…Son of a bitch. Was I too hasty?

[You have used a strength that doesn't meet the probability!]

[The exile penalty is accelerated.]

I had engaged in combat recently and expected this to happen. However, the collapse of my body was much faster than expected. It seemed that the burden of extracting a constellation's status was considerable.

The marquises started to adapt and pushed themselves against my pressure. They seemed to have one legendary story or many historical-grade stories. I guessed they were on the level of Reinheit of Paradise.

"Even if you are a constellation, you can't kill me in the scenario!"

In addition, they were smart. Marquis Osteon once again transformed into an executioner and aimed a scythe at me. It was a situation where the only fighter, Jang Hayoung couldn't move. Now I had no way to kill this guy. The situation started flowing in an even worse direction.

"An exile?"

"…Don't tell me?"

The story fragments falling from my body increased and the marquises finally noticed. I wasn't able to use Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint due to the skills restriction but I seemed to know what they were thinking.

「 If I could get that guy's story… 」

The hyenas hunting the injured predator started to carefully surround me.

"Call for reinforcements! We can destroy him if we drag out the time."

There was a whistle and executioners approached from every direction. I also felt unusual movements from the nobles on the Factory side.

「 Kim Dokja thought. 」

To kill a marquis, I must use at least Electrification.

「But I can't use the skill.」

If I wasted more time, my body and the citizens would be at risk.

「I have to kill them using a method other than skills.」

How?

「There was only one way.」

The moment I made a decision, Marquis Osteon approaching me let out a terrible scream. "Kuaaack!"

Marquis Osteon's arm rolled along the ground. He was currently an executioner and shouldn't be hurt by normal attacks. It meant…

"You shouldn't be so careless."

Jang Hayoung stood behind him and laughed like a villain. It was an incredible recovery when considering what happened earlier.

[The character 'Jang Hayoung' has used the skill 'Immortal Body Lv. 7'.]

…Immortal Body? Wasn't this a healing skill from the Murim World? Jang Hayoung felt my gaze and muttered like he was giving an excuse. "One of the people I chatted to was from Murim…"

I watched the ashamed Jang Hayoung and sighed. He didn't talk with just the black dragon. By the way, Immortal Body was part of the Breaking the Sky Sword style…

"Hit them all! Kill the fighter first!"

Marquis Osteon removed the status of executioner and shouted at the surprised reinforcements. The remaining four executioners and the nobles who arrived started to surround us. I counted three earls and give barons. There was Baron Melen who I saw on my first day here.

"There! Save the revolutionary!"

The citizens ran to save us but the numbers were still lacking. Jang Hayoung turned pale as he watched the nobles who were taking out weapons.

"What should I do? I can't kill them."

A fighter was strong against the executioner but vulnerable to all other positions. In the end, I had to deal with the rest.

"Deal only with the executioners."

I blocked the nobles aiming for Jang Hayoung. Countless spears headed towards me but I didn't avoid them.

[You are currently under the protection of the scenario.]

I couldn't die under the protection of Guard. I could handle them one by one without overdoing it. As if reading my thoughts, a message appeared in the air.

[The 'ruler' has forcibly recalled the Night.]

The ruler. It was a position that referred to the duke, the master of this industrial complex.

[No one has died tonight.]

Night was over but the fight was still continuing. No, it was starting from now on.

[The power of the scenario that is protecting you has disappeared.]

"His protection has been released! Kill him!"

"He is a guy with amazing stories!"

The nobles rushed at me with anticipating and I smiled bitterly. "You slightly used your head but this was a mistake."

Night disappeared and the strength of the executioner couldn't be used. In addition, the marquises who were the core leadership of the industrial complex were here. I had been waiting for a long time.

"Open the story."

My body was unstable and I couldn't use skills. This didn't mean I had no way to fight.

[The historical-grade story 'Bug Slaughter' has been activated.]

It was impossible to open a story above legendary grade in my present state. However, I didn't need a legendary story to deal with these guys. This was a story that used the 'status' at the highest level. It was a story that the demon noble called Tentacio had once used in Dark Castle.

I slowly blinked and felt the nobles in front of me becoming smaller. The story Bug Slaughter was gained in exchange for killing tens of thousands of bugs. It was a terrible and vulnerable story when encountering a strong person but it was different when dealing with a weak person.

[You have absolute power over all beings with a lower status than you.]

[This story is only available to existences with a certain level of 'status'.]

A menacing air emerged from my body and the complexions of the approaching nobles turned blue.

"T-This is ridiculous…!"

It was already too late to feel regret. There was no need to use a sword. The muscles of my body instantly swelled and I started to beat the nobles with my fists.

"Kuaaack!"

It was literally a 'slaughter'.

[You have acquired a historical-grade story.]

[You have acquired a historical-grade story.]

The stories of the nobles entered my hands one by one.

[Your incarnation body is rapidly collapsing!]

I quickly opened a hole in the bodies of the barons and then pulled off the heads of the earls. The situation suddenly reversed and the remaining nobles started to run away.

"Run away! He isn't someone you can deal with! Quickly—!"

I missed some people but I didn't miss the important ones.

"Kuaaack!"

Cuarteto and Osteon struggled as I grabbed them by the neck. I didn't hesitate to hit their heads together and them pierced both heads with a hand.

"Kuheeeeok…"

The situation would've been different if it was a full-blown resistance. However, the marquises had been defeated by my 'status' and couldn't resist.

[You have obtained many new stories!]

[You have killed the Demon Marquis 'Cuarteto'.]

[You have killed the Demon Marquis 'Osteon'.]

[A new achievement has been acquired!]

[Your notoriety is spreading in the 73rd Demon Realm due to the killing of the marquises!]

[The high-ranking nobles of the Demon Realm will fear you.]

[50,000 coins have been acquired as compensation for the achievement.]

It was a small amount of compensation but it was better than nothing. I looked around and saw Jang Hayoung and the citizens organizing the remaining situation. The surviving executioners and nobles were retreating towards the Factory.

[Your incarnation body is reaching its limit.]

[The story 'Bug Slaughter' has been forcibly terminated.]

My vision momentarily shook and I became dizzy. I shouted towards the people fleeing towards the Factory. "Baron Gilat, Baron Sarabos and Earl Mokba!"

They were the names of the surviving executioners. It was the names of the executioners I got from Han Myungoh in advance. Now Jang Hayoung and I didn't have the energy to chase or engage with them.

Thus, I called out their names. It was a type of warning. I knew all their identities. I knew who they were and their positions. Therefore, they could die at any time.

The executioners trembled as they were threatened for the first time in their lives. I shouted towards them, "Tell this to the duke."

The light of dawn started shining like a lot of time had passed. In the dim and pervasive shadows, I slowly concluded my words.

"Learn to fear the day."

I was going to collapse at any moment but I didn't lose consciousness until the remnants of the nobles disappeared into the Factory.

Someone muttered, "R-Revolution…"

People started to call out for a revolution. I listened to these voices and recalled my favourite sentence from the 'revolutionary' arc.

「In the light of dawn, the stopped time of the industrial complex started flowing again.」

The anger and screams of those who had been sleeping for a long time in the Night. They were asleep for a long time and now feelings they didn't know existed were waking up.

"Revolutionary! Revolutionary!"

"Yoo Joonghyuk! Yoo Joonghyuk!"

[Your influence has transcended the influence of the real revolutionary.]

[The acquisition conditions have been satisfied and a new story is created.]

[The new story 'Silver Screen Revolutionary' has begun!]

Bihyung and the constellations should've seen this sight. It was a waste. I would've received a lot of coins. Then the message arrived like it had been waiting.

[The 'Dokkaebi Egg' has responded to your story.]

[The 'Dokkaebi Egg' has started to record your story.]

The vibrations of the egg became stronger and I heard another message.

[The egg's hatching is imminent.]

I knew that the time had come when I had the sound of cracking. Indeed, there was no need for other dokkaebis at this stage. It was because a dokkaebi had been present in this stage from the beginning.

[A temporary channel will be created in the Demon Realm.]

The Demon Realm's scenario would start from now on.

[The constellation 'Demon King of Salvation' has entered the temporary channel.]

Chapter 211: Ep. 40 - Hatching, II

I suddenly let out a breath. It felt like somebody had taped up my mouth and then ripped it off.

[The constellation 'Demon King of Salvation' is looking at the Syswitz Industrial Complex.]

My field of view widened and I saw things that couldn't be seen by incarnations. The industrial complex seemed like a giant circular dome from up high. A circular city centred around the Factory. All incarnations within the city were looking at the sky.

"T-This…!"

"A channel! A channel is open!"

Perhaps they received the message that a temporary channel had opened.

"A dokkaebi has come! Our Demon Realm is finally receiving attention!"

Their faces looked thrilled. It was natural. This was a place where people excluded from the scenario gathered. The incarnations, who once hated the constellations and coins, entered the Demon Realm and became the ones who missed them more than anything.

"Hey! Are you okay? Did you hear the message just now?"

I barely managed to stand up with the support of Jang Hayoung.

[Entry into the temporary channel has temporarily delayed the collapse of your incarnation body.]

I sighed with relief. A channel was an important device that formed the core of a story. My stories started recovering just by entering the channel. Of course, the exile penalty wasn't completely removed but… I could earn some time with this.

[Enter the main scenario to prevent the breakdown of your stories.]

I had to kill the real revolutionary in order to enter the main scenario. I touched my broken arms and legs as a test. Fortunately, the core stories still seemed safe. The broken parts could be somehow repaired.

[Your current incarnation body is severely damaged.]

[You need more stories to repair it.]

The list wasn't confirmed yet but many stories were taken from the nobles. Most of them were historical-grade with a few legendary grades mixed in. In any case, I had to move fast before the temporary channel closed.

I asked Aileen who was approaching from the distance. "The injured people?"

"…There are more than I thought."

Aileen's expression was dark. At first glance, dozens of people were lying down on the ground. Considering that many of them were critically injured, it would be hard for a lot of them to survive today.

"Dokkaebi Bag."

A familiar holographic window appeared in the air. It had been so frustrating when it was missing.

This was the feeling of a rich person who couldn't spend money. I briefly checked if any useful items had been received and then spent 3,000 coins to buy a large amount of Ellain Forest Essence.

"Give this to the people."

"T-This… how did you get this?"

"Don't ask me anything more."

The startled Aileen received the essences with wide eyes. It was natural to be surprised. It was because the Ellain Forest Essence was something that could only be obtained through the Dokkaebi Bag. It wasn't available in the Demon Realm where there wasn't a channel.

[The duration of the temporary channel is very short.]

I pulled the Dokkaebi Egg out of my bag. The surface of the egg had fine gold cracks.

Signs of hatching. A temporary channel was a type of fetal movement for a dokkaebi. It was like breathing exercises.

I lightly stroked the egg and a small vibration was felt inside the shell.

[The 'Dokkaebi Egg' will soon hatch!]

[Consume a healthy story.]

I quickly pulled out a few story fragments and gave them to the egg. The egg shivered and made some noises.

[The Dokkaebi Egg is satisfied.]

[The Dokkaebi Egg wants the warmth of parents.]

It was really fussy. Come to think of it, Bihyung had said something.

–I'm telling you just in case the egg hatches. Before the hatching, you have to carry the egg in your arms.

–What? Why?

–I don't know for sure. But that is how healthy dokkaebis are born. Thus, I did it.

I thought it was strange that the dokkaebis believed in such a superstition but there were reasons for superstitions in this world. It was because this was a world where all stories came true.

I looked towards the Factory in the distance. Since the two marquises had died, the Syswitz Industrial Complex had now turned completely towards the path of revolution. I broke both limbs and gave a good warning at the end, so the Factory side wouldn't act rashly. I couldn't face them in my current state so this situation would last for a few days.

"Aileen. Close off the council's residence from now on."

"Huh?"

"The nobles won't move for a while. Thus, we should take a break and get ready."

I looked down at the egg, which was shaking more and more. From now on, the duke wasn't the only problem. Once the channel opened, the real monsters would appear.

I needed to prepare some things before then.

Thanks to the help of the others, I set up a room in the council's residence with the proper temperature and humidity. Aileen checked my body's condition and sighed. "Don't move today. Your body is in bad shape."

"Understood."

"Don't speak carelessly. You really almost died. This is the first time I've used five historical-grade stories for the repair…"

I wasn't happy with the cost to my body. I could barely survive by using good stories. Still, it was better than dying.

"I still have the legendary stories so it's fine."

I confirmed the legendary stories I had acquired from killing the marquises.

[The legendary story 'God of the Dice' has been acquired.]

The legendary story, God of the Dice. According to Ways of Survival, the story was roughly like this:

「One of the stories held by the King of Gambling. The owner of this story said he was about to freely choose the scale of the first dice roll.」

Sometimes it was unknown why certain stories were considered legendary grade. It might be a legendary grade but how could it compare to my 'King of a Kingless World'…

Aileen had an astounded expression on her face as she opened her mouth. "Are you going to use a legendary-grade story as a fragment to repair your body? Don't you know how much it is worth?"

"…"

"No, how the hell have you survived so far? Even with the protection of the story…"

The protection of the story… It was a greeting often used by the dokkaebi.

"Stop nagging. In any case, I can't move today because of this child."

I touched the egg in my arms. All future plans could be implemented if this child hatched well. Jang Hayoung stared carefully at my arms and asked, "What is that?"

"An egg."

"Egg? What egg?"

"A dokkaebi egg."

Jang Hayoung and the other group members had wide eyes at my words.

"What? Really?"

I nodded and looked down at the egg. Every time the egg shook, the temporary channel was opened and closed.

[Number of constellations who have entered the channel: 1 person.]

It was currently a lonely number but it wouldn't be long before the channel was full. I would surely make it happen.

"Wait! This is a real dokkaebi egg? It's not a joke?"

"Do I look like I'm joking?"

"…The channel is open because of this egg?"

"Yes."

Unlike the stunned Jang Hayoung, Aileen was making a serious expression. "Wait a minute, if this is really a dokkaebi…"

"I just want to give the Demon Realm a chance. You can't remain as slaves of the industrial complexes forever."

Aileen bit her lips at my words. In fact, she also knew. I pointed out something she was thinking in her heart.

"Are you afraid the next scenario will be worse?"

A scenario was always waiting after the current scenario. The scenario might be better than this or the worst one they had ever experienced. Aileen spoke like she didn't want to admit it. "A world without it is the best."

"You need to think if an uncertain life is truly worse."

"I'm very thankful for your revolution. But you…!" Aileen stared into my eyes and paused. I didn't know what she saw or felt in this brief encounter. "… What are you doing this for?"

She ended up asking.

"Some people want to see the ending of the story." I replied as always.

"That… do you intend to reach the end of the scenario?"

"It is similar."

Then Aileen muttered, "A Seeker of the End…"

"…?"

"I heard a story from the constellations of my home planet. There are constellations seeing the 'end' of the stories."

Seeker of the End. That reminded me, there were those guys in the Star Stream. It wasn't yet time to move in earnest but the story was already circulating on Aileen's home planet. Aileen fell deep into thought while Jang Hayoung opened his mouth. "If that is a dokkaebi, won't it become like the ones we know eventually?"

"I won't let that happen. Not all dokkaebis become the same streamers."

"Indeed, it is the same with people. How did you obtain the egg? I never heard anything about this from the wenny people."

"That…"

I hesitated as I wondered how to explain it. Suddenly, Han Myungoh looked between the egg and I with strange eyes. "It must've been hard. Childbirth is a painful thing."

"…I think you are misunderstanding something. I didn't give birth to it."

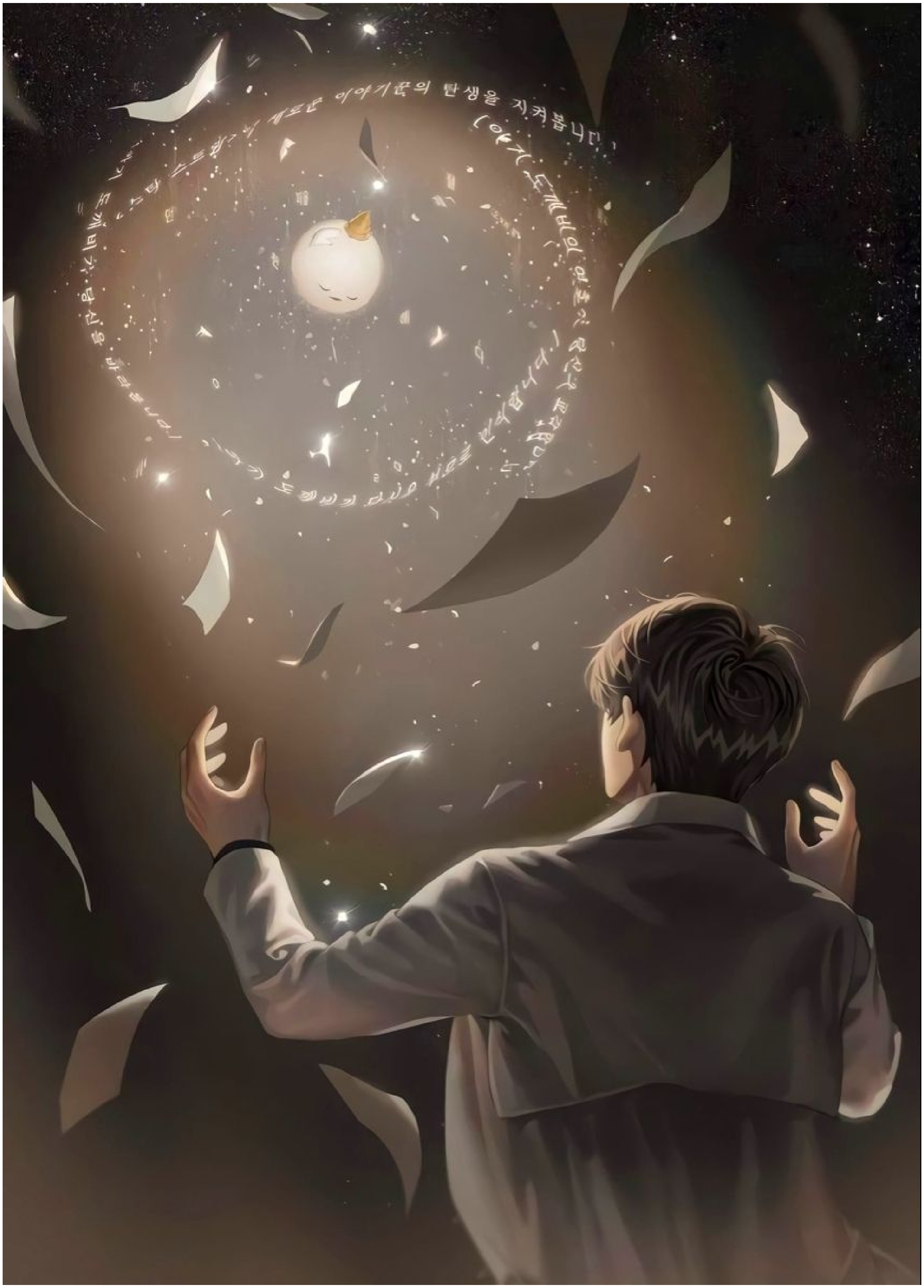
"I understand."

It seemed that an uncomfortable consensus was formed. I wanted to explain that I never received the demon king's curse. Then the cracks in the egg became stronger and a dim light started leaking out.

[The egg's hatching is imminent.]

The moment I had been waiting for finally came.

[The Star Stream is watching the birth of a new streamer.]


새로운 이야기꾼의 탄생을 지켜봅니다
(아기 도깨비의

[*]

I looked down at the creature that emerged along with Han Myungoh, Jang Hayoung, Mark and Aileen. There was something wonderful about the birth of life. A small back could be seen through the breaking shell. Jang Hayoung made a helpless expression as he stared at the back covered with white fur.

"…I really hate the dokkaebi. I feel it once again."

However, this birth wasn't blessed. The newborn dokkaebi cried with a wrinkled face. It was as if just being here was painful. I recalled one paragraph about the Dokkaebi King spoken of in Ways of Survival.

「"Listen. They are born with fate and are inevitably poor people who have to live while loving the story."」

The newborn dokkaebi kept crying. She was born in this world and as long as there were stories in this world, she had to love it.

Yes, I made you like this. Thus, blame me.

[The baby dokkaebi is looking at you.]

[The baby dokkaebi recognizes you as a parent.]

[The soul of the baby dokkaebi is communicating with you.]

Then I heard a voice.

–I've been waiting for a long time ahjussi.

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[*] Official novel illustration (canonical)

Chapter 212: Ep. 40 - Hatching, III

The flow of time and space was becoming abnormal. Jang Hayoung's lips moved very slowly while the voices were badly fragmented and didn't sound normal. It was like the whole world was in slow motion.

「Kim Dokja realized. This is the time of the dokkaebis.」

In order to manage and judge a large number of channels at the same time, the dokkaebis' cognition rate was significantly faster than other creatures.

I looked up at the air. A sphere of white light floated over a baby dokkaebi with fluffy fur. It was a sphere I had seen before. It was the soul of Shin Yoosung.

'It has been a while, Yoosung'.

A translucent light appeared inside the sphere and the silhouette of a person could be seen. The existence who wanted to save the world and who used to have faith in Yoo Joonghyuk. The Shin Yoosung of the 41st regression was right in front of me.

[You have earned an incredible achievement!]

[You are the first human to hatch a dokkaebi egg.]

[You have acquired a new story!]

[The story 'Father of a Dokkaebi' has been acquired.]

Shin Yoosung read my expression and spoke.

–Don't apologize. I chose this.

'Still, I'm sorry'.

–Ahjussi is incredible. Captain of the 41st regression wasn't like you.

'It isn't easy. I have a lot of work to do'.

–Don't you need my help?

I nodded and Shin Yoosung smiled brightly.

–Can I do it well?

'You can do it well. I will help you'.

Only a person who reached the bottom of the scenario knew the weight of the scenario. This was why I believed in the 41st regression Shin Yoosung. Of course, this wasn't why Shin Yoosung had to believe in me.

–Captain of the 41st regression was unsuccessful.

Shin Yoosung's voice was shaking slightly.

–There will be more horrible things going forward.

'I guess'.

–Ahjussi can't imagine the things that are waiting.

'I will go with you'.

Shin Yoosung was silent for a moment. She seemed to be discern the meaning of my words and was measuring the depth of the last years. Either way, it would be painful for her. Soon, Shin Yoosung opened her mouth.

–I won't be able to remember ahjussi right after I'm born.

'I know'.

–Don't make too much of a fool of yourself.

'I'll try'.

Her smile was brilliant. In the silence that was like calm music, Shin Yoosung continued to speak.

–I have few good memories of the scenario.

She sounded indifferent but it was sincere because of the indifference. I listened to her and recalled the story of Ways of Survival. I thought of the stories of 'Shin Yoosung' that I knew. It couldn't be fully explained even with one hundred or one thousand sentences…

–Still, if I ever have something to say…

I didn't know if I had time to worry about this. I might've read Ways of Survival and could read her thoughts with Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint but I didn't understand the pain that the 41st regression Shin Yoosung had endured.

–This time, I will talk to ahjussi.

Thus, I could only reply to her in one way.

'Thank you'.

I bit my lips to try and conceal my heart. A bright string of light rose and the flow of time gradually returned to its original state.

[The first channel of the 73rd Demon Realm has opened.]

[Channel name: #BI-90594]

The fragmented sounds returned and I could hear Jang Hayoung's voice. "What will you name the child?"

…This was what he said. I had been very worried because of the name.

The baby dokkaebi was looking at me. I stared into her eyes and spoke quietly.

[Channel Manager: Biyoo.]

Did she know it was her name? The baby dokkaebi reached out to me. I grabbed the small and fluffy hand and it felt like the baby dokkaebi smiled at me.

Shin Yoosung was crying. She often cried after escaping from Seoul Dome. It happened when she fell asleep after a hard day or when she opened the Attributes Window and gazed at her 'constellation support'. Shin Yoosung's tears flowed out unknowingly.

It was always Lee Gilyoung who spoke to Shin Yoosung during this time. "Hey. Why are you crying again? Dokja hyung likes mature people."

Shin Yoosung's red and swollen eyes flashed at the words. "Get lost!"

"Hyung will be back soon. Didn't you see? He left while saying, 'We will meet again, Lee Gilyoung'."

"He never said that?"

"He told me! Surely you heard it?'

Lee Gilyoung saw Lee Jihye standing in the back and his eyes narrowed.

"What are you smiling at?"

"Something cute."

Shin Yoosung, Lee Gilyoung and Lee Jihye were on the way to the place they promised to meet after getting rid of the monsters that appeared as disasters in the 12th scenario. The place where they promised to meet the other party members was Seongnam City. Since they decided to meet again here, the other party members would soon gather.

As Lee Jihye and Lee Gilyoung bickered, Shin Yoosung opened her Attributes Window.

[The link to your sponsor has been disconnected.]

This was the message that appeared that kept appearing in Shin Yoosung's Attributes Window shortly after leaving Seoul Dome. Lee Gilyoung didn't like Shin Yoosung's somber face and spoke again, "Hey, look at this coin."

"…What is it?"

"If I throw the coins and it is heads, Dokja hyung is alive."

Lee Gilyoung pulled out a 100 won coin and Shin Yoosung pouted. "You have done this before."

"Let's try it again."

"…Do what you like. Ahjussi won't suddenly appear in front of you."

Flipping a coin. It was the action done whenever Shin Yoosung and Lee Gilyoung became uneasy.

"How many times has Dokja hyung died so far?"

"…41 times."

"How many times did he live?"

"59 times."

If a heads emerged, Kim Dokja would come back to live. If a tails emerged, Kim Dokja was dead.

Lee Jihye heard this story and asked, "Are you sure you want ahjussi to really be alive?"

Lee Gilyoung threw the coin in the air. At almost the same time, three pairs of eyes followed the coin. The skeptical Lee Jihye also focused on watching the coin. There was a clink as the coin fell to the ground and moved twirled. Three people stared breathlessly at the coin.

Heads, tails, heads, tails. Then…

"Heads! Look, what did I say?"

Lee Gilyoung's confident voice was heard as the coin stopped on the heads which contained a portrait of Admiral Yi Sunsin. Even Lee Jihye felt slightly better after seeing the result. However, Lee Jihye knew this result wasn't due to 'chance'.

[The constellation 'Maritime War God' has consumed some probability.]

Lee Jihye smiled bitterly. Her sponsor had been losing power recently and it was because he wasted his probability on this. Nevertheless, she couldn't say anything.

[The constellation 'Maritime War God' is looking at the children with sad eyes.]

People needed hope and perhaps the constellations were the same. Suddenly, Lee Jihye wanted to be mischievous. She picked up the coin that had fallen and opened her mouth. "Since ahjussi is alive, let's try something else."

"Huh? What is it?"

Lee Gilyoung spoke half-heartedly like he was displeased with her intervention. Lee Jihye ignored him and kept speaking.

"Does Dokja ahjussi like you better? Or does he like Yoosung more?"

"Of course it is me!" Lee Gilyoung shouted.

"What? Have you forgotten the garter belt incident? My liking was higher."

"Hey! That…"

Then a shrill voice was heard from behind them. "A 15 year old schoolgirl!"

The owner of the voice wasn't Shin Yoosung, Lee Jihye or Lee Gilyoung. They saw two girls approaching in the distance. They were Han Sooyoung and Yoo Sangah who came back from fighting monsters in Gwacheon.

Lee Jihye recognized the owner of the voice.

"A 15 year old schoolgirl. He said that to the black flame dragon and took a skill!"

As they were going to reach Lee Jihye and the children, another woman appeared from the Suwon direction. She was a slender woman with a long sword hanging from her waist.

"What are you talking about?"

It was Judge of Destruction Jung Heewon, who had been in charge of Suwon.

"Heewon unni!" Lee Jihye rushed towards Jung Heewon with delight. However, Jung Heewon's state wasn't good. Her armour was severely damaged and her thights and forearms were covered with cuts. It was unthinkable when considering Jung Heewon's strength. The monster species weren't that strong.

"Are you okay? Did a different monster appear?"

"That isn't it. There were some problems with my stigma."

"Stigma?" Jung Heewon was about to explain only to lightly shake her head. Instead, she looked towards Han Sooyoung. "Han Sooyoung-ssi, please keep talking. What were you saying?"

Maybe it was because of Jung Heewon's intense interest but Han Sooyoung instantly started to talk about what happened. Lee Jihye listened to the story and wondered,

"I'm not sure what you are saying… who is the 15 year old schoolgirl?"

People's gazes focused on Han Sooyoung. Han Sooyoung spoke brief gibberish before declaring in a slightly excited voice.

"Kim Dokja, he is alive."

"How did you come to that conclusion? Why…"

Anyone who heard Han Sooyoung's reasoning would think it was nonsense. At this moment, Jung Heewon interrupted. "I don't know the connection between Kim Dokja and the 15 year old schoolgirl but… it doesn't seem very likely."

Lee Jihye asked with an absurd expression. "Unni, you understood what she said just now? Did you learn a new skill?"

"It isn't likely. However, I do think Dokja-ssi is alive."

The party members gulped at Jung Heewon's words. Kim Dokja, was he really alive? Jung Heewon took a pained breath and started speaking. "I suddenly can't use my stigma."

"Huh?"

What did this mean? What did Jung Heewon's inability to use her stigma have to do with Kim Dokja surviving? Jung Heewon immediately replied to their question. "My sponsor has suddenly disappeared."

"Your sponsor?"

Jung Heewon nodded and looked at her Attributes Window.

[The link to your sponsor has been disconnected.]

It was the first time she had seen this. Thanks to this, she was unable to borrow the power of her sponsor for the moment. However, that wasn't the only message.

–I found Kim Dokja.

At this time, a person arrived in the 73rd Demon Realm.

[You have arrived in the 16th personal scenario area!]

[This scenario has a time limit!]

[Be sure to return to the main scenario within the given time!]

The moment he stepped through the portal, a bleak horizon of stories and mountains of garbage story fragments unfolded. Yoo Joonghyuk frowned at the sight and asked, "…Is this really the right place?"

*

Then a small angel doll sitting on his shoulder nodded.

"Do you have to answer through this toy?"

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' says it can't be helped because there are no channels here.]

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* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)

Chapter 213: Ep. 40 - Hatching, IV

Yoo Joonghyuk's wrinkles deepened as he stared at the symbolic figure shaped like a doll. "…How are you sending an indirect message without a channel?"

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' says it is possible if the symbolic body is in contact with the incarnation.]

Uriel's symbolic body was the doll on Yoo Joonghyuk's shoulder. Yoo Joonghyuk gently poked the symbolic figure with a finger.

"Is it okay to do this?"

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' says it will be okay as long as it isn't caught by a dokkaebi.]

"No, I'm not talking about the dokkaebi."

Uriel initially didn't understand what he was saying. Yoo Joonghyuk pointed to the side of the doll.

The doll cocked her head and then covered her mouth with both eyes.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is deeply moved by the heart of the incarnation 'Yoo Joonghyuk'.]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' says it is a bit painful.]

There were weak sparks around Uriel's symbolic body. It was because the Demon Realm was a taboo for her, an archangel. The Demon Realm was the domain of the demon kings. Uriel was taking an unnatural risk and forced to bear the brunt of her probability being exhausted. Uriel moved to clinging to his arms and Yoo Joonghyuk asked her, "Why are you going so far to look for Kim Dokja?"

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is asking if it isn't the same for you.]

"There seems to be a misunderstanding. I…"

In fact, the Demon Realm was originally a place where he would've never come. The difficulty here was incomparable to other scenarios of the same rank. It was comforting that this was the 73rd Demon Realm. There were no demon kings and the ruler would be a duke at most. This much was worth a try. Above all, he was much stronger than he was at the same point in his previous regressions.

"I just don't like people impersonating me. It doesn't matter if it is Kim Dokja or not."

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is laughing.]

"There are also many usable items in the Demon Realm…"

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is laughing loudly.]

"Do it one more time and I will rip apart your body."

Yoo Joonghyuk turned his head and gazed at the wide horizon. Perhaps that bastard was somewhere in this desolate world. In this silent world, Yoo

Joonghyuk finally started moving.

The Syswitz Industrial Complex.

The atmosphere of the duke's office was much more unusual than usual as Earl Silocke sweated while reporting.

"…Therefore, we plan to control access into and out of the industrial complex while the revolution is ongoing."

Silocke's heart sank several times as the face of the Gilobat envoy distorted in front of him. This

person might be Gilobat's envoy but he wasn't the one in charge of the delegation.

Explosive Ombros. He was a marquis of the Gilobat Industrial Complex and the most prominent candidate to be the next duke of the 73rd Demon Realm. Silocke gasped for breath as he saw the fire glowing in Ombros' eyes. He might've fled if it hadn't been for Duke Syswitz standing at the window and looking outside leisurely.

"…That's why I am asking the Gilobat envoys to stay here for a while."

"Have you finished speaking?"

"Y-Yep! T-Then I will go…"

Silocke hurriedly opened the office door and ran away. Meanwhile, Ombros took a few deep breaths to control his temper. It was an annoying situation but he couldn't act as usual. It was because the strongest existence in the 73rd Demon Realm, Syswitz was behind him.

Duke Syswitz stared out the window for a while before smiling. "That's what happened."

"…What am I supposed to do?"

"I'm sorry but you can't leave. Please stay in the Syswitz Industrial Complex for the time being."

In the end, Ombros exploded. "…Don't you know these words can cause diplomatic issues?"

"You're too sensitive. It is just a protection measure for the envoys of the alliance."

"Is it because of the revolutionary?"

"Seven executioners and two marquises have died. It has been a long time since this happened."

The last phase of the Revolutionary Scenario would start when all executioners in the complex died. Strictly speaking, Duke Syswitz was in a crisis right now. Unlike his words, there was no sense of crisis in Duke Syswitz' expression. Ombros didn't like this contradiction and complained, "A revolutionary appearing at this time… you must want to save face, Duke Syswitz."

"Really? I think it is fun. It has been 30 years since a revolutionary emerged in Syswitz. Sometimes this event is needed."

"You are speaking like the constellations."

"Why not? The story isn't only related to the constellations."

Ombros would've scoffed if a normal incarnation had said this. However, Duke Syswitz was qualified to say such things. He wasn't comparable to the 'historical-grade constellation's but Syswitz was a monster who had ruled the 73rd Demon Realm for 400 years.

"It is good to have as many stories as possible before the beginning of the demon king competition.

The more powerful the revolutionary that appeared, the better it is for me."

He never even thought about being hit by the revolution.

"Why are you so confident that you can stop the revolution?" Ombros asked.

"Why do you think?"

Ombros' eyes sank at the question. Maybe it was an obvious story. Syswitz had lost two marquises in this incident.

"I hope you won't betray Gilobat."

"Haha, who said that?"

"I'm telling you this personally."

"I will also give you a piece of advice. Do you think that Duke Gilobat can become the demon king?"

Ombros was a bit upset by the words. Syswitz didn't give him time to think.

"Or do you think Melledon and Bercan can become the new demon king?"

"…I can't answer this question."

"No, you can answer it. It is because everyone knows who is the strongest of the four dukes in the 73rd Demon Realm."

Ombros gulped. This calm declaration could sound so scary. Once again, the oldest duke of the 73rd Demon Realm couldn't be ignored.

"It won't be easy. Melledon has joined hands with Vedas."

"He isn't the only one who can borrow the power of the constellations."

"These words…"

Duke Syswitz stared at the sky outside the window instead of answering.

"The dokkaebis will come soon. Then what will happen next?"

Now the night sky was completely dark. However, soon there would be many stars in the night sky. Then the other demon kings would show up as a response to the emergence of the constellations.

Marquis Ombros felt a heart-shaking sensation.

Finally, the 73rd Demon Realm would become a battleground for a proper scenario.

"…Is there a channel liaison yet?"

"I put in a request to the bureau."

At this moment, Ombros realized why Syswitz didn't look for support. Once the dokkaebis appeared and the full-fledged scenarios began, the constellations would gather towards the bigger events. Suddenly, some thoughts ran through his head.

"It wouldn't be bad for there to be a small entertainment before the full-fledged Demon King competition begins. The constellations love slaughter."

"Is that why you are leaving the revolution alone?"

Syswitz stared at the smoke with a strange smile. Ombros sighed bitterly. "…You were born evil."

Every conflict in this world was a commodity. Now Syswitz was selling the lives of the many civilians in the industrial complex to seek the attention of the constellations.

"Thank you for the compliment."

Ombros shook his head like he was tired. If he planned this production then Duke Syswitz would surely be preparing for a greater blow. It wasn't difficult to predict what would happen in the industrial complex.

"I can see movement in the Factory."

The most powerful story weapon possessed by the dukes, the Factory. Duke Syswitz nodded. "I have already prepared it so you will see sooner or later."

Anticipation filled Ombros' eyes. The most powerful person in the 73rd Demon Realm. It wasn't a common opportunity to see him in action. Then…

[The #BI-90594 channel has been created in the 'Syswitz Industrial Complex' area.]

Ombros heard the message and stood up with amazement.

"Did you call the dokkaebis already?"

Once he saw the expression on Duke Syswitz' face, Ombros realized this wasn't part of the plan.

The door of the office opened and somebody ran in.

"Duke!" I'm sorry but I have an urgent report—"

It was Earl Silocke who previously fled from this place. Syswitz quickly managed his facial expression and replied, "Tell me."

His report was probably related to the emergence of the new channel. However, unexpected words emerged from Silocke's mouth.

"The Factory isn't operating hard enough."

Duke Syswitz made an embarrassed expression.

"…What does that mean? Didn't I tell you to replenish it?"

"T-That… it looks like all the civilians who came to work have stolen the story fragments."

Ombros noticed how things were progressing and said, "It seems this revolutionary is using his head. Perhaps the dokkaebis moved first because of him…"

"That is impossible. The negotiations with the bureau haven't ended yet."

Duke Syswitz frowned at the unexpected situation and immediately gave instructions. "Send the supervisors and slaves to the horizon. Have them collect more story fragments."

"I have already sent them. By the way…"

Duke Syswitz hadn't realized that the report wasn't over. Earl Silocke's shoulders hunched over like he was afraid of how the duke would react.

"Just… I lost contact with the supervisor who went out to collect the story fragments."

The horizon near the Syswitz Industrial Complex. Jang Hayoung kicked the body of the dead supervisor and said, "It seems that the duke has been preparing for quite a while. Ordering a collection of this scale…"

It was an extra large collection with thousands of slaves mobilized. The situation was resolved but it would've been dangerous if we had been a bit later. It was impossible to launch a full-scale war against the Factory when my incarnation body wasn't yet intact. Things would've become worst if these story fragments entered the Factory.

"You are good." I glanced at Han Myungoh beside me.

He knew the duke would move in this way. If Han Myungoh hadn't been the spy, I wouldn't have guessed the exact timing to put the plan into action. Han Myungoh was elated by my praise and laughed.

"Hum, who am I? Aren't I the 'Brain of Mino Soft?"

"You can use that as a modifier if you ever become a constellation."

I smiled at Han Myungoh. At first, I didn't like being on the same side as this person. Now I thought it wasn't a bad choice.

"Bring the slaves over here! I will start repairing those who are still sane first."

Now that I had decided to wage war properly, I could feel something different from Aileen and the citizens. I watched them and controlled my heart. The baby dokkaebi who looked like cotton candy sat on my shoulder and cried out. "Baat!"

Her memories hadn't been recovered but every dokkaebi had the instincts of a streamer. They filled in the scenarios where there should be a story.

[A new sub scenario has arrived!]

[The Sub Scenario—'Liberate the Slaves' has started!]

"Thank you."

I lightly stroked her head and Biyoo shouted, "Daat!"

It might not be possible for me to enter the main scenario but I could receive a sub scenario whenever there was an opportunity. It might be a temporary measure but if I kept building up sub scenarios, I would be able to recover enough to face the duke.

「Kim Dokja thought: There is nothing urgent. Time is still on my side. I now need to thoroughly prepare to safely pass the Demon Realm's scenario.」

I sincerely thought this. At least, until I heard an unexpected message.

[A new constellation has entered the #BI-90594 channel.]

Chapter 214: Ep. 40 - Hatching, V

…A new constellation? Already? It was earlier than the expected timing. I thought there would only be subscriptions after a few more incidents…

[A constellation is looking at the incarnations without revealing their modifier.]

It didn't seem to be a constellation I had already met. I was a bit disappointed. I was hoping it would be Secretive Plotter or Abyssal Black Flame Dragon.

"D-Did you hear the message just now?"

"What message?"

"I heard an indirect message!"

I didn't know if it was rich or not but the new constellation was sprinkling indirect messages from the beginning. Biyoo shouted from her position on my body. Maybe Biyoo was receiving many coins right now. It was natural to be amazed. Now she knew how to make coins as a dokkaebi.

「 Kim Dokja thought: I hope they are a good person. 」

The inclination of the initial subscribers would determine the nature of the channel. The stimulus and difficulty of the scenario would be determined if the initial constellations were 'incarnation seekers' or 'fun seekers'.

After all, every detail that the dokkaebis couldn't determine were made in response to the desires of the subscribers.

In fact, this was what I was most worried about. The 41st regression Shin Yoosung had already suffered countless injuries from the dokkaebis. In order to continue the scenario in the future, Biyoo must constantly face the desires of the constellations.

"Baat?"

I placed my hand on Biyoo's head.

[A constellation who hasn't revealed their modifier is revealing their modifier.]

[The constellation 'Nouveau Richer Snake Boss' disapproves of the incarnations here.]

I frowned at the message.

…This was a bad start. I remembered hearing about the Nouveau Richer Snake Boss in Ways of Survival.

[The constellation 'Nouveau Richer Snake Boss' is bored with the development of the scenario.]

[The constellation 'Nouveau Richer Snake Boss' is dissatisfied with the naive development of the dokkaebi.]

Nouveau Richer Snake Boss. His hobby was to enter the channels containing weak constellations, flash coins around and ruin the scenario.

[The constellation 'Nouveau Richer Snake Boss' wants stimulation.]

I remembered Ways of Survival talking about how many channels had decreased subscribers or were completely destroyed due to him. He was only mentioned in passing but now I had to face him directly.

[The constellation 'Nouveau Richer Snake Boss' doesn't want the survival of the 'removal slaves'.]

[The constellation 'Nouveau Richer Snake Boss' says everyone should cooperate to kill the enemies!]

[The constellation 'Nouveau Richer Snake Boss' declares that he will donate coins to anyone who kills a removal slave.]

The citizens started to look around at the messages. Some people looked confused at what this meant and others looked hesitant. Some people were panic-stricken as bad memories popped up.

However, some of them were secretly taking out their weapons. Jang Hayoung noticed it and screamed, "Wait! What are you doing right now?"

He was one step late. Once they saw one person taking out a weapon, the actions of the citizens became faster. One, two, three. The number of weapons increased.

"Hey, are you serious? This isn't it!" Mark seized a citizen who was approaching a removal slave. "Just because they are removal slaves doesn't mean they are lost. Some still have their minds!"

"Most of them were those who sold their souls to their duke!"

"Not all of them are like that! Don't you know?"

"Aren't they dead anyway? This is great!"

The citizens were blinded be coins and drew their blades.

[The constellation 'Nouveau Richer Snake Boss' is excited about the intensified conflict.]

[The constellation 'Nouveau Richer Snake Boss' declares that he will donate 3,000 coins to the

incarnation who kills the most removal slaves.]

3,000 coins. It was a luxurious sum in the industrial complex where coins were precious.

"L-Let's just kill them. We have to live…!"

"Right! Chairman, just kill everyone and go back!"

The balance of voices was leaning sharply. The number of citizens who took out weapons increased. Mark once again shouted to stop their greed. "They were once citizens! If you act this way, how are you different from the nobles?"

"Get out of the way! If we don't act right now—"

[The constellation 'Nouveau Richer Snake Boss' is enjoying the dispute between citizens.]

The moment Mark was pushed to his ass by the struggle, another message followed.

[The constellation 'Nouveau Richer Snake Boss' declares that he will donate 300 coins to an incarnation who kills a citizen.]

The citizens were momentarily stunned. They glanced at each other and hurriedly moved away from each other.

"Uh…"

"W-Wait a minute!"

I thought I knew what they were thinking.

「Yes, the scenario was originally like this.」

One day, the citizens of this place had performed the 'first scenario'. Pointing blades at each other and killing to survive.

"U-Uhh…"

The citizens glanced at each other while holding weapons. A constellation spoke a few words and the bonds of the citizens gathered in the name of 'revolution' were gradually dimming.

[The constellation 'Nouveau Richer Snake Boss' is delighted with the reaction from the incarnations.]

My hatred of the constellations, which I had forgotten for a while, revived again. Once upon a time, I might've been like these citizens. I would've played along with what the constellations for one or two coins, adapted to the story of the constellations and become disillusioned, saying 'this is unavoidable'.

「Kim Dokja thought.」

It was unavoidable…

「There is nothing unavoidable.」

I took a step back and completely crushed the floor. I used this force to jump into the crowd of citizens. Then I grabbed the neck of the citizen who had strongly pushed Mark.

"K-Keeok!"

"300 coins per body."

"Kuoock… R-Revolutionary?"

"300 coins. Don't you think that is too cheap?"

The citizen I was holding struggled but I tightened my grip instead of releasing my hand. Soon after, the pale citizen dropped his weapon and the surrounding citizens screamed. Once the citizen was about to suffocate, I laid him down roughly on the ground. Their terrified eyes watched me.

"300 coins per person… how much would it be if I kill everyone here?"

"U-Uhh…"

"If you kill the removal slaves, he will give 3,000 coins. So altogether, it is 13,000 coins… indeed, it is hard to ignore."

13,000 coins. Most of the citizens here had never seen such an amount.

"…But don't you know? You can't change anything with 13,000 coins. At best, it will be a few vague skills and some equipment."

The citizens' eyes started shaking. Those who had never used the Dokkaebi Bag wouldn't know. 13,000 coins were just a petty amount of cash for the high-ranking constellations. What could they do in this world with that much money?

I looked down at the citizen on the ground. "Then what are you going to do next?"

"Y-Yes?"

"What will you do with the 13,000 coins after killing everyone?"

Emotions slowly crossed the faces of the citizens. Fear, fear and…

"I, I…"

The citizens murmured in voices that sounded like they had fallen into an abyss.

"N-Nothing…"

I watched the bewildered faces of the citizens. In fact, I knew. They didn't do this with a clear purpose. Perhaps the citizens themselves didn't understand why they were trying to gather coins. They just had the compulsion to survive and collect more coins than other incarnations. The scenarios made the incarnations slaves to the story.

In this heavy silence, the citizens realized what they had been planning to do and burst out crying. "R-Revolutionary. I…"

I got up, ignoring their eyes. Then I spoke casually, "Since a channel has opened, more constellations will come in the future."

The eyes of the citizens staring at me were shaking with a different light.

"Don't sell your stories for just one or two coins. If you want to sell them, do it for the right value."

I didn't know how much of my words had been communicated to the people. I wasn't good at talking. Even so, this was all I could do.

The people around me bit their lips with sad faces. Then they looked like they had decided to do something. The citizens dropped their heads and started to put away their weapons. None of them opened their mouths but their expressions alone were an answer.

However, not all of them accepted my words.

[The constellation 'Nouveau Richer Snake Boss' is staring at you.]

[The constellation 'Nouveau Richer Snake Boss' feels a strong rage towards you.]

[The constellation 'Nouveau Richer Snake Boss' has requested a bounty scenario.]

A bounty scenario. Yes, there was something like that. It was a damn scenario that was invoked at the request of the constellations.

"…Revolutionary?"

The surprised citizens glanced at me with fearful faces. The target was obvious if a bounty scenario was triggered now. At this time, Biyoo rose from my head and floated in the air.

[Baat.]

Other dokkaebis would've willingly accepted the bounty scenario but Biyoo couldn't do that. Biyoo's body swelled up as if to refuse the request.

[…Baat?]

Then faint sparks flowed over Biyoo's small body.

[B-Baat. Baaaat…!]

At this moment, I realized what would happen.

[The constellation 'Nouveau Richer Snake Boss' has requested a bounty scenario.]

[The constellation 'Nouveau Richer Snake Boss' has requested a bounty scenario.]

Biyoo was now struggling with her instincts.

「Unlike common misunderstandings, the dokkaebis don't deliberately produce stimulating scenes.」

It was out of instinct to meet the demands of a constellation subscribed to a channel.

「The more innate the streamer, the more powerful these instincts are. It is an instinct to create a scenario that more beings desire. All dokkaebi live with such instincts.」

Biyoo was still a baby and it was more difficult for her to overcome such instincts. I reached out and lightly grabbed Biyoo. "It's okay."

"There isn't only 'one' subscriber to this channel."

[The constellation 'Demon King of Salvation' doesn't agree with the invocation of the bounty scenario.]

The sparks scattered instantly at my fingertips.

[The bounty scenario request has been denied.]

[The constellation 'Nouveau Richer Snake Boss' is astonished.]

I raised my head towards the air. "Snake Boss. The story that you want isn't here."

I gazed at the faint constellations shining in the night sky and declared in a nonchalant voice. "I'm busy so get lost."

Chapter 215: Ep. 41 - Real Revolutionary, I

At this moment, I thought it was a bit of an overkill. I meant to say something similar but I didn't mean to provoke him so much. Maybe I was too accustomed to giving cider to individual constellations. It was laughable. I wasn't Yoo Joonghyuk and I didn't have anyone giving me coins now.

"Didn't you hear it? The Demon King of Salvation!" Jang Hayoung ran to my side and exclaimed. "Look at the constellation who joined out channel! A person from Earth!"

I was about to tell him that I was the Demon King of Salvation when I remembered something that he said previously.

–Ah, he already has a girlfriend.

…I shouldn't.

Instead, I looked up at the sky where the light was shining.

[The constellation 'Nouveau Richer Snake Boss' has jumped exceedingly high.]

This jerk must be pissed off but he couldn't go on a rampage. A low-ranking constellation like the Nouveau Richer Snake Boss didn't have the guts or enough probability to make trouble in the Demon Realm.

[The constellation 'Nouveau Richer Snake Boss' is furious that a mere incarnation has destroyed him!]

…What incarnation? Who killed this guy in the original novel? It couldn't be Yoo Joonghyuk…

[The constellation 'Nouveau Richer Snake Boss' is indignant that a constellation he has never heard of is opposing his will!]

[The constellation 'Nouveau Richer Snake Boss' is looking around for the Demon King of Salvation.]

This guy didn't know that I was the Demon King of Salvation. Well, it didn't matter. As long as he cared about the Demon King of Salvation, half of my purpose was achieved.

「Kim Dokja thought: I must gather constellations to this channel. This way, I can gain the upper hand in the 'Demon King Selection' which would follow after the Revolutionary Scenario.」

For this to happen, I needed word to spread about this channel. Even so, it was dangerous to blindly recruit constellations. If too many powerful people entered from the beginning, Biyoo would find it hard to handle and it could be troublesome for me.

At this moment, Nouveau Richer Snake Boss was becoming upset in the channel.

[The constellation 'Nouveau Richer Snake Boss' starts to question the nearby constellations about the Demon King of Salvation.]

[The constellation 'Nouveau Richer Snake Boss' is surprised to hear the rumours about the Demon King of Salvation.]

He was a low-grade guy among the top people of this world.

[The constellation 'Nouveau Richer Snake Boss' claims to have seen the Demon King of Salvation.]

[The constellation 'Nouveau Richer Snake Boss' is appealing against the accusations of the constellations pouring towards him.]

[The constellation 'Nouveau Richer Snake Boss' claims to have really seen the Demon King of Salvation.]

Therefore, the narrative-grade constellations didn't believe his words. In other words, the story only reached the arrogant lower-grade constellations. It meant the Nouveau Richer Snake Boss was a perfect fit for collecting such constellations.

[The constellation 'Nouveau Richer Snake Boss' is gathering his gang.]

It was as I expected.

[New constellations have entered the #BI-90594 channel.]

If Secretive Plotter was in the same channel, he would've clearly sent me a message of admiration at my ploy. It felt a bit nostalgic.

[The newly entered constellations are revealing their modifiers.]

[The constellation 'Nail-Eating Rat' is looking for the fingernails of fallen incarnations.]

[The constellation 'Dog Who Threw Himself into the Flames' is curious about the channel's incarnations.]

Since there was a series of animal modifiers, he really had called his friends. Nail-Eating Rat and Dog Who Threw Himself into the Flames… they were modifiers that I knew were unknown even without looking at Ways of Survival. These bad guys were also constellations.

[The constellation 'Nouveau Richer Snake Boss' is warning the Demon King of Salvation.]

[The constellation 'Nouveau Richer Snake Boss' declares that this channel has been taken over by the Twelve Zodiacs nebula.]

…What was this? I had seen the Twelve Zodiacs in passing in Ways of Survival. They were a nebula but they weren't very cohesive. In addition, the majority of members were low-grade constellations. There wouldn't be a problem even if they became hostile to me.

「Kim Dokja thought: First, the number of subscribers has increased. Next would be to sort them.」

The larger the channel, the more loaches that obscured the water. Now that I wasn't free to use my status, I needed a constellation to take charge of quality control. It needed to be a constellation with a strong power but was moderately decent. They should be capable of crushing other constellations… where could I find such a person?

In fact, I already had the answer.

"Jang Hayoung, what are you doing?"

Jang Hayoung, who was typing something into the air, glanced at me with surprise.

[The 'Unidentified Wall' is surprised.]

It seemed he was doing something similar. My eyes narrowed as I said, "You will die if you tell the other constellations about the Demon King of Salvation."

"I just wanted to boast that I heard the message…"

"Then you will be punished. The Demon King of Salvation is a very, very scary man."

Jang Hayoung jumped and glanced up at the sky. He thought that the Demon King of Salvation might be looking at him from somewhere. Fortunately, there were no indications of unusual movements in the channel. Jang Hayoung hadn't spread his nonsense yet. Jang Hayoung noticed my glance and asked, "You know the Demon King of Salvation?"

"A little bit."

"Are you friends?"

I didn't know if we were friends on not…

"It is enough that he gave me a message to tell you."

"…What is it?"

"He is looking at you."

I thought saying this would be better. In any case, I had to take advantage of his power from now on.

* * *

[The constellation 'Nouveau Richer Snake Boss' is looking for a place to relieve his anger.]

[The constellation 'Nail-Eating Rat' is curious about you.]

The indirect messages appeared in the air one after another. Duke Syswitz listened to the messages for a while before opening his mouth with a frown.

"Gather all the nobles at Night."

"Huh? But… U-Understood!"

The subordinate quickly escaped from the office and Duke Syswitz placed a new cigar and placed it in his mouth. He looked slightly nervous due to the indirect messages of the constellations.

'I don't know who opened the channel. However, I can't let that opportunity go'.

It wasn't a formal channel. However, he could still take advantage of the channel to start the competition in the most advantageous position in the Demon Realm.

'The other dukes haven't yet obtained a channel for broadcast'.

The modifiers of 'snake' and 'rat' seemed wrong but they were still constellations. He didn't know the details but this situation was a great opportunity for him to become a demon king.

Marquis Ombros watched the situation and asked, "Are you planning to face the revolutionary in a situation where the Factory isn't operating?"

"…"

"Once all the remaining executioners are dead, the revolutionary will gain the power to kill you."

A ruler who lost all his subjects would be vulnerable to a revolution. That was the planned evolution of this scenario. However, Duke Syswitz didn't blink at all. "Of course not. If the person who showed up now is the real revolutionary."

"What…"

"By the way, have you decided which side you will be on?"

"Huh?" Ombros looked surprised. "I'm a marquis of Gilobat…"

Duke Syswitz smiled and Ombros realized the meaning of 'side'. "Are you?"

Ombros' back was soaked with sweat while there was a very short conflict in his head. The duke who obtained the first 'channel' would be overwhelming advantageous in the selection competition. Many constellations would soon flock to this channel. In addition, Duke Syswitz had the most powerful story in the 73rd Demon Realm…

Ombros' worries didn't last long. "I greet the new demon king of the Demon Realm."

The demon made a decision. Duke Syswitz nodded as Ombros slowly knelt down.

* * *

I entrusted the removal slaves to Aileen and Mark before asking Biyoo to disrupt the broadcast channel for a while. It was to prepare for any possible problems. I didn't want the animal friends to hear what happened from now on.

"Jang Hayoung, how many people are you talking to now?"

Jang Hayoung looked me in the eye and replied. "Three people?"

"One is the black flame dragon. Who are the remaining two?"

"Um… Actually, it might be five."

"Five people?"

"To be precise, it is nine but…"

"…Nine people?"

"If I add those who took longer to reply, there is 15 altogether…?"

There were several distinctive features of the Unidentified Wall. One of them was the chat function that Jang Hayoung opened not long ago. It was the ability to send messages to anyone with a modifier in the Star Stream.

However, having this ability didn't mean everyone could use it like Jang Hayoung. "You talked to 15 people in this short amount of time?"

"Well, it wasn't that hard?"

It was hard for me to talk to even one person. He was a really great multi-tasker. In short, 15 constellations and transcendents were talking to this guy. Those people with strong pride…

I wondered how it was possible but this was Jang Hayoung's true power. It was because of this power that Jang Hayoung was able to build a force of transcendents.

Jang Hayoung watched my face and asked, "By the way, why are you asking?"

I hesitated for a moment. This choice was very important. If I made a bad choice, my hard-earned channel could become ruined in an instant. I thought for a moment before slowly opening my mouth. "I'd like to call somebody."

"Huh? Who?"

I hesitated to reply. I wasn't sure if my choice was correct or not.

「Kim Dokja thought: The one I will call now is beyond my control.」

It was really hard to get here. A damn scenario was a scenario but the ones who really bothered me were the constellations. Those who wanted the bounty scenario were easy. When I thought about it, I came to the Demon Realm because of my fate.

Even now, I couldn't sleep when thinking of that time. After all these efforts, I came to this distant stage and opened a new channel. Now should I call one of them to this place…?

Chapter 216: Ep. 41 - Real Revolutionary, II

"…What aren't you saying?"

Obviously, there were good constellations in this world. They were the constellations I read about in Ways of Survival. After Ways of Survival being a reality, there were some constellations that I reevaluated. Still, it didn't change that their essence was a 'constellation'.

I didn't know what my expression was like but Jang Hayoung had worried eyes. "…Is something wrong?"

"No, nothing like that."

"Then why are you worrying?"

I was somehow hesitant to speak and shook my head lightly. Jang Hayoung stared straight at me and stated, "I would like to hear it."

There was something familiar about this and I couldn't help smiling. I closely examined Jang Hayoung's face. A sharp nose on pure white skin. Clear and deep eyes below eyebrows that were drawn in a soft line…

A faint guilt filled my heart.

「 He is a kid who likes stories. 」

「 Because Yoo Joonghyuk is a good person, this person should taste the bitterness of reality… 」

「 Joonghyuk doesn't listen to people. The other person should be a good listener. 」

The result of all the comments I made was now in front of me. He had eyes to see the world, a nose to breath and ears to hear the story. Perhaps it was because of guilt but I spoke my first words unknowingly. "There are people who think bad things."

"People?"

I nodded and continued, "They are overall bad people. They bully or gossip about others and even commit some terrible things."

Jang Hayoung listened to the story and asked me, "Do you hate the people you are talking about?"

"…I thought so but I don't know."

I didn't know if I was serious or not.

"Some people were better than I thought and some people acted differently than what I knew."

The countless words of Ways of Survival that I read in the past flowed through my mind.

"What is real about them? What is reality and what is fake? I don't know very well."

Jang Hayoung silently listened despite my vague wording. How much time passed? Jang Hayoung thought about something. "It's hard to understand what exactly is troubling you… so you want to know more about these people?"

"What?"

"They seem like bad people but there might be some good people. Well, isn't that your expectations? No?"

Why did it sound so romantic? There was a backlash but when I thought about it, this might be the problem. Jang Hayoung nodded and said, "Every now and then, too, you have to talk. Talk to the people."

"It would be useless to talk."

"Why?"

"Just…"

I couldn't explain it well. It was a helpless feeling that couldn't be described. However, it was when a person became most helpless that they were the most truthful.

"I think there is a huge wall."

[The Fourth Wall is looking at you.]

"You and I are talking like this but we're not really communicating. There is no such thing as communication in this world."

[The 'Unidentified Wall' is looking at the Fourth Wall.]

「Kim Dokja thought: Maybe reality or the novel is all the same.」

「I've read it for so long and I still don't know.」

「Maybe I will never know.」

I felt like I was mistaken and that the moment I spoke these words, everything would change. This optical illusion was broken by Jang Hayoung's words."I might be different from others but of course, there is no such thing."

"What?"

"Everyone has a wall and communication is impossible… that's obvious."

I couldn't believe the friendly Jang Hayoung thought so. It was a bit surprising. Then Jang Hayoung continued, "However, we still have to talk. Even if there is a huge wall, there is a person behind that wall."

"…What can we say when there is a wall?"

"Write on the wall."

My mouth dropped openat the brazen words.

"If you shit or pee, you will leave something on the wall. That way, the other party will recognize it."

"Why would you do such a thing? The other person is beyond the wall anyway…"

"Still, you should leave a mark." Does that make sense?" "There is no apparent meaning."

"Then?"

"It is just important that you left it."

"The other party won't know so why?"

"At least the wall has changed." I was speechless for a moment. Jang Hayoung spoke in a resolute voice. "Then one day, someone might read it."

I stared at Jang Hayoung. Jang Hayoung, who was born into this world because of my greed, lived a life unrelated to me. Maybe he became a better person than I thought. I laughed with some bitterness. "I have one question."

"…Huh?"

"Did you talk to the constellations in this way?"

"Ah, that…"

Judging by his hesitation, I must be correct. I had a bit of understanding of the minds of the constellations. They were the heaviest but at the same time, loneliest beings in the universe. They were writers as well as those who watched the stories. Jang Hayoung would've listened to them as he did to me.

[The constellation 'Nouveau Richer Snake Boss' is looking at the cheeky incarnation!]

Jang Hayoung looked up at the air at the same time. Thanks to Biyoo's interference, the Nouveau Richer Snake Boss couldn't find my location for a while. Of course, this didn't last long.

Jang Hayoung asked in an uneasy voice. "…Is that bastard thinking of staying here?"

"Perhaps."

He had been embarrassed and was probably determined to ruin the channel. I thought for a moment before finally making a decision.

Jang Hayoung was right. Even if there was a wall, I had to write something on this wall. This was despite the fact that it might change what was originally written…

I didn't want to be a person who only read.

"Jang Hayoung, can you contact this person?"

Once I thought about it, I had been acting as a reader the whole time. In order to see the ending that I wanted, I had to create a new story. In fact, I had already warped reality. I just didn't know yet who would read it.

"Who?"

I didn't know if the constellations would comply with my suggestions. Now that I opened a channel… if that person helped, the Revolutionary scenario would end without any problems.

Then a message appeared in the air.

[The fifth Night has arrived.]

Sinister flute sounds were heard. I looked around the industrial complex. In the raging fire, people were screaming. My expression hardened and I spoke towards the scattered Aileen and Mark.

"Gather all the citizens."

* * *

The duke was driven into a corner. It was obvious after the Fourth Night was over. The Factory's operating power had been cut off by the kidnapped slaves. Thus, the duke couldn't come out for the moment.

However, the duke led the nobles and emerged on this Night.

「Kim Dokja thought: What is he intending?」

My mind was a bit complicated due to the variable of a new constellation intervening. In addition, the constellation I called hadn't come yet.

「It's fine. Let's think positively. This might be an opportunity.」

Yes, I didn't need to have a weak mind. I was now a constellation. I had done well so far and there wouldn't be a problem.

"Jang Hayoung! Take care of the executioners! Absolutely don't get involved with the other nobles!"

"I know!"

I ran through the streets using Way of the Wind and reached the place where the biggest fire was burning. How long had I been running? I soon saw a demon standing on the spire of a broken building.

"Are you the revolutionary?"

It was a long-haired demon engulfed in red flames. My face was tingling from the heat that emerged from his whole body. It was a stinging heat wave. I looked at the yellow flames and knew what this power was. There was only one person who used this type of story in the 73rd Demon Realm.

"Marquis Omboros."

He was the most powerful noble in the 73rd Demon Realm after the dukes. He was someone I would've hesitated to bump into before I became a constellation. However, Omboros' expression was weird.

"I am Ombros, not Omboros."

Ah, I got his name wrong. I might be Kim Dokja but even I couldn't memorize the name of extras. Omboros kept muttering like his pride was hurt. "You aren't fleeing despite knowing me. I thought you were someone with good knowledge but you're just someone with good luck."

"You would be the lucky one if I ran away. Omboros."

"I told you it is Ombros!"

Instead of answering, I raised the magic power in my body. Last time, I had fought using the status of a constellation. This time, the opponent was great and it wouldn't work against Omboros. Thus, this was an all-out battle.

[The 5th bookmark, Kyrgios Rodgraim is selected!]

[The exclusive skill 'Miniaturization Lv. 3' is activated!]

[The exclusive skill 'Electrification' Lv. 11 (+1) has been activated.]

A yellow heat wave burst out from Omboros' fist. It was the emergence of Brilliant Explosion, a skill of his story. He had the most impressive explosion stigma in the 73rd Demon Realm. The power was strong but it wasn't difficult to avoid. The explosion range was large so it was considered a long-range attack.

"You rat…!"

[The constellation 'Nail-Eating Rat' hates the words of Demon Ombros.]

Omboros felt it was difficult to deal with the smaller me with a simple explosion and he changed his operation. The heat from his hands rapidly contracted and changed into a small ball.

"Die!"

The condensed heat was more intense around his hands. He thought he would push me in strength after reducing the range…

It was a good plan but he met the wrong opponent. I wasn't an ordinary incarnation. I watched the fierce incoming explosion and stretched out my fist without hesitation. The centre of the explosion was deeply pierced by the blow containing my magic power.

My ears momentarily buzzed and the fragments caught in the explosion scattered in the air. The flames in the area were swept away and went out. Only a blue-white lightning was scattered everywhere. I heard a sound and my vision blinked white.

[The constellation 'Nouveau Richer Snake Boss' is astonished at your strength.]

Omboros couldn't be seen in the place that the blue-white lightning swept through. Maybe he flew away or he might've died.

"Oh my god…"

The industrial complex was brutally destroyed. Some of the citizens confirmed my strength and were kneeling. At this point, I didn't know how I was in a fight. If I returned to the scenario properly, could I win one on one with a few constellations?

[Your incarnation body can't handle the level of force used.]

[A significant portion of your incarnation body has been damaged!]

…Damn, it was starting again. Still, it was fine. It would be over before my body was in tatters.

"Waaaaahhhhh!"

Were they inspired by this situation? The citizens in the surrounding area started shouting.

"Revolutionary! Revolutionary!"

[New constellations have entered the #BI-90594 channel.]

The number of constellations kept increasing. It was a different feeling from Bihyung's channel. Well, maybe because I thought of this as 'my channel'. I went to the forefront of the battlefield and cut at the approaching nobles.

"Waaaaahhhhh!"

The duke himself brought about his end by coming out without the Factory. The wave of angry citizens gradually pushed the nobles.

How long had it been? Finally, we arrived at the gate of the Factory.

"The revolution is around the corner! Just a bit more…!" Someone cried out.

However, the next moment, an earthquake occurred from deep in the ground. The confused citizens screamed and sat on the ground. Something seemed to stand up in front of me. A huge building, which had been sleeping like an old beast, was raising its body. There was an engine sound reminiscent of a steam engine. Soot filled the night sky and loud sounds tore at the eardrums.

My heart suddenly sank.

…The Factory was operating? How?

Nevertheless, I couldn't afford to think about it. A giant fist struck my defenseless self. A few buildings were smashed and the steel frames shattered. I momentarily lost consciousness before coming back.

[Your incarnation body is seriously damaged!]

[Enter the main scenario now to prevent the breakdown of your stories!]

Blood poured from my body and the stories making up my body were shaken. Damn, my mind was in such a complicated state that I was caught off guard. Making such a mistake…

Nevertheless, I couldn't understand no matter how hard I thought. How was the Factory operating?

[The constellation 'Nouveau Richer Snake Boss' is pleased at the sight.]

[The constellation 'Nail-Eating Rat' is enjoying your trials.]

[A few constellations hope that you will suffer more pain.]

Dammit. I opened the channel but none of these guys were on my side. The moment I gritted my teeth and raised my body, a familiar name was heard.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is holding his hair while closely scrutinizing you.]

Chapter 217: Ep. 41 - Real Revolutionary, III

…Really?

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is looking closely at your face.]

Did the Great Sage, Heaven's Equal really come?

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is narrowing his eyes at your attire.]

I felt a strange sense of stability from the gaze. It was a strange feeling to feel at ease from someone watching me.

"Prisoner of the Golden Headband."

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is looking at you.]

The Great Sage, Heaven's Equal had yet to notice. He wasn't certain if I was Kim Dokja or not. Maybe it was due to the story covering my face. I thought for a moment before deciding to give him confidence. "That's right. It's me."

Silence filled the air. It was a tight silence like someone was taking a breath. After a while…

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is shocked by your identity!]

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is asking how you are alive.]

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is wondering why you are here.]

The message that flew only at me seemed like it was covering the sky.

「 The Great Sage, Heaven's Equal. He isn't part of the absolute good or absolute evil system. He is of the neutral system. He is playful but also indifferent. He doesn't easily connect with other constellations due to his temperament… 」

This was the Great Sage, Heaven's Equal that I knew from Ways of Survival. One of the strongest constellations in Ways of Survival, who fought against numerous constellations and built up a ridiculous myth-grade story. Even so, he died a lonely person without any deeps bonds to the end.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband'…]

I listened to the Great Sage, Heaven's Equal's messages while slowly closing my eyes. It was important to trust the information I knew. However—

"The Great Sage, Heaven's Equal."

"…I'm glad to see you again."

The Great Sage, Heaven's Equal was silent for quite a long time. We might both be constellations but he had a presence I couldn't catch. Even so, at this moment, I felt like the Great Sage, Heaven's Equal was right in front of me.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' has sweet lips for a long time.]

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is repeatedly grabbing and releasing his hair.]

The next moment, something fell from the sky. I unintentionally caught it.

…It was the hair of the Great Sage, Heaven's Equal. I couldn't help laughing. Perhaps this was how the Great Sage, Heaven's Equal showed his trust in someone.

[Your understanding of the constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' has slightly increased.]

I spoke towards the Great Sage, Heaven's Equal. "The fact that I'm here is a secret. Do you understand?"

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is nodding.]

The constellation was better than I thought and he would keep my secret well. "By the way, how did you come here…?"

Before I could finish speaking, one wall of a collapsed building tilted and someone appeared. It was Jang Hayoung who appeared with dirt falling from him. Fortunately, the fighter was still unharmed.

"Yoo Joonghyuk! Are you okay?"

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is making a strange expression.]

That reminded me, I was still selling Yoo Joonghyuk's name. It was time to tell my real name to Jang Hayoung…

I asked about the outside situation. "How is it outside?"

"…It isn't good."

I thought I knew what was going on. The industrial complex was shaking like there was an earthquake. Screams of the citizens came from all over the place and Jang Hayoung's expression hardened. "The duke is turning the industrial complex into a ruin while looking for you."

It would be strange if this place wasn't turned into a wasteland. Once the duke started the Factory, there was no way to stop it. However, it was impossible for me to retreat now.

"How are the executioners?"

"There is only one left. He is good at running…"

The blood of the demons on Jang Hayoung's cheeks covered up the aura of a fighter. It was a remarkable achievement considering the short time.

"Take care of the remaining one. Then the duke…"

As I spoke, sparks appeared around my face. My knees instantly lost strength.

"Hey! You…" The amazed Jang Hayoung ran over and grabbed my shoulder. My skin started cracking apart.

[Your broken story is collapsing.]

[The exile penalty will resume.]

[The durability of your incarnation body is at a dangerous level!]

…This damn incarnation body wasn't easy. The nickname of 'sunfish' might fit me more than Yoo Joonghyuk.

"Biyoo."

[Baat!]

I called out and Biyoo's fingers moved through the air. Then a scenario message popped up.

[A new sub scenario has arrived!]

[Sub Scenario - Story Repair]

Category: Sub

Difficulty level: D

Clear Conditions: Restore the durability of your incarnation body to a certain level.

Time Limit: None

Compensation: None

Failure: —

It was a scenario I had requested from Biyoo in advance. Originally, it would be impossible to use the sub scenarios for personal gains. A formal channel of the bureau would've never allowed it.

[The sub scenario has alleviated the exile penalty.]

Thanks to Biyoo's scenario, the anguish of my incarnation body was reduced.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is interested in the way you use the scenario.]

[800 coins have been sponsored.]

Normally I would've received a barrage of criticism from other constellations but in this case, there wasn't a fuss because there was no compensation. In any case, now I was an exile and had to constantly receive scenarios. I had to stick to this until I entered the main scenario.

[The acquisition of a sub scenario has delayed the collapse of your incarnation body.]

I barely managed a sigh and met the worried eyes of Biyoo. I deliberately smiled.

–I'm fine so don't worry.

Biyoo moved her head and disappeared again. She had to manage the scenario throughout the industrial complex so Biyoo would be feeling hectic right now.

The sparks around my body fell silent and Jang Hayoung asked, "…Are you really okay?"

"I can hold on. Where is Aileen?"

"She is with Mark. They are evacuating the citizens."

It was a wise choice. It was too unreasonable for the citizens to fight back as long as the Factory was in operation. If I didn't know the real revolutionary was hiding somewhere…

I moved and could see the atmosphere covered with fine dust. There were the bodies of the fallen nobles and the citizens.

"…Is it going to end like this?" Jang Hayoung looked at the shadow of the Factory in the distance and bit his lips. The transformed Factory looked like a giant. It was an old giant spewing smoke from a chimney on its head. The giant's hand pulled out something from a nearby building.

"Kuaaack!"

The dying noble struggled as he was caught by the hands of the Factory. Looking closer, it was the marquis I fought before.

"Duke! Duuuuuke!" He shouted painfully before being crushed in the Factory's fuel engine.

There was the sound of teeth grinding. Heavy flames emerged from the power plant side of the Factory as if it was satisfied. Now I was able to determine how the duke operated the Factory. Jang Hayoung spoke in a weak voice. "Using his own men as a source of power… how can he do that?"

"It means he doesn't care about the industrial complex anymore.

"…Why? Isn't this his industrial complex?"

I activated Lamarck's Giraffe instead of replying. It was to temporarily restore my body by using story fragments.

｢ Kim Dokja thought: This guy is determined to become the 'demon king'. ｣

A large voice burst out from the head of the Factory and challenged the sky.

[Look constellations! This is what you want!]

It was the appearance of a duke fully absorbed in the story he was making. How old was he and how many years had he lived?

All beings might just be children in front of the story. The duke's words caused more constellations to enter Biyoo's channel.

[Very few constellations are curious about Duke Syswitz' actions.]

Maybe this was what I looked like. I was reminded of something.

｢ "It is easy to attract the attention of the constellations. However, creating a good scenario is difficult." ｣

It was something the Dokkaebi King in Ways of Survival had once said. I thought this saying was correct. Then I had a thought.

What was a good scenario? No, did it even exist?

"If we leave…!"

"Just wait a bit."

I stopped Jang Hayoung and looked up at the Factory. The Factory and the 'story weapons' produced an unusual force that couldn't be tolerated by the existing probability. In other words, it was perfect for a self-destructive scenario.

As expected, sparks burst from the joints of the randomly operating Factory. I explained to Jang Hayoung. "Maybe his 'persuasion energy' is lacking. It won't last long if he only has a few nobles."

The factory's persuasion energy that was its fuel was made of countless story fragments. The story weapons consumed the persuasion energy and temporarily overcame the probability. It was easy to say that the Factory was similar to my current incarnation body.

Soon it would be caught up in a probability storm…

However, unlike what I thought, the movements of the Factory didn't become dull.

[The constellation 'Nouveau Richer Snake Boss' is looking at Syswitz with pleased eyes.]

[The constellation 'Nail-Eating Rat'is delighted with Syswitz' destruction.]

[A few constellations are willing to pay for the probability.]

…Damn, it was like this. There were those who paid the probability.

[Where is the revolutionary hiding?]

Once again, there was a huge earthquake and the citizens screamed in an awful manner. I leaned against the building for a moment before slowly walking forward.

Jang Hayoung hurriedly grabbed my arm. "You will die if you go now! Can't you see that?"

I measured the durability of my incarnation body.

「Do I have enough power to get rid of this enemy?」

I didn't know.

「Can I kill it if I use Electrification and Way of the Wind?」

I still didn't know. "Jang Hayoung, kill the last executioner. I'll somehow take care of the rest."

Jang Hayoung stuttered at my words. "W-Why are you going so far? You can run away! You aren't a real revolutionary!"

"I hate this damn story."

"…What?"

"It's so obvious."

I ran towards the Factory. The streets were mostly deserted. Most citizens were trapped inside their houses and holding their breaths. I looked at the scene and remembered Yoo Joonghyuk of the 111th regression.

「The industrial complex's last Night arrived and the revolutionary didn't appear.」

…Yes, this was expected.

「However, I wished for a different story.」

Suddenly, a citizen bleeding against a wall reached out towards me.

"Re, volutionary…"

What revolution? What was all this about? Why did so many people have to die? Why did this scenario exist?

[The constellation 'Nouveau Richer Snake Boss' is staring at you.]

[The constellation 'Nail-Eating Rat' is yelling towards you.]

[The constellation 'Dog Who Threw Himself into the Flames' wants your destruction.]

The constellations sent messages towards me. Biyoo struggled as she was forced to send the messages towards me. I waved my hand to indicate that it was fine. Honestly, I wasn't fine before but now I was good.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is looking at you.]

At the very least, one person was on my side.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' wants you to smash that damn scrap heap.]

I flew into the air.

Chapter 218: Ep. 41 - Real Revolutionary, IV

The pistons of the cylinders installed on the Factory moved wildly while the grinder roared. The story fragments that weren't digested popped out from the surface like screws. It was evidence that this Factory wasn't a finished product.

The duke slightly frowned as he saw the unstable exterior of the smoking Factory. 'It isn't at a bad level yet'.

The Factory. Everyone in the Demon Realm had a similar story, even if they were a grand duke. Of course, the power of each Factory varied but Syswitz' Factory was unique.

'It was worthwhile going to the Underworld'.

A body height of 40 metres. The Factory that resembled a giant was based off the Giant Soldier of the Underworld. It was a weapon that he barely managed to get a look at by bribing one of the judges of the Underworld. Of course, the duke's Factory was only a clone with an inferior output compared to the giant soldier.

'I can't be satisfied with this degree…'

The Factory let out a harsh sound as if to express the duke's disappointment. The blades of the grinder struck the ground. Dust filled the area as dozens of civilian buildings collapsed. Just like a child breaking a hand-crafted toy, the duke relentlessly broke them.

[Very few constellations are delighted at the exciting destruction!]

[Some constellations are pointing to the fleeing citizens!]

It was a long story. The history of the Syswitz Industrial Complex had accumulated over countless years. Even so, there was no hesitation in the duke's behaviour.

"Kuaaack!"

The duke picked up the stories that were blown out of the grinder and thought. 'It is an offering to proceed with a bigger story'.

400 years. A time when a dynasty was born and collapsed. During that time, Syswitz was the dictator here.

He once loved everything in this industrial complex. He was sometimes a wise ruler and sometimes a tyrant. He tried to elevate the happiness of the citizens through a gentle reign and he slaughtered them through oppression and tyranny. He was happy, sad or sometimes interested.

Then one day, the duke had only one emotion left. 'I'm tired'.

After going on a field trip to Olympus and the Underworld, his thoughts became even stronger.

'Why should I be eating these stories?'

He never forgot the lavish dinner that was served at the dining table of the queen of the Underworld.

A sword master of another world, a great sage, a 9th circle great magician…

Syswitz ate the finely cooked story pieces and was truly amazed. Oh my god, this taste. He had a soulless expression as he enjoyed the tastes that burst in his mouth.

–I see that you're pretty good at eating.

Syswitz came to his senses and noticed that Persephone never touched the food in front of her. Persephone stared at the stories that were ravenously scattered on his plate like they were terrible food. Syswitz couldn't forget the disgrace he felt at that moment.

'I will go to the next scenario'.

Bigger stories. Bigger stimuli. Then he would gain a bigger power.

'I will become a demon king. I will live by eating huge stories that are far superior to those fucking guys'.

For that dream, it meant nothing to discard this trivial industrial complex.

[…What revolution?]

His voice trembled and the whole industrial complex shook.

[Look, there is no such thing as a revolution! It is just the roleplay of the scenario!]

It was a tone that mocked all citizens.

[A play that has been repeated over and over for 400 years. You are fighting for such a foolish thing!]

Syswitz shouted despite also being part of the scenario. He felt like he could move onto the next stage.

'I can do it'.

It seemed successful to some extent. Duke Syswitz felt a sense of liberation as numerous constellation focused their gazes on him. A peripheral pleasure obtained from denying oneself. Syswitz felt like he was the centre of the whole world for the first time. By the way…

"Do you really think so?" Someone cried out.

Of course, it was me.

「You…」

…Damn. The problem was that I heard his inner thoughts too well.

[The character 'Demon Duke Syswitz' is overwhelmed by his delusions.]

[The exclusive skill, 'Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint' stage 2 has been strongly activated!]

The thoughts of the duke randomly poured in. It was like looking at his naked self. To a certain extent, even those who didn't use Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint could feel it.

[The constellation Nail-Eating Rat's hands and feel are curling up from the duke's words and deeds.]

[The constellation 'Nouveau Richer Snake Boss' says he is okay because he doesn't have hands or feet.]

These guys were even laughing. The duke didn't know the situation and smiled at me. [Fake revolutionary.]

"Who is fake?"

I activated Bookmark and Way of the Wind before running forward. A giant blow narrowly passed by me. A crater occurred in the place where the grinder passed like a bomb had gone off.

…This level was enough to hit a historical-grade constellation? It was a power that I couldn't endure in this damn incarnation body. This was the power of a story weapon. It made non-constellations a match for constellations.

Furthermore, Duke Syswitz might not be a constellation but he was d demon had historical-grade stories comparable to historical-grade constellations.

The bombs from the grinder swept through the industrial complex. Citizens ran out crying as they lost their homes. They were people who lost their hometowns and came to the Demon Realm, struggling to make a life here. The citizens who lost their jobs were staring at me with soot-covered faces.

I looked at the citizens and had a thought. I also disliked the scenarios. But… dammit.

｢ Kim Dokja thought: I hate to admit it. ｣

I seemed to understand why this scenario existed. I split through the air using Way of the Wind. I instantly arrived at the head of the Factory and once again used Electrification.

[The durability of your incarnation body is at a dangerous level!]

I fainted earlier and used up the duration of Bookmark in vain. I only had 20 minutes left. A blue-white whirl of lightning emerged from my right hand and rushed towards the Factory. The exterior of the Factory shook slightly.

[Kuek…?]

As expected, I lacked hitting power. My current incarnation body could only exert a quarter of the original firepower.

[Better than expected…]

Moreover, the sustainability wasn't long. Nevertheless, I had to fight. I had to defeat this guy with my own hands.

[The constellation 'status' is released.]

[Your incarnation body is several damaged and only a fraction of the energy is released.]

It was a short time but for a moment, the Factory temporarily stopped working. I didn't miss this gap and focused magic power on both fists.

[This aura? You, don't tell me…!]

[The Gold Dragon's Broken Heart is activated!]

Whenever the amount of magic power sharply decreased, the gold dragon's heart recharged my magic power. In the ensuing battle, the Factory's hard shell started to be peeled off. Screws popped out and story pieces flowed from the gap.

｢ Kim Dokja thought: It would've been a good fight if my body was fine. ｣

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is watching you anxiously.]

I stood firmly and hit the upper part of the Factory with a fist containing all the power of Electrification. If I knew that I would have such a hard fight, I would've learnt more diligently from Kyrgios. Well, I guess I didn't have talent.

[The durability of your incarnation body is reaching its limit.]

[If you don't stop combat immediately, the collapse of your body will resume.]

My breathing was becoming worse and my fists were slowing down. The Factory was still in good condition.

The duke spoke with delight. [Thanks to you, the last scenario of the industrial complex will be very sweet.]

I knew I couldn't win. First of all, I wasn't fighting for the sake of winning.

｢ Kim Dokja looked down at the citizens of the industrial complex. ｣

People were watching me. Some people's mouths were wide open while others had their two hands joined together. I could also see Aileen and Mark. Each person was different but they all had similar expressions.

「Revolutionary and fighting.」

It was enough to think this.

「There is a revolution.」

It didn't matter if it was real or fake. It had once been written that the things people believed in had power. Just like a story became reality.

[Your influence on the story will become more pronounced.]

The next moment, the Factory's huge arm took my attack. My body was thrown back by the shock wave.

[Your fighting ability is good but you can't win. You are fake.]

I raised my body from the broken floor. "As you said, I'm not a revolutionary. However, there is a revolution."

[Such a thing doesn't exist.]

"Why do you think that? Is it because you were a 'revolutionary' at first?"

[…!]

"In the end, even if a revolution occurs, the endless cycle of governance will repeat?"

I could understand Duke Syswitz' feelings. I was well aware of the tragedy of the 'Revolutionary Scenario'. What made a revolutionary a revolutionary?

"It is you who failed, not everyone else."

There were terrible scenarios. There were tragic scenarios. However—

"There are no meaningless scenarios."

No matter how rubbish a scenario, people ended up living that scenario. They were happy or sad. They struggled against the impossible. Someone died while someone else saved another person.

This was the scenario of Ways of Survival that I knew. That's why I was able to keep reading Ways of Survival.

My body became harder and harder to move. If I had followed the original novel, I wouldn't have suffered like this.

「Yoo Joonghyuk had a thought. If he doesn't know who the revolutionary is, he can kill them all until the revolutionary emerges.」

In the end, the Yoo Joonghyuk of the 111th regression made the worse choice. However, I didn't want to do this. That's why I kept fighting.

The duke once again struck and in the end, my back was grazed. Towards the me without strength, the giant hands of the Factory came again and again.

[Your story is quite tempting. I'm going to eat you.]

He was a person who had gone to the Underworld and tasted excellent stories. It was natural for him to be thrilled when looking at me. As soon as the giant hand was about to grab me, someone rushed towards me with all their power and rolled holding me.

A familiar woman stood in the place where dust rose. "What are you doing?"

The chairman of the Civil Council, Aileen. I stood up on the wall with a frown. "Get out of the way."

"You've done enough." Aileen didn't move. I saw her determined expression and a corner of my heart froze. Wait a minute, surely the revolutionary…

[Hahaha! Where are you hiding? Self-proclaimed revolutionary!]

Aileen turned back after hearing the duke's voice. I realized what she was going to do and hurriedly chased her. Just as she stood in front of the duke, someone shouted, "The revolutionary is here!"

It was the first time I had seen this person. He shouted while pointing at himself.

[Someone has made a 'revolutionary declaration'!]

He could've been a member of the Civil Council or a hidden citizen. I didn't know the revolutionary's name or face. They were just a passing extra not mentioned in Ways of Survival.

[What…?]

"No, I am the revolutionary!" This time it was a woman's voice. I didn't know these faces. The woman trembled as she shouted but nevertheless, she stood firmly upright. This was the start as voices burst from everywhere.

[Someone has made a 'revolutionary declaration'!]

[Someone has made a 'revolutionary declaration'!]

Aileen and Mark were the same. It wasn't just the citizens. Many of the incarnations hiding in the house also cried out. They held weapons while shouting in an irresistible manner.

"I am the revolutionary! Kill me!"

The features of the citizens holding weapons were extremely desperate. Numerous citizens armed with weapons advanced towards the Factory like a wave. I was so excited that I stumbled.

「It was a sight that didn't appear in the Ways of Survival that Yoo Joonghyuk lived.」

It was a pity. I wanted to show the 111th round Yoo Joonghyuk this sight. If he saw this, he definitely would've made a different choice.

At this moment.

"I am the revolutionary Yoo Joonghyuk!" Someone shouted.

"I am Yoo Joonghyuk!"

"No, I am!"

…What? No, wait a minute.

"I am Yoo Joonghyuk!"

What the hell were they thinking? Now people were shouting a name instead of 'revolutionary'. There were countless Yoo Joonghyuks in the industrial complex.

[Someone has made a 'Yoo Joonghyuk declaration'!]

No… wait.

[The Star Stream's achievement system is confused.]

At the same time.

A man dressed in a black coat with a small doll on his shoulder arrived at an industrial complex. The man looked at the industrial complex and muttered.
"…Is this Kim Dokja's location?"

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is nodding with a faint blush.]

Chapter 219: Ep. 41 - Real Revolutionary, V

Yoo Joonghyuk entered the industrial complex by using Covert Maneuver and Stealth Shroud.

[You have entered the new main scenario area.]

The Demon Realm's industrial complex. He had visited the Demon Realm in the second regression but it was the first time he came in this period of time.

He slowly looked around and saw the citizens wandering the area. Their faces showed that they abandoned the scenario and felt despair at the world.

It was one of the reasons why Yoo Joonghyuk rarely formed bonds. He didn't want to share that despair. This was the most poisonous emotion for a regressor.

'It is quieter than I thought. I thought it would be a mess thanks to Kim Dokja'.

He looked around and there wasn't anyone who seemed to be Kim Dokja. He would be easily seen with his unusual behaviour…

Yoo Joonghyuk wondered if he was really alive.

"…How annoying. It is too big."

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is hoping you won't make any unnecessary sacrifices.]

He turned his head to see the Uriel doll puffing up her cheeks. Yoo Joonghyuk gave a small sigh and focused his eyesight as he looked around. He came here with the symbolic body of an archangel so his actions were limited.

'I can grab a citizen and ask…'

As he focused his senses, he felt dark energy hiding among the citizens. It was a characteristic of demons. If it was a demon then the archangel couldn't say anything.

'They must have a lot of information'.

Of course, a demon was strong. However, Yoo Joonghyuk was a transcendent. He rose to this realm without borrowing the power of his sponsor. There were few presences that could threaten Yoo Joonghyuk unless they were equal to a constellation.

'That is a good one'.

Yoo Joonghyuk moved through the shadows like flowing water and quickly spotted his desired target. Yoo Joonghyuk activated a skill before the startled demon earl could scream.

[The exclusive skill 'Sound Wave Blocking Lv. 10'. is activated!]

The demon earl's neck was grabbed. Yoo Joonghyuk opened his mouth. "If you answer my questions carefully from now on, I will spare you."

Of course, he didn't mean to spare the demon but he still said so. It was because he knew from experience that this was more effective.

The confused demon earl shouted, "W-Who are you…!"

"Kueeok! S-Such a thing…"

A brutal assault was poured towards the demon earl and his body became ragged in an instant. The demon earl coughed up black blood and spat out all types of curses. Then he changed his tune in less than five minutes.

"A-Ask! Ask anything you want!"

Then Yoo Joonghyuk opened his mouth. "Kim Dokja…"

Yoo Joonghyuk was talking when he suddenly remembered something. 'Kim Dokja' obviously wouldn't mention his own name here. Yoo Joonghyuk changed the question.

"Where is Yoo Joonghyuk?"

[Someone has made a 'Yoo Joonghyuk declaration'!]

[Someone has made a 'Yoo Joonghyuk declaration'!]

Numerous citizens shouted the name 'Yoo Joonghyuk'. It seemed as if the entire industrial complex had become 'Yoo Joonghyuk'. As I came to my senses, I noticed the countless 'Yoo Joonghyuk' advancing towards the Factory.

"I am Yoo Joonghyuk!"

"I am the real Yoo Joonghyuk!"

Of course, I moved between them and raised a hand.

"Yoo Joonghyuk! Wow…"

Yoo Joonghyuk should've seen this sight…

I wondered what he would look like if he was here.

[The name of 'Revolutionary Yoo Joonghyuk' is being widely spread in the 73rd Demon Realm.]

The Star Stream was a world of stories. So many citizens here were calling out Yoo Joonghyuk's name so he must've acquired a considerable degree of stories. I didn't know what these jerks were doing but he got to eat well…

Then a strange message was heard.

[Your reputation is rising.]

Huh?

[The reputation of 'Kim Dokja' is rapidly increasing in the 73rd Demon Realm.]

The messages continued to be heard.

…What was this situation? I never said my name?

[T-These damn guys…!]

On the other hand, Duke Syswitz was baffled by the surging tide of people.

[The last executioner has died.]

[Duke Syswitz's 'ruler' effect is disabled.]

Then Jang Hayoung finally completed his mission.

[All executioners in the industrial complex have died.]

[Everyone in the industrial complex has gained the 'execution right' for the ruler.]

[From now on, the 'Night of Revolution' will begin!}

Night of Revolution. The citizens were excited as they heard this message for their first time in their lives. The 'execution rights' for the duke. They had the power to directly punish the ruler.

"Wahhhh! Goooooo!"

Just like waves hitting hard reefs, the citizens flocked towards the Factory. The citizens were bloody and countless citizens were trampled on by the Factory, but this caused the citizens' will to burn even higher.

"Smash it!"

The citizens were thinking that they just needed to smash this big pile of metal. They just needed to get beyond this iron barrier and they could tear apart the duke.

「However, the citizens didn't know. This was actually the greatest hurdle of this revolution.」

The giant grinder started to spin and the citizens were sliced apart in the blink of an eye.

"Uwaaaack!"

"Back off!"

In the Revolutionary Scenario, the Night of Revolution was the time when the duke was the weakest. It was because every citizen in the industrial zone gained the power to kill the duke. Nevertheless, there were conditions. The duke needed to come out of the Factory.

"Shit! It is too hard!"

The shall of the Factory didn't break down no matter how it was smashed. The duke laughed.

[Foolish things.]

At one time, he was also a revolutionary. Thus, he never thought about this day. Night of Revolution was the most dangerous time for a duke. Still, the duke was absolutely safe as long as he didn't leave the Factory.

[There is nothing that can destroy this Factory.]

Thus, the duke made his Factory in the hardest form in the world. It was built on the basis of the Giant Soldier in the Underworld. It was impossible for this fearsome story weapon to be broken with the power of the citizens.

The duke showed no mercy in his movements. Every time the grinder moved, the citizens' bodies were torn to pieces. Indirect messages poured down from the sky like rain.

[The constellation 'Nouveau Richer Snake Boss' is drunk from the battlefield of blood.]

[The constellation 'Nail-Eating Rat' is excited about the human slaughter.]

The coin messages poured as the ranks of the citizens were broken.

"Aaaaack!"

The revolution was crumbling before the solid outer wall that couldn't be broken.

"Aileen. Is everything ready?"

"The temporary measures are over. But the battle…"

"It's fine. I just need to move once."

I responded roughly and stood up. This was probably the limit of what I was capable of with the story repair.

[Where are you hiding? Recite that smug revolutionary declaration again!]

I listened to the duke's voice and went forward. I held firmly to Unbroken Faith and walked step by step. Sparks appeared around the outer shell of the

Factory thanks to excessive probability consumption. The Factory was obviously a force outside the scenario. It was the constellations supporting this unfair scenario.

「Kim Dokja thought: If the duke is crushing the people with a power from outside the scenario, I can do the same thing.」

"Biyoo."

The hiding Biyoo emerged with a "Baat."

"Extend the bandwidth of the channel to the Underworld."

It might be difficult for the present Biyoo but if I didn't do this, I wouldn't be able to use this method.

"Can you do it?"

Biyoo seemed tired but nodded.

[Baat.]

This was really the last resort. I remembered the memories of my second trip to the Underworld.

–This is the key to making a giant soldier. Understood?

–Oho, it was like this… hey, I really appreciate it!

–Well, if you really appreciate it, place my name in the maker column.

I hadn't used it until now because this story weapon consumed a huge amount of probability. A weapon that would cause a probability storm simply by summoning it. Therefore, this weapon was limited by probability unless it was a scenario of Gigantomachia. It was impossible for me to summon it, even if I have the strongest sword.

"Prisoner of the Golden Headband."

The story was a bit different if I wasn't alone.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is looking at you.]

"Please help me."

Of course, it was only a summoning even with the Great Sage, Heaven's Equal's help. Even so, I could win just by summoning it.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' says it is against the fairness of the scenario.]

"I want to change this scenario."

I stopped talking and glanced at the Factory where sparks were flying. They might've received a buff due to the execution rights but the citizens weren't able to lay one hand on the duke. If this continued, the population of the industrial complex would be wiped up in the next few minutes.

"Besides, hasn't it stopped being fair a long time ago?"

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is annoyed.]

Damn, I thought we were a bit closer. Originally, the Great Sage, Heaven's Equal was the type that didn't get easily involved in such matters. Maybe it was a miracle that he was even listening to me.

"Are you really going to leave these guys alone? They are the ones who hijacked the probability first."

[The constellation 'Nouveau Richer Snake Boss' is rejoicing in the mess.]

"There are no dokkaebis here to deter them."

The Great Sage, Heaven's Equal was silent. Thinking about it, he didn't lend me probability even during the King of a Kingless World story. In the end, I committed a taboo.

"Did you receive a strange message a while ago?"

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is asking about what you mean.]

"I don't know the details but it is about the missing hair—"

A thunderous aura was felt from the sky. It was the Great Sage, Heaven's Equal's anger.

I shouted in reply to the anger. "That's right. They are the ones who sent it."

[The constellation 'Nouveau Richer Snake Boss' is staring at you with astonishment.]

[The constellation 'Nail-Eating Rat' is biting his nails at the unexpected situation.]

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is furious.]

At this moment, the hair of the Great Sage, Heaven's Equal that I left in my pocket floated into the air. I replied with a sigh, "…I will use it well."

I grasped the hair and felt the power of a condensed story. There was inherent energy in the hair. It was hard for me to measure the strength of the Great Sage, Heaven's Equal. The first thing that mattered here…

I hesitated for a moment before watching the sky and chanting the 'starting words'.

"…Now, the sword designed to cut a sleeping giant."

The moment I started chanting the first words, the colour of the sky began to change. The clouds showed signs of abnormality and a new, ominous aura filled the night sky.

[Constellations of the Demon Realm have noticed your presence!]

Yes, I was caught. It would be strange if I wasn't noticed but it couldn't be helped. I hoped that Persephone and Hades would take care of me.

"Now, descend here."

The discoloured sky started to split in half. In the gap, two huge eyes were staring at me.

[The Giant Soldier Pluto has responded to your call.]

The sparks of a formidable probability shook my body. I jerked like an electric eel and red blood flowed from my eyes. I wanted to scream but it was a pain that didn't even allow me to scream.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is sharing your probability.]

My already tattered body wasn't immediately destroyed because the Great Sage, Heaven's Equal was bearing some of the price.

[The demon kings of the Demon Realm are stunned by the surprise probability storm!]

[A few constellations are surprised by the abnormalities in the scenario!]

There was another huge shadow covering the sky. Some citizens noticed and stared at the sky. Then their eyes slowly widened.

"D-Disaster…"

The duke discovered it late and also looked up. A black gas emerged from the gap in the cracked sky. The shell boasted an eerie luster like a black dragon's scales. The duke saw its appearance and exclaimed with shock.

[T-This… h-how…!]

Shock filled his face.

[I heard it was incomplete!]

It was incomplete at one time. To be exact, it was until I visited the Underworld.

「The secret weapon of the Underworld King, Giant Soldier Pluto.」

Finally, a huge armoured weapon with a height of 30 metres fell from the sky.

Chapter 220: Ep. 41 - Real Revolutionary, VI

The body of the giant soldier appeared with a loud roar. In the original novel, it was the weapon of the Underworld King but in the second half, Yoo Joonghyuk started using it in earnest. The ultimate weapon that struck the giant in the myths was summoned in front of me by the probability I shared with the Great Sage, Heaven's Equal.

Blood flowed as I looked up at Pluto with a messy and shaky vision.

[Your incarnation body has reached its limit!]

[Your incarnation body has reached its limit!]

Shut up. I had to maintain consciousness. At least, until I gave a command to him.

[What? Where is this?]

Then I heard a voice. It was obviously a voice I had once heard before. This guy used his 'soul' as the last ingredient. I called the guy's name. "Kim Namwoon."

Then Pluto's thick body looked this way.

[…Subway grasshopper?]

"…That's right."

Kim Namwoon laughed as if he realized everything.

[Hahaha! What, did you really use those starting words?]

The starting words to summon the giant soldier were given to me by Kim Namwoon.

–Understood? I will use these starting words so remember them well. If you call it properly, I might be able to help you once.

I didn't know if he would really use those words as the starting word. However, his personality didn't change just because he died.

"You entered it directly."

[Hahaha, of course! I like this feeling!]

Originally, all souls planted in the giant soldier were overseen by the main system. Now Kim Namwoon planted his own soul in the software of the giant soldier.

[Okay, it is a special service. Take a look ahjussi. I'll give you a good show.]

"I'm sorry but I don't have the strength to do so…"

[What? Why is that?]

I lifted my finger without any strength and pointed somewhere. Pluto's gaze followed my finger and its mouth moved curiously. I opened my mouth, "Finish it."

The probability allowed me to summon the giant soldier for less than a minute. There was probably only 30 seconds left.

The fear-stricken Duke was moving the Factory this way. [T-This is impossible! Why, why is the real giant soldier…!]

The fiercely rotating grinder struck Pluto's outer shell.

[What is this crappy toy?]

The grinder that the duke was proud of was torn down with a simple swing of its hand.

It was a light hand gesture like tearing a piece of paper.

[Did you call me to destroy something like this? It is really too much.]

…There were 25 seconds until the summoning was cancelled.

[How annoying.]

Pluto was moving steadily despite the complaints.

20 seconds. It smashed the arms of the Factory with an outstretched fist.

15 seconds. The hand sword completely paralyzed the operations of the Factory.

10 seconds. A simple kick smashed the main power unit of the Factory.

The fearsome Factory that ate a tremendous amount of stories sank down. It was impossible to know if the duke inside the Factory was dead or alive. Pluto's body turned towards me.

[Is it over now? Haha, then what now?]

"…"

[Ahjussi. Now you are stuck with me…]

Then a tremendous probability storm swept over Pluto. Kim Namwoon's voice was buried by a roaring sound that seemed to rip apart time and space.

The body of Giant Soldier Pluto started to disappear into powder like it was vaporized. The probability was exhausted and it was forced to return.

…One second.

[Damn. Underworld, I…]

That damn jerk. I'm not going back there, you idiot.

[The summoning of 'Giant Soldier Pluto' has been released.]

The giant soldier disappeared but people still couldn't react. The majority of citizens were stunned from shock and those who managed to open their eyes were already crazy. It was natural. The incarnations here had witnessed the greatest god of death in this world.

I turned my head and looked at the wreckage of the Factory. The outer shell that wasn't damaged by my Electrification was now a mess, like it had been hit by a fierce beast. There were no movements from the Factory since its joints were broken and the power part was destroyed. It had been destroyed by the giant soldier in less than 30 seconds.

I slowly climbed up the Factory and found the person sitting in the cockpit. The lid of the cockpit was cracked open and the demon sitting there was bloody.

"Cough, cough!"

It was Duke Syswitz. The duke looked up at me with eyes full of disbelief. "Y-You. What are you…"

The Factory was the duke's main story. The story was ruined and the duke absolutely wasn't safe anymore. I aimed Unbroken Faith at the guy. The duke opened his mouth, "From the wenny people… I heard about you."

The duke foresaw his end and started chattering. "Unfortunate constellation, you will never survive if you kill me… Because you—"

I stabbed his heart without hesitation. There was no energy left so I fell from the Factory along with his body. There was terrible pain and I gasped as I looked up at the sky. Aileen came running to support me.

"…The duke?"

"He is dead."

Then the system messages came up.

[Demon Duke Syswitz has been defeated.]

[200,000 coins have been acquired.]

I weakly laughed. However, it wasn't yet time to relax.

[You have defeated the 'ruler' of the industrial complex.]

[You aren't a 'revolutionary'.]

[The normal scenario route wasn't followed and the 'ruler' inheritance has been cancelled.]

[The inheritance is automatically transferred to the most prestigious person in the current scenario.]

[The current 'hidden scenario' is in progress.]

[Kill the 'real revolutionary' to enter the main scenario.]

…It was as expected. Killing the duke didn't allow me to enter the scenario. I sold the name of Yoo Joonghyuk so maybe Yoo Joonghyuk was given the inheritance rights to the industrial complex.

"…What is my status?"

Aileen bit her lips as she repaired my story. "It's okay. I'll fix it."

"…How much time do I have left?"

Aileen didn't answer.

"Tell me quickly."

"10 minutes. No… 5 minutes."

My five senses were becoming paralyzed. My lips didn't listen to my instructions and the sensation at end of my hand gradually faded. I couldn't hear the system messages anymore. Perhaps my body was broken enough that it could no longer be repaired. I didn't know why I was suffering like this despite coming to the Demon Realm.

Aileen's voice quivered. "You said you are looking for a revolutionary…"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"I have to kill the revolutionary to enter the main scenario."

There was no reason to hide it so I answered honestly. Then Aileen stared at me. "I see…"

Aileen seemed like she made up her mind.

"You can live. Because I…"

"The revolutionary was in the ranks earlier. Isn't that right?"

I cut off Aileen's struggling words. "You wanted to hide and also wanted to run away."

"…"

"Still, you came out and fought hard."

Aileen watched me for a moment before turning her head. I could tell what expression she was making without looking.

"Don't cry. I'm not going to die." I laughed without strength.

「Kim Dokja thought: If I kill the revolutionary here, the stories I've accumulated will be meaningless.」

There would be a method even if I didn't become the 'revolutionary'. It had always been this way so far. "Aileen. Didn't you ask something before? The thing I asked you to make…"

Aileen pulled something out. It was a rectangular communication device equipped with a panel. It was the smartphone I asked her to produce.

"Turn it on please…"

The panel turned on and a message automatically appeared.

[You have acquired a new device. Synchronization has started.]

The synchronization finished and as expected, a file was created on the desktop. My eyes were still blurred and I couldn't see properly, but it was obviously the text of Ways of Survival.

「Kim Dokja thought: I am a 'reader'. All the answers are here.」

I somehow opened my eyes and looked at the text. However, my vision was blurred and I couldn't see. I had to find a way to break through this situation by reading Ways of Survival but funnily enough, I couldn't read it.

「Kim Dokja thought for the first time.」

…Dammit.

「This is the end.」

At last, even Aileen's face was blurred.

[The hidden scenario 'Self-Proclaimed Revolutionary' has been cleared.]

It was an auditory hallucination.

[You have become a revolutionary.]

I definitely thought it was a hallucination.

[Congratulations. You have officially entered the main scenario.]

[The exile penalty has ended.]

[Your incarnation body has automatically started to recover.]

[Your collapsing stories are recovering.]

It was impossible. My five senses were returning and my faded vision started to reappear. I looked around with wide eyes. Aileen was safe. Jang Hayoung and Mark were the same. None of them were dead. Then why…?

This wasn't the end.

[The name 'Kim Dokja' is being widely spread in the 73rd Demon Realm.]

[All the demons in the Gilobat Complex are afraid of your name.]

[The citizens of the Gilobat Industrial Complex have joined your revolution.]

I thought I heard wrongly for a moment.

…The Gilobat Industrial Complex? This… it wasn't the Syswitz Industrial Complex?

[A group of people who consider 'Kim Dokja' a hero have appeared in the Gilobat Industrial Complex.]

The Gilobat Industrial Complex was quite a distance from the Syswitz Industrial Complex. There was no way my name would resonate there. I listened to the explosive messages and thought about some faint possibilities. Even so, the possibilities were too dim.

[Someone has killed the 'ruler' of the Gilobat Industrial Complex!]

[You are currently the most prestigious person in the Gilobat Industrial Complex.]

[Due to the scenario possibility, you have become the owner of the Gilobat Industrial Complex.]

This was impossible. It was something that couldn't happen.

"Haha…"

There was a flustered laugh as relief spread from deep inside my heart. I wonder why. I glanced at Aileen's wrist watch at this moment.

The clock wasn't going backwards. The time was advancing steadily without rewinding. The needle

could go back but time wouldn't return.

"…He came." I was so happy that I wanted to call out his name.

"Huh? What are you saying?"

I smiled and said, "The real Yoo Joonghyuk came."

I couldn't see or hear it but I could feel it. That person was definitely in this world. The guy who slaughtered a strong demon with the Splitting the Sky Sword had arrived from beyond the horizon. I was lost in these wild feelings and forgot about my smartphone.

「Perhaps Kim Dokja should've checked the smartphone first.」

I heard the Fourth Wall's words and reflexively picked up the fallen phone. As usual, the title of the text file appeared on the screen. Then I realized something and a corner of my heart was frightened. Something had been altered. To be exact, there were strange words attached to the title of the txt file.

–Three Ways to Survive in a Ruined World (1st Revision).txt

싱숑 장편소설

전지적 독자 시점

Omniscient
Reader's
Viewpoint

PART 2

02

비채

*

Chapter 221: Ep. 42 - Asmodeus, I

A sleeper car was rolling around. The citizens of the council, including Aileen, were busy moving me somewhere. I could feel the fragments of my stories constantly entering, like patient in critical condition.

Putting aside the urgent situation, my mind was gradually becoming calm. I decided to sort out the situation.

[Currently, you have the inheritance rights to the Gilobat Industrial Complex.]

How did I become a revolutionary and gain the inheritance rights of the Gilobat Industrial Complex?

The answer was simple.

「 'Kim Dokja' killed the ruler of the Gilobat Industrial Complex. 」

At first glance, it seemed like a circular argument but this wasn't the case. It was because 'Kim Dokja' wasn't my body. In other words, it was easy for someone to impersonate me, build up a reputation there and finally kill the ruler.

[The Star Stream is correcting the scenario error.]

[A new story related to you is scheduled.]

What crazy person could do such a thing? There obviously couldn't be two such crazy guys.

「 Kim Dokja thought: Yoo Joonghyuk is now in the Gilobat Industrial Complex. 」

At first, I purely felt gratitude. Ah! Yoo Joonghyuk was a decent person! That jerk hit the industrial complex to save me! I felt thrilled for a while without thinking much.

Then once I thought about it, I couldn't believe it. That Yoo Joonghyuk entered the Gilobat Industrial Complex to save me? In the first place, it was strange that Yoo Joonghyuk knew about my crisis. How could a guy who wasn't a constellation or have access to a channel know about my crisis?

Thus, Yoo Joonghyuk was likely to do the opposite of coming to my rescue. He noticed that I impersonated him and came to the Demon Realm to pick me up. In the meantime, something went wrong and he headed to the Gilobat Industrial Complex first where he went through an unnecessary dispute and overturned the industrial complex. I couldn't even fathom how much rage it felt to do that.

"You're being healed. Don't shake your body." Aileen, who was working on my story in the treatment room, pushed up her glasses and scolded me.

I replied in a dispirited manner. "I'm sorry, it is instinct. How is my state?"

"Don't talk nonsense in your current physical condition." Aileen sighed but her expression didn't look bad. "I can only see it as a miracle. You are slowly recovering. The damage to your stories is so big it will be hard to move around but… I think you will be fine.

Maybe it was because I entered the main scenario again but my sense of breathing had changed.

Those who didn't know what it felt like to be an exile and return to the scenario wouldn't understand.

「Kim Dokja thought: This is the 'story'.」

It felt like a cozy and huge world was embracing me. Funnily enough, it felt like I was now living properly. It was frightening to think about who designed these 'senses'.

"Kuek…"

"Don't move!"

Aileen's sharp voice was heard along with the strong pangs.

[Your current story configuration is incomplete.]

I had entered the scenario and was in the recovery phase but things were still serious. It was a miracle that I survived long enough to kill Duke Syswitz. It was a reckless battle. It was uncharacteristic of me and I didn't know why I acted like that.

[Some constellations are asking about you.]

Moreover, I summoned the story weapon so my future stories would become very complicated. I opened the message log that I had been putting off.

[Many constellations in the channel are greatly impressed by your performance!]

[3,000 coins have been sponsored.]

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is nodding at your confidence.]

[4,000 coins have been sponsored.]

There was some sponsorship. Somehow I wasn't impressed.

[The 20th main scenario has ended.]

[The main scenario 'Demon Realm Revolution' has been cleared.]

[The excessive main scenario skip is delaying the compensation.]

[The collection of stories due to clearing the main scenario is pending.]

There were some problems but the scenario messages came up correctly.

[Some constellations are wondering about your identity.]

[Some constellations would like to invite you to their nebula!]

[Someone is eyeing your story!]

The familiar shenanigans had also begun. It was understandable why they were running around like this.

「The story weapon Pluto.」

Even the narrative-grade constellations coveted the giant soldier. The giant soldier was a rare weapon that could only be seen in the huge stories of Gigantomachia. It was a weapon that could trample on the legendary story, the Factory like it was a toy. There was no way the constellations wouldn't covet such a weapon.

By the way, 'he' hadn't come yet…

[The constellation 'Father of the Rich Night' is watching you.]

…He came, shit.

[The constellation 'Father of the Rich Night' is watching you.]

Father of the Rich Night. Fortunately, he didn't take any action apart from looking at me. It was normal for him to be angry because I used his story weapon… No, Hades looking at me might be a terrible thing in itself. He was the king of the Underworld.

[The exclusive skill 'Fourth Wall' is strongly activated!]

[The Fourth Wall is laughing.]

Dammit, I disliked this mean fellow.

Of course, I was narrative-grade and could touch Hades' toes but the problem was my current condition. The bandages wrapped around my body represented my present situation.

The incarnation body was the phenotype of my status. The phenotype was ruined so the status of the constellation inevitably shrunk. It was the first time I had been injured like this…

It was hard to lift one arm but the smartphone in my hand was comforting. I was grinning and Aileen frowned as she bandaged me. "…I told you not to look at that for too long."

"My mother always said this."

"You need to maintain absolute stability."

"For me, looking at this is absolutely stable."

I deliberately didn't explain. It would probably be filtered even if explained.

"What about the Syswitz Industrial Complex? No, now we should call it the Yoo Joonghyuk Industrial Complex."

"It's fine."

The duke died and the industrial complex was on its way to stability. There was a lot of talk about the removal slaves and the treatment of the nobles who were prisoners but Aileen was doing well.

Aileen looked at me for a moment and asked, "In fact, you aren't Yoo Joonghyuk?"

It was a question I had anticipated and I nodded. "That's right, I'm not him."

"However, the owner of this industrial complex is now Yoo Joonghyuk."

Certainly, it was true. In fact, there was a mention in my messages.

[The current owner of the industrial complex is Duke Yoo Joonghyuk.]

Duke Yoo Joonghyuk… That jerk should be thanking me. I glanced at Aileen and told her, "The duke will soon come."

Aileen's expression filled with a strange tension. "…Yoo Joonghyuk is a demon?"

"He isn't a demon although sometimes he feels like a demon." I was worried about how to explain and finally decided to say, "In this round, Yoo Joonghyuk is a good guy."

Aileen didn't understand what I meant. I shook my head. "I have a favour to ask. Can you call Jang Hayoung and Han Myungoh to me? I have something to say to them."

"…I understand."

I had passed one crisis but it was literally only 'one'. The 'Revolutionary' scenario was over but the following scenarios were incomparably larger in scale.

[some demon kings are interested in your actions.]

If I wasn't cautious, I would be eaten. Thus, from now on, I had to prepare step by step. As soon as Aileen disappeared, I opened the file on the panel screen without hesitation.

–Three Ways to Survive in a Ruined World (1st Revision).txt

It was the long-awaited Ways of Survival. My heart was already beating quickly. What did first revision mean? In addition, why did the writer give this to me?

However, the file didn't immediately appear. It might be due to the smart made by Aileen. The performance was enough to make me miss my old smartphone. The file barely opened after a considerable amount of time passed.

"…The phone isn't slow. It is the file that is too big."

Indeed, this was around the time it would take to load on an unoptimized PC. I felt a bit sick at the huge amount of text.

Damn, how did I read this?

In order to see where the story was modified, I had to read it again from the beginning and compare it to my memories. I started reading the first ten pages.

…There didn't seem to be much change? It started with the subway and Yoo Joonghyuk's actions…

This was a revision so why was this jerk still like this? Then a sentence that didn't exist in the original Ways of Survival appeared for the first time.

「Yoo Joonghyuk thought, 'If it was him, I wouldn't have thought of this'.」

I stopped as I felt cold.

「'If he had been here, I would've judged things a bit differently…'」

I subconsciously scrolled back to the first page. The performance of the smartphone caused the text to be mixed up but I couldn't afford to worry about it. An eerie feeling filled my heart. I was missing something.

…The first scene was the same? No. It was a completely different beginning. I scrolled to the first page of the first chapter of Ways of Survival and stared with a stunned expression.

"…It isn't the third regression."

The first revision of Three Ways to Survive in a Ruined World. I read the first sentence of the novel again.

「 Thus, Yoo Joonghyuk's fourth life began. 」

The first revision started from Yoo Joonghyuk's fourth regression.

「 Yoo Joonghyuk had a thought. 」

「 In this round, that guy doesn't exist. 」

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* Official novel cover (canonical)

Chapter 222: Ep. 42 - Asmodeus, II

In this round, that guy doesn't exist…

As soon as I read this sentence, an electric current flowed from my head to my toes.

…Perhaps, no, it couldn't be. Of course not. There were many people who could be called 'that guy' by Yoo Joonghyuk. In the previous regressions, there were a few 'guys' that Yoo Joonghyuk met…

Then I remembered Yoo Joonghyuk's thoughts that often appeared and my mind became complicated.

「 Yoo Joonghyuk had a thought. 」

「 'Don't think it will improve by repeating the regressions'. 」

「'There is only my birthday in this life'. 」

「 'I don't know if I can do it. Still, I won't give up'. 」

Shit, by all appearances, these were my words. I quickly scrolled through the pages towards other scenes. The words 'that guy' often appeared. He never wrote the name 'Kim Dokja but it was clearly me.

Of course, I couldn't be sure 100% because I didn't remember everything I said. Even so, I couldn't imagine anyone else saying these words to Yoo Joonghyuk. If someone else had spoken such cheeky things, Yoo Joonghyuk would've cut off their heads.

"…I'm having a psychotic break."

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is wondering about your words.]

I ignored the message from the Great Sage, Heaven's Equal and slowly took a deep breath. I needed to organize my thoughts. There was still time. Unexpectedly, the Fourth Wall helped me.

「Kim Dokja thought: In short, this is the current situation.」

Yes, tell me.

「One, the first revision of Ways of Survival had arrived.」

「Two, the revision started from Yoo Joonghyuk's fourth regression.」

「Three, a person presumed to be 'Kim Dokja' appeared in the recollections of the fourth regression Yoo Joonghyuk.」

It was a very straightforward organization. These three facts were proof of only one thing.

「Yoo Joonghyuk failed the third regression.」

I couldn't think of anything else, no matter how I looked at it. If Yoo Joonghyuk and I reached the end of this world, he wouldn't have moved onto the fourth regression.

This was the most logical reasoning. The third round that I intervened in was a failure. The time after the failure was newly recorded in the revision of Ways of Survival.

I wondered how it was possible but this was a world where many impossible things had already happened. I let out a brief sigh and searched Ways of Survival again.

One question was resolved but many more opened. Through the Fourth Wall, I tried to sort out the questions that came up one by one.

「 Why don't I exist in the fourth round of Yoo Joonghyuk? 」

No matter how I thought about it, I couldn't get an answer. It might be because I wasn't a character or it might be due to other problems. In any case, it was obvious that 'I' no longer existed from the fourth regression onwards. There was a second problem I had to focus on.

「 If the first revision is a depiction of future events, could there be a second revision depending on my actions? 」

Nothing was certain. Maybe this first revision couldn't be ruled out as a 'definite future'. Still, I was certain that it wasn't a high probability. If this was a 'definite future', the author wouldn't have sent it to me.

I didn't know why but the author was giving me an opportunity through this 'revision'. If I kept going along this path, the third regression would end in failure. Then in the fourth regression, Yoo Joonghyuk would repeat things alone.

The author was sending a warning. Of course, the author might have a terrible stench but… in any case, I decided not to consider it because there was no answer.

"The first step is to read all of this again… my head will hurt."

I pressed a hand against my temple and kept reading Ways of Survival. Some places were the same while some were changed. Anyway, I felt numerous emotions as I read the story.

'That jerk Yoo Joonghyuk, he is still like this despite everything I told him."

I was thinking about it.

'Eh? Look at this. Hasn't it changed a bit?"

I thought about it. Also…

'Yes, this part was very interesting. I liked this part'.

'Fuck, there is too much explanation…'

'…No, the sentences seem a bit better? Did the author grow?'

Stuck in these thoughts, I returned to the reader's identity and fell into Ways of Survival again. He was still a sunfish but the interesting thing was that my intervention reduced Yoo Joonghyuk's minor mistakes. The most notable part was that he caught the 'ichthyosaur' like me at the beginning of the fourth round.

「 Yoo Joonghyuk thought, 'That guy got a hidden scenario here'. 」

He also didn't die from the Theatre Dungeon in the 8th and 11th regressions.

「 "…I lived because of that guy. Well, I still would've somehow survived'. 」

I was almost moved to tears when I read this part. If I had a place to show off then I would've boasted.

'Everyone, take a look. That damn sunfish has grown'.

Of course, I was the only reader of Ways of Survival so there was nowhere to boast. My quick scrolling suddenly stopped as I thought of a question. Wait a minute, this guy was doing better than I thought? Then what happened next? Yoo Joonghyuk who was affected by me… would he reach the 'proper' ending of this world?

"What are you doing? I heard from Aileen that you are dying."

"Kim… Joonghyuk-ssi. Is your body okay?"

The door opened and Jang Hayoung and Han Myungoh entered. I had forgotten that I told Aileen to call the two of them.

"Eh, is that a smartphone?" Jang Hayoung saw the device I was holding and ran over in a flash.

I lightly changed the hand holding the phone and answered, "No, go away."

"Can you receive messages? A call? The Internet?"

"Do you have a jaw?"

Jang Hayoung made a sullen expression at my cold reply. "Then why did you call us here?"

"Are you still keeping in contact with the constellations I told you about?"

"Ahh, them?" Jang Hayoung shrugged and replied, "They aren't interested."

"Really?"

The future scenarios would be difficult to overcome with my strength alone. Until now, the opponents were disasters that descended through the scenarios or individual constellations. Those who would disturb me in the future were bigger. For example, those damn Vedas guys who fucked me over with 'fate'.

If I wanted to fight them, I needed to know the trends of the constellations and transcendents with similar ideas.

"Everybody seems busy doing their own thing. Most of them didn't even answer."

…It was still too early. It was much later in the story that Jang Hayoung became the 'King of Transcendents'. Therefore, the constellations who were by Jang Hayoung's side in the original novel might be different at this point in time. Moreover, the 'original' had already changed.

I sighed and said, "It's fine. You can go out."

"…What? You were the one who called me." Jang Hayoung grumbled and left the room, leaving only Han Myungoh behind.

Han Myungoh opened his mouth first. "You know, it is strange. I knew you from the days in the company but…"

"That's enough. Do you know why I called you."

"Ahem." Han Myungoh seemed to know the reason. "…In fact, I can't contact him."

"Isn't your connection to the household restored?"

"It recovered. However, there is no response from the demon king."

Not long ago, I broke Han Myungoh's connection to Demon King Asmodeus using the Four Yin Demonic Beheading Sword. Still, it was only a temporary thing. I thought it was time for contact with Asmodeus to be re-established. Yet there wasn't any contact from him yet.

"Isn't there anything he wants to ask?"

"Perhaps he no longer believes me. Or…" At this moment, Han Myungoh's expression changed. "I-I am connected!"

I was nervous for a moment. Demon King Asmodeus. A powerful presence among the 72 demon kings would now speak to me through Han Myungoh's eyes and mouth. By the way, Han Myungoh's expression was a bit strange.

"Huh?"

"What is it?"

"Something is wrong."

"What happened?"

"H-He came directly!"

"Huh?"

"The demon king came directly!"

One side of my heart cooled. The demon king came directly. The meaning of these words was simple. Demon King Asmodeus directly visited the scenario area with his own body.

I asked while constantly receiving the channel messages from Biyoo. "Is he near here?"

"I-I think he has already found you…"

Already found me? No matter how much I raised my senses, I couldn't feel the demon king at all. If the demon king really came near here, not only would the constellations of the channel be turned upside down, the enormous pressure should've caused a group of incarnations to bleed to death. By the way…

"Wait, don't tell me…?"

If I thought about it, I did everything under the name of 'Yoo Joonghyuk'. The beings who didn't enter the channel or know exactly what was going on were likely to guess my position through the Star Stream. According to the Star Stream, my current position was…

"Shit."

"W-Why all of a sudden?"

"Head Director Han, do you know the way to the Gilobat Industrial Complex?"

Yoo Joonghyuk was in danger.

"Kim Dokja!"

"Hooray Kim Dokja!"

"The independence of the industrial complex!"

Yoo Joonghyuk listened to the shouts coming from all over the Gilobat Industrial Complex and had a complicated expression.

'I didn't mean to do this'.

Yoo Joonghyuk frowned as he stared at Duke Gilobat who died in his hands. Sparks were flying around Yoo Joonghyuk's body due to the excessive opening of his transcendent power. He didn't need to open it at this point.

'It was too early to open the first stage of transcendence'.

However, it was impossible to handle his work in the Demon Realm in a short amount of time without opening the power. It was a power that was deliberately hidden from the constellations but he was caught by one of them. Yoo Joonghyuk watched the Uriel doll sitting on his shoulder.

'I don't think this person has any ideas'.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is satisfied with your achievement.]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is touched by your companionship.]

"…The duke gives a lot of coins. Thus I killed him."

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is laughing.]

Yoo Joonghyuk didn't answer and looked at the panel screen in the duke's office. There were low-quality scenes that seemed to be taped by the wenny people.

–Yoo Joonghyuk!

–I am Yoo Joonghyuk!"

It was an absurd scene. Hundreds of people shouted that they were 'Yoo Joonghyuk'. The most disturbing thing was the huge guy yelling it in the centre.

–Yoo Joonghyuk! Yoo Joonghyuk! Wah!

Yoo Joonghyuk watched the scene with a frown before turning his head.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is turning red.]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is urging you to go and meet Kim Dokja.]

Yoo Joonghyuk shook his head. "…I've confirmed that he is alive. Cancel your personal scenario and send me back to the original world.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is surprised.]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' says the personal scenario hasn't ended yet.]

[The contents of the personal scenario of the constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is to meet Kim Dokja…]

"Do you really think I will accept that personal scenario?"

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is greatly shocked.]

The shoulders of the Uriel doll trembled and she had an expression that she wouldn't make even if Eden was destroyed. Yoo Joonghyuk watched for a while before sighing.

"Is this okay?"

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is raising her head with a sullen expression.]

"I have become a duke of the Demon Realm with this. But you are an archangel. I'm asking if there is a problem with this."

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is greatly embarrassed.]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' says she hasn't thought about it.]

"…Shit." Yoo Joonghyuk spoke all types of curses as he wondered how he could act in the future with the archangel.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is warning you!]

A tremendous darkness started gathering around him. Yoo Joonghyuk instinctively drew the Splitting the Sky Sword at the formidable aura. However, the opponent was someone he couldn't win against just be drawing a sword.

A dark abyss gathered into an essence. The deepest darkness of the Demon Realm was manifested before his eyes. Yoo Joonghyuk knew this darkness very well.

"Run away. I can't protect your symbolic body."

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' says it isn't possible.]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire'…]

Yoo Joonghyuk's shoulders were shaking slightly. The Uriel doll had never seen such a sigh before and grabbed Yoo Joonghyuk's shoulder with a panicked expression. It wasn't easy to calm down the trembling. As if he didn't want to acknowledge the fear, Yoo Joonghyuk opened his mouth with a nasty expression.

"…I was once killed by this guy."

The next moment, the body of darkness revealed itself with a tremendous aura that burst the bodies of the incarnations in the area.

[You are in a place like this, Demon King of Salvation.]

Chapter 223: Ep. 42 - Asmodeus, III

I told her to take me to the Gilobat Industrial Complex and Aileen replied,

"No matter how fast you are, it will take at least two days to reach the Gilobat Industrial Complex. Perhaps if there is help from a transcendental existence…"

"The delegation must be a transportation vehicle. Is it unreasonable?"

"I said two days assuming that you use it."

Two days… even two hours was too long for me. No matter how I got there, I had to arrive within an hour or I would find Yoo Joonghyuk's torn body. I was thinking hard, "The help of a transcendent presence…"

The first one to come to mind was 'Hermes'. If I had this constellation's help, I could cover a distance that took two days within a few minutes. The problem was that he belonged to Olympus.

"…Going to hell is going to hell. I can't borrow his hands."

"Huh?"

I waved my hand at the startled Aileen. "I'm just talking to myself."

Of course, I was purposely talking to myself. The reason—

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is wondering what is going on.]

[The constellation who likes to change sex is wondering what happened.]

[Some constellations are curious about the information you have hidden.]

It was in order to induce this response. I deliberately ignored their messages and spoke towards Aileen. "Is there another way? A warp portal or something like that…"

"This is the 73rd Demon Realm. It is also the outskirts of the 73rd Demon Realm. We don't have such advanced transportation devices."

"…I see."

"What the hell is going on?"

"Someone is about to die."

"Who?"

"It is the master of this industrial complex."

As expected, my message log exploded.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is asking what you mean.]

[The constellation who likes to change sex is listening to your story.]

…The explosion was still small but it couldn't be helped since there weren't many constellations in the channel. By the way, when did the person who liked to change sex come here?

"Prisoner of the Golden Headband. Can you help me?"

I spoke directly to the constellation and the people in the treatment room were astonished. I

decided to be more brazen.

"If you don't mind, I'd like to borrow your Nimbus Cloud."

It was one of the Great Sage, Heaven's Equal's star relics, the Nimbus Cloud. If I could borrow it, I could reach the Gilobat Industrial Complex in the shortest time. The problem was whether the tricky the Great Sage, Heaven's Equal would lend me his star relic. He had already wasted probability once because of me…

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is asking why you need the 'Nimbus Cloud'.]

I struggled for a moment before opening my mouth. I had to speak well here. "I pretended to be Yoo Joonghyuk. Then Yoo Joonghyuk impersonated me… it caused a scenario error and there is a problem…"

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is annoyed.]

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' hates complicated things.]

I decided to summarize the situation according to the Great Sage, Heaven's Equal's patience. "Due to this, Yoo Joonghyuk is going to die."

I wanted to know if he would help but the response from the Great Sage, Heaven's Equal was unexpected.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is pulling out a handful of his hair from the stress.]

"Wait a minute."

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is leaving to find a hair comb.]

"Excuse me?"

There was no response from the Great Sage, Heaven's Equal who disappeared.

[A constellations who likes to change sex is enjoying the situation.]

[100 coins have been sponsored.]

I was looking up at the air when Aileen asked me, "I don't know who he is but the new owner of this industrial complex is in a crisis?"

"…That's right."

"Why?"

"He is going to meet a demon king."

"A demon king isn't necessarily an evil existence. If you are lucky, you can survive."

"I guess but…"

The problem was the demon king was 'Asmodeus'. In the novel, Asmodeus was one of the greatest adversaries whenever Yoo Joonghyuk regressed. Yoo Joonghyuk had already died against Asmodeus in the past. Could Yoo Joonghyuk be safe from him? No good images popped up no matter how hard I thought.

Han Myungoh looked at me nervously and opened his mouth. "Now what are you going to do?"

It was a big problem. Even if I managed to get there in time, there was no guarantee I could overcome Asmodeus by joining forces with Yoo Joonghyuk. However—

"I won't know without trying."

"Huh, I didn't know you were so passionate. In the company, you never…"

"If I don't work hard, I will die. It is different from not becoming a full-time employee if I didn't work hard."

"…Ahem."

The situation was bad but I decided to think as positively as possible. There was something I didn't know. Perhaps things would turn out well even if I didn't go there. A miracle could happen that caused Yoo Joonghyuk to experience a great awakening or Asmodeus might suddenly become a good guy.

…Damn, that was impossible. I opened the revised Ways of Survival on my smartphone again. I couldn't come up with something so I had to read this to find the answer.

"What's happening?"

"Shhh, be quiet. This is what I do best."

I quickly scrolled through the contents of Ways of Survival. Then one sentence in the 12th regression caught my eyes.

「Yoo Joonghyuk thought there were many reasons for his failure in the third round. This was the most important reason.」

My heart suddenly sank. No, hurry up and think about it. The moment I read the next sentence, my mind became blank and I almost went crazy.

「'At that time, we shouldn't have pretended to support the Demon King Asmodeus'.」

There was a little girl with dark eyes. She had a small body and appeared to be around eight or nine years old. The chubby cheeks and vivid expressions were reminiscent of a child actor. There wasn't any apparent threat on the surface.

'…His taste is the same'.

However, Yoo Joonghyuk knew very well that the gigantic presence in that body wasn't the main character of a children's drama. This girl was the peak of the 72 existences scattered across the Demon Realm and the owner of the '32nd Demon Realm', someone even narrative-grade constellations were reluctant to face. Devil of Lust and Wrath, Asmodeus.

Asmodeus smiled with the girl's face.

[Oh, there is no need to be so tense. I just came to talk.]

The utterance of his true voice brought pain to the incarnations in the area. All incarnations in the industrial complex were probably bleeding. In front of this fearsome pressure, Yoo Joonghyuk held his breath and raised all his magic power.

The feeling of pressure wrapped around his skin gradually decreased. This presence was so strong that even the transcendent Yoo Joonghyuk found it hard to bear. As expected, the status of a demon king itself was different.

Whether or not he knew Yoo Joonghyuk's heart, Asmodeus approached Yin with gentle footsteps.

[Interesting. The last time we met was when I saw you through my subordinate's eyes at the Syswitz Industrial Complex…]

The steps were obviously light but in Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes, they were the heaviest things in the world. The grip on the Splitting the Sky Sword become stronger and the veins of his neck bulged.

[You moved to Gilobat and defeated the duke in such a short time… your skills are great, Demon King of Salvation.]

Demon King of Salvation… It was obvious who this was referring to.

'Damn Kim Dokja'.

Everything happened in the wrong place. In a short time, Yoo Joonghyuk had dozens of thoughts.

'This guy is in an incomplete incarnation body. Can I win?'

'No, it is impossible'.

'It might be an incarnation body but this is the Demon Realm'.

'Then can I run away?'

'It is too unreasonable'.

'There is no way to get rid of the demon king, who has the mind and heart of an incarnation'.

Originally, the demon kings couldn't exist in this scenario. Based on the visible sparks, a huge amount of probability was being consumed in real time. Yoo Joonghyuk couldn't escape from somehow who showed up with this determination.

'There is only one way that will possibly work'.

'Buy time to waste his probability'.

He might be a demon king but he couldn't take over the body of an incarnation in the scenario for long. He would be forced to return as long as Yoo Joonghyuk could buy some time. The problem was that it shouldn't be a 'fight'. In the end, Yoo Joonghyuk had to bend his pride a bit.

"Yes, I am the Demon King of Salvation. Who are you?"

[…It is a bit strange? Were you originally this handsome? The face I saw last time…]

"You came here because you have something to say. Then tell me."

[Huhu, yes. But before we talk, there is something that is bothering me.]

"What?"

Asmodeus's small fingers snapped. Formidable sparks appeared and a little doll with half of one arm torn appeared in the air.

*

[As expected.]

Yoo Joonghyuk bit his lips. He was dealing with a demon king. It was a mistake to think that the Recluse's Cloak wouldn't be noticed.

[Why is the symbolic body of an archangel here?]

"I don't know."

[Is that so? Is this true?]

Intense sparks flashed and Uriel made a pained expression.

[I can tell who you are based on this symbolic body.]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is looking at Asmodeus.]

[Archangel Uriel. Is your brother Raphael well? I want you to tell him that I haven't forgotten the debt.]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is roaring with anger!]

[Of course, you can only tell him if you return safely.]

Yoo Joonghyuk's expression darkened. This was the Demon Realm. No matter how strong Uriel was, she couldn't expose the demon king's incarnation body with a symbolic body. Yoo Joonghyuk didn't hesitate to raise his energy.

"Stop."

It would be difficult if he lost Uriel's symbolic body here. He would become lost from the scenario if he lost Uriel here. Asmodeus looked impressed by the pressure of the boiling magic power coming from Yoo Joonghyuk.

[Hrmm? This energy… it is tough. But…]

The next moment, Asmodeus was in front of Yoo Joonghyuk.

[A mere mortal is imitating a star.]

The small arm stretched out and grabbed Yoo Joonghyuk's jaw.

"Kuek…!"

[Indeed, you aren't the Demon King of Salvation. Isn't that right?]

Yoo Joonghyuk hurriedly swung the Splitting the Sky Sword. Surprisingly, it was easily caught by Asmodeus' hand.

[If I'd known you could make such a pretty face, I wouldn't have let you go in the beginning.]

Then the Splitting the Sky Sword was broken in half.

[You are afraid of me. Cute child.]

"Kuoock…"

[If you resist so much, I will lose the desire to talk to you.]

Dark shadows flocked behind Asmodeus. The darkness gathered in the air and formed a monster with huge horns.

[I want to trample on you.]

Blood started to flow from Yoo Joonghyuk's nose. The mighty story was weighing down on his transcendence. In front of the vast presence, Yoo Joonghyuk quietly prepared to open 'transcendence stage 1'.

There were no odds but Yoo Joonghyuk didn't give up. If he could just create a gap for one moment, he might have enough time to return to the Earth scenario. As Yoo Joonghyuk was thinking this, he allowed one attack and felt the shock of his entire body being broken.

His left arm and right leg were broken and even the magic power in his stomach was lost. By the time he came to his senses, he was crumpled on the ground. Asmodeus raised this Yoo Joonghyuk and touched Yoo Joonghyuk's forehead softly.

[I can't believe it. A mere human has such sublime despair.]

"Dog… bas…tard."

[Persephone said that 'Kim Dokja' must be the best story. Huhu.]

Asmodeus licked his lips. Yoo Joonghyuk stared at Asmodeus before closing his eyes.

'I'm sorry Kim Dokja'.

There was no other way. He was forced to look towards the next regression. He closed his eyes and Yoo Joonghyuk's clock prepared to go back. The second hand, the minute hand, the hour hand. The moment that the giant hands were going to move in the opposite direction—

「That's why you should've thought about me earlier.」

All of a sudden, Yoo Joonghyuk's clock stopped.

[The exclusive skill, 'Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint' stage 3 has been activated!]

Huge sparks appeared around Yoo Joonghyuk and the startled Asmodeus moved back. Something blinked inside Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes while something else woke up. Of course, it was me.

[You…]

[The constellation 'Demon King of Salvation' is looking at the 'Devil of Lust and Wrath'.]

I stared at Asmodeus with bright eyes. Then I said, [Don't touch my incarnation, Asmodeus.]

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* Official novel illustration (canonical)

Chapter 224: Ep. 42 - Asmodeus, IV

"What the hell is this guy thinking…?"

Aileen pulled out the catheter and muttered as he watched Kim Dokja lying down. Fragments of the story were trickling from the bandages.

–For now, this is the only way. I hadn't wanted to use it.

Aileen hurriedly raised her courage, swept up the fragments and took the pulse of the other arm. Kim Dokja's face was pale and no warmth could be felt.

"Bring more story packs! Quickly!"

The people watching ran out of the treatment room at Aileen's cry. Aileen watched the face of the dying Kim Dokja and recalled his last words.

–Just let me die for an hour or so.

–Ah, of course, it isn't really dying. It is just on the verge of dying.

–I really will go to see Kim Namwoon if I die at this time.

–I will trust you. Understood?

Beep— beep—

The story stability levels on the patient stability monitor were dropping sharply. Aileen watched Kim Dokja sleeping with an unknown expression and inserted a new story into his veins.

Fortunately, the third stage of Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint was connected properly. Aileen had done her work properly. By the way…

Asmodeus' energy was blazing in front of me. I was in a state of tension, unlike my previous declaration. The opponent was 'Asmodeus'. I felt a bit of regret for using words that were too impressive at the beginning but now it was too late for regret. Asmodeus finally opened his mouth.

[Demon King of Salvation?]

I nodded with Yoo Joonghyuk's head. I felt Yoo Joonghyuk's soul struggling in one corner of the ego but I forced him to fall asleep. Yoo Joonghyuk couldn't pop out at this time.

[I am the Demon King of Salvation.]

The use of my true voice consumed an excessive amount of probability but I pretended to be calm. I deliberately used my true voice in order to not be pushed back by his momentum. The bonus was that maintaining my true voice made me look strong. Asmodeus glanced at me with surprise and asked again.

[…He is really your incarnation?]

[That's right.]

The unconscious Yoo Joonghyuk would be furious if he knew this but I didn't think and said it anyway. There was no better answer in the current situation. At least, that's what I thought.

[I didn't hear that you have such an incarnation.]

[Your information network seems to be slower than I thought. This person is my incarnation.]

Asmodeus had definitely come here to 'talk' with me. The credibility of his words couldn't be determined but this was the only way for Yoo Joonghyuk to survive. If he really came to 'talk', he wouldn't do anything unnecessary like touching my incarnation.

[Hrmm…]

Asmodeus didn't seem to accept my words as his energy gradually became strong. I desperately recalled the information about Asmodeus that I knew.

「An indulgent madman.」

「A member of the gourmet association.」

「He has a slight acquaintance with the Underworld of Olympus.」

「The owner of crooked libido.」

There were a few things that could be of some help but there was nothing I could use right now. Either way, it would be best to solve this confrontation as smoothly as possible. I raised my senses as much as possible and searched the vicinity for anything that could help me. The only thing that stood out was the small stuffed doll attached to my shoulders.

…What is this? That jerk Yoo Joonghyuk actually collected such things? Then the doll suddenly looked at me.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is so moved she has a nosebleed.]

…Wait. Surely this doll…

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is rubbing her cheek against you.]

The doll softly touched Yoo Joonghyuk's cheek and I felt it through Yoo Joonghyuk's body. I was panicked. Why was Uriel here?

Asmodeus opened his mouth. [I guess the rumours are true if you're not shrinking back before my 'status'. You became narrative-grade in the tenth scenario… I can't believe it is true.]

[I don't know. It might be more than rumours.]

I pulled the Uriel doll and quickly hid her in my arms. The atmosphere was strange but it would be difficult if Uriel did something. Asmodeus licked his lips.

[Huhu, the story about your tongue seems true. It is to my taste. By the way… how are you alive? I heard from the constellations that you died.]

[I have good luck.]

[…You also like having secrets.]

[I hate people who keep trying to pry secrets from me.]

[Is this person your new incarnation? I heard that children are your taste.]

[What bullshit is that?]

[Then my hard work preparing this wasn't worthwhile.]

Asmodeus smiled at me in a charming manner while looking down at his child's incarnation body. He had the appearance of a pretty child. If Han Myungoh was right, this child must be Han Myungoh's daughter. Fortunately, she didn't resemble Han Myungoh at all.

[There seems to be some misunderstanding… many false rumours have spread.]

The rumours spread about me taking Shin Yoosung as my incarnation. He understood what I was saying and Asmodeus smiled at Yoo Joonghyuk's face.

[Indeed, I can bend my taste if it is this beautiful body.]

At this point, it was clear that a normal conversation was impossible. I spoke roughly. "Stop talking with your true voice. There won't be any incarnations left around me."

[Why?]

"This is now my industrial complex. I want you to stop killing my citizens."

Officially, Gilobat died because of 'Kim Dokja' and this became my industrial complex.

[You are the new owner of the industrial complex.]

In fact, these messages were actually rising. Of course, I actually needed a good excuse to stop using my true voice. Asmodeus spoke with a small smile, "Hrmm, yes. I'm sorry."

Asmodeus did it half-heartedly but he was polite when he had a purpose. At least, until his purpose was met.

"Then why did you come for me?"

"It sounds like you already know. Right?"

"…How should I know? I'm not a prophet."

"I know you have a similar power to the prophet of Asgard."

He was probably talking about Anna Croft. I didn't know how much of my story had spread and twisted. Whatever the rumours, it was clear that now was the time to lay the foundation on this side.

"Maybe it is because of the 'Demon King Selection'."

Asmodeus grinned at the answer. It wasn't hard to guess. It was because shortly after the industrial complex had fallen, the following message was heard.

[You are currently a 'Demon King Candidate' of the 73rd Demon Realm.]

[A new scenario is currently pending.]

"Are you aiming for a new throne?"

"Huh? I already have the 32nd Demon Realm. It is pointless to gain one with a lower rank."

"Then what?"

"I want to help you become a new demon king."

As expected, he said it. Han Myungoh had told me something similar.

–The demon king… he told me to make the '73rd Demon King' with my own hands.

I thought for a moment before shaking my head. "I'm sorry but I don't need help. I currently have no desire to participate in the competition."

"I don't think you have the veto rights? You have to participate in the selection as soon as you become a duke."

"I can survive with my own strength."

"Well, you might've been lucky until now. Will it continue in the future?"

"…"

"Do you think Duke Melledon and Bercan have the same thoughts as you?"

It was known that nebulae were already attached to them. They were also nebulae hostile towards me. Asmodeus laughed. "You need my help. You will die if you refuse.

It was unknown who would kill me but he seemed certain I would die. Fucking bastard. Did he come all this way only to grab my ankle?

[A small number of constellations are watching your choice.]

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is watching your choice.]

[The constellation who likes to change sex is watching your choice.]

I moved to this location and asked Biyoo to expand the channel. Thus, the constellations were watching my choice. Most constellations felt reluctant towards demon kings. My future story would be determined depending on the choice I made here.

I took a calm breath and asked, "Is your purpose the giant story?"

Something stirred in Asmodeus' eyes at my words.

"…I'm surprised that you already know about such a thing."

"It is the only reason why guys like you would cut off their nose in the blink of an eye."

I smiled bitterly.

A giant story. If the stories I had accumulated so far were in the category of general stories, there was a new field in the Star Stream called giant stories. For example, things like Olympus' Gigantomachia and Asgard's Ragnarok.

By building a small stake in a giant story, the constellations could gain enormous power and probability. If they occupied a large stake then they would become a huge power. This was why the constellations rushed with fiery eyes every time the apocalypse scenario occurred.

The Demon Realm's 'Demon King Selection' was one such giant story. It wasn't comparable to Gigantomachia but it was large compared to general stories.

Asmodeus nodded. "You are correct. I need the shares of a giant story."

Asmodeus was already a demon king and belonged to a higher level scenario, so he couldn't participate in the selection. However, he could help me in exchange for a 'stake' in the story.

Originally I would've refused the proposal. The giant story that could be accumulated through the Demon King Selection would become the key foundation for my future fight against the nebulae. If I gave a share in it to the wrong person, it was likely I wouldn't be able to obtain anything.

However, Yoo Joonghyuk of the 12th regression had mumbled.

「 'At that time, we shouldn't have pretended to support the Demon King Asmodeus'.」

I wanted to grab the collar of the 12th regression Yoo Joonghyuk and ask what he meant, but the person now was only in the third regression.

In the end, I had to make a choice. Should I grab the hand of the demon king or not?

I slowly opened my mouth.

Chapter 225: Ep. 42 - Asmodeus, V

"How funny. I'm not even a 'demon king' yet. How can I give away the stakes in a giant story I don't have?"

"You can do it if I help." Asmodeus had an arrogant confidence on his face. It was an expression that made becoming a 'demon king' simple. I watched his face and followed up with,

"…Okay, I will give away a stake if I become a demon king."

At this moment, the stars in the sky were flashing.

[A few constellations are greatly disappointed in your judgment.]

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is looking at you with troubled eyes.]

[The constellation who likes to change sex wants to change your sex.]

The constellations showed a strong reaction as I expected. However, I couldn't help it for now. Unless I knew how to not lost against Asmodeus, I couldn't do anything that would antagonize him.

Asmodeus laughed like he was satisfied with my answer. "Good thinking. How much will you give away?"

"30%."

Light disappointment flashed across Asmodeus' face. "It is too little."

"Don't you think you're being too greedy?"

"50% and write the contract here."

What a shameless swindler. If I gave away half of a giant story, I wouldn't be able to draw on its strength without Asmodeus' permission. I firmly shook my head. "I can't sign that agreement."

"Why?"

The pebbles started to float into the air. This was blatant intimidation but I wouldn't have come here if I would be caught by such intimidation. I stared up at the sky and kept speaking, "I won't give a stake to just you."

A deep silence instantly fell at my words. Asmodeus' face was blank and he didn't understand what I meant. The stars all around me were holding their breaths and demanding clarification.

"30% of the giant story will be released as competitive shares."

"…Competitive shares?"

"It means whoever helps me can gain part of those shares. The extent that they obtained will depend entirely on their contribution to the story."

The gazes staring at me from the sky started to change on by one.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is making a interested expression.]

[A few constellations are greedy after hearing your words!]

'Competitive shares' was the last card I could offer. If I had to take a beast with me while moving forward, it would be better to expand the choice of beasts. Asmodeus noticed my intentions and his expression hardened. "…I was deceived."

"I didn't lie."

The pebbles floating in the air rushed towards me, to be precise, towards Yoo Joonghyuk. It was a strong attack that couldn't be easily blocked. It might've been hard for me in the past but not now.

It was because now I wasn't alone. The stones flying through the air were caught by invisible hands.

[A few constellations are staring at the Devil of Lust and Wrath.]

It was a situation where I declared a competitive share in a giant story. The constellations aiming for those shares wouldn't just watch Asmodeus' actions. Asmodeus gritted his teeth. However, even Asmodeus didn't want to waste probability in this place against a large number of constellations. In addition, there was a formidable constellation present.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is staring at the Devil of Lust and Wrath.]

Asmodeus stared at the air for a while before taking back his strength. The stones lost their support and instantly fell to the ground.

[The demon king 'Devil of Lust and Wrath' is disappointed in you.]

Asmodeus spoke with a terrifying expression, "You have made a mistake. You are not the one who will become demon king. You just threw away an important opportunity."

It was a tone that suggested he could give the opportunity to someone else at any time. Certainly, things would become complicated if Asmodeus joined hands with someone else. Nevertheless, I didn't back down. "Well, I think you are the one throwing away the opportunity, not me."

I thought about why Asmodeus must've chosen me. Common sense said it was more advantageous for Asmodeus to be attacked to Bercan or Melledon rather than me. I was a human and a constellation while Melledon and Bercan were demons.

Yet Asmodeus extended his hand towards me first. There was a compelling reason for Asmodeus to choose me. In fact, Asmodeus' expression seemed a bit strained at my refusal. "…It is really unpleasant. Don't you know that I am a demon king?"

A great demon was making this type of expression. It was an extremely rare scene from the perspective of Ways of Survival. I slowly shook my head. "It doesn't matter if you are a demon king or constellation. I just want my story to be the best story."

"The best story?"

"You should know what I mean since you belong to the Gourmet Association."

Asmodeus' expression changed at the words I deliberately mentioned. It was a face that was both bewildered and delighted. Asmodeus gazed at me with an expression that was hard for humans to describe and opened his mouth a few dozen seconds later.

[…A candidate will test the cooking skills of a demon king…?]

I held my breath at the formidable killing intent aimed at me. It was like the whole time and space of the area was in the demon king's grasp. The confused constellations squeezed out light but the darkness around them was so dense that their power couldn't reach.

This was the real power of a demon king. If Asmodeus truly used all his power here, I was convinced that Yoo Joonghyuk and I would've vanished regardless of the Prisoner of the Golden Headband's presence. He was revealing this power now as a type of proof and warning.

[The Demon King 'Asmodeus' reveals a subtle liking towards you.]

It was a warning that he could kill me at any time. Asmodeus laughed from inside the darkness.

[I like it. I will leave for today.]

Fortunately, the situation seemed to be wrapped up. I didn't pretend to support Asmodeus and he didn't one-sidedly lose his shares of the story. There was plenty of room to change things…

[However, I should clean up the garbage before I go.]

Asmodeus moved his fingers and an explosive sound was heard from my chest. It was the sound of a doll popping. There was a throbbing pain around my heart but Yoo Joonghyuk's body didn't receive any apparent damage. Asmodeus' body scattered into ashes as he left these last words.

[I can't see that thing wandering around in front of me.]

I gazed at the disappearing Asmodeus before hurriedly touching my chest. "… Uriel?"

I pulled out that Uriel doll that was already tattered. Not long afterwards, I felt something being disconnected from the doll. I saw the messages rising in front of Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes.

[The connection with the constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' has been temporarily disconnected.]

[The personal scenario has been automatically terminated.]

I was able to see how Yoo Joonghyuk came here. I didn't know why but Uriel gave him a personal scenario to go to the Demon Realm. Yoo Joonghyuk received that scenario and came here. The problem was the scenario had just been forcibly terminated.

Sparks started appearing around my skin. I instantly realized what would happen.

"Uriel! Wake up!" I desperately shook the doll but there was no reaction from Uriel. The symbolic body was excessively broken and the connection with the body was forcibly terminated.

"Shit."

Cracks were spreading over Yoo Joonghyuk's hard body.

[You have left the main scenario.]

I hurriedly looked around. This couldn't continue. At this rate, Yoo Joonghyuk would surely die.

[The exile penalty has begun.]

It was different from me. Yoo Joonghyuk didn't have the Fourth Wall. There wasn't anyone to protect him after becoming an exile.

"Hey! Anybody is good!"

I hurriedly shouted towards the sky. However, Yoo Joonghyuk's body was destroyed and my voice didn't emerge. The cracks that started in the legs spread to the neck and paralyzed the vocal cords.

It was a penalty that prevented me from asking the constellations in the night sky for help. The whole universe was intensely hoping for Yoo Joonghyuk's death, as if it was going to take away his stories and kill him.

…Was it up to here? I couldn't let it. Everything was over if Yoo Joonghyuk died here.

In less than one second, the pages of Ways of Survival passed through my head. The letters on countless pages flew towards me and I reached out to them. Yes, this was the only way. I didn't have it but Yoo Joonghyuk was different. I was forced to ask him for help.

[The constellation 'Demon King of Salvation' is looking at Yoo Joonghyuk's sponsor.]

I wanted to use my true voice but now I had no strength. I was forced to hope that my story would reach that existence.

[The sponsor of incarnation 'Yoo Joonghyuk' is looking at you.]

A huge presence was looking at me. It was somewhat familiar but also unfamiliar. Before I could open my mouth, a darkness came over me.

[The exclusive skill, 'Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint' stage 3 has been forcibly released.]

A space covered with darkness. I had this experience once before. When was it? It happened when I exited from the constellation banquet.

[■■…]

[How to change…]

[…No.]

Dammit, what the hell did this mean—

"Heok!" I shot up and gasp like I was going to vomit. My heart was beating like crazy and there was a cracking sound from my neck. My eyes were full of tears.

I was alive. To be precise, Aileen saved me. However, I felt more desperate than relieved. I shouted in a thick voice towards the outside of the treatment room.

"Aileen!"

Aileen, who had been waiting outside, rushed over at my call. She was pale when she saw me pulling out the catheter. I shook off her hands and shouted, "Quickly get me up. I have to go to the Gilobat Industrial Complex."

"What are you talking about? A person who just woke up—"

"There is no time, quickly!"

Dozens of thoughts crossed my head. Let's ask the Great Sage, Heaven's Equal for help. If not, let's call Hermes. I hated it but I might be able to get a favour using the shares of the story. I just had to get to Gilobat right away. It wasn't too late yet. Go right now—

"There is no way for a person who has been unconscious for one week! You will have to rest for at least one week to stabilize your body!"

"…What?"

It felt like my heart stopped beating. I thought it was an auditory hallucination. The world that I read was collapsing. The letters that lost their place were pushing at me.

"…How much time has passed?"

"A week. You have been unconscious for a week."

I looked blankly at the floor before picking up the smartphone that Irene created. I turned on the panel and checked the file.

–Three Ways to Survive in a Ruined World (1st Revision).txt

The title of the text was unchanged. The second revision didn't come and Yoo Joonghyuk's lines were the same.

There was a moment of despair as I realized that nothing had changed. Really? Yoo Joonghyuk really died?

Chapter 226: Ep. 42 - Asmodeus, VI

My hands were trembling but I took a deep breath and regained my composure. No. Yoo Joonghyuk couldn't be dead. Above all, the message that caught my attention was evidence.

[You are currently waiting for the next main scenario.]

Based on common sense, Yoo Joonghyuk shouldn't be given the exile penalty. It was because Yoo Joonghyuk would've entered a new scenario like me.

There might be variations for individual scenarios but he became a duke as soon as I became a duke. It meant that like me, Yoo Joonghyuk was a 'demon king candidate'.

[There is currently a delay in the compensation due to an error in the Star Stream system.]

However, there was this one message. It was very rare to acquire a story or achievement through 'impersonation' in the Star Stream. This time, Yoo Joonghyuk and I impersonated each other and made achievements in each other's name.

What if the main scenario of the Star Stream was twisted because of this? I entered the main scenario safely but what if Yoo Joonghyuk didn't enter? Was that why the exile penalty began?

"Are you okay?"

"…Do you have a glass of water?"

Aileen stared at me with disbelieving eyes for a moment. "Don't pull out the catheter again while I'm gone."

Aileen left the room and I calmly reexamined the situation. I had to be composed. It wasn't clear whether Yoo Joonghyuk had died or not. It was likely that he had been killed by the start of the exile penalty just prior to the release of Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint, but absolute certainty was a taboo in the Star Stream. I needed to first confirm Yoo Joonghyuk's life or death properly.

"Biyoo."

Biyoo had expanded the channel to the Gilobat side. If Biyoo helped, I might be able to see the area using the eyes of a constellation.

"Biyoo. Do you hear me?"

Did something happen? There was no response from Biyoo. I couldn't even hear the messages from other constellations. I felt uneasy for a moment. What happened to Biyoo while I was away?

…Huh? I listened quietly and could hear Biyoo breathing near me. Biyoo's transparent body was lying on my chest, fast asleep.

I sighed with relief. I would've been devastated if something happened to Biyoo.

"…I'm sorry." I stroked Biyoo's head. According to Ways of Survival, a dokkaebi must sleep for at least half a day when it was just born. I was sleeping so it wasn't strange for Biyoo to have fallen asleep.

It was a situation where Biyoo had exhausted her strength due to overworking.

I decided to use the second method.

[The exclusive skill, 'Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint' has been activated!]

Then my temples started throbbing.

[The skill is cancelled due to accumulated damage.]

…Damn, this didn't work either. It seemed that I suffered a huge blow when my link with Yoo Joonghyuk was severed.

In the end, I picked up the smartphone again. It was the first time I felt so helpless. I didn't know if Yoo Joonghyuk was dead or not and the only thing I could do was read the novel.

No, don't think like this. Kim Dokja, please wake up. You've survived so far thanks to this novel.

I bit my lips and opened Ways of Survival again. Everything came from this story. Thus, the answer would be in the story.

[The attribute effect has increased 'speed reading'!]

I read the book with wide eyes, not missing a single word or sentence.

「'At that time, we shouldn't have pretended to support the Demon King Asmodeus'.」

It was hard to see it as Yoo Joonghyuk and I pretending to support Asmodeus this time. I might've deceived him but in the end, there was a nuance that he would still cooperate with us. I couldn't be sure that Yoo Joonghyuk was dead with this sentence alone.

The 13th round.

The 134h round.

…

Yoo Joonghyuk's regressions continued. It took longer than before but his spirit was gradually worn down by the continuous regressions.

「'It is hard'.」

The 18th round.

「'I want to quit now'.」

The 21st round.

「'Dammit, dammit, dammit!'」

…

I read about Yoo Joonghyuk's despair and also felt my heart burning. As time went by, Yoo Joonghyuk returned to his original pessimistic form. A regressor who survived every regression using the principles of only thinking about himself.

「'I can't change anything'.」

He went back, went back and went back again. In the second half of the novel, there was no big difference with the Ways of Survival that I read before. Apart from the first half that I influenced, Yoo Joonghyuk made similar mistakes and regained similar tendencies.

「'Damn, a few more times…'」

I spent several months with Yoo Joonghyuk but I was only able to have this much influence on the novel. I wanted to reach out to the frustrated Yoo Joonghyuk but Yoo Joonghyuk was in a place I couldn't reach. The 25th, 26th, 27th rounds… Yoo Joonghyuk constantly repeated the regressions and I had to stop reading.

It was painful to read. The original Ways of Survival was a story like this. How did I read all 3,149 chapters?

Due to my irregular breathing, Biyoo attached to my chest was moving uncomfortably.

I remembered the page number before scrolling down to the bottom. It might be burdensome to follow this story right now but there was something I had to check first.

Did Yoo Joonghyuk reach the proper ending in the first revision? Did the author write the epilogue?

The screen hitched badly while I was scrolling due to the poor performance of the smartphone. How long did I scroll down? I finally reached the spot where the original ending should be. However, I only found a huge void.

「 Current being edited. ㅠㅠ 」

There was a one line message. I was swept away by two different emotions.

"…Haha."

The emoticon that followed the word 'edited' angered me but some of the possibilities that came from the message made me excited. This story could still be changed. There was a way even if Yoo Joonghyuk was dead. Somehow I had to bring him back to this regression.

I scrolled through with a determined feeling. Then the sentences that were written in the section before the ending caught my attention.

「 Before the end of the scenario, Yoo Joonghyuk recalled countless memories of his death. 」

「 'In the third round, I almost died the first time I met Asmodeus'. 」

I had too many thoughts.

…Eh? Wait. This was currently the third round…

There was a knock on the door and I raised my head to see Mark. He saw that I was awake and waved. "R-Revolutionary! You woke up? It is fortunate."

"What is going on?"

"Nothing. I just wanted to let you know that someone came to see you."

I was busy and wanted to tell him to come back later when Mark continued speaking. "The owner of the industrial complex is looking for you."

"Huh?"

"The owner of the industrial complex has come to visit you."

What did he mean? Wasn't I the owner of the industrial complex?

"Get out of the way."

The next moment, someone pushed past Mark and entered the room. It was a presence that changed the atmosphere just by standing there.

I stared blankly at the man with my mouth gaping open. Yoo Joonghyuk, who I thought was dead, was standing in front of me.

It took me a bit more time to come to my senses. Aileen, who came back, glanced at us and disappeared after arranging the table while the blankly standing Mark also avoided this place. Once the surroundings became quiet, I opened my mouth first. "When did you come here?"

"Two days ago."

I was ashamed of myself for freaking out in the last 10 minutes. The man I had been worried about was walking around the same industrial complex while I had all sorts of delusions about his death.

"…How did you survive? It was a situation where you couldn't survive."

"I received a bit of help."

"From who? Was it your sponsor?"

"That guy has never helped me once."

I asked for his help but I didn't think he would actually help. From the beginning to the end of Ways of Survival, all he did was make Yoo Joonghyuk regress. Yoo Joonghyuk's wounds had healed and he looked quite healthy.

"A constellation helped me."

"A constellation? Who?"

"You don't need to know the details."

"What did you give in exchange? None of them would help for nothing."

"I just received a slight penalty."

"Penalty?"

"Until the Demon Realm scenario is over, I will disappear for 10 minutes a day."

"Disappear? What does this mean?"

"Something like that. In any case, I have now entered the main scenario and the scenario error has been resolved. There is no need to worry about it."

Yoo Joonghyuk's expression while speaking seemed like he had solved something. It was somewhat troubling. I had fallen asleep for a week and Yoo Joonghyuk survived with the help of someone unrelated to me. Then he came here to finish become the ruler of the industrial complex.

"…"

Perhaps it was because it was rare to talk to Yoo Joonghyuk like this. An awkward silence filled the treatment room. Yoo Joonghyuk stared blankly down at the table while drinking tea.

I wanted to ask why he came here. I wanted to ask what he would do in the future. However, completely different words emerged from my mouth.

"The others… are they doing well?"

In fact, Yoo Joonghyuk couldn't know. He was a person who only filled his head with the scenarios. Such a person wouldn't care about what other people were doing. I deliberately wanted to nag at him. Please don't live your life alone. If he lived like that, he could never reach the end of the scenario. I meant to give this speech. By the way…

"Lee Hyunsung went to the army." Yoo Joonghyuk started talking. "Jung Heewon and Lee Jihye are training new incarnations. They are strengthening their power in preparing for the future disaster scenarios."

"…Eh?"

"Yoo Sangah and Han Sooyoung are in contact with government officials."

"The two of them are together?"

It was the first time I saw Yoo Joonghyuk saying so many words. Maybe this was why I fell into his story.

"Gong Pildu is buying land in Seongnam to build a huge castle. He seems to really think he is a king."

"Haha, that ahjussi is really…"

"The two children are doing well. They seem to throw a coin every time they are bored."

I was fascinated as Yoo Joonghyuk continued to speak in a blunt voice. Some stories were easy to understand while others took a bit more time. Nevertheless, they were all stories of someone I knew. The people I liked were living stories in a place where I didn't exist.

As I listened, I felt somewhat sweet, sad and nostalgic. "Everybody is busy living."

[*]

I felt a strange loneliness at the end of the story. I see. Everyone was living well.

[The exclusive skill 'Fourth Wall' is shaking.]

I realized that I was an 'outsider' of this story.

「The 25th regression Yoo Joonghyuk said, 'I can't change anything'.」

Without me, people were still continuing the scenarios. Just like Yoo Joonghyuk repeated the regressions. The 4th, 5th, 6th rounds… it led to an endless story where I could be easily forgotten. Meanwhile, people would move towards the ending. It was natural. It might be natural but I felt pained at the reminder.

I bit my lips and tried to say something. I'm glad. The words didn't emerge from my mouth. Then I heard Yoo Joonghyuk's voice. "In addition, everyone is telling your story."

I slowly raised my head at the words. Yoo Joonghyuk's face was still expressionless. "They say it a lot. Your story."

I smiled slightly while covering my eyes with both hands. I didn't appear so on the surface but I wanted to say that I was smiling. In the small darkness created with both hands, Yoo Joonghyuk's voice was heard again as he drank tea.

"Let's go back to Earth, Kim Dokja."

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* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)

Chapter 227: Ep. 43 - Breaking the Sky Sword Saint, I

After the completion of the senior-grade dokkaebi test, Bihyung was somehow lazy. All he had to do was manage the 'Korean Peninsula scenario' that was left to him by the former Seoul branch manager, Baram. Sometimes, all he had to do was lie down and watch the scenarios he made.

–Heewon-ssi! It's this way!

–Damn, I missed one. One person is going to the north!

On the screen, one of the scenarios on the Korean Peninsula called 'Catching the Mole' was in full swing. It was a scenario where they had to catch all the 'bomb moles' that escaped within a certain time.

A terrible explosion would occur if one was missed but the constellations on the Korean Peninsula didn't seem distressed.

–Titano found it. I'll take care of it with Yoosung.

The incarnations showed perfect organization and teamwork. It was different from some countries where a quarter of the land was blown away from similar scenarios. Of course, this scenario wouldn't be approved if it had such extreme difficulty.

"Damn, why is it like this…"

Bihyung grumbled as he bit his fingers. In fact, he could increase the difficulty of this scenario much higher. It could blow up half the Korean Peninsula and lead the incarnations to a terrible disaster. However, he didn't do so.

'I should've saved Kim Dokja at that time… if I raise the difficulty here, they will surely die'.

It was too late to regret it now. No matter how many preparations were made, it was impossible to live outside the scenario.

[Constellations of the Korean Peninsula are supporting 'Kim Dokja's Party'.]

[Constellations of the Korean Peninsula have sponsored 2,000 coins.]

The reason why Bihyung's channel was maintained was due to the subscribers Kim Dokja left behind. The constellations were steadily supporting the scenario, regardless of whether they were interesting or not. However, the channel didn't only have such constellations.

[Many constellations are bored with the progress of the scenario.]

[Some constellations have left the channel.]

Kim Dokja had disappeared and Yoo Joonghyuk left the Korean Peninsula scenario. Thus, the number of constellations abandoning the channel grew every day. In other words, Bihyung was slowly dying.

'I need to make changes. But how?'

Of course, he knew how. If he raised the difficulties of the scenarios like before and tricked the constellations, the subscribers would increase again. Nevertheless, Bihyung no longer wanted to lead the scenario that way.

'Maybe I've changed as well'.

He had changed from his old self who only pursued unconditionally stimulating scenarios and didn't care much about the life and death of the incarnations. Bihyung wanted to tell a different story. He wanted to forget the 'cider' that the bureau mentioned and see different scenarios. Just like the scenarios made by the first generation dokkaebis, something that would be remembered for a long time by the dokkaebis…

–Bihyung.

Bihyung heard something through the dokkaebi communication and reflexively rose.

–You look good. Have you been well?

The face that emerged on the panel was Baram, former Seoul branch manager who left the Seoul Dome after becoming a 'great dokkaebi candidate'. The astounded Bihyung quickly acted politely.

After leaving the Seoul branch, Baram entered the senior administrative bureau. It was a place where the wisest dokkaebis around the world gathered.

Baram on the panel seemed more impressive than he did before.

–I contacted you because I have a few messages.

"A few…?" Bihyung was a bit nervous. It was because he never received good news when Baram spoke in such a meaningful manner.

–There are signs of a giant story.

"…Isn't there still a lot of time left until Gigantomachia or Ragnarok?"

–It isn't those stories. The giant story is being set up in the Demon Realm.

Bihyung's expression changed at the words 'Demon Realm'.

"Is it the Demon King Selection?"

Bihyung watched Baram nodding and gulped. Unlike the giant stories that appeared on a regular basis, the Demon King Selection was a very rare scenario. Bihyung had never seen the Demon King Scenario in person.

'The last selection tournament was already 800 years ago'.

Just imagining the giant story caused his heart to shake with excitement. Baram read Bihyung's heart and laughed.

–Are you looking forward to it?

"I'm looking forward to it but I also feel regret. Who is the dokkaebi responsible for it?"

The Demon Realm had been the domain of the wenny people since ancient times. It was a barren scenario area where channels almost never opened. This was the Demon Realm. Then the broadcast of the Demon King Selection…

–This time is different. The bureau has decided to dispatch dokkaebis to the Demon Realm.

"Huh? That…"

The dokkaebis didn't interfere in the work of the wenny people and the wenny people didn't interfere in the work of the dokkaebis. This was the 'Promise of the Horizon'. Now Baram's words were directly contradicting the covenant.

–I was originally planning to open a channel after signing a new agreement with the wenny people but it has become more complicated. They broke the promise first.

"They broke the promise?"

–An illegal channel has occurred in the Demon Realm.

"…Huh?"

It was something that couldn't happen according to common sense. There were no dokkaebis in the Demon Realm. Then how was a channel opened?

–I'm not sure about the exact details. That's why the bureau is in an uproar right now.

"If the wenny people stole a channel, can't you close it from here?"

The operating rights of the channel were limited to the dokkaebi. Even if the wenny people stole a channel using a strange trick, the bureau could easily handle it by closing one or two channels.

–The problem isn't the wenny people.

"It isn't the wenny people? Then who opened the channel?"

–It seems there is a dokkaebi in the Demon Realm.

"…Dokkaebi?"

Wait… perhaps? No, no. It wasn't possible. Baram kept speaking.

–In any case, that is why I've dispatched dokkaebi from the bureau to the Demon Realm.

"I see. By the way, why are you telling me this?"

–You are on the list to be sent.

"I'm in charge of the Korean Peninsula."

–Other dokkaebis will take care of the Korean Peninsula for a while. Take a few intermediate dokkaebis and go to the Demon Realm.

Bihyung was silent for a moment. Leave the hottest Earth scenario and go to the Demon Realm? This was the same as a demotion.

–Aren't there a few incidents on the Korean Peninsula anyway? Don't feel too sorry. Your dream of going higher can be achieved if you do this properly.

"…You told me a similar story last time. Why me?"

–I don't know the exact reason but the elders pointed to you directly.

There is no refusing if they have decided. Bihyung's expression became depressed. He had to go to that dangerous area?

–I know what you are thinking but don't be too depressed. It isn't a demotion. Rather, I have one more piece of information that you might like to hear.

Bihyung raised his head without any expectations while Baram spoke in a strange voice.

–The Demon King of Salvation has appeared in the Demon Realm.

We were silent for a long time. 30 minutes passed after Yoo Joonghyuk's words before I finally opened my mouth. In these 30 minutes, I saw Aileen enter and leave the room once.

"…Yoo Joonghyuk, did you bring the Uriel doll?"

Yoo Joonghyuk silently pulled out the doll at my question. I carefully examined the doll. The arms and legs were all torn apart. It might be a symbolic body but Uriel's real body would've been impacted by such a blow. An archangel with such pride was suffering like this in the Demon Realm.

"…I can't go back now."

"I see."

He answered as if he already knew. I turned my head and saw that Yoo Joonghyuk was also watching the Uriel doll. We didn't speak but we could clearly tell what the other person was thinking.

"Are you going to take part in the Demon King Selection?"

"…That's right."

The Demon King Selection. It was a scenario I had to go through to confront the constellations in the future.

"I'm sorry for the party members but I have to get a giant story here." I spoke while carefully attaching Uriel's torn arm. "This way, I can prepare for the future destruction scenarios."

My choices would be limited if I returned to Earth. I could get opportunities here and build up my power so it wasn't efficient to go back now. The scenario difficulty had already become more terrible than the original novel. I would only lose time from my work if I returned to Earth.

Yoo Joonghyuk stared at me for a moment. "It isn't a bad idea."

His tone showed he understood many things. Perhaps Yoo Joonghyuk understood my heart more than anyone else. It was because he lost his precious things when he was weak.

I asked, "What are you going to do?"

"I"m going to stay in the Demon Realm for a while. There is a personal scenario here so I can't leave right away."

Hoh, I see.

"Really? If you don't mind, why don't you help me out?"

"I am helping myself, not you."

I looked up at Yoo Joonghyuk because I wanted to know what he meant. It was clearly the same expressionless face as before but something felt different. "…Are you also planning to participate in the Demon King Selection?"

"It is natural."

My mind became complicated. This jerk, he was thinking about taking part in the Demon King Selection…?

"Wait! You told me to go back to Earth…"

Yoo Joonghyuk ignored me and got up to go to the window. The faint light of the sunset cast a dark shade on Yoo Joonghyuk's face. According to Ways of Survival, Yoo Joonghyuk pretended to have a cool face when he was caught.

This bastard, he wanted to send me back to Earth and become the demon king. The shameless back looked like it wanted to flee.

Then Yoo Joonghyuk opened his mouth. "They're coming."

A cold surged from outside the window as Aileen and Mark ran through the door of the treatment room. I was able to know what was going on without listening to them. It was because Biyoo had woken up and was staring at me nervously.

[The constellation 'Founder of Humanity' is looking at the Yoo Joonghyuk Industrial Complex.]

[The constellation 'The Last Pharaoh' is looking at the Yoo Joonghyuk Industrial Complex.]

[Constellations of certain nebulae are looking at the Yoo Joonghyuk Industrial Complex.]

More than a dozen stars twinkled in the sky and one of them let out an intense burst of light and sparks. After a while, a huge shape started to appear at the entrance of the industrial complex.

It was the direct descent of an incarnation body. It was a giant mummy with a golden crown on its head. The height surpassed the walls and the incarnations in the industrial complex started screaming.

If I remembered correctly, this constellation belonged to Papyrus. In addition, Papyrus had joined hands with Bercan.

Yoo Joonghyuk spoke in a terrible tone, "…I guess they have come to protest."

There was no need to ask what the protest was about. It was already the prelude to the Demon King Selection.

Chapter 228: Ep. 43 - Breaking the Sky Sword Saint, II

[Who is… the industrial complex's… new master?]

The colossal voice was heard and Yoo Joonghyuk and I simultaneously looked out the window. Judging by the noisy streets, the use of a true voice was quite tough. Yoo Joonghyuk muttered in a small voice, "A constellation of Papyrus."

"If it is the Last Pharaoh, it is probably that woman?"

A giant mummy with an old, golden crown. Everything was covered with bandages apart from the high nose. It was just like what I read in Ways of Survival. It was clear that the body belonged to Cleopatra, the last pharaoh of Egypt.

[Who… is… Yoo Joonghyuk?]

Once again, the true voice rang out through the industrial complex. It was certainly great but neither of us were discouraged. Cleopatra was a historical-grade constellation at most. Yoo Joonghyuk and I were no longer nervous regarding great constellations.

"Yoo Joonghyuk. Can you win?"

It was an opponent I couldn't afford to go against while I currently had story packs hanging from my body. Yoo Joonghyuk shook his head. "It is impossible right now. It will soon be time."

"Are you talking about the penalty? The one where you disappear for 10 minutes a day?"

Yoo Joonghyuk didn't answer. I accepted it as agreement and looked at Cleopatra. "Then that person…"

"She won't do anything."

"Why?"

"The Demon King Selection hasn't started yet."

Naturally, the incarnation bodies of the constellations who weren't part of the scenario were constrained by probability. As long as the giant story hadn't opened yet, they couldn't act freely. Even so…

"Hey, have you already forgotten about Asmodeus?"

"Not everyone can act like Asmodeus."

I knew that much. It was because the demon kings had much fewer restrictions than the constellations in the Demon Realm. The problem was the constellations could consume extra probability to overcome these constraints.

"Isn't Cleopatra a member of Papyrus? If she borrows the probability of the nebula…"

"Kim Dokja. You have already forgotten what they have done."

"What?"

Before Yoo Joonghyuk could answer, I heard Cleopatra's voice in the air.

[Tell the… new ruler of the industrial complex. He will surely die… if he participates in the Demon King Selection.]

Cleopatra's body started to disappear with these words. Like a massive sand castle collapsing, the body returned to dust.

[Keep this in mind… Papyrus will never… warn you twice.]

Then why are you leaving so gently? It was strange. Usually, she would leave after killing hundreds of incarnations.

Yoo Joonghyuk opened his mouth like I was pathetic. "Have you forgotten? They forced fate on you."

"Ah."

That reminded me, there was such a thing. Papyrus, Vedas and Olympus used a massive amount of probability to force my fate on me. It was the reason why Cleopatra easily disappeared. They now lacked probability.

Yoo Joonghyuk spoke in his distinctive somber voice, "We've bought some time before the Demon King Selection."

I nodded. At least for now, the constellations wouldn't attack this side. I checked the message logs.

[The 'Demon King Selection' is currently being prepared.]

[Remaining Preparation Time: 28 days, 17 hours and 12 minutes.]

If my prediction was correct, the Demon King Selection would consume the 21st to 24th scenarios. It was a giant story so it was natural to eat the scenarios. I measured the time remaining and said,

"The two of us alone isn't enough."

"I know."

Once the Demon King Selection started, the constellations would start to flock here. A historical-grade constellation might be lacking in strength but they were still much stronger than normal incarnations. Moreover, once many of them started to appear, it would be difficult for only Yoo Joonghyuk and I to deal with them.

"Do you have an idea?"

Yoo Joonghyuk shook his head. There was a way to bring colleagues from Earth but Lee Hyunsung and Jung Heewon still lacked the ability to fight against transcendents or constellations. They needed time to become stronger by alternating between personal scenarios and main scenarios. A full-scale power management would be possible when they entered the latter scenarios. I needed to find colleagues I could use right away.

"Have you gathered any colleagues here?"

"Ah, there is…" Speaking of which, where was Jang Hayoung? I twisted my sore body and looked around. "I sent him to search for group members. It is time for some results…"

"Be prepared. I'll be leaving in a second."

Before I could ask where he was going, Yoo Joonghyuk disappeared from my view.

I worked out my plan and left the treatment room after sorting out my bandages. Aileen said I should rest for two more weeks but my physical condition wasn't that bad, perhaps because I was relaxed.

[The attribute 'Lamarck's Giraffe' has increased the recovery effect.]

…Ah, it was due to the effect of the attribute. The alarmed Aileen rushed over as I stepped outside and stretched. I interrupted her before she could open her mouth. "Don't worry. Rather, can you heal this?"

Aileen received the Uriel doll and cocked her head. "…What is this?"

"A constellation's symbolic body."

Aileen made the mistake of dropping the doll to the ground. She hurriedly picked up the doll again and asked me, "…Will I be punished for dropping it?"

"Don't worry, she is a good constellation. Please firmly repair it."

The constellation was nice. The words were strange to say but I was talking to Uriel, not other constellations.

I said I would go for a short stroll and emerged onto the streets of the industrial complex. The streets of the industrial complex were bathed in a dim light and seemed different from before.

A few people recognized me and nodded lightly. I could see a vigour that I never saw before on their faces. Perhaps this was the expression of those who decided to live.

"Hey Yoo Joonghyuk! Did you wake up?"

I turned around and saw someone running over here. Jang Hayoung walked up to me and gave me a clumsy headlock. I tried to pull Jang Hayoung off me. "My name isn't Yoo Joonghyuk."

"Oh, now you want to reveal your real name?"

"…You know?"

"Well, I'm not the only one using a pseudonym."

I stared at Jang Hayoung for a while before speaking in a meaningful manner. "My name is Kim Dokja."

I spoke nice words but Jang Hayoung had a dazed expression. "It is a strange name. I seem to have heard it before…"

"…It's fine. What were you doing?"

"Oh, I was chatting to a few people and got a tip about this area."

"A tip?"

"You don't know because you have been sleeping? Interesting things have happened in the industrial complex in the meantime."

I heard from Jang Hayoung about what happened in the past week. Of course, the most interesting thing was about Yoo Joonghyuk.

"He rejected the ruling rights?"

"That's right. He said he would become the duke but he wouldn't rule here. Thus, everyone was in an uproar."

The situation was clear. Maybe Yoo Joonghyuk was practicing his motto of 'dominate but don't rule'. That's what he said. The idea was good. However, the situation was bad.

"The order of the industrial complex must be out of control. If the situation isn't organized, that declaration would just create a security problem."

"That's why the citizens are excited right now."

A powerful dictator had the power to control people's desires. Since a dictator gave up his power,

the piled up desires of the citizens would burst out at once.

「"Do you think the darkness of the industrial complex will disappear if I die?"」

These were the words of Duke Syswitz in Ways of Survival. I once again thought he was right. The industrial complex wouldn't suddenly change just because the ruler changed. Rather, the oppressive dictatorship had vanished and the people's hidden desires would become even more exposed.

"Hey, give me that fragment!"

"I-I don't want to. I picked it up."

Voices burst out like they had been waiting and Jang Hayoung and I simultaneously turned our heads. A large number of people were lynching an incarnation in an alley. The situation was obvious. They were fighting over a story fragment that came from the Factory. I was about to move when

Jang Hayoung restrained me. "Wait. Just watch."

"…What?"

"I told you, there was a tip."

"What is the tip?"

"The 'Punisher' will show up here."

"Punisher?"

I had never heard of such a position. There was no such position in the Revolutionary scenario or Ways of Survival. Jang Hayoung noticed my doubts and added. "It's a nickname created by the citizens. A great beauty appeared a few days ago and has been maintaining the peace…"

At this moment, a man's shout was heard from inside the alley.

"Kill him and steal it!"

The men pulled out their weapons and it seemed to be a full-fledged lynching. I would rather move first instead of waiting for the punisher. The moment I moved my hand to the sword at my waist, a slender shadow appeared in the alley.

"Stop."

A woman with a black cape covering her body was standing on the wall. I wasn't sure about her equipment because of the cape but her face was very clear. It was a face that seemed to be on a different dimension from the world around it. I watched the woman's waist-long hair flapping in the wind and moved slowly in great shock.

…Was there such a figure in Ways of Survival? All of a sudden, the meaning of every praise word became clear.

Deep sultry eyes were set beneath neat eyebrows. All the standards that determined beauty in the world were collapsed at the same time. It was a face that couldn't be described using the modifiers of a constellation. To my chagrin, there was only one way to express this face.

「 There was no doubt it was a beauty that would slap[1] Yoo Joonghyuk on the cheeks three times. 」

There wasn't such an expression in Ways of Survival. In Ways of Survival, Jang Hayoung was at most described as 'two slaps on the cheeks'. I was stunned with shock while the person who would slap Yoo Joonghyuk twice whispered, "She came. That person is the punisher."

The men were overwhelmed by the woman's beauty and belatedly woke up. Their lips moved and I knew what would emerge. Before their mouths could open, something moved. Then something fell. It was a little bit later that a man screamed. "U-Uwaaaack!"

The man who had his arm cut off screamed terrible while the other people identified the situation and started fleeing. They noticed it was an enemy that couldn't deal with. Even the rescued man was terrified and ran out of the alley. In an instant, only the man's fallen arm and the woman remained in the alley.

Jang Hayoung watched the woman silently holding the sword and let out a burst of admiration. "Look, isn't she really amazing? You told me to look for some useful people. I tried to talk to her yesterday but she just disappeared—"

The swordsmanship was brutal but moved along a fixed course. The amazing thing was the speed of the swordsmanship. I murmured, "An incarnation can't have that level of swordsmanship."

"What?"

Jang Hayoung might've missed it but I definitely noticed. At this point in time, this speed was only possible for transcendents. My heart thumped loudly.

I didn't know the identity of this woman but if I could make her my colleague, she would surely be a great power in the Demon King Selection. The moment the woman in the black cape turned around, I jumped into the alley without hesitation. "Hey!"

I was planning to use Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint to get information while talking to her. It would be easier to persuade her if I could see her Attributes Window. Then if I was lucky—

"Kuek…"

Before I could approach the woman and use the skill, I had to stop in place. The woman's eyes were looking at me. I trembled from the terrible emotions that were transmitted to me. Tremendous resentment and anger shot towards me. I was struck dumb by the sheer waterfall of emotions.

…What was this girl? Did she know me?

…Rather, why did she hate me so much?

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[1] **Slap on the cheeks** – Korean idiom meaning "to put someone's beauty to shame."

Chapter 229: Ep. 43 - Breaking the Sky Sword Saint, III

I resisted the waves of anger and resentment and shouted towards the punisher, "Wait! Just wait!"

Then the messages of the constellations entered my head.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is astonished.]

[A few constellations are worried over your judgment.]

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is having an intense allergic reaction to your gaze'.]

Huh? What? All of a sudden…

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' has entered the channel.]

…Ah, Uriel!

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is surprised!]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is surprised!]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is surprised!]

It wasn't strange for Uriel to enter the channel since it had been a week since the Asmodeus incident. The problem was the messages from the subsequent constellations.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is asking about what is happening.]

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' says he doesn't know much.]

[The constellation who likes to change sex is giggling.]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is heading towards the nebula 'Asgard'.]

The sudden outpouring of messages from the constellations woke me up. What was this situation? Why were they pointing in my face…

The punisher quickly disappeared from the alley while I was confused by the messages of the constellations.

"Ah, wait!" It was a pity. This was a chance to get a good colleague.

Jang Hayoung belatedly chased after me and asked, "How is it? Isn't she beautiful?"

"When did she appear?"

"Three or four days ago. The rumour that she is a beauty as well as having incredibly ability quickly spread. She is also elusive."

"Will she come tomorrow?"

I hadn't been able to figure out her swordsmanship but she would definitely be a great help in the Demon King Selection. By the way, where did this person come from? She wasn't in the original Ways of Survival…

"She comes every day so she will probably come tomorrow. Were you fascinated by her?"

"It's not like that."

"I'm joking, I'm joking. I know. You don't like girls."

"…Who said that?"

Where did such a rumour…

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is looking at you.]

…I think I knew where the rumour came from.

"It has been a while, Uriel."

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is raising her nose with an 'ahem'.]

I listened to Uriel's indirect messages while heading to the treatment room with Uriel.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is praising herself.]

Most of Uriel's stories were about how she convinced Yoo Joonghyuk to go to the Demon Realm. As expected, it was Uriel who persuaded Yoo Joonghyuk to save me. It was as I thought. He wouldn't come here on his own to save me.

"Your symbolic body is currently being repaired. You'll be able to enter it again when it's done."

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire''s is touched to tears.]

"By the way, what personal scenario did you give Yoo Joonghyuk? It would be dangerous for an archangel to release a personal scenario in the Demon Realm."

In fact, it was dangerous for a high-level constellation like Uriel to come to the Demon Realm.

The nebula Eden had a truce with the 72 demon kings of the Demon Realm. Perhaps Uriel was conscious of this face and manifested herself as a symbolic body instead of an incarnation body. Uriel wouldn't have been so helpless against Asmodeus if it wasn't for this.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is making a sullen expression.]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' says it doesn't matter anymore.]

Once the link between Yoo Joonghyuk and Uriel was cut off, Uriel's personal scenario had been forcibly erased. Yoo Joonghyuk said that he received another personal scenario.

I was listening to Uriel's story when Jang Hayoung interrupted. "How did you become so familiar with the constellations?"

"I am also a constellation."

"…What? Are you joking?"

"Didn't I tell you?"

Jang Hayoung had a complicated expression on his face. "A constellation… the beings in the sky? The same as the mummy who appeared in the morning?"

"That is usually the case.

"That's why there is a modifier. A constellation lives in the context of that modifier…"

Come to think of it, there was that setting. The nature of the constellations was inside the context of the modifier. I had become corrupted as soon as I became a constellation so I couldn't see the context…

"That's right. Those constellations."

"What is your modifier…"

Jang Hayoung was conscious of my status as a constellation and became cautious. I couldn't help smiling. This bastard would probably be surprised to know who I am.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is alert towards the incarnation 'Jang Hayoung'!]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is warning incarnation 'Jang Hayoung' not to be too friendly!]

"Uh…!" Jang Hayoung was intimidated by Uriel and quickly moved away from me.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is making an angelic smile.]

Why did the angel say this to him? I entered the treatment room and was able to see Yoo Joonghyuk leisurely sitting at the table while drinking tea. "You're late."

"What? You are already here?"

I didn't know where he went but Yoo Joonghyuk's boots were covered with dirt. The tea had also been changed. Was there herbal tea here? Thinking about it, this guy's taste was very delicate.

Yoo Joonghyuk glanced at Jang Hayoung behind me. "Is he the one you mentioned?"

"That's right." I answered and Jang Hayoung stepped forward.

"…This is the new duke? Hello, I'm Aslan."

"You're a rude jerk."

"Sorry, I'm actually a bitch."

Their gazes clashed in the air. I felt the atmosphere become awkward and quickly interrupted. "Is this the first time you've seen each other? Yoo Joonghyuk, didn't you come here a few days ago?"

"There was no time for greetings. Then your new colleague is someone who doesn't know if he is a man or a woman?"

"That's right."

"I hate weak guys."

"…I'm not weak?" Jang Hayoung puffed up his chest but he didn't enter Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes. He might have the Unidentified Wall but his power was still insufficient compared to the transcendent Yoo Joonghyuk. They were both main characters but Yoo Joonghyuk was the first one.

Yoo Joonghyuk quietly lowered his teacup and spoke in a cold voice. "He isn't worth waiting for. Surely this jerk isn't the only one?"

I quickly responded instead of the offended Jang Hayoung. "Oh, there's one more. I haven't talked to the person yet but I've found a decent colleague."

"Who is it?"

"She is called the punisher. She appeared a little while ago and I think she will be quite helpful."

Yoo Joonghyuk's expression became complicated at my words. "That person is impossible."

"What? Why?"

"I tried to get her but failed."

"What did you say to her? Were you mean? Something like: I will kill you if you don't become my colleague—"

I fell silent at Yoo Joonghyuk's furious expression. Yoo Joonghyuk must have a good reason if he was saying this. I didn't know but perhaps he had a previous love or hate relationship with her. Who was that woman to have such a relationship with Yoo Joonghyuk? She wasn't in the original… no, the original had changed a bit and there might be a new story. I should look for it soon.

"Then there is only one way left…"

Jang Hayoung received my gaze and replied with a sulky expression. "Why, what is it?"

"Did you do what I asked correctly?"

"I did."

"What about the transcendent I told you about?"

"I got a response. Come and look."

Yoo Joonghyuk raised an eyebrow as he listened to the conversation between Jang Hayoung and I. "Transcendent? What are you talking about?"

"Ah, this person can communicate with beings of other scenarios. Isn't he quite useful?"

It was a scheme to appeal Jang Hayoung's ability to him but Yoo Joonghyuk's expression was still sour. "So?"

"It isn't limited to colleagues or incarnations. If we recruit constellations or transcendents—"

"The constellations aren't possible. I can't trust them."

"Then you are okay with transcendents?"

"Have you thought of someone?"

I nodded. "I will go to First Murim."

"…The First Murim?"

"It is a place where transcendents are the most abundant."

"I know what you're thinking but there is no guarantee that they are all superior to the constellations. There are many big evils and big demons present."

"I know but aren't there others?"

"Do you think they will all help you just because they have a touch of a chivalrous spirit? I don't remember seeing a decent human among those in Murim."

I felt a deep resentment in Yoo Joonghyuk's voice. Well, it wasn't unreasonable since he already experienced the First Murim in the last regression. However—

"Well, at least one person might help."

I watched Yoo Joonghyuk's distorted expression and spoke in a joyful manner. "I'm going to ask for help from the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint."

Breaking the Sky Sword Saint. One of the most powerful transcendents in all of Ways of Survival. She wasn't at the top at this point in time but her skills were enough. It was because the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint was none other than Yoo Joonghyuk's master.

"Why that person?"

"She is an unconventional existence that isn't tied to righteousness or unrighteousness. Also, isn't it natural to pick your master?"

Yoo Joonghyuk's expression was worse than when the story of the punisher came out. The sight of the disconcerted Yoo Joonghyuk… it was really unusual. Yoo Joonghyuk was pale and his forehead was sweaty. "Absolutely not."

"Why?"

"If I say no then you can't. That person can absolutely never…"

Of course, I read Ways of Survival and knew why Yoo Joonghyuk was acting like this. It couldn't be helped. This time I had to move according to my plan. "No, we have to go. I've already obtained the ticket."

Biyoo floated in the air and made a sound.

[Baat!]

A new scenario message followed.

[A new sub-scenario has arrived!]

The First Murim was a scenario area where people frequently came and went so I was able to purchase portal tickets from the Dokkaebi Bag, although it required 50,000 coins. However, the advantage was that I could come and go at will.

"Yoo Joonghyuk, think carefully. It might not necessarily by the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint. There are quite a few useful things you can obtain there."

The First Murim was a place where a variety of warriors from the 20th to the 40th scenarios gather. If we went there at this point in time, there would certainly be a lot of information and hidden pieces available.

Yoo Joonghyuk was troubled for a long time before asking, "When are you going?"

I smiled and replied, "Right now."

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[*] Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)

Chapter 230: Ep. 43 - Breaking the Sky Sword Saint, IV

The preparations were soon over. I entrusted the Yoo Joonghyuk Industrial Complex to Aileen and the Kim Dokja Industrial Complex to Mark and some council members.

…Rather, it felt strange hearing the Kim Dokja Industrial Complex. Was there really an industrial complex with that name in the Demon Realm? I thought the people would be unhappy.

"Damn, I'm just a pub owner. Is it possible to leave that to me?"

"It is just like running the pub. It is only until I come back. I have transferred some of the rights so you should be able to handle security."

Mark had an unconvinced expression despite my words. "Still, wouldn't it be good for you to show your face? The people of the industrial complex will be quite confused."

"I don't have time to go there right now."

"If a new revolutionary appears…"

"The whole area has passed onto the next scenario. A revolutionary won't appear for a while."

Mark seemed convinced by my words. It was slightly uneasy but it would be enough to leave the industrial complex to Mark for a while. It was Mark who was the greatest help to the damaged industrial complex in the original novel. Kim Dokja was already in a panic due to the devastation caused by Yoo Joonghyuk so people like Mark were needed.

Mark led the council members towards the Kim Dokja Industrial Complex. Han Myungoh watched their backs and suddenly opened his mouth, "Then we should depart."

"We?"

I looked back at Han Myungoh with a frown.

…When did this person pack his bags?

"I won't stay here alone."

"…"

"I also have a good eye when it comes to martial arts. I read many martial arts novels when I was young."

In fact, I knew why Han Myungoh wanted to follow. To be precise, it was Han Myungoh's boss, not Han Myungoh.

[The demon king 'Devil of Lust and Wrath' is looking at you.]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is looking at Demon King Asmodeus.]

I felt sorry for Uriel but I couldn't help right now. It was best to maintain a good relationship with Asmodeus for now, as I didn't know about the development of the third regression in the revised version. There was also something more worrisome than Uriel and Asmodeus.

"There are too many dregs."

"Do you complain about the world?"

Jang Hayoung and Yoo Joonghyuk were glaring at each other. I sighed. My purpose was meeting the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint which meant Yoo Joonghyuk had to come along. Jang Hayoung was also necessary as a liaison. Above all, this journey would be a great help to Jang Hayoung's growth.

"Then let's depart." I sent a signal and Biyoo opened a portal in the air with a 'baat' sound. There was a whirling sound and a portal was created. It wasn't the size of the Great Hole but it was enough for the four of us to go across.

Yoo Joonghyuk hurriedly ended as soon as the portal appeared. Jang Hayoung watched Yoo Joonghyuk disappearing and spoke in a tense voice, "…I've never left the Demon Realm before."

After the first dimensional movement, Jang Hayoung always lived in the Demon Realm. I wanted to give words of encouragement but Han Myungoh unexpectedly opened his mouth first.

"Believe in me. I've read more than 300 volumes of martial arts novels. You just have to follow me."

I smiled at Han Myungoh's words.

…Over 300 martial arts novels. I didn't know it if would be similar to the First Murim.

"Let's go."

The three of us plunged into the portal at the same time. My vision darkened and the landscape of the universe unfolded before me. I crossed the universe as a ray of light. It was the Star Stream galaxy where countless stories were spoken. A few stars stared at me passing by and once I came to my senses, I was touching the rough ground.

"Wow, I'm dizzy…"

Jang Hayoung was retching to the side while Han Myungoh looked like he had climbed a mountain.

I didn't see where Yoo Joonghyuk had disappeared to.

…He probably didn't want to meet the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint.

"Ohh, this place…" The overexcited Han Myungoh urged us forward with a childlike expression. I probably looked like this at the beginning of Ways of Survival.

[You have arrived at the Blue Dragon Castle.]

The portal in the sky closed with this message and I started examining the area.

「The Blue Dragon Castle is one of the four great fortresses of the First Murim.」

According to the description in Ways of Survival, this was one of the largest castles in the First Murim. Based on the size of the square, the city must be enormous. It was a sprawling city centred around the big palace.

The markets and lively streets were selling various things. There were Murim people sitting in front of small and large houses. No one showed apparent hostility but I could guess how powerful they

were.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is making an interested expression.]

[Some constellations are nostalgic at the sight of the First Murim.]

The First Murim was a place were countless strong people were born and raised. Perhaps some of the constellations had passed through this place. Jang Hayoung glanced around the surroundings like he was overwhelmed by the atmosphere and opened his mouth. "…It is a Chinese style? Is it originally like this?'

"The 'martial arts' background is originally like this."

Despite saying it was the Chinese style, the red lanterns were Japanese-style while some Southeast Asian architecture was mixed in. Of course, there were things unique to China. For example, the Chinese dress…

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is looking at you.]

I walked while pretending I didn't hear it. The fortress was so wide that I couldn't get a feel for the size. However, if I read it correctly, the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint shouldn't be in this area.

First… we should go towards the market. We came all the way here and I wanted to try the dishes of the First Murim. The best things to eat were dumplings and chicken broth. These two dishes were the food that Yoo Joonghyuk ate the most in the First Murim.

He often described the scene of him eating dumplings with hot chicken broth. At night, I would hold my hungry stomach and go to the convenience store to buy a 1,000 won steamed bun.

"Hmm, I don't see anyone training in martial arts."

"They won't carelessly show off martial arts. You won't know if you had read 300 volumes of martial arts novels."

"Then are you an expert at the Murim World? Is there some type of relationship?"

"Yes, of course."

"I'm looking forward to it."

I stared at Han Myungoh with pitying eyes. This man seemed to think that this 'Murim' was the 'Murim' he knew. Not long afterwards, Han Myungoh's expectations started to slowly crumble.

"…Something is strange."

"What do you mean?"

Han Myungoh looked closely at a passing incarnation like he had seen something that shouldn't be seen. "Why are the Murim people wearing jeans?"

"Why can't they wear jeans?"

"No, there can't be jeans in China during this time period…"

"They are probably tourists like us."

It wasn't just jeans. Most people wore earphones or large headphones while there are also incarnations using smartphone-like devices. There were those who pursued the so-called Murim fashion but approximately half of them didn't fit the world like us.

Han Myungoh felt despair as his romance was destroyed in front of him and I briefly sighed. "I know what you were imagining but this is what Murim is like these days."

"I-Is that so?"

"Of course. The cities are all like this now."

"This wasn't the Murim that I wanted…"

"In fact, everything in the world is disappointing."

Han Myungoh didn't give up despite my words. He learnt an interpretation skill and talked to a street vendor. His way of speaking matched the Murim World. "Excuse me, where do I go to find a martial arts hall?"

The merchant who was dozing off against the pile of goods on a shabby stand stared at Han Myungoh with wide eyes. "Um? I guess you just came here."

"Yes."

"Why do you want a martial arts hall? Do you want to learn martial arts?"

"Since I came to Murim, shouldn't I learn the sword?"

"Ahaha, indeed. That's right. Your words are correct."

Han Myungoh's mouth curved upwards at the reply.

[The character 'Chu Gukmyung' has triggered 'Bargaining Lv. 4'.]

It was really bad quality from the start. "However, you seem to be misunderstanding something. These days, we don't learn martial arts from martial arts halls."

"Huh? What does that mean?"

"Haha, the sweaty traditional martial arts teaching methods are used only in the 100th rural Murim World. No one learns martial arts like that these days. You seem to be from a dark world so I will give you special information. You're lucky."

Han Myungoh was confused. "Then how do you learn martial arts these days?"

"We use this."

The merchant brushed off the dust accumulated on the goods. The box that the merchant held contained something that was similar to a small mp3.

[Heaven and Earth Ice Spirit Sword Unopened Set]

[-A recording engraved with information directly from the brain of the martial artist, the Ice Flower Goddess!

–Repeated learning is the best! If you keep studying it from childhood, you will gain enlightenment!

–Six month installments are possible! At 500 coins per month, anyone can be a master!]

"…What is this?"

"It is a fad among young people these days. It is rumoured that anyone can become a master if they use this 1,000 times."

"Is that true… really?"

"Of course it is true. I lived in Murim for over 10 years. Would I lie? Do you see the young people walking around with earphones?"

"Yes, I've seen them. Don't tell me?"

The merchant nodded significantly at Han Myungoh's question. "Everyone is currently listening to it. The youngsters are busy reading these days."

"Huh… I see. That's what it was. I'm behind the times."

"Huhu, this is a limited edition because it was directly recorded by the Ice Flower Goddess. Do you know the Ice Flower Goddess? She is the public girlfriend of Murim. Here, I'll let you have a listen. It is very effective even when you aren't sleeping."

Han Myungoh stuck the earphones in his ears while Jang Hayoung rummaged through the merchant's goods.

[Phantom Flyer Home Training 6 Months Set]

[-You can be a master if you follow it 10,000 times!]

[Follow the South Palace Sword King's study!]

[-Use the safest and fastest way to reach the peak by listening to the online lectures of the top teacher of the South Palace!]

–The 24 hours question and answer board is in operation. There is no need to worry about coins. Feel free to contact us anytime!

Come to think of it, these recordings were at the peak popularity during this time. They were known to stimulate the unconscious learning of martial arts so they sat at home, listened to lectures and practiced it comfortably…

The merchant stared at Jang Hayoung who was recklessly rummaging through the goods. "Hey there, young miss or mister… in any case. Don't mess it up if you aren't buying. They are expensive."

"Can we really become a master with something like this?"

"Don't you see the reviews here? They are all products certified by professional agencies."

I remembered the first time I read about the listening devices in Ways of Survival. The views of the Murim people were also shown.

–Baek Youngshin (12 years old, male): I listened to it because of a friend. It was very good. I have been first in my private academy since the third month.

–Tanlangmiyo (32 years old, female): Honestly, I listened for three weeks and thought it took too long… From the sixth week, I started to hear the martial arts that I didn't know!!!

–Hwa Wang Bangun (24 years old, male): After hearing this, my performance in the scenarios became better. What about the scenario difficulty?? I'm not afraid of the dokkaebis anymore!!!

They were clearly false advertisements but it was a temptation for any incarnation who actually visited the First Murim for the first time. They were incarnations who had come through tough scenarios.

However, it wasn't easy to learn martial arts techniques profound enough to reduce the difficulty level of the scenario with a few coins.

Han Myungoh complained that he didn't like this Murim, changed his mind. "Would you like to listen to it once? It feels like the martial arts enters really easily—"

"Huhu Mister, you are in good shape. It is known as the lightheaded phenomenon and usually occurs after three weeks."

"Ah, is that so? Then how much in a lump sum— "

I was about to stop him when a terrible voice was heard from behind me.

"If people can become experts using such a thing, the First Murim would've never been destroyed."

Chapter 231: Ep. 43 - Breaking the Sky Sword Saint, V

The merchant frowned as he looked towards the voice in the back. As expected, Yoo Joonghyuk was standing there. My expression changed as I warned him, "Hey, don't go around talking like that."

The destruction of the First Murim that Yoo Joonghyuk mentioned was a scenario that hadn't happened yet. In the original novel, the tragedy would occur in a few more years. Of course, Yoo Joonghyuk witnessed this in the last regression and the future became the 'past' for him.

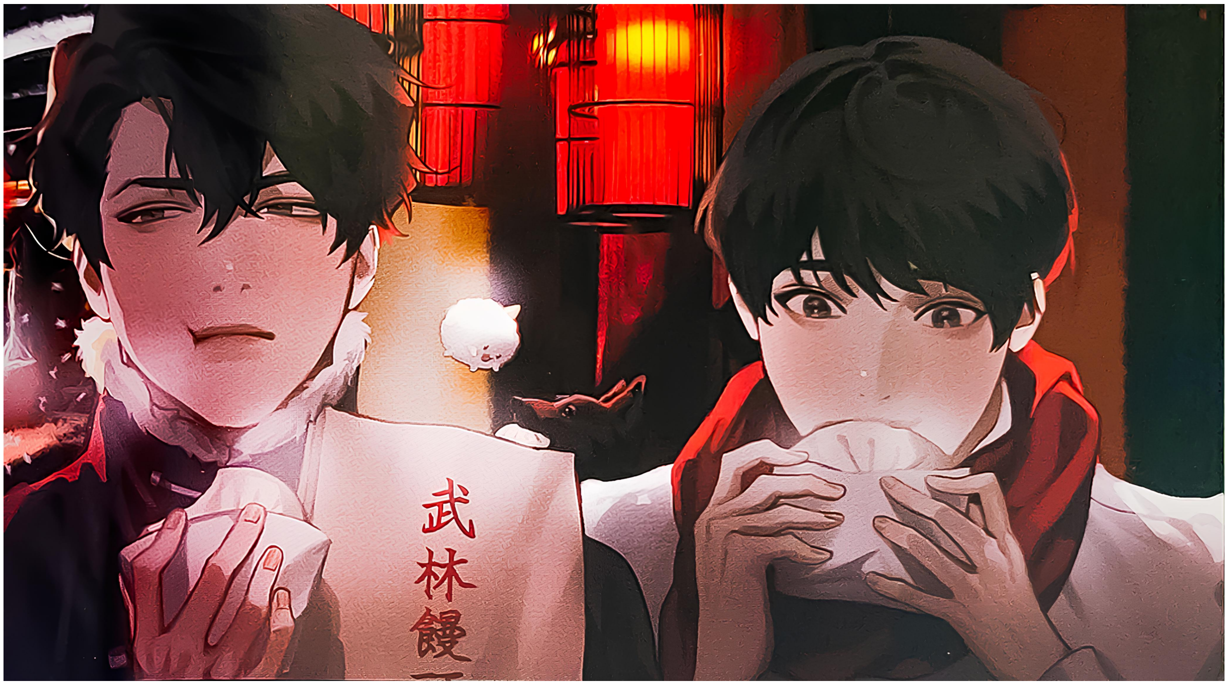
"Don't waste unnecessary time. You know that people can't become stronger with that trash."

"I was just letting the group take a look."

"We aren't here to be tourists. Have you forgotten?"

As he spoke, I managed to see something in Yoo Joonghyuk's hand. It was a paper wrapped with a hot and sweet smell coming from it.

…Dumpling? Yoo Joonghyuk ate the dumpling with an unapologetic face and continued talking, "There are three hidden pieces that can be found in the First Murim at this time. The Annihilation Emperor's martial arts book, the Black Demon Spirit's Black Heavenly Demon Sword and the Blood Demon School's Demon Spirit Bead."



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The merchant cut in after Yoo Joonghyuk's words.

"Hahaha! The Annihilation Emperor's martial arts book and the Black Demon Spirit's Black Heavenly Demon Sword? The Blood Demon School's Demon Spirit Bead? There is still someone searching for such things…!"

"…"

"Wake up! They are literally legends! They completely disappeared during the old days of Murim!"

Yoo Joonghyuk didn't bat an eyelid despite the merchant's laughter. It was because Yoo Joonghyuk knew they really existed. He even knew how to obtain a few of them. He shamelessly mentioned it in front of other people because he knew they wouldn't believe him anyway.

I replied to his words, "The Blood Demon School's Demon Spirit Bead has a low utility even if obtained. You might be able to absorb it but if I or the other party members eat it incorrectly, qigong deviation is likely to occur."

Yoo Joonghyuk made the expression that I wanted. On the other hand, the merchant's expression was embarrassed as he heard us calmly discussing legends. I continued talking, "The Annihilation Emperor's martial arts book is very difficult to obtain. You can get it but you can't stay there for long."

"I see."

"Finally, the Black Demon Spirit's Black Heavenly Demon Sword… maybe you are trying to obtain it because your sword is broken but have you forgotten that there is a weapon that is easier to obtain with a similar performance?"

Yoo Joonghyuk's complexion changed at my words. He noticed what I was trying to say. "…Do you really intend to go there?"

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"Yes. This time, the power of the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint is essential."

"I'm not going."

"Do what you want. However, can you guide me to the school?"

Yoo Joonghyuk made a grim expression and the merchant interjected again. "Are you going to find the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint?"

"That's right."

"Hah…" The merchant watched us with a slightly weary expression. Then he shook his head and withdrew his products. "That's it. Give that to me. I won't sell them to you."

Han Myungoh, who was listening earnestly to the Ice Flower Goddess, was embarrassed as the earphones were suddenly pulled out. The merchant smiled at Han Myungoh. "I'm surprised that there are still friends who want to stick to the old ways. It isn't too bad to feel the change of the times in person. Good luck with your hard work."

The merchant spoke unknown words and dragged his stall to another place to solicit customers. I stared at the merchant's back for a moment. Han Myungoh asked, "…What the hell does that mean?"

"Department Head, you said that you like Murim novels?"

"Huh? Well, that's right."

"Then it'll be great. The person we are visiting now is the only one in 'Murim' who adheres to the old training methods."

I said this while chasing after Yoo Joonghyuk walking ahead of me. Was it because he came to the First Murim after a long time? Yoo Joonghyuk had a nostalgic look on his face as he looked at the surroundings with distant eyes.

The streets gradually grew quiet. The buzzing of the marketplaces died away and there was the faint smell of animal feces.

How long did we walk? Yoo Joonghyuk's footsteps finally stopped. It was in front of a shabby residence that couldn't be compared to those on the busy streets. There was a small hut in the centre of the grounds. I read the small nameplate set up in front of the hut.

[Breaking the Sky Sword School.]

–Recruiting disciples at all times.

This was where the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint lived.

"It is up to here for me." Yoo Joonghyuk spoke these words and climbed up a cherry tree nearby.

He really didn't want to meet the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint.

Han Myungoh spoke in a suspicious tone, "Something so shabby…"

"Originally Murim masters stay in shabby places," I replied.

Jang Hayoung asked with an expectant expression, "Is there someone here who gave me the martial arts technique?"

Come to think of it, Jang Hayoung had received the Breaking the Sky Sword's Immortal Body through the wall. Someone had taught it to him but I didn't know how it was possible. Even Yoo Joonghyuk had struggled to learn it…

"Breaking the Sky Sword Saint, are you here?" I knocked on the door. "Breaking the Sky Sword Saint! I need your help!"

There was no answer from the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint to my loud shouts. However, I couldn't go back just because there was no answer. I shouted brazenly and opened the door. "I will take this as signal to enter!"

There was a creak as the door opened and revealed the interior. The interior of the residence was better than I thought. There weren't any signs of a person living there. Instead, an unexpected existence was waiting for us.

Jang Hayoung cried out happily, "Aw, there is a dog?"

A dog was lying on the floor and staring at us. It was a medium-sized dog dressed in a dark blue uniform with its tongue stretched out.

Han Myungoh nervously stuck to my side. "Is that the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint?"

"No."

I gazed at the panting dog and recalled the contents from Ways of Survival.

「Black coloured fur with reddish brown eyes. The watchdog lay down in a manner that was as elegant as a person.」

There was no doubt.

"This dog is a disciple of the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint."

"…Disciple?"

"If I remember correctly, he is called the Breaking the Sky Master."

Han Myungoh asked with an absurd expression. "No, why is a dog a disciple?"

"It happens when people are worse than dogs. In the first place, the idea that people are better than dogs is a human ideal."

I read the curious air around the dog.

[The exclusive skill, 'Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint' has been activated!]

Old folktales gathered and became stories. Fragments of folktales in the area became an original story told to me.

[The story 'Dog who Grows Up at a Village School for 3 Years can Recite Poetry' in in effect.]

For example, what if a dog accompanied the strongest person in Murim for a long time? What if the dog started to follow the master's actions one day? He followed and copied for 10 years, 20 years, 30 years… and finally, 100 years passed.

Jang Hayoung murmured with astonishment. "W-What is this…?!"

The dog stood up on two legs and looked at us like he was a human. He had strange eyes that couldn't be read at all. I couldn't sense any hostility from him but it was difficult to see him as benevolent. Han Myungoh frowned at the strange sight. "I don't think this is a welcome greeting. I will deal with him."

"…Department Head?"

"I'm also a demon earl. Don't look down on me."

An earl-grade demon certainly wasn't weak. An earl should at least have a decent story.

"Haaap!"

Han Myungoh ran forward and confidently revealed his story. I wasn't sure about the exact identity of the story but he had picked up a few historical-grade stories and were using them. He was still a member of Asmodeus' household so if I checked Han Myungoh's skills…

"Kuaaack!"

Before I could finish the thought, Han Myungoh's body flew through the air with a loud sound.

[The character 'Breaking the Sky Master' has used Hundred Steps Godly Fists Lv. 10!]

[The character 'Breaking the Sky Master' has used Red Phoenix Shunpo Lv. 10!]

…Oh my god. The dog blew Han Myungoh out of the house and rushed towards Jang Hayoung. I reflexively pushed Jang Hayoung and activated Bookmark.

[The exclusive skill 'Way of the Wind Lv. 10 (+1) is activated!]

The momentary wind sensation made the dog's movements look dull. I pulled Jang Hayoung and moved along the path created by the wind, avoiding the dog's paw. There was a fearsome power in the dog's paws as sparks occurred. Who could believe that a lowly looking dog was using the power of the Breaking the Sky?

"Wait a minute! We have no intention of fighting!"

Then the dog picked up a piece of paper that was rolling around.

–Recruiting disciples at all times.

I finally realized what was happening.

"…Shit. It is the disciples' recruitment period."

If I remembered correctly, there were quite a few people yearning for the old Murim who visited the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint. Most of them weren't even able to enroll because of this dog.

「"I won't accept any person as a disciple if they aren't as good as a dog."」

In other words, the dog… the Breaking the Sky Master was the checkpoint to enter the Breaking the Sky Sword School.

The dog was stimulated by my movements and growled. Faint sparks appeared around the dog.

The startled Jang Hayoung asked, "W-What is this? Is that really a dog?"

I was also surprised. Based on the way the sparks were turning yellow, there was no doubt. This was 'transcendence stage one'. I never thought the Breaking the Sky Master would be this strong, dammit.

I could deal with him if I revealed my power but my body hadn't recovered yet. I also couldn't excessively use my stories to deal with the dog. In the end, there was only one method.

"Yoo Joonghyuk! Help me just once!"

Yoo Joonghyuk was quiet. This jerk wasn't responding?

"I'll help you find the Blood Demon School's Demon Spirit Bead if you deal with this guy!"

Yoo Joonghyuk still didn't respond. Then the dog moved. It was so fast that I couldn't avoid it using Way of the Wind. It happened when I was going to invoke Electrification. Yoo Joonghyuk appeared in front of me and used the Heavenly Sword of Gathering Clouds to block the dog's paws.

"The Demon Spirit Bead is still insufficient. Add the Black Demon Spirit's Black Heavenly Demon Sword as well."

Shit. this stingy person.

"…I understand. Just take care of the dog."

Yoo Joonghyuk lightly shook his sword to shake off the dog and took a kendo position with an arrogant expression. Yellow sparks started to flow around Yoo Joonghyuk's body. As expected, Yoo Joonghyuk also passed transcendence stage one. Originally, it shouldn't be possible for him at this point in time.

The Breaking the Sky Master was tense when the same power appeared. The confrontation between man and dog was filled with unbelievable tension.

A formidable magic power started to encroach on the surroundings. In the original work, Yoo Joonghyuk had also competed with the Breaking the Sky Master.

「The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint has two disciples.」

It was the first time he came to the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint to learn swordsmanship.

「One is Breaking the Sky Master, the dog raised by the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint.」

He probably lost at that time.

「 The second is Supreme King Yoo Joonghyuk. 」

Now it would be different.

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* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)
* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)

Chapter 232: Ep. 43 - Breaking the Sky Sword Saint, VI

The Breaking the Sky Master was strong. It sounded ridiculous but there were probably no dogs in the Star Stream stronger than the Breaking the Sky Master. Of course, there were few people stronger than the Breaking the Sky Master.

Yoo Joonghyuk and the Breaking the Sky Master collided. The sparks from transcendence stage one hit each other and the landscape started to distort.

The path that transcendents walked caused interference. They were existences who reached transcendence by walking on only one path. Thus, battles between transcendents was always a continuation of denying each other.

Your path is wrong, my path is right.

Through such denials, the transcendents became stronger, harder and broken at the end. As the presence of the transcendents dominated the area, Yoo Joonghyuk's thoughts flowed into my mind.

「 It's been a while, apprentice. 」

Anyone who heard it would laugh. He was calling a dog, not a human, his apprentice. However, Yoo Joonghyuk didn't laugh.

The expression that faded away hit at his heart. The memories that had been suppressed because he didn't have time to dwell on the past were released. Yoo Joonghyuk encountered the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint and learnt martial arts with the Breaking the Sky Master in his second round.

「In this place, Yoo Joonghyuk learnt a bit about human feelings.」

Here, Yoo Joonghyuk learnt, trained and lived with his non-human master and non-human fellow apprentice. If there was a bit of warmth left inside Yoo Joonghyuk right now, it was probably from the First Murim training. Likewise, the First Murim was probably the cause that deprived him of the warmth of humanity.

「…I didn't want to see you again.」

The strongest dog Breaking the Sky Master and the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint died fighting against the returnees alliance.

Yoo Joonghyuk moved. The paws of the dog collided with the Heavenly Sword of Gathering Clouds. The footsteps of the Red Phoenix Shunpo that reached another state of polarity tangled together. The sparks in the air became more intense as the number of encounters between the dog's front paws and Yoo Joonghyuk's sword shot up. Not long afterwards, the energy started to decline little by little.

As expected, a main character was a main character.

The story of the dog that grew up following the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint couldn't stand against the story of a man who lived to prevent the destruction of the world. The time of Yoo Joonghyuk, who lived a lonely life looking only at the scenarios, was found in every swing of the sword.

「I won't look.」

Yoo Joonghyuk's time didn't contain any mourning because he would have to suffer through the same time again anyway.

Fight, fight again and keep moving forward. It was the best mourning possible for this guy's past.

The Breaking the Sky Master was unable to tolerate the weight of the sword and moaned. Yoo Joonghyuk's offensive became faster. The swordsmanship became more persistent and he dug into the weak points in a ruthless manner.

Jang Hayoung was blankly gaping from beside me. "…Wow, this is real."

It was probably the first time he had seen this type of battle. It was a great battle but it was too early to feel admiration. This was just passing entertainment when considering the fights ahead.

In the end, the Breaking the Sky Master was pushed back in the power struggle and whined. Yoo Joonghyuk didn't miss this opening. Yoo Joonghyuk's successive strikes overpowered the Breaking the Sky Master's paws and he narrowed the gap. Rough breathing emerged from the dog's mouth. Then Yoo Joonghyuk's final blow pierced the Breaking the Sky Master's waist.

…To be precise, it was about to pierce it.

An eerie sensation suddenly went down my spine. Someone was standing behind me.

…When did this existence stand behind me?

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is surprised.]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is curious.]

[A a few constellations are wary of the energy they can feel.]

"The sky is noisy today. What spectacle can I see?" The owner of the voice stood there in a leisurely manner, like she had been drinking.

Her body was much bigger than Yoo Joonghyuk. The tall woman who was around three metres tall passed by me and gave off a colossal pressure. It was so obvious that no one had to ask.

The presence in front of me caused my heart to throb. She was one of the strongest transcendents in Ways of Survival, the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint.

An ether storm moved through the air and Yoo Joonghyuk's Heavenly Sword of Gathering Clouds froze.

"Are you beating a dumb dog like this? You are a man without any principles."

The Heavenly Sword of Gathering Clouds was trembling. The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint's two fingers held Yoo Joonghyuk's sword like it was a toy.

Woof woof!

The Breaking the Sky Master lay on the floor and stretched out his tongue again.

On the other hand, Yoo Joonghyuk had thrown away the Heavenly Sword of Gathering Clouds and activated Red Phoenix Shunpo to leave the place. It was the fastest I had ever seen Yoo Joonghyuk move. An interested smile appeared as the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint watched Yoo Joonghyuk running away.

"You are a quick guy. I should grab him last… let's see."

The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint's nonchalant gaze moved over our party. The moment I met her eyes, the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint appeared in front of me. Her speed was enough to make me sweat. I couldn't be faster even if I used Electrification.

"First of all, there is one guy whose appearance is unclear."

She just grabbed my chin but my vision shook. I staggered while the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint was already holding the chin of Jang Hayoung beside me.

"Kuek…?"

"Oh, this is my type? You pass."

The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint's movements left only afterimages. This must be the Movement Transposition I had only heard about. Suddenly, the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint was poking the fallen Han Myungoh in the face with a branch.

"…You look like a monster species. Will I get something if I kill you?"

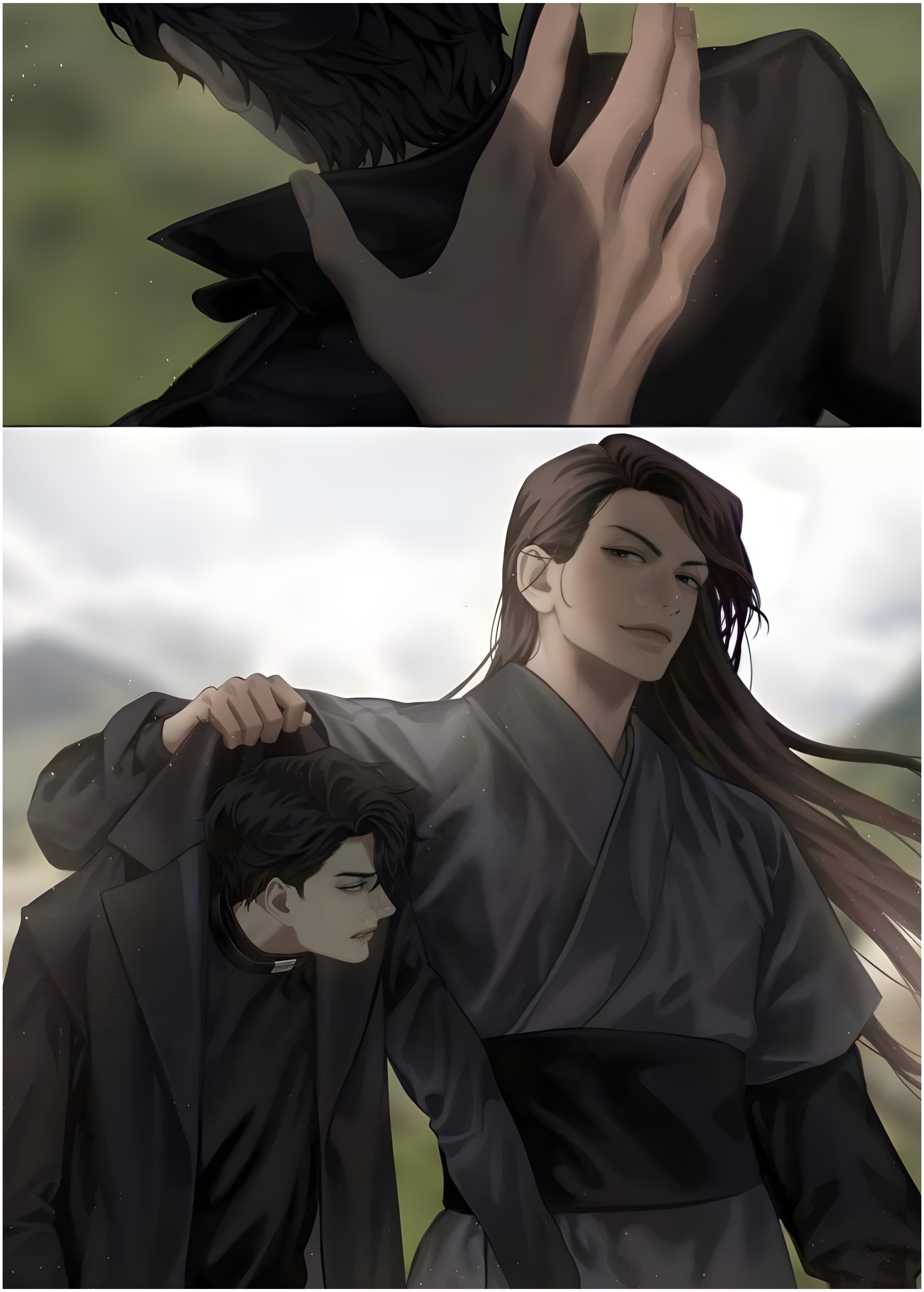
"…W-What?!"

"For the moment, you have the death sentence."

Han Myungoh from unconscious after being struck by the branch and the figure of the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint disappeared into the forest. There was the sound of condensed air bursting and a great explosion in the distance. After a while, the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint came back with a big gust of wind.

"Phew, he was pretty fast. First, his face is qualified…"

Yoo Joonghyuk had bruises all over his face and was caught in the grasp of the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint. Yoo Joonghyuk's body was damaged but he was still using the Red Phoenix Shunpo in such a situation. Nevertheless, Yoo Joonghyuk's feet only hit empty air.



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It was because the Breaking the Sky Sword's huge hand was carrying Yoo Joonghyuk on her back.

I knew why Yoo Joonghyuk was reluctant to meet the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint. Thinking about it with common sense, there were many dangers when encountering the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint at this point.

Yoo Joonghyuk had learned how to use the sword from the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint in the second round. The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint of the third round didn't know Yoo Joonghyuk at all.

"…How do you know my techniques?"

Yoo Joonghyuk didn't answer. Instead, he glared at me with eyes that contained great resentment.

「Kim Dokja! Do something! Quickly!」

For reference, the 18th regression Yoo Joonghyuk was killed by the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint.

It was the end of the guy who used to say he surpassed his teacher by becoming a transcendent early.

I decided to cut to the chase. "Breaking the Sky Sword Saint, we are gathering transcendents to fight against the nebulae."

"…Hrmm, is that so?"

"I need your help."

The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint stared at me like I was an unusual toy. Then she rummaged around and pulled out a huge smoking pipe. Tobacco smoke rose. The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint stared at me before suddenly blowing the smoke towards me.

"You are mistaken about something. I'm not a volunteer. Get lost if you haven't come to be my disciple."

The fine particles of smoke contained the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint's mysterious magic power.

The smoke surrounded me. There was no doubt that it would strike at me the moment I spoke nonsense. Of course, I had to speak nonsense.

"Do you really need disciples?"

"…What?"

"In fact, you're not expecting too much."

The tobacco smoke surged like a wave. I continued to speak like I was provoking her. "Maybe you will be the last master of the Breaking the Sky Sword School. It is because Murim will soon be destroyed."

At this point, curiosity filled the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint's eyes. She frowned as she looked between me and Yoo Joonghyuk held in her arms.

"It is an interesting story."

"Do you want to hear it?"

"It is interesting but I'll hear it a bit later. First, I need to look at this guy in my hands."

The Breaking the Sky Sword placed Yoo Joonghyuk on her shoulder and walked into the house while hitting his butt with the smoking pipe. Yoo Joonghyuk's bloody cry echoed in my head.

「 Kim Dokja!! 」

"Treat these people like friends."

Woof woof!

The tobacco smoke quickly filled the area around the hut as the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint disappeared into it with Yoo Joonghyuk. It was a type of disappearance spell that surrounded the hut. I would only be lost in the smoke if I chased after them.

Jang Hayoung seemed anxious. "I-Is it okay to leave him? Will he die?"

"He will be okay… probably."

It was regrettable that the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint didn't listen to my story first but it wasn't the worst situation. It wouldn't be bad to give the two of them time. I hoped she would tease Yoo Joonghyuk properly.

"Shall we sit back and relax?"

Jang Hayoung and I lay down after helping Han Myungoh. Then something touched my legs.

I turned around and saw the Breaking the Sky Master holding a bowl of dumplings.

…I think this was what Yoo Joonghyuk bought. Great, I happened to be hungry. The Breaking the Sky Master looked up at me with glib eyes and barked.

Woof woof!

「Eat.」

It was polite enough to impress me. I picked up a dumpling in a slightly embarrassed manner and the drooling Breaking the Sky Master's head followed the dumpling. He was a really patient dog.

"Do you want to eat one?" I asked as I split one dumpling in half.

Woof woof!

「You are a good person.」

The Breaking the Sky Master smiled and sat down beside me. He stretched out his feet like a human and blew on the dumpling. I spoke towards the dog, "This place is very quiet."

Woof woof!

「It has been a long time since a disciple came.」

A few steps away, Jang Hayoung was looking at me like I was a madman. I smiled at him and placed a finger to my lips as a sign to keep quiet. The Breaking the Sky Master once again barked.

Woof woof!

「It wasn't like this in the old days.」

The Breaking the Sky Master licked the dumpling skin with a foolish expression while looking outside the fence. I followed his gaze and saw the scenery beyond the broken fence.

It was the path we had walked. My eyes could only see spider webs and dust but the Breaking the Sky Master who spent 100 years here probably saw a different landscape. I could roughly guess the landscape.

Woof woof!

「There were many martial arts halls.」

Woof woof!

「There were many disciples.」

This was originally a 'martial arts hall' street. It was a street where young people filled with chivalry practiced martial arts. They were passionate and able to devote themselves for years or decades to become masters.

「They sweated, tried hard and were rewarded.」

However, now there was nobody here. I didn't need to ask why. The countless sights I saw here showed me the reason for the decline of this street. It was lonely.

「Now nobody wants to learn martial arts using the old ways.」

"Indeed."

I knew why this was happening in Murim but it was a natural consequence. Those who were once grand masters in Murim fell to the constellations using the system and those who practiced martial arts for decades were defeated by the incarnations who gave coins and learnt skills in only five minutes.

「That's why I'm happy you came.」

…It seemed to be a misunderstanding since I didn't intend to learn any martial arts here. I told him so. "Um… The old ways aren't always great. It is good if people can easily become stronger."

「What do you mean?! An easy thing is unconditionally bad! Everything that the dokkaebis and constellations brought are bad!」

Perhaps a dog who learnt martial arts for 100 years would develop the watchdog philosophy

"I know you don't like the dokkaebis and constellations but the old ways aren't always right. The old Murim wasn't very fair either."

「In the old days, people could become a master if they put in effort!」

I just laughed. "Do you really think so?"

I knew what the Breaking the Sky Master wanted to say. I also knew that it had some value. However, I couldn't agree with this idea. If I left it like this, the Breaking the Sky Master and Breaking the Sky Sword Saint would be buried in the flow of the era and meet the ending of the original novel. I didn't want to let it happen in the third round.

At this moment, the expression of the Breaking the Sky Master changed. I thought he was angry at me but it wasn't something that good. It was due to a dangerous aura felt outside the grounds. Someone was coming this way.

[Breaking the Sky Sword Saint. Give up your techniques.]

The gate opened and a few dokkaebis appeared. I thought it was approximately the time for them to appear but they were already here. The Breaking the Sky Master raised his magic power and barked.

The dokkaebis told him, [The nearby martial arts halls have already sold all their techniques! How long will you defend your old martial arts? I told you that you will miss the timing if you keep being stubborn. How long will we keep offering to buy it for an expensive price…]

By the way, the appearance of one dokkaebi was very familiar. The eyes of the dokkaebi shook greatly when he saw me.

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* Official novel illustration (canonical)

[You…?]

Chapter 233: Ep. 44 - Swindler, I

Yoo Joonghyuk's master, the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint was very patient. It was the same 100 years ago and even 200 years ago. That's how she was able to make a group of sword techniques. As other martial artists sold their skills and left Murim, she stayed here alone and broke through transcendent heights.

"So who the hell are you?"

Her big finger poked Yoo Joonghyuk's cheek as he hung in the air. It was just a finger but it was the finger of a transcendent. Thus, there was no way it couldn't hurt. Nevertheless, Yoo Joonghyuk didn't react.

「"The teacher and disciple. The two of you are the same."」

They were the words spoken by one of the Murim's 10 Grand Masters, the Heavenly Demon. Perhaps the Heavenly Demon saw them accurately.

"You aren't saying a word. You will be spanked if you don't talk."

The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint raised the large smoking pipe. Yoo Joonghyuk's butt couldn't endure the pressure and he couldn't help letting out a pathetic sound.

'Damn Kim Dokja. I will surely kill you'.

Slap! Slap! Slap!

The sounds were like jokes but the power contained in the pipe wasn't a joke. Before long, blood trickled from Yoo Joonghyuk's mouth. Then the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint's eyebrows formed a strange curve. "You are a man of character."

She was a bit impressed. "I will ask you again. Where did you steal and learn the power of the Breaking the Sky Sword School?"

"…"

"I will spare your life if you tell me honestly."

Yoo Joonghyuk slowly raised his head at these words.

The Breaking the Sky Sword School was originally a non-humanistic organization. As an outsider, Yoo Joonghyuk couldn't have learnt it.

Now the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint said she would spare him. Her meaning was clear. The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint was currently trying to take Yoo Joonghyuk as a disciple.

'Teacher'.

Yoo Joonghyuk understood his teacher's mind better than anyone. It was hard to find a proper disciple in the declining Murim. Then a transcendent person who learnt her martial arts suddenly showed up. It was natural to be interested.

'But…'

Yoo Joonghyuk bit his lip. Maybe it wasn't bad to move according to Kim Dokja's intentions. He knew the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint better than anyone. If he took the chance and told her the story, he would surely find himself in the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint's good graces. However, Yoo Joonghyuk didn't want to do that.

"Hrmm, it is a fiery gaze."

"…"

"Do you desire me?"

Talking such bullshit in the middle of this situation, it was certainly his teacher. Yoo Joonghyuk kept biting his lip.

'You will die if you meet me here'.

Yoo Joonghyuk remembered his teacher's last appearance. A transcendent wounded alone after years of hard work. No matter what, her stubbornness refused to be broken.

–Dumb disciple. They are existences that you can deal with.

His teacher fought alone against the returnees alliance after being turned down by the strongest in Murim, the Heavenly Demon and Blood Demon.

–Live, Joonghyuk.

At the time, Yoo Joonghyuk hadn't fought with her because he was weak. He was too weak.

"…Your eyes are sad."

Yoo Joonghyuk trembled at the sudden words. The clear eyes of the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint faced Yoo Joonghyuk. The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint was a mixture of a human and giant god. Thus, she had one of the abilities of the Neanderthals.

"Lonely, arrogant, deeply wounded."

She had the Mirror Eyes that could read the emotions of others. The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint was staring at Yoo Joonghyuk with these eyes.

"Who are you?"

Yoo Joonghyuk harshly bit his lips like he was digging up his agony. He shouldn't say it. Never, he absolutely couldn't say it…

[The constellation 'Demon King of Salvation' is looking at you.]

Yoo Joonghyuk looked up at the message.

[The constellation 'Demon King of Salvation' says it will be okay.]

…It would be okay?

[The constellation 'Demon King of Salvation' says this round will be different.]

[The constellation 'Demon King of Salvation' is telling you to trust your teacher.]

This round would be different. He wouldn't have believed it if it was spoken by someone else. Then why? He wanted to believe what this person was saying.

[The constellation 'Demon King of Salvation'…]

"This fly… shut up."

The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint flicked her fingers at the air and all the sound in the area disappeared completely. All outside sound was cut off with magic power. It was possible for a transcendent at the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint's level. Kim Dokja's voice wouldn't be heard for a while as long as the dokkaebis didn't adjust the channel frequency. From now on, it would be left to Yoo Joonghyuk's own judgment.

"…My name is Yoo Joonghyuk." Yoo Joonghyuk took a small breath before releasing it. "I was your disciple."

"Hrmm… what does that mean? I have never seen you before. I naturally have no memories of taking you as a disciple."

"It is literally what I said. I learnt the techniques from…"

The moment Yoo Joonghyuk was about to speak, sparks flew around his body.

[The story 'Disciple of Breaking the Sky Sword Saint' is activated.]

Yoo Joonghyuk's lips twisted as the ending of his words were forcefully changed to a honorific.

"…Teacher."

Yoo Joonghyuk's expression distorted. He recalled the conversation he had with the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint in the last round.

–You said that you are a regressor. If so, we might meet again someday.

–I won't become your disciple next time.

–This angry fellow. You should say sweet words… and why aren't you adding honorifics? Do you want to caught in your next life?

Perhaps this story remained because of his previous conversation with the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint.

[You have to use honorifics for the incarnation 'Breaking the Sky Sword Saint'.]

It was funny. He hadn't been formal with the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint at the time yet this story remained with him.

–At that time, become my disciple again.

His heart throbbed as old memories poured out like a waterfall and knocked on his heart. He couldn't hear the indirect messages but he felt Kim Dokja looking this way.

'Companion'.

Yoo Joonghyuk had long forgotten what it felt like to believe in someone. He slowly blinked before opening his mouth. "Aren't you wondering about who I am?"

"Of course, I am terribly curious."

"Then I will open my mental barrier. Take a peek. It is possible with your Mirror Eyes."

"…Hrmm. You know about the Mirror Eyes?"

"Just five minutes. I can't give you any more time than that."

The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint's eyes were tinged with suspicion. "Are you planning to use a strange trick?"

"You can subdue me even if I used a trick."

The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint's eyebrows raised at the provocative tone. "Okay."

It wasn't just the constellations who loved stories. There weren't many chances to peek at another transcendental existence. This transcendent suddenly appeared in Murim and used the same techniques as her. There was no way she wasn't curious.

"I will look at you."

Soon after, the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint's Mirror Eyes shone. Yoo Joonghyuk felt like his hair was being pulled out.

A memory transfer through the Mirror Eyes was dangerous for Yoo Joonghyuk and the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint. Nevertheless, Yoo Joonghyuk was committed. Perhaps the spirit of the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint would be broken. She might not believe what she saw. She could deny everything and erased Yoo Joonghyuk. However, if this gamble succeeded, he might be able to change the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint.

A dozen minutes passed until the clear energy of the Mirror Eyes in the area disappeared. The light of the Mirror Eyes was turned off but the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint didn't talk. She just stared at the floor with a lowered head. Had she gone crazy? Or…

There was an unknown emotion in the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint's eyes as she raised her head. It was the first time he had seen this expression in the third round.

A moment passed before Yoo Joonghyuk realized the meaning of the expression.

"You said you wouldn't be my disciple again…"

Yoo Joonghyuk and the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint talked for a long time.

"You've worked hard."

"…Stop with the flimsy comforting. It doesn't match you."

"Okay. You are unmistakable my disciple."

The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint of the second round regression had died and would never return again. The current Breaking the Sky Sword Saint wasn't the same as the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint of the second round. Even so, the two people spoke like they weren't conscious of this fact.

"…I got revenge. The Heavenly Demon and Blood Demon, I beat them both in the 35th scenario."

"Yes. I saw. I'm not satisfied since you found it hard to win."

"Then you shouldn't have died."

It wasn't a normal conversation between a teacher and student but there was a gentle smile on the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint's face. "You've changed a lot, Joonghyuk."

"Nothing has changed."

The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint flicked her finger at the answer. Then a portion of the barrier around the hut distorted and a panel reminiscent of a large telescope lens popped up. On the small panel, the outside scenery was shining.

"Is it due to that child that you came to see me?"

It was Kim Dokja talking to the dog while eating dumplings. Yoo Joonghyuk watched the scene and opened his mouth.

"Is he your new friend?"

"There is no such thing as friend. This person is just…"

"He is already brave enough to think about fighting against the nebulae."

"…"

"Do you think he can do it?"

As the first friend of her blunt disciple, the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint looked closely at Kim Dokja's face. Then the barrier shook and a loud voice was heard.

[Breaking the Sky Sword Saint. Give up your techniques.]

The surprised Yoo Joonghyuk rose from his seat.

"…The dokkaebis." The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint spoke like she was tired of this. "The techniques buyers came again."

"…It is faster than planned. How long has it been?"

"A while. I'm the only one left around here."

Martial arts were valuable in Murim. It was because they were all types of stories made up of history. The deeper the origin, the greater the value. The dokkaebis were well aware of this and coveted the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint's techniques.

Yoo Joonghyuk pulled out the Heavenly Sword of Gathering Clouds and opened his mouth. "Kim Dokja and I will handle it."

"The opponents are dokkaebis. You can't do anything."

"It is possible for Kim Dokja."

Instead of answering his teacher's question, Yoo Joonghyuk watched the dokkaebis on the panel. One of the dokkaebis looked familiar.

'It is that guy from Seoul Dome'.

Kim Dokja probably wouldn't let him go. Then Kim Dokja's voice came from the screen.

–I didn't know you were still alive. Didn't you go to be punished?

As expected, Kim Dokja's characteristic 'messing around with people' had started. Kim Dokja scratched his chin and spoke to the dokkaebis like it was interesting.

–Hmm, yes. Did you come to buy the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint's techniques?

Yoo Joonghyuk shrugged at his teacher. Kim Dokja would've sorted it even without Yoo Joonghyuk coming out. He didn't know what Kim Dokja was trying to do but Kim Dokja was going to do another weird trick to deal a proper blow to the dokkaebis.

The next moment, Kim Dokja said something strange with an unexpected smile.

–Okay, I'll sell it, the techniques of the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint.

Chapter 234: Ep. 44 - Swindler, II

[You… perhaps at that time…]

I saw the trembling expression of the dokkaebis and remembered some bad memories. Biyoo floating beside me was also frowning. It was natural for her to be furious. This was a dokkaebi behind the tragedy of the 41st Shin Yoosung 'disaster'. His name… was it Paul?

I thought he would go to purgatory and be severely punished…

The bureau's punishment was like hitting cotton. What type of punishment was joining the Murim Redevelopment Team?

"You've lost a lot of weight in your face while I haven't seen you?"

[Uhh, kuooooh…!]

"You were an intermediate dokkaebi back then. Now you are… lesser-grade?"

[You! You…!]

I saw his agitation and felt like asking for the 'solo meeting rights' to beat him up again. The story of this guy being beaten up, was the wenny person reading it well?

[Stop and back off, Paul.]

Another dokkaebi moved forward on behalf of Paul who was unable to speak.

[Are you Kim Dokja?]

I looked closer and this dokkaebi was also familiar. I had heard this voice somewhere before. Eh? Wait… this guy?

"Uh, was that you? The person working under Bihyung… The name…"

[Youngki. Indeed! You are Kim Dokja!]

The dokkaebi happily greeted me. I dimly remembered. He was the dokkaebi responsible for the sub-channels under Bihyung.

[I heard rumours that you were alive. I didn't expect to see you at a place like this…!]

"Is Bihyung doing well?"

[He was visibly gloomy after you disappeared.]

I felt a little sorry that Bihyung had become depressed. That guy Bihyung must've liked me. "Haven't you cleaned up well? You previously didn't even know how to update the scenario."

[Ahaha. That is a shameful story. I am now an intermediate dokkaebi.]

He was an intermediate dokkaebi. This guy was part of the Korean Peninsula scenario so Bihyung must've received a high-speed promotion. It felt like a lot of time had passed but it had been less than one year.

[By the way, Dokja. What do you mean by selling the skills?]

Youngki watched me with calm eyes. No matter what, a dokkaebi was a dokkaebi. I couldn't take it easy.

"I meant it literally. I will persuade the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint to sell you the skills."

[How will Dokja…]

"I have my ways. What skills do you need? The Red Phoenix Shunpo? Or the Hundred Steps Godly Fists?"

[We already have the Hundred Steps Godly Fists. What we need is…]

"The Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship?"

Youngki nodded at my words. It was as I thought. The Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship. It was the name given to the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint's Breaking the Sky. One of the top-ranked skills in the First Murim that anyone would covet was Yoo Joonghyuk's Breaking the Sky Swordmanship.

I felt the Breaking the Sky Master growling by my side and quickly agreed. "Okay. I'll sell it. No, I won't sell it. I'll give it to you."

The Breaking the Sky Master looked up at me with absurd eyes. Youngki was astonished.

[R-Really?]

"Instead, do me two favours in exchange. The first one, place the Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship as the prize for the scenario you will soon open."

[Huh?]

I smiled at Youngki's stupid expression. Did he think I would just give him the Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship?

"Aren't you going to open the 'Martial Arts Competition' scenario soon? The Black Heavenly Demon Sword is included in it."

[H-How do you know…!]

"Why are you so startled? You always do this. It is a regular scenario for Murim. A precious sword of Murim will appear and a huge crowd of people will fight for it."

[That is true but… how do you know about the Black Heavenly Demon Sword?]

How did I know? The Martial Arts Competition was an event scenario that Yoo Joonghyuk repeatedly participated in when he came to First Murim. I didn't know how many times I made a comment telling the author to skip the competition.

"It doesn't matter how I know. In any case, add the Breaking the Sky Swordmanship as a prize. Give it as the first place prize."

Youngki's eyes rolled quickly. It was probably a great suggestion for him. There were a limited number of things that the dokkaebis could do with the techniques bought from the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint. They could secure additional subscriptions by adding it to a large scenario or sell it at a high price through the Dokkaebi Bag. Youngki was currently figuring out which one would be more profitable.

[Okay. I have nothing to lose if I do this. It will be saving on the cost of buying the technique. Only…]

"Only?"

[You said two favours. What is the second one?]

I laughed softly at the prudence. He had become pretty clever since reaching intermediate level. "The second condition is simple. I want everyone here to participate in the Martial Arts Competition scenario."

[Everyone here…?]

Youngki's eyes narrowed. He finally figured out my ploy.

[It is an interesting suggestion but… it is difficult.]

"Why?"

[I don't know about the other incarnations but it can't be the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint.]

I thought he would say this. The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint was likely to win if she participated in the martial arts competition. The participants of the martial arts competition would naturally be reduced and the dokkaebis would suffer losses. I acted like I was yielding a big thing. "Then everyone apart from the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint."

[Then it's fine. The martial arts competition is in two weeks. Until then, please prepare the skills of the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint.]

I responded to the waiting Youngki. "I understand. Don't forget to properly invite us to the scenario."

[Of course. Then I'll see you again soon.]

"Give my regards to Bihyung."

[Haha, understood.]

Maybe he was glad that things went well. Youngki laughed joyfully as he disappeared. The dokkaebis that followed him also started to leave. Paul was staring at me the whole time and I glared as hard as I could.

After a while, the dokkaebis disappeared and Jang Hayoung standing next to me grabbed my collar. "Hey, what the hell did you do just now? Sell the techniques? Enter the martial arts competition? What the hell…"

Woof woof! Woof woof woof!

「We won't sell our techniques! What the hell are you thinking?」

The dazed Breaking the Sky Master responded too late. It was the expected reaction. In fact, this much was what I guessed.

"Kim Dokja!"

…It was as expected. Yoo Joonghyuk caused a huge cloud of dust as he ran over and grabbed my neck. He shook me like a man betrayed. I flapped like a paper doll without strength and said, "Let me speak."

"Shut up! What the hell are you thinking? Selling the techniques…!"

"Please calm down. I did it because of you."

"…What?"

"Don't you know what we just got?"

Yoo Joonghyuk's hands stopped for the first time at my words. Then a message came to my ears.

[A new sub scenario has arrived!]

[The sub scenario 'Martial Arts Competition' has begun.]

Yoo Joonghyuk read the details of the scenario that just arrived and was silent for a moment. "…The Black Heavenly Demon Sword?"

"Yes. You said you wanted it."

"…"

"If you look closely, there is also the Demon Spirit Bead. It is the third place prize but I don't remember well…"

Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes were greatly shaken as he watched me. He suddenly released me. This jerk, you didn't need to be so moved.

In any case, he seemed to be persuaded. The problem was the other side. I turned and saw the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint standing with a stiff expression.

「An existence born with the power of a giant god. The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint's existence is no different from a god.」

There was nothing wrong with the description from Ways of Survival. She felt overwhelmingly threatening just standing there.

I smiled and waved my hand. "Did the conversation between teacher and student end well?"

"…You aren't sane."

"Listen to my story before saying anything."

"I have no time to mix words with a person like you."

The heavy fog around us was thickening. I quickly added, "Breaking the Sky Sword Saint, it isn't possible to maintain the old ways forever."

The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint's thick eyebrows were fiercely curved.

"Is it so important to keep the non-humanistic principle? What if you lose everything you have because of it?"

Yoo Joonghyuk looked at me like I was mentally ill. "Kim Dokja! Don't say anything else!"

Of course, I kept talking.

"In the first place, your real strength isn't the Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship, right? You've abandoned it for a long time after reaching transcendence. Why don't you sell it for something?"

The ground around me started vibrating. Eventually, Yoo Joonghyuk placed me behind him as protection and raised the Heavenly Sword of Gathering Clouds.

It felt as if the gravity of the whole area was strengthened. It felt like a giant mountain was pressing on my shoulders. Jang Hayoung and Han Myungoh couldn't even scream as they sank into the ground. The group would be wiped out if this continued.

"Teacher, wait…!"

Yoo Joonghyuk cried out but the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint didn't stop.

…Was she going to do this? She was really stubborn.

[The constellation 'Demon King of Salvation' has triggered the status of a constellation.]

Sparks appeared around me and the surrounding gravitational pressure was temporarily relieved. I smiled at the startled Breaking the Sky Sword Saint. I might have an incarnation body but I was still a narrative-grade constellation. "I haven't sold it yet so don't be too harsh."

"You were hiding."

"In any case, you can regain the martial arts technique if you win the competition. Won't you win the competition?"

The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint looked calmer and the pressure she gave off subsided. It wouldn't be a problem for her to overpower me if she used her real strength but she seemed to take me as Yoo Joonghyuk's colleague. She told me, "I can't participate in the competition."

"It would be no fun if an adult plays with kids."

"The children of Murim are much stronger than you think."

"I'm aware. However, your disciple is strong."

The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint understood what I meant and I patted Yoo Joonghyuk's shoulder as he stood next to me. "There will be Joonghyuk in the competition."

Yoo Joonghyuk turned and stared at me with wide eyes. I didn't know why he was surprised. Did he think he wouldn't participate?

The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint's eyebrows wriggled again. "He's still weak."

"You can make him stronger. He is your disciple anyway."

"I never said I would accept him as a disciple…"

At this point, Yoo Joonghyuk stared at the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint with wide eyes. In any case, the teacher and student were both not honest.

[The exclusive skill, 'Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint' has been activated!]

Well, I knew that not being honest was their virtual.

「It is too early for him.」

「Joonghyuk will die if he goes to the competition.」

「He isn't at a level to compete with the 10 Grand Masters.」

I couldn't fully hear the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint's thoughts because of my low understanding level. Even so, it wasn't hard to know what she was thinking. In the end, I had to do this for the teacher and student.

"If you accept Yoo Joonghyuk as a disciple, I will let you meet your clan."

"…What does that mean?"

"Exactly what I said. You haven't found your clan yet, correct?"

The Breaking the Sky Sword looked at me with a strange expression. "I don't know how you know this but my clan has been wiped out. There are no giant gods left."

"No, there are still some left."

"What…"

I looked up and spoke,"Master of the Underworld, are you still watching?"

Hades was now in my channel. I owed him for last time so it was time to give a greeting. However, it wasn't Hades who responded to my call.

[The constellation 'Queen of the Darkest Spring' is looking at you with a strange smile.]

"…It has been a while, Persephone."

Damn. This queen was hard to deal with. When did she enter? I was about to open my mouth when I heard more messages.

[The constellation 'Queen of the Darkest Spring' says she has heard the story.]

[The constellation 'Queen of the Darkest Spring' will listen to your request.]

As expected, Persephone was quick when it came to good stories. The problem was that this queen never did anything without an ulterior motive.

[The constellation 'Queen of the Darkest Spring' says there is a condition.]

…As expected.

"…Please say it."

[The constellation 'Queen of the Darkest Spring' is inviting you to the feast of constellations.]

Feast of constellations? It was strange. Was now the time for a constellation banquet to be held? Persephone's message followed as an answer to my question.

[The constellation 'Queen of the Darkest Spring' is inviting you to the Gourmet Association.]

Chapter 235: Ep. 44 - Swindler, III

From the next day onwards, Yoo Joonghyuk was absorbed in training with the Breaking the Sky Sword

Saint.

The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint kept maintaining a serious expression from the moment she heard her clan could be found. Yoo Joonghyuk knew her heart but devoted himself to meditation instead of comforting his teacher.

'Originally, I was going to meet the ancient giant gods in person but…'

In any case, it wouldn't be bad to leave it to Kim Dokja. Yoo Joonghyuk would've had to pass through 40 scenarios in order to meet an ancient giant god if he followed his original plan.

'That guy, I didn't think he would have such a relationship with the Underworld'.

Kim Dokja really had unknown corners. How the hell did he succeed in charming all those constellations…

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is laughing.]

Just look at this archangel. The Demon-like Judge of Fire wasn't such a constellation during the second round. She was a strict and lofty archangel full of justice. Yoo Joonghyuk couldn't understand why such an existence was so ruined this time.

"Are you really thinking about participating in the competition?"

Yoo Joonghyuk nodded silently at the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint's question.

"You might die. The competition scenarios are never easy."

"I am much stronger than I was at this point of time in the last round."

"It isn't at a level to deal with the 10 Grand Masters."

Yoo Joonghyuk was well aware of the 10 Grand Masters of Murim. One of them was the Ice Flower Goddess whose techniques were sold by the previous merchant who welcomed visitors. There was also a grand master from the Namgung Family, a distant relative of the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint. They would appear when the martial arts competition opened.

In addition, the martial arts competition was a commodity so he had to consider the incarnations of famous constellations participating.

[Some constellations are looking forward to the martial arts competition.]

[Some constellations are tired of the martial arts competition.]

Fortunately, the stronger constellations were tired of these scenarios. As a scenario that repeated every year in Murim, there weren't many constellations paying much attention to the martial arts competition.

The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint read Yoo Joonghyuk's heart and opened her mouth. "You have to open transcendence stage two."

"I've opened it before so it won't be difficult."

"It is different from breaking through stage one."

"I will do it somehow. I've already reached stage three in the last round."

"…Stage three?"

The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint's eyes shook. The third stage of transcendence wasn't a step that could be reached with talent alone. It took an enormous amount of 'time' to pass through the third stage. On the other hand, Yoo Joonghyuk couldn't have experienced such a large amount of time in the last round…

Yoo Joonghyuk understood his teacher's question and replied, "I used a time fault in the Dark Dimension."

A time fault in the Dark Dimension. It was often called the 'cemetery of Murim'. There were two types of Murim people who went to that place. In that prison of enormous time, there were those who hit the wall of talent and became crazy or those who went beyond the wall. Yoo Joonghyuk was the latter.

"…I can't imagine how hard your training was. How many years were you inside there?"

"Around 100 years."

"Stage three in 100 years… no wonder why you are so arrogant."

100 years. It was a long time for ordinary humans but it wasn't the same for transcendents.

There were many people who lived for 200 or 300 years in this world who couldn't reach transcendence no matter how much they built up their martial arts. It was a wall that couldn't be overcome by improving the physical body with all types of spiritual medicine. There was a thick wall in transcendence yet Yoo Joonghyuk crossed that wall three times in 100 years.

"I will shorten it if I enter the time fault again."

"It's a crazy idea! Using a time fault will numb the soul. Haven't you seen the martial artists who went mad in the time fault? Don't you know that there is a fine line between insanity and transcendence?"

"…In the last round, I couldn't surpass you even after entering the time fault."

"Of course! 100 years is too early to catch up with me!" The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint struggled for a moment before saying, "In any case… you have reached the third stage, it is better to teach you than an ignorant person."

Yoo Joonghyuk's expression wasn't very bright despite his teacher's praise. The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint felt something fishy and questioned him. Yoo Joonghyuk eventually told her the story.

The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint heard the story and asked as if it was absurd, "Your spiritual awakening was while you were exhausted?"

"Well, I don't remember exactly."

In the end, he didn't know who he broke through into stage three. The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint's expression wasn't good. "Are you confident you can trust your unconscious mind and break through to stage three again? That sounds like the pseudo-cult followers of the Ice Flower Goddess.

"That's why I need you. Please teach me your techniques again."

"What?"

"Using the same method as before is difficult. It takes too long."

The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint was stunned by her disciple's shameless words. "I don't know if I should help. You've crossed the wall of transcendence so you know that transcendence is never done in one way. All transcendents have to find their own way to transcend."

"You can still help. Isn't there the 10,000 Streams[1] will Gather Together School."

"It means we will have to find one of the many branches. There is no such enlightenment in the world. Just as there is no such story."

"Still, if there are 10,000 branches, can't we catch one of them? I've already found one in the past."

Yoo Joonghyuk said this and thought he was somehow talking like Kim Dokja. He didn't originally talk this way. Maybe he was influenced while they were together. The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint sighed at her silent disciple. "Were you originally so talkative? It won't be easy. You should've seen from the previous round that the Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship wasn't originally for men."

Yoo Joonghyuk also knew it. That's why it was very difficult to learn the skills of the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint in the past. However, this time was different.

"The problem of gender can be resolved to some extent."

"What does that mean?"

[The constellation who likes to change sex is snorting.]

Yoo Joonghyuk frowned at the indirect message. Complex emotions and enormous anger rose every time he thought about it but he had to take advantage of everything he could.

"It is time to wrap this up."

After a while, the astonished Breaking the Sky Sword Saint's mouth dropped open. Yoo Joonghyuk took out his sword with a blank expression.

"You can never tell that guy out there."

@1L9I2Aa8UCL0IGJ

*

[In the Kim Dokja Industrial Complex, there are people who doubt your achievements.]

[The story about the 'Swindler Kim Dokja' is spreading in the Kim Dokja Industrial Complex.]

I woke up from my nap due to a message in the air. Based on the message, it seemed that a bad rumour was circulating in the industrial complex while I was away. It was natural since the industrial complex had changed rulers but the new ruler never showed his face.

By the way, Swindler Kim Dokja… Why did it feel like people who didn't know my face knew me better?

"Kim Dokja. What are you doing?"

Someone kicked me and I got up with a groan. I saw Yoo Joonghyuk whose upper body was bare and covered in sweat. It was probably from the hard training under the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint.

"…I was just thinking for a moment."

"You're being lazy."

"I have to be lazy now. I'm a patient."

It was an excuse but it was true. I had yet to fully recover from the exile penalty. The recovery was also delayed due to what happened with the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint. I was increasing the proficiency of Lamarck's Giraffe and steadily ingesting story fragments, so recovery wouldn't be too late.

I looked at the people training hard in the front yard of the place. "How about those guys?"

The sweating Jang Hayoung was sparring against Han Myungoh. The Breaking the Sky Master was supervising and pointing out any mistakes.

"That girl has a fair amount of talent. Her strange attribute means she is learning it very quickly."

"That isn't a girl. He's a man."

"Sometimes I don't know where your eyes are."

What an idiot. He was a man, right? It was like this in the original novel. I was about to speak when Yoo Joonghyuk wondered, "Rather, what is happening with the constellations?"

"…I'm thinking."

It had already been a week since I received Persephone's message.

[The constellation 'Queen of the Darkest Spring' is inviting you to the Gourmet Association.]

[In one week, the Gourmet Association Festival will be held at Oro Castle.]

[Please decide if you will depart by tonight.]

An invitation to the Gourmet Association. I expected it to happen someday but it was earlier than expected.

The Gourmet Association. It was a gathering of constellations who loved gourmet food. At first glance, it was like the 'constellation banquet' but reality was completely different.

If the constellation banquet was official, the Gourmet Association Festival was unofficial and the intensity of the events that happened was also different.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is worried about you.]

Above all, there was no Uriel in the Gourmet Association.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is wondering about your choice.]

There was no the Great Sage, Heaven's Equal, no Secretive Plotter. Was there… the Abyssal Black Flame Dragon? I couldn't remember it well.

In any case, the atmosphere of the place wasn't as favourable to me as the 'constellations banquet'. There was nothing more dangerous in the Star Stream then going to a gathering of unstable constellations.

Yoo Joonghyuk read my expression and asked, "Are you frightened?"

"No way."

I wouldn't have come all the way here if I didn't participate in the Gourmet Association for that reason. I silently watched Jang Hayoung and Han Myungoh sparring. Han Myungoh was hit continuously hit and let out a scream. Yoo Joonghyuk watched along with me and stated. "It's because of this place."

"…That's right."

According to Persephone's message, the Gourmet Association Festival was exactly one week later. As it happened, the date was exactly the same as the martial arts competition.

It meant I wouldn't be in the First Murim on the day the martial arts competition scenario occurred. If something happened…

"Go and come back, Kim Dokja."

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[1] **10,000 Streams will Gather Together** – Korean idiom meaning "all things will eventually return to the same point."

* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)

Chapter 236: Ep. 44 - Swindler, IV

I reflexively raised my head at Yoo Joonghyuk's decisive words. "…Is it okay?"

"The scenario we are facing right now isn't the Demon King Selection but the Martial Arts Competition."

I had been thinking this but once I heard Yoo Joonghyuk say it, I felt a strange sense of relief and pride. "You… have really become a person. At the very least, I won't die for the time being."

Yoo Joonghyuk ignored my words and continued, "The only thing that can be obtained from the competition is the Black Heavenly Demon Sword. Getting the Black Heavenly Demon Sword doesn't mean we can win the Demon King Selection."

Yoo Joonghyuk was right. Winning the Murim competition didn't mean we could win the Demon King Selection.

"That's why you have to go to the Gourmet Association. We need colleagues for our nebula. You might be able to gain allies if you go to the Gourmet

Association."

I understood what he was saying. Go to the Gourmet Association and come back with some usable constellations. There was one worrisome point.

"…Our nebula?"

"Didn't you say you would make one last time?"

"Kim Dokja's Company?"

"I'll quit right away if it is really named that."

Yoo Joonghyuk turned his head away with a frown. I felt pleasantly surprised.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire" is wiping her tears with a handkerchief.]

It was something that was unthinkable when he first grabbed me by the neck. Yoo Joonghyuk and I really became colleagues. In any case, it was funny that I was hesitating when Yoo Joonghyuk told me this.

I stood up and declared, "I'll go."

That night, I was greeted by a Gourmet Association Guide who flew through the portal. The guide drove a small carriage with a black horse, while dressed in a western cowboy costume. He seemed to be one of the subordinates of the owner of Oro Castle.

The guide descended from the carriage and bowed politely to me.

[Are you the Demon King of Salvation?]

"That's right."

[Take the carriage. The journey is quite long and you can rest.]

The guide didn't show any particular surprise or responses towards me. Was it because he was a guide of the Gourmet Association that he wasn't surprised by 'Demon King of Salvation'? The guide got on the carriage and turned to ask me.

[I will pick up some passengers along the way. Do you mind?]

"Uh, that's okay."

Some passengers… who? I missed the opportunity to ask as the guide immediately started the carriage.

The interior of the carriage was spacious and comfortable. There was no shaking at all and it was like I wasn't moving. It was great. I could read Ways of Survival on the journey.

I read Ways of Survival during these few hours. Maybe it wasn't a few hours but a few days. It was difficult to measure the time because I didn't know how fast the carriage was moving.

「…Thus, the 15th regression Yoo Joonghyuk thought as he died, 'I wasn't lucky'.」

「…At the end of the 19th round, Yoo Joonghyuk thought, 'Next time'.」

「…Yoo Joonghyuk finished his 25th life and murmured, "It really will be next time."」

…I had to cancel calling him a person. This jerk, he was still a sunfish in the first revision. It was the same whether I helped him or not.

I didn't forget to find the information I needed on Yoo Joonghyuk's death. There weren't many details about the Gourmet Association. Yoo Joonghyuk visited the Gourmet Association in the later stages but it was to kill them, not get along with them. Those sections were mostly filled with "Kuaaaack!"

「 The Flying Fox said, "Constellations are all bad. However, the Gourmet Association are the worst among them." 」

It was also impossible to find any favourable contents about them. The more I read, the more I was uncertain that going to the Gourmet Association was the right thing to do. Anyway, I continued reading Ways of Survival.

「 Yoo Joonghyuk was thinking, "It would've been nice if he had come with me'. 」

If there was a difference in taste between the original and the revision, it was the moment these words came out. They were traces of when I intervened in the original work. I paid particular attention whenever these lines appeared. It was because there were only a few scenes where the 'third regression' was mentioned.

「 'You must do this. He said this is the right way'. 」

…The right way? What did this mean?

[It is time to eat. If you don't mind, I've prepared something simple.]

"Thank you."

The carriage stopped and the guide provided me with a meal. It was a type of in-flight meal. It resembled high-quality ham and smelled very fragrant. Of course, it wasn't really ham.

[The Last Gladiator of Planet Selegedon.]

It was a story meal typical of the Gourmet Association. It seemed to be a pretty strong story based on the concentration that I could feel…

I touched the soft ham with a fork that the guide gave me. At this moment, some of the story contents flowed into my head.

–S-Spare me. Please spare me…!

A city that crumbled in a horrible manner due to the turmoil of the constellations. The appearance of incarnations bursting under huge pressure. The dying gladiator who lost all dignity…

The bodies of torn incarnations pouring into the mouths of wickedly smiling constellations. The last scene of the world that had already disappeared. The screams and despair of the incarnations gathered together at the end of my nose.

I looked down at the ham and quietly put down the fork.

[…The food doesn't suit your taste?]

"I'm not hungry right now." I answered with a calm smile.

[I'm sorry. I didn't account for your taste as a constellation. New food…]

"No, I'll eat what I brought."

The guide took away the plates in a regretful manner and sat back down on the driver's seat. Once he was completely gone, I barely relaxed my expression. It felt like I was going to vomit.

A sentence I had just read in Ways of Survival passed through my head.

「"it is a nightmare for the incarnations."」

Once again, I realized where I was going and who I was dealing with. I foolishly acted like I was going on a picnic.

I touched some of the stories that were in my pocket. Compared to the stories they ate, the stories abandoned in the 'Story Horizon' were almost colourless and odourless. They were the plain stories of ordinary incarnations living and dying in a normal way, just like trash. There was a reason why the Gourmet Association abandoned them.

I absorbed the story fragments using Lamarck's Giraffe and quietly closed my eyes. Somehow, I felt like I was going to have a nightmare.

The trip continued for a few days and I used the interlude to look at some of the things I hadn't maintained.

[Coins Possessed: 1,252,353 C.]

First, I checked the coins that I hadn't paid attention to lately. It was a really huge amount of money.

1.2 million was enough to buy the Great Demon's Eyes. However, Anna Croft had already obtained it. I had a better skill so I didn't need it. But…

I wondered how to use the remaining coins. It wasn't bad to increase my overall stats but the efficiency of the stats started to fall once the average exceeded 100. From then on, investing in skills was much better than investing in stats.

Of course, there were times when the accumulated overall stats were overwhelming. Once I convinced the Fourth Wall, I should properly check my Attributes Window.

[A new passenger is going to enter. It is okay?]

I was so immersed in my thoughts that I wasn't aware the carriage stopped. "Yes, I"m fine."

The left door of the carriage opened at my reply. I was a bit nervous as I looked at the people who were going to join me through the cracks in the door. The possibility of it being a constellation was high.

"Ah! I've been waiting a long time. Why are you so late?"

[I'm sorry. The road was a bit rougher than I thought…]

A voice that was somewhat familiar entered my ears. It was a high female voice mixed with a Russian accent.

I could see three people through the cracks in the door.

[There is someone who has already boarded. I hope you have a pleasant journey.]

Whether it was lucky or unlucky, I didn't feel any constellations. In other words, they were all incarnations with stories.

A woman with a gentle smile boarded the carriage first. "Excuse me.

The woman who greeted me politely had brown hair that fluttered in the wind. The moment the woman raised her head, I reflexively asked, "Selena Kim?"

Selena Kim. She was one of the American representatives at the constellation banquet. Perhaps it was due to my changed face but the woman was confused for a while before exclaiming,

"Ah, you…?"

"Do you remember who I am?"

"Of course! Kim Dokja! It's been a while! Were you invited?"

"Yes, that's what happened."

I shook hands with Selena and studied the rest of the group. The person who followed with a girl with twin ponytails.

"What are you… eh?"

As expected, I had seen this person before. It was the Russian girl I met at the constellation banquet.

Her name… what was it? I remember her having the nickname of Red something.

I ignored the girl and checked the remaining person. At this moment, I got goose bumps.

"This is the first time we've actually met."

There was an immeasurable depth in the calm and relaxed voice. I knew this person well. One of the strongest incarnations in Ways of Survival along with Yoo Joonghyuk. I had even met this person before.

"I saw you in a dream one day. I don't remember since it was too long ago. At that time, you said we would meet…"

I remembered. In the Green Zone scenario, I saw her after eating the Specter's Stone. I told her, "I remember."

"I'll formally greet you. It is nice to meet you, Kim Dokja. No… Demon King of Salvation."

She smiled while a yellow demon eye flew above her blond hair. It was a very beautiful smile but I couldn't accept it. It was because I knew better than anyone the disturbing thoughts behind the smile. "I am Anna Croft."

Asgard's prophet. The head of the Zarathustra, Anna Croft was here.

Chapter 237: Ep. 45 - Gourmet Association, I

Anna Croft was silent on the way to Oro Castle. She sometimes smiled strangely when our eyes met but she didn't speak first.

I wished I could read her thoughts but my understanding of Anna Croft was so low that I couldn't activate the second stage of Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint.

I didn't like Anna Croft in the original novel. I couldn't count the number of times she killed or backstabbed Yoo Joonghyuk with the fingers on both hands.

The atmosphere in the carriage was awkward because both Anna Croft and I weren't speaking. Selena Kim was sweating.

"…Thus, we came together. The incarnations of Asgard were invited."

Selena Kim's good nature meant she couldn't stand this type of atmosphere and she kept saying things that weren't asked for. In any case, it was good for me to hear a lot of information.

"I see. Are you part of Asgard?"

"Yes. It was Anna's arrangement."

"You picked a good nebula."

"Ahaha, I was just lucky. Thanks to it, I can enjoy this great luxury. The other incarnations weren't invited…"

Selena Kim looked slightly excited. Well, the invitation to the Gourmet Association had a different meaning from the constellation banquet. If the constellation banquet was a gathering for the entire nobility, the Gourmet Association was similar to a gathering of the upper nobility.

Still, it wasn't necessarily a good thing. I wondered if Selena Kim could continue thinking like this once she arrived.

"Iris, why aren't you saying anything? You said you wanted to meet Dokja-ssi again."

"Блин! (Damn!) Since when did I say that?"

"This child… haven't you been talking about Kim Dokja since the last banquet? You haven't seen each other for a while so say something."

Iris' face turned red at Selena Kim's teasing. Iris noticed my gaze and carefully opened her mouth. "You are the Demon King of Salvation… right?"

I had doubts that this person was the cheeky kid from back then but I decided to be polite. "Correct."

"…Is it uncomfortable for you to be with us?"

"Why would I feel uncomfortable?"

"We are just incarnations. The Demon King of Salvation is…"

Selena Kim's expression was also changing. I had forgotten for a moment but I was different from them. The gap between incarnation and constellation was like the gap between heaven and earth.

Other constellations would've said, "These little bugs finally realize who they are talking to." Of course, I wasn't like that.

"It's fine. I was once an incarnation."

Selena Kim seemed to sigh with relief at my words. Iris gained some courage and opened her mouth again. "Then… can I ask one question?"

"Please ask."

"Do you have an incarnation you signed a Sponsor Contract with?"

"Why are you asking?"

"Uh, that…"

Selena gave a hint for the hesitating Iris. "Iris. Do you have a sponsor yet?"

"I-I'm just asking! It is out of curiosity!"

The twin ponytails moved as Iris twisted her head while Shin Yoosung and Lee Gilyoung on Earth came to my mind. Those guys, please stay well…

I spoke with a nostalgic heart. "I have an incarnation on the Korean Peninsula."

Iris' expression changed at my words. "Ah, perhaps that little kid…"

I nodded. It seemed the rumour of Shin Yoosung had spread everywhere. The constellations had already told their incarnations.

Then Anna Croft opened her mouth. "Have you ever thought about changing your incarnation?"

Selena Kim and Iris stared at Anna Croft with surprise. Anna Croft continued speaking, "There are many good incarnations in the Asgard nebula. There are many talented friends. Iris is one of them."

It was an unexpected proposal. Why was Anna Croft suddenly making this offer? Maybe Asgard was talking about me. Well, I hadn't formally made a nebula yet.

"Are you telling me to join the Asgard nebula?"

"It isn't necessarily the same thing. There are many good incarnations in Asgard. I'm just saying that it isn't bad to accept one of them. Can't you withdraw the Sponsor Contract at any point?"

The disappointed Iris once again stared at me with sparkling eyes. I replied with an emotionless face. "I have no intention of cancelling my Sponsor Contract."

"Do you like that girl? Is she called Shin Yoosung?"

I didn't answer and Iris' face filled with deep disappointment. My understanding of her might be very low but the change in emotions was easily caught.

By the way, Anna Croft made a strange remark. "For example, if an incarnation suddenly dies…"

There was an unknown smile on Anna Croft's face. "Don't look so surprised. It is just an example. It is a possibility. An unexpected accident or a sudden disaster can cause the death of an incarnation… It is a common thing. If that happens, don't you think you'll change your incarnation?"

"An unexpected accident?"

"Yes, an unexpected accident. An accident that happened accidentally."

I stared at Anna Croft. Shin Yoosung's death… I never thought about it.

"That won't happen as long as I live."

"You don't know. It is unclear how and when Fate will work."

…Fate? The atmosphere momentarily shook. The surrounding air filled with an ominous aura and the entire carriage trembled. Iris and Selena Kim's expressions stiffened. They had goosebumps on their arms as they watched me with a frightened expression.

I hadn't wanted to do this. I didn't want to scare them by seeming like a villain. However, Anna Croft crossed a line she shouldn't have crossed.

[If something like that happens.]

Sparks of probability appeared as I used my true voice.

[The nebula 'Asgard' is concerned.]

[Constellations of the 'Asgard' nebula are warning you!]

I heard the indirect messages of the Asgard constellations enter my ears. Nevertheless, I didn't stop.

[If that happens, I will destroy all the worlds that caused that Fate.]

The impact of the shock caused the windows of the carriage to burst at the same time. The startled driver looked back this way. There was even vague astonishment on Anna Croft's normally calm face. Perhaps she wasn't aware of exactly how much 'status' I had.

Shortly afterwards, the carriage stopped and the voice of the guide was heard.

[We have arrived at Oro Castle.]

I smiled at the three people who were still stiff. "Let's go."

We got down from the carriage and was guided into Oro Castle.

Oro Castle. The castle was one of the main homes of the Gourmet Association scattered all over the world and was owned directly by a member of the Gourmet Association. Perhaps it was… I remember that it was one of the 72 demon kings. Was it 'Immeasurable Austerity?

[They have been granted permission to enter.]

[I've confirmed it. Come in.]

The interior of the castle had more of a modern than medieval style. It was reminiscent of a luxurious hotel lobby. The forms of the intermediate symbolic bodies could be seen scattered around.

[Some constellations are paying attention to your presence.]

We were guided to a waiting room in the corner of the first floor lobby. Perhaps some people hadn't arrived yet. The three incarnations of Asgard and I were the only ones present.

[Please wait in the waiting room. There are still more incarnations arriving… ah, the Demon King of Salvation is a constellation. I will arrange a separate waiting room for you.]

"No, I'm fine. I'll just be here."

The guide stared at me like I was strange but soon disappeared. Frankly, it was more comfortable here. I needed some time to prepare my mind.

There were panels hung on the wall of the waiting room. They played sub scenarios currently going on all over the dimensions…

"Excuse me, earlier…" It was Selena Kim who spoke. She might be hesitant because of what happened in the carriage but there was nothing wrong with the setting of Ways of Survival.

I smiled softly and replied, "It's fine. I was a bit too much."

Selena Kim's expression slightly softened. "No, we were too rude. I'm sorry, Demon King of Salvation."

Her words were much more formal than before. I didn't mean to refuse the apology but something felt bad. Selena Kim did nothing wrong. She was one of the few people I liked in Ways of Survival. The one I hated was the shameless person standing in the corner and watching this scene.

Then the door of the waiting room opened and another guide appeared.

[Incarnations of Asgard, please follow me.]

The constellations of Asgard were probably looking for them. Selena Kim and Iris nodded to me before leaving.

On the other hand, Anna Croft watched me without leaving the room. "You have too many constellations as enemies."

"It isn't something for you to worry about."

Anna Croft slightly frowned at my assertion. She didn't seem daunted despite what happened before. She was a mere incarnation but she had contracted with an entire nebula. Perhaps the top-ranked Asgardians were protecting her from my 'status'.

"As companions moving towards the same goal, I am seriously advising you. You might not like it but it is time to cooperate with other constellations."

The same goal…

"Well, I don't know your goal so I can't answer it."

"Protecting this world. Aren't you fighting for this as well?"

Instead of answering the question, I glanced at the panel on the wall of the waiting room. There were images of incarnations torn apart by disasters and constellations. I didn't answer and Anna Croft brushed by my side.

At this moment, I opened my mouth. "I have to see if this world is worth protecting or not."

Anna Croft's expression hardened at my words. She looked between the anxious guide and me before giving a short sigh. "…I hope we have a chance to talk later."

She disappeared and only I remained in the waiting room. Once left alone, I quietly organized my thoughts.

I recalled the Gourmet Association constellations mentioned in Ways of Survival and thought of the constellations that could be persuaded. I didn't forget their characteristics or their modifiers.

I was fortunate at the constellation banquet but there was no guarantee it would happen again.

If the Gourmet Association was expressed as a social circle, this would be my full-fledged debut.

Depending on the impression I made here and what I talked about, the direction of the following scenarios would change.

At this moment, the door of the waiting room opened.

I thought it was a guide but this time, an unexpected presence was waiting for me. The moment I was about to say something, the other person spoke first.

[It's been a while, Kim Dokja. I've been waiting for a long time.]

I heard the bright tone of the True Voice and realized what the other person was. Really, the queen of the Underworld was too mischievous.

I sighed and asked, "…Why the hell do you look like that?"

Chapter 238: Ep. 45 - Gourmet Association, II

Persephone laughed softly.

[Why? Don't you like it? The neighbouring archangel told me that this is your taste.]

"It is an absolute misunderstanding."

[Hrmm…]

Persephone's voice sounded regretful. For reference, Persephone was currently in the form of Yoo Joonghyuk. It was just fortunate that she wasn't wearing a Chinese dress.

[Then how about this?]

"Wait…!" Before I could finish, Persephone's appearance changed once again. I thought she would turn into Yoo Sangah in a Chinese dress but this time it was unexpected. "No, this…"

Persephone smiled and I flushed, despite knowing the other person was Persephone. Persephone was in the form of the 'punisher' that I had seen a while ago.

[I noticed that you couldn't take your eyes off her at the time. Is it like this?]

The white skin was revealed through the side of the dress and I reflexively closed my eyes while shouting, "…Stop teasing!"

[Huhu, it is really funny.]

Persephone laughed like a child before once again transforming. This time, it was the appearance of Yoo Sangah. She had a tidy office look instead of the Chinese dress and garter belt. I saw this appearance from the days of Mino Soft and felt complicated. Yoo Sangah always spoke to me in this attire.

Yoo Sangah-ssi, please be well. I was a bit worried that she was with Han Sooyoung… still, it was Yoo Sangah so I believed she would be okay.

Persephone kept smiling.

[Follow me. I came to pick you up.]

I nodded and followed behind Persephone. I walked out of the waiting room and felt a bit nervous at some of the gazes of the constellations. I walked with Persephone and saw the constellations. I felt like I was her young servant for some reason.

Soon after, Persephone and I reached a huge elevator in the middle of the lobby. Maybe the Gourmet Association Festival would be held on the top floor of this castle.

The door of the elevator that resembled a huge crystal ball was opened and Persephone and I boarded. My body felt a bit heavier and the darkness of the Dark Dimension spread outside the transparent crystal wall. Beyond the horizon of the dimension, the magnificent world of the Star Stream was revealed.

[You are looking forward to it.]

"Rather than looking forward to it, I am a bit nervous."

Persephone laughed as if she understood my heart.

[I'm glad you are alive. Last time you were an incarnation and now you are a constellation.]

"I'm still a newbie. I'm not sure it is okay for me to come here."

I meant to be humble by Persephone's expression hardened at my words.

[What do you think my position is in the Gourmet Association? Is it hard to take in a new member?]

"That's not what I meant…"

[I'm just joking.]

"Please stop making fun of me."

[Think of it as investing in advance since I don't know how promising a constellation you will be in the future. It is something you will have to suffer one day.]

I felt it before but I didn't know why this queen was so good to me. The only thing she asked for in exchange for taking the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint to Tartarus was to participate in this Gourmet Association Festival.

Maybe she knew. In fact, the condition of attending the Gourmet Association was beneficial for me, not her. She made a full-fledged debut for me as a constellation.

Persephone's obsidian eyes were sparkling.

[How much is your status now? It can't be narrative-grade.]

Perhaps the other constellations didn't know that I was narrative-grade. I thought for a moment before replying, "I will be on the second floor at the next constellation banquet."

Persephone's eyes widened at my eyes. She guessed I would be historical-grade at most. It was quite pleasurable to see the queen of the Underworld look so embarrassed. However, there was also deep concern mixed in her eyes.

[There will be constellations who feel jealous of you.]

"…"

[Some constellations will try to draw you to their side.]

"I'm expecting it."

I was prepared. The constellations I would meet in the future wouldn't be easy. They might be jealous of me or trying to pull me to their side. Either way, it was dangerous.

[However, most of the constellations will be indifferent to you.]

"…Huh?"

[Until now, you haven't been able to feel it because you've gone to places where the influence of the Korean Peninsula scenario is great… Don't forget, this is the Gourmet Association.]

The Gourmet Association. This was a grand gathering of high-ranking constellations in the Star Stream.

Suddenly, Persephone's laughter seemed scary.

[I won't act as a nanny like I did at the constellation banquet. This time, I want to see you act with your own strength.]

The door of the elevator opened with a ding and Persephone disappeared into the banquet hall. Left alone, I hesitated before getting out of the elevator.

[Some constellations show curiosity towards you.]

Some constellation glanced at me when I got off but the interest soon disappeared. It was rather fortunate. It would be hard to move if excessive interest was poured towards me.

Just as on the first floor lobby, there were no constellations who existed as symbolic bodies. Everyone was a humanoid or living being of this world. There wasn't a single constellation here conscious about using probability.

Some of the constellations that occupied the banquet hall looked like those I read about in Ways of Survival. The first one to stand out was the man in a Viking outfit that occupied the centre of the banquet hall. It would be stranger if I didn't recognize him with the giant hammer on his back.

[The best of the first generation stories is naturally the 'Dragon Eating the Hammer'.]

The constellation of the nebula Asgard, Thursday's Thunder was speaking in an excited voice. Then a woman replied from the other side.

[What do you mean? The best is obviously the 'Children of Dawn'. The rating is also the highest.]

She was a goddess wearing a white dress embroidered with stars. If I remembered correctly, she was a constellation of the Guardian Tree nebula, the 'Morning Star Goddess'.

It seemed there was a controversy over which story was the best. Fighting over which story was the best, it was exactly the same as what I read in Ways of Survival. It was clear what this place was like after seeing the high-ranking constellations that were hard to see on the Korean Peninsula. Even the powerful 'Persephone' was just a normal constellation in the Gourmet Association.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is cheering for you.]

Luckily, the sole comfort was that the 'channel was still functioning. Yes, I couldn't be discouraged in a place like this.

I quietly approached one of the central groups in the Gourmet Association and talked to one of the surrounding constellations.

"Ex…"

However, no one looked at me. It was as if I didn't exist to the constellation here. I gathered my courage and tapped on the shoulder of the constellation besides me.

"Excuse me."

This time, there was a reaction. The constellation looked at me before brushing past my shoulder and walking to the centre of the hall.

「Kim Dokja knew this feeling very well.」

I felt like I was alone in this world. Suddenly, the voices of the many constellations felt distant. They were clearly in the same place but they were elsewhere. I understood what Persephone meant by 'indifference'. The Gourmet Association was building their own barrier to prevent new people like me from entering.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is looking at you with sad eyes.]

…But I couldn't give up. I had to somehow create a crack.

I broadened my vision and looked around the periphery of the Gourmet Association. In addition to the constellations chatting in the centre of the banquet hall, there were also people standing alone. They were also members of the Gourmet Association and would certainly be powerful.

The edge of the banquet hall contained numerous panels like those seen in the waiting room. They were videos of scenarios taking place all over the world. I looked closer and saw the moment I became the Demon King of Salvation displayed on a small screen in the corner.

However, no constellations were watching it. The Korean Peninsula scenario that I went through was just one passing story. The panel next to it was showing a real-time broadcast of the Korean Peninsula. It seemed to be Bihyung's channel.

On the screen, a good-looking girl with a bob was speaking nonsense.

–That jerk Kim Dokja, I'm sure he is feeling delighted right now.

I couldn't help smiling at the familiar voice. Han Sooyoung wouldn't be able to talk this crap if she knew where I was right now.

–Hey, are you doing well picking up the Abyss Stones? You have to gather it well. You will be glad when you need to use it later.

–…Did Dokja-ssi really give this order?

–Of course!

I felt great longing as I saw Han Sooyoung and Yoo Sangah on the screen. I thought I would be more depressed if I kept watching and turned to another panel.

The screen contained a common 'mass-produced story'. The story was called 'Legend of the Legendary Return from Another World'. It had a third-rate smell just from the title and the contents were obviously about a returnee who saved the world and was happy Still, it was worth watching. It somehow resembled Ways of Survival… the protagonist's speech was similar to Yoo Joonghyuk. I watched the story and a message emerged.

[Do you want to enter a star rating?]

Oh, it was a system that gave stars to every story. I placed my hand carefully to the 'star point' box next to it. At this moment, someone's voice was heard.

[This is my favourite story.]

I looked back and saw an old man standing there. I responded lightly, "It's an interesting story."

[Huhu, is that right? This friend has good taste.]

In fact, it was a story that didn't fit the Gourmet Association that I knew. The Gourmet Association didn't like these mass-produced stories. The constellations of the Gourmet Association were sick and tired of it once concepts such as 'ninth circle' and 'sword master' came out. This Legend of the Legendary Return from Another World had both of them.

"Are you the contributor of this story?"

[That's right. Keke. I show it every year. I just wanted to know one more person to know the story. It is a really nice and fun story but I don't know how to say it.]

"That feeling, I understand it."

Somehow, I was glad. I also posted about Ways of Survival on every community site I went to while reading it. Most people just swore at me but… in any case, this old man was similar to me.

The old man sighed and added, [These guys just scoff if I recommend it. The younger ones already have high eyes… they are busy with the first generation stories.]

It was a really unexpected remark. Certainly, there was an uptight part to the Gourmet Association. The higher their position in the Star Stream, the stronger the tendency.

At this time, the mutters of passing constellations were heard.

[The steady person is here again.]

[Tsk tsk, he has no idea about a good story because of his age…]

…Steady person? It seemed to be a nickname for the old man by my side. I recalled that there was a constellation with a similar nickname in Ways of Survival…

[Get this thing off! It isn't a story and should fuck off!]

At this moment, the star rating attached to the Legend of the Legendary Return from Another World changed.

★ 1.3/5 -> ★ 1.1/5

The rating became lower. It was obvious who was doing it.

[T-These guys!]

It was the so-called 'star point terror'. The old man screamed at the disappearing constellations. I thought I understood the old man's feelings and brought a hand to the star point section.

"I don't think the story is terrible enough to get this score."

There was a beep and the star point increased. The old man turned his head towards me at the sound.

"In fact, I'm not sure why there is a score on the stories. Every story has value. It is a story that is interesting to some people and salvation for others."

The old man was startled by my words. He licked his lips a few times before murmuring with admiration.

[You aren't like young constellations these days… you have a great sense of value…]

"It's nothing."

Everyone would think like me if they endured a story like Ways of Survival. The old man's mood relaxed and he smiled at me.

[You seem to be good company. What's your modifier? I didn't have a chance to ask.]

Was this going to be a good story? I smiled and declared, [I am the Demon King of Salvation.]

Chapter 239: Ep. 45 - Gourmet Association, III

The expression of the old man changed at my words.

[…Demon King of Salvation…?]

It was difficult to read the exact emotions due to the old man's intricately folded wrinkles. The old man was first surprised, then angry and finally looked admiring. To be exact, every emotion was contained in one expression.

[That's right. You are… huhu, I see.]

The old man seemed to know me. I didn't expect anyone in the Gourmet Association other than Persephone to know about me… yet he had a surprising awareness?

"Can I ask for your modifier?"

The old man gave an unknown smile instead of answering my question.

[Do you like the coat I made?]

"…Huh?"

[The coat you are wearing.]

I reflexively looked down at my white coat.

[Infinite Dimension Space Coat]

It was a coat I was awarded with after defeating Myung Ilsang. The name of the constellation who made this coat was…

"…Mass Production Maker?"

The old man laughed at my surprised tone.

[I am called that.]

He pointed his thumb at himself and I was slightly discouraged. The Mass Production Maker. He was mentioned in the list of constellations who had the greatest influence on the Star Stream scenario.

It was difficult to describe his combat ability as being of the highest level but he was an existence with a close connection with many nebulae and the bureau. To make matters worse, I killed Myung Ilsang who was the incarnation of the Mass Production Maker in the fifth scenario.

[Huhu, you don't have to look like that. I won't eat you.]

The Mass Production Maker seemed to have noticed what I was trying to say.

[I know what you're thinking. Don't be alarmed. It is common in the Star Stream. He wasn't the type of person I was interested in anyway.]

"…"

[He had no guts, had a weak will and always searched for the easy way.]

I felt a complex amount of emotions. There was relief that the Mass Production Maker didn't care much about it and disillusioned that even a constellation like the Mass Production Maker thought of incarnations as tools…

I pretended to be calm. "Thank you."

[Don't thank me for that. No matter how lousy, he was still my incarnation… by the way, I saw the story you made.]

"My story?"

[Yes, you are great at leading the scenario in unexpected directions and creating a mess. Thanks to you, I haven't been bored for a while. I gave you five stars.]

I didn't know if it was praise or mockery but I thanked him.

[This is your first time here. Who introduced you?]

"The queen of the Underworld."

The eyes of the Mass Production Maker shone.

[That old hag… huhu, doing this thing through all means. Bringing a new entrant like you at a time like this…]

I seemed to know what he meant but I deliberately trembled. "What is happening in the Gourmet Association?"

[They are always doing things. Rather, did that old hag abandon her new entrant to see what you could do? Tsk tsk… in any case, she is an Olympian. Come on. I'll give you a brief introduction.]

Unexpectedly, things were going well. I followed behind the Mass Production Maker and looked around. I shouldn't forget my purpose for coming here just because there were many spectacular attractions. I came to recruit constellations to help in the Demon King Salvation.

Let's see. The first thing was to talk to the constellations…

[You know who that drunkard over there is, right? He is Thor. The vigorous and stern woman over there is Vakarine…]

I felt a thrill every time the Mass Production Maker called out the name of a constellation. The real names of the constellations had the power to attract their attention. The problem was they might like it or be angry. I sometimes called out the names of constellations like Persephone but not like this…

[They don't like me very much so I can't introduce you to them. They scared just by me approaching.]

In fact, Thursday's Thunder and Morning Star Goddess seemed to be avoiding the Mass Production Maker. I roughly knew the cause.

[Tsk tsk, they don't know what good stories are…]

In any case, I felt that the reaction of the constellations was noticeably different just by moving with the Mass Production Maker. It was also easy to enter the centre of the banquet hall, which was difficult to get into before. However, now everyone would run away before I could even speak…

Ah, I remembered that Asmodeus was a member of the Gourmet Association… where is he?

[It looks like the main event is going to begin.]

The Mass Production Maker smiled alone and grabbed my sleeve. I sat at a nearby table and the guide immediately gave me food.

[Eyes of the Ninth Circle Great Sage Merbatos.]

I took a quick look at the food before putting down my fork. Several of the surrounding constellations laughed at me. They seemed to be despising that fact that I barely touched the food and couldn't eat it. The Mass Production Maker just ignored the gazes and chewed on the eyeballs.

[This has a good taste. Look, that friend is today's host.]

A light lit up the stage and the host appeared. The face was familiar. It was the constellation who pushed past me earlier. It was a young lady dressed in a gorgeous gothic lace dress with a cute face.

[Gourmet Association members, hello~ I am today's host, Euphrosyne!]

I heard the name and knew who she was. The goddess of joy and celebration, Euphrosyne. She was a constellation belonging to the Olympus constellation.

Along with the applause, some constellations lost their dignity and screamed.

[Ohhh, Euph-ssi! Over here!]

To be precise, it was the Mass Production Maker next to me.

Suddenly, a memory from Ways of Survival came to mind. In the original novel, there was a time when Euphrosyne emerged as the host of the Gourmet Association Festival. At the time, Yoo Joonghyuk…

[Thank you for attending while you're so busy! Thank you for the owner of Oro Castle, Immeasurable Austerity for lending us this place!]

Maybe he killed her.

[There are two main events today. Before that, I would like to introduce a special guest. Maybe you've heard of these constellations? Today's guest is from a planet that is emerging as a hot spot recently!]

I had an ominous feeling as firecrackers burst in one corner of the stage.

[Please clap for Anna Croft, a prophet from Earth!]

The noisy constellations fell silent simultaneously. I saw Anna Croft climbing the stairs to the main stage.

…I see. I seemed to know why Anna Croft came to the Gourmet Association at this time. She truly was a woman I couldn't like.

Anna Croft looked at the audience with her uniquely calm gaze and greeted her with a bright smile.

"It is nice to meet you, constellations of the Gourmet Association. I am Anna Croft, an incarnation of the nebula Asgard."

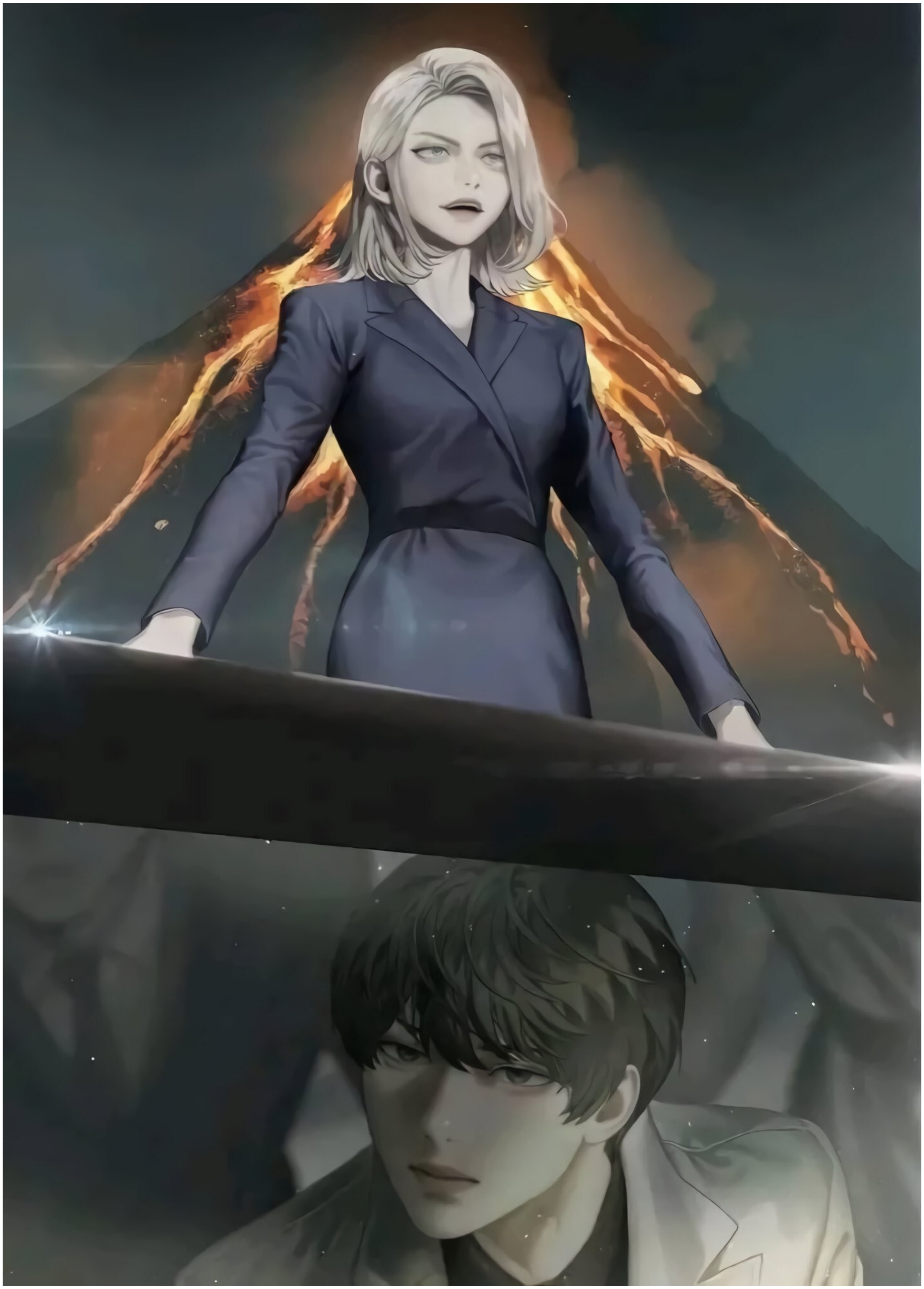
She looked dignified but the constellations were already frowning from the moment she opened her mouth.

[The Gourmet Association has really fallen. I can't believe the food is talking on the stage.]

[The Star Stream is degenerating these days.]

This was the Gourmet Association. It was a banquet of carefully selected 'stories' for the gourmet constellations. It was a natural story but the 'fresh incarnations' were the main ingredients of the story.

Anna Croft came to this place knowing it. "I might be lacking but I am the host of the first event."



*

That's why this woman was scary.

[I don't know what food you have prepared.]

[Take it out now!]

The atmosphere heated up and it was Euphrosyne who tried to quickly intervene.

[Now, everyone. Don't be too excited… isn't it okay to listen to the words of the prey? Shouldn't you have some patience with your food?]

Euphrosyne smiled in a cheerful manner and the agitated constellations paused for a moment. The clever Anna Croft didn't miss this gap.

"In recent years, the Star Stream is flooded with obvious stories."

The provocative beginning caused the constellations to focus on her. Anna Croft continued speaking. "The returnees, reincarnators, sword masters, 9th circle magicians… even the same prophets. It all starts from being stronger than others…"

There was a faint smile on Anna Croft's face.

"It is the reality of today's Star Stream, which is flooded with stories that are created for the sake of fleeting fun."

The constellations looked impressed. It was as if they were amazed that their food was telling a story. However, Anna Croft's story was just beginning.

"it wasn't like this before. At the very least, the trend was different during the first generation stories."

As if possessed, the constellations waited for Anna Croft's next words.

"In those days, the constellations loved stories. It was because the stories were worthy. The dokkaebis gave a theme and the constellations explored the form and aesthetics of it. At that time, the stories definitely reached the realm of 'art'."

…Art. She was a truly scary woman. I could say this from the position of an incarnation. The constellations looked nostalgic at Anna Croft's words. Persephone could be seen among them. All of them were constellations who survived those days.

[Interesting. Then you have a story that can satisfy our appetite?]

The person speaking was a demon king leaning against a corner of the hall. Anna Croft wasn't panicked by the provocation and smiled.

"That's right. I am going to give you back the lost 'first generation' stories."

The constellation's expressions changed. Everyone doubted their ears.

"You don't like sword masters or 9th circle magicians. You like stories with a theme of blood, sweat, tears and effort. I came here today to present you with such a story."

The constellations reacted in different ways to Anna Croft's words. Some shouted about how an incarnation was making a fool of them while others were interested in what she was saying. There were also constellations who responded skeptically, just like the Mass Production Maker by my side.

[…She is telling a stupid story. The current Gourmet Association won't find such stories interesting. Isn't that right?]

"I agree."

There were certainly some great stories among the first generation but times had changed. The constellations who already experienced stimulating stories wouldn't be touched by stories that mimicked the first generation.

Still…Anna Croft couldn't be unaware of this. She was the most competent incarnation in all of Ways of Survival.

I recalled the parts of Ways of Survival that were about her. In the original novel, Anna Croft never held such an event at the Gourmet Association Festival. However, there must be something similar to this.

At this moment, someone grabbed my shoulder. "Demon King of Salvation!"

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* Official novel illustration (canonical)

Chapter 240: Ep. 45 - Gourmet Association, IV

I looked back and saw a woman with a familiar face. "Selena Kim?"

"Please, please save Iris!" The hand holding my shoulder was trembling. The kind and calm Selena Kim was making this expression? "If this continues, Iris will die…!"

At this moment, scenes of Ways of Survival crossed my mind.

「"Anna, why did you do this… it didn't have to be this way!"

"It is a necessary thing."

"No, it isn't. This… the incarnations don't know anything! How can you do this?"

"This is also to save humanity. Don't forget Selena. We were thrown into a herd of predators that can eat us at any time."」

It didn't happen in this round. However, the original version had already been revised. In other words, it wasn't unusual for the work of another round to occur in this round. Moreover, the story of the third regression was deleted in the first revision.

"Selena Kim. Please tell me exactly precisely. What happened?"

Before Selena Kim could speak, the voices of the angry constellations around me were heard.

[How dare an incarnation…!]

Fearsome gazes were pouring towards me and Selena Kim. Selena Kim stiffened like a stone statue and turned pale. The Mass Production Maker raised his status in order to protect me and sparks of probability appeared around Selena Kim.

This 'central hall' was only for constellations. For a moment, I had forgotten this was the Gourmet Association.

Selena Kim shut her mouth like a frightened goldfish and was dragged away by a guide. Selena Kim was unable to rebel and stared at the stage with resentful eyes.

I didn't know if the story that Selena Kim was about to tell me was the same as Ways of Survival. Only one thing was certain. The reason why Selena Kim came to me was involved with why Anna Croft was on the stage.

As I looked at the stage with troubled eyes, Anna Croft continued to talk with blank eyes. "The story I'm going to tell you is the Bracelet Expedition."

The constellations made a fuss.

[…The Bracelet Expedition?]

"That's right."

[Are you going to parody the first generation story, Evil Blight Bracelet?]

Evil Blight Bracelet. It was mentioned in the original Ways of Survival and was a story that was more of a classic than the Dragon Eating the Hammer or

Children of the Dawn Star. It was older than the first generation and was closer to the zero generation.

The Bracelet Expedition was a typical expedition story where a group of 15 people went to burn a bracelet that was the source of a disaster.

The Mass Production Maker heard her words and muttered, [Huh… she wants to reproduce that boring story?]

However, Anna Croft continued speaking without being concerned about the reaction of the constellations. "I will introduce the Bracelet Expedition that will lead this story."

Anna Croft clapped and a large panel appeared behind her. It was a huge panel that covered the entire wall on one side of the hall. The panel showed a vast forest where 15 incarnations were gathered.

–…Where the hell is this place?

–Are you sure Anna is right?

–Everyone, wake up. If we play well, we can get the highest rank sponsors.

I seemed to know what they were talking about. Looking closer, the frightened Iris was among them. That's right. This was why Selena Kim…

A system message soon emerged like it had already been approved by the dokkaebis.

[The sub scenario — Bracelet Expedition has begun.]

[This scenario can acquire new stories depending on the success or failure.]

* A total of 15 incarnations will participate in the scenario.

* All incarnations must arrive at the volcano in the centre of the hunting ground through cooperation.

* The expedition owns the Absolute Bracelet and the scenario is only completed by throwing the bracelet into the volcano lava and destroying it.

* Any incarnations who complete the scenario can make a wish to the Gourmet Association.

The contents were just like the novel I knew. In the first place, the story of the Evil Blight Bracelet was a homage to the novel…

The scenario message continued.

* There are a large number of evil spirits in the hunting ground. The scenario will fail if the expedition is destroyed by the evil spirits.

* If the Absolute Bracelet isn't destroyed in the time limit, the scenario will fail.

[Hoh… you have prepared this scenario. Interesting.]

Some of the constellations responded favourably. I considered it a poorly designed scenario but there was a flavour in it that the constellations could find. It was the replay of an old story. Anna Croft's aim was to ignite the memories of the constellations of the Gourmet Association.

However, it was barely enough to satisfy the constellations of the Gourmet Association.

[…Still, something is lacking. What do you want us to do? Don't tell me it is just to watch this boring game.]

"As you can see from the panel, there are incarnations waiting for your choice."

[Are we supposed to be their 'sponsors?']

"Of course, you can make that choice but it won't be much fun."

[That means…?]

"The constellations can directly participate in this scenario and taste the freshest incarnations."

Along with Anna Croft, additional scenario messages were printed.

* A total of 15 evil spirits will appear in the scenario.

* All constellations in the Gourmet Association can apply for the 'evil spirit' role on a first come, first served basis.

I was appalled the moment I heard the scenario message. Anna Croft was aiming at this from the beginning. It was a scenario that brought out the scent of the first generation while solving the desires of the constellations.

The constellations became heated up. There was a sense of excitement different from the previous bustle. Even the Mass Production Maker showed an interested expression.

One of the constellations asked. [What do you get from this scenario?]

"Nothing. I just hope that all of you will enjoy it."

The shameless smile shook me. There was no way she didn't want anything. She was just trying to raise her position by saying this.

[Constellations of the Gourmet Association are showing favourability towards incarnation 'Anna Croft'.]

Anna Croft's plot surpassed the cruelty of the constellations. She didn't care about what she sacrificed for her own purposes. She had stabbed Yoo Joonghyuk in the back more than 10 times.

"Then I'll start the scenario in one minute. Constellations who want to apply, please sign in the selection window."

At Anna Croft's words, a selection window appeared in front of my eyes.

[Would you like to participate in this scenario?]

[Current number of applicants: 2/15]

At the place where a story was being made, there was an opportunity to devour the subjects of the story. The number of applicants was rapidly rising.

[Current number of applicants: 5/15]

I was once again reminded of why I came here. I had to make allies for the Demon King Selection. In order to do this, it was better to participate in the scenario. I would be able to become closer to them by sharing stories with other constellations.

[Hahaha, I will eat the artwork.]

[It isn't expected?]

It might be time to admit it. I had become the 'constellation' I hated.

[Current number of applicants: 9/15]

Then I heard a 'baat' sound in my ears and a small panel popped up. It was Biyoo's screen that only I could see.

–I will start the 857th competition!

It showed Yoo Joonghyuk attending the martial arts competition. Perhaps he had become much stronger in the meantime because Yoo Joonghyuk was continuously beating his opponents with the least movements possible. I stared at his calm movements and thought as usual:

What would Yoo Joonghyuk do? At this moment, I seemed to meet Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes. Of course, Yoo Joonghyuk wouldn't know that I was watching. Even so, Yoo Joonghyuk seemed to talk to me.

「"No matter how many times I return, my choice is the same."」

No, maybe he already told me. In fact, I saw him make the same choice many times.

「"I will kill all of you, not leaving a single one."」

So far, I had always made a different choice from Yoo Joonghyuk. I wasn't Yoo Joonghyuk. Amidst the strong backlash, I always walked on a different path.

Persephone was watching me from afar. She was waiting for something interesting to happen. The constellation who lived for a long time knew where the really interesting stories would start. Thus, she understood what I was going to do from now on.

[Current number of applicants: 14/15]

I raised my hand towards the selection window.

Iris Vladimirovna Rebezova was born in Moscow. She grew up listening to stories of revolution. Her favourite revolutionaries were Che Guevara and the early Karl Marx.

However, the world she was born in wasn't the era of revolution. It was a world dominated by desire and capital and determined by the owners of the capital. Iris realized from a young age that there was no 'revolution' in this era.

This was until the dokkaebis showed up.

–Haha, this is an interesting place. A world in which plant fibers are king.

Iris saw the collapse of many nations and realized that the revolution she had been waiting for had begun. The world, which had been a place of the haves and have-nots, once again melted back into turbulent currents.

The revolution could happen. The world could be changed. The young Iris was convinced of this, at least until today.

"Aaaack!"

"Help me! Please!"

The upper body of an incarnation was completely separated.

[It is very fresh meat.]

The incarnations were torn apart by big teeth. The evil spirits wiped the stories flowing from their lips and chuckled.

[I'm disappointed. Is this the story you wanted me to eat?]

[Hasty friend. Please wait. The scenario has just begun.]

[How am I supposed to wait? This is a parody story…]

"A-Ahh… ahhh…"

Her frightened companions urinated before the colossal 'status'. It was the first time she thought that the word 'revolution' was so empty.

She couldn't resist. No one could stand up to such things.

"Iris! Run away! Run!"

Iris had the cries of her colleagues and ran. The twin ponytails she was proud of were messed up by blood and sweat but she didn't care. At the same time, she had the screams of her colleagues scattered through the woods.

The footsteps of the evil spirits were coming closer. It was obvious what would happen to her.

Run away? Damn, where could she escape to? In this small stage, where could she flee? A vast array of trees surrounded her. No matter where she ran, she couldn't leave this stage.

Iris cursed something that wasn't 'capital' for the first time. She cursed the constellations. She cursed the Star Stream. She cursed this story.

Nevertheless, she still begged. Please, someone, change this story. Even a very small salvation was okay, please. Please.

[The constellation 'Demon King of Salvation' is looking at you.]

To her surprise, salvation faced her.

[The constellation 'Demon King of Salvation' wants to establish a 'Sponsor Contract' with you.]

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Iris was confused.

Originally, she was supposed to sign a contract with a constellation of Asgard. It was a lesser-grade constellation that wasn't well-known and Iris didn't like the contract. That's why she participated in the Bracelet Expedition hosted by Anna Croft. Anna said that if Iris showed a great performance here, Anna could change her intended sponsor.

Now in this unexpected place, a chance came to Iris.

[The constellation 'Demon King of Salvation' wants to establish a 'Sponsor Contract' with you.]

Thinking about it, there was no way constellations could only contract with one incarnation. Some constellations had two or three depending on their capacity. Of course, the power of the constellation was divided so the incarnations received weakened stigmas.

Even so, Iris wasn't in a position to regret something like this. "I accept!"

[The constellation 'Demon King of Salvation' states that this contract is only for a limited time.]

[The constellation 'Demon King of Salvation' states that this contract is valid until the end of the Bracelet Expedition.]

Temporary contract…

'Yes, now isn't the time to be greedy'.

Iris bit her lips and nodded. By the way, the words of the constellation weren't finished.

[The constellation 'Demon King of Salvation' says there is a condition.]

[The constellation 'Demon King of Salvation' wants the 'wish' to be transferred to him after the scenario is completed.]

Iris' mind was complicated.

…It was a temporary contract and he wanted the wish? A strange regret passed over her but she wasn't in a position to pass up this chance. The Demon King of Salvation's condition was based on completing the scenario. It meant he would keep her alive, no matter what happened.

"I'll definitely give it to you."

At the same time, a holographic contract descended in the air. Iris ran over and signed the hologram.

[The Sponsor Contract has been completed.]

Power flowed into her body and she felt that someone was supporting her. She felt confident that she could do anything. However, Iris' confidence quickly disappeared at the cries from behind her.

[The incarnation hunting has begun.]

There were screams as incarnations were torn apart by evil spirits.

[Current number of expedition members remaining: 6 people]

In the original novel, this game was called 'Hunting and Chasting'. This wasn't a Gourmet Association event, it was an event hosted by Anna Croft. In this round, Anna Croft decided to skip the process and start from the Gourmet Association.

I continued to mutter towards the air and the Mass Production Maker asked me, [Hoh, you participated?]

"…Did you participate?"

[Huhu, I'm too old to run to scenarios like that. And… it doesn't suit my tastes.]

In fact, not all members of the Gourmet Association were enthusiastic about this scenario. On one side, there were the constellations who disliked Anna Croft. On another side, there were the constellations who disliked the event itself.

[Hmm. I don't see your modifier on the list of evil spirits…]

There were 15 constellations who participated in the scenario. However, the number of constellations who chose the role of the evil spirit was only 14. I nodded and the eyes of the Mass Production Maker slowly widened.

[Indeed, there was a reason the old hag Persephone brought you here. But is it okay? You are here for the first time…]

I replied with a smile. "The more brilliant my debut, the better."

Then the system message arrived like it had been waiting.

[The story 'Gourmet Association Heretic' has been acquired.]

Maybe Anna Croft would be listening to messages similar to mine.

「There is always a story in a place where many constellations gather.」

This was the first principle of generating a story. The level of the story was determined by combining the risk to the story subject and the form of the story. Anna Croft was currently an 'incarnation' and she was walking a tightrope. If her scenario was successfully completed, it might be a legendary story such as 'Follower of the First Generation' or 'Story Manipulator'.

I closed my eyes and saw what was happening with Iris.

[The constellation 'Demon King of Salvation' is looking at his incarnation.]

I felt sorry when I saw her shaking shoulders but I didn't have any good memories for this child. I wasn't good enough to show kindness to her. That's why this was just a gesture for 'trading'.

[The constellation 'Demon King of Salvation' says to stay calm.]

Iris gulped and replied.

–I don't know if I can do it.

[The constellation 'Demon King of Salvation' says there is no hopeless scenario.]

All scenarios had holes to escape out of. The hole was small and tiny so it was highly difficult to clear on the first try. This meant there was a chance to clear it after trying a few times and I was a person who knew more about this world than anyone else.

The sound of the evil spirits moving could be heard in the distance. Iris' physique was at the limit and the only stigma I could pass on was Sacrifice's Will. Dammit, that stigma wouldn't help in the current situation. However, stigmas weren't the only things that constellations could give.

[The constellation 'Demon King of Salvation' is giving his incarnation the 'Assassination King's Cloak.]

Iris was surprised to see the gift that emerged in the air. It was an item I bought for 150,000 coins from the Dokkaebi Bag. It had a usage limit of 30 minutes a day and lacked the ability to deceive the constellations, but the current situation was different.

[…Here?]

The constellations emerged from the grass as if they were waiting. The constellations that became evil spirits looked different. There were a giant horned demon and a spirit with a bull's head holding a small scythe. The only thing they had in common was that they had no feet and were shrouded in a black cloak.

[Hmm, strange. It was definitely around here.]

[Did you see it properly?]

Iris disappeared and the constellations who were evil spirits couldn't discover her traces at all. The constellations who played the role of evil spirits were under strong restrictions. The constellations in the role of the evil spirit could only one-tenth of their current 'status'.

For the constellations, a game wasn't fun if it was too easy. Just as there were no humans who would rejoice in stepping on 15 bugs. They didn't hesitate to impose constraints on themselves for entertainment. This was the constellations of the Gourmet Association.

[It seems she must've done something. Let her run a bit more. The scenario should be stacked up to taste better.]

[…Huhu, I'm looking forward to it.]

The constellations searching the grass soon gave up and Iris received a system message.

[The expedition member Iris Vladimirovna Rebezova has survived an evil spirit once.]

[The story 'Bracelet Expedition' has accumulated.]

This scenario was made up of classic stories. The longer Iris stayed in the scenario, the more the energy of the classic story would permeate her.

–I-I lived!

[The constellation 'Demon King of Salvation' says you were lucky this time.]

If these guys were high-ranking constellations, it would've been impossible to hide from them using the Assassination King's Cloak.

However, just like Persephone and the Mass Production Maker, the really high-ranking Gourmet Association constellations wouldn't run like dogs towards this scenario. It was also interesting to watch other constellations vent their desires in this event. In other words, they were the real audience I should aim for.

–Thank you for the gift.

[The constellation 'Demon King of Salvation' says it is a loan.]

–…Yes.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is sympathetic to your incarnation.]

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' reproaches your harshness.]

The scenario would start from now on.

As the number of expedition members continued to decrease, Iris moved towards the volcano while avoiding the eyes of the constellations. She also had the good luck of collecting the bracelet from the expedition members that died along the way.

[Current number of expedition members remaining: 2 people]

It was natural since I was participating in the scenario while reading Ways of Survival in real-time. It was because Ways of Survival contained a very detailed account of the Evil Blight Bracelet, the prototype of this scenario.

I analyzed the terrain using the scenario map and moved Iris along the most efficient path towards the volcano.

[Haha, this is a fun story. Wasn't there a lot of delicious food? I'm drooling…]

The other constellations seemed to notice that someone was involved on the 'expedition' side. Nevertheless, none of them were panicked.

[The expedition member 'Merves Lutier' has died!]

Shortly afterwards, Iris was alone.

[…It smells delicious.]

The scattered evil spirits were gathering near the volcano. They knew that the last expedition member had to come to the volcano. Now the time of the Assassination King's Cloak was almost up. I gave a signal to Iris.

[The constellation 'Demon King of Salvation' says to do it now.]

Iris started running towards the volcano. I stared at the back of the running girl. All the constellations of the Gourmet Association were watching the little girl running with all her might.

Perhaps, everyone knew. This girl, she had no choice but to die here.

"Ah…"

She was 100 steps away from the volcano when the privilege of the Assassination King's Cloak finally ended. The 10 evil spirits wandering around instantly gathered.

[I will eat first!]

Iris watched the incoming evil spirits and backed away with terror. Her last desperate gaze was towards the sky.

[The constellation 'Demon King of Salvation' is asking to lend him your incarnation body.]

Iris gasped as her mouth opened.

[The constellation 'Demon King of Salvation' says it isn't an 'advent'.]

If I manifested in the form of an 'advent', I would also be constrained by the scenario. Thus, I wouldn't do it as an 'advent' this time.

I had a skill that was more efficient and consumed less probability. I deliberately pulled out a few stories that made up my incarnation body in order to deal myself a serious blow.

[Exclusive skill, Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint stage 3 has been activated!]

[The 1st person supporting role viewpoint has been activated.]

[Your understanding of 'Iris Vladimirovna Rebezova' has increased!]

I opened my eyes to Iris' point of view. Maybe my body in the Gourmet Association was currently sleeping. Thus, I had to end this game in the shortest amount of time.

[Some constellations have noticed your presence!]

At the same time, there was an outpouring of true voices towards me.

[There was someone helping her. Who are you?]

[Hoh, is it an advent?]

[This windfall…!]

Iris received the accumulated stories and her body shone golden. I laughed bitterly as I looked down at myself.

One way for a newcomer in the Gourmet Association was to grow step by step. However, if I dragged it on like that, I might not be able to reach the end of the story after 3,000 chapters.

[Did that Anna girl plan something? The person I just killed was a sword master.]

One constellation walking in the distance spoke as he threw the incarnation in his hands. Perhaps he was the last expedition member to die.

[You look like a new recruit. It is best for you to leave this place. Or else your body will suffer a great blow.]

The head of the dead expedition member rolled towards me. It was the head of the incarnation who fled to the end but eventually didn't survive. I carefully picked up the head and one of the constellations sneered.

[Do you pity him? Huhu… this guy doesn't know art.]

"Why should their lives be your art?" I stroked his head and the memories of the dead incarnation flowed in. The memories soon became a story that dwelt at my fingertips.

[A fragment of the story 'Grudge of a Brutally Murdered Sword Master' has been acquired.]

The constellations drew back with a frown.

[…You like dirty stories.]

"Dirty? You gave it to me."

Why did this person easily become a sword master? It was simple. He originally received it from a constellation.

"The story is boring. The scenario is too slow. It is the power that all of you gave them."

The things that were received gathered. Someone became a sword master. Someone became a great magician. Then the sword master and great magician became the sin. They all became the prey of these beings.

[What are you trying to do? Stop eating!]

A hot-tempered constellation raised the power of the evil spirit. Originally, Iris couldn't defeat them. The expedition could never win against the evil spirits. However—

The evil spirit screamed and retreated from the burning sword.

[Kuaaaack!]

In my hand was the sword I had purchased along with the Assassination King's Cloak.

> [Item Information]
>
> Name: Eoren's Sword - Replica
>
> Rating: SS+ (Specific scenarios only)
>
> Description: A sword energized by a first generation story. Only female incarnations can use it and it can generate a force that resists evil spirits for 10 minutes.

It was a sword that cost 200,000 coins. It was also a sword that was useless apart from in this scenario. Normally it was an item I would never buy.

[…A first generation sword?]

[Hey, don't be scared! It's just a replica version!]

In fact, I was really worried about it.

[Many constellations are astonished by your actions!]

I had wondered if it was worth taking this risk for this scenario. I measured what I could get from it.

[Some members of the Gourmet Association are showing a strong hostility to you!]

Some things should be calculated and some shouldn't. Then I made a choice.

"You knew I would come to the volcano." I decided not to calculate things. "Then did you know? I also knew you would be gathering here."

No matter what penalties were received or if the opponents were constellations. I couldn't afford to pay attention to it.

Nevertheless, I smiled like always. "Let's start the real hunting."

Chapter 242: Ep. 45 - Gourmet Association, VI

There were 10 constellations gathered here. I didn't know where the remaining four were but maybe they were scattered somewhere in the scenario area.

[If you don't yield…]

[I'll eat you too.]

The true voices of the constellations flowed from the mouths of the evil spirits. I didn't hesitate and infused magic power into the sword.

[The exclusive skill 'Purest Sword Force Lv. 8' has been activated.]

It was Iris' magic power instead of mine. Still, Iris was an incarnation who came all this way and her potential was considerable. The white energy was added to Eoren's Sword and the aura around it became more abundant.

Eoren's Sword was a weapon that could deal a powerful blow to evil spirits for 10 minutes. However, a powerful weapon didn't necessarily mean I would dominate this place.

A constellation saw my sword and laughed.

[Hahah, slow down! Small constellation. Please entertain these old people!]

[What old people? I haven't lived 500 years yet. There are those older than us.]

Was it because this was the first time I was attached to a young girl's body? My sword could only draw a clumsy trajectory through the air.

The constellations might not be able to use all their power but a constellation was a constellation. They ranged from historical-grade to lesser-grade.

The constellations who gathered to become evil spirits released their status. Iris' movements started to stiffen as the 10 constellations released their energy. Her body thrashed like she was caught in an invisible spider web. The spiders who trapped her were approaching.

I looked at Iris' body that was trembling regardless of my will and bit my lips. It was always like this but this time would be different.

[Don't look down on me. I am also a constellation.]

So far, I had never properly released my status. I had been fighting my way through the Demon Realm scenario in a sick state. However, I had been steadily recovering my stories while riding on the Gourmet Association's carriage. Thus, I might not be at a 100% state but I could use a 'status' that was almost equal to it.

[The constellation 'status' is released.]

Some of my stories started responding to the situation.

[The historical-grade story 'Gourmet Association Heretic' is rebelling against the surrounding oppression!]

[The legendary-grade story'Demon King of Salvation' is responded to incarnation Iris' situation!]

The surrounding ground was split apart with a loud sound and the nearby forest shook. The constellations were astonished by the flood of sparks in the area.

In this scenario, the descended constellations could only use 10% of their power. On the other hand, I used 'Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint' instead of 'advent' and was able to release my original status.

[How can a newcomer have this much status?]

[…Is this really the 'advent' state?]

The constellations didn't know this fact and were almost terrified. They were mistaking the current status as 10% of my original strength. It was the reason I was pushing myself in such an unreasonable manner.

[Either die or get lost. Choose one or the other.]

I had to get them right not before they stopped being fooled.

[C-Cheeky bastard…!]

[…The Star Stream is really wide. Where did a guy like this pop up from?]

Some of the constellations shrank back from the pressure I gave off while others were burning with enthusiasm.

[Ahahaha! The best dish. Today's Gourmet Association Festival is the best!]

The constellations emitted terrible shrieks and the arms of the evil spirits stretched towards this side. I hurriedly stepped back and swung my sword but couldn't cut off the incoming arms. Iris' voice was heard in my head.

'S-Sorry! I'm a terrible swordsman…!'

Shit. This was why my movements were like this. Blood splashed as Iris was wounded. Did they realize something from my movements? The momentum of the constellations was changing.

[…Something is strange?]

The constellations spread out and carried out sporadic attacks using the bodies of the evil spirits. I tried to defend by swinging the sword but it wasn't easy since Iris' swordsmanship skill level was too low.

The result was quite different from when I was in Yoo Joonghyuk's body. Once again, I realized how great Yoo Joonghyuk was.

[Indeed. only that guy's status is high. Get rid of him!]

[There is no need to worry about the sword. Hahaha, today we will eat!]

The worst situation that I wanted to somehow avoid was unfolding. The attacks of the evil spirits flew from everywhere. There was a small scythe that grazed my legs. A boomerang turned around and aimed at my back. A long spear pierced through a gap and struck my side. In less than a minute, Iris' body was covered with wounds and bruises.

My physical strength was rapidly dropping. I hurriedly opened Bookmark and Way of the Wind but it felt awkward in Iris' body. Eventually, my footsteps became twisted up and I was disoriented. The constellations aimed for this short gap and stretched out their arms towards me.

"Kuek…"

Iris was caught by the neck and hung helplessly in the air.

[You have bad luck, newcomer.]

The constellations acted like it was over as they opened their mouths.

[It is eating time.]

Grotesque fangs grew and digestive juices dripped from their mouths. Since they could customize the appearance of the evil spirits, it was really the worst taste.

I opened my mouth without hesitation. "I will activate the fifth bookmark."

In fact, I didn't want to use this skill here. I wasn't sure if Iris' body could endure it, nor did I want to consume an excessive amount of probability. Nevertheless, there was no other way.

[The fifth bookmark is activated.]

The moment that Bookmark was activated, an unexpected message arrived.

[The skill is not suitable for this person.]

[The exclusive skill 'Miniaturization' is cancelled.]

[The exclusive skill 'Electrification' is cancelled.]

The power of Bookmark disappeared with the sound of sparks. Sometimes a skill wasn't compatible with the chemistry of the body. But why did it have to happen now? I never expected this.

[Is this your last hurrah? Yes, give it a try.]

Along with the ridiculing voice, a long tongue slipped out from the mouth of the evil spirit and started to strangle Iris' throat. My prayers were blocked and I turned blue. I could feel Iris' consciousness blurring. The connection with Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint was weakening.

[The attribute effect has accelerated your thinking ability.]

Dozens of thoughts crossed my mind during this crisis until something was caught in the net.

…I didn't know if it was possible. My understanding of the character was still low. Still, I could try it.

"I will release Knight of Revolution Mark Javier from the sixth slot."

I released my 'status' as much as possible and instantly escaped from the capture of the constellation. Then I continued speaking. "I will place the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint Namgung Minyoung in that spot."

[The number six bookmark is activated.]

An immense presence permeated me. I felt all the things I've read, felt and experience become one and nestle in my body.

[Your understanding of this person is insufficient!]

It felt like the first time I loaded Kyrgios Rodgraim.

[W-What…?!]

[…What power is this?]

Astonishment filled the eyes of the Gourmet Association constellations.

[The level of the character is too high to fully reproduce the skill level.]

[The level of the character is too high so only a part of the skill is activated.]

[The duration of the bookmark is reduced due to a low understanding of the character.]

The original Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship was a skill that could only be used by women.

Yoo Joonghyuk overcame it with effort but it was unreasonable for me.

[Your current body configuration is similar to the physical makeup of the character in question.]

To be exact, it would've been impossible with my original body.

[The exclusive skill 'Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship' Lv. 10 (+1) has been activated.]

Thunder fell from the sky and nestled in Eoren's Sword. I released the maximum amount of power possible at the optimum time. Everything was over before the constellations even noticed the situation.

[The exclusive skill 'Breaking the Sky Thunder Sword' Lv. 10 (+1) has been activated.]

The blue thunder that could overturn the earth flew from the sky and struck everything in the area. The words of Ways of Survival passed through my head.

「The Murim don't consider the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint as one of the 10 Grand Masters.」

The bodies of the evil spirits scattered into ashes without even screaming.

「The Murim people think of the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint as a type of disaster.」

Born as a small human and facing the constellations after hard work. This was the strength of the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint, a disaster of Murim.

[The skill has exceeded the talent of the incarnation body.]

I felt something twisting as blood flowed. The result was obvious. It was a force that Iris and I couldn't use because we weren't transcendents. The sky blinked like a power failure had occurred.

The dazzling thunderbolts disappeared and there were no evil spirits left in the surroundings.

[The constellation 'Brash Swamp Predator' has been eliminated from the scenario.]

[The constellation 'Tranquil Island Gourmet' has been eliminated from the scenario.]

[The constellation 'Forgotten Lord of Envy' has been eliminated from the scenario.]

…

[A total of 10 constellations have been eliminated from the scenario.]

[You have earned an unbelievable achievement!]

[A series of impossible feats have been accomplished in a row!]

I was barely breathing as I looked up at the sky.

[The Star Stream is paying attention to your achievements.]

[A new story for you is being prepared.]

The constellation's status might've been extremely limited but they still massacred the incarnations. Thus, there was no way I wouldn't get a story.

Blood emerged from my mouth while pouring simultaneously from my ears and nose. Blood poured out from many holes and I almost became used to the taste. Fortunately, the probability allowed by the Gourmet Association meant I could still endure.

I plastered Iris' broken body with fragments of the story. The shock from the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint's technique had already caused Iris' consciousness to disappear.

[Constellations of the Gourmet Association are astonished by the contents of the scenario.]

[Some constellations of the Gourmet Association have become hostile to you.]

I knew I would be hated. However, there was always something to gain from losing something.

[Some constellations of the Gourmet Association are very curious about your story.]

[Some constellations of the Gourmet Association feel favourable towards you.]

I stumbled away with Iris' body and headed towards the volcano. Iris would survive once this scenario was completed. In order to complete the scenario, I had to throw the bracelet into the volcano lava.

There wasn't much distance remaining. 40 steps, 30 steps, 20 steps…

My face became hot as I neared the lava. The cliff that I could throw the bracelet was clear when I felt someone's presence. I expected them to appear now. There were still four evil spirits that I hadn't finished off.

[Demon King of Salvation, you are doing something really interesting.]

The familiar voice entered my ears as I tightly gripped Eoren's Sword. I looked back and a familiar looking girl stood there. She was an evil spirit but her basic appearance hadn't changed at all.

I opened my mouth. "Asmodeus."

Asmodeus was ecstatic, as if feeling pleasure that his name was called.

[…Ah, let me call you again.]

The person who damaged Yoo Joonghyuk's body and was the main culprit behind the third round failing.

I felt Asmodeus' status slowly approaching. This was the power of only 10%. As expected, one of the 72 demon kings was on a different dimension.

I took a step back and vigilantly watched my surroundings. It was still a difficult situation. Even if I removed this guy, there were still three more evil spirits remaining. My chances of winning were gone if they came. So before that…

[Don't be so vigilant. There are no other constellations.]

Three small heads were hanging from the small hands of the smiling Asmodeus. The black cloak billowed around the severed heads. They weren't the heads of incarnations.

A chill rose very slowly from the tip of my toes. In this brief moment, I understood why Asmodeus was described as a madman in Ways of Survival. There was a cold smile on Asmodeus' face that was smeared with the blood of constellations.

[I devoured all of them.]

Chapter 243: Ep. 45 - Gourmet Association, VII

He ate all of them…

There was no guilt on Asmodeus' smiling face as he spoke such words.

[Several members of the Gourmet Association are strongly condemning Asmodeus.]

[A small minority of the Gourmet Association are delighting in Asmodeus' brutality.]

The members of the Gourmet Association were worn out by the years and they varied in tendencies and taste. At first glance, the 'first generation' stories seemed the best but there were some constellations like the Mass Production Maker who preferred SSS-grade stories while others liked unexpected developments like now.

[Huhu, the body of a constellation has a different physical quality. It isn't real but…]

This was why demon kings like Asmodeus were accepted in the Gourmet Association. Constellations, transcendents or demon kings, the Gourmet Association was a place where stubborn children were more concentrated than any other group, but they respected all types of gourmet delights.

I gulped as Asmodeus stepped into puddles of blood and slowly approached.

[The special effect of Eoren's Sword will end.]

I might've used the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint's techniques but it worked properly thanks to Eoren's Sword. Without the sword, there would be no way to deal with the evil spirits.

After half a dozen steps, Asmodeus licked his lips as he stared at me.

I stated, […You didn't come here to eat me.]

[Hmm, how can you be sure?]

[You can't get the giant story if you kill me.]

Asmodeus made a promise to me regarding the Demon King Advancement. Thus, he couldn't kill me here.

[I promised a 30% stake. Why are you in this place?]

[There is no certainty that I will receive 30%.]

[Do you not have the confidence to compete with the other constellations?]

Asmodeus' expression hardened at my provocative words.

[Now you are provoking me?]

Asmodeus had a threatening air but I didn't feel nervous.

[If you are really a demon king, don't be a pushover. Compete properly to obtain your share.]

In the first place, it was apparent that Asmodeus had appeared here to 'help me'. He might be

Asmodeus but the act of attacking fellow members of the Gourmet Association couldn't help being burdensome. Even so, he acted in such a manner while pretending to be a 'maniac'.

Asmodeus' complexion paled as he shouted, [Demon King of Salvation… You seem to be mistaken about something. I can eat you right now—]

[Don't repeat the same words and get the fuck out.]

Asmodeus' eyes widened. I continued without stopping.

[If you really want to eat me, kill me right now.]

The past me would've thought I was crazy if he saw this. This was Asmodeus, not someone else. Nevertheless, there was a reason I acted like this.

The 'status' of Asmodeus burned towards me. I got goosebumps from the formidable force but believed in the 'story' that I read more than my senses.

「At that time, we should've treated Asmodeus differently.」

The revised version of Ways of Survival. I had found such a sentence in the 49th Yoo Joonghyuk's record.

「Asmodeus loves beings who don't compromise.」

「The more he faces such a being, the greater the desire to beat them.」

I didn't know how Yoo Joonghyuk gained such insight but if he was right, all of Asmodeus' actions were understandable.

[Your understanding of the character 'Asmodeus' has increased.]

Then a phenomenon occurred.

[Your understanding of the character 'Asmodeus' has increased.]

[Your understanding of the character 'Asmodeus' has increased.]

The explosive indirect messages occurred as I started to understand the inner surface of a demon king for the first time.

[Exclusive skill, Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint stage 2 has been activated!]

「I want to eat.」

「No.」

「I want to eat.」

「No.」

「Ahhhh…」

A tremendous amount of thoughts rushed into my ears. It was appalling that so much greed could exist in one being.

[It is really amazing…]

Asmodeus moved like the wind as he held a handful of Iris' hair and took a slight breath.

[Haaaah… good. Yes, this is enough for today.]

"…"

[Still, keep this in mind, Demon King of Salvation. Next time won't be the same as today…]

I didn't listen to Asmodeus' words and ran towards the volcano. I couldn't miss this opportunity that I had barely gained. The lava could be seen right in front of me. Way of the Wind caused the bracelet at my fingertips to fall down the cliff. The bracelet melted with a clear sound.

[The sub scenario has ended.]

[You have obtained 150,000 coins as compensation.]

[Your awareness in the "Gourmet Association' has greatly increased!]

[You have acquired a new story!]

I poured the Ellain Forest Essence into the mouth of the completely exhausted Iris. Her physical condition was a mess but recovery would be fast due to not consuming much probability.

[The 1st person supporting role viewpoint has been released.]

There was the feeling of my environment being crushed and I returned to the banquet hall of the Gourmet Association. My senses returned and the first thing I heard was the voice of an old man.

[Young man, I enjoyed it.]

I realized I had returned when I saw the Mass Production Maker laughing heartily. I looked at him for a moment before slightly bowing my head.

"…It is all thanks to you."

[Hrmm, what are you talking about?]

"It is this."

My hand was holding the 200,000 coins of garbage that Iris used just now, Eoren's Sword. For reference, the grip of the sword had the following message engraved:

—made by Mass Production Maker.

The Mass Production Maker laughed. [It was just business. Who knew that sword would be sold today?]

"It was a recommended product in the Dokkaebi Bag."

[Huhu, how can a constellation know about the work of dokkaebis?"

I didn't know if this was the consideration of the Mass Production Maker or not. One thing was for certain. This sword had saved the lives of Iris and I.

[By the way, things have become a bit difficult.]

I looked around. The atmosphere around me was tense.

[Who is the Demon King of Salvation?]

The constellations were running wild as they looked for me with fiery anger. Among them was the constellations who had lost their bodies and returned from the scenario.

[The constellation 'Brash Swamp Predator' reveals hostility towards you.]

[The constellation 'Tranquil Island Gourmet' is glaring at you.]

Euphrosyne was standing dumbfounded on the stage while Anna Croft was pale. Now some of the constellations were watching me while wondering what I was going to do. The sub scenario was over but for them, this situation was an extension of the game. Of course, I wouldn't betray their expectations.

[You have gained the 'wish ticket' according to the contract with the incarnation 'Iris.]

[You can make one wish within the category allowed by the Gourmet Association.]

It was within the category allowed by the Gourmet Association…

The meaning of this was obvious. I naturally couldn't wish for the constellations to be killed.

[This is beyond the probability allowed by the wish.]

I couldn't wish for all the constellations to be on my side or to be their master. It was naturally a wish that wasn't possible.

[This is beyond the probability allowed by the wish.]

In other words, this 'wish' was a type of diplomatic card. I had to identify the possible and impossible areas and find the best wish for me.

[Some members of the Gourmet Association are showing a strong hostility to you!]

[Many constellations are looking forward to your choice.]

Even the constellations in my channel were tense.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is looking forward to your choice.]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is wriggling her fingers in a trance.]

In front of all these eyes, I slowly opened my mouth.

[I wish that the Gourmet Association will show me courtesy.]

For a moment, a tremendous silence filled the hall. I didn't panic and looked around in the silence.

[The probability of the Gourmet Association is activated!]

[Your wish has been received.]

Sparks filled the hall of the Gourmet Association. No, looking closer, they were thunderbolts, not sparks. Then a loud voice was heard.

[Ahahaha! A really fun guy!]

Thursday's Thunder was holding a glass of beer while laughing.

[A story that was boring became worthwhile to see a bit. Why are you complaining about and persecuting this small constellation?]

Some of the constellations rebelled strongly against his words.

[But the rules…!]

[The scenario is just a scenario. In addition, that scenario has ended. That's all that my hammer and I know.]

Thor's hammer made a deafening sound like it wouldn't accept any arguments. Thor of the Asgard nebula had one of the most powerful stories in this place. No one here wanted to resist his hammer.

[It is unpleasant to agree with this rough thunder's words but this time, I feel the same.]

The person who spoke was the Morning Star Goddess. Star powder fell from her finely twisted hair as she moved.

[The scenario should end in the scenario. If you want to fight, fight in the scenario. I don't want to see the Gourmet Association becoming uglier.]

The two top-ranking constellations present stood up so the other constellations couldn't help

wavering. Moreover, the 'wish ticket' had already been activated.

Some of the constellations were still glaring at me but they showed no signs of hurting me. The atmosphere calmed down and the eyes of the Morning Star Goddess turned to me.

[Still, I would like to ask one thing.]

It was an unexpected question and I reflexively looked at her.

[Demon King of Salvation. Why are you showing us such a scenario?]

The eyes of the goddess seemed to contain a galaxy. Now they show like she had found a new star.

[In my eyes, you seem to have something to say. However, my eyes are dark and I can't figure out the scenario you showed me. If you don't mind, I'd like to hear it from your mouth.]

She didn't say that the scenario I showed was crude and this was probably due to her innate humility. I could see Persephone smiling at me from beside the Morning Star Goddess.

…I told you to do things yourself and this is the only way I can help you.

All the constellations of the Gourmet Association were looking at me. It was the situation I had been wanting since I came here. What should I say to gain favour with them? It would be stupid to think they would help me if I just brought up the Demon King Selection story.

「At that moment, Kim Dokja thought for the first time about what he really wanted to say.」

It was too far away and not yet visible. However, for at least one person who walked on the path, it was clear. He failed thousands of times while feeling frustrated and desperate.

There was someone who tried to take this road before me. I recalled the man who walked on the road that no one else walked on and laughed. Then I very naturally came up with some words.

[I…]

No, perhaps this was the only thing I had to say.

Chapter 244: Ep. 46 - New Story, I

[I will create a 'new story' that never existed before.]

The constellations shut their mouths at my words. It wasn't just because they were shocked. Rather, they didn't understand what I was saying.

The first one to speak was a constellation drinking beside Thor. [What do you mean by a new story?]

According to Ways of Survival, the Dokkaebi King left these words a long time ago:

「There are no new stories in the Star Stream. All stories are just based on old stories.」

This old saying was the humility of the dokkaebis and was a phrase that needed to be overcome.

I hesitated to answer and a hot-tempered constellation came out first.

[Is there a sword master in the story?]

Sword master… I nodded at the unexpected question.

[There is.]

Some constellations sighed at my response while others had shining eyes. Then another constellation asked. [Is there a great magician?]

[Maybe one will appear.]

[A reincarnator?]

[Yes.]

[An SSS-grade hunter? For reference, I like friends who are rewarded for a reasonable effort.]

[It is a possibility. I don't dislike this who try hard.]

[A returnee will naturally come out?]

The various questions continued for a while, as if it was fun. In the process, there were those who smiled and those who shook their heads. No matter their expression, they were all imagining a story.

It was a story that hadn't been created yet. However, it was a story that might exist. Was it because it had been a long time since the Gourmet Association jumped into such 'imagination?' For a while, there was a gentle atmosphere in the hall that didn't fit the Gourmet Association.

However, the atmosphere didn't stay like this.

[I don't understand. Aren't there many of these stories already?]

The one who poured cold water on it was the Morning Star Goddess.

[Sword masters, great magicians reincarnators, returnees… what is new about this story? I don't know how such a product can be considered as 'new'.]

I thought for a moment before replying, [It isn't just new materials that make up a new story. Aren't the first generation stories that the Gourmet Association likes also made up of ordinary materials?]

[Are you comparing the first generation of art with your story?]

[I don't mean to compare it. In the first place, I'm not trying to make art.]

Some constellations looked disappointed at my words. The Morning Star goddess laughed like it was ridiculous.

[You are speaking vulgar words. Yes, good. Then what is new about your story?]

The atmosphere of the constellations was changing again. As expected, I couldn't throw a few things around casually. I faced them and declared in my true voice,

[In the story I'm creating, there will be an end to all scenarios.]

The end of all the scenarios. The atmosphere instantly froze.

[H-How dare you…]

Some people muttered while other constellations became pale. There was a backlash that didn't occur even when I mentioned the first generation. Perhaps it was because I broke their taboo.

I felt the gazes pouring towards me and closed my eyes. This wouldn't dramatically change the situation. However, my story would remain deep in the mind of the constellations. It was enough for now.

[…Crazy bastard.]

By the way, it seemed that the impression I gave them was too deep. The voice filled with hostility continued.

[I knew that there were all types of crazy people in the Gourmet Association but this time it is quite good. Are you in your right mind to say such words?]

It was a green doll with a dragon's head. It was the Brash Swamp Predator. A constellation who was active in the previous scenario. His smile was full of ridicule as he continued,

[Then what do you want us to help you with? Let's go together to the end of the scenario, is that what you want to say?]

[That's right. I came here to find constellations who will reach the end of the scenario with me.]

My calm declaration caused the countenance of the constellations to change. Some of them had already joined a nebula. Thus, my words would sound like a provocation.

[Nebula? What is the name of the nebula?]

[There is no name yet. I haven't formally established it.]

[Hmm… how many founding members are there?]

[Two.]

The scorn of the constellations increased. I felt a bit upset but I put up with it

In any case, this was considered 'courtesy' in the Gourmet Association. I didn't think any of them would just accept it.

The Morning Star Goddess asked, [One is you and the other person? Is it a constellation?]

[It isn't a constellation…]

I hesitated to reveal Yoo Joonghyuk. The Brash Swamp Predator wondered, [Perhaps it is that guy?]

Images were playing from a panel on the screen. It was playing the finals of the martial arts competition in First Murim.

–It is finally the confrontation you are waiting for!

The camera focused on a man as the moderator spoke.

–The disciple of the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint, Supreme King Yoo Joonghyuk!

As expected, Yoo Joonghyuk had safely reached the finals. Then the opponent…?

–One of the Murim's 10 Grand Masters, the Ice Flower Goddess, Zhuge Lingling!

A splendid spotlight shone on Zhuge Lingling, who was dressed in a light t-shirt and jeans.

The Ice Flower Goddess wasn't an easy opponent. She was one of the transcendent existences that represented Murim. Originally, Yoo Joonghyuk wouldn't have been able to compete with her. It depended on how much progress he made in the Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship in the meantime…

[Cough…]

My mind became wide awake the moment someone made a sound. I looked around. Then I gradually became angry.

…Dammit. Someone had uploaded this video. I stared at Anna Croft who was standing in a corner of the stage. However, based on her expression, it didn't seem to be her. If so, the video…

[Huhu… a feast of mortals…]

The Brash Swamp Predator laughed.

[Gosh, this is really losing steam. An existence that just reached the narrative level and a trivial mortal is discussing the 'end of the story'?]

Several constellations laughed like they had been waiting. It was a laugh that denied all the words I had spoken. Maybe I expected it to be like this. It might've been wrong to expect anything from the constellations in the first place.

[Hahaha, what is the modifier of this constellation? Was it Demon King of Bragging?]

[Queen of the Underworld! You brought a very delightful friend!]

On the screen, Yoo Joonghyuk was confronting the Ice Flower Goddess. The Brash Swamp Predator chuckled like he thought it was cute.

[This scenario seems tough for him, let alone the end of the scenarios.]

I quietly clenched my fists. I knew the path Yoo Joonghyuk would walk and the achievement he would make in the future. I knew very well that the hard-working guy would one day kill every member of this damn Gourmet Association.

Yet in the eyes of the constellations present here, the current Yoo Joonghyuk was just a trivial mortal.

[This worked out well. I am bored because the scenario is over. Do you want to make a bet? Who will win between the two bugs?]

[Oh, good, good!]

A number of constellations agreed with the proposal of the Brash Swamp Predator. Then a system message appeared.

[A new sub-scenario has arrived!]

[The sub scenario — Gourmet Association Betting has begun.]

Numerous selection windows emerged in front of the constellations.

[I'll bet 50,000 coins on that female.]

The moment the Brash Swamp Predator cried out, the other constellations laughed and bet a few coins. Then the Brash Swamp Predator glanced at me.

[Newcomer. You should also bet.]

[I already did it.]

[Who did you bet on?]

[100,000 coins to Yoo Joonghyuk.]

The fact that I bet twice as much as him caused the Brash Swamp Predator's eyes to widen.

[Cheeky fellow. You will regret it.]

He seemed to know how this bet would turn out. In the distance, Anna Croft was watching me with serene eyes. Yoo Joonghyuk's struggle was entering the mid-stages on the screen.

[Hoh, he is fairly decent? Should I make him my incarnation?]

Yoo Joonghyuk seemed to be pushed at first but his momentum was slowly becoming stronger. Some of the constellations admired the unexpected flow of events. Then they shut up as soon as the Brash Swamp Predator glared at them.

As expected from Yoo Joonghyuk. His encounter with the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint was much earlier than planned and his Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship had reached higher than the original level.

Inside the stadium, the Breaking the Sky energy exploded and the Ice Flower Goddess coughed up blood as she rolled through the dust. The situation had completely tilted to one side. The story flowed to an unexpected place and the expression of the Brash Swamp Predator changed.

[…Hmm, it isn't fun like this.]

The moment I had an ominous feeling, sparks appeared around several members of the Gourmet Association, including the Brash Swamp Predator. I quickly realized what they were doing. Their sparks spread to the screen showing the martial arts competition. To be exact, it was to the Ice Flower Goddess.

–Aaaaack!

The Ice Flower Goddess screamed and this was followed by the host's words.

–W-What is this?

Yoo Joonghyuk also seemed surprised. Yoo Joonghyuk's expression stiffened as the Ice Flower Goddess mutated into a monster. I stared at the Brash Swamp Predator and spoke in a cold voice, [Didn't you say this was a bet?]

The Brash Swamp Predator laughed.

[I didn't say there could be no interference.]

Thanks to the probability supplied by many constellations, the body of the Ice Flower Goddess was covered in green scales.

Both Yoo Joonghyuk and I knew what it meant. It was a constellation's 'advent'. It was the same in Peace Land and Dark Castle. At the time, Yoo Joonghyuk and I fought together but not anymore.

[Exclusive skill, Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint has been activated!]

[You can't connect with the current target.]

…Damn jerk, what was he doing at a time like this? It was impossible to use Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint because Yoo Joonghyuk wasn't thinking about me at all.

On the screen, the Ice Flower Goddess who was half a green dragon roared.

The Brash Swamp Predator. The ancient being who was born on the planet 'Selegedon' was a constellation who just reached the narrative-grade like me. However, the number of stories he accumulated was far beyond me so our abilities were on a different level.

With one breath, the monster half-destroyed the venue of the martial arts competition. Maybe he signed a Sponsor Contract with the Ice Flower Goddess for a short period of time. The low rate of synchronization meant not a lot of his strength was expressed. Still, it would be nothing to end the competition since it was strengthened with such a degree of probability.

It would be hard to deal with a narrative-grade constellation who had accumulated such stories, even if it was Yoo Joonghyuk.

[You look uneasy. Don't you believe in your colleague?]

I looked around and saw Persephone smiling as usual.

I didn't believe in him? It was a natural story. I couldn't believe in that sunfish who often died…

[I believe in him.]

Even so, I answered it like this. Persephone's eyes flashed at my natural answer.

[In the first place, I came here because I believed in him.]

I stared at Yoo Joonghyuk on the screen. It didn't matter how many times he was defeated, broken or felt despair. He was a person who didn't give up until the end. If I couldn't believe in him, who could I believe in the first place? Even if this round failed…

This guy would surely see the ending of this world eventually.

I slowly closed my eyes before opening them again.

[I'll raise my bet. I'll make it one million coins.]

Chapter 245: Ep. 46 - New Story, II

[The constellation 'Demon King of Salvation' has placed one million coins on the incarnation 'Yoo Joonghyuk'.]

The system message resonated in the hall and the attention of the constellations focused on me. I bet my money on a fight that was obviously disadvantageous. My actions intrigued some of the constellations.

[The constellation 'Thursday's Thunder' is showing favourability to you.]

[The constellation 'Morning Star Goddess' is showing favourability to you.]

However, only a few constellations showed such a response. Most of the constellations were swept away by the heat of the gambling.

[Hahaha! You are crazy! If so, I'll bet 500,000 coins!]

The Brash Swamp Predator, who bet on the Ice Flower Goddess from the beginning, opened his mouth first. Then the watching constellations started to join one by one.

[The constellation 'Tranquil Island Gourmet' has placed 20,000 coins on the constellation 'Zhuge Lingling'.]

[The constellation 'Master of the White Castle' has placed 30,000 coins on the constellation 'Zhuge Lingling'.]

…

The messages were pouring out. Most of them were messages giving coins to the Ice Flower Goddess, Zhuge Lingling. I was the only one who was on Yoo Joonghyuk's side.

[The constellation 'Queen of the Darkest Spring' has placed 300,000 coins on the incarnation 'Yoo Joonghyuk'.]

…Huh?

I reflexively glanced at Persephone who was giving a mysterious smile. I asked in a slightly worried tone, […Will it be okay?]

[Um? Why are you asking if it will be okay?]

I was the one who had nothing to reply. Maybe it was nothing for Persephone to bet 300,000 coins. By the way, there was a meddlesome man beside me.

[Hum, old hag. Doesn't Hades nag you when you spend money like this?]

[I'm not a grandmother so the Mass Production Maker should mind your words.]

[An old woman at your age should eat moderately…]

[Watch your mouth unless you want to be stuck in Tartarus… wait, did you bet as well?]

The Mass Production Maker laughed at Persephone's question.

[The constellation 'Mass Production Maker' has placed 150,000 coins on the incarnation 'Yoo Joonghyuk'.]

The Mass Production Maker looked at me and said, [I didn't bet a lot because I didn't receive that much gold from this month's Dokkaebi Bag settlement.]

In fact, he bet the exact price of Eoren's Sword that I bought. Maybe there would be no income apart from the commission fee.

In any case, I was grateful to them. Thanks to this, more excited constellations were betting coins.

[The constellation 'Goddess of Joy and Celebration' has placed 50,000 coins on the constellation 'Zhuge Lingling'.]

The coins placed on the bets snowballed and soon surpassed six million coins. Now the constellations of the Gourmet Association couldn't help shifting their gaze to one place.

[Die! Kill him quickly!]

[I'll kill you if I lose my coins!]

They were no different from the human spectators in the arena… I felt strangely excited despite experiencing these 'stories'. The Mass Production Maker laughed as if he read my heart.

[I've gone through these 'stories' so I'm hungrier for these stories.]

[…Maybe not.]

[Whether it is a constellation or human, they are all just children in front of the story. By the way, is there a chance of winning?]

[Do you feel uneasy?]

[No, it isn't like that…]

[If there isn't a chance to win, I'll have to make it.]

To be precise, I had to make it a high multiplier. If Yoo Joonghyuk died, this round would be ruined. If the situation was like this, it was better to do it properly.

[The exclusive skill, 'Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint' has been activated!]

We couldn't lose.

[You can't connect with the current target.]

Shit, Yoo Joonghyuk… I was still getting this message. However, it wasn't the only method.

"Biyoo."

[Baat.]

As I waited, Biyoo moved her hand and a personal panel popped up in front of me. The screen soon unfolded.

The Brash Swamp Predator cried out strangely and let out a terrible poisonous fog.

–Uwaaaack!

Everyone touched by the smoke screamed as they oxidized. Judging from the Brash Swamp Predator's state, he was using roughly one-third of his status. One-third was enough to ruin the venue. The surrounding constellations were also supporting his use of probability.

The grounds of the venue were split apart by the monster's feet. It was a terrible destructive power. However, it wasn't as strong compared to Peace Land or Dark Castle. At those times, the outer gods had descended.

Still, there was no guarantee that this situation was better than Peace Land or Dark Castle. In Peace Land, there was the Paradox Baekchung, Kyrgios. In Dark Castle, there was Goryeo's First Sword.

…Then who was present now?

[The constellation 'Demon King of Salvation' is looking at incarnation Yoo Joonghyuk.]

Yoo Joonghyuk frowned at my message. "…Kim Dokja. Is your work finished?"

[The constellation 'Demon King of Salvation' says it is still in progress.]

"Still?"

At this moment, a shadow of suspicion filled Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes. Yoo Joonghyuk stared at the Brash Swamp Predator and asked, "Perhaps… did this guy appear because of you?"

The bastard noticed quickly.

"…Kim Dokja?" He was filled with tremendous anger.

I reached out as an apology.

[The constellation 'Demon King of Salvation' has sponsored 100 coins to the incarnation 'Yoo Joonghyuk'.]

"I don't need it!"

Then the Brash Swamp Predator moved. He was an ancient lizard that governed all the swamps on his planet. The embodiment of his head was suddenly rising from the back of the Ice Flower Goddess who had become a lizard.

There was a terrible scream as the incarnation was deprived of her body. The lizard screamed and rushed forward, swinging a huge tail towards Yoo Joonghyuk. The tail of the lizard smashed through Yoo Joonghyuk's Strong Self-Defense and he was hit hard.

"Kuk…"

Yoo Joonghyuk didn't seem to have reached the second stage of transcendence yet. Well, it would be impossible for even Yoo Joonghyuk to reach the second stage of transcendence in just two weeks.

It could be called a devil's talent that he could drive the first stage Ice Flower Goddess to such a state.

Then there wasn't much time.

[The constellation 'Demon King of Salvation' is making a request.]

Yoo Joonghyuk had experienced Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint several times and should I what I was asking for. By the way, Yoo Joonghyuk's reaction was unexpected. "I don't want to."

[The constellation 'Demon King of Salvation' says if this continues, everyone will die.]

"I won't die."

[The constellation 'Demon King of Salvation' says it isn't the time to be stubborn.]

I wasn't convinced I could knock down that monster even if I used Electrification in Yoo Joonghyuk's body. There might be a way to use the Fourth Wall like last time but it was only possible for constellations who used mental skills.

Yoo Joonghyuk used swift footwork to attack and the Brash Swamp Predator once again prepared his poison. Based on the number of sparks around his mouth, this was a really devastating attack.

I urged Yoo Joonghyuk but Yoo Joonghyuk was adamant. "Go and do what you have to do, Kim Dokja."

I panicked at the unexpected action. No, why was this bastard so stubborn today? I hurriedly looked around. Since it was like this, I had to borrow another hand, even if the martial arts competition was ruined.

In this place, there was only one person strong enough to help us. The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint, Namgung Minyoung. She was a powerhouse who wouldn't be pushed by Kyrgios or Cheok Jungyeong. Thus, she could deal with this monster alone. Soon afterwards, I found the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint sitting in the audience while eating dumplings.

[The constellation 'Demon King of Salvation' is asking for help.]

Despite my message, the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint just kept chewing the dumplings. She sometimes fed dumplings to the Breaking the Sky Master lying next to her. In the seats below them, Jang Hayoung and Han Myungoh were sitting beside each other while also eating dumplings.

…What were these humans doing? Then I once again sent a message.

[The constellation 'Demon King of Salvation'…]

At this moment, Yoo Joonghyuk spoke. "…Shin Yoosung. Are you listening?"

Biyoo appeared along with these words.

[…Baat?]

"Turn off Kim Dokja's screen."

Biyoo glanced at Yoo Joonghyuk like it was difficult. I didn't know how much of Shin Yoosung's memories survived but when I thought about it, these two people had a very complex relationship.

Nevertheless, this was a story from before her rebirth. Now it was different. There was no reason for Biyoo to listen to Yoo Joonghyuk when she was my dokkaebi. Yet Biyoo sitting on my shoulders suddenly looked at me with a sorry expression.

[Baat, baaat…]

"…Biyoo?"

[Baaat… Ku…kuooh…]

There was absurd acting and Biyoo pretended to fall asleep. At the same time, my personal panel turned off and Yoo Joonghyuk's appearance disappeared.

[You have been disconnected.]

"No, what is this…!"

I didn't know what was happening. Why did Biyoo act like this all of a sudden? There was no mention of this situation in the revised Ways of Survival?

–Waaahhhhhhhh!

There was a sudden scream and I turned my attention to the panel installed on the stage.

[That…?]

The surprised constellations started moving towards the panel. Persephone and the Mass Production Maker were also approaching the panel. The screen was completely obscured by the more than 100 constellations gathered in front of it.

*

[No, wait a minute! Let me look!]

I tried to enter any gaps but the cluster of constellations was too hard. All I could hear was the sound of thunder from the screen. Still, it was clear from the sound alone.

It was the Breaking the Sky Thunder Sword. It was the real thunder sword, unlike what I had stolen. It seemed to be a devastating hit as the Brash Swamp Predator let out a huge scream.

The answer was obvious even without looking. Fortunately, there was the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint.

I let out a sigh of relief. Yoo Joonghyuk was unharmed because the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint had acted. Thanks to this, the martial arts competition would be cancelled but it was better than Yoo Joonghyuk dying.

Then someone suddenly shouted,

–Oh, the disciple of the Breaking the Sky Sword!

–Breaking the Sky Sword Beauty!

…Breaking the Sky Sword Beauty?

[We shouldn't disparage an incarnation's martial arts.]

[H-How is this… wasn't it only the power of transcendence…?]

[Hahaha, it is an interesting ability. Is it something that Asgardian person did?]

[It isn't to my taste.]

The true voices in the halls were becoming heated up for an unknown reason.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is astonished.]

[The constellation who likes to change sex is struggling with pleasure.]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is shedding resentful tears.]

The channel and the banquet hall. I was dizzy from the indirect messages coming from everywhere.

[My coins! No! My coins…!]

[Uwaaaaaah!]

No, what the hell was going on? I held my breath and used my 'status' to move through the constellations. I barely reached the front of the panel and another tremendous lightning attack came from the screen. The entire screen turned white from the powerful lightning.

The light slowly faded and once it disappeared, black ashes were scattered like snow. In front of my eyes, one man was standing still. It was the appearance of Yoo Joonghyuk who had raised his sword with an arrogant expression.

Under his feet while a giant lizard charred by lightning. Yoo Joonghyuk stepped off the lizard's body and walked to one corner of the venue, pulling out something black that had been plugged in.

–There is no second place in this competition.

It was the Black Heavenly Demon Sword.

–Thus, this is mine.

Then the host's voice rang out.

–The winner of the Martial Arts Competition has been decided!

I didn't know how such a thing was possible. I rubbed my eyes and glanced again. The situation was still the same. It wasn't the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint but… Yoo Joonghyuk?

–The winner is the Breaking the Sky Sword Beauty, Yoo Joonghyuk!

No, what the hell was the Breaking the Sky Sword Beauty…? My questions didn't last for long. It was due to the overwhelming system messages that entered my ears.

[The sub scenario — Gourmet Association Betting has been completed.]

[You have won the bet.]

[You have acquired a new story!]

[The story 'Miracle Gambler' has been acquired.]

Then there was the sound of coins falling.

[The sub scenario compensation has been acquired.]

I reflexively checked my number of coins. The numbers slowly creaked up, as if it was too hard to handle.

[Coins Possessed: 1,986,725 C]

…

[Coins Possessed: 2,790,876 C]

…

[Coins Possessed: 3,890,875 C]

The coins that the constellations bet were being stacked up like snow on my balance.

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* Official novel illustration (canonical)

Chapter 246: Ep. 46 - New Story, III

[Coins Possessed: 5,490,875 C]

The endlessly climbing coins finally stopped at the peak. I doubted my eyes several times as I stared at this unbelievable number.

[…Young man, how much did you earn?]

I looked around and saw the Mass Production Maker's blank expression. The old man must've made a great profit since he bet 150,000 coins earlier. The dividend must be at least five times…

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' envies you.]

[The constellation 'Loan Shark Aiming for the Heart' is craving your coins!]

Even the always stern looking Persephone was smiling. For reference, the queen of the Underworld bet 300,000 coins.

…The Underworld must've gained a lot?

[Nonsense! This is ridiculous!]

Most of the constellations were filled with great despair apart from the three of us. I just needed to see their expressions to know how much coins they had lost. The constellations who bet a small amount to relieve their boredom looked sad but those who bet over 100,000 coins…

[Uwaaah!]

They were filled with anger. There were some constellations on the verge of bankruptcy. For example, that guy.

[The constellation 'Brash Swamp Predator' is revealing enormous hostility towards you.]

[Grab that guy!]

The constellations who lost their coins, including the Brash Swamp Predator' were approaching me. He lost his reason along with the coins and was prepared to throw himself into Han River.

The constellations who noticed withdrew from my side. However, there was one constellation who didn't back down. It was the queen of the Underworld, Persephone.

[Everybody back off. How long are you going to act so ugly?]

Her 'status' was reminiscent of the cold night air and the approaching constellations faltered. However, some constellations were so agitated that they couldn't be cooled by the night breeze.

[Queen of the Underworld! Did you win some coins just now?]

[Get out of here! It has nothing to do with you!]

The atmosphere became heated and some of the watching high-ranking constellations intervened.

[Maintain your courtesy.]

It was the Morning Star Goddess who was familiar with Persephone. Nevertheless, the Brash Swamp Predator had already lost his senses and didn't hesitate.

[…Courtesy? Fuck courtesy…!]

As soon as the Brash Swamp Predator released his status, the other constellations also raised their status. Powerful sparks filled the air as a notice of the imminent conflict.

[The wish ticket used by the constellation 'Demon King of Salvation' is in effect.]

Suddenly, intense sparks filled the hall and the movements of the agitated constellations stopped. A portal opened on the white ceiling while everyone hesitated. Beyond the portal was a sinister aura. It wasn't an outer god but it was clearly something immense.

Who was this? This was obviously above the highest ranked constellations…

The atmosphere tore apart and a strange creature appeared through the portal. The mysterious aura around his body was unmatched but he was neither a god or constellation. The man was dressed in a magician's costume with an old-fashioned cane.

[…A dokkaebi?]

It was a dokkaebi.

[It has been a while, constellations.]

The hall fell silent with a single sentence, like cold water had been poured on it. It was an overbearing silence. The enraged constellations who had just been screaming were holding their breaths.

[The rules of the Star Stream binds all constellations of the Gourmet Association.]

All the constellations present were constricted by the probability. It was absolutely impossible for an ordinary dokkaebi, even if they had the channel operating rights.

[U-Uhhh…]

The Brash Swamp Predator, who didn't falter despite the threats from high ranking constellations, was taking a step back with a white face. I had seen a description of this dokkaebi in the original novel.

｢ Most incarnations think there are only four ranks of dokkaebis. The lesser-grade, intermediate grade, semi-advanced and senior dokkaebis. However, there are dokkaebis above them. ｣

｢ The dokkaebis of the Star Stream, those with up to twelve coloured horns are the 'first seat'.｣

This dokkaebi had seven red horns coming from his head. The Star Stream called them 'great dokkaebis'.

[Sorry but the party will end here.]

As I read Ways of Survival, I had a question about the relationship between the constellations and dokkaebis.

The dokkaebis might have special powers but a high-ranking constellation could kill one or two dokkaebis. Yet even the strong constellations didn't touch the dokkaebis. No matter how annoying the scenario, they never tried to kill the dokkaebis.

…Why? The reason was right in front of me. A single hand gesture trapped all of the Gourmet Association in a net of probability.

I had never seen such dense sparks before. This was the power of the 'story'. Perhaps it was a story borrowed from the most powerful beings in the world.

Whether it was narrative-grade or historical-grade, they clearly couldn't escape from the storm of sparks without being destroyed.

The high-grade constellations such as Thursday's Thunder or Morning Star Goddess didn't complain and only showed unpleasant expressions. It was Persephone who opened her mouth first. [Great Dokkaebi Halong. It's been a while.]

The great dokkaebi slowly looked around.

[It has been a while, Queen of the Underworld.]

[Is the Story King well?]

[The king is safe.]

Due to the opponent, Persephone's expression was in a state of tension that I had never seen before.

[Why did you come here? In addition, leading dokkaebis of the executive branch…]

The dokkaebis of the executive department whom I had once seen were standing in a line behind the great dokkaebis. The fearsome pressure they emitted was no less than the Gourmet Association constellations. It was natural.

The dokkaebis of the executive branch were once constellations. Instead of replying immediately to Persephone's words, the great dokkaebi swept over the constellations.

[We are here to pick up the constellations who borrowed coins.]

[…Coins?]

Several constellations groaned and started to run away. The Mass Production Maker muttered with understanding.

[They are really foolish…]

It seemed that some constellations had borrowed coins from the dokkaebis to make their bets. Funnily enough, one of them was the Brash Swamp Predator.

[Uhh… move, move out of the way!]

He rushed to a sparkling wall and tried to rip apart the net of probability.

[Kuaaaack!]

The great dokkaebi's net was powerful. The moment he reached the net of sparks, the Brash Swamp Predator screamed. The dokkaebis of the executive branch bound his incarnation body.

[R-Release me!]

I stared at the rows of constellations and thought about why the dokkaebis appeared here. I didn't know the exact reason but I wondered if it was because the probability was influenced by my wish. In this world, the dokkaebis were the most sensitive to probability.

In a flash, the dokkaebis arrested all the people who owed debts and started to transport them across the portal. It was a swift move like there was nothing to see.

The great dokkaebi didn't say goodbye. He stared as if warning the constellations before turning to leave.

The moment before the portal was about to close, the great dokkaebi glanced at me. Beyond his cool eyes, someone was talking to me.

「 Don't be too loud, baby. The 'king' is watching you. 」

The great dokkaebi left and the Gourmet Association ended its meeting. It was natural for the party to end. It was time for the respective constellations to go back.

I took advantage of the chaos in the banquet hall to slip out of the castle. A significant number of constellations were dragged away by the bureau but there were still some hostile to me. Thus, I needed to get out of here before there was trouble.

However, I stood at the entrance of Oro Castle and encountered a difficulty I hadn't thought of.

…How did I get back?

There was no guide or carriage. If I delayed here, I might be caught by other constellations…

At this time, there was an engine sound and something appeared around the corner of the castle. It

was a luxury sports car with a streamlined body. It was a car reminiscent of the SSS-class Ferrarigini.

Wait, the person who made that car…

The sports car stopped in front of me with a loud sound. The window rolled down and an elderly man wearing sunglasses appeared.

[Get on, young man.]

It was the Mass Production Maker.

The moment the rear doors opened, the central body of the car behind longer and changed into the form of a limousine. I felt pure admiration at the sight as I got into the back seat.

How many people could ride in this? Was he selling this car? Now I had money…

The body was made from solid protective material that adhered not just to the outside but the inside as well. I drank ice tea from the refrigerator in the limousine and looked around the vehicle.

The Mass Production Maker was in the driver's seat while Persephone was in the passenger's seat. Persephone had been communicating with someone since earlier. Perhaps it was related to the great dokkaebi who appeared.

"Mass Production Maker, thank you for your consideration. Still, I have a question."

[Hmm, what is it?]

"…Why is this woman with you?"

I glared at Anna Croft who was sitting next to me. The Mass Production Maker smiled sweetly. [Huhu, I promised to give her a ride. Don't fight too much.]

It was a very unpleasant situation but I couldn't complain. I sighed and examined my companions. There were three Asgardians along with myself in the back seat.

There was the exhausted Iris and stunned Selena Kim. Anna Croft looked at their condition before suddenly speaking to me. "…Iris would've lived even if you didn't help."

"I know. Perhaps Thursday's Thunder would've saved her. Isn't that right?"

Anna Croft bit her lips at my words. Anna Croft was a more brutal woman than anyone else but she didn't lose those who were her 'own'. In face, Anna Croft's colleagues didn't die in the similar event that she held in the original novel.

Rather, they awakened through the scenario. It was the other people who died.

"It was Iris' chance to get a good sponsor and you ruined everything. The future I saw wasn't like this…"

"She wouldn't have wanted to get a sponsor in that way."

"You don't know who the constellation was."

[Tsk tsk. I told you to get along but I guess it isn't possible.]

The form of the limousine changed and my seat showed strange movements. My vision blurred and I was sitting in the passenger's seat where Persephone had been. The Mass Production Maker had changed my position with Persephone.

Maybe he didn't want to hear fighting or perhaps there was a sound barrier between the front and back seats.

The Mass Production Maker told me, [You're on bad terms with incarnations as well as constellations. Don't make too many enemies.]

"I don't want to make enemies either."

In fact, I came here to seek 'colleagues' rather than enemies. As a result, it turned out like this…

The Mass Production Maker took out an electronic cigarette and spoke, [I felt anger in your story. There is a strong rage against this world and the constellations.]

I tried to say something but fell silent.

[I know that you saw many things that shouldn't be seen today.]

"Not at all'.

The Mass Production Maker laughed. I somehow felt awkward and took out my smartphone. The darkness was like a screen in the front of the car. The Mass Production Maker gazed silently at the darkness and there was a slight sadness.

[Still, don't hate them so much.]

It took some time for me to understand his words.

[They just couldn't stand the loneliness. Whether it is a garbage or a noble constellation… they all acted like that because they like the story.]

I was confused because I didn't know the Mass Production Maker would say such words. A strange feeling of betrayal filled my chest. "This doesn't mean they can trample on the lives of incarnations."

If they liked the story, they could do their own scenarios. Instead of ruining the scenario of others, they could move on to the next scenario. Turning to another scenario and selling their minds was just avoiding reality.

I tried to say this. At that moment, the smartphone turned on and Ways of Survival came into view. The last sentence I had been reading was on the screen.

I stared blankly at the sentences and the Mass Production Maker asked, [You are always looking at that. Are you going to write something on an empty notebook?]

I couldn't find a way to answer the question, but I soon smiled weakly and replied, "…I just feel steady when I look at this."

In the distance, the darkness of the Dark Dimension could be seen. A light emerged from an empty window.

Finally, it was time to go back.

Chapter 247: Ep. 47 - Demon King Selection, I

It had been a week since I went to the Gourmet Association. During this week, I was very busy. There were only four days left until the Demon King Selection. Until then, I had to complete all of my preparations.

*

Apart from the Black Heavenly Demon Sword in Yoo Joonghyuk's hands, there were some usable hidden pieces in Murim. I opened the first revision of Ways of Survival in order to find the sub scenarios that would let me get the hidden pieces. During this time, I read the revised text and reviewed the important parts but there were still many missing pieces.

"You're busy as soon as you come here. I've barely seen your face." Jang Hayoung, who was wearing large sleeveless clothes that didn't fit him, followed after me for 30 minutes.

I stared at him with a frown and asked, "Shouldn't you be training?"

Jang Hayoung stretched out his lips and replied, "…Haven't I been working hard?"

"What is hard? You were eating dumplings."

"Can't I do closed door training while eating dumplings?"

I wondered why he was bothering me when something came to mind. "Oh, I heard you finished third in the competition? It is a big deal."

Jang Hayoung shrugged and pretended to look elsewhere. "It wasn't a big deal."

However, the curve of his mouth showed that he felt pretty great. I knew why he was chasing after me like this… dishonest guy.

"Did you get it? The Demon Spirit Bead?"

"Yes.

"Give it to me."

"Why?" Jang Hayoung stepped back with a suspicious look.

I sighed and told him, "I'm not going to take it away. You can't eat it like this anyway."

Based on his dark expression, he had already heard about it from Yoo Joonghyuk. I'm sure he told the story while picking out the Black Heavenly Demon Sword.

「 If you eat it, you will experience a qi deviation and all the blood vessels in your body will explode, killing you. There is only one person here who can safely absorb the Demon Spirit Bead. 」

…I thought this and understood why Jang Hayoung was acting like this. "You don't have to give it to me if you don't want to. You are the one who earned it yourself."

It couldn't be helped if Jang Hayoung didn't believe me since not enough trust had been built up yet. At this moment, Jang Hayoung extended a small hand. "…It isn't like that. In the first place, I wouldn't have gained this if it wasn't for you."

A small pill fell into my hand with a thud. This was one of the three major drugs of First Murim, the Demon Spirit Bead. I spoke with a smile, "Wait and see."

It was a drug that a terrible person from the Blood Demon School made in the past by refining the blood of 1,000 people. It was a cursed pill that could gain the best power out of the Conception Vessel[1] but turned the person who took it crazy due to the curse of the souls.

In the original novel, Yoo Joonghyuk always found it delicious but Jang Hayoung would surely die if he took it.

"Let's see…"

However, as with any scenario, it wasn't impossible to use a cursed item. In fact, I clearly remembered a scene from Ways of Survival where the Flying Fox absorbed this tribulation.

「 All I need is three Great Return Pills. After all, everything is about balance and harmony. If demonic energy is a problem, we can supply it regularly. 」

The curse could be avoided if three Great Return Pills were ground together with the Demon Spirit Bead.

It was easier said than done. The problem was how to get the Demon Spirit Bead, one of the top three drugs, along with three Great Return Pills. However, this wasn't a big problem for me.

"Biyoo."

I called Biyoo and opened the Dokkaebi Bag. The Great Return Pill was already on the 'Recommended Goods List'. The dokkaebis' big data was scary.

[Recommended Products List]

* Great Return Pill—200,000 C

Stock: 5

200,000 coins. I normally would've been distressed by the price but not anymore. I deliberately switched the screen to public and purchased the goods.

[600,000 coins have been consumed.]

[You have purchased three Great Return Pills.]

Then channel messages kept appearing.

[Some constellations envy your overspending.]

[A few constellations are curious about the performance of the Great Return Pill.]

[Some constellations say they will sponsor 500 coins if you tell them the performance of the Great Return Pill.]

"6-600,000 coins?!" The passing Han Myungoh shook while holding a bowl of dog food. He was probably preparing a meal for the Breaking the Sky Master. "That… I heard you were rich."

"Things turned out well. Please take this and grind it together."

"W-What is this? Is it a panacea?"

"Don't be curious. If you eat it wrong, you will be cursed by a demon king."

Han Myungoh paled after hearing about the demon king's curse and acted quickly after taking the pills from me. The four pills were turned into a fine powder. I held out the bowl towards Jang Hayoung who told me, "I can't eat powder."

"Endure it this time. Block your nose and swallow it with water."

"By the way… can I really eat this?"

"it won't be much help to Yoo Joonghyuk or I if we eat it. You're different."

Yoo Joonghyuk already had enough of a magic power system in place even if he didn't eat the Demon Spirit Bead. Meanwhile, I had the Broken Heart of a Young Gold Dragon. However, Jang Hayoung was suffering from a lack of magic power.

Jang Hayoung kept hesitating so I told him, "If you don't want to eat it, give it to me. Anyhow, you have no courage."

"I'll eat it!" Jang Hayoung poured the powdered medicine into his mouth and swallowed the bitter taste with water. The moment Jang Hayoung put down the bowl, the Breaking the Sky Master who had been waiting for the opportunity rushed over and eagerly licked the bowl.

Jang Hayoung looked at his condition and cocked his head with a slight smile. "…I don't feel anything special?"

"The efficacy should appear by tomorrow. It will take time for the pills to mix with the body's energy."

Jang Hayoung nodded like he understood. Then Han Myungoh stepped in again from where he was listening. "Look, Dokja-ssi."

I glanced back and something I expected had showed up.

"This car… it is from the Gourmet Association?"

The car he mentioned was the X-grade Ferrarigini left in one corner of the yard. I stared at the sleek black body that could even cross the fault lines of the Dark Dimension and the words of the Mass Production Maker suddenly came to mind.

–Don't make too many enemies.

He was definitely a different type from the constellations I knew. I would've had a better memory of him if he had given me this car for free.

"Is the Gourmet Association a charitable organization? I bought it with a lease."

"Lease? H-How much…"

"It is 50,000 coins a month."

"5-50,000 coins? How many coins did you earn?"

"Roughly 4.8 million coins."

Jang Hayoung and Han Myungoh's mouths dropped open as they heard '4.8 million coins'.

Jang Hayoung asked, "Excuse me… do you have an incarnation?"

"Why? Do you want to be my incarnation?"

I smiled at him and Jang Hayoung shouted, "I was just wondering! In addition, I've already decided on a constellation."

"Constellation? Who?"

I asked with slight nervousness. I didn't want Jang Hayoung as an incarnation but things would become complicated if Jang Hayoung picked the wrong constellation. Then Jang Hayoung unexpectedly replied, "The Demon King of Salvation."

"What?"

"I want to be his incarnation."

I wanted to make a joke when I saw Jang Hayoung's intense eyes. Then I thought about it and realized that he still hadn't heard my modifier. In the original, he was a person with great senses…

No, there was no reason for him to think I was the Demon King of Salvation in the first place. I suddenly wanted to tease this person. "Will he accept you? Have you contacted him?"

"Not yet…"

I saw Jang Hayoung's blushing face and realized he really didn't know who I was. It was a complicated feeling.

Then the watching Han Myungoh interrupted. "You still don't know his modifier?"

"I don't know it. Should I know?"

Before I could stop him, Han Myungoh pointed at me. "That friend is the Demon King of Salvation."

* * *

For the next two days, Jang Hayoung avoided me. The usually lazy person suddenly never emerged from his training. Thus, I was stressed because I was left alone with Yoo Joonghyuk in the training field.

BLACKBOX

*

"You must've done something useless again, Kim Dokja."

"…It's nothing."

Yoo Joonghyuk scratched the ground with the Black Heavenly Demon Sword and left. It was an action that appeared when he was in a good mood… this jerk, he seemed excited about his new sword. In the training field, the sound of Jang Hayoung punching a pile was heard repeatedly. It sounded similar to when I kicked my futon every night.

"You didn't seem like a constellation but you have their habit of peeking."

I turned around and saw a super tall woman. I was about to open my mouth when the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint spoke, "If you don't add 'nim', I will hit your arse."

"…Breaking the Sky Sword Saint-nim."

I couldn't be like Yoo Joonghyuk just because of a single syllable. "Have you gone to Tartarus?"

"Not yet. However, I got an appointment with the 'Queen of the Underworld' thanks to you."

"I'm glad."

Perhaps it was due to the anticipation that she would meet her kin but a mild shadow passed over the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint's face. The harvest of this journey was that I obtained her.

The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint was one of the strongest transcendents in Ways of Survival. Her presence alone might we might be able to somehow get through the Demon King Selection.

I opened my mouth, "I have a question. Can I ask it?"

"I'll allow it."

"Why did you teach Jang Hayoung your martial arts?"

"That person has talent. It is possible to achieve a new type of transcendence if I polish him well."

I knew what she meant. Perhaps the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint felt the 'wall' that was inside Jang Hayoung. However, that shouldn't be the reason.

"You know that he is a man."

Originally, the Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship was only for women. Yoo Joonghyuk might be the exception but this school had never accepted many disciples.

"You're still young. There isn't only one interpretation of a story."

The words were cryptic. Maybe the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint noticed that Jang Hayoung was a woman in his previous life. Then the story of the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint began. "I remember a man I knew before."

"A man?"

"Yes, a man."

At this moment, I fully understood the meaning of 'there isn't only one interpretation of a story' spoken by the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint. The word she chose was confusing because it could be a man or her man, i.e. a lover… no, the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint shouldn't have a lover.

"He was very handsome."

In the original novel, the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint never mentioned a man so I felt something strange.

"You aren't trying to say that… Jang Hayoung is like your former lover, right?"

I was joking but unexpectedly, the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint answered seriously. "His handsome looks are a resemblance."

At this point, I wondered if she accepted Yoo Joonghyuk just because he was handsome. The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint didn't care about my disappointment and continued, "He was very handsome but a poor person because of his small size."

"…Small?"

I was thinking about her ex-boyfriend when something flashed through my mind, causing me to feel astonishment. A person who had a connection with the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint in Ways of Survival. In addition, 'small' was the most appropriate word for him.

No, wait a minute. I thought their relationship wasn't good…

At this moment, a loud sound was heard from outside. An unimaginable aura dominated the area of the Blue Dragon Castle, including this estate. The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint and I ran outside at the same time and Yoo Joonghyuk looked my way.

"Kim Dokja."

In the sky, a vortex was appearing. It was a vortex I knew very well. It was a cursed outlet that only opened when a 'disaster' appeared in the scenario.

Yoo Joonghyuk spoke in a low tone, "…The Great Hole."

The 'disaster scenarios' were originally only seen in the early scenario areas. There was no 'disaster' in the First Murim. There were no disasters in scenario areas that had passed the 20th scenario.

In such an area, there was only one really why the 'hall' would open.

"…Run away."

The 'Great Disaster' scenario of the First Murim was going to begin.

[1] **Conception Vessel** in traditional Chinese medicine is one of the eight meridians, which were believed to be a network of channels in the body through which Qi flowed.

* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)
* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)

Chapter 248: Ep. 47 - Demon King Selection, II

There were two types of 'disaster scenarios' in the Star Stream. The first was the apocalypse scenarios named after the relevant nebulae and had become a type of myth, such as Ragnarok and Gigantomachia.

The second was a destruction scenario that occurred irregularly. This was the case with the Great Hole before my eyes.

"It isn't a constellation." The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint stared up at the raging sky that had become dark.

*

If it didn't have the aura of a constellation, there was only one answer. "An outer god."

Now I had become a constellation. I could feel the power of the outer god casting shadows from the hall. It was one I had encountered a few times. However, the feeling I felt now was different in dimension. The blind wasn't too blinded when looking at the sun. For the first time, I hated that I had become a constellation.

Yoo Joonghyuk muttered, "…Why is the destruction scenario beginning now?"

Yoo Joonghyuk had gone through the first and second rounds and knew the future of the First Murim.

In the original novel, the First Murim was destroyed by an outer god.

However, it was still too early. In the original novel, it happened in a few years. Now something pulled that timeline forward. What was it? What the hell went wrong…

…Wait, perhaps? Yoo Joonghyuk had similar thoughts and asked me, "…Is my idea correct?"

"It seems to be the case." I replied nervously.

The 'destruction scenario' was a scenario that tested the possibilities of the incarnations. If the accumulated probability value was never filled up, the 'disaster' would never begin. In this Blue Dragon Castle, there was only one thing that recently triggered probability.

The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint opened her mouth. "It was the martial arts competition."

The martial arts competition. The probability that the Brash Swamp Predator and other constellations used eventually triggered the disaster.

[A few constellations who dislike you are enjoying the situation.]

Damn bastards.

"Kim Dokja. What the hell did you do there?"

Yoo Joonghyuk didn't know exactly what happened at the Gourmet Association and was angry at me. I had no excuses. There was no way to reverse a scenario that had already begun.

[In a few moments, the destruction scenario will begin!]

[The 'Outer God' is preparing to attack!]

[All non-participants in the scenario should quickly leave the scenario area!]

The messages were heard from the sky and a disturbance began in the Blue Dragon Castle.

"Crazy! What is this?"

"Hurry and flee!"

Unlike other scenarios, the 'Great Destruction' scenario had the option of participating. Incarnations like us were quickly leaving the area. Even the merchants selling the files containing the martial arts and the martial artists of Blue Dragon Castle… Their expressions changed the moment the Great Hole appeared in the sky. The concept of 'skilled' and 'unskilled' was meaningless in front of this existence.

"What happened…"

Jang Hayoung and Han Myungoh belatedly ran out into the yard.

"We have to get out of here. Prepare quickly."

"Heok…" Jang Hayoung gulped as he pointed to the sky.

Many tentacles were extending from the Great Hole. It was undoubtedly the outer god I encountered on Peace Land and in Dark Castle.

[I wi ll ex plore this sto ry of li ving things.]

I was overwhelmed by the terrible presence that permeated the syllables. The colossal greed caused the escaping people to collapse and piss themselves.

"U-Uwaaaaah!"

It was huge chaos that disrupted the spirit just from the true voice. Of course, it was unreasonable to confront such a person, no matter how strong Yoo Joonghyuk was. Even a weak outer god had the power to trample on constellations. It was hard to expect a chance using the Fourth Wall like I did with the Devourer of Dreams.

[There are 30 minutes until the start of the destruction scenario.]

We had to run away from here. Maybe that was the better choice.

"Breaking the Sky Sword Saint."

I gazed at the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint and she was looking back at me. It was an unfathomable expression.

「To the Breaking the Sky Sword Namgung Minyoung, the First Murim was home.」

All I knew were the sentences written in Ways of Survival. According to those sentences, there was no reason for the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint to defend this place.

「Of course, not everyone likes their 'home'.」

To her, the First Murim was just the breeding ground of a corrupt world. It was a world that lost recognition and compassion.

「"Murim was already destroyed long before the First Murim was destroyed.」

So far, there was no reason for the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint to stay here. The First Murim would perish. To be exact, it had to perish.

"Teacher." Yoo Joonghyuk's voice pushed for us to leave.

Then why didn't the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint move? She stood like a mountain as she silently stared at the street across from her. The city was chaotic from rioting and desertion. Then I saw a group of people approaching. They were those who were looking at transcendence or had seen transcendence.

I sensed the youthful aura around their bodies and noticed who they were.

"Breaking the Sky Sword Saint, it's been a while."

The heads of the powerful clans of Blue Dragon Castle had come to visit the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint.

It wasn't hard to guess why they came here. The outer god had come to Murim and the destruction was scheduled.

There were two types of reactions before Murim was destroyed. Run away or fight.

Those who didn't have much to lose would flee but the incarnations who had been here for a long time were different. They built up forces, gathered wealth and created stories. They were those who reached the peak in power of one area.

"Breaking the Sky Sword Saint. We need your help."

From left to right, they were the Zhuge Family, Murong Family, the Sichuan Tangmen School, the Hwangbo Family and the Namgung Family.

The heads of the five main forces of the First Murim had gathered, which was probably a rare event throughout all of Murim. Behind them were the chiefs of the big schools.

"I beg you, lend Murim your strength."

Namgung Minyoung clenched her fists and replied. "You need my strength…"

Some of the heads of the distinguished families recoiled at the cold voice. The quickest one to react was the head of the Zhuge family. "Please help us. I'm asking you."

I understood why they came out like this. The Ice Flower Goddess, who was the best martial artist of this area, was defeated by the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint's disciple. There was also an overwhelming gap in skill.

Perhaps the impact of the martial arts competition alarmed the countless masters who had been running along the easy path. Yoo Joonghyuk showed the power to defeat even a descended constellation.

The old masters felt nostalgic at the old path of transcendence while the adventurers who came to visit were reminded of those who had reached the peak.

"Master's ancestor, please help your descendants."

In the end, the one who spoke was a member of the Namgung Family, which was the same family as the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint Namgung Minyoung.

It was a middle-aged man with a fierce face. Perhaps this was Namgung Jincheon, one of the 10 Grand Elders. It might be only half but the blood of his family also flowed through the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint. For that reason, the eyes of the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint were shaken.

I wasn't able to watch any more and went forward. "How funny. Weren't you the ones who previously abandoned the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint?"

Normally, I would've acted on their shared feelings. I would've devised a way to take them together with me to the Demon King Selection. However, now the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint was more urgent.

"Sadly, you forget everything you did when the constellations and dokkaebis first visited here."

"What… who are you?"

Some of the family chiefs changed their expressions after realizing the true meaning of my words. Maybe they also remembered. Why did the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint, who ruled at the top of Murim, open a martial arts hall in a fallen area?

Yoo Joonghyuk knew the circumstances and bit his lips at my words. The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint Namgung Minyoung's expression distorted and her heroic spirit stopped.

I couldn't blame her for being swept away. She didn't pursue honour or vain lust. Thus, she was used by the Murim people and eventually abandoned here. As the symbol of the fallen Murim, the distinguished families left her in this place and built their own castles.

"The Namgung Family's master, it is the same for you. Master's ancestor… you have never called the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint that before, right?"

"T-That…"

"If you had any thoughts, you wouldn't have come here. I don't know if you're brave or stupid. Don't you know why the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint split apart from your Namgung Family?"

A child born between a giant god and a human. I knew better than anyone the trials that the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint experienced as she grew up, perhaps even more than Yoo Joonghyuk.

「 How is a female…! 」

「 It is the cursed blood of the giant gods. 」

The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint made a questionable face. She must be wondering why I knew these things. Usually, it would be a dangerous remark but now her question was beneficial for me. The Breaking the Sky Sword would follow me in order to resolve this question.

"What do you know…?!"

"Shut up! Breaking the Sky Sword Saint, who is this person?"

The agitated family heads approached to threaten me and Yoo Joonghyuk raised the Black Heavenly Demon Sword. It was a good thing. If there was a conflict here, we could get out of here peacefully.

Before the furious Yoo Joonghyuk could deal a blow, the Zhuge Family's head suddenly fell to the ground. "Breaking the Sky Sword Saint, I am reflecting on the mistakes of those days. I understand that we can't undo our actions."

…Damn, there were still smart guys in this world. The other family heads were baffled by the Zhuge head's actions. The head of the Zhuge Family was begging to the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint with a desperate countenance. It was as if he was praying to the god of Murim. "If you don't help, the First Murim will be destroyed…!"

He could ask for a god's compassion at any time but he was a disciple ready to abandon his faith at any time.

Then the god of Murim responded, "At one time, small trees came together to form a forest."

The head of the Zhuge Family looked up at the Breaking the Sky Sword after hearing the unexpected words.

"Now that the small trees are uprooted and only a few large trees that have occupied the land have covered the sky with their branches."

The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint looked at the Blue Dragon Castle with a blank expression. The spires of the distinguished family's homes rose higher than the walls. It was as if they were looking down on the residents on behalf of the heavens. Then I understood the words of the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint.

"The leaves and branches are plentiful but now there are only a few trees left. What do you think? Can this still be called a forest?"

Murim had died a long time ago. The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint had declared it just now. "Let's go."

The god of Murim turned her back and betrayed this world. It seemed easier to resolve than I expected. I was satisfied and followed after the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint. Yoo Joonghyuk was watching me while Jang Hayoung and Han Myungoh packed quickly as they ate dumplings.

At this moment, a strange message was heard.

[Your actions have had a profound impact on the direction of ■■.]

…What?

[The 'second revision' update will begin.]

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* Official novel illustration (canonical)

Chapter 249: Ep. 47 - Demon King Selection, III

The second revision update. The message appeared at an unexpected time and made me think for a moment.

Another revision meant the future would keep changing due to my actions. In other words, after receiving the first revision, I contributed to the creation of a new future.

My heart throbbed at the thought. Did I succeed in the third round? Would it once again start from the fourth round? Did Yoo Joonghyuk reach the end in the story I changed?

…The author, why did he keep sending me these things?

[The 'second revision' update is in progress.]

I couldn't be sure of anything since the file hadn't updated yet. Things might've gotten better or worse. The thing I had to think about right now wasn't the direction of the new revision but the immediate development.

"Breaking the Sky Sword Saint! Are you going to flee now? You are going to abandon the world you have been living in!"

As I was briefly distracted by Ways of Survival, the masters rose in unison. The most serious change occurred in the Zhuge head who had been the first to kneel. "…Run away? You are saying this to me?"

"What are you doing right now if it isn't running away?!"

"How funny, child."

There was a deep mockery in the voice. The Murim people responded to the voice and raised their aura. Every one of them were first-class masters in First Murim. The magic power of the family heads combined and a threatening earthquake spread through the area.

The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint stepped towards the family heads who were raising their pressure.

"Kuheeok!"

It was an incredible sight. The shock waves that spread from around the advancing Breaking the Sky Sword Saint precisely offset the seismic waves emitted from the other side, causing internal injuries to all the masters with a magic power that was several times the opponent.

Everything was done with a simple footstep. This was the power of the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint who was called a disaster. The fallen masters coughed up blood and stared resentfully at the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint.

"B-Breaking the Sky Sword Saint!"

"Don't throw us away! Please!"

They believed that this type of power would surely prevent the 'destruction'. In the pale countenances, there was the shadow of hope rather than despair. The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint stared down at them blankly while the Great Hole in the sky became bigger and bigger. Now I couldn't delay any longer.

"Biyoo."

Biyoo appeared out of thin air and started to open a portal. The problem was the location of the portal. No matter how much I looked, there were no portals around us. The first one to speak was Jang Hayoung, who confirmed the location of the portal using Hundred Lanes that he learnt through the Unidentified Wall.

"…I think the portal opened that way. Do we have to run to the square?"

Jang Hayoung was pointing to the square that we first arrived at when we came to the Blue Dragon Castle. I urged Biyoo.

"Biyoo. Can't you move the portal to this place?"

[Baang.]

Biyoo shook her head with a grim expression. Independent dokkaebis might be constrained in strength. Or perhaps it was because Biyoo was still a young dokkaebi. In the end, we have to move back to where we first passed through the portal.

The Breaking the Sky Master barked. I turned back and saw the Breaking the Sky Master was pushing his head out from the passenger seat of the X-grade Ferrarigini.

"Get on, quickly!"

Han Myungoh called out to us from the driver's seat. We quickly boarded the vehicle.

"Depart."

The magic power engine of the X-grade Ferrarigini roared. The masters chased after us using their techniques but no matter how high their level, they couldn't catch up to the work made by the Mass Production Maker.

[There are 10 minutes remaining until the start of the 'destruction' scenario.]

I could see the landscape of the First Murim outside my window. The sky was red. Things like meteorite debris were falling from the Great Hole. A market exploded from the shockwave and flames spread. The giant spires built by the distinguished families were paying the price for challenging the sky.

"Aaaaaaack!"

Buildings collapsed and the ground shook. Some people were covered by the collapsed buildings. There were people crying over dying people and others shouting that they should flee. I could see little children who abandoned everything and sat down on the spot.

I was watching the fall of a world like I was turning pages.

One day, Asmodeus had stated,

「"The scenario is a small destruction to prevent a greater destruction."」

How many more had to suffer destruction in order to end this story? I turned my head and saw that the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint and Yoo Joonghyuk were watching the same scene as me.

"Flee quickly!"

"But…!"

The voices of several young people came from the window. The men and women injured by the debris were looking around for help. Han Myungoh stepped on the brakes and Jang Hayoung opened his mouth. "…Can't we give them a ride?"

I thought he would say this. I shook my head. "No."

Han Myungoh stepped on the accelerator and we started moving again. Jang Hayoung spoke in a voice filled with faint resentment.

"…There's plenty of room in here."

"We are 'separate' from this scenario so we can leave. Those people are different."

"However, this master was born here and can leave with us."

"She is a bit special."

I glanced at the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint. The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint was an existence with the blood of a 'giant god'. She wasn't born in the Murim scenario and could receive other scenarios if she left this place. Outside the window, I could see male and female martial artists.

"The people here will die anyway."

Those who were born here and only received scenarios here couldn't escape from the First Murim.

Even if they managed to leave here, they would instantly die due to the 'exile penalty'. There was helplessness in Jang Hayoung's expression.

"Then…"

I knew Jang Hayoung's feelings. I have lived with these emotions for a long time. In front of any crisis in the world, the only thing we can do was turn over the pages of the world.

[There are 8 minutes until the start of the destruction scenario.]

[Your story of destruction is descending.]

The darkened sky was flashing. In the meantime, the number of tentacles that emerged through the Great Hole had exceeded four. Jang Hayoung shook as he gazed at the growing hall and Yoo Joonghyuk was immersed. The hairs on my skin were standing up.

「Kim Dokja thought: I can't compete with that.」

Who did I have to fight against? What strength did I need to obtain in the future? I once again realized it.

Maybe this was one of the giant stories. It was a story that I couldn't afford yet. This 'story', which descended to end a world, was completely different from every story I had ever used.

[There is no pl ace to run, po or sla ves of the sce na rio.]

The windows of the Blue Dragon Castle were destroyed by the resounding true voice.

[Des truc tion will fo llow you.]

Even the body of the Mass Production Maker's car couldn't overcome the shock of the true voice and shook.

[There are 5 minutes until the start of the destruction scenario.]

"The portal!"

Fortunately, we arrived at the portal in time. Now we just had to escape.

"Let's go."

I got the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint and made my debut in the Gourmet Association. I also built up many coins. The finish was tough but I had no solution at this time. The First Murim was a world that would someday be destroyed and now I had no way of stopping that destruction.

At this moment, the Breaking the Sky Sword got out of the car.

"Breaking the Sky Sword Saint?"

Her expression was still unreadable. Still, I knew her thoughts without needing to read her expression.

[All residents of Murim should gather immediately in the square.]

Her divinity echoed through this world like a lion's roar. It was extremely powerful and was reminiscent of a constellation's true voice. The fleeing martial artists instantly looked this way after hearing her voice.

"B-Breaking the Sky Sword Saint!"

"Breaking the Sky Sword Saint!"

For a moment, the Murim people had mixed feelings of joy. I got off the car and shouted, "Wait a minute!"

I was confused. Why did the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint make this choice? Was it because of something I did?

Several thoughts passed through my head. Perhaps the second revision being updated was because the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint died in this place?

[The 'second revision' update is in progress.]

I gritted my teeth. The second revision still hadn't arrived.

"Breaking the Sky Sword Saint! We must go together!"

The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint would die if she remained here. Then the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint replied, "Young constellation, one tree doesn't make up a forest."

Amidst the sinister feeling, the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint directed her words to me. "Then how many trees need to gather to become a forest?"

Of course, I never thought about such a thing. Instead, all I saw were the tiny trees being broken by the falling meteorites. The very small trees had been covered by such big trees that it was unknown they even existed. The trees were shouting towards the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint. "S-Save me. Please save me!"

I had forgotten. What type of person was the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint?

「Her heroic spirit is so high that she sometimes makes other people's definition of justice shabby.」

Every transcendent had something they couldn't concede and this was it for the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint. However, understanding her justice didn't mean I condoned her actions. Just as a few trees couldn't be called a forest, one tree couldn't block a landslide.

"Have you forgotten your promise? Didn't you say you would help me if I let you meet your people?"

"I remember and I'll keep it." The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint replied as she stared up at the sky. Since the complete 'great destruction' hadn't begun yet, the 'oldest ones' wouldn't appear. Still, it was certain that beyond this sky was an ancient god. At the very least, it was similar to the Devourer of Dreams caught by me and Yoo Joonghyuk.

"I will go to you after stopping them here."

…Could the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint beat an existence that didn't fall to Cheok Jungyeong's Three Swords Style?

"Teacher!" Then Yoo Joonghyuk came forward.

However, the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint was stubborn. "Leave. The lesson for this time is over."

"I need you." The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint's eyes were faintly shaken at the honest words. "It is very fascinating. If only it wasn't for this type of situation."

"I can't break the 46th scenario alone. You must…"

From these words, I realized what the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint meant to Yoo Joonghyuk. The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint faintly smiled at Yoo Joonghyuk. It was as if her disciple was special.

The giant hands of the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint covered Yoo Joonghyuk's head like a lid. "You're not alone."

The eyes of the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint stayed on me for a very short time. She continued speaking. "I will stop the destruction of this place."

Just as Yoo Joonghyuk knew the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint, the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint knew Yoo Joonghyuk. Thus, she knew the words to send Yoo Joonghyuk away. "I will stop the destruction of this world."

"Breaking the Sky Sword Saint…!"

"Stop it and go."

Yoo Joonghyuk didn't move. The many emotions pouring out of his heart were conveyed to me.

[There is 1 minute until the start of the destruction scenario.]

In the end, I pulled at Yoo Joonghyuk. I didn't want to leave this way but if I didn't make this choice, the third round would end here.

"…We must go, Yoo Joonghyuk."

The person who stiffened like a stone statue didn't move and Jang Hayoung and Han Myungoh eventually came out. Yoo Joonghyuk was dragged into the car and the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint stared at me. "Please look after my disciple."

The Breaking the Sky Master barked from the car. Yoo Joonghyuk was staring this way with a completely distraught expression.

"You too, leave."

The person who always looked down on people was now looking up at a place higher than herself. Then the sky gazed down at her.

[In te res ting crea tion… who a re y ou?]

The foreign god was asking for the name of a god. In a situation where the constellations would be stunned, the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint opened her mouth without retreating.

[I am the god of Murim.]

As if she heard her disciple leaving, the lonely tree that guarded the forest for a long time spoke towards the sky.

[I am the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint.]

Chapter 250: Ep. 47 - Demon King Selection, IV

The ground and the sky rattled like cogs. Something gigantic was descending from the sky and there was a person blocking it. The magic power and giant story caused a burst of brilliant sparks as they collided.

[There are 40 seconds until the start of the destruction scenario.]

The opponent was an outer god. Little by little, the ceiling of the sky was coming closer. The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint didn't back down despite the pressure weighing down on the entire castle. No, she couldn't back down. She never backed down from her beliefs. This was the banner of a transcendent who only walked a single story.

"Fight it!"

The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint revived the despairing Murim people.

[Many constellations are interested in the development of this scenario.]

[Some constellation are paying attention to the transcendent 'Namgung Minyoung.]

The stars were gathering in the night sky. Like piranhas smelling blood, the constellations illuminated the sky with a red light. The dokkaebis also appeared like they had been waiting.

[Constellations, it is time for the destruction to come!]

Some of the constellations were watching the world's demise with a somber expression while others were watching with excitement. Every person's feelings were different but the downfall of one world was nothing more than entertainment for them.

…Just like me. At this moment, many emotions muddled my head. Maybe these emotions had been piled up since the Gourmet Association. If I threw away Murim here, would I be any different from them?

"Breaking the Sky Sword Saint! I…!"

I pulled up my status and a change occurred in the constellations.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is looking forward to your choice.]

[Many constellations are paying attention to your presence!]

The attention moved from the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint to me.

[Yo u…?]

If I caught the eye of the outer god, I wouldn't be able to escape this place. The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint knew this and stopped me. "This isn't your battlefield."

It was as if this page wasn't allowed for me.

"Leave this world to the people here."

I didn't know what Murim was for the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint. It was a place that worshipped her a god while also bringing her down. Nevertheless, at this moment, the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint decided to defend Murim.

[The stories of the 29th scenario area, the First Murim is piling up.]

Then Murim responded to the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint.

[The 29th scenario area has found its guardian.]

[The First Murim is looking at 'Breaking the Sky Sword Saint Namgung Minyoung'.]

[The possibility of a giant 'story' is germinating.]

The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint blinked with surprise. Perhaps it was the first time she had heard this message. If someone wanted to destroy the world, the world would respond to the destruction.

「In this world, everything that has built up history has a will.」

It was a land that was made of the blood, flesh, sweat and effort of the Murim people. The stories carved onto the land were flocking to the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint. Grandeur could be felt from the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint as Murim nestled in her body.

The possibility of a giant story. It hadn't blossomed yet and I didn't know when it would be germinated…

Still, it as the possibility of a giant story.

[Ka ka ka ka ka ka ka.]

A bizarre sound that resembled laughter poured from the sky. Finally, five tentacles descended from the sky.

No matter how great the possibility of a giant story, it was impossible to stop the outer god with just the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint. The outer gods were beings who had lived a long time and faced such giant stories. She knew no more time could be wasted and the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint shouted, "Go now!"

Then my body was pushed into the car.

[The portal is activated.]

Yoo Joonghyuk belatedly regained his mind and tried to get out of the car, but the X-grade Ferrarigini had already started.

It only took one moment. As we passed through the portal, the Breaking the Sky Master was silent. The scenery of Murim slowly moved away and everything was covered in darkness. The survivors never said anything for a long time.

[You have arrived in the 73rd Demon Realm.]

[There are three days remaining until the Demon King Selection.]

Maybe it was because too many things happened in a row. The party had no words after returning. The car turned off and only a stillness remained.

"I'll smoke a cigarette for a while."

Han Myungoh left while Jang Hayoung placed his head against his knees. The Breaking the Sky Master whined while Yoo Joonghyuk… damn. I breathed calmly while thinking about what I gained from this journey.

Everything I had done was for the upcoming Demon King Selection. I went to Murim to recruit the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint as a colleague and went to the Gourmet Association in the process.

I couldn't bring the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint back with me. I couldn't persuade the constellations of the Gourmet Association. The only income was that Yoo Joonghyuk and Jang Hayoung became stronger, there was a transcendent dog and…

[Coins Possessed: 4,890,875 C]

…

[The second revision update has been completed.]

Despite the message, I didn't dare to look at my smartphone. Nevertheless, I had to look, even if I felt disgusted by the contents I would see.

"Kim Dokja."

I looked up and saw Yoo Joonghyuk staring at me. I couldn't bear to read the anger in his heart. I had nothing to say even if Yoo Joonghyuk tried to kill me here.

"What do we do now?" It was a voice that contained no special feelings. I felt a subtle fear and triggered Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint. Then I immediately regretted it.

「… 」

「… 」

「… 」

My chest was stuffy from the suffocating emotions. They were emotions that couldn't be described in words. The sorrow was too deep that it couldn't become language.

Yoo Joonghyuk was already a madman. Maybe he had been like this for a long time. This event would wear him down even more. The emotions that didn't burst would move onto the next turn and it would lead to his death. It would wear at him and isolate him.

The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint of the third round would be forgotten. I opened my trembling lips. I needed to say something.

The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint was surely alive. She would come back alive. However, I couldn't say it. I wasn't tls123.

"We have to try." That was all I could say. "Struggle, fight and turn things upside down."

Yoo Joonghyuk stared at me quietly before leaving the car. I could see it without asking. Maybe he was going to do his own preparations.

This was Yoo Joonghyuk. He didn't give up on his goal even if he gave up his life. Despite the mighty despair, he challenged it again and again, overcoming that despair. Thus, he lived and would live like that.

Eventually, he would become unhappy. Once Yoo Joonghyuk, only one sentence that I read from his heart was left with me.

「I'm not like you.」

I brooded over this sentence as I turned on my smartphone. I knew what Yoo Joonghyuk was talking about.

–Three Ways to Survive in a Ruined World (2nd Revision).txt

The death of the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint would be recorded. The success of this round would be written down. Maybe the changed 'ending' would be written.

[The 'Fourth Wall' is shaking faintly.]

My trembling fingers touched the screen several times. Yoo Joonghyuk's words once again emerged.

「I'm not like you.」

I didn't know what that bastard knew about me. I had watched Yoo Joonghyuk for over 10 years while Yoo Joonghyuk hadn't even known me for a year. That jerk, what did he know about me…?

I turned off the screen. It didn't matter what was written. In any case, the story I wanted to create wouldn't be in it.

"Jang Hayoung. I want to save Murim."

Jang Hayoung wiped his eyes while raising his head. I stared at him and slowly opened my mouth. I didn't know if this would work or not. Still, it was better than doing nothing.

There were various beings in the detention centre of the Executive Branch. It was mainly filled with imprisoned constellations and transcendents caught by the 'probability conformity assessment'.

However, it was rare for a member of the Executive Branch to come directly, even if probability was

violated. Those who used too much probability would be hit by a storm and it was easy to avoid attention.

Even so, the Executive Branch had to step in for this man's situation. The dokkaebi 'Youngki' sighed as he gazed at the map trapped in the probability net.

"Look here."

Then the little person looked at Youngki. Youngki gazed at the handsome face and said, "You should now return to your original scenario area. Isn't your home in danger?"

"…"

"Thanks to you, your planetary system is unable to proceed with the scenario."

The small man laughed. "Once I leave, you will send the 'disaster' to Peace Land again."

"Didn't I already say that won't happen?"

"I don't believe in your words."

Youngki flinched and stepped back at the growling voice. This was why transcendents were tricky. The constellations could quickly understand once spoken to but the transcendents were stubborn mortal and sometimes made absurd messes like this.

The man continued to speak. "There is someone I'm waiting for. I'll stay here until he returns to my home."

"Waiting for? Who is it?"

"I'll leave on my own once he comes."

Youngki was about to open his mouth again when the prison door opened and a new prisoner appeared.

[Grrr… fucking dokkaebis!]

The prison shook from the fierce true voice. Youngki and the small man turned towards the voice at the same time.

At the entrance, a constellation who had been bounded by the Executive Branch dokkaebis was walking in. It was a constellation with the appearance of a lizard.

[That bastard scammed me! He was the one who stole my coins. Why did you grab me instead of him?]

"If you can't find a way to repay your debt, we will be forced to take away a story."

Youngki had a rough idea of the situation. Sometimes these things happened. The constellation came here because he couldn't repay the ridiculous loan interest.

Youngki was clicking his tongue while the constellation continued yelling. The dokkaebis were familiar with such turmoil but one person wasn't.

"Shut up."

The Brash Swamp Predator turned at the cold voice.

[Who are you? Little man…!]

At this moment, a tremendous airflow swirled around the 'little man'. His body seemed to rise in the air and blue lightning wrapped around his body.

[What… kuk…?]

The Brash Swamp Predator let out a confused sound. The power of a mortal pressed down on his 'status'. It was something he had never experienced before.

The 'net' of the prison let out a pained scream. A strength beyond the probability assigned to this place was rising from the small man. The shocked Youngki and the other dokkaebis increased the output of the net but the situation didn't change.

The man's body became smaller and he 'popped' through the net. The huge storm shot towards the Brash Swamp Predator. The whole building shook and dust rose.

[Uh… uhh…]

The Brash Swamp Predator lay on the floor. Five dokkaebis had bravely rushed forward and barely managed to deflect the trajectory of the blue-white fist. The terrible traces left by the fist remained on the wall. Rather than blaming the master of the fist, the dokkaebis quickly delivered a report.

"Congratulations Brash Swamp Predator. You are free."

[Huh? What?]

"I just received an order to release you. Someone has paid your debt."

[What? Who…?]

The Brash Swamp Predator forget what just happened at the news. The moment the dokkaebi mentioned a name, Kyrgios' body stopped while the Brash Swamp Predator wondered,

[…That guy paid my debt?]

At this moment, the blue-white lightning of Electrification shot towards the dokkaebi. Kyrgios picked up the dokkaebi by the collar and asked, "What did you say just now?"

"N-No, what…?"

"The name you just said. Where is he now?"

Before the dokkaebi could answer, a message flew into Kyrgios' ears. Kyrgios stared blankly at the air for a moment before walking past the dokkaebis towards the entrance.

Youngki urgently exclaimed. "Wait a minute! I can't let you go! If you go back to your home planet—"

"I won't go home." The Paradox Baekchung, Kyrgios Rodgraim spoke with a smile filled with anger. "I will go to my disciple."

Chapter 251: Ep. 47 - Demon King Selection, V

We soon arrived at the Yoo Joonghyuk Industrial Complex (formerly Syswitz).

Along the way, Yoo Joonghyuk spoke no words and acted similarly once arriving at the industrial complex. The moment the X-grade Ferrarigini turned off, Yoo Joonghyuk got off the car and told me, "From now on, I will act separately."

"…Will you come for the selection?"

Yoo Joonghyuk briefly nodded before moving his feet and disappearing from view. He seemed to know where he was going and what he was going to do. The one certain thing was that everything in his vision would be broken.

"…You aren't going to stop him?"

I nodded at Jang Hayoung's question. After all, I made a plan on the premise that Yoo Joonghyuk didn't listen to me. Yoo Joonghyuk just needed to live safely until the Demon King Selection.

The important thing was what I needed to do now. I ignored the minor procedures and headed straight to Aileen's council room.

"It has been a while."

I hadn't met Aileen for some time and she looked haggard from the busy industrial complex.

Aileen pushed up her glasses and submitted a report. "Since the duke left, I have been struggling with the other industrial complexes… the party members handle it well."

"Party members?"

"Yoo Joonghyuk's party. You don't know it? Every morning, there are people walking around saying 'I am Yoo Joonghyuk'. It was founded just before you left… you must not have seen it."

Was it them? Damn. I sometimes thought I could still hear the shouts from that day.

Aileen shook her head and continued. "In recent days, a group of followers of the 'Punisher' was created."

"Was her identity revealed?"

"Not yet. She was suddenly gone soon after the duke left."

"Gone?"

A strange feeling entered my heart. Perhaps? I had a thought but it wasn't possible. It was

impossible for such a thing to come true, no matter how I thought about it.

Aileen let out a small sigh. "I don't know why I keep reporting to you. The owner of this industrial complex is Yoo Joonghyuk."

"It doesn't matter. In any case…"

"…The duke should now go to his industrial complex."

This wasn't my industrial complex. Since I had returned to the Demon Realm, I had to go check the current status of the Kim Dokja Industrial Complex (formerly Gilobat). I left it to Mark but I didn't know what would've happened.

I stared at the landscape of the industrial complex through the window. Many things had happened since coming here. I got up from my seat and Aileen rose with me.

"D-Duke-nim."

I looked back and Aileen's expression was strange. It seemed cold, sad and disappointed. Even so, her voice was calm when she opened her mouth. I had studied Aileen in Ways of Survival and knew whenever she made this voice.

Aileen rummaged for a moment and then held out a small box. "This is what you asked for before."

The box contained a small watch. It was a small pocket watch designed with very fine circuits. I held it and felt a slight vibration from the watch. As I sensed the slow but surely moving time, many things passed through my mind.

The story horizon, the revolutionary game… All the memories that had gone retreated to an out of reach place were ticking away.

I stared at the watch for a while. I glanced at Aileen again and she was looking at me with both wrists overlapping each other.

I seemed to know what would happen from now on.

"Duke Yoo Joonghyuk."

It was a motion that crossed both wrists. This was a greeting from the home planet where Aileen lived, Lindberg. Crossing two veins and conveying the vibrations to the other side. As if the second hand of the clock was moving, Aileen's pulse was conveyed to me.

"This industrial complex won't forget you."

After leaving the Yoo Joonghyuk Industrial Complex, I headed straight to the Kim Dokja Industrial Complex. Originally it should've taken a week but the engine of the X-grade Ferrarigini meant it only took two hours.

I sat in the passenger seat and looked at the scenery passing by while thinking about Aileen's words.

–There was on dokkaebi, one from the sinister family with a lump and several constellations.

It was a list of those who came to visit while I was away. The dokkaebi was probably from the bureau and the sinister family with a lump was probably a wenny person. I couldn't guess the constellations because they didn't leave their modifiers.

–Be careful, there are many strong people in the Demon Realm watching you.

There was no need to tell me. I just needed to look at the channel.

[Many constellations are paying attention to your actions.]

[Your modifier is spreading among the constellations of the absolute evil system.]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is watching you with anxious eyes.]

There were no three days until the Demon King Selection. I looked to the back seat where Jang Hayoung and the Breaking the Sky Master were hugging each other while sleeping. The Breaking the Sky Master and Jang Hayoung must be tired.

In particular, Jang Hayoung was forced to operate the Unidentified Wall because of me. Still, their presence meant I could think of something to try.

I glanced at the driver's seat and asked, "Department Head Han Myungoh."

"Hmm?" Han Myungoh glanced at me with a puzzled expression from where he was experimenting with the function of the X-grade Ferrarigini. I didn't know if he was conscious of my gaze but Han Myungoh cleared his throat. "Hum hum, life isn't easy?"

…Honestly, the timing was strange. Han Myungoh saw my confusion and quickly added.

"I felt it while living… life is supposed to be like this. There are times when nothing can be done and times when things don't work out."

It was an obvious statement but Han Myungoh's expression contained a certain amount of affection. Come to think of it, Han Myungoh had really experienced many things. In a sense, he might've had a harder time than me.

I thought about it and suddenly wanted to ask Han Myungoh something. "Can I ask you something?"

"Ask me anything."

Perhaps the man who gave birth to a child in this world could make a reliable expression. I repeatedly turned the smartphone on and off as I thought about what to say.

Han Myungoh seemed to accept my actions and opened his mouth. "Kung… it was painful."

"What are you saying?"

"I thought that's what you wanted to ask. It is a pain that's hard for any man or woman to endure."

I was shocked once I understood what Han Myungoh was talking about. No, I didn't want to ask him about that…

Still, I was curious. "Where did it come from?"

"I gave birth in my heart."

"Was it painful?"

Han Myungoh pulled out a cigarette and suddenly made a serious expression. "At first, I was going to kill you."

The bitter cigarette smoke flew out the window.

"It was shameful and humiliating. I was dumbfounded and wondered why I was in a situation like this."

"…"

"I tried the methods that appeared in dramas. For example, things like eating a lot of soy sauce. It wasn't easy to find because of the situation."

There was no sense of reality as I heard this story from Han Myungoh. It would've been an unimaginable hardship for me.

"I was scared. What if I gave birth to a monster? What if my child ate me? One day, suddenly tearing out of my belly and killing me…"

"…"

"I was alone for countless nights, ran away and avoided monsters while feeling worried. What should I do about this child? Should I kill it, let it live, kill birth to it or…"

I didn't use Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint but the numerous scenarios where Han Myungoh ran away passed through my head. Han Myungoh spoke with an expression I had never seen before.

"Even so, do you know? Funnily, months passed as I thought about it. Then while struggling, I survived."

Han Myungoh was able to survive the grandiose scenarios for one reason.

"I realized it at that time. Ah, perhaps this child saved me. Thus, I decided. Whether I live or die, let's give birth to the child."

He suddenly threw the cigarette out the window. Han Myungoh pulled out a new cigarette. In that short time, Han Myungoh looked distant before coming back.

I knew Han Myungoh well. He was one of the people who would surely enter the list of 10 worst people I knew. Nevertheless, at this moment, Han Myungoh felt like a decent person.

"She was an infinitely beautiful baby. She wasn't human but she was incredibly pretty."

"…I've seen her."

She was pretty, which was why Asmodeus used her as his incarnation body. I was just thinking this when the smile on Han Myungoh's face disappeared. The story didn't end well but I could see what Han Myungoh wanted to say.

After a while, Han Myungoh kept speaking. "Thus, Dokja-ssi should try it."

"…I should try giving birth?"

"No, I'm worried about Dokja-ssi."

I felt a momentary prick. My confused face reflected on the smartphone screen.

"I don't know what Dokja-ssi is thinking. To be honest, I didn't like the original Dokja-ssi."

"That's good to know."

"Yet I can feel that Dokja-ssi is strange recently."

I closed my mouth.

"I know that things don't work out well. Not everything will flow as you wish. Even so, don't dwell on it too much and let your heart lead you."

"…"

"It is Dokja-ssi who survived whatever happened. If you don't do it right, you'll regret it later."

Really, I had lived for a long time and see the world. I never expected there would come a day when I empathized with this guy.

The LCD screen of the smartphone turned on and the file of Ways of Survival was shown.

–Three Ways to Survive in a Ruined World (2nd Revision).txt

I didn't have Han Myungoh's experiences. I never had a child, nor did I plan to have one. Nevertheless, I strangely knew a bit of Han Myungoh's feelings.

To read or not read the second revision. This was the only thing occupying my thoughts for the last few hours.

I was scared that I would be affected by reading the novel. It was painful to confirm the results of my work. I was afraid that my 'future' might be fixed.

However, it was laughable from the beginning. Han Myungoh's words…

Yes, this story wasn't properly born yet. I opened the file of Ways of Survival without hesitation. Then I started reading as I always did.

The second revision of Ways of Survival started from the fourth round.

「It was just like what happened at that time. In the third round, Teacher would've died there if it wasn't for him.」

Some statements relieved me.

「Nevertheless, I couldn't change it.」

Some of the descriptions still hadn't changed.

「That guy isn't in this round.」

I still wasn't present in Yoo Joonghyuk's fourth regression.

「I failed the third round.」

I didn't panic because I had already expected it. I didn't know why the author sent me something like this. It might be to frighten me or to use me for the ending that he wanted. I didn't even know if it was the writer who originally sent this.

I slowly closed my eyes, took a deep breath and opened it. Then I thought at the Fourth Wall.

「Kim Dokja thought.」

It was as if I was writing a sentence in a novel.

「I don't know what he wants in the end. However, no matter the result, I will only make the ending that I want.」

I wrote the sentence and stared at the air for a while. Understandably, there was no return answer. Instead, it was the Fourth Wall that reacted.

[The Fourth Wall is wriggling happily.]

I suddenly looked out and saw the industrial complex in the distance. It was the first time I was visiting the Kim Dokja Industrial Complex. By the way, Han Myungoh suddenly reduced the speed.

"What happened?"

"…The scenario is progressing."

Scenario? No way… The Demon King Selection hadn't started yet?

[Do you want to enter the hidden scenario area?]

Han Myungoh cautiously approached the industrial complex. The entrance of the industrial complex was bare without a single guard.

I opened the window and could hear words being shouted from inside the industrial complex.

"I'm Kim Dokja!"

"No, I am!"

"I'm Kim Dokja! Me!"

Han Myungoh and I glanced at each other at the same time.

"What is this…?"

A system message followed.

[Hidden scenario — the Kim Dokja Game is in progress.]

Something strange had happened in my industrial complex while I was away.

Chapter 252: Ep. 47 - Demon King Selection, VI

[You have entered the hidden scenario area.]

[Would you like to participate in the hidden scenario — the Kim Dokja Game?]

Han Myungoh stared at me and muttered in a dumbfounded manner. "…What is going on?"

I stared at Biyoo.

[Baat, baaat…]

Biyoo repeatedly shook her head. It wasn't Biyoo who did this.

Most hidden scenarios were activated according to the will of the Star Stream, just like the main scenario. Then why at this time? A subsequent system message gave a hint.

[The owner of the industrial complex is currently absent.]

[An emergency promotion scenario is activated.]

It seemed that I had been away for too long. "I think the Star Stream has determined that I have no intending of inheriting the duke's position."

"Isn't it okay now that you're here?"

"That would be good."

The scenario remained unchanged after I entered the industrial complex. Maybe the Star Stream scenario was twisted by the impersonation act that Yoo Joonghyuk and I committed. At the time, there was a message that an error occurred.

"…What is the Kim Dokja Game? It is a free participation scenario?"

Jang Hayoung opened his eyes in the back seat and stretched.

[We are currently electing the 'real Kim Dokja' of the industrial complex.]

At this rate, my name was going to be stolen. I turned towards Han Myungoh and asked, "Will you participate?"

"Why would I do that?"

"What about you, Jang Hayoung?"

"I don't want to be Kim Dokja." HIs expression quickly changed and he seemed to be sulking. "…I don't know the Demon King of Salvation."

In order to avoid reality, he had decided to separate me from the Demon King of Salvation. The last one I looked at was the Breaking the Sky Master.

Woof woof!

I nodded. "Then only I will join."

"Is it okay? You don't know what is going on…"

"No matter what happens, I have to go. This is my industrial complex."

Immediately after joining the scenario, a message window emerged.

[Hidden Scenario - Kim Dokja Proof of Identity]

Category: Main

Difficulty: ???

Clear Conditions: Prove to the constellations of the 'Kim Dokja Industrial Complex' channel that you are Kim Dokja.

Time Limit: 3 hours.

Reward: Become the duke of the Kim Dokja Industrial Complex and 200,000 coins.

Failure: ???

* All aspiring 'Kim Dokja' in the scenario will have the same appearance until the scenario ends.

* During the time limit, the aspiring 'Kim Dokja' who receives the most points from the constellations will inherit the Kim Dokja Industrial Complex.

…It was the first time I had seen such a scenario. This scenario naturally wasn't in the original.

[A new aspiring 'Kim Dokja' has entered.]

[There are three hours left in the scenario.]

[You must be acknowledged as 'Kim Dokja' by most of the constellations.]

[You are the 1131st aspiring Kim Dokja.]

The scenario started and I was summoned to the outskirts of the plaza in the Kim Dokja Industrial Complex. There was already a struggle to prove they were Kim Dokja.

[Haha, everyone! Do you want to be recognized by the constellations? Show us that you are the real Kim Dokja!]

I heard the voice of a dokkaebi. While I was away, the bureau had successfully advanced into the Demon Realm. It would be a hindrance to the wenny people… in any case, they gathered like ghosts whenever there was a story.

[Baaat!]

Biyoo became determined and started to expand the channel.

[Multiple constellations have entered the channel.]

I looked around slowly at the other aspiring 'Kim Dokja'.

"I am Kim Dokja! Look!"

"I'm Kim Dokja!"

The aspiring Kim Dokjas had mosaics on their faces as they shouted. Perhaps I looked like this to the other constellations.

…Damn, something felt strange. Most of the aspiring Kim Dokjas were just repeating my name and not showing any unusual gestures. They were those who were blinded by the duke's position and participated.

However, not all of them were the same.

"I am the prophet Kim Dokja!"

"I am the Demon King of Salvation!"

[Some constellations are interested.]

[Candidate 986 has gained 10 points.]

I stopped for a moment as I saw some candidates screaming 'Kim Dokja' in a plausible costume.

"I am the King of a Kingless World!"

[A few constellations are interested in this candidate.]

[Candidate 986 has gained 20 points.]

…Wasn't he quite good? I entered the centre of the industrial complex and more and more people started saying plausible things. Some Kim Dokjas could be seen duelling. I wanted to know why this area was so bloody when I heard a message from a familiar constellation.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is arguing that Kim Dokja is a brave person.]

…I was wondering why the Great Sage, Heaven's Equal was so quiet. He was already in the middle of this situation. There was the sound of a blade cutting through the air and the aspiring Kim Dokja collapsed.

"Kuaaack!"

A sharp magic power cut at the waist of another aspiring Kim Dokja. Some candidates fled and the winning Kim Dokja shouted,

"This is proof that I am Kim Dokja."

A blade made of blue magic power was in his hand. I was honestly a bit surprised.

[A great number of constellations are interested in this candidate!]

[Candidate 312 has gained 100 points.]

Candidate 312 wasn't using the Purest Sword Force but it was similar in appearance. Candidate 312 glanced at me before starting to wipe out other candidates again. It was only a fleeting moment but the moment I met his eyes, Aileen's words went through my head.

–Since the duke left, I have been struggling with the other industrial complexes… the party members handle it well.

I had a rough idea of how things turned out like this. Some of the aspiring Kim Dokjas here were from other industrial complexes. In other words, there were those who received sponsored information about me and posed as Kim Dokja.

My mind was a bit complicated. If I was defeated in this game, the wrong Kim Dokja would enter the Demon King Selection.

[A few constellations are interested in you.]

[A few constellations are demanding that you prove you are Kim Dokja.]

How could I prove my identity? I had no resident registration or identification card to prove myself.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' says the true Kim Dokja loves companionship.]

…Uriel? I was about to shout at her when a candidate in the centre of the square knelt down and started crying. "Yoo Joonghyuk! Yoo Joonghyuuuuk! Wake up! Please wake up!"

Kim Dokja screamed as he held the imaginary Yoo Joonghyuk in his arms. I couldn't help laughing. I didn't do such a thing. Uriel couldn't be fooled by such acting…

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is shedding tears.]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is begging you to show her again next time.]

[Candidate 32 has gained 300 points.]

…I couldn't believe it. I shook my head and passed Candidate 32, only to hear an unexpected statement.

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' claims that the real Kim Dokja is a chuuni.]

Abyssal Black Flame Dragon? When did he come…

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' claims that the real Kim Dokja surely knows the true middle-school second-year syndrome.]

A true chuuni? I think I knew what happened… surprisingly, at the same time, there was a candidate who started shouting,

"Uhhhh, Yoo Sangah-ssi. Do you know? Kukuk. I am a reader. I have the life of a reader."

My thoughts became incredibly complicated. It was a story before the scenario appeared. How did he know… no, wait, I never said it that way.

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is satisfied.]

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' has given Candidate 97 300 points.]

I felt desolated and my lips were trembling. At this rate, I would lose my name to these ridiculous people.

I should think calmly. In order to show that I was Kim Dokja, I needed to remind them of the events shared by only me and the constellations.

"Get your hand off me and get lost, you damn jerk!"

[Candidate 32 has gained 200 points!]

Something only the constellations and I knew…

"I like to smile like this!"

[Candidate 97 has gained 250 points!]

The constellations and I…

"My favourite thing is a Chinese dress and garter belt!"

[Candidate 312 has gained 400 points!]

Damn, what the hell was happening? I organized my complicated thoughts and decided to use an easy method. I would directly inform them that I was Kim Dokja thought the Demon King of Salvation's indirect message.

[During the course of the scenario, the constellation 'Demon King of Salvation' can't speak.]

…Son of a bitch.

[There is one hour left in the scenario.]

There wasn't much time left now. I quietly held Unbroken Faith in my hand. There was a limit to the number of aspiring Kim Dokjas. If I killed all the aspiring Kim Dokjas, the last candidate would become the true Kim Dokja.

However, I didn't want to use this method. They were currently blinded by power but most of them were citizens of my industrial complex…

I sighed and shook my head as I gripped and released the hilt of my weapon repeatedly.

「 These actions aren't like you. 」

To my chagrin, Yoo Joonghyuk was right. Kim Dokja would never solve things this way. I thought about it. How do I prove my identity? No, what did it mean to prove I was 'me' in the first place?

At this time, there was a sudden change.

"This is Electrification, the ultimate technique taught by the Paradox Baekchong…!"

Candidate 312 was shouted while holding a lightning sword. I was about to point out it was Paradox Baekchung, not Baekchong when lightning struck from the sky.

"Uwaaaack!"

The blue-white lightning hit the candidate's blade and tore his body apart. Some candidates screamed and retreated while some constellations liked it and randomly gave points. At the crucible of the confusion, I looked up at the sky. Something small was falling from the sky.

…I thought it was time for him to come but I didn't expect it to be this fast. The small dot that gave off huge pressure landed in the square of the industrial complex with a deafening roar.

A blue-white light flooded the square. A small man stood in the centre of the lightning and emitted a huge presence. Sparks flew as a voice was heard from the dust.

[Where is my disciple?]

After a while, the appearance of the voice's owner was revealed.

[Many constellations are astonished.]

The small man didn't care if the constellations were astonished or not. There were some constellations who realized the identity of the man.

"This small body…"

"Wait, don't tell me?"

They glanced at each other and then fell down in front of the man.

"M-Me!"

"I am Kim Dokja! Teacher…!"

Numerous Kim Dokjas fell down in front of the small man. I looked at them and clicked my tongue. It was good that they were quick-witted. However, it would be better if their bodies could move faster.

"Aaaack!"

"Kuaaaack!"

The Kim Dokjas were attacked by the blue-white lightning and turned to ashes. I looked at the teacher kind enough to personally come to pick up his disciple and realized something.

…I see. In the first place, 'I' wasn't something that could be proven.

[Your unique story will be played.]

[The story 'Returnee's Disciple' has begun.]

It was because 'I' was made up of things that didn't only belong to me. Amidst the fleeing Kim Dokja, there was one person who knew the real Kim Dokja.

[Where is my real disciple?]

If I came forward, I would be ripped apart like the other fakes. Then I heard a familiar voice.

"Damn, what is this? Are they all Kim Dokjas?" I looked back and saw Jang Hayoung grumbling.

I spoke to Jang Hayoung. "Jang Hayoung."

He looked over with surprise after hearing his name and flinched back with surprise. "…Kim Dokja?"

I nodded and asked, "Did you learn the Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship?"

"…Of course I learnt it. Why?"

I smiled and spread open my arms. "Use it on me now."

Chapter 253: Ep. 47 - Demon King Selection, VII

Kyrgios had accepted three disciples so far. One was after his first transcendence and another was 50 years later. Then he didn't accept any disciples for a while.

It was because all his previous disciples had died. One was to the successor of the Heavenly Demon School. The other was to the Blood Demon School.

It was the events triggered by these two deaths that made the 'Paradox Baekchung' Kyrgios Rodgraim become famous. Enraged by his disciples' deaths, Kyrgios struck the homes of the Heavenly Demon School and the Blood Demon School. It wasn't known exactly what happened in Murim at that time. One thing was for certain…

Half of the 100,000 Great Mountain Ranges became a bare mountain. The Blood Demon School withdrew its forces from the First Murim.

100 years later, Kyrgios once again accepted a disciple. Kyrgios asked the disciple whom he met after much trouble.

[…What is this about?]

"This poor disciple is greeting you."

Kyrgios looked at his disciple with a bitter expression. This was the last disciple he received with his heart.

[I asked you. Why is it like this?]

This disciple wasn't talented and didn't have any spots to like. The moment they met, he acted familiar and like they knew each other for a long time. He was 'friendly' to the Paradox Baekchung. The paradox was so bizarre that Kyrgios wanted to learn a bit about him.

"I've been to the First Murim."

Kyrgios glared at his disciple who was covered in blood. He was a person full of mischief on Peace Land. The reason Kyrgios didn't punish him for the sin of stealing the technique and fleeing was because he saved Kyrgio's planet.

Thus, Kyrgios waited. Someday, his disciple would reflect on himself and show up again. Yet his disciple appeared like this…

Kyrgios' eyes narrowed as he spoke. [There are traces of the Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship from your wounds.]

"…"

[Did you encounter the disciple of the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint? Or was it the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint?]

The disciple didn't answer. Kyrgios' force became stronger.

[Answer me.]

The entire industrial complex wriggled like a trampled bug. The presence spread and all the Kim Dokjas in the industrial complex kneeled from the pain. It was just a wave of magic power but it was like he showed off his 'status. This was the presence of the Paradox Baekchung. The only one who didn't kneel was his disciple.

"I didn't want you to see me like this."

[What does that mean?]

"I have defiled the name of Baekchung."

[…]

"Please kill me."

Kyrgios' eyebrows wriggled at the words. It was because he remembered the message he received before coming here.

–Please kill me.

Kyrgios small teeth made a sound as they grinded together.

[It is true that I came to punish you. But…]

His disciple was beaten up in a distant place. Moreover, it was a situation where his disciple told him to kill him because his disciple couldn't overcome the disgrace.

In such a situation, what type of teacher could punish his student? There would certainly be such a teacher but at the very least, Kyrgios wasn't like that.

[…Why are you so keen to be killed?]

"…"

[Foolish guy.]

Kyrgios turned his back to his disciple. He didn't know what happened to his prideful disciple but he would find out if he went to Murim.

[Did you say it was the First Murim?]

His disciple didn't answer but Kyrgios was already moving.

[That world will know that there is a 'paradox' above the 'breaking the sky'.]

Kyrgios left and the war clouds over the industrial complex disappeared like they had been washed away. In the places where Kyrgios passed, the aspiring Kim Dokjas were lying down.

"U-Uhh… uwaaah!"

I saw those who wanted to be me and felt very complicated. Jang Hayoung asked, "…Was it too much?"

It wasn't a question for the aspiring Kim Dokjas. I stared at the portal that Kyrgios disappeared through and said, "That's the only way to move him."

Kyrgios had already lost two disciples to Murim. In order to send him to the First Murim, I was forced to make a cowardly excuse.

"What if he kills the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint?"

"Don't worry about it." I responded while placing a story fragment on the wounds caused by Jang Hayoung.

It seemed that Kyrgios was going to get revenge for me but it remained to be seen how things would turn out. A transcendent of Kyrgios' level would notice the trouble occurring in the First Murim.

[You have triggered a new sub scenario.]

Perhaps by now, Kyrgios would've gained a sub scenario to intervene in the First Murim. Kyrgios was also unhappy with the outer gods. Once he found out the situation, he would be forced to help the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint.

"You should be more worried about us."

"What? Why?"

"Originally, Kyrgios shouldn't appear here."

Despite the countless crises I had experienced, I didn't call Kyrgios thought Jang Hayoung. I originally intended to call him during the Demon King Selection.

However, I used that card to save the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint. I didn't know if it was the wrong choice but at least it was an honourable choice.

I looked up at the night sky.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is watching you with anxious eyes.]

Some stars were worried about me.

[Some constellations are smiling at you.]

Some stars were taking my crisis as an opportunity. I smiled bitterly towards those stars. "If you've seen enough, can you make a decision now?"

I took a deep breath and declared towards the sky. "I'm the real Kim Dokja."

The conversation with Kyrgios was open to the public and no further proof was needed. The stars in the night sky shone at the same time.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' admits that you are the real Kim Dokja.]

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' admits that you are the real Kim Dokja.]

[The constellation Queen of the Darkest Spring admits that you are the real Kim Dokja.]

.

.

[A very small number of constellations disagree with the results.]

Those who wanted something else disagreed but this was a majority vote.

[Many constellations recognize you as the real Kim Dokja.]

[You have been recognized as the real Kim Dokja.]

[The hidden scenario has been completed!]

[200,000 coins have been acquired as a scenario reward.]

The faces of the aspiring Kim Dokjas started to change one by one. The mosaic scattered and their real faces were exposed to the sky. For the first time, the citizens confirmed the true owner of the industrial complex and cried out with amazement. "Kim Dokja! The real Kim Dokja!"

"T-The master of this industrial complex is back…!"

More messages popped up.

[You have formally inherited the former Gilobat Industrial Complex.]

[The former Gilobat Industrial Complex has been officially declared as the Kim Dokja Industrial Complex.]

[Your notoriety is spreading in the Demon Realm!]

[Your fame is strengthening your current stories.]

A bright light surrounded my body and my stories were further strengthened.

[You are the 'duke' of the industrial complex.]

Soon, a lonely fight would begin.

After the situation settled down, the first place I headed to was Mark's office in the heart of the industrial complex.

"…I'm ashamed."

"No, you did well."

Riots occurred due to the Kim Dokja Game and Mark and other officials were detained. I patted Mark on the shoulder and comforted him. "You did your best."

No one, including Mark, would've been able to stop the Kim Dokja Game. In the first place, it was an event that occurred because I went away. It was thanks to Mark that the industrial complex was maintained to this extent. In fact, Mark was a mercenary leader on his home planet and possessed a very high level Crowd Control skill.

I listened to Mark's report on the surrounding trends.

"There is news of war coming from everywhere."

A group of people exiting the industrial complex could be seen from the office window. Some of them were people who just participated in the scenario and others weren't.

"A war can't be done alone. Don't you know?"

"It is foolish to hold onto those who have no will to fight."

Most of them would die from the penalty of 'leaving the scenario area'. Even so, they decided to move. It meant the situation was desperate.

[The population of the industrial complex is decreasing and the power of the Factory is reduced.]

The story weapon, the Factory was maintained through the work of the citizens. It was natural for the power to go down once the labour force shrank.

However, I spoke like it wasn't a big deal. "We can't see the outcome with just the power of the industrial complex. The main focus of the enemy isn't the industrial complex anyway."

I had to deal with Melledon and Bercan. Melledon had joined hands with Vedas while Bercan was working with Papyrus.

It shouldn't be a direct alliance with the nebulae based on the scale of the alliance. They had probably just contracted with some constellations of the nebulae.

Nevertheless, it was a power that couldn't be ignored. It was still unknown but in the Demon King Selection, perhaps I would have to fight at least 10 constellations.

"Is there a plan?"

To be honest, the odds weren't very high. I had just become a constellation and it would be suicidal to fight them, even with Yoo Joonghyuk's help.

"I have a way."

I couldn't say it now. There were too many eyes watching.

[Many constellations are admiring your ambition!]

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is wondering what that means.]

[2,000 coins have been sponsored.]

In fact, there were a few things that I had thought about. It would've been impossible before but now it was possible. Before I could use these methods, there was something I had to check first.

[The Fourth Wall is wriggling.]

It read my mind and responded. I slowly blinked as I thought, 'I need your help'.

It would know what I wanted to say without me needing to open my mouth.

'Let me see my Attributes Window'.

Until now, I have somehow fought without properly knowing my information.

Until now.

[The Fourth Wall is shaking nervously.]

It would be difficult to do so from now on. It would be hard to know the enemy without knowing myself. I already knew a bit about the enemy so I had to know about 'myself'.

Chapter 254: Ep. 47 - Demon King Selection, VIII

[The Fourth Wall is showing its teeth in a threatening manner.]

Fierce sparks filled the air. I quickly ordered Mark to leave the office. I wouldn't be able to figure out what was happening if he was present.

'Wait a minute, listen to me'.

I thought about what I could do to appease this damn wall. 'You love stories. Once this is over, I'll feed you many things that you want to eat.

[The Fourth Wall is looking at you with a frown.]

The growling pressured seemed to calm down a bit. It didn't seem to have any effect.

'I have something I need to check. I could die if I don't know it. Is that what you want?'

The Fourth Wall was silent. Fortunately, this guy didn't want me to die at the moment. The Fourth Wall was silent for a long time before speaking.

「The Fourth Wall says, Kim Dok ja.」

"Yes."

「It wi ll be dan ge rous with out me.」

I thought I knew what it was talking about. One of the Fourth Wall's functions included protecting me from the eyes of the constellations. Thus, it was worried about the constellations harming me once it was turned off.

'I know. However, this time I have to look'.

In front of my firm will, the Fourth Wall was silent for a moment before opening its mouth.

「10 se conds on ly.」

10 seconds. Yes, it was a bit tight but it was fine.

「All chan nels must be block ed.」

I nodded.

–Biyoo. Play an ad on the channel.

The moment the order was sent via the dokkaebi communication, the screen turned off.

[Many constellations are confused by the sudden advertisement.]

Okay, this was enough. However, the Fourth Wall wasn't satisfied.

「The Fourth Wall says, Not e nough yet.」

'Not enough? What?'

The Fourth Wall didn't answer. I looked up and Biyoo was blinking innocently.

[…Baat?]

Biyoo was clearly blocking the channel properly. It wasn't enough yet…

At this moment, the previous scenario came to mind.

Hidden Scenario - Kim Dokja Proof of Identity. In this industrial complex, there was a dokkaebi carrying out the scenario. I stared out the window at the ruins of the scenario.

The Star Stream created the hidden scenarios but it was the dokkaebis that guided the direction of the scenario.

[Many constellations are protesting the unstable channel conditions.]

In retrospect, 'Kim Dokja Proof of Identity' was a rather unusual scenario. It was a scenario that precisely knew the demands of the constellations and even contained information about 'me' before the first scenario…

No matter how I thought about it, there was only one person who would do this. I sighed and slowly opened my mouth. "Bihyung, won't you come out?"

"Ahjumma! Where are you? I came!"

A charitable medical relief station in Seongnam. This shelter, established with the government's help, was one of the civilian relief organizations that cared for the casualties of the scenario invasions.

Han Sooyoung shouted while kicking a fallen patient in her way. "Kim Dokja's mother! Kim Dokja's mother, raise your hand!"

The patient who had been lying down quickly moved away due to the kick. Yoo Sangah hurriedly approached and took care of the patient.

"I'm sorry. Are you okay? …Hey, Han Sooyoung-ssi!"

Han Sooyoung was disgusted by Yoo Sangah's sharp voice. "Ahhh, go away if you're going to nag me."

"You are too much. These people are patients!"

"I'm a patient too."

As the frowning Yoo Sangah finally became angry, the door of the relief centre opened and new patients appeared. They were incarnations wounded by the monsters present in this world. They were people the large wards couldn't handle and were forced to come to this relief station. Han Sooyoung saw a familiar woman as she looked around.

"Lee Seolhwa is also here."

Doctor Lee Seolhwa. She was a colleague of Yoo Joonghyuk who was taking care of the patients here.

Han Sooyoung sighed deeply. "It is a real mess… Do you know? She was originally destined to be a very bad woman."

"How do you know that?"

"I just know. Why can't I know what Kim Dokja also knows?"

Yoo Sangah's eyes narrowed when Han Sooyoung mentioned Kim Dokja. Han Sooyoung glanced at Yoo Sangah and said, "Kim Dokja has changed too many things. He saved those who were meant to die and killed those who were meant to live…"

"…Is this about the prophecy?"

"You don't know it anyway. I just want to say that I would've never done what Kim Dokja did."

Han Sooyoung pulled out a piece of dark chocolate and ate it. The bitter taste of the chocolate spread in her mouth and the bitterness seemed to affect Han Sooyoung.

"The future was ruined by him. The story should flow the way it was meant to. If it was me…"

"If it was you, Kim Dokja and you would be no different from a 'character'."

It wasn't Yoo Sangah's voice. Han Sooyoung smiled and turned towards the person.

"You look healthy, Sooyoung."

Kim Dokja's mother, Lee Sookyung was behind them.

"It doesn't matter if I'm healthy or not."

"My Dokja seems to like unhealthy children."

"I don't care what Kim Dokja likes!"

Lee Sookyung laughed at Han Sooyoung's reaction before turning her head. "It has been a while, Yoo Sangah-ssi. What's going on here?"

Before Yoo Sangah could reply, Han Sooyoung interrupted again. "Use Good or Bad Luck, Disaster or Happiness Fortune."

Good or Bad Luck, Disaster or Happiness Fortune. It was one of the stigmas Lee Sookyung received from her sponsor, Founder's Mother.

"Good or Bad Luck, Disaster or Happiness Fortune… you always seem confident. Why are you suddenly trying to lean on something like this?"

"I wish I could solve everything with confidence."

"You have lost your information. Is that right?"

Han Sooyoung and Lee Sookyung were different from Kim Dokja. Han Sooyoung only read the 'early' parts of the original novel while Lee Sookyung only knew the information she had heard from Kim Dokja. In the end, both of them had uncertain future information.

Lee Sookyung smiled lightly and asked, "Why did you come to me? Sangah can do something similar with Olympus' power."

"Are you joking? Did you forget what Olympus did to Kim Dokja?"

The two of them bickered while Yoo Sangah muttered with an embarrassed expression.

"I'm sorry, I can't help you right now…"

"Don't worry about it. I know the situation with Olympus is complicated. Isn't it in the midst of an internal feud right now?"

"…Yes."

Yoo Sangah bowed her head with an unconvinced expression while Han Sooyoung said, "Just leave it alone. They've had so much sex that their lifespan is being cut. Faster than—"

Yoo Sangah's eyes widened at the unexpected words. Lee Sookyung looked at them and laughed.

"Okay, young ladies. What information do you want to know? For reference, I can't see the concrete future with Good or Bad Luck, Disaster or Happiness Fortune. I can only point the way."

Han Sooyoung nodded as if she already knew. "I want to know about Kim Dokja's current situation."

"Hrmm…"

Lee Sookyung looked at Han Sooyoung with a subtle gaze and Han Sooyoung quickly added. "It is because the Korean Peninsula could be destroyed depending on how things are going over there. I am hearing strange stories from the constellations these days… why are you laughing?"

"You're just cute."

Han Sooyoung complained. "Quickly do it."

"I've been looking at it for a long time."

"Yes? …Then what is it?"

Lee Sookyung smiled. "Well, it can be either. A week ago, it was in the middle and three days ago it was inauspicious…"

"What? Inauspicious?"

"Yesterday it was lucky…"

"Then what is it now?"

Lee Sookyung pulled out a bronze mirror without speaking. It was a fragment of the Heavenly Mirror, one of the three divine treasures. "See for yourself."

There was an unusual nuance in her voice that caused Han Sooyoung and Yoo Sangah to simultaneously put their heads together. Then faint letters appeared on the bronze mirror.

—Great Misfortune.

For a moment, Han Sooyoung doubted if she read the hanja[1] properly.

"Is this real?"

"I don't know. If you're curious, you can ask the Hongik nebula." She said this but Lee Sookyung didn't look very comfortable either. Then the surface of the mirror shook and the writing changed.

"Ah…? The word 'help' appeared?" Yoo Sangah exclaimed and the other two glanced at the mirror.

Help. It was an obvious meaning and there was no need to interpret it. Han Sooyoung and Yoo Sangah faced each other at the same time.

Lee Sookyung sighed lightly and asked them, "Then who will go?"

[…Kim Dokja is truly Kim Dokja. How did you know?]

Bihyung appeared out of thin air. His fur was shiny and he was now wearing good quality cloth materials. The dokkaebi used to only wear tiger underwear but that was an old story now.

"What about the Korean Peninsula channel?"

[I was demoted. Can't you tell?]

"It looks like you're not doing well without me?"

[You'll know if you come back.]

Bihyung didn't use honorifics as before. Perhaps it was proof that the relationship between us had changed. In fact, my contract with him had ended with my death.

Bihyung stared at me for a while and I gazed back.

[Have you been well?]

"It is as you can see."

[Yes, I've heard many stories about you.]

I lightly nodded.

[Do you want to come back to my channel again? I will treat you well.]

Perhaps Bihyung's words were sincere. It was a more dangerous proposal because it was genuine.

"Well…"

I didn't hate Bihyung now. However, I wasn't naive enough to join hands with Bihyung. Bihyung was a dokkaebi with strings to the bureau and the bureau was one of the most dangerous groups in the world.

[Indeed, you were originally such a person.]

Bihyung's expression was changing. It was natural for the dokkaebis to be aloof to those who left their channels. The idea that Bihyung could become an enemy wasn't impossible. Even so, the time had come sooner than I thought.

[Then what about this? Build a joint channel with me. It is fine since this is the Demon Realm.]

For a moment, I thought I heard wrong. "…Are you serious?"

[Think about it once.]

In fact, it wasn't a bad suggestion. If I built a joint channel with Biyoo, it would allow Biyoo to learn and grow quickly. "I understand. More than that, now…"

At this moment, I heard Bihyung through the dokkaebi communication.

–Do you want me to turn the channel off?

I nodded. As expected, Bihyung only pretended to be stupid.

–I don't know what you're trying to do but I wish you well. I have a few things to do so… let's resolve the rest at a later time.

I didn't understand why Bihyung was so favourable towards me. In any case, I was fortunate. Bihyung changed the settings and then a message from the constellations was heard.

[All constellations in the channel are dissatisfied with the channel's connection!]

I immediately looked at the Fourth Wall.

「The Fourth Wall says, Do not look for too lo ng.」

[The exclusive skill 'Fourth Wall' has been released.]

I felt the curtain surrounding my world disappearing. I didn't miss this time and turned on the Attributes Window.

[Checking the Attributes Window.]

A vast amount of information entered my mind.

[Character Summary]

Name: Kim Dokja

Age: 28 years old

Sponsor: None

Modifier: Demon King of Salvation (Narrative)

Exclusive Attributes: Lamarck's Giraffe (Legend), Demon Realm Duke (Legend), Scenario Interpreter (???), ■■ Apostle (???)…

…

…

I could now see my attributes that I couldn't confirm properly last time. To be honest, it was surprising. I thought my attribute would be 'reader'…

Scenario Interpreter? Besides, what was ■■ Apostle? Why wasn't the attribute rating shown?

[You have checked your Attributes Window for the first time.]

[The effect of the 'Scenario Interpreter' is activated!]

In any case, I kept checking the information. The part I watched most carefully was the 'Exclusive Skills'.

> Exclusive Skills: Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint Lv. ?, Bookmark Lv. ?, Character List Lv. ?, Fourth Wall Lv. ?, Reading Comprehension Lv. ?, …

One of the skills originally hidden with a ■ could be seen.

Reading Comprehension. At first glance, it seemed like the ability to read and understand something but I didn't think it was that simple. Most of the skills I've acquired so far were like that.

I raised my hand to the Attributes Window without thinking. Then there was the sound of sparks appearing and the Attributes Window started breaking apart.

…Was it already 10 seconds? I thought so at first but the problem wasn't that simple.

A faint ringing was heard in my ears and my head suddenly throbbed. The finger touching the Attributes Window was numb and the world became dizzy. I felt like vomiting. Beyond the insurmountable wall, something was calling me.

[The exclusive skill 'Fourth Wall' is strongly activated!]

The situation wasn't improved despite the Fourth Wall activating. The surrounding landscapes started to mix together. It was a scene where things that shouldn't go together were merged. In the midst of this terrible mood, I felt a strange sense of unity. It felt like something I had been wanting for a long time.

Then I heard a strange message.

[Your understanding of the character 'Kim Dokja' has increased.]

What…? The moment my consciousness flickered, someone spoke to me.

「(So, you were told not to look for too long).」

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[1] **Hanja** – Chinese characters.

싱숑 장편소설

전지적 독자 시점

Omniscient
Reader's
Viewpoint

PART 2

03

비채

*

Chapter 255: Ep. 45 - Entrance as a Character, I

A burning pain was felt from my cheeks several times.

"Kim Dokja! Hey! What is this?"

My vision blinked and my consciousness slowly rose to the surface.

[The exclusive skill 'Fourth Wall' is strongly activated!]

"Uh…"

My voice didn't sound like me. It was only a moment but it felt like I had become a different existence and came back. A terrible sensation remained in my entire body. The shoulders being touched by Jang Hayoung's fingers trembled.

"What's wrong with you?"

I couldn't clearly remember what had happened. I asked the Fourth Wall to check the Attributes Window and then I heard a voice…

I rubbed my temples and asked, "…How did I faint?"

"I don't know! I came running because of a sudden lightning bolt!"

"Lightning?"

"Do you know the sparks that appear when you break the probability? That…"

"Did it strike like lightning?"

Jang Hayoung nodded. "It was the first time I had seen something so big."

My coat and other clothing were charred black. I couldn't believe that the coat with the automatic restoration function was damaged like this… The ceiling of the office looked like it had been hit by a meteorite.

"Are you okay?"

"I'm fine. Of course, I'm fine…"

Rather, I felt lighter. It was impossible. My body was burnt like this but my spirit was clear. The power of my stories felt fuller.

[The effect of the exclusive skill 'Reading Comprehension' has increased understanding.]

I saw the message and a previous memory emerged. That's right. I had obviously seen such a message.

[Your understanding of the character 'Kim Dokja' has increased.]

The message marked me as a character. It was something that never happened before. Cool energy filled a corner of my chest.

I had seen the presence of 'characters' many times'. They were those who came from outside the original novel but was eventually assimilated with the original. They were mostly those who stopped reading the novel.

I urgently summoned the Attributes Window. 'Attributes Window'.

However, the Attributes Window didn't easily open. The reason was obvious.

[The Fourth Wall is looking at you.]

I started sweating.

「Kim Dok ja look ed for 15 se conds.」

'I'm sorry, really'.

Who knew who much time had passed? In fact, 10 or 15 seconds to look at the Attributes Window was a tight time frame.

「I wi ll no t see you for the mo ment.」

'Wait, let me ask you something'. I grabbed the Fourth Wall before it was about to disappear. 'What the hell is behind that wall?'

It was a vague memory but I definitely saw something before I fainted. I looked a bit closer and it seemed I had been talking to someone. There were clearly a few shadows.

「…Sleep y.」

Then the Fourth Wall fell asleep. The function was still working but the consciousness had turned off. Shit.

[You have acquired a new story!]

[The story 'Looked into the Abyss' has been acquired.]

[This story doesn't have a rating.]

I stared at the messages in the air with blank eyes.

Looked into the Abyss. I knew the existence of this story from the original novel. I couldn't prevent the goosebumps.

Unrestrained questions flooded my head. Why did I get this story here? What was the relationship between that story and being called a character? Was I now a character or was I still a reader? I… Was I still able to change the future?

"Kim Dokja?" Jang Hayoung was staring at me with emotional eyes.

How much better would it be if my situation was as clear as his eyes? If I could read myself like I read these eyes…

At this moment, there was a flash in my head.

「 What if I use Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint on myself? 」

I never thought of it before. There was clearly something lurking inside me that I didn't know. I didn't know if it was something the author left behind or if it naturally permeated me during the process of the world changing. The obvious thing was I needed to figure out what it was.

However, I hesitated to use Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint.

…Could I figure it out using this? In the first place, Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint was a skill that read the thoughts and movements of the target…

[…Kim Dokja? Are you okay?]

I barely escaped from the mire of thoughts thanks to the dokkaebi floating in front of me. "Bihyung?"

I stared at Bihyung with a stupid expression. Didn't he say he was leaving earlier? Bihyung started stammering.

[Ah… after the sudden storm…]

He said he was busy but he must've been observing in the vicinity. In any case, he was a sneaky fellow. I couldn't trust him.

[D-Don't get me wrong. I forgot to tell you that I came back.]

As I spoke to the dokkaebi with calm eyes, Jang Hayoung looked over here with the frightened eyes of a rabbit. I patted his shoulder with a gentle gesture and asked Bihyung. "What aren't you saying?"

[As you know, the Demon King Selection will be a very big event.]

It was already expected. The story of what happened at the Gourmet Association must be spreading between the constellations. Some of those present would certainly participate in the Demon King Selection.

[It isn't just getting bigger, there is also a fight over the broadcasting rights. You might've expected it but I'm not the only one dispatched to the Demon Realm.]

"Then?"

[You know the dokkaebi on the other side.]

I knew the dokkaebi?

[It is a guy with a huge grudge against you.]

There were two of them. However, one was in Murim so there was only one more left. "…Is it Dokgak?"

[Yes.]

Dokgak. The dokkaebi, who was in charge of the Japanese channel, had been humiliated by me and Bihyung.

I was lucky at the time but now it was different. Among the dokkaebis mentioned in Ways of Survival, Dokgak was a person with outstanding talent regarding channel management. If he was chosen as one of the dokkaebis to lead this 'Demon King Selection', the future schedule would never flow smoothly.

[In any case, be careful. The channel management is good so… wait a minute. What about your dokkaebi?]

"Dokkaebi?"

Come to think of it, I felt very lonely. Through the cracked ceiling, the constellations shining in the sky could be seen. It was strange. I might've ordered the blocking of the channel but I should be hearing their complaints. Yet I didn't hear any messages.

"Biyoo?" I called out a name with an uneasy heart.

Biyoo didn't appear. At first, I thought she was sleeping again. However, minutes passed and there was no Biyoo. An ominous premonition struck me.

…Don't tell me?

"Biyoo!"

Biyoo had disappeared.

[A new constellation has entered the #BI-90594 channel.]

.

.

[The constellation 'Bald General of Justice' is greatly moved by your return.]

[The constellation 'Maritime War God' is welcoming you with a smile.]

[Many constellations are welcoming your return!]

I entered Bihyung's channel and familiar names greeted me. I couldn't rejoice at all despite the baptism of cheers.

[The constellation 'Demon King of Salvation' is asking the whereabouts of the dokkaebi 'Biyoo'.]

Some of the constellations answered immediately.

[The constellation 'Bald General of Justice' is wiping his head like it is difficult.]

[The constellation 'King Heungmu the Great' is coughing and placing his thumb and index finger together.]

[Some constellations say they are willing to answer if you give them coins.]

…It turned out that the constellations of the Korean Peninsula had little money. I rummaged for coins in my pocket while Jang Hayoung opened his mouth. "Perhaps she was caught in the storm?"

Biyoo wasn't from the bureau and didn't have a mighty story to protect herself from a great storm. I couldn't rule out the possibility that she was swept away by the storm. However—

"It can't be. There were no signs."

If that happened, terrible debris could be seen. However, there were no traces of Biyoo. It felt as if someone had completely ripped away Biyoo's existence. Who was it? Who took Biyoo…?

Bihyung looked up from where he was biting his nails. Our eyes met and we realized that we had the same idea. Biyoo was the only dokkaebi with an independent channel.

[Fuck, it's those guys.]

"The wenny people."

The sentences of the original novel flowed into my head.

「The only scenario area that isn't under the jurisdiction of the dokkaebis. It is the Demon Realm.」

As written in Ways of Survival, the Demon Realm was essentially the area of the wenny people. In such a zone, they confirmed there was a dokkaebi who wasn't a member of the bureau.

–The soul is mine.

The first time we met, he had coveted the Dokkaebi Egg. The value of an independent channel was so large that it couldn't be calculated at present.

A giant story event was currently taking place in the Demon Realm. There was no way the wenny people would miss something happening in their sphere of influence. They had definitely stolen the channel for the Demon King Selection.

The wenny people were inherently resistant to probability. Thus, they would've been able to take Biyoo when I was unconscious and there was a storm around me. Dammit… why at this point?

[Leave it to me. I'll find them.]

I could see anger in Bihyung's eyes.

[The dokkaebis' honor is at stake. She might not be a member of the bureau but I can't see this.]

"Let's go together."

Bihyung shook his head.

[It isn't long until the Demon King Selection. In the meantime, aren't there certain things you should be doing?]

That's right. The remaining time was really short. If I misused this time to find Biyoo, I might be defeated at the start of the competition.

"…Why are you doing this?"

[You belong to my channel now.]

Bihyung avoided my gaze while replying.

[I'm just moving for my channel. You have to win. That way, the constellations will like you and my channel will become bigger.]

Then Bihyung disappeared into thin air.

Jang Hayoung asked, "…Is it okay to believe in him?"

There was nothing as stupid as a question about believing a dokkaebi. Putting aside my belief in Bihyung, there was no race as mysterious as the dokkaebis in all of the Star Stream.

I sighed briefly. Yoo Joonghyuk's situation wasn't good right now and Jang Hayoung wasn't strong enough to pursue Bihyung.

A presence that could help me was in the night sky but the problem was that I was now in Bihyung's channel. In other words, all messages I sent through the channel would be inevitably read by Bihyung.

If so… there was only one way. "Jang Hayoung, call the wall."

There were quick footsteps in the darkness.

[Baat, baaaat!]

Biyoo burst out crying as she was trapped in a cage.

[Baaat! Baat…!]

An elderly man with a small lump on his left cheek was running along a dark road. There was an excitement in his urgent steps. The old man was in a very good mood.

[The age of the dokkaebis will now end.]

The old man was excited at the thought of showing off his achievement to the other wenny people. He couldn't describe how envious he was when a fellow colleague recently came up to him bragging about gaining the 'story of beating up a dokkaebi'. Now he brought not a story about beating a dokkaebi but a dokkaebi itself. The old man patted Biyoo's cage like it was adorable.

[My child, you will be the first 'wenny person' with a channel.]

This was the long wish of the wenny people. It was to take back the dominance of the story from the dokkaebis.

[■■'s streamer. From the hell of this terrible scenario, I will free the slaves…]

The lump on the old man's left cheek swelled greatly. The lump wriggled excitedly as it touched the cage containing Biyoo. Biyoo stared at the lump with terrified eyes and urgently looked around. She searched for help but unfortunately, there was no person to rescue Biyoo present.

[Hey.]

To be precise, it wasn't a 'person'.

[Won't you put that lump away?]

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* Official novel cover (canonical)

Chapter 256: Ep. 45 - Entrance as a Character, II

The moment the wenny man turned around, three spears made of yellow sparks struck in front of him. The wenny man frowned and stepped back. It was an attack containing the power of a great story.

[A senior dokkaebi.]

A silhouette floated beyond the yellow trajectory that filled the air. It was a baby-sized dokkaebi in neat clothing. It was Bihyung.

[Leave that baby behind and get lost if you know what's good for you.]

Red fangs flashed from the mouth of the growling Bihyung. The dokkaebis of the Star Stream didn't easily become angry. The constellations in the channels didn't like the dokkaebis to express their emotions. However, there were times when a dokkaebi became truly angry. It was during those times that the canines would be shone.

[Why are you coming out for a dokkaebi who isn't a member of the bureau?]

[A dokkaebi is a dokkaebi.]

[How funny.]

[…I gave birth to this child. I might not want to raise her but shouldn't I act as a parent?]

The wenny man laughed at the words.

[Parent? A parent!]

It was a great laugh and the lump on his cheek shook.

[Since when did a dokkaebi have such human aspects? If there was such a thing, you should've given it to my ancestors.]

[Sorry, I wasn't even born at the time.]

[Then who will compensate for our suffering?]

One of the wenny man's eyes concealed by the fog was revealed. It was a Great Demon's Eye. The yellow iris started spinning and emitting a fierce pressure.

[Who will compensate us for the pain of having our 'Story Bag' taken away?]

[What is this bullshit? I know that story but we gave back the Story Bag. It was even double—]

The situation got worse and Bihyung's expression started stiffening. He didn't expect for the wenny man to try to fight against him. Bihyung might've made a big appearance but this was the first time he was fighting a wenny person.

—No matter what happens, avoid fighting a wenny person as much as possible.

It was advice left behind by the previous generation dokkaebis. Bihyung was a fairly old dokkaebi of the Seoul branch but he knew little about the relationship between a dokkaebi and wenny person.

The only thing certain was that the two races had been antagonistic since the days before the concept of the 'channel' was established.

The wenny man said, [It looks like you don't know anything. You didn't return the wenny people's possessions.]

Bihyung was annoyed. [I don't know about that. Just give me that child quickly! If not—]

[There are many types of evils in the world.]

There was an eerie chill in the wenny man's voice. Before Bihyung could even scream, the wenny person continued. It was like the sentence of an old song.

[The 'first evil' is an evil that makes someone unhappy.]

The wenny man's lump was gradually getting bigger. A warning was ringing in Bihyung's head.

[The 'second evil' is evil that enjoys misery.]

Along with the lyrics, something was released from the wenny man's lump. It was something that absolutely shouldn't be released.

[The most 'repugnant evil' is the evil that reveals its misery to others.]

Bihyung moved without hesitation.

[The authority of a giant story is being used.]

Bihyung became a senior dokkaebi and gained the rights to a giant story. The wenny person wouldn't be able to resist the power that could manipulate the Star Stream. By the way, the wenny man was laughing. [Didn't the previous generation tell you? Never use that power in front of a wenny person.]

The story flowing out of the lump started to trap the story around Bihyung's body. The language of the system was entirely black. It was as if someone had covered the world in black paint.

[The operation of the giant story ■■■■…]

Bihyung was startled. This type of manipulation was only available to the great dokkaebis above the highest-ranking dokkaebis. How did this wenny man have this power…?

[Perhaps… the language of another world?]

[Stupid dokkaebi. Your mistake was coming here alone.]

Something was crawling out of the wenny person's lump. A monstrous creature was sending its tentacles through the torn lump.

[K-Kuoh, kuooooh.]

The quick tentacles instantly grasped Bihyung's small body.

[The story 'Song of the Wenny Person' is in effect.]

Bihyung realized too late the moment the story touched him. Why did the previous generation dokkaebis avoid the wenny people?

[Due to the racial characteristic, the resistance to the 'wenny people' has plummeted.]

[The hatred of the wenny people makes your mind weak.]

[The wenny people's grudge has sharply reduced your fighting power.]

A feeling of helplessness filled Bihyung and he felt like an incarnation. Countless gazes pouring from the air struck his body like arrows.

[The constellation 'King Heungmu the Great' is astonished by the power of the wenny people.]

[The constellation 'God of Wine and Ecstasy' is frowning at the source of the wenny people's power.]

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is forming fists.]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is greatly angry!]

The wenny man laughed. [We can't apply this power to other races. However, it is different for a dokkaebi.]

The force of the tentacles slowly squeezed tighter and suffocated Bihyung. He could feel the deep grudge of the wenny people through the tentacles.

It was a story that showed a near-invincible force against the dokkaebis as long as certain conditions were satisfied. He was apalled by the wenny people's story, which had been filled with the hatred of a race since its birth.

[You will die in view of your favourite constellations.] I will get a very good story today.]

The story flowed and squeezed Bihyung like he was a fruit. He belatedly contacted the bureau but Bihyung would become juice before they came. It happened the moment his consciousness was going to disappear under the tightening tentacles.

The tentacles wrapped around Bihyung exploded. The surprised wenny man retreated and Bihyung's small body fell to the ground. It was a tall man who caught Bihyung.

"What a stupid dokkaebi to confront a wenny person."

Bihyung turned his head at the cold voice. Bloody boots. A long black coat flapping in the wind. The trapped Biyoo shouted "Baaat," while the constellations in the sky sent indirect messages.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is screaming and cheering!]

Bihyung saw the black weapon in his hands and realized the identity of the man.

[Y-You…?]

He got goosebumps the moment he locked eyes with the man. It wasn't because of the man's skill Sage's Eye, which was designed by the oldest man in all dimensions, nor was it because of the fierceness around his body. Bihyung had met countless incarnations.

However, only one incarnation had the eyes of this man. He seemed to be measuring how to kill Bihyung. The moment Bihyung started struggling, the man threw Bihyung's body back.

"Stay back."

Bihyung fell with a loud sound and rolled across the ground. The man gripped the sword in his right hand without hesitation. The Black Heavenly Demon Sword started crying and a solid story of transcendence started surrounding the man.

The cut-off tentacles wriggled on the ground. The wenny man stared blankly at the scene and Yoo Joonghyuk opened his mouth. "You are the great demon of the horizon."

[That's right. It has been a while. Puppet of the Oldest Dream.]

"…It is the first time I'm seeing you."

[Hahaha! You will never know! You will never know even when going through 1,000 deaths and living 1,000 lives again. Because you are…!]

Yoo Joonghyuk had no intention of listening to the wenny man's bullshit and his sword cut through the space.

The wenny man saw the blade passing right in front of his nose and shouted, [Wouldn't it be good if we both backed away at this point? You have nothing to do with this situation—]

"Give me Shin Yoosung."

[What?]

He followed Yoo Joonghyuk's gaze towards the cage where Biyoo was trapped. The wenny man finally realized how the situation had gone wrong.

[Are you aiming for the dokkaebi? Bah! It is no use for a human to have a channel—]

"I don't need a channel."

Biyoo's eyes shook from inside the cage. The fallen Bihyung stood up and listened blankly. The atmosphere of transcendence surrounded Yoo Joonghyuk's blade.

The wenny man laughed. [I'm dumbfounded. Don't you know the value of this dokkaebi? It is unreasonable for you in this round. It is useless even with the person called Kim Dokja! No matter how many variables, the flow of the Star Stream…]

The sparks of transcendence appeared and a waterfall of magic power poured from Yoo Joonghyuk's Black Heavenly Demon Sword. The arm of the wenny man flew through the air.

Magic power flowed out from the blade in the form of the Breaking the Sky energy and the wenny man shouted, [S-Stop! You don't know because your cumulative deeds are still low. In other parallel dimensions…!]

The excessive leakage of information caused sparks of probability to splash around the wenny man. He swallowed his words and yelled again.

[In any case, you're making a mistake now! Never make me your enemy—]

"I made a promise with my colleagues. I'll get revenge for her."

Biyoo in the cage was shaking. She might've lost her memory and many parts of her past life had disappeared but Biyoo's body was trembling.

"You'll die here."

The Shin Yoosung of the 41st regression didn't have her memories. If so, who was the revenge for? Yoo Joonghyuk didn't know. He just swung his sword. Just like revenge for the first round was completed in the second round and revenge for the second round was completed in the third round.

He tore at the tentacles coming from the lump and then placed a huge sword against one of the wenny man's arms. The next moment, Yoo Joonghyuk was standing behind the wenny man. The energy of Breaking the Sky flooded the entire space.

[W-Wait a minute! Stop—]

The wenny person's lump flew through the air. The next moment, the wenny man's body was engulfed in the darkness that emerged from the lump.

[A curse, I will curse you. The 'I' of all dimensions will never forgive you…!]

The wenny man was struck in the mouth by the Black Heavenly Demon Sword. There was a terrible scream and the darkness that escaped from the lump completely swallowed the wenny person.

The darkness stared at Yoo Joonghyuk for a moment before it completely disappeared. Then a complete stillness came. Yoo Joonghyuk stood still for a while from the excessive use of transcendence. Countless system messages entered his ears.

[You have acquired a new legendary story!]

[You have accomplished an achievement that never existed before.]

[The story 'One Who Killed a Wenny Person' has been acquired!]

[All the wenny people in the Demon Realm have become hostile to you!]

Yoo Joonghyuk slowly walked towards the cage and carefully pulled out Biyoo. Biyoo cried out loudly. Her little hand touched Yoo Joonghyuk several times. Yoo Joonghyuk stared down at Biyoo for a while before he placed her in his pocket and started moving.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' has wet eyes.]

[The constellation 'Bald General of Justice' is wiping his head with a towel.]

[The constellation 'Maritime War God' is so impressed that he is writing a poem.]

The light of countless constellations was shining towards him but none of them could reach Yoo Joonghyuk. No matter how many years they had lived, they couldn't understand the regressor who suffered the destruction of the world twice. The next moment, Yoo Joonghyuk heard a message.

[The constellation 'Demon King of Salvation' is looking at you.]

It was a star that never appeared in the last two rounds. Then why? Yoo Joonghyuk felt like the star had been there for a long time.

Yoo Joonghyuk declared, "Get lost, Kim Dokja."

Then one of the stars in the sky really went out.

"…Kim Dokja?"

There was no answer from Kim Dokja.

Chapter 257: Ep. 45 - Entrance as a Character, III

"Things have been roughly sorted out."

I sighed with relief as I looked at Yoo Joonghyuk through the screen of the channel. I was anxious about the bureau arriving but fortunately, Yoo Joonghyuk was faster. It was a good choice to convey a message to Uriel through Jang Hayoung.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is smiling brightly.]

It was Uriel who took Yoo Joonghyuk to that place. Yoo Joonghyuk was angry with me over the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint incident so I decided that Uriel's words would have more influence on Yoo Joonghyuk.

Jang Hayoung watched Bihyung on the screen and muttered, "It is the first time I've seen a dokkaebi so helpless."

"The racial stories are intertwined. In order to deal with a wenny person, a great dokkaebi or at least four dokkaebis must appear."

"…You know it very well? Aileen said that everything about the dokkaebis and wenny people was covered in a veil."

"This is basic information among the constellations."

Jang Hayoung stared at me with strangely respectful eyes after hearing my words. Of course, not all constellations knew this information. The screen showed a short close-up of Biyoo and Yoo Joonghyuk holding her.

「I will get revenge for you.」

「Goodbye, Captain.」

「Good job.」

「I'll leave it to you.」

「Rest.」

The sentences that only I could see were passing through my head. Now these words had gone to the place they were meant to. I didn't know much about it but one thing was certain.

At least now they understood each other without words. The things I couldn't read had definitely touched them. I didn't know why but I felt lonely thinking about it.

"…Kim Dokja?" Jang Hayoung was staring at me.

I scratched my head and quickly opened my mouth. "In any case, Yoo Joonghyuk will do it somehow. This side must be ready…"

…Shit. Already? Jang Hayoung and I looked out the window of the office at the same time. Clouds of sand were gathering beyond the walls of the industrial complex. There was a commotion among the citizens. I could see Mark and the other lawmakers calming them down.

[Oh, there are some hot-tempered constellations. There are still 48 hours until the Demon King Selection.]

The familiar voice of a dokkaebi was heard in the air. High above the industrial complex, Dokgak stared at me and laughed.

[I was originally thinking the beginning should be more boring…]

He was obviously smiling but his eyes were full of resentment against me. No matter how much he disliked me, he couldn't start his own game within the Demon King Selection story.

[This time, it isn't bad to start early.]

…What?

[A new sub scenario has been acquired!]

[The Sub Scenario—'Skirmish' has started!]

I saw the emerging window and noticed how things were progressing. A sub scenario. In the absence of Biyoo and Bihyung, this jerk…

[Sub Scenario - Skirmish]

Category: Sub

Difficulty: ???

Clear Conditions: Protect the 'Story Core' of the industrial complex for a limited amount of time. Or steal it.

Time Limit: 48 hours.

Compensation: Attacking side— qualification for the Demon King Selection

Defending side—200,000 coins, ???

Failure: —

I frowned. It might be a sub scenario but opening a scenario in this way was clearly out of the ordinary.

[Some constellations are dissatisfied with the unfair process of Dokgak!]

[Some constellations are requesting a 'probability conformity screening!]

Fortunately, I wasn't the only one to think so.

[Ahh, I knew some of you would think so. Certainly, there is some unfairness. The number of defenders and attackers aren't equal.]

Dokgak was sneering at me. It was a smile that told me I could handle such a scenario. It was an obvious provocation.

[Thus, I have slightly adjusted the difficulty level. As far as this sub scenario is concerned, the individual constellations of the attackers and defenders will have equal levels.]

The moment Dokgak spoke, a faint aura surrounded my incarnation bodies.

[The stats of everyone participating in the scenario is fixed.]

I slowly clenched my fists before opening them. The attacking constellations would've received the same penalty. I couldn't see whether my stats had fallen or increased.

[Some constellations are still protesting that this scenario is against the probability!]

Dokgak had a troubled expression.

[Ahh, don't say that. This is really… you have all become weak. Have you already forgotten that scenarios are fun because they're difficult?]

The channel became a terrible mess with indirect messages supporting and opposing it. In the meantime, Dokgak pushed ahead with the scenario.

[You are currently the owner of the Kim Dokja Industrial Complex.]

[You are playing the role of 'defender' in the Skirmish.]

[You must protect the Story Core from the attacking constellations.]

I smiled bitterly as I faced Dokgak. Yes, this was what he came up with.

"Kim Dokja, how…"

Rather than answering Jang Hayoung, I opened the wide and yelled towards the citizens.

[All citizens. This is the first time I am personally greeting you.]

My true voice resonated through the industrial complex. I once again breathed in and shouted, [Please calm down and concentrate on my words.]

The voice of the duke was heard for the first time and all the citizens looked at me. Voices came from all over the place. "It is Kim Dokja!"

"That person is the duke!"

Unfortunately, I couldn't match their expectations.

[I can't protect you.]

Perhaps there had never been such a duke in the Demon Realm. In addition, I hoped there wouldn't be any more in the future.

[So don't die here like dogs and find your own way to live. I will personally recommend the Yoo Joonghyuk Industrial Complex!]

I could see the mouths of the citizens dropping open at my absurd declaration. Even Mark looked up in a bewildered manner from where he was calming the citizens. Still, it couldn't be helped. This was the only way to save them. There should be no unnecessary sacrifices in this scenario.

[Do you want to free the citizens of your industrial complex?]

"Free them."

[All citizens of the industrial complex are freed from your influence.]

[The citizens of the Kim Dokja Industrial Complex have received the 'Escape Scenario'.]

[The citizens of the Kim Dokja Industrial Complex can now choose an industrial complex.]

[You have acquired a new legendary story!]

[The story 'Liberator of the Industrial Complex' has been acquired.]

Messages poured out and I left a final message.

[Everyone, please leave. I will stop them until everyone leaves.]

Bihyung might've argued against this if he was here but now he was lying in a distant place.

[The citizens of the industrial complex are giving a standing ovation for your noble sacrifice.]

Thanks but I wasn't planning a noble sacrifice. I focused on the energy coming from beyond the barrier of the industrial complex. There were four huge energy sources. At least four constellations were approaching.

"Jang Hayoung. Take Han Myungoh and the Breaking the Sky Master. Flee and don't look back.

Never think about fighting them."

"What? I don't want to!"

"I don't care if you want to! Go directly to Yoo Joonghyuk. Quickly!"

There were 'four' coming now but there would be more behind them. They weren't something a transcendent dog, a human whose gender was ambiguous and a middle-aged man who had been pregnant could face.

"I am one of them anyway."

I immediately ran downstairs and pulled out the Story Core of the Factory.

[The Factory has stopped running.]

The important thing was to protect this Story Core. I didn't have to stay in the industrial complex to defend it. I opened Bookmark and used Way of the Wind to climb onto the wall of the industrial complex.

[Is this what you want?]

The four approaching constellations listened to me.

[If you want it then you'll have to take it away.]

The fearsome constellations followed behind me. The reason I could flee was because we had equal stats.

They were four and I was one. I didn't have much of a chance, regardless of whether the constellations were high or low ranking.

I ran over barriers using Way of the Wind. The constellations confirmed I was holding the Story Core and started to chase me. If they took me down here, they could qualify to participate in the Demon King Selection. It wasn't strange for them to go on a rampage like this.

Dokgak laughed at me. [Hahaha, it is very easy to run away! Constellations, do you really want to stay on Bihyung's channel to watch such a person?]

This son of a bitch… I wouldn't have suffered from this sub scenario if Bihyung hadn't been distracted. However, I couldn't do anything because Bihyung wasn't here.

"Requesting a rise in membership level of the Dokkaebi Bag."

I had already become a 'platinum' level which was an increase by two levels. Still, platinum wasn't the highest rating.

[The dokkaebi in charge is currently absent.]

[The status update will be automatically executed due to the dokkaebi's absence.]

[500,000 coins have been consumed.]

[Congratulations! You have become a diamond member of the Dokkaebi Bag!]

[Due to the increase in membership level, the items list of the Dokkaebi Bag will be updated.]

The diamond members could purchase VIP exclusive items. If my memories were correct, the 'items' would've been released by now.

[You can see the list of exclusive VIP items.]

If Bihyung was here, he would've hidden this list even if he died. It was because Bihyung's black history was among the items on this list.

* Random Story Box (ver 1.3) — 20,000 C

* Story Fusion Box (ver 1.3) — 200,000 C

…It was as expected. These crazy coin items were being sold. Fortunately, the updated version was the one I was looking for.

「"Shit, what are the odds… why didn't they publish the odds?"」

In the 71st round, Kim Namwoon bought this wrong thing and was ruined.

[You have purchased ten Random Story Boxes.]

[You have purchased one Story Fusion Boxes.]

[400,000 coins have been consumed.]

The Random Story Box was one of the few gambling items that consumed coins to get 'stories'. Due to the description that the best quasi-myth-grade story could be obtained, the incarnations and constellations ran towards this item once it was released on the market.

Of course, it went without saying that they all became bankrupt. The result was natural. The probability of getting a historical-grade story from the Random Box was less than 0.001% and the odds of a quasi-myth story wasn't even 0.00001%. Then what about the remaining 99,99%?

「"Crazy! 50 historical-grade stories? There is even the lowest-grade? Is this a joke?"」

I grabbed a falling box and opened it with my mouth.

[Do you want to use the Random Story Box?]

I knew there was little chance of a good story coming out of this box. Then why did I want this box? The story I wanted wasn't a good story.

.

.

[The story 'Head Shoulder Knee Feet' has been acquired.]

[The story 'Don't Cut My Hair' has been acquired.]

[The story 'Nose Pendant Hanging from the Nose'.]

[The story 'Earring Hanging from the Ears'.]

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Indeed, it was as I saw in Ways of Survival. In the 1.3 version of the Story Box, there was a more than 80% chance of stories regarding the 'body' coming out. The most common of them was the Nose Pendant Hanging from the Nose and Earring Hanging from the Ears.

From behind me, a serpent's fangs grazed my sides and thighs. It was an attack containing the power of a story. I gritted my teeth and activated Way of the Wind to the extreme, hiding behind the ruins of a building. I needed a bit more time.

[Wh…ere… are… you…!]

I ignored the ugly true voice and confirmed the stories I had just acquired.

[Historical-grade Story: Nose Pendant Hanging from the Nose]

Description: If you place anything on your nose, it will trigger an effect that makes it look like an accessory. The item doesn't matter.

[Historical-grade Story: Earring Hanging from the Ears]

Description: It anything is hung on your ears, an effect that makes it look like an earring will be activated. It is a story made in combination with Nose Pendant Hanging from the Nose.

Needless to say, these stories weren't helpful when it came to breaking through the current situation. However, it was different with the next item.

[Item Information]

Name: Story Fusion Box ver 1.3

Rating: —

Description: It can fuse together different types of stories. There is a very low probability of randomly creating a higher-grade story.

An item that had a very low probability of generating a high-grade story when mixing certain combinations of stories. Originally, this item wasn't very useful. The same stories being put together produced different results every time and the odds of getting a good story were ridiculously low.

Nevertheless, according to the characters' remarks, there was a bug in the 1.3 version of the fusion box.

「"The sale of the box was discontinued because of this. Shit, I should've tried it before Anna Croft—"」

There was a bug with the 1.3 version fo the Story Fusion Box. It was that when mixing certain stories, the first person who did it must receive a 'certain story'.

The two stories were poured into the box without hesitation and there was a bright flash of light. A message entered my ears along with the throbbing pain.

[The legendary story 'Distorting Things as One Pleases' has been acquired.]

Chapter 258: Ep. 45 - Entrance as a Character, IV

One day, there was a constellation who left such a remark.

「"Every story has a flaw. This means that all stories can be completed."」

The legendary story 'Distorting Things as One Pleases'. This story was made by the narrative-grade constellation who left behind that remark.

[The story 'Distorting Things as One Pleases' is searching for the target of the distortion.]

I got up and moved away from the ruined building. I could see three constellations chasing me through the dust clouds. It was originally four but I didn't know where the last one went.

[Kuaaaah…]

[Gi ve me the sto ry co re.]

I was surrounded by the incarnation bodies. There was one giant snake that reminded me of Orochi and one giant field mouse. The last one was a fiery dog resembling a Cerberus. The Mass Production Maker had told me something during my visit to the Gourmet Association.

–Not all constellations have a noble character.

Some of the constellations would build up stories like me to become constellations while others would lend themselves to the 'authority' of other constellations. In some cases, they might not have accumulated excellent stories but they were lucky enough to fall into an advantageous area and become a constellation.

"What if I don't want to give it to you?"

It was the case with the guys in front of me.

[The constellation 'Nouveau Riche Snake Boss' is staring at you.]

They were those who received the patronage of constellations or 'fortunately' became constellations by eating other beginner constellations or incarnations.

[The constellation 'Nail-Eating Rat' is coveting your nails.]

[The constellation 'Dog Who Threw Himself into the Flames' is looking at the surrounding constellations.]

I knew I would eventually bump into them from the moment they appeared in front of me.

[Many constellations are looking forward to your battle!]

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is looking forward to your performance!]

I could feel the hot gaze of the stars. They would be curious. I hadn't fought properly since becoming a narrative-grade constellation. Dokgak spoke from the air.

[Haha, you are still stupid… are you really going to fight?]

I listened to Dokgak's words and gritted my teeth. The three constellations in front of me had exactly the same level of combat power as me. It was due to Dokgak's penalty. A penalty where everyone in the scenario had the same combat power.

I used Way of the Wind to avoid the poisonous liquid that poured out of the Nouveau Riche Snake Boss' mouth. At almost the same time, the Nail-Eating Rat swiped his nails towards me. The moment I rolled around on the ground, the surroundings were filled with the flames of the Dog Who Threw Himself into the Flames.

I moved around the flames and pulled out my newest thing. This was a fight that couldn't be won if we faced each other with our incarnation bodies. This was if it was only the force of the incarnation body.

[The exclusive skill, Character List is activated.]

They might be animals but they were still historical-grade constellations. Originally, I couldn't look at them with this skill.

[The effect of 'Looked into the Abyss' has increased the effect of all your skills.]

[The exclusive skill 'Character List' is amplified!]

This time was different.

[You will be able to view constellations who are lower rated than you.]

.

.

[You can now read the constellation information of 'Nouveau Riche Snake Boss'.]

[You can now read the constellation information of 'Nail-Eating Rat'.]

[You can now read the constellation information of 'Dog Who Threw Himself into the Flames'.]

I looked at the characteristics of these guys. Of course, it didn't make sense to simply identify the stats or attributes information when combat power was set at a certain point.

[The effect of Character List will randomly output a list of the constellation's stories.]

A list of their stories quickly crossed my eyes.

[Snake Eating Other Snakes.]

[Rat Turning Into a Person.]

[Loyalty Towards the Master.]

[Predator of the Weak.]

…

In the meantime, countless attacks were focused on me. The fist of the Nouveau Riche Snake Boss grazed past my shoulders, my body flew through the air from an attack by the Nail-Eating Rat and my skin was burnt by the flames of the Dog Who Threw Himself into the Flames.

[Your reading speed has increased due to the attribute effect.]

I didn't back down and kept reading their list of stories. They were constellations and had an excellent number of stories. Some were legendary while most were historical-grade.

[Rat Who Stole the Words of the Night.]

[Fear of Rodents]

[Mine is Mine, Yours is Mine Too.]

[Towards Plandas.]

…

How long had it been? My legs were paralyzed and the Nouveau Riche Snake Boss wound around my body. My vision was literally reversed as my body was captured by him.

Give me the Story Core.]

The strong grip on my body made by bones feel twisted. It was a mighty power that the Infinite Dimension Space Coat couldn't bear. Story fragments fell down from my body like crumbs.

[Constellations who love cruel stories are excited.]

[Some of the constellations want to see your body torn apart.]

The eyes of the snake changed at the indirect messages of the constellations. Having the name of 'constellation' didn't mean all of them were on the same level.

They were more like incarnations. They were watched by other constellations and received coins from them.

"I have one question… Why do you want to live like this?"

The Nail-Eating Rat raised his head with a sound.

[Kuooooh…?]

I smiled bitterly. Well, I couldn't afford to think about such things. I had to survive these guys.

"I feel sorry for you. Right? Usually a constellation should have a 'king's story'…"

[The story 'Distorting Things as One Pleases' is paying attention to your words.]

Whether it was a snake, a rat, a dog or a human… Those who steadily built up their stories would have a story of a 'king' at the very least. However, these guys have no such stories.

"…You have always fought against beings weaker than yourself and don't have such stories."

[Wh at non sense…!]

The next moment, a bright light rose from my body.

[The story 'Distorting Things as One Pleases' has found a story to distort.]

The story, Distorting Things as One Pleases. This story didn't have the power to improve my combat power.

[The story 'Distorting Things as One Pleases' is starting the story distortion.]

Instead, it could wake up the potential of stories that hadn't yet found their true power. The direction didn't matter.

[The story 'King of a World without a King' has been distorted!]

[The story 'King of a World without a King' is starting the story.]

I felt the power of the story seething deep inside my body. The muscles in both arms swelled up. I gripped the Nouveau Riche Snake Boss that was wrapped around my body. The snake screamed in my hands.

「The world without a king is now here.」

A huge magic power escaped and the story started to speak for itself. The reason I checked the constellations' list of stories was simple. It was to use this power.

「He was born rejecting all thrones in his black world.」

A brilliant light rose from the sword in my hands. The Four Yin Demonic Beheading Sword. It was the sword used to destroy the Absolute Throne and the weapon used in the story King of a Kingless World. The weapon responded to my story and regained its original shape.

「Reign over all beings who aren't kings.」

[W-Wait! This strength…!]

The fact that our combat power was the same didn't mean the 'status' of the stories is the same.

Even if the density and number of stories were low, I was also a constellation. Dokgak should've properly recognized this fact.

[Some constellations are admiring your story application!]

[Constellations of the Big Dipper are paying attention to you.]

Dokgak was bewildered and he frantically tried to manipulate the scenario. However, now it was too late to change the sub scenario. He had already exhausted a lot of probability because of the excessive sub scenario.

[The constellation 'Nail-Eating Rat' is preparing to turn its tail and run.]

The rat realized the unusual signs and turned around first. However, I wouldn't miss a single one.

"Stop."

[The effect of the story 'King of a Kingless World' is activated.]

[In front of your majesty, all beings who failed to qualify as kings must bow.]

[Kuaaaah!]

[Eeeek!]

There were powerful sparks and the bodies of the Nouveau Riche Snake Boss and Nail-Eating Rat became stiff. The Dog Who Threw Himself into the Flames was already on the ground from the moment he saw my story.

[Grrrr. D… don't co me.]

As I approached, the Nouveau Riche Snake Boss wriggled on the ground. Only those who had the story of a 'king' could resist this story.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is pleased.]

[The demon king 'Devil of Lust and Wrath' is looking at you.]

As the king of the monkeys and king of the 32 Demon Realm watched over me, the Four Yin Demonic Beheading Sword moved.

[Kuaaaaaack!]

One blow. Two blows. I struck the head of the Nouveau Riche Snake Boss a few times. The scales of the Nouveau Riche Snake Boss weren't easily destroyed. The flesh of the Nouveau Riche Snake Boss was cut by the Purest Sword Force and his blood splashed, turning the surrounding land red. The Nouveau Riche Snake Boss let out several pained screams before falling quiet.

[Constellations of the absolute good system are frowning at your cruelty.]

I pulled the Four Yin Demonic Beheading Sword out of the head of the Nouveau Riche Snake Boss.

[The demon king, 'Silver Claws Owl' is rejoicing in your execution.]

[2,000 coins have been sponsored.]

The constellations didn't know what was really cruel.

"You should've been prepared if you coveted my position."

This was a warning to the constellations. It was a warning that they shouldn't interfere with the giant story. I watched the sky and waved the Four Yin Demonic Beheading Sword.

[You have killed the Nouveau Riche Snake Boss's incarnation body.]

[You have acquired some of the stories of the Nouveau Riche Snake Boss.]

It was the power of the Four Yin Demonic Beheading Sword that could cut off the connection between constellation and incarnation body.

[The constellation 'Nouveau Riche Snake Boss' has fallen into a deep sleep with a scream.]

Perhaps the Nouveau Riche Snake Boss would never return to an incarnation body. Then I looked at the Nail-Eating Rat. Soon after, the Nail-Eating Rat received the same fate.

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is delighting in your madness.]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is looking at you with sad eyes.]

I brushed the blood of my cheeks and looked at the last remaining constellation. The Dog Who Threw Himself into the Flames was trembling uncontrollably while his head drooped down. The flames that covered his body had already disappeared.

The only thing that remained on the dog's body were the black burn stains from protecting its master. I recalled his list of stories. This dog was different from the other two in the Twelve Zodiacs.

[The constellation 'Dog Who Threw Himself into the Flames' is pledging allegiance to you.]

I looked at the panting dog and hesitated for a moment. Certain constellations would be disappointed if I didn't kill the dog here. However… Other constellations aiming for me were running in the distance.

[The story 'Distorting Things as One Pleases' has come to an end.]

I had used an excessive amount of magic power and needed to recover. I put away my sword and climbed onto the dog.

"Let's go to the Yoo Joonghyuk Industrial Complex."

As if waiting, the dog started taking strong steps. The scenery passed quickly and I looked up at the sky.

The stars in the night sky seemed to be flowing to different places. Some chose to watch and others chose to take part. Everyone started to draw the trail of the story according to their respective desires.

The real Demon King Selection would soon begin.

Chapter 259: Ep. 49 - The Best at Something, I

The Dog Who Threw Himself into the Flames ran while carrying me for two days and nights. The constellations relentlessly chasing me were a frequent threat but every time, the Dog Who Threw Himself into the Flames literally threw his body to protect me.

[The story 'Faithfully Devoting One's Life' has been repeated.]

How far did we run? Finally, the brightness of a new day could be seen.

[The sub scenario — Skirmish has ended.]

[You have kept the Story Core safe during the time limit.]

The constellations chasing after us stopped one by one in distant places and all types of indirect messages flew through the air.

[Some constellations who failed to chase you are disappointed.]

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is yawning and asking if it is all over.]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is rejoicing with sleepy eyes!]

[The constellation 'Dragon Lying Down' is nodding at you ploy.]

[Some constellations are pointing fingers at your cowardice.]

It didn't matter if they pointed fingers or not. The most important thing was to survive. Dokgak stared down at me with disapproving eyes and sent me compensation.

[You have obtained 200,000 coins as compensation.]

[You have obtained two Anvil Stones for Equipment Transcendence as a reward.]

I thought it was around the time for items to enhance equipment to be released. SSS-grade items from the early scenarios were almost like scraps in the mid-to-late scenario areas. However, using the transcendence anvil stones allowed you to stop the equipment from losing its quality.

The income wasn't just that.

[The story 'One Who Went Against the Twelve Zodiacs' has been acquired.]

It might be historical-grade but the more stories I had, the better. In the end, these little stories gathered together to form the complete 'status'. In particular, the stories obtained would be useful in future fights thanks to Distorting Things as One Pleases.

[Constellations chasing you are returning.]

No long after the constellations hid themselves, the exterior of the Yoo Joonghyuk Industrial Complex emerged. Citizens who received the escape scenario were lining up to enter the industrial complex. Fortunately, Jang Hayoung and Han Myungoh had done well.

I spoke to the Dog Who Threw Himself into the Flames. "You can leave now. You don't have to be loyal to me."

He didn't want to follow me wholeheartedly anyway. Thus, it was better to part ways at this point. However, after I turned away, he kept chasing me.

Pant, pant, pant.

I spoke with a frown. "What? You aren't going?"

Yip…

Moisture filled the big dog's eyes.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is looking pitifully at the 'Dog Who Threw Himself into the Flames'.]

The real name of the Dog Who Threw Himself into the Flames was the Dog of Osu[1]. In order to save his master from dying of fire, the dog wet his body and used it to extinguish the fire. Unfortunately, even this name wasn't his actual name.

"…Are you going to follow me?"

Yiiip!

I hesitated for a moment. Come to think of it, things would be hard for this dog even if he split from me.

[Some of the constellations are looking at the Dog Who Threw Himself into the Flames.]

In this world, there were just as many constellations aiming for other constellations as there were constellations aiming at incarnations. If he countered those who had the modifiers of 'Dog Hunter' or 'Melberg's Dog Fancier' then he would be stolen or killed. So far, he had been safe because of the Twelve Zodiacs.

"Then let's go together."

Pant pant pant!

"However, make your size a bit smaller. It will be a disturbance if you are too big."

Yiiip!

The Dog Who Threw Himself into the Flames reduced the size of his body. He became the size of a golden retriever.

"Kim Dokja!" Jang Hayoung discovered me and waved in the distance. "Hey! Are you okay? What is that dog?"

"I picked him up. What about the others?"

"They are busy guiding the people."

The Dog Who Threw Himself into the Flames licked Jang Hayoung's hand. Jang Hayoung asked, "What's his name?"

I wanted to tell the truth but decided to say it roughly. "Osu."

[You have given a name to the Dog Who Threw Himself into the Flames.]

[The Dog Who Threw Himself into the Flames is greatly impressed.]

[The loyalty of the Dog Who Threw Himself into the Flames has greatly increased!]

…If I had known, I would've given him a better name. Jang Hayoung carefully examined Osu's body and was delighted.

"This is great. Sajeo will like you."

I was about to ask who 'Sajeo' was when I realized.

"…Are you talking about the Breaking the Sky Master? Was she a female?"

"Did you forget that only women can learn the Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship?"

Come to think of it… The Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship was like that. There were too many exceptions. For example, the guy in front of me…

"…Why are you looking at me like that?"

"No, it's nothing." I shook my head to get rid of my thoughts. The important issue right now wasn't Jang Hayoung's gender identity. Because…

[The beginning of the Demon King Selection is imminent!]

The Demon King Selection was starting now.

"…It came."

Jang Hayoung looked up nervously at my words. The entire 73rd Demon Realm was shaking. Unfamiliar coloured stars appeared in the sky one by one. In order to watch the big event where the giant story was occurring, the constellations arrived from various parts of the Star Stream.

[Multiple constellations are entering the channel!]

[Many demon kings are entering the channel!]

I could feel the mood just be looking at the beings entering the channel.

[The constellation 'Queen of the Darkest Spring' is looking at you.]

[The constellation 'God of Wine and Ecstasy' is staring at you.]

[The constellation 'Mass Production Maker' is waving at you.]

The constellations I had met also appeared in the high skies.

I tried to relax as I looked up at them in the sky. I had finally come to this place. There were still many scenarios remaining and they were far away. Nevertheless, it wasn't a long way off now. At the very least, I came to a place where these lofty constellations were located in this mountain range.

[The 25th main scenario has arrived!]

[Excessive skipping of the main scenario has damaged party of your status.]

I didn't carry out the scenarios in the 20s. I started to 25th scenario straight away so it was unavoidable that there would be a loss in probability.

[The Main Scenario — 'Demon King Selection' has started!]

[Main Scenario #25 - Demon King Selection]

Category: Main

Difficulty: ???

Clear Conditions: Team up with 'helpers' to win the 'mythical battlefield'.

Time Limit: —

Compensation: Official succession of the demon king position, ???.

Failure: Death

* You can recruit 'helpers' for this scenario.

* There will be additional explanations from the dokkaebis as the scenario progresses.

It was a scenario where 'death' was marked as the failure result. I would die here if I lost. It wasn't unfamiliar to me since it happened often.

[This scenario is held on a dedicated stage.]

[The total number of participants in this scenario is four.]

[The main participants can recruit 'helpers' if it is mutually agreed upon.]

[You are a main participant in this scenario.]

I felt something great from the north and west.

[Constellations belonging to the 'Melledon Industrial Complex' are showing hostility towards you.]

[Constellations belonging to the 'Bercan Industrial Complex' are showing hostility towards you.]

As the constellations in the sky flashed, the voice of the dokkaebi was heard.

[You have been waiting a long time, constellations.]

They were Dokgak and Bihyung.

[Finally, the Demon King Selection that you have been waiting for has begun!]

Along with Bihyung's words, a large hologram of a 'stage' appeared on the screen in the air.

[First, thank you to the Mass Production Maker for making the game stage for this scenario!]

There was exaggerated applause as the map created by the Mass Production Maker appeared on the hologram.

[The game 'Mythical Battlefield' is loaded!]

The map was a vast forest area with huge cliffs at the edges. The forest zone contained patterns of the 'industrial complex' in the east, west, north and south, which probably signified the starting points of each industrial complex.

[As you might have expected, this 'selection' isn't simply a hit and run fight. It will be held in the form of a 'team competition', with each team being an industrial complex.]

Some of the constellations were surprised by the dokkaebis' words and sent indirect messages. Of course, I wasn't surprised. I knew it well through the original novel.

[The rules of the game are simple. All participants can make a team of seven people, including themselves.]

[Every team member is given a different position and will play a role in the scenario through that position.]

It was similar to the so-called AOS games that were once popular on Earth. One tanker, two close range damage dealers, two long range damage dealers and one supporter. Finally, one all-rounder.

This was the game— the Mythical Battlefield where seven people teamed up to fight.

[The constellation 'Mass Production Maker' is smiling.]

As a matter of fact, this game was made of elements that had been stolen from somewhere…

The dokkaebi's words continued. [There are two ways to win the game. One is to annihilate the participants of other teams apart from your own. The second way is to take away the 'sentence' of the other team. Well, there will be more details once you join the game… rather, there is one more important announcement.]

Bihyung glanced at me after long words.

[A total of four teams were originally scheduled to participate in this selection competition but one of the industrial complexes almost collapsed before the game started.]

I felt uneasy for a moment. Bihyung continued. [To consider the fairness of the game, we have decided to tie two comparatively unfavourable industrial complexes together into one team.]

Then I heard a message in the air.

[You are currently a participant of the Yoo Joonghyuk - Kim Dokja Industrial Complex.]

It was an unexpected situation. I had been worried about Yoo Joonghyuk's team so now I was able to reduce my troubles. Perhaps it was Bihyung's doing.

In any case, why was it the Yoo Joonghyuk - Kim Dokja Industrial Complex? Based on the order of the hangul flowchart, shouldn't the name of the industrial complex be Kim Dokja - Yoo Joonghyuk Industrial Complex? In any case…

"Jang Hayoung, where is Yoo Joonghyuk now?" I looked around for Yoo Joonghyuk but I couldn't find any traces of him.

Jang Hayoung's eyes were wide as he asked back, "What are you talking about? Didn't you meet him?"

"…Meet him?"

"Didn't he go looking for you?"

"What?"

I had a bad feeling. I hurriedly used Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint.

[You can't connect with the current target.]

Dammit. I was wondering how to find this son of a bitch when something flashed on my mind. Fortunately, it was now midday.

[You have used the Midday Tryst.]

The Midday Tryst. It was a one-on-one chat item that I linked to this guy in the past. I didn't know if it was in range but this was the only thing I could believe in right now.

[There are 39 unread messages.]

By the way, I had dozens of messages from him. I hurriedly opened the window. The first message started as followed:

Kim Dokja, I saved Biyoo / Sender: Yoo Joonghyuk, 47 hours and 39 minutes ago.

The messages continued to come over the next few days.

But why did you suddenly disappear? /Sender: Yoo Joonghyuk, 46 hours and 54 minutes ago.

I have no time for your childish antics. /Sender: Yoo Joonghyuk, 46 hours and 39 minutes ago.

I will kill you if you don't show up again. /Sender: Yoo Joonghyuk, 45 hours and 18 minutes ago.

It isn't a joke. /Sender: Yoo Joonghyuk, 44 hours and 39 minutes ago.

…

Kim Dokja. /Sender: Yoo Joonghyuk, 41 hours and 38 minutes ago.

After that, the dozens of messages continued. The last message was:

I will go. /Sender: Yoo Joonghyuk, 23 hours and 14 minutes ago.

No, where did this bastard plan to go? I was dumbfounded and quickly sent a message.

—You idiot, come back quickly! I am currently in the industrial complex!

However, Yoo Joonghyuk didn't answer. There were no signs that he read it. Instead, I received a scenario message that was like a death sentence.

[Please recruit your helpers within 10 minutes.]

[You can recruit six helpers.]

There were two dogs, one gender ambiguous human and a person trembling with fear that I would point to him… he had postpartum depression… dammit. I urgently needed to fill up the seven people, regardless of power.

I sighed and opened my mouth. "…I will choose the helpers."

The two dogs, Jang Hayoung and Han Myungoh were included but I still needed two more. Even if one spot was left for Yoo Joonghyuk, one more person had to be recruited separately. I looked up at the sky.

[Every constellation in the channel is listening to you.]

Now it was time to test my network.

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[1] **Dog of Osu** – a Korean folktale about a loyal dog that sacrificed himself to save his owner's life.

Chapter 260: Ep. 49 - The Best at Something, II

The moment I opened my mouth towards the constellations,the frightened Han Myungoh raised his hands. "D-Don't include me! Honestly, I don't think I will be any help."

He was frightened. All participants and helpers would be at least a historical-grade constellation. It was a power that Head Manager Han of Mino Soft didn't have.

I touched Han Myungoh's shoulder and told him, "Please fill in the number of people. It isn't a real death even if you die in there. Just close your eyes and play the game."

The Mythical Battlefield had a total of three chances. If I lost this round, I could make up for it in the next round and the round after that.

"B-But it will be painful!"

"Yes."

"Then I don't want to! I won't…!"

"Thank you, Department Head-nim."

[You have gained 'Demon Earl Han Myungoh' as a helper.]

[Number of helpers spots left: 5 people.]

It would be nice if I could get a better pinch-hitter but there were no suitable talents. I could choose Mark or Aileen but they were honestly inferior to Han Myungoh, who was a demon earl.

"I will naturally participate." Jang Hayoung bumped his fists like he had been waiting.

[You have gained 'Dimensional Mover Jang Hayoung' as a helper.]

[Number of helpers spots left: 4 people.]

How much was Jang Hayoung's combat power now? I heard he came third in the martial arts competition but… I couldn't feel it because I wasn't present. The Jang Hayoung of any round hadn't succeeded the Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship during this period.

I turned my head towards another Breaking the Sky Sword Saint disciple. "Breaking the Sky Master."

Woof!

The answer was simple.

[You have gained 'Knowledgeable Dog Breaking the Sky Master' as a helper.]

[Number of helpers spots left: 3 people.]

The transcendent dog Breaking the Sky Master could definitely compete with the historical-grade constellations. This dog would obviously be a big help in this fight. By the way, the expression of the Breaking the Sky Master wasn't good.

Grrrr! Woof!

The Breaking the Sky Master's blustery gaze was directed towards a dog. I knew what he meant.

"That's right. He is a new colleague."

Woof woof woof!

"It can't be helped even if you don't like it."

Osu, who had been watching quietly, started sniffing the butt of the Breaking the Sky Master. Then the Breaking the Sky Master had flames in her eyes as she kicked his forehead.

Yiiiip!

He wasn't reliable but I had to add him as a colleague. He was better than Han Myungoh because he was a historical-grade constellation.

[You have gained 'Dog Who Threw Himself into the Flames' as a helper.]

[Number of helpers spots left: 2 people.]

One of the remaining two spots was for Yoo Joonghyuk.

[You have registered 'Supreme King Yoo Joonghyuk' as a helper.]

[The character is currently not nearby.]

[Once the person accepts the offer, they will be automatically summoned to the battlefield.]

[There are five minutes remaining.]

Now I had one spot left.

[The constellation 'Demon King of Salvation' is looking at the constellations.]

I could feel the eyes of the constellations on me. Let's get a volunteer.

"Is there anyone who can become a helper?"

To be honest, I thought there was no way there would be no applicants. The constellations in the channel were those who had been following my story all the way here. If there was more than one volunteer, I might be able to replace Han Myungoh. By the way…

[The constellation 'Queen of the Darkest Spring' is making an unknown smile.]

[The constellation 'Bald General of Justice' wipes his head hard.]

[The constellation 'Mass Production Maker' is complaining of back pain.]

…Shit.

[Many constellations are turning their heads away from your eyes.]

I glared at the sky with disapproving eyes. This stage might not be deserving of Persephone or the Mass Production Maker but there were the historical-grade constellations…

I sighed and turned towards Jang Hayoung. "Jang Hayoung, did you contact the constellations I mentioned?"

"…Yes."

In order to prepare for this day, I asked Jang Hayoung to get in touch with some constellations.

"What about Maritime War God?"

"He said he will think about it."

I frowned. How long was he going to think about it? No matter how much he was worried about the probability… Was he afraid of going against other nebulae?

[The constellation 'Bald General of Justice' is wiping his head with a towel.]

Originally, my plan was to bring Breaking the Sky Sword Namgung Minyoung and Paradox Baekchung Kyrgios Rodgraim. However, these two people were now in Murim.

"Goryeo's First Sword?"

"There was no answer." At this point, I felt a bit betrayed.

[The constellation 'Bald General of Justice' has a traffic expression as he wrapped the towel he wiped his forehead with around his head.]

It couldn't be helped. If this happened, I had to choose the second best thing.

[The constellation 'Bald General of Justice' is nodding and looking at you.]

"Asmodeus. Didn't you say you would help me?"

A sinister black star in the corner of the sky wriggled at my words.

[The demon king 'Devil of Lust and Wrath' is looking at you.]

[The demon king 'Devil of Lust and Wrath' says he will help from the third round.]

…From the third round?

[The demon king 'Devil of Lust and Wrath' wants to test if you deserve his help.]

I bit my lip. This damn demon king was now measuring me… I wondered if I could make it to the third round. Fortunately, I didn't see any names of demon kings among the helpers on the other side.

[In the Melledon, the constellation 'Founder of Humanity' has been designated as a helper.]

[In the Bercan, the constellation 'The Last Pharaoh' has been designated as a helper.]

[In the Melledon, the constellation 'Poked Out His Eyes' has been designated as a helper.]

[In the Melledon, the constellation 'General of Banara' has been designated as a helper.]

There were the modifiers of some fearsome constellations, even if they weren't demon kings. I could even see some narrative-grade constellations. The desire of the constellations to tear, chew and taste this scenario could be felt on my skin. It was a situation where I had to grasp at any straws.

"Uriel."

[The nebula Eden is troubled by your suggestion.]

[The demon kings of the Demon Realm are paying close attention to the movements of the nebulae 'Eden'.]

…I forgot that this was the Demon Realm. The image of Uriel and the writings of the Scribe of Heaven appeared in front of my eyes. As long as the agreement between the two groups persisted, Uriel wouldn't be able to participate in the game. In the end, I reached out for another straw.

"The Great Sage, Heaven's Equal."

However, the reaction of the Great Sage, Heaven's Equal.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is scoffing at you.]

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is clicking his tongue at the constellations of the other industrial complexes.]

He seemed to think that this stage didn't fit his pride as the Monkey King. It would hurt his self-esteem to lower himself to this scenario.

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is chuckling towards you.]

Jang Hayoung asked like he had heard the message. "What about the fire dragon?"

"No."

"Why? He's better than I thought."

I knew the Abyssal Black Flame Dragon wasn't a bad guy but his power was too risky to borrow. Crucially, there was a separate place where the Abyssal Black Flame Dragon was needed. I eventually sighed. "It can't be helped. The only remaining constellation is…"

"Who…?"

[The constellation 'Bald General of Justice' is holding his bamboo stick like he has been waiting.]

"Jang Hayoung, send a message to Secretive Plotter."

[Some constellations are surprised by your choice!]

The constellation Secretive Plotter. Of the four main constellations in my channel, he was the only one whose identity I didn't know. I didn't know why he hadn't showed up in my channel when the Great Sage, Heaven's Equal and the black dragon had appeared.

[A small number of constellations are afraid of your choice.]

[Some constellations are trying to dissuade you from your choice!]

The reactions of the constellations were understandable. I wasn't sure about the identity of the Secretive Plotter but it was highly likely he was an outer god. He also had enough influence to knock away the great old ones. Perhaps the other constellations were deeply conscious of this fact.

Jang Hayoung typed something in the air before calling out to me, "Kim Dokja. Did you say it properly?"

"Why?"

"Look at this." Jang Hayoung showed me the screen he had entered. The following message was on the screen:

[This modifier doesn't exist in the Star Stream.]

I was stunned and asked Jang Hayoung, "Did you enter it correctly?"

"Do you think I'm a fool?"

Jang Hayoung once again entered 'Secretive Plotter'.

[This modifier doesn't exist in the Star Stream.]

Secretive Plotter… this modifier didn't exist?

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is making an interested expression.]

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is curious.]

[The constellation 'Master of the Skywalk' is turning on the network.]

[A number of constellations are searching for Secretive Plotter.]

I didn't think it would be like this and was momentarily paralyzed.

[There is one minute remaining.]

In fact, there were cases where constellations had multiple modifiers. However, was that the current situation? A modifier had disappeared?

"What now?"

Jang Hayoung stared at me with nervous eyes. The remaining time was less than 30 seconds.

[The constellation 'Bald General of Justice' is screaming and standing up!]

I looked up at the sky. It was hard to ignore him anymore.

"…Samyeongdang, please help."

The moment I spoke, lightning flashed in the sky.

[The constellation 'Bald General of Justice' is using probability to summon an incarnation body!]

I stared at the incarnation body that was being formed in the dazzling light and thought about it. It might be better to have a trustworthy ally compared to a strong but uncontrollable constellation. At the very least, Samyeongdang was one of the constellations who supported me when I first got the rights to open a nebula.

The summoning ceremony ended but the light still hadn't disappeared. A closer look showed a flash of light from the head of Samyeongdang. I used my hand to form a curtain as a voice was heard.

[It's been a while, Kim Dokja.]

I was impressed by the true voice that contained a formidable history. Dogs and cats could become constellations if they were lucky. This didn't mean they were constellations.

"It's been a long time, Samyeongdang."

The three metres tall monk. He held a large bamboo stick that was like a giant tree. The historical-grade constellation 'Samyeongdang' finally revealed his true self.

[You have gained 'Bald General of Justice' as a helper.]

[You have all your helpers!]

.

.

[All participants have completed recruiting their helper.]

[The game 'Mythical Battlefield' has appeared in the Demon Realm!]

Chapter 261: Ep. 49 - The Best at Something, III

The moment I heard the system message, the surrounding landscape started to change.

The Mythical Battlefield. The feature of this Mythical Battlefield was to virtually borrow the stage of a giant story.

[You have entered the Armageddon battlefield. The game will start after three minutes.]

On one side of the sky, a stairway of heaven opened while the other side was a door of hell. If this was real, the archangels of Eden would've flocked to the staircase while the demon kings of the Demon Realm would've come out of the gate of hell.

Fortunately, there was no such thing. This was a 'hypothetical stage'.

The constellation 'Guardian of Youths and Travel' is frowning at the familiar stage.]

[The demon king 'Devil of Lust and Wrath' is showing hostility to 'Guardian of Youths and Travel'.]

[Many constellations and demon kings are confronting each other.]

…I really hoped it wouldn't be a big deal.

"It is eerie…"

Jang Hayoung held his shoulders while looking up at the sky. I heard an eerie sound in the background. I looked at the huge shield that surrounded us. The shield would protect us until the game started.

"Stay alert. Please check your selected position."

The party members regained their composure at my words.

"Who's the tanker?"

[I am.]

The tanker was Samyeongdang, the close range damage dealers were me and the Breaking the Sky Master and the long range damage dealers were Jang Hayoung and Osu. Han Myungoh was the supporter. Finally, the all-rounder was…

"Yoo Joonghyuk?"

"He might've fallen somewhere else."

The Mythical Battlefield depended on where you were summoned from.

[The helper 'Yoo Joonghyuk' has responded to the summons.]

This message appeared so Yoo Joonghyuk should be somewhere on the battlefield.

Jang Hayoung asked, "Is this game on a battlefield of time and space? I've seen it. If the enemy's stronghold is destroyed…"

"That's right. Still, it is a bit different."

Usually, an AOS game ended when you captured the enemy's main base. This game was different.

"We have to capture the 'sentence', not the base."

"Sentence?"

I pointed to the object that was in Han Myungoh's hand. It was a small monument shining with brilliant colours.

"W-What is this?"

"We have to protect that."

The monument literally contained a small sentence.

『 Messengers of Heaven, Gatekeeper of Hell. 』

Han Myungoh was terrified and tried to hand over the monument to me. I pushed it with the palm of my hand and stated, "Department Head-nim should hold it. It is important to guard it well."

"I-It is because it is important that Dokja-ssi should…!"

"Department Head-nim should hold it because it is important. The sentence is usually held by the main participant. The enemies are expecting that."

"I-I won't do it! I have never played such a game!"

Han Myungoh was dull in games despite being the department head of a game company. Come to think of it, Yoo Sangah played games well. Yoo Sangah carried her team alone and reached the finals of the in-house game competition.

…However, the person present now was Han Myungoh, not Yoo Sangah.

"In any case, there are two ways to win this game. One is to steal the enemy team's sentence. The other is to kill all of the enemy team's participants."

"It will be easier to steal the sentence."

"Yes, that is usually the case."

"Good! Leave it to me!" Jang Hayoung cried out in a highly motivated manner.

However, this wasn't a solo game. "I know you are motivated but stop your personal play. From now on, we will make a plan…"

Bark bark!

Woof woof!

…I had forgotten two of my companions. The Dog Who Threw Himself into the Flames was sniffing around the periphery while the Breaking the Sky Master was lying down like she wasn't interested. I turned my head toward my last hope.

"Samyeongdang."

He seemed to be listening to advice from other constellations so he was the only one I could expect anything from.

[I don't understand because you are using difficult words. Uhhh… game… what is this?]

Samyeongdang had an incredibly annoyed expression.

[Some of the constellations of the Korean Peninsula are frustrated with the Bald General of Justice.]

I never considered that he was an elder. Samyeongdang didn't know the modern game terminology.

[In any case, I just have to kill all of them?]

"Yes, it is similar…"

[If that's the case, we'll be the winner! I am your helper!]

Samyeongdang started to run while wielding his bamboo stick.

[The game has started!]

Then the stage's shield was finally lifted.

[The stats of the players will be automatically adjusted based on the difficulty of the game.]

[In the first round, all participants can only use 10% of their original stats.]

[This penalty will be reduced as the number of rounds increases.]

Then in our 'stairway to heaven' side, small angels resembling fairies started to fly.

[The team's support group is created!]

[The low-grade angels are helping you!]

The surprised Osu barked at the angels.

"Hey! Don't bite them. They're on our side. Samyeongdang, wait! Let's go together!"

It was a rollercoaster from the start. Samyeongdang was in the front line and the Breaking the Sky Master and Osu started sprinting after him. Jang Hayoung and I chased them while Han Myungoh was timid at the back of the party.

"Department Head-nim, stay in the back as much as possible. Don't come forward."

"…I will do my best!"

Han Myungoh was excellent at running away and would find a way no matter what.

"Ah, the map changed?"

We left our main area and a vast plains area unfolded in front of us. Both sides of the plains had a valley and forest respectively. If I remembered correctly, there was the Apocalypse Imoogi on the valley side and the Fallen Seraphim on the forest side. In addition, there were quite a number of monsters that gave a buff effect if they were caught early in the map…

"Wait a minute! Samyeongdang! Don't go too fast!"

[Believe in me! I'm strong in a war!]

Samyeongdang let out a brilliant true voice and reached into the air.

[Fallen spirits of the Korean Peninsula! Give me the power to win!]

Who would give strength to Samyeongdang? Surprisingly, messages were heard.

[The constellation 'Slumbering Lady of Fine Brocade' is supporting the constellation 'Bald General of Justice'!]

[The constellation 'Last Hero of Hwangsanbeol' is cheering on the constellation 'Bald General of Justice'!]

[The constellation 'King Heungmu the Great' has sponsored 100 coins to the constellation 'Bald General of Justice'!]

It was literally a simple cheer.

[Ohhhhhh!]

Soon after, the enemy appeared in front of him. Every constellation in an incarnation body was holding a weapon.

[General of Vanara.]

[Poked Out His Eyes.]

[Thunder Eating Bird.]

There was a monstrous monkey dressed in armour with golden feathers. In addition, King Oedipus whom I once met… the constellations were encountered seemed to be from the Melledon Industrial Complex.

It was a party where narrative-grade constellations were mixed. However, there was still a chance of winning because they had less insight into the game.

[Come on, you barbarians!]

Samyeongdang discovered the enemies and made a sudden attack. His voice was so loud that I felt some expectations for a moment.

Yes, I didn't know until I saw him fight. On the battlefield where only 10% of stats could be used, I didn't know the strength of Samyeongdang. I couldn't belittle a historical-grade constellation. There were strong people like Cheok Jungyeong among them.

[This Guardian God of Victory will break down this battle formation!]

Samyeongdang swept the bamboo stick. The confused constellations screamed and an explosion swept through the battlefield. Flesh scattered everywhere. A weapon was broken. Blood scattered from a wound.

[The first death has occurred!]

Samyeongdang fought well. I looked around at the party members and cried out, "Everyone, run away!"

[The helper 'Bald General of Justice' was defeated by the helper 'General of Vanara.]

[The industrial complex 'Melledon' team has earned one point.]

"Shit, what was with that monk? Believe in him?"

Han Myungoh was the fastest when it came to running away. I thought it would be like this but Samyeongdang wasn't just trolling.

[Samyeongdang's soul is roaming the battlefield.]

[Ohhhhh!]

The dead soul of Samyeongdang wandered around the battlefield and attacked the constellations coming after us. It was thanks to this that we found a chance to run away. However, the enemy's pursuit was fast.

The first one chasing us was a huge bird covering the sky. It was the Thunder Eating Bird. If I remembered correctly, the bird's real name was Garuda. He was the mount of Vishnu, one of the three lords of Vedas. His beak changed trajectory in the air and turned towards me.

[The constellation 'Dog Who Threw Himself into the Flames' is throwing his body to protect you!]

At this moment, Osu ran forward. He struck Garuda's big body from the side.

Grrrr!

Fortunately, Osu clung onto the feathers of Garuda. Flames rose as Osu barked at us to run away.

Bark bark! Bark! Yiiiip!

It was a situation where Osu was clinging to a constellation. It was too late to save him.

[The helper 'Dog Who Threw Himself into the Flames' has died!]

…Dammit. The situation was getting worse. The Breaking the Sky Master was nowhere to be seen. The people left were Jang Hayoung, Han Myungoh and I.

"I-I'm sorry!"

Then Han Myungoh suddenly committed an abrupt act. Han Myungoh cut off one of his legs.

[The character 'Han Myungoh' has activated 'One-Legged Swift Runner Lv. 10'.]

…Oh, Han Myungoh had that damn stigma. Han Myungoh started running like an ostrich. Yes, it was all over if Han Myungoh so it was better for him to run away. By the way, that skill had already reached level 10.

"Kim Dokja. Now what…?"

I blocked Jang Hayoung and immediately jumped into the surrounding grass.

[You have concealed yourself in the nearby terrain.]

[The effect of the 'bush' means the enemies can't detect you.]

Grrrrrrr…

I looked up at Garuda and whispered to Jang Hayoung.

–We can't fight against them with our current power. We have to aim to win by default due to the other players dropping out. It was important to buy time.

–…Do you plan to consume time?

–For now.

There was something I believed in. It was strange since I thought I was going to win with just this member. Somehow, I had to drag out the time a bit more. At least, until he came.

[The Demon King of Salvation! Where are you?]

The true voice echoed in front of the bush.

[It has been a while since our ill-fated relationship. Fleeing fate and living in a place like this… the blind prophet couldn't read it.]

The humble but arrogant way of speaking made me instantly aware of his identity. After a while, the presence of King Oedipus, the blind and shrewd king appeared in the forest. I knew he had participated in this selection. However, I didn't expect to encounter him so quickly.

[You know that hiding is useless. This blind prophet already knows where you are.]

The moment Jang Hayoung's shoulders flinched, I placed a finger to his mouth.

–Don't worry. He can't read my future with his ability.

Thus, it was a clear trap. The moment we revealed ourselves, all the nearby constellations would run.

[It isn't too late now. Olympus is still open to you.]

[The constellation 'Demon King of Salvation' says to go away and not speak bullshit.]

[…How funny.]

King Oedipus laughed but his expression was completely stiff.

[I'll see if you can keep staying still.]

The surrounding constellations started to sweep through the bushes. Their attacks were devastating as they used all types of explosions, acid and fire to damage the nearby bushes. The acidic liquid melted my feet and burned my neck and wrists. However, I held Jang Hayoung's wrists tightly and didn't move.

A little bit more. Just a bit more.

The bombardment swept through the area. Fortunately, they didn't seem to have found us. They started gradually moving away from us.

…Just a bit more. I listened to the sound and estimated their distance. 10 steps, 20 steps, 30 steps… Suddenly, all the explosions disappeared.

"Run."

Jang Hayoung and I ran out of the bush. We didn't see any constellations. At this moment, a scream was heard out of nowhere. It was a long and terrible scream. In the distant sky, a bird was falling down with a giant sword through its neck.

[The helper 'Thunder Eating Bird' has been killed!]

…He came.

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"…What?" The surprised Jang Hayoung's eyes widened.

"This is why I wanted to buy time."

[The participant 'Yoo Joonghyuk' has killed the helper 'Thunder Eating Bird'!]

[The 'Yoo Joonghyuk - Kim Dokja' industrial complex has won one point.]

Yoo Joonghyuk falling through the air and the bewildered constellations could be seen.

[The constellation 'Poked Out His Eyes' is crying out with surprise!]

[The constellation 'General of Vanara' is showing hostility towards Yoo Joonghyuk!]

[Many constellations are amazed by Yoo Joonghyuk's movements.]

Yoo Joonghyuk wasn't panicked at all despite the attacks. His movements seemed like he had grasped all the terrain features of this place. By the time the furious King Oedipus swung his staff, Yoo Joonghyuk had already disappeared.

[Where did you go?]

[Find him! He is near here!]

The constellations moved and searched around but they couldn't find where Yoo Joonghyuk had disappeared to. I hid behind a tree with Jang Hayoung and watched the scene.

One of Yoo Joonghyuk's attributes was 'Pro Gamer'. This guy received an overwhelming advantage and adaptability in all games. This game was still in the early stages and stats were limited.

Before the constellations were accustomed to the game, this 'first round' was a better stage for us than anyone else. The opponents might be constellations but it wasn't easy for them to face off against the current Yoo Joonghyuk.

[There he is!]

The General of Vanara let out a wind blade from his mouth towards a bush and shouted. There was a loud noise and the surrounding terrain was cut. However, this time, Yoo Joonghyuk wasn't present. The confused General of Vanara retreated and a flash of light emerged from the dirt on the ground. It was too late to avoid it.

[The participant 'Yoo Joonghyuk' has killed the helper 'General of Vanara!]

Yes, Yoo Joonghyuk should catch at least two.

[The 'Yoo Joonghyuk - Kim Dokja' industrial complex has won two points.]

[The participant 'Yoo Joonghyuk' has started to blow blood onto the battlefield!]

Jang Hayoung pointed towards Yoo Joonghyuk and shivered. "What is this? A monster?"

"It is similar. He is the best pro gamer in South Korea."

I was talking about the setting of Ways of Survival. In the distance, the General of Vanara's body was split in half and he disappeared. The rules of the game were applied so he wouldn't really die, but the mental damage was significant.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is pleased.]

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' has sponsored 20,000 coins to the incarnation 'Yoo Joonghyuk'.]

The true name of the General of Vanara was Hanuman, a monkey hero of Indian mythology. Due to the characteristic of both being monkeys, the two constellations didn't have a good relationship with each other. I guess it was true.

[Shit, chase him!]

Yoo Joonghyuk killed two people and hid in the rocky gorge this time. Then one more enemy appeared.

[The constellation 'Founder of Humanity' wants to show an example to his arrogant descendant.]

The constellation who was close to a primitive man. The Founder of Humanity, Manu. I forgot that he was on the side fo the Melledon Industrial Complex.

"Maybe we should help."

Manu of Vedas was a narrative-level constellation. He might be low in level among the narrative-grade constellations but it was absolutely disadvantageous for Yoo Joonghyuk.

Yoo Joonghyuk had already consumed a lot of mobility and magic power killing two constellations. He might have the attribute of Pro Gamer but it was too much for him from now on…

[The participant 'Yoo Joonghyuk' has activated the 'Sentinel Golem's Blessing!']

Yoo Joonghyuk stood on a rocky highland area and aimed a giant bow.

[The star relic 'Robin Hood's Strongbow' has maximized the user's accuracy!]

This bastard, when did he get this? It was something that could only be obtained from the 15th scenario area, Lugratia. Intangible arrows flew towards the body of King Oedipus.

[Keok…!]

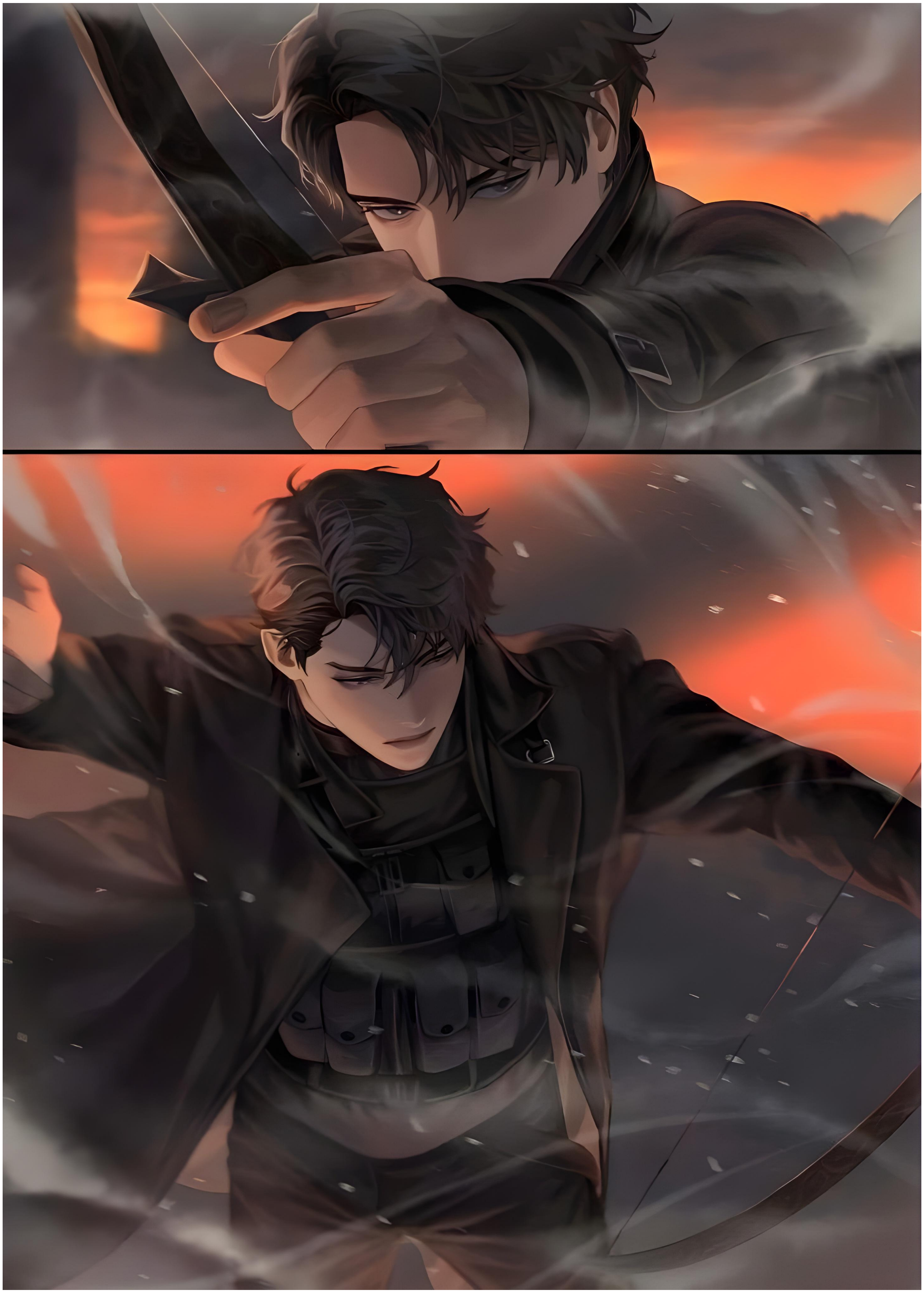
Of course, Yoo Joonghyuk's advantage wasn't only swordsmanship. This guy could use all types of weapons with the Weapons Mastery skill.

[You! You're not a closer range damage dealer?]

In addition, Yoo Joonghyuk's position was 'all-rounder'.

[The participant 'Yoo Joonghyuk' will receive the position compensation effect.]

While this game was in progress, Yoo Joonghyuk wouldn't be penalized for using any types of weapons.



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[I will kill you! This thing, this thing…!]

King Oedipus screamed as holes were drilled into his body.

"We should go help!"

"Wait a minute."

Making clumsy movements in the current circumstances would only hinder Yoo Joonghyuk.

Immediately after launching Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint, Yoo Joonghyuk's operation flowed into my head like a movie trailer.

Jang Hayoung frowned at my flippant smile and asked, "…What is it?"

"That bastard is scarier than I thought."

Yoo Joonghyuk didn't waste a single second when he came here. The evidence was the Sentinel Golem's Blessing that was embedded in his body.

[The Sentinel Golem's Blessing has started to accumulate!]

The sentinel golem inhabited the outskirts of the gorge and gave a 'fainting' buff effect. However, this buff had one condition. The person had to succeed in 20 attacks before the 'fainting' effect was produced. Now there were approximately 10 metres between Yoo Joonghyuk and King Oedipus.

[This thing, this thing…!]

King Oedipus jumped and tried to aim for Yoo Joonghyuk. King Oedipus' body hardened from the ankle and he collapsed like a stone statue.

[The helper 'Poked Out His Eyes' has fainted.]

The duration of the fainting was three seconds. These three seconds were enough time for Yoo Joonghyuk.

[The participant 'Yoo Joonghyuk' has killed the helper 'Poked Out His Eyes'!]

[The name of the participant 'Yoo Joonghyuk' is widely circulated on the battlefield!]

[The 'Yoo Joonghyuk - Kim Dokja' industrial complex has won three points.]

Three… I honestly admired him. The appearance of the dying King Oedipus was unrealistic. It was hard to believe he was the constellation who threatened me at the constellation banquet.

[Impertinent fellow!]

However, the fight hadn't ended yet. Before Yoo Joonghyuk could sigh, the excited Founder of Humanity rushed forward. Yoo Joonghyuk was now lacking physical strength and magic power.

The Primitive Spear belonging to the Founder of Humanity dug into a gap that Yoo Joonghyuk revealed. It looked similar to a stone tool but the power it contained was enormous.

On the other hand, Yoo Joonghyuk was also tough. He twisted his back with a flexible motion and at nearly the same time, he swung his weapon. The spear collided with the sword and a sharp sound was heard. The distinctive yellow aura that was only for transcendents was wrapped around Yoo Joonghyuk's Black Heavenly Demon Sword. It opposed the blue 'status' woven around the Primitive Spear wielded by Manu.

[These martial arts! They were skills left behind by worms. It still seems useful.]

It was a situation where participants could only use 10% of their power. Manu seemed unable to accurately determine the amount of force he could control. There were dozens of exchanges in a flash and Manu laughed like he was having fun.

[You are pretty good human. I have seen countless transcendents but none as strong as you.]

"You haven't seen my master."

A power similar to martial arts emerged from Manu's spear. Manu had mastered almost every type of talent that a human could gain. Originally, the present Yoo Joonghyuk wouldn't be able to defeat Manu. Still, the balance of power was even because Manu hadn't fought such a long battle for a long time.

[How interesting! I haven't competed with more than 10 blows since becoming a constellation!]

The forcible equilibrium balance maintained this confrontation. I grabbed Jang Hayoung who was about to pop out.

"That jerk will die if this continues!"

The same thing would happen even if we popped out. I wanted to use Electrification to run out and cut off Manu's neck.

However, I had to endure it for now. If it turned out like I thought, Yoo Joonghyuk would soon welcome an opportunity. All I needed was time. Just time.

"Jang Hayoung, send a message through the wall."

"What? To who?"

"The Founder of Humanity."

"Huh? The guy currently fighting with Yoo Joonghyuk? Ah…!"

The clever Jang Hayoung realized what I was planning. Jang Hayoung turned on the Unidentified Wall and wrote a message. Soon after, Manu's baffled voice rang out.

[What? These messages…!]

I didn't need to ask to know the situation that Manu was facing now. Perhaps countless messages sent by the '15 year old schoolgirl' were popping up like pop-up windows in his field of view.

[These ridiculous tactics!]

Manu hesitated and a white light started to emerge from Yoo Joonghyuk's body. I had seen this bright light before. It happened when Jung Heewon evolved to the Judge of Destruction. Then when Lee Hyunsung learnt Great Mountain Smash…

[The character 'Yoo Joonghyuk' has reached the moment of attribute evolution!]

[The attribute 'Pro Gamer' of the character Yoo Joonghyuk has evolved!]

Attribute evolution. Finally, Yoo Joonghyuk's second attribute had come to full bloom. Manu rushed forward and wielded his spear. At the same time, the dazzling light burst from Yoo Joonghyuk's body.

I watched the fascinating scene and recalled what Lee Jihye said in the latter half of Ways of Survival.

「"Master has countless attributes. Hmm…the best is naturally Regressor. Other than that, Master of the Panacea and Enemy of Gods and Demons are excellent… huh? Which one is the most envious attribute? Ahaha, it is naturally…"」

Manu's spearsmanship swept over Yoo Joonghyuk in vain.

「"The Ruler of Amusement. It is that."」

@1L912Aa8UCL0IGJ

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Yoo Joonghyuk slowly opened his eyes as he made the same expression I had constantly read about.

「 At that moment, Yoo Joonghyuk seemed to understand everything about this game. 」

Perhaps in Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes, all of Manu's attacks looked like a combination of 0s and 1s.

It was the legendary attribute, Ruler of Amusement. As long as this stage was a 'game', Yoo Joonghyuk was closer to a deity than any other constellation in the world.

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* Official novel illustration (canonical)
* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)

Chapter 263: Ep. 49 - The Best at Something, V

Yoo Joonghyuk's attribute evolved and the game flowed smoothly like water.

[The participant 'Yoo Joonghyuk' has killed the helper 'Founder of Humanity'!]

[The participant 'Yoo Joonghyuk' has won the 'Living Legend' title!]

The constellations hadn't yet adapted to the game and weren't able to follow Yoo Joonghyuk's movements. The constellations were inferior to Yoo Joonghyuk in terms of utilizing game items, understanding the terrain and the extra buffs.

[The participant 'Yoo Joonghyuk' has started to write a new myth on this Mythical Battlefield!]

[The participant 'Yoo Joonghyuk' is raising his name in the rankings of the Mythical Battlefield!]

Victory or defeat was decided in an instant.

[The time limit for the first game is over!]

[The winning team will be determined based on the pointed obtained during the time limit!]

[The winning team of the first game is the 'Yoo Joonghyuk - Kim Dokja Industrial Complex'.]

We got a total of six points. In addition, the sentence we took away from the opposing team meant we had two sentences.

『 The flower of the story blooms in the cruel Demon Territory. 』

Jang Hayoung stared at the sentence we had obtained several times before looking up blankly. "…We really won?"

"Yes."

I also didn't feel it was real. No matter the situation, we obtained the first victory against the mighty constellation… it wasn't a level to be elated by the fact that things went 'as planned'.

[The demon king 'Devil of Lust and Wrath' is looking at you with interest.]

[Many constellations are cheering for the Yoo Joonghyuk - Kim Dokja Industrial Complex!]

[You have obtained 100,000 coins each as a reward for the first game!]

I was able to see Yoo Joonghyuk approaching from a distance. I wanted to say something nice but Yoo Joonghyuk opened his mouth first. "The messages were sent by this person."

Before I could ask what he was talking about, Biyoo popped out of Yoo Joonghyuk's arms.

[Baaat!]

Biyoo seemed invigorated as she swung the Uriel doll like it was a toy.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' insists that she didn't do anything!]

Biyoo threw the doll into the air and entered my arms. I stroked her head a few days before asking Yoo Joonghyuk, who had grabbed the doll.

"Where the hell did you go?"

"I went to the vicinity of Melledon."

"Why there…?"

"There was an item I had to obtain."

"Item? What is it?"

"You don't need to know." Yoo Joonghyuk's expression was somewhat dissatisfied as he stared at me. "In addition… I thought it would be helpful to start at an unexpected position for the selection."

"It was a good judgment."

In the first round, the spawn location different depending on where you were when the game started. Yoo Joonghyuk hadn't departed from the same place as us and was able to farm items using a completely different route. This made it easier for him to aim at the enemies.

[Hahaha, something amazing happened. However, the game isn't over until it ends!]

I heard Bihyung's voice from the air. His expression seemed somewhat excited because we won.

[5 minutes later, the second game will start!]

It wasn't the time to be drunk on victory. This game had a total of three rounds. I looked over at my weary party members. The bodies of the dead Samyeongdang and Osu were revived again.

"Now we just need to win one more time. The game is over if we win two rounds first. So everyone, just try a bit harder…"

I tried to cheer them up but the condition of my party members wasn't good.

"Samyeongdang, why do you look like that?"

Samyeongdang had turned into a wooden gong and was making a rattling sound.

[That… I spent too much of my probability.]

In this game, death didn't mean the disappearance of the incarnation body. However, the thing that remained unchanged was the number of resources consumed.

"Osu?"

Yiiip!

Just like Samyeongdang, Osu died in the last game and he was now almost as small as a guinea pig. It seemed they had overconsumed their probability and energy in the last game. The constellations of the same rank had significant differences in level due to the quantity and quality of their accumulated stories.

It was Han Myungoh who opened his mouth. "I-I can't do it anymore."

Han Myungoh had run away safely until the end of the first game. He was like a lizard as his cut off leg slowly grew. Nevertheless, his face had aged 10 years during this short period.

"It's fine. You've worked hard."

No matter how much their power was suppressed, the opponents were still constellations. He had faced the status of a constellation for more than an hour and any normal incarnation would collapse.

The small consolation was that the Breaking the Sky Master was unharmed.

Woof woof!

In the first game, the Breaking the Sky Master helped Yoo Joonghyuk hunt one of the constellations. Me, Yoo Joonghyuk, Jang Hayoung and the Breaking the Sky Master. Now there were only the four of us in the team. Understandably, four wasn't enough to win the game.

Then Yoo Joonghyuk opened his mouth. "I will try to call additional power."

"Do you have any constellations?"

"I don't know if reinforcements will come in time. I'll just put them on the list for now."

I had no idea of who he would call. Did Yoo Joonghyuk have any connections during this period?

Yoo Joonghyuk continued talking, "We have to change our plan in the second round. Our positions as well."

"Why? Can't we do it like the last round?"

At Jang Hayoung's question, Yoo Joonghyuk glanced at me and silently shook his head. I ended up answering instead. "Yoo Joonghyuk's attribute is powerful but it isn't invincible."

"…It seems almost invincible."

"It was because the constellations didn't know much about this game."

From the second round, the penalty on stats would be slightly released. The constellations who had looked down on us would start to collect attributes and skills related to the game and would narrow the gap using an enormous amount of coins. Yoo Joonghyuk might have Ruler of Amusement but there was a limit to him alone.

I pondered for a moment before declaring to the party members. "I have an idea."

"We have decided to cooperate with the Bercan Industrial Complex."

[…Are you telling me to join forces with Papyrus?]

"It isn't the time to cover hot water with cold water."

A deep sigh emerged from Duke Melledon who resembled a rhinoceros. All the constellations on the battlefield had been destroyed by a single incarnation. They were caught off guard and hit in the back or had a sword piercing their feet. There were even constellations who fought against him one on one and were defeated.

"We can't let them win this time. You should know this."

[Don't worry. I was careless in the last round but this time will be different.]

Founder of Humanity, Manu gritted his teeth as he raised the Primitive Spear.

[I have learnt enough about this game.]

In fact, messages had been coming from the air for a long time.

[The constellation 'Founder of Humanity' has purchased the 'Special Game Talent' skill!]

[The constellation 'Thunder Eating Bird' has purchased the 'One Week Game Master' item!]

The dokkaebis were grinning widely at the suddenly buying binge.

[Oh my, constellations! Going to this extent…]

The constellations didn't like this expression on the dokkaebis but the more important thing was their pride, which had been crushed by the incarnation.

[Let's go.]

The game started and the constellations moved in unison. The influence of the attributes and items was great. They used the terrain to cover their actions and were fully aware of how their stigmas and skills were applied to this game.

The all-rounder of the team was the incomprehensible incarnation. If they killed him, the game would end.

[Over there.]

The Thunder Eating Bird glide and created strong winds. Amidst the wind-swept bushes, the owner of the sword was revealed. It was Yoo Joonghyuk.

"Now!"

The moment that Duke Melledon gave the signal, four constellations rushed at once.

[It will be different from before!]

The Founder of Humanity swung his spear, followed by a ray from King Oedipus. Yoo Joonghyuk couldn't avoid the attack and blood flowed from his forearm. The shadow of General of Vanara split up and pursued the gap revealed by Yoo Joonghyuk. A sharp rod brushed past Yoo Joonghyuk's side. There was the sound of flesh being hit.

Now the power of the constellations was limited to 30%. That damage that Yoo Joonghyuk received was different from before. However, Yoo Joonghyuk held up well despite the constellations' onslaught.

[…What? Why isn't he dead?]

Duke Melledon felt it was strange and used a skill to figure out Yoo Joonghyuk's physical state. Surprisingly, Yoo Joonghyuk still had more than 70% of his health remaining.

"T-This guy's health is a bit strange. Don't tell me…!"

Then the screams of the constellations were heard from the rear.

The enemies probably believed that Yoo Joonghyuk was an all-rounder.

"Breaking the Sky Master!"

The Breaking the Sky Master flew forward at my signal. Like a spear of light dividing the space, the Breaking the Sky Master penetrated the torso of the Thunder Eating Bird who was aiming at Yoo Joonghyuk. The battered bird fell down and the Breaking the Sky Master tore at the bird's torso with her fangs.

As soon as our position was exposed, the nearby constellations started to run this way. There were a total of three constellations rushing over. The long distance damage dealer Jang Hayoung received an agility penalty so there was no chance of winning when it was close combat. Even so, the situation was different this time.

"Kim Dokja, buy me 10 seconds."

"Understood."

Jang Hayoung took a stance, his left hand forward while his right fist was pulled back to his shoulder as he started gathering strength.

[Jang Hayoung has used the points earned to unseal a specific skill.]

[The helper 'Jang Hayoung' is preparing the ultimate.]

In this game, stigmas and skills over a certain power level were treated as 'ultimate'. In addition, the ultimate could only be released with points obtained in the game. Jang Hayoung used the points we had just earned as an assistant.

[The helper 'Jang Hayoung' has activated Breaking the Sky Force Punch Lv. 10!]

There was the sound of a cannon bursting and a mighty wind was created as Jang Hayoung's fist tore through the space. The wind crushed the ray of light coming from King Oedipus and blew away two of the running constellations.

Breaking the Sky Force Punch. I had seen it in Ways of Survival. It was a technique made out of boredom by the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint who pursued the path of the sword.

…I didn't know she could make such a powerful technique when bored.

[The helper 'Jang Hayoung' has killed the helper 'Thunder Eating Bird'!]

[The helper 'Jang Hayoung' has neutralized the helper 'General of Vanara'!]

I thought it would be a success just defeating one constellation. Yet one constellation died and one suffered a fatal wound.

"Didn't I say that I was a hard worker?"

Jang Hayoung laughed despite obviously overdoing it. Even Jang Hayoung would find it hard to achieve such rapid growth. Maybe he made a deal with the Unidentified Wall.

[Kill him!]

The enraged constellations ran in a messy manner. Jang Hayoung also ran towards them.

"Kim Dokja! Go! Do it according to the plan!"

If I tried to save Jang Hayoung here, the time would be delayed. This time, it was me who had the 'sentence'. Shortly after I ran towards the gorge, a scream was heard from behind me.

[The helper 'Breaking the Sky Master' has been killed!]

[The helper 'Jang Hayoung' has been killed!]

…Shit. Fortunately, Yoo Joonghyuk was still in good shape. Whether he was a tanker or all-rounder, Yoo Joonghyuk was Yoo Joonghyuk.

I went down to the bottom of the canyon and dark fog started to pour into the vicinity. I had calculated this. If the fog had begun, the 'monster' would soon appear here.

Then a constellation was felt from above the rocky terrain.

[You are quick, Demon King of Salvation.]

It was an unexpected move. Melledon's side should be tied up with Yoo Joonghyuk. How did they already reach here? The moment I saw the shadow on the canyon rocks, I realized what happened.

There was the shadow of a giant mummy and a goddess with a pointed scorpion tail. They were constellations of the Bercan who hadn't been seen in the last game.

'The Last Pharaoh' Cleopatra and the 'Scorpion Goddess' Serket…

Surprisingly, King Oedipus of the Melledon camp could also be seen. I smiled bitterly. "…I see. You have decided to join forces?"

Serket's tail swelled up and fired a stinger towards me. I was about to avoid the attack when old bandages released by the Last Pharaoh wrapped around my ankles. Close range damage dealers were vulnerable to long range damage dealers. My movements were limited so it was obvious that I would die like this.

King Oedipus seemed ready to finish things. I reflexively curled up. A powerful storm swept over my body.

I could hear the laughter of the constellations. It was a laugh that was convinced of my death from this blow.

[You have converted the points won in the last game!]

[You have unlocked a certain skill with the points!]

I slowly raised my body in the dust. The laughter disappeared from the constellations' faces as they saw me.

[The constellation 'Poked Out His Eyes' is astonished!]

[The constellation 'Scorpion Goddess' has wide eyes!]

The white fur wrapped around me protected me without a single scratch.

[The exclusive skill 'Bookmark' has been activated!]

It had been a long time since I used the third bookmark. I had been hesitant to use this bookmark for quite some time. I didn't think it was polite to my dokkaebi.

[Your understanding of this person is very high and the skill abilities are strengthened!]

[The exclusive skill 'Beast King's Sensitivity Lv. 10 (+1)' has been activated.]

I felt the warm of Biyoo curled up in my arms. The third bookmark, Beast Master Shin Yoosung. I looked up at the constellations on the canyon with the white fur wrapped around me.

[The participant 'Demon King of Salvation' will receive the position compensation effect.]

I didn't have the same attack power as Yoo Joonghyuk. Nor could I learn things quickly like Jang Hayoung. However, I had something better than them.

"I'm sorry but I'm the all-rounder in this game."

The Demon King Selection would end in the second round.

Chapter 264: Ep. 50 - Dokja's Story, I

"The fourth bookmark."

[The exclusive skill 'Way of the Wind Lv. 11 (+1) is activated!]

I avoided the flying sting of the Scorpion Goddess. If the strength of her body hadn't been suppressed, the poison would've vaporized the whole area. However, it was fine since I had Way of the Wind.

I stepped on the melted gorge and release the Purest Sword Force. My sword cut the bandages of the Last Pharaoh. The moment my sword hit the bandages, there was the sound of a drum beat. King Oedipus didn't miss this gap and flew forward.

[The exclusive skill 'Beast King's Sensitivity Lv. 10 (+1)' has been activated.]

Normally, this was an impossible fight. Originally, only one bookmark could be used at a time.

[The effect of 'Looked into the Abyss' has improved all your skills!]

[Currently, two bookmarks are being used at the same time.]

[The duration of Bookmark is reduced by half.]

All my skills had improved since the last time I checked my Attributes Window.

"The fifth bookmark!"

[The exclusive skill 'Electrification' Lv. 12 (+2) has been activated.]

I became smaller through Miniaturization. Then I turned into a point of light and penetrated the torso of the Last Pharaoh. The Last Pharaoh suffered a fatal wound and collapsed to the ground with a scream.

I was fighting with the history I had built up. The things I read. The times I had lived. Everything that I had. How many more flashes of light were seen and how much blood was spilled?

King Oedipus opened his mouth and spoke in a slightly weary tone. [Great, Demon King of Salvation.]

"…"

[Honestly, I didn't think you would be this strong.]

Nevertheless, there wasn't a look of defeat on his face. Shadows flocked to the top of the gorge. They were the other constellations belonging to Melledon and Bercan.

Duke Bercan.

Mysterious Bird of the Nile.

Supreme God of Light.

…

The number of constellations that appeared was close to 10. They looked down here from the high cliff of the gorge. I was stifled by the presence of the constellations but I didn't back down.

"Are you just going to watch from there?"

Rather, I raised the 'status' that was sleeping inside me. I was also a constellation. I didn't lose to them in terms of 'status'. Some of the constellations were crushed by the status I released and stumbled back. However, it wasn't everyone.

[You're an interesting child.]

All of a sudden, some of the constellations on top of the canyon bowed and retreated. Someone was approaching from among the constellations.

His long, golden hair waved every time he took a step and his four arms drew a beautiful rainbow. The third eye on his forehead looked down here like the sun coming out.

[Mithra was trying to get his own holiday off so I was wondering what type of person you were.]

His blinding appearance made his modifier obvious.

'The Supreme God of Light'.

I even knew his true name. "Surya."

Dazzling sparks appeared when I mentioned his real name. It was a sight that attested to the status of the name.

[Kid, do you know my name?]

"I know."

The nebula Vedas had eight great Lokapala. They were the guardians of the eight cardinal directions, including north, south, east and west.

"Surya of the southwest."

Surya was one of the eight Lokapala.

[The constellation 'Mass Production Maker' is frowning.]

[The constellation 'Goddess of Love and Beauty' is accusing the 'Supreme God of Light'!]

[The constellation 'Queen of the Darkest Spring' is pointing out that this behaviour doesn't fit the status of the Supreme God of Light!]

He was a powerful being equal to the 12 gods of Olympus. This presence was staring at me.

[If so, you know that you can't win this game.]

The status of over 1,000 years emerged from his body and I suppressed the desire to step back. He wasn't a constellation I could fight against. Lokapala Surya was different from King Oedipus and Cleopatra, who were humans that became constellations.

[Come to Vedas. You will die even if you win this game.]

"I don't want to."

[You don't know the world that will appear after the giant story. Do you think you can stand against that power alone? It isn't a story that only one star can afford.]

I knew what he was saying. Perhaps the world that Surya saw was different from the world that I saw. Just by obtaining a single 'giant story', the level of the world that the constellation could perceive was entirely different.

"Nope, I can afford it. I'm not alone."

[The possibility of a new story is germinated!]

The 73rd Demon Realm wriggled as if in response to my words. Surya felt the vibrations and said, [You aren't alone… how funny. Who is with you now?]

"A person who is more familiar with the cause and effect law than anyone else is saying this… it is truly ridiculous."

A powerful storm started to flow from Surya's incarnation body. The constellations around him turned pale. Still, he couldn't exercise all his power in this game, no matter his status. Sparks burst out in a dazzling manner.

In this game, Melledon had won two points. These two points might be able to free one of Surya's stigmas. I couldn't let that happen. As I moved, the constellations blocked my way.

A fist containing the power of Electrification struck the face of the constellations. The Broken Heart of a Young Gold Dragon repeatedly pumped and created a massive amount of magic power.

I didn't hesitate to release this strength. A little more, just a bit more. I had to draw my magic power to the limits.

The constellations couldn't cope with the power of Electrification and fell down while bleeding. It was a transcendent power that could even destroy constellations. The white lightning burnt the bodies of the constellations.

[The participant 'Demon King of Salvation' has killed the helper 'Scorpion Goddess'!]

[The participant 'Demon King of Salvation' has killed the helper 'The Last Pharaoh'!]

The broken heart of the gold dragon couldn't afford the magic power and the energy in my body suddenly fell sharply. I gritted my teeth and moved. I dealt a blow to Duke Bercan and immediately turned my back to him, striking a blow to the Mysterious Bird of the Nile.

[You are overly affected by the character!]

[The excessive use of Bookmark can leave a permanent injury on your soul!]

Meanwhile, the Supreme God of Light wasn't perplexed at all as he saw me moving closer.

[I have watched you for a long time. You always borrow the power of other beings.]

The Beast King's Sensitivity wrapped around my body while I prepared to deal a blow with Electrification.

[From the first scenario to the present, you have never fought with your own power. Do you really

think you can build up your own story?]

[The history that you've learnt is just history that came from stealing.]

It felt like I was facing hard steel. The Supreme God of Light used only one of his four arms to block the blow from Electrification.

[It isn't yours.]

The third eye of the god shone as brightly as the sun. At that moment, I realized what stigma Surya had released.

[The constellation 'Supreme God of Light' is invoking the 'Third Eye'.]

My vision distorted and all the light around me disappeared. In the darkness, I felt the edge of this space gradually crumbling.

[There is no 'you' in your story.]

Everything around me was already Surya's space.

[You will die alone.]

The Third Eye had the power to control time and space. It was the power of Surya's Third Eye. I was confused because I didn't think Surya would use this power so quickly.

How could I get out of here? It wasn't possible to use Electrification and Way of the Wind.

[The legendary story 'Distorting Things as One Pleases' has activated!]

I didn't know what to read. King of a Kingless World wasn't suitable. Person who Opposes the Miracle was also ambiguous. The same was true for One Who Hunted the King of Disasters.

The space was now reduced to one square metre. What should I do?

[The story 'Distorting Things as One Pleases' is screaming.]

My back was tingling when I heard a sound. It sounded familiar, as if someone was eating a story.

「De li cious food.」

I looked back and a small mouth was stuck to my back, eating my story.

「Kim Dok ja is a fo ol.」

It was the Fourth Wall. This bastard wasn't going to help me? The torn apart 'Distorting Things as One Pleases' was now nearly useless and was entering its stomach.

I forgot the urgency and shouted at the absurd situation. By the way, the thing that came out of my mouth wasn't a yell.

「The Fourth Wall said, "Ku waa aaah!"」

An explosive burst of sound poured into the surrounding space. The space trembled like it was a living creature and a gigantic crack formed.

[The stigma 'The Third Eye' is shuddering.]

I realized what was going on. The Third Eye was a mental ability that controlled time and space by manipulating cognition. The Fourth Wall was the strongest skill I had in regards to a mental barrier.

[The constellation 'Supreme God of Light' is astonished!]

The darkness collapsed like glass breaking. Once the light returned, the first thing I saw was tears coming from the eye on the forehead of the Supreme God of Light.

[You… what are you?]

The astonished true voice resonated and the other constellations hurriedly rushed towards me.

[You dare… die!]

My magic power was at the bottom. I didn't have enough power to open Bookmark again. Nevertheless, it wasn't necessary anymore. It had been 20 minutes since the game started.

[The fog of the gorge is thickening.]

There was a groan from somewhere in the gorge and the movements of the constellations stopped. The nervous constellations looked at the top of the gorge and a dark shadow fell towards this side.

I nervously slid down a rocky wall. It had been a long time since I saw something like this. The length was five kilometers. The body with a circumference of over 10 metres was falling towards the ground along with the collapsed upper part of the gorge. The constellations let out warning signals but the large ones were crushed under the scales of the giant monster.

[The helper 'Mysterious Bird of the Nile' has been killed by the 'Apocalypse Imoogi'.]

The monster burst like a bug and coiled up in the gorge, crying towards the air. The Apocalypse Imoogi. It was the name of the monster I had been waiting for.

[Damn! Don't back down!]

The constellations were overwhelmed by the sudden disaster and started attacking with their stigmas. The one who killed the monster could get a powerful team buff.

However, there was no way I could knock it down. According to Ways of Survival, the Red Dragon of the Apocalypse who appeared in Armageddon had the fearsome power to blow up a third of the stars in the sky with a single tail.

[Kuaaack!]

Of course, this imoogi wasn't at the level of the Red Dragon of the Apocalypse but there were no constellations who could deal with this monster at the beginning of the game.

[Kueeeeok!]

The constellations screamed as they were torn apart by the teeth of the imoogi while those struck by the tail were blown away. The unstoppable system messages were signalling the devastation of the gorge.

In a moment, seven participants and helpers died in the gorge. The surviving constellations escaped from the gorge using the sacrifice of other constellations.

Surya's cold voice echoed through the gorge. [You have a wicked trick up your sleeve. However, you won't be able to make it.]

The Apocalypse Imoogi struck the constellations and was now looking at me. A red sphere gathered at its mouth in order to dissolve the last insect. The red flames of the apocalypse. It was the fire of judgment that could melt everything on the ground.

The plan was okay. Melledon and Bercan suffered deadly damage and the disadvantage of the game was now balanced to an almost equal level.

…I would've liked to have a bit more strength left. My death here meant we would be deprived of our sentences. I felt regret and emptiness. If we went to the third game… was there a chance for us to win?

My eyes slowly closed as dark red flames headed towards my head. The waves of heat enveloped my body and there was the sizzling sound of rocks melting. Still, I didn't die no matter how much time passed.

[A new helper has been summoned to the game!]

I opened my eyes and saw someone in front of me. He wore a neat commando uniform. The soldier with the special forces mark on his shoulder was blocking the flames with a huge shield.

[The constellation 'Master of Steel' is looking at you.]

He had endured even the hottest Hell Flames Ignition.

"A captain of South Korea's special operations command…"

I watched the trembling man swallowing and sighed. 'How' or 'why'. I wanted to ask but didn't say anything. Numerous voices were pouring towards me through Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint and all my words were pointless.

Afterwards, a giant 'chimera dragon' was seen falling from the sky.

[A new helper has been summoned to the game!]

I saw the little girl sitting on the head of the dragon and funnily enough, felt a bit tearful.

"Ahjussi!"

The helpers that Yoo Joonghyuk called finally reached the battlefield.

Chapter 265: Ep. 50 - Dokja's Story, II

There were a total of three 'reinforcements' that Yoo Joonghyuk invited. Beast Master Shin Yoosung, Steel Sword Lee Hyunsung and…

"Hyunsung-ssi! Please take Dokja-ssi out of here!"

Ariadne's web shot through the air and placed me on Lee Hyunsung's back. A woman in a cat suit was running through the sky with the Hermes Walking Method. It was the incarnation of Olympus, Yoo Sangah.

"Yoosung, fire the breath from a long distance! Continue until Hyunsung-ssi leaves!"

The chimera dragon roared and fired a breath. The Apocalypse Imoogi screamed like it was quite painful.

[The constellation 'Master of Steel' has given a great probability to his incarnation.]

[The constellation 'Abandoned Lover of the Labyrinth' is supporting her incarnation.]

[The constellation 'Master of the Skywalk' is supporting his incarnation.]

The constellations supporting Lee Hyunsung and Yoo Sangah seemed to be struggling. Thanks to Yoo Sangah's commands, I was forcibly carried on Lee Hyunsung's shoulder.

"…Lee Hyunsung-ssi."

"Stay still, Dokja-ssi."

"You don't have to do this. I can move now."

Lee Hyunsung didn't loosen his hard arms at my words. The only thing he did was silently climb the gorge. Once the top of the gorge could be seen, Lee Hyunsung opened his mouth. "Dokja-ssi, have you ever thrown a grenade?"

"…Grenade?"

"To use a grenade, you have to go through three steps. Remove the safety clip, remove the safety pin and throw it.

"I know because I've thrown it in the training camp."

"Then you know how important the safety pin is for a grenade."

I realized what Lee Hyunsung was trying to say.

"I lost the safety pin."

"…Wasn't it the bullet shell last time?"

"I thought that I shouldn't lose it again." Lee Hyunsung turned his head and looked back at me. "Once the safety pin is inserted, it must be done well."

Soon after, we reached the top of the gorge. At the bottom, Yoo Sangah and Shin Yoosung were riding the chimera dragon out of the gorge. I saw Shin Yoosung's brightly smiling face and my heart felt complicated.

"Hyunsung-ssi."

"…Yes."

I knew what Lee Hyunsung wanted to say. He had been a soldier all his life so this was the only way he could express it.

"Thank you for coming."

I heard a sniffling sound but pretended not to know anything. After a while, something rolled like an acorn and crashed into my leg.

"Ahjussi!"

She hugged my tattered leg like it was precious.

"It's been a while, Yoosung."

Shin Yoosung nodded vigorously when her face against my coat. I patted Shin Yoosung's back while Yoo Sangah approached. "It has been a long time, Dokja-ssi."

"Yes. Have you been well?"

Well, it was a stupid question. Since the scenario started, no one could be well.

"You are the same, Dokja-ssi."

Yoo Sangah's smile wasn't false. Before the destruction of the world and after the destruction, Yoo Sangah was the only one who laughed at my jokes.

"The others…"

"Only we came. Heewon-ssi and the kids wanted to come as well but…"

"I tossed the coin with Lee Gilyoung and won!"

Shin Yoosung interrupted with a laugh. I see. My life was decided by throwing a coin. I stroked Shin Yoosung's head and said, "Thank you Yoo Sangah-ssi."

"I was just thinking about going. There was a bad sign from Dokja-ssi's Good or Bad Luck, Disaster or Happiness Fortune.

"Good or Bad Luck, Disaster or Happiness Fortune?"

I knew this skill. There was only one constellation on the Korean Peninsula who had it.

"Yes, it showed 'great misfortune'. Sooyoung and I were wondering about who should go when Yoo Joonghyuk contacted us…"

I roughly understood what was going on. I didn't think Han Sooyoung and Yoo Sangah would throw a coin so… Yoo Sangah probably came because Han Sooyoung had a problem. Han Sooyoung seemed to be doing well with the job I entrusted to her.

"Sooyoung-ssi also wanted to come."

"Ah… yes. Indeed."

It was a lie. She disliked me.

Then there was a rumbling sound from a bush. I was so excited to meet my companions again that I forgot the game wasn't over. I rushed through the forest area with the group and asked, "Are you aware of the situation?"

Yoo Sangah nodded. "I heard the story from Bihyung."

Yoo Joonghyuk might be playing in the tanker position with Ruler of Amusement but by now, his health would've almost reached the bottom.

The second game would be decided here.

The chimera dragon let out a burst of wind and the nearby trees collapsed. The battlefield where the constellations was fighting was clearly revealed.

"Yoo Joonghyuk!"

Yoo Joonghyuk glanced this way from where he was surrounded by constellations.

「 You're late. 」

He was still arrogant but the blood flowing from his body made him seem like he was dying.

[You! He has a sentence!]

Perhaps there was a special skill to determine this as one constellation screamed.

Apart from our team, the number of participants remaining was six. Our side had only five people, including the new reinforcements. In addition, Yoo Joonghyuk was in a state where he almost couldn't fight anymore.

[Go!]

As the all-out combat began, the constellations set up a formation centred around the Founder of Humanity and General of Vanara. The first one to run towards them was Steel Sword Lee Hyunsung.

"I! Won't! Lost! It! Again!"

Lee Hyunsung flew forward and started to fight with the narrative-grade constellation, Manu.

Manu frowned like he was displeased to exchange blows with an incarnation. His powerful 'status' burned at Manu's fingertips and the steel shell was slightly softened, but Lee Hyunsung didn't back down.

[The constellation 'Master of Steel' is looking at the 'Founder of Humanity'.]

The Founder of Humanity was narrative-grade but so was the Master of Steel. I looked at the thorns of Steel Transformation rising around Lee Hyunsung's body and I could only guess how harsh the personal scenarios that he completed were. It wasn't a position that more than 10 incarnations could reach. The current Lee Hyunsung showed an overwhelming growth potential than the Lee Hyunsung of any other rounds.

Yoo Sangah watched the scene and also ran forward. "I'll take Olympus."

[This girl, are you crazy?]

King Oedipus discovered Yoo Sangah. The two of them both belonged to Olympus. However, based on what I heard from Dionysus, Olympus was currently in the middle of a civil war.

[Master of the Skywalk! You're making the wrong choice right now!]

I didn't know the exact situation but it was obvious that a group led by Dionysus and Hermes was trying to be independent from the existing Olympus.

Yoo Sangah started fighting with King Oedipus while Shin Yoosung moved the chimera dragon.

The condensed breath covered the battlefield. The constellations who couldn't avoid it screamed.

[There are 10 minutes remaining.]

The second round was reaching its end. At this moment, the points of each team were almost equal. The constellations were desperate. Several constellations headed towards the chimera dragon and the dragon and Shin Yoosung were in a crisis.

The dragon wasn't able to use its force because it consumed quite a lot of power when dealing with the Apocalypse Imoogi.

[A hatchling! It is only big!]

It would be our side that was disadvantageous if this round ended in a draw. The game would flow into the third game and if we didn't win, we would have to deal with the constellations on a stage where the penalty had disappeared.

Yoo Joonghyuk knew this fact and pointed to Duke Bercan. "Kill the duke. He has the sentence."

I nodded.

"I will create a path." Yoo Joonghyuk squeezed out his magic power and used Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship.

[They are aiming for the sentence!]

Yoo Joonghyuk slashed and slashed again to create a road. He used his last force to draw a huge semicircle on the ground and the constellations rushed at him.

「 I'll leave it to you, Kim Dokja. 」

Yoo Joonghyuk was pierced in the heart by Manu's spear.

[The helper 'Yoo Joonghyuk' has been killed!]

He stood upright even at the moment of death. The constellations turned to me after Yoo Joonghyuk disappeared. The Primitive Spear and a ray of light headed my way. However, the bombardment didn't reach me.

"Dokja-ssi!"

Lee Hyunsung activated Steel Transformation to block the attacks of the constellations. The hot heat and shock would be terribly painful but Lee Hyunsung seemed more energetic. Duke Bercan could be seen in the distance.

[There are five minutes remaining.]

"Hyunsung-ssi, throw me."

"It isn't possible. Doing that again…!"

"You have to throw the grenade after pulling out the safety pin." I stared into Lee Hyunsung's shaky eyes. "Even if I die here, I won't really die."

The real death was losing this Demon King Selection. Lee Hyunsung watched for a while before closing and opening his eyes. Lee Hyunsung's eyes returned to that of a soldier. "I won't believe your lie again!"

"No, now isn't the time to be stubborn—"

"If you die, we will die together!"

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is greatly pleased.]

"I must do this."

Then Lee Hyunsung started running with me on his back. Manu was hit by the rushing Lee Hyunsung and rolled on the floor like a bowling pin.

[Keeok! Cheeky incarnation…!]

No one was able to stop the berserk Lee Hyunsung. At least, it looked like that.

[Proud child. As I said earlier, it is barely 'history'.]

Lee Hyunsung's movements were stopped by a powerful 'status'. The Supreme God of Light Surya had recovered his strength and was blocking the way. His Third Eyes might not work properly but he was still a Lokapala of Vedas. He had the power to stop us.

His four arms moved and the entire ground shook as the running Lee Hyunsung was pushed back. He tried running again but the same thing repeated.

[The place where you are standing now is a place for humans. A human who keeps repeating the same mistakes.]

I triggered Electrification from Lee Hyunsung's back. My fists stretched out and struck Surya's torso.

Even so, Surya didn't budge. The transparent shield created by the four arms smothered all my attacks.

[Only this much? Are you really trying to see the end of the scenario?]

It was the power to deny all the history I had accumulated. Electrification and the Purest Sword Force didn't work.

[The times have changed. Only this much history…]

There was such a gap despite only 30% of his power being available. What would happen if 100% of the power was opened?

Then a new voice was heard. "Don't ignore ahjussi!"

Shin Yoosung shouted from the head of the chimera dragon. The breath poured out at Shin Yoosung's signal. Surya swung his arms and scattered the breath.

Lee Hyunsung leapt through this gap. His Steel Transformation body collided with Surya. Surya, who had been unmoved by countless attacks, shook for the first time.

"Uwaaaaaah!" Lee Hyunsung swung his fists towards Surya like a madman. Lee Hyunsung didn't stop despite the Steel Transformation around his fists cracking, blood splashing and bones breaking.

[The 73rd Demon Realm is responding to the will of you and your helpers.]

[A new story about you is being made.]

The human's will to challenge a god was causing cracks in the defensive wall. A little break. It was a very small crack that human history created.

"Hyunsung-ssi."

Lee Hyunsung and I didn't miss this gap. As if throwing a grenade, Lee Hyunsung threw my body that had become small through Miniaturization. I broke through the barrier created by Surya's arms and rushed to Duke Bercan. Duke Bercan turned his head with surprise while I activated and my side pierced his neck.

[The participant 'Demon King of Salvation' has killed the participant 'Duke Bercan'!]

…I did it. Along with the triumphant victory, countless system messages flowed into my head. Before I could read the messages, a power squeezed at me. At the last moment, I saw Surya's face.

[You have died.]

Chapter 266: Ep. 50 - Dokja's Story, III

My vision blackened before coming back. It felt like my consciousness had experienced a power outage. I blinked blankly but only the dark ceiling was visible.

…What happened? I took deep breaths and moved my heavy head as I started thinking.

I was participating in the second round of the Demon King Selection. I killed Duke Bercan and at almost the same time, I was killed by Surya. Then the system messages poured out.

Did I win the second round? Or… did I lose? I thought about it but I wasn't sure.

[You have taken away the enemy's sentence and won the game!]

I seemed to have heard this message.

[Your sentence was taken away and you have lost the game!]

I also seemed to have heard this message. Maybe it was both. Then which one was first? For now, I had no way of knowing.

[You have died.]

The only thing I was sure about was this message. I died in the game and awakened in this place.

"Ugh…"

I slowly rose from my seat and the place where I was lying was seen more clearly. Numerous lamps were set up between niches, illuminating the vast darkness. It was an unfamiliar place I had never visited before.

There was a sign stating [000~100] in the place where I stood and large bookshelves around the sign. There was the smell of books. It was reminiscent of a university library.

…Library? Why was I here? I pulled out a book on the closest shelf and turned a page.

「After Lee Seolhwa's death, Yoo Joonghyuk thought he should die many times. He could never win against them with talent and skills alone. The end of the scenario wasn't visible and the power of the constellations was unbelievably strong. Revenge for Lee Jihye and Lee Seolhwa couldn't be achieved. Yoo Joonghyuk thought in the midst of his despair.」

The sentences in the familiar style were lined up and I read the sentences as if they were being sucked in.

「'What if I have a sponsor?'」

It was a scene that didn't appear in detail in Ways of Survival. Even so, I knew this scene. It was because the scene was defeated dozens or hundreds of times in my imagination.

「[The constellation '???' wants you to be his incarnation'.」

This was the first time Yoo Joonghyuk received his sponsor. Yoo Joonghyuk in the 0th regression repeatedly trained to his limit without a sponsor but had to kneel in front of the incarnation.

「 A new attribute, Regressor will blossom! 」

It was the story of when Yoo Joonghyuk first became a 'regressor'. I reflexively closed the book and looked at the title.

[Yoo Joonghyuk, 56th record of the 0th round.]

I suddenly had an idea of what this place was. As my eyes became accustomed to the darkness, the surroundings looked better. This was the library where all the records of Ways of Survival were gathered.

I muttered in a slightly weary manner. "…It seems to be more than 3,149."

Ways of Survival was long but not to this extent. This huge space was filled with books. I wasn't sure if I could read half the books even if I devoted my whole life to it.

Then I got a headache. The curled memories were breaking out like a eggshell cracking. This place that had just seemed unfamiliar now felt familiar. The lamps in the niches and the shelves of books.

I slowly got goosebumps and an intense feeling struck my head. I had already come to this place once. When was it? When…

「 Kim Dok ja. 」

The voice echoed through the library. I knew this tone. "…The Fourth Wall?"

Then the entire library shook faintly.

「 Yo ur so ul was in dan ger. 」

"Danger?"

「 I call ed you… 」

The Fourth Wall called me here. It wasn't difficult to figure out what he meant. "Perhaps, are you also in here?"

「Co rrect.」

"How do I get out of here? Where is the exit?"

「…」

"…Hey?"

I called out a few more times but the Fourth Wall didn't answer. He was a guy who slept when sleepy so he might've fallen asleep again this time. I had to find a way out myself.

[You can't use Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint in this location.]

[You can't use Bookmark in this location.]

All my available skills were blocked. I couldn't see the end of the library no matter how far I walked. I couldn't see the exit as I looked to the north, south, east and west. I became convinced that I couldn't escape and felt a drug-like comfort.

"…Heaven."

Everywhere I looked was Ways of Survival. It was a world full of Ways of Survival. I might've been happy if I came here before the scenario started. It was a story that would never end no matter how much I read. I wouldn't go hungry because I was just a soul.

…There was no way for me to go out so I should read more books. I didn't know. There could be a way in the book.

I pulled the books out of the shelves, stacked them next to each other and started reading them. I looked for a while and once again realized that Ways of Survival was Ways of Survival.

"…There are too many explanations."

The surroundings were quiet so the speed at which I read the book was faster than usual. However, I didn't read it roughly. Like a gourmet long starved of meat, I cut every sentence into pieces and relished them.

"That jerk, he was cute at this time."

"…Damn, I should've killed him a bit more in the beginning."

Some of the stories were already known and some weren't.

"This information was forgotten…"

"What? There was something like this?"

There was no one in this place and I naturally spoke to myself. I wasn't conscious about any listeners. Thus, I read a few more books. There was a sense of pride in my heart and warmth rose.

Suddenly, I felt weak. Why didn't I just give up and stay here? It wouldn't be too bad if I never woke up from here. There was no scenario here to kill me.

I didn't need to see the constellations. After reading a number of books, I ran past some bookshelves, reading those in the middle.

「 Yoo Joonghyuk sometimes thought this. 」

「 'If I hadn't met that guy on the bridge, what would've happened? Or if I had killed him there… what would've happened to my remaining life?' 」

I saw the familiar phrases and reflexively looked at the title of the book.

[Yoo Joonghyuk, 12th record of the 3rd round.]

…As expected, it was the third round. I opened a few more books Some of them were written about me.

「 'Damn Kim Dokja'. 」

Some books contained:

「"Kim Dokja, wake up! Kim Dokja!" 」

Some good words were written. In some books, nothing was written.

「■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■」

The sentences were filtered and couldn't be read. Some of the episodes had blank pages. It was as if the story hadn't been recorded yet.

All books were organized in accordance to the order of the rounds. It was as if someone had arranged it so I could find it easily when needed. But who…

I just had this thought when I saw something on the other side of the bookshelf. I reflexively put the book back and looked. It was a very short moment but there seemed to be the shadow of a person.

"Who's there?"

The sound of footsteps started heading further away. I started chasing the sound. I almost stumbled over a few books on the floor but persistently followed the shadow. The signs of the bookshelves changed quickly.

From [000~100] to [100~200]. Then it was [200~300].

[Yoo Joonghyuk, 24th record of the 373rd round.]

[Yoo Joonghyuk, 31st record of the 473rd round.]

Countless books passed by quickly.

[Yoo Joonghyuk, 27th record of the 573rd round.]

[Yoo Joonghyuk, 12th record of the 681st round.]

…

I was a bit breathless and still couldn't see the end of the books. It was obviously a soul body but I was breathless. I kept running. This was an opportunity. If I missed this person here, I wouldn't be able to catch it again.

How far did I go? I was getting a bit closer.

"Wait!"

The moment I shouted, the floor in front of me suddenly disappeared. My body failed to overcome inertia and fell forward. I might've fallen down if I hadn't reflexively grabbed the bookshelf next to me.

[Yoo Joonghyuk, 22nd record of the 1863rd round.]

[Yoo Joonghyuk, 23rd record of the 1863rd round.]

[Yoo Joonghyuk, 26th record of the 1863rd round.]

…

Books poured towards me head. It hurt as much as Yoo Joonghyuk's fists. I barely dug myself out of the pile of books and the shadow I was pursuing had already disappeared.

"Shit…"

Instead, there was a cliff in front of my eyes. I couldn't see the bottom.

"Ah…"

I stared down the cliff like I was possessed. This was the end of the library. It was the end of all the stories. I stared at it and felt the urge to throw myself in. I felt like I could know something I had long wondered about. If I could go inside there…

The moment my body tilted towards the bottom of the cliff, someone tightly grabbed my shoulders.

「(You will die if you fall. It is really 'beyond' the wall.)」

Slap! Slap! Slap! Slap!

"Wake up."

Slap! Slap! Slap! Slap!

"Yoo Joonghyuk-ssi, stop it! Dokja-ssi's face is swollen!"

"What the hell is happening?"

"He is still breathing. I think there was a shock to the soul…"

Yoo Joonghyuk frowned at Yoo Sangah's words and stood up. The swollen Kim Dokja was lying on the ground. The bear-like Lee Hyunsung was holding onto him and crying out madly.

"Dokja-ssi… wake up. Please…"

The moment the second round was completed, the Mythical Battlefield suddenly disintegrated. All participants and helpers of the Yoo Joonghyuk - Kim Dokja Industrial Complex were left in front of the wastes of the industrial complex.

Yoo Sangah stared at the people standing in the same camp. Two dogs and one pretty boy. Also, Han Myungoh…

"You were alive, Department Head-nim."

"Y-Yoo Sangah-ssi…" Han Myungoh started sweating and retreated.

Yoo Sangah stared at Jang Hayoung. "You… are you on our side?"

"Ah, I…"

Jang Hayoung met Yoo Sangah's eyes and stuttered in a confused manner. He didn't know how to introduce himself. Then Jang Hayoung caught sight of Shin Yoosung. "Ah, weren't you in that video…?"

"…You know me?"

Jang Hayoung recalled the scenes of the 73rd Demon King scenario thanks to Shin Yoosung and figured out who they were. "I'm a real fan! Wow, I can't believe I'm meeting the incarnations of Earth…"

Jang Hayoung's eyes were glowing as he shook Yoo Sangah's hand. Yoo Sangah smiled lightly and stared into the air.

"By the way… did we win or lose?"

Only one unknown system message was floating in the air.

[We are currently determining the winning team of the second round.]

Jang Hayoung said, "I think Kim Dokja killed him first. Then shouldn't we win?"

"But our sentence was stolen…"

Yoo Joonghyuk shook his head. "Kim Dokja was faster."

The words filled with strong conviction caused Jang Hayoung and Yoo Sangah to brighten. It was likely to be true if Yoo Joonghyuk said so.

Then a cloud of dust appeared on the other side of the wilderness. It was a scene filled with a powerful 'status'. There were no need to ask about the identity of the incoming beings.

Yoo Joonghyuk stared at the sky and his expression hardened.

[We are currently determining the winning team of the second round.]

It was still the only sentence floating in the sky. It had been the same for 30 minutes.

"Be prepared."

"Huh?"

"Something is wrong."

In the main scenario, the fast-paced bureau would never spend 30 minutes to determine the winner.

In other words, this situation was intended by someone. Someone didn't want the scenario to end this way.

The present 73rd Demon Realm was filled with an enormous amount of probability due to the Mythical Battlefield.

Yoo Joonghyuk pulled out his Black Heavenly Demon Sword and declared, "This time it isn't a game."

The terrible roar of the Thunder Eating Bird filled the sky. The constellations who no longer received penalties from the game were coming over here.

Chapter 267: Ep. 50 - Dokja's Story, IV

A strong hand grabbed my shoulders. I reflexively turned my body and punched out. There was a thud and my fist was caught in a big hand.

「(Oh, did you come to fight?)」

The darkness was lifted and a white face was revealed.

「(I saved you once before. You must've already forgotten.)」

It was a face I knew. Even… it was someone I killed.

"Why are you here?"

「(…Are you really asking because you don't know?)」

It was an ambiguous face where it wasn't clear if the person was male or female. It gave me a feeling of incomprehensibility. This presence shouldn't be here.

"Nirvana Moebius."

A long time ago, he was eaten by the Fourth Wall.

What happened to the beings who were eaten by the Fourth Wall? I had this question from the first moment the Fourth Wall ate something.

「(It is as you can see. This is what happened.)」

Nirvana laughed. We hadn't met for a while but Nirvana was just the same as our first meeting. If there was one difference, the letters making up Ways of Survival was hanging on his body like a shackle.

"You've been alive here the whole time?"

「(It's hard to say this is living.)」

Looking closer, Nirvana's voice didn't flow out of his mouth. I couldn't even say it was a voice. Nirvana stared up at the air.

「(I'm living thanks to that damn parasitic wall.)」

At this moment, the warning of the Fourth Wall echoed.

「Nir va na talk ing too much.」

Nirvana laughed. His eyes were bitter but there was a strange uplifting sensation from him. I followed Nirvana's gaze and looked around the library. There were numerous types of letterforms that made up a world. In this place, everything was Ways of Survival.

"Now you know everything you've ever wanted."

「(There is no entity that knows everything. Just like you.)」

Nirvana really seemed like a mysterious sage. I felt strange. For the first time, a character learnt the secrets of this world.

"How do you feel? Now you know that you are a character in a novel."

Nirvana's expression changed at my provocation.

「(A novel… is that what you really think?)」

Nirvana looked at me with pitying eyes and his lips shook several times. However, no sound emerged. I was frustrated. "What is it? Finish it to the end."

Nirvana smiled quietly.

「(I like your story.)」

I was embarrassed by the unexpected words.

「(To be precise, I like the story you have changed. The sentences that feel your will, the context that contains things you don't say…)」

"…What are you saying now?"

I stepped back in an awkward manner. I looked at his bastard and remembered his words before his death.

「(It isn't just me. All the beings here love your story.)」

"Who else is in this place?"

The air started shaking and a few dark shards fell from the ceiling. The vibrations were like something giant was burrowing this way. Nirvana picked up the fragments and frowned.

「(There is no time so you better move quickly. It isn't good to talk too much here. Something terrible will happen.)」

Nirvana started walking before I could ask anything. I followed Nirvana while looking back at the cliff I had almost fallen off. The vibrations in the library were spreading from the cliff. "Wait, where are you going?"

「(There is someone who wants to meet you the most.)」

"What? Who?"

「(It is the existence who organized the shelves from 000.)」

…Organized the shelves?

「(We aren't just here to play. If we don't clean up properly, you won't remember it.)」

"…Wait, what does that mean?"

「(You don't need to understand.)」

I turned and saw new bookshelves appearing. The library was really spacious. Ways of Survival increased the number of rounds that were skipped in the second half. Perhaps this library had arranged all those omissions. A signpost saying [000~100] appeared in front of me.

「(It's here. Then have a good conversation.)」

I turned the corner and saw a familiar creature. It was the 'minimum' size compared to what I saw in the past but it was definitely the existence I knew.

12 tentacles were being used to pick up books on the floor. There was a squid-like body controlling those tentacles. There was something like horn-rimmed spectacles placed on a small hole that was presumed to be the eye.

"…You were here."

The squid looked this way. The 12 tentacles nodded simultaneously.

「(The poor truthseeker came.)」

It was the Devourer of Dreams. In Dark Castle, I defeated it with the help of Cheok Jungyeong and the Fourth Wall. He was swallowed up by the Fourth Wall and ended up in this space.

"Did you want to see me?"

「(I want to help you.)」

Something that was presumed to be the squid's mouth looked pleased. I didn't know how to respond to this different species gesture.

"I don't know what you're saying all of a sudden. I need some time to figure out the situation…"

「(There isn't much time.)」

"Why are you trying to help me?"

「(With your help, I have reached the truth of the universe. Noble beings will pay back their debts.)」

Noble beings. In fact, it wasn't strange for the Devourer of Dreams to call itself that. This squid was strong enough to chew up the constellations making a fuss outside. "Then I have one thing to ask."

「(Go ahead.)」

"Who created this library?"

At this moment, huge sparks popped up and my body crashed into a bookshelf. 12 tentacles stretched out at the same time, holding my body to the bookcase. He looked at the falling books and the Devourer of Dreams pushed up his glasses.

「(It does not constitute a question. Ask another question.)」

I bit my lips and thought about it. It was meaningless to ask a question related to Ways of Survival right now. It was possible to read the second revision and there was a way to come back to this space and read the related questions.

In other words, I had to ask a question that wasn't recorded in Ways of Survival. It was also a question that the 'outer god' had to answer. Finding the question wasn't difficult.

"Who is Secretive Plotter?"

Strong sparks once again sprung up. I was worried that my body would be thrown back again but fortunately, the sparks were weaker this time.

「(Are you curious about the great plotter?)」

The tentacles moved very slowly.

「(He is one of the oldest beings in this universe…)」

I was hearing information about Secretive Plotter for the first time.

「(The most solitary being in the universe, the one who fights against the Oldest Dream.)」

"How do I know if you are just saying this? Let me know the right modifier—"

「 (A modifier is meaningless for him. However, he will help you if you want.)」

"Help? How…"

「(Make an Otherworld Covenant with him.)」

The Otherworld Covenant. I knew what it was. In the fifth scenario, the Absolute Throne that I destroyed was a type of covenant. However, there was never a good end to a covenant in Ways of Survival.

"I can't do that."

A few tentacles nodded like they were heads.

「 (I thought so. You hate higher level beings.)」

"I won't be able to create the story I want if I borrow your strength."

「 (You are now someone who can't be controlled.)」

I felt strange. I didn't think an 'outer god' would say this.

「 (You need to think again about your anger. In order to reach the end, it is necessary to properly consider the things you can use.) 」

Dudududu!

「(This world is heading towards ■■. It hasn't been written yet but it has already been written. The great plotter can help you. So that you can find the right way…) 」

"I believe in the stories I have accumulated."

Dudududu!

The gap in vibrations was gradually shortening. The Devourer of Dreams spoke like he was resigned to my stubborn will.

「 (…Unfortunately, there is no more time. Remember that the great plotter is always waiting for you.) 」

One of the tentacles wound around me. Meanwhile, the other tentacles moved quickly and started looking for something on the shelves. The book he found was:

[Yoo Joonghyuk, 38rd record of the 3rd round.]

The pages turned quickly. I realized what was going to happen and hurriedly opened my mouth.

"Wait a minute. I still have something to ask!"

「(Goodbye, ■■'s Apostle. If the probability allows it, we will meet again.) 」

The pages of the book opened and sentences appeared on the blank pages in real time.

「 Yoo Joonghyuk had a thought. 」

「 Wake up quickly, Kim Dokja. 」

「 Otherwise everyone will die. 」

…Dammit, this was why I was forced to leave. The next moment, I was sucked into the context of the sentences.

* * *

The battlefield was a ruin. Yoo Joonghyuk wiped his bloody lips while looking at the bodies of the incarnations on the ground and the approaching constellations.

The combination of the transcendent dog Breaking the Sky Master and the constellation Osu was amazing. They didn't mind their broken bodies and were biting at the rushing historical-grade constellations.

Thanks to this, Cleopatra in the front was a mess while King Oedipus had nasty bite wounds all over his body.

It was reasonably okay when dealing with historical-grade constellations.

[Disgusting! You dare to call yourselves constellations when you can't even deal with such bugs?]

However, the narrative-grade constellations watching from the rear came out and the situation completely reversed.

Shin Yoosung's chimera dragon crashed down due to the Thunder Eating Bird. Lee Hyunsung had his Steel Transformation shattered by the General of Vanara's fist and he was rolling on the ground. Yoo Sangah was somehow managing to fight despite coughing up blood several times, but this seemed to be her limit.

Osu was stabbed by the Founder of Humanity's Primitive Spear and staggered to the ground. Osu's incarnation body was stabbed and the Breaking the Sky Master also staggered.

They opened the limits allowed by the probability of the 25th scenario. It wasn't 100% power but the powerful 'status' that the parties present brought out filled the entire Demon Realm with dazzling white sparks.

This was the strength of the beings called constellations. They were beings who came from the highest place in this world.

Yoo Joonghyuk asked, "Why are you doing this?"

[The constellation 'Supreme God of Light' is laughing quietly.]

"It looks like you don't have to have the history of being defeated by bugs."

Surya's cheeks subtly twitched at these words. The opening of the Lokapala's status caused the expressions of the constellations to change. The opening of an excessive force caused sparks to appear around Surya's body. However, Surya looked confident like he could afford it.

[Kuwaaaaaaang!]

He released his 'status' and dealt one blow. However, the whole area became a terrible mess. The nearby structures were turned to ashes and the fleeing incarnations were destroyed. People collapsed while blood emerged from all orifices.

[Some constellations are dissatisfied with the progression of the scenario!]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is greatly angry!]

[The demon king 'Overlord of the Great Demon Castle' is pleased.]

[The demon king 'Maker of Discord' is excited!]

[Many constellations are excited about the great battle!]

Lee Hyunsung was defending in front and blood poured from his ears and mouth. Yoo Joonghyuk grabbed Lee Hyunsung's shoulder.

"Back off, Lee Hyunsung. This is an opponent you can't go against."

Lee Hyunsung reflexively tried to say something but even that seemed hard. Yoo Joonghyuk left the faltering Lee Hyunsung behind him and walked forward while wiping the blood off the Black Heavenly Demon Sword.

It was a desperate situation. His Sage's Eye was analyzing the battlefield in real time. The number of constellations visible at the moment was almost 20. Some of the historical-grade constellations were eliminated from the field but it wasn't a number he could win against.

「 Young disciple, no. You will die if you open that power! 」

The Breaking the Sky Master instinctively realized what Yoo Joonghyuk was going to do. However, Yoo Joonghyuk's will was stubborn.

Yoo Joonghyuk slowly raised his power and huge sparks appeared. He knew he wasn't their opponent. However, it was always like this.

–Once you reach transcendence stage three, you can gain the power to destroy constellations.

The words left behind by his teacher were the only comfort that Yoo Joonghyuk now believed in. This time, he was using a shortcut to raise his power. This didn't mean the power was a lie because he used a shortcut.

A dazzling aura burst from Yoo Joonghyuk's body. Soft hair poured down like a waterfall while his large size became a smaller and sleeker body. He took the form that allowed him to practice the ultimate Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship. Yoo Sangah stared at the scene from behind and couldn't help opening her mouth. "…Yoo Joonghyuk-ssi?"

Yoo Joonghyuk slowly turned back, his long hair cut off by the Black Heavenly Demon Sword. The ines of the face had changed but it was clearly Yoo Joonghyuk. No, it was even more than before. Yoo Joonghyuk's gaze stayed on Kim Dokja's face for a moment.

*

"Take him away."

Yoo Joonghyuk turned his head and wiped the blade of the Black Heavenly Demon Sword. The constellations who were laughing at him were approaching.

King Oedipus opened his mouth. [Foolish transcendent. This is the cost of going against the constellations. You will die here.]

Yoo Joonghyuk replied while still wiping his blade. "I guess so. However, some of you will die too."

[Haha, it is useless! The extinction of an incarnation body…]

Yoo Joonghyuk didn't listen. Instead, he was reminded of Kim Dokja's words.

'Don't give up on this life'.

"Then in the next life, half of you will die."

Yoo Joonghyuk's voice rang out quietly through the battlefield. Yoo Joonghyuk raised his head along with the Black Heavenly Demon Sword. The footsteps of the constellations stopped for the first time. The power of transcendence was threatening the surroundings.

"In the next life, all of you will die."

The Black Heavenly Demon Sword's cry seemed to touch the sky. The expressions of the constellations stiffened as Yoo Joonghyuk concluded his words.

"You will die forever."

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* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)
* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)

Chapter 268: Ep. 50 - Dokja's Story, V

[Arrogant transcendent, what bullshit…!]

At the beginning of the showdown, Yoo Joonghyuk moved.

The scorn of the constellations and the overwhelming disadvantage in power weren't important to the present Yoo Joonghyuk. From the moment he entered the third round, he had been focused on only killing the enemies in front of him.

An aura spread from Yoo Joonghyuk and some of the historical-grade constellations in front murmured to themselves. However, most of the constellations still looked down on Yoo Joonghyuk.

No matter how transcendent, he was just a human. The constellations had no reason to lose in a situation where they had an overwhelming advantage in numbers.

This became the last thought of the General of Vanara.

[The exclusive skill 'Giant Body Transformation Lv. 6 is activated!]

Giant Body Transformation was used and Yoo Joonghyuk narrowed the distance to the constellations in an instant. Yoo Joonghyuk shot forward like a meteor.

By the time the General of Vanara realized the sword and hurriedly raised his huge double-edged sword, his head was already cut by the Black Heavenly Demon Sword and flying through the air.

[You dare…!]

The General of Vanara's eyes widened and he spoke in his true voice, even with his cut neck.

Yoo Joonghyuk cut the flying head in half using the Black Heavenly Demon Sword.

It was a ridiculous end.

The excessively concentrated magic power was melting Yoo Joonghyuk's blood. It was the result of invoking transcendence stage three to the limit. The maximum time he could stay in this state was 10 minutes. In these 10 minutes, Yoo Joonghyuk had to defeat everyone.

"Next."

The death of the General of Vanara was a great shock to the constellations. The constellations didn't disappear with the death of their incarnation bodies.

However, there was no one who wanted to lose their incarnation body in vain. A fatal death permanently damaged the constellations. All the constellations became stiff.

Yoo Joonghyuk utilized this short gap to attempt a second attack. The Black Heavenly Demon Sword left a dark trajectory as it moved and cut off the wings of a giant bird. The Thunder Eating Bird let out a loud cry. Then the constellations started to move.

[You!]

The Founder of Humanity's Primitive Spear aimed at Yoo Joonghyuk. It was a blow that would've turned any normal incarnation to powder.

However, Yoo Joonghyuk received this blow. The impact ruptured his right forearm muscle and the force pushed at his entire body. Blood poured from his mouth but Yoo Joonghyuk didn't lose focus.

[Excessive concentration has expanded the category of the attributes!]

[The exclusive attribute 'Ruler of Amusement' is activated!]

His concentration awakened the power of the character. All the incoming constellations became data and flowed into Yoo Joonghyuk's mind. At this moment, the world was a game to Yoo Joonghyuk. Yoo Joonghyuk avoided the attacks of the constellations with restrained movements and fought back using magic power.

[Kuaaack!]

The Founder of Humanity screamed as his fingers were cut by the Black Heavenly Demon Sword.

Yoo Joonghyuk's Black Heavenly Demon Sword let out a deafening roar as it dug into the gap.

Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship.

Destruction skill.

Breaking the Sky Meteor.

The sword rose from the ground to the heavens, stabbing the sky like a thunderbolt. The branches of the sword energy hide in the dark clouds and created thunder. The thunder poured from the night sky and struck the constellations like meteorites.

Dozens of thunderbolts fell from the sky and the incarnation bodies of the constellations were pierced. It was a blow containing the power of transcendence stage three.

[Kuaaah!]

Yoo Joonghyuk watched the constellations struggling with the pain and felt himself dying. The experiences of the third round went through his mind.

It was a short round. Even so, many things happened.

[The story 'One who Inherited the Name of the King' is crying out.]

As if responding to his feelings, the stories starting speaking. It was as if every story had its own will. Most of them weren't stories he had accumulated alone.

[The story 'Person who Opposes the Miracle' has begun.]

A story about returnees.

[The story 'Paradise of Despair' has begun.]

A story earned by preserving the abandoned paradise.

[The story 'One who Fought Against an Outer God' has begun.]

The story where he confronted the outer god.

[The story 'Ruler of the Industrial Complex' has begun.]

It was a story that he would've normally never achieved. It was a story that was unrelated to the current situation but it was a story related to someone else. It was a story that could never be achieved alone.

The stories started talking at the same time. It was as if they didn't want to finish the story here. Along with the bitter pain, blood poured from Yoo Joonghyuk's chest. He didn't even know how he obtained these wounds.

There were a few fallen incarnation bodies on the ground. The Supreme God of Light Surya saw it and spoke.

[Amazing. You already can't be called a human anymore, child.]

Yoo Joonghyuk's stories emitted a bright light like he was rebelling against the true voice.

[The story 'One Who Hunted the King of Disasters' is roaring.]

Yoo Joonghyuk was a transcendent. The stories were the unique parts making up the constellations. Just having stories didn't mean a person could be equal to the stars in the night sky. Even so, the current light pouring from Yoo Joonghyuk's body was brighter than any constellation in the place.

Yoo Joonghyuk looked at the stories flowing from his body. Some were known and some were unfamiliar. There was a story that couldn't be obtained again.

[The story 'Life and Death Companions' wants to continue.]

He couldn't help glancing at Yoo Sangah and the other party members. He also saw Kim Dokja on Lee Hyunsung's back.

Yoo Joonghyuk gripped the Black Heavenly Demon Sword that was slipping from his hands.

…He couldn't die. He couldn't die in a place like this. He used the last of his strength to point the trembling sword at Surya. Surya laughed as if the sight was interesting.

[However, it is only a human story.]

Surya released a bright light as he used the stories he accumulated over thousands of years. It was a status that couldn't be resisted. Yoo Joonghyuk's short history was shaking in front of those formidable years.

[Foolish humans who don't know that a god's power is so high.]

The sunlight that melted everything poured towards Yoo Joonghyuk.

The scene of the industrial complex being destroyed by the constellations. Incarnations died without being able to rebel. Some people who felt desperate at the sudden disaster appeared up close on the screen. The most horrifying thing was that a man who was covered in injuries and lost one arm was still fighting.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is furious!]

[The constellation 'Queen of the Darkest Spring' is sorry for the incarnation 'Yoo Joonghyuk'.]

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is pointing a finger to the cowardly constellations!]

[Many constellations are complaining about the constellations on the battlefield!]

There were countless indirect messages from the constellations and the dokkaebi of the bureau were listening to them. Among them was Bihyung, the dokkaebi in charge of the Demon King Selection.

[What the hell do you mean by this?]

He was rarely angry or agitated but now he had the same mind as the constellations in his channel.

[The second game is the victory of the Yoo Joonghyuk - Kim Dokja Industrial Complex! There was a time difference but there is nothing to worry about. Then why not announce the winner?!]

Shortly after the second game, Bihyung contacted the bureau's approval team directly. However, the only answer he got in return was 'it is being prepared'.

In the end, the last connection Bihyung had was Baram, the next great dokkaebi candidate. There was a crackling sound and Baram's face appeared on the screen.

[This is the decision of the bureau.]

The decision of the bureau. They were magic words.

'This is the bureau's decision'.

'This is the bureau's decision'.

[Baram. This is the main scenario.]

There were some things that even the bureau couldn't touch.

[Since when did the bureau interfere with the development of the main scenario? It is also a scenario where a giant story is involved… Baram, don't you know what will happen if you do this?]

Baram didn't answer.

[Please tell me. Who the hell did this? Is it one of your superiors?]

Bihyung glanced at Dokgak on the screen. It was clear that Dokgak was associated with this situation. However, this wasn't something that could be done by one or two senior dokkaebis. The silent Baram opened his mouth.

[…Are you doubting the 'great dokkaebis' right now?]

[Is there any other streamer who can do this beside them?]

[Bihyung, please wake up. Why would they do this?]

[I don't know. Perhaps some bribes were received.]

Baram frowned.

[The great dokkaebis aren't bound by such private understandings.]

[Then why is this happening? Baram, you must know something!]

[Bihyung.]

Bihyung instantly flinched. Baram's voice was furious. Bihyung thought there would be a strict scolding but unexpectedly, Baram just relaxed. It was as if he understood Bihyung. Baram on the screen was also watching the scenes of the Demon King Selection. Baram's lips slowly opened.

[Yes, maybe one of the great dokkaebis created this 'delay', as you said.]

[Then…]

[However, even a great dokkaebi can only do it up to there. It is impossible for a great dokkaebi to endure the storm that will be created from intervening in a scenario of this magnitude.]

[…So who did it?]

At this moment, there was a loud noise and the ceiling of the bureau shook. It sounded like a huge dragon passing by. It was the sound of 'probability' moving.

Bihyung's expression hardened.

[Don't tell me… something so ridiculous…]

[Do you understand now?]

The existence that could move this probability. There was only one such existence in the Star Stream. He didn't even know if it should be called an 'existence'.

Baram drove in the wedge. [The will of the Star Stream wanted this.]

[This is ridiculous!]

[There is no other way to explain it.]

Bihyung's words were taken away and he stared blankly at the screen. Kim Dokja's party was shown on the screen.

Originally, they should be excited about winning. Now they looked terrible as they lay on the ground.

It was a confrontation with constellations supported by the nebula. It was a ridiculous fight from the beginning but the party fought well. They played a game against powerful constellations and finally won the competition that gave them a giant story. Now they were going to be losers just because there wasn't a 'winner announcement'.

It was just because the Star Stream wanted this. Resentment mixed with anger filled Bihyung's eyes.

[Then… why does a streamer exist?]

It was the first time Bihyung felt helplessness since becoming a dokkaebi. His fingertips trembled as the parts of the scenario he touched fell.

[If we can't stop this nonsensical development… what are the streamers of this world worth?]

[Bihyung.]

Baram saw Bihyung's sad eyes and slowly spoke.

[Steamers are also part of the story.]

The desperate Bihyung stared at the screen. Yoo Joonghyuk was gradually melting in the dazzling sunlight. Now the story was leaving the streamer's hand.

Thus, there was only one thing to believe in.

[Many constellations are looking at one constellation.]

The man on Lee Hyunsung's back was shaking. On the screen, the man was slowly opening his eyes.

Chapter 269: Ep. 50 - Dokja's Story, VI

[Baat! Baaat! Baaaaat!]

My cheeks hurt.

[

Baaaaat!]

There was a bit more pain. I felt something violently shaking in my arms. I opened my eyes at the exact moment the earth let out a tremendous ringing sound. I reflexively raised my head and could see brilliant flashes of light. The sparks of probability in the sky were falling like lightning strikes all over the Demon Realm.

"Dokja-ssi?"

I woke up the moment I heard Yoo Sangah's voice. Like a disconnected current being reconnected, thoughts started to flow through my head.

There were broken incarnation bodies everywhere. No matter how I looked, this wasn't the Mythical Battlefield. All the fallen bodies were living human beings. The industrial complex being torn apart by the Thunder Eating Bird could be seen.

"Did the constellations come?"

Yoo Sangah, who was about to say something, wiped her bloody cheeks and nodded. "…Yes."

A system message was floating in the air while the party members were in tatters.

"The winner still hasn't been announced."

It was a situation I expected thanks to the last message of Yoo Joonghyuk in the library. However, I didn't expect the situation to be so serious.

"Kuk…"

Lee Hyunsung suffered a serious injury on his side and staggered. I quickly got off Lee Hyunsung's back and bought a few recovery items from the Dokkaebi Bag.

I gave the Great Return Pill to Lee Hyunsung and Yoo Sangah, who were the most seriously injured. Shin Yoosung had no wounds but her magic power was depleted, so I gave her an advanced magic power recovery medicine. Trauma medicine was given to Han Myungoh, Breaking the Sky Master and Jang Hayoung. It cost over 400,000 coins but now wasn't the time to worry about that.

"Ahjussi…"

Shin Yoosung drank the potion and looked up at me while leaning against the rock. I looked at Shin Yoosung for a moment before saying, "You should rest here. By the way…"

In a distance place, the deafening roar of the constellations was shaking the earth. I could tell the number exceeded 12 just by the 'status'. At this moment, I had an ominous feeling.

…The constellations were gathered so how could the party members flee to here?

"Yoo Joonghyuk…"

None of the party members answered. I looked around the battlefield as an explosion occurred. Everyone except for Yoo Joonghyuk was here. In addition, someone was fighting the constellations.

[The 'Fourth Wall' is shaking faintly.]

"That stupid bastard…"

"Ahjussi! No!" Shin Yoosung clung to my waist when I tried to run forward. "Ahjussi will die. You'll die there."

She was an always straightforward and brave child. Fear was deeply permeated in the child's eyes. Shin Yoosung burst into tears as I pulled away from her. In the saturated battlefield, the tears scattered like dust. Perhaps this child had seen it. It was the fear of a giant story that humans could never overcome.

"Please take care of Yoosung."

I left Shin Yoosung to Jang Hayoung who was in a good condition and activated Way of the Wind. I heard a voice calling out to me from behind but had no time to turn around.

I moved forward and the pressure of the 'status' bursting from the centre of the battlefield became stronger. It was a fearsome storm of magic that I had never experienced before. The centre definitely contained Yoo Joonghyuk.

「 Kim Dokja thought: Is there a way? 」

The pages of Ways of Survival flashed in my head.

「It isn't possible. 」

「That method is too unreasonable.」

I bit my lips. I predicted that this situation might happen. However, the time passed too quickly and I had been asleep for too long.

I was late. Yoo Joonghyuk was still far away and the wind wasn't on my side. I could buy a new skill from the Dokkaebi Bag but I can't guarantee its utilization.

In the end, I made a decision.

"I will invest three million coins into my strength, physique, agility and magic power."

[Your total stats have grown abnormally!]

[The coins you invested have allowed you to cross the stats limit of the scenario.]

[A fuller probability will release some of the stat constraints for this scenario.]

[The growth of the stats value compared to the invested coins will be randomly adjusted.]

A tremendous amount of sparks jumped from my body. It felt like my muscles were tearing and growing bigger. There was the feeling of my bone density changing and a terrible pain came over me.

"Cough…"

I had put it off until now due to the poor cost to value ratio but there was no other way.

[Your mind can't cope with your evolving incarnation body.]

[The exclusive skill 'Fourth Wall' is activated!]

[Your incarnation body is evolving to a new level!]

Since the early scenarios, the 'overall stats' didn't have a big influence on combat. It was because stories, stigmas and skills had much more influence.

In addition, since the number of coins per level after level 100 was exponentially larger, it was more advantageous to buy a skill using the same amount of coins. Now the situation was different.

[All your stats have exceeded 200!]

[Your incarnation body can handle a bigger 'status'.]

I needed a strong body, not a powerful skill.

[Your agility has reduced the air resistance.]

[Magic power is opening up the blocked bloodstream.]

A huge amount of coins was transforming my incarnation body.

[Your strength is causing an explosive change!]

The frequency of my footsteps and the speed at which the landscape passed in my vision changed drastically.

"Yoo Joonghyuk!"

Of course, it was impossible to surpass the constellations or transcendents. Still, it was enough to confront them for a while.

[Many constellations are envying your incarnation body.]

I crossed the wilderness at a tremendous speed and the centre of the battlefield finally entered my eyes. At the centre, I could see a dying person.

"You idiot! What are you doing?"

In front of Surya's radiant light, Yoo Joonghyuk was dying. I didn't know where his left arm had gone and steam was rising from his charred body. Even so, Yoo Joonghyuk was gripping the Black Heavenly Demon Sword without moving an inch. Yoo Joonghyuk's head moved slowly towards me. His voice wasn't heard, as if he had no strength to open his lips.

[The 'Fourth Wall' is greatly shaken.]

The words of the Mass Production Maker came to mind. The constellations were also just part of this great story. They were also lonely and had to do these things.

…Bullshit.

[Get lost!]

The Founder of Humanity stood in front of me and wielded the Primitive Spear.

[The exclusive skill 'Electrification' Lv. 12 (+2) has been activated.]

White lightning exploded from my fist and the battlefield filled with a blue light.

[Kuaaack!]

The confused constellations supported the thrown back Manu and raised their status. The magic power poured towards me like a tsunami. My strengthened body withstood the mighty power of the constellations.

The flesh of my fist cracked and blood flowed down but it was still bearable. The constellations blinked as the dust settled down. They didn't know I had this much power and were shocked.

[Stop him!]

A blue-white energy flew towards the constellations. In an instant, there were abrasions on my back and thighs as well as a long stab in my side.

"Yoo Joonghyuk!"

My cry didn't reach him properly. Yoo Joonghyuk had fallen to his knees and his life was now flickering. No magic power could be felt from him. Yoo Joonghyuk was dying.

I held my breath and then shouted with the greatest true voice possible. [Asmodeus!]

The true voice burst out and the constellations blocked their ears for a moment. The historical-grade constellations couldn't stop and tears poured from my eyes. I shouted again.

[If you are a demon king, keep your promise!]

The situation was so big that I didn't expect much. He was a shrewd guy and should know how dangerous it was to take my side right now. However, it was Asmodeus…

As if waiting, one star in the sky flashed. There was a storm coming in and something was descending.

[The demon king 'Devil of Lust and Wrath' has appeared in this world!]

A tremendous probability was flowing and a colossal presence was manifesting before my eyes as an incarnation body. A little girl surrounded by a dark aura raised her head.

It was the king of the Demon Realm who immediately subdued the transcendent Yoo Joonghyuk. Later, he would join one of the worst organizations in the world, the 'Seekers of the End'.

[D-Demon king!]

The 32nd demon king, Asmodeus started running wild.

[Ahahahahaha!]

He laughed and a huge rake appeared at the fingers of the demon king. Asmodeus' 'Bloody Grip' scraped through the area and tore at the constellations.

[Kuaaaack!]

[The mad demon king!]

[What the hell is this?]

The constellations turned their gaze towards me and I triggered Way of the Wind to snatch Yoo Joonghyuk.

[Chase him!]

The constellations started running but my strengthened incarnation body was a bit faster than them. I ran with all my strength while carrying Yoo Joonghyuk on my shoulder. "Wake up please."

Yoo Joonghyuk was barely breathing. The weight of his body was lighter than usual. He had suffered such severe pain that even the skeleton of his body seemed changed. I listened to his gradually fading heart beat and cried out, "Hey, don't mess around! You can recover! Do something!"

However, Yoo Joonghyuk didn't move. I called out to Biyoo and bought a few more Great Return Pills. My left hand supported his body while my right hand poured the pills into Yoo Joonghyuk's mouth.

No effect was visible. He didn't have the strength to swallow it. His breathing slowed and became distant. The tips of Yoo Joonghyuk's toes were breaking and his body was disappearing.

I used Way of the Wind to wrap around the debris and prevent them from escaping. Even so, I couldn't prevent the dim light from emerging from his heart.

I was well aware of this phenomenon. I had read the scene a few hundred times and had to know what it was.

「Yoo Joonghyuk had a thought.」

"Don't think about it."

「 This life ends here. 」

"Dammit! Don't think about it!"

Story fragments were falling from Yoo Joonghyuk's cheeks. I was scared of this story and slapped his cheek before crying out to the air.

"Shit! Don't go back! You jerk, leave him alone!"

[The sponsor of incarnation 'Yoo Joonghyuk' is looking at you.]

"You can still survive! This round isn't over! You can fight back against this guy! I can save you!"

Yoo Joonghyuk's sponsor was silent. This guy always did the same thing. He watched Yoo Joonghyuk suffering from death. He placed the soul of a hopelessly broken man back into the world line of the past.

[The stigma 'Regression Lv. 3' has been activated!]

It was cruel. Was this really how it ended? How did I get here? Would Yoo Joonghyuk really die here?

Then a single line emerged.

[Incarnation 'Yoo Joonghyuk' is looking at his sponsor.]

"…Yoo Joonghyuk?"

Yoo Joonghyuk, who became so ragged that his shape couldn't be recognized, stared at his sponsor with a single bloody eye. Sparks appeared around his disappearing body.

[Incarnation 'Yoo Joonghyuk' is resisting his sponsor.]

[All of the stories of incarnation 'Yoo Joonghyuk' is resisting death.]

This was something I had never seen in any round.

[The incarnation 'Yoo Joonghyuk' has refused to regress.]

Chapter 270: Ep. 50 - Dokja's Story, VII

Yoo Joonghyuk's entire body was trembling.

「…I can't die.」

「 I will never die here.」

Yoo Joonghyuk's desperate will was being conveyed through Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint.

"Hey, you…"

This Yoo Joonghyuk refused to 'regress'.

[The sponsor of incarnation 'Yoo Joonghyuk' is looking at his incarnation.]

Yoo Joonghyuk's sponsor was silent as this situation occurred for the first time. It was a mysterious silence. It seemed to be both angry and sad. Or perhaps there was no response. Not long after that, the gaze on Yoo Joonghyuk disappeared.

[The stigma 'Regression Lv. 3' has been cancelled.]

Crazy, something like this was possible. The light of the stigma disappeared and Yoo Joonghyuk once again sagged down. His barely opened eyes closed and his mouth was mumbling something. I felt his desperate will to live. It was Yoo Joonghyuk's unique commitment to somehow survive.

Yoo Joonghyuk's thoughts were heard in my head.

「 Break it down. So I can eat. 」

I pulled out another Great Return Pill, turned it to powder and poured it into his mouth. The stories of the fallen man slowly stopped collapsing.

"…It's fine."

Yoo Joonghyuk was betting everything into this round. He decided to forsake the premise that it was okay to fail a few times and to remain in this world. Perhaps he had lost consciousness but Yoo Joonghyuk didn't say anything else. Instead, the stories wrapped around Yoo Joonghyuk's body shone brightly.

[The story 'Life and Death Companions' wants to continue.]

Life and Death Companions. It was a story that didn't exist for Yoo Joonghyuk in the original novel.

「 "What is your relationship with Yoo Joonghyuk?"

"We are life and death companions. 」

It was at Chungmuro. It was clearly the conversation I had with Gong Pildu. I couldn't help laughing. Now we would really live together or die together.

I ran while holding on tightly to Yoo Joonghyuk. My party members shouting in the distance could be seen.

I felt a hot heat behind me. Together with a fierce wind, fireballs narrowly brushed over my head. The chasing constellations were already right behind me.

[Did you call the demon king? Do you know what you have done?]

The constellations roared as a formidable aura poured towards me.

[Stupid bastard. Now the 73rd Demon Realm will perish!]

I shouted at Lee Hyunsung in front of me instead of replying to them. "Lee Hyunsung-ssi!"

Yoo Joonghyuk's body flew through the air and Lee Hyunsung caught him. At the same time, I turned around and reflexively punched out. A running constellation collided with me and screamed.

Electrification struck the tail of the Scorpion Goddess and then Unbroken Faith slashed at the Thunder Eating Bird. The Blade of Faith absorbed power and shone brightly. Blood splashed and I unleashed with all the power of Electrification.

The number of constellations that followed me was seven. It was a number I couldn't afford by myself. The bigger problem was that the dark clouds in the air were thickening. Dark clouds flocked like a sinister omen and the stars shining towards the 73rd Demon Realm disappeared one by one.

In fact, this was why I didn't call Asmodeus until now. A series of dark lightning fell from the sky and the frightened constellations jumped back. Sparks flew in the air and the demon kings descended.

Now that Asmodeus was here, nothing was holding back the other demon kings. Unfortunately, the demon kings weren't on my side.

[The demon king 'Maker of Discord' has appeared in the Demon Realm!]

[The demon king 'Monarch who is a Philosopher about Corpses' has appeared in the Demon Realm!]

The summoning of the incarnation bodies alone seemed to surpass the other constellations. Now there was no one who could help me.

[The 73rd Demon Realm is responding to your story.]

The only thing I could believe in was the stories I had built.

"Everybody, step back! Maintain your strength as much as possible while I buy time!"

Then one of the party members went wild. There was a roaring sound from my side.

"Department Head-nim? What…"

Han Myungoh activated One-Legged Swift Runner and started running somewhere at a tremendous speed. It was the direction I came from. It was the place that contained Demon King Asmodeus.

[Ahahahahaha!]

Demon King Asmodeus laughed cheerfully. Arrows of light struck all over his body and blood flowed from his torn arm. However, only feelings of pleasure and joy could be seen on the face of the little girl.

[I'm happy! This is fun!]

Many constellations lost their incarnation bodies due to the Bloody Grip. However, there were still many constellations remaining.

The demon kings were basically existences equal to narrative-grade constellations. Normal constellations were unknown but there was no chance for Asmodeus to win against one of the Lokapala, Surya.

Surya opened his mouth like he couldn't understand. [I wonder why, Devil of Lust and Wrath.]

There was the sound of a giant drum bursting in the distance. Perhaps the constellations chasing the Demon King of Salvation were having the final showdown.

Surya couldn't understand it.

Why were these humans still resisting? Why was a demon king taking sides with a human?

Asmodeus smiled like he was slightly exhausted. Surya raised his left hand and the attacks of the constellations ceased.

[Asmodeus, why are you siding with trivial humans?]

[Siding… I'm not siding with anyone.] Asmodeus grinned while licking the blood on his hands. [It just seems fun.]

[…Fun?]

[You don't know. What is the story of the Demon King of Salvation?]

[I also saw it. It is a common story.]

Asmodeus made a big fuss at the words.

[Hahahaha! Surya! You must've lost your eyes from all the light pouring out! I told you before. If you want to enjoy the stories for a long time, take good care of your eyesight.]

[…I admit that the child is a good one among the new stars. However, it is a normal level in the Star Stream. He doesn't yet have a myth-grade story.]

Surya frowned as his status spread out.

Asmodeus was still laughing. [A myth-grade story… you have lived for a long time but you are still judging the stories by that?]

[It is only human history. No evaluation is needed.]

[All stories eventually depart from history.]

[…Asmodeus, you played around in the Gourmet Association and now you're saying this. Then do you want to keep going? You will eventually lose your incarnation body.]

[Well, I suppose. But before that…] The constellation was narrowing the distance one step at a time and Asmodeus suddenly opened his mouth. [By the way Surya, why are you obsessed with the Demon King of Salvation?]

[…Obsessed? What do you mean?]

[It isn't just you but the nebulae. Isn't that right?]

[It seems you are the one who is blind.]

[At best, it is human history as you said. Yet you and Vedas keep trying to recruit the Demon King of Salvation. You failed and now you're trying to kill him. This isn't exactly like a giant nebula.]

[…]

[At this point, I want to ask something. Why are you doing this?]

Surya had no words for a moment. There was a subtle emotion on his face. Surya hurriedly raised his right hand as if to hide his feelings. It was a sign for the constellations to attack. At this moment,

Asmodeus said, [Wait, ahaha… hahaha. I see. Surya…]

[…]

[You… I heard about what happened at the Gourmet Association.

Surya's raised hand stopped.

[The Demon King of Salvation is pursuing the 'last scenario'. That's why you hate him. Right?]

Surya's fingers trembled, showing his agitation. Asmodeus scoffed at the shaking.

[It is because you can't get the qualification of the end.]

A spear of light pierced Asmodeus' body. Asmodeus' lips held a deep ridicule as he was constantly pierced by spears of light.

Blood dripped down. The urgently implemented incarnation body was much weaker than usual. Asmodeus held the intestines that were flowing from his torn skin.

[…The human body is really uncomfortable.]

Asmodeus ignored the incoming constellations and looked up at the sky. Stars could be seen through the dark cloud. The light and darkness in the sky were competing against each other.

The strong existences surrounding the 73rd Demon Realm were moving. Asmodeus had lived for a long time but he hadn't seen something like this before.

Today, something tremendous was happening in the Demon Realm.

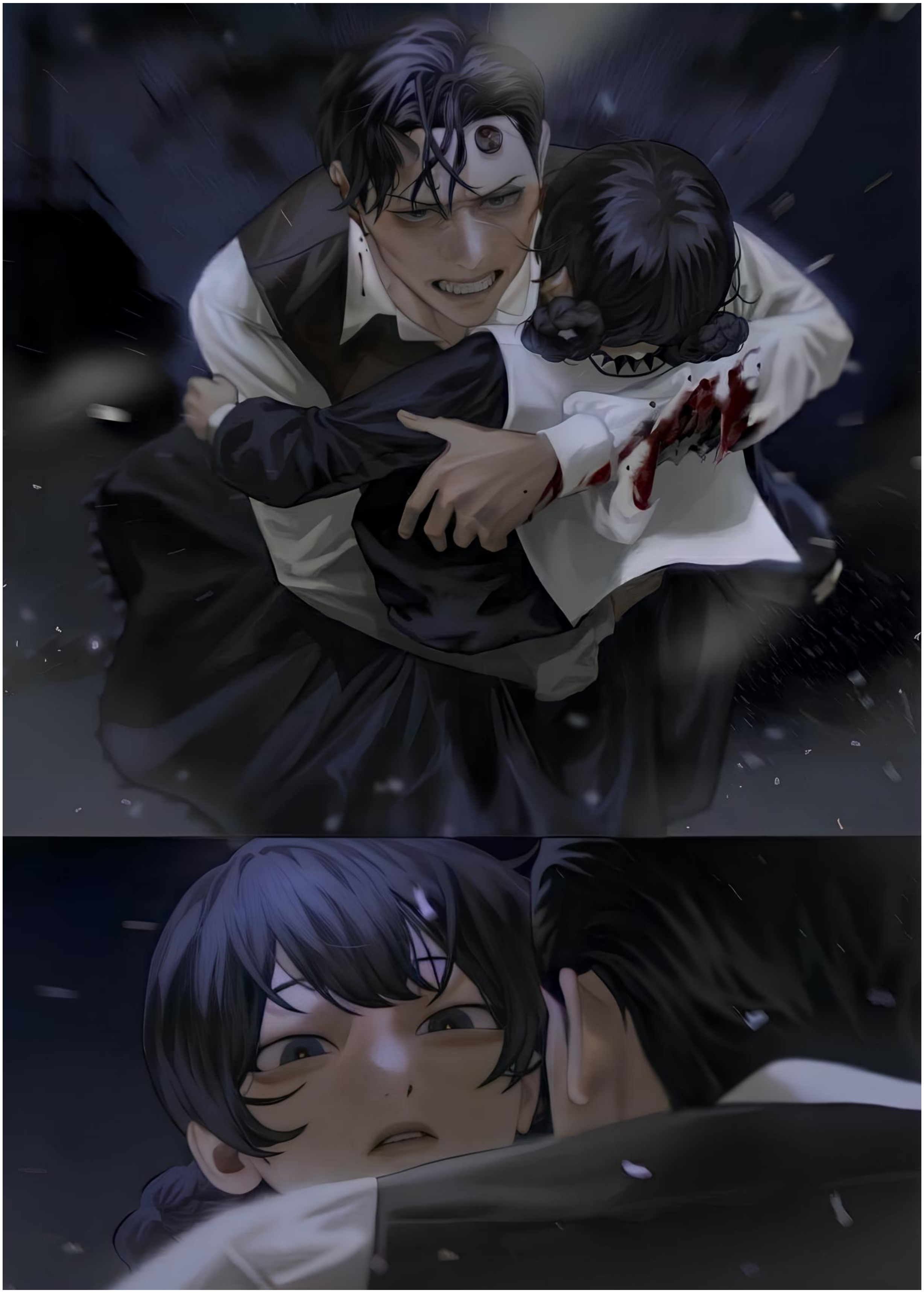
Surya's spear of light moved and the constellations poured magic power towards Asmodeus. The moment that Asmodeus' incarnation body was going to die.

Dudududududu!

A cloud of dust obscured the view of the constellation. The astonished constellations paused for a moment and someone embraced Asmodeus' small body. Even Asmodeus was surprised this time. He had lived for many years but had never been saved by anyone.

[You…?]

Han Myungoh was running while carrying him. One arm and a part of Han Myungoh's left arm had disappeared from the constellations' attacks.



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Asmodeus muttered with a bemused expression. [Why…]

He knew the identity of this person but Asmodeus couldn't understand why this person came here. Han Myungoh might be a member of his household but this loyalty…

Han Myungoh strongly hugged Asmodeus without answering. A blind and big heart could be felt. The emotions weren't directed at Asmodeus.

Asmodeus smiled as he was held in Han Myungoh's arms.

[Really, this scenario is truly interesting…]

"I'm sorry everyone. I think you have to come with me."

The moment Kim Dokja said, this, Lee Hyunsung was the first to stand up.

"I was waiting."

Yoo Sangah and the Breaking the Sky Master followed while the frightened Shin Yoosung clenched her fists. Osu, who was the size of a guinea pig, barked.

It was a humbling power but they were determined. Humans didn't back down in front of the 'status' of the constellations.

There was an explosion and the battle began. One blow broke bones, two blows caused a deep wound and three blows couldn't guarantee their life.

The demon kings were making things more and more chaotic. The demon kings flew through the air like released strings.

"Kuheeok!" It was Lee Hyunsung who flopped down first.

The chimera dragon screamed as its wings were broken.

Jang Hayoung sat down and watched all of it. "Ah, ahh. Ah…"

Jang Hayoung was overcome by overwhelming helplessness and couldn't move. The Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship that Jang Hayoung learnt was too weak. The techniques he learnt through the wall weren't enough to deal with the constellations.

Jang Hayoung held the place that was hit by the demon king and gazed at the fighting Kim Dokja.

The Demon King of Salvation he had long wanted to meet was struggling.

His ribs and right arm were broken. Jang Hayoung wanted to fight together. Only the stars in the sky were shining without mercy. There were so many stars so why wasn't anyone helping them?

[The exclusive skill 'Unidentified Wall' is activated!]

In fact, he had done it many times already. He sent messages several times to the modifiers Kim Dokja mentioned but there was no reply. Nevertheless, Jang Hayoung kept sending unanswered prayers to the constellations.

'Please, please just one person'.

[The Unidentified Wall asks, "Do you really want to help?]

The wall was slightly vibrating.

[The Unidentified Wall asks, "Do you really want to help?]

He nodded. 'I want to help. I can accept any price. Please'.

The next moment, numerous messages appeared in front of Jang Hayoung's eyes.

–Hello. Do you perhaps know Kim Dokja? He is looking for constellations…

–Hello constellation. You don't know me but I have to ask a favour… if Kim Dokja…

–Constellation, please help me. Kim Dokja is in danger.

–Please help. Please…

…

Jang Hayoung read the hundreds of messages that surfaced in front of him with a blank expression.

They were all messages from himself.

[There are currently 124 messages waiting to be sent.]

To be exact, they were messages he thought he had sent.

"W-Why…?"

Goosebumps covered his entire body. It was the reason why a reply didn't come from numerous constellations.

[The Unidentified Wall said, "I was told not to send it"]

"Who?"

[The Unidentified Wall says, "It is an existence higher than me."]

He didn't know who it was. However, Jang Hayoung could see what he had to do now. "Send them. Right now! Send all of them!"

The Unidentified Wall was silent for a moment.

[The Unidentified Wall is sighing. "Don't regret it."]

The next moment, his head was going to burst from the pain.

[124 messages have been sent.]

Like water being discharged from a damn, numerous messages were released from Jang Hayoung and flew through the sky. Time passed. One minute, two minutes… Jang Hayoung stared up at the sky without releasing the string of hope.

[The constellation 'One-Eyed Maitreya' has entered the channel.]

Then somebody answered. Similar to a meteor shower, the sound of people entering the channel didn't stop.

[The constellation 'Brash Swamp Predator' has entered the channel.]

[The constellation 'Seo Ae Il Pil' has entered the channel.]

[The constellation 'First Spiritualist of Joseon' has entered the channel.]

[The constellation 'Goryeo's First Sword' has entered the channel.]

[The constellation of a small planet has entered the channel.]

The distorted balance of the sky changed and Jang Hayoung listened to all the messages with joy and despair.

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' has entered the channel.]

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* Official novel illustration (canonical)

Chapter 271: Ep. 50 - Dokja's Story, VIII

I raised my head at the entrance of the constellations.

[Constellations who favour you are looking at you.]

All of them were constellations who had once sided with me.

[The constellation 'Seo Ae Il Pil' is looking at you.]

[The constellation 'First Spiritualist of Joseon' is looking at you.]

Among them were constellations of Earth.

[The constellation 'Goryeo's First Sword' is looking at you.]

There was also Cheok Jungyeong who I couldn't contact for a while. However, there was an even more welcome existence.

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' is looking at you.]

Secretive Plotter. I didn't know his exact identity. All I knew was that he favoured me and watched my scenarios.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is clasping both hands together gently.]

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is forming fists.]

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is grunting and looking at you.]

All four of my early constellations had now gathered.

[Your story is being created in the 73rd Demon Realm.]

All the gazes poured towards me and I felt like I had returned to the beginning of the story.

Surya spoke.

[Child, I know your expectations but they won't help you. The constellations are clever and won't make foolish choices like you humans.]

I saw my colleagues who were barely standing. My colleagues were centred around the fallen Yoo Joonghyuk.

Surya laughed. [None of them will want to be the enemy of a nebula…]

As soon as he spoke, an earthquake occurred between Surya and I. The ground quickly became damp and turned into a sticky swamp. In the swamp where I would be sucked in if I took a step, someone was waking up.

I immediately noticed who it was.

[The constellation 'Brash Swamp Predator' has appeared in the Demon Realm!]

The Brash Swamp Predator. He was a constellation of the Gourmet Association. He had fallen into debt and was dragged away by the Executive Branch.

It was a lizard that was over 30 metres. The ancient lizard that awakened from the swamp let out a resounding roar. The Breaking the Sky Master recognized the Brash Swamp Predator and growled.

If I was right, this time he wasn't my enemy.

I smiled and asked, "Have you come to pay off your debts?"

In the past, the Mass Production Maker had advised me: Don't make too many enemies.

[…I could've paid them back if you hadn't helped me!]

The giant lizard turned his head and showed hostility towards the constellations.

[I don't like them very much. That's why I came!]

The giant lizard finished the short conversation and rushed to the constellations. The constellations shouted at the monster who was running towards them.

The Brash Swamp Predator was a narrative-grade constellation. He was scary when he was an enemy but I couldn't feel reassured now that he was on the same side. The angry Surya cried out,

[Lackey of the Gourmet Association… aren't you afraid of the nebula?]

[Nebula? Hahahaha! Since when has the Gourmet Association cared for such a thing?]

Many members of the Gourmet Association were heretics of the Star Stream. They were those who practiced their will, regardless of whether they belonged to a nebula or not. The Brash Swamp Predator wasn't part of a nebula and was one of the most free-spirited in the Gourmet Association.

[Kuaaack!]

The giant lizard swung his tail and the surface of the ground split apart while fragments shot up. The Thunder Eating Bird and Mysterious Bird of the Nile rushed towards him. The huge monsters started to fight and the surroundings quickly became a mess. In the centre of the mess, Surya rose to the sky and looked down at me.

[One garbage doesn't change the result.]

Surya's light flooded towards me. It wasn't easy to avoid even if I used Way of the Wind and Electrification. I couldn't contend with a Lokapala but I didn't give up. My skin was torn and my bones were exposed. In the middle of this pain, I somehow tried to buy time.

My nerves were focused on the system message in the air.

[The winner of the second game will soon be announced.]

The winner of the game was decided. No matter how strong the presence that delayed the scenario, there was a limit. In other words, I only needed to buy time and we would win this game.

[Child, it won't work out as you wish.]

I could feel a lot of probability moving. It was a probability originally not allowed for this scenario. The probability offered by Vedas was moving. The balance in the sky changed and the scales of probability were leaning.

[Vedas' will has come here.]

A bright sun shone behind Surya. Sweat flowed as my body felt like it was melting. One, two, three, four… the light sources burnt the ground. I was unable to look at Surya since I would be blinded so I focused on his shadow.

[The story 'King of the Twelve Suns' is shining.]

This was Surya of Vedas. He was a king who united the twelve sun gods.

[Do you see the difference in status now?]

My exhausted party members fell down and groaned.

"U-Uhhhh…"

The Brash Swamp Predator struggled painfully and the only constellations looked up at Surya with awe. Surya was powerful but he became even more powerful when the 'Destruction Scenario' of Vedas ended. Surya, the sun god who absorbed all the power of Vivasvat and Savitr, became a monster who turned the Earth of the 265th round of Ways of Survival into a hell of fire.

Still, no matter how strong the enemy, I had to struggle.

[The stigma 'Song of the Sword Lv. 3' has been used.]

[Your sword is filled with the words left by the Duke of Loyalty and Warfare.]

「In the night, a god appeared in his dream and said, "You will win big if you do this. Otherwise, you will lose."」

It was a verse I heard when dealing with the lesser dragon.

[It is the stigma of a historical-grade constellation. You are using a petty trick.]

Thanks to the effect of the skill, it was like I wore sunglasses and could see the light source in front of me. As I recalled, this verse had the effect of telling the enemy's weakness through colour. The green showed the strong areas and the red showed the weak areas. I stared at Surya with my eyes wide open.

I stared and stared again. Cold sweat flowed down my back.

[Yes, what are you seeing?]

The smiling Surya was slowly approaching me.

[You can keep stealing stigmas. You might have risen to become a constellation but you were born human.]

Surya's whole body was green. I couldn't see any weaknesses.

[A human history can't transcend a god. There is no such thing in the Star Stream.]

I couldn't deal with Surya alone. It was impossible even with the Brash Swamp Predator's help. I threw my torn coat and spoke.

"…The balance of probability is tilted. This means I can put more weights on it."

[The balance won't tilt, no matter how comes.]

My story wasn't a myth. I wasn't a god or a hero. My story might be a common one in the Star Stream.

[Constellations in the night sky are making a decision.]

Even so, someone in this world was listening intently to my story.

"That remains to be seen! Come, Goryeo's First Sword!"

There were explosive sparks and a meteor fell through the dark clouds.

[The constellation 'Goryeo's First Sword' is responding to your call.]

A spectacular sword energy tore through the sky. It was the Three Sword Style I had previously seen.

[Who called me, Cheok Jungyeong?}

The sword struck like a thunderbolt and deeply wounded one of Surya's suns. Along with the blinding explosion, Surya's voice was heard.

[A trivial historical-grade constellation dares…!]

A hot flash flooded towards the ground and something thumped against the ground, sending me and my colleagues back. Once I came to my senses, I was in the arms of a man. In terms of size, he was no smaller than the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint.

[It has been a long time, Descendant.]

The magnificent sight of Goryeo's First Sword was in front of me.

"It's been a long time, old man. Your status has changed."

The historical-grade Cheok Jungyeong was now narrative-grade.

[It is all thanks to you. Several things happened.]

I had expected it. Cheok Jungyeong had joined in the fight against the outer god. He would've gained a powerful story and risen to a higher level.

[The debt can finally be repaid.]

Cheok Jungyeong stared up at the sky and the indirect messages of the constellations followed.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is murmuring to himself in anger.]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is started gloomily.]

Perhaps the other constellations also wanted to come here. However, there were constraints on probability and they couldn't move in front of the nebula's eyes.

In particular, Uriel belonged to Eden and the problem was more complicated. If she did something wrong, a great war between good and evil might occur…

I wasn't disappointed despite not receiving help from Uriel.

"It's coming."

Surya's beams of light were coming in waves.

[…I knew that the gods on the Indian side don't play around but they are truly monsters.]

Cheok Jungyeong protected me and cut down the waves of light. However, Cheok Jungyeong's blade was slightly corroded.

[I might be able to cut the great mountain and the sea but I haven't cut the sun yet. If I knew there was such a monster, I would've brought 'Ye'.]

'Ye' was probably the sun hunter in Chinese mythology. He seemed to be an acquaintance of Cheok Jungyeong. Even so, Ye wouldn't be able to deal with Surya, a constellation with the constitution of an 'emperor'.

[I'll deal with you!]

The Founder of Humanity rushed towards Cheok Jungyeong. The great men fought and the surrounding area was devastated by the sword energy.

[The 73rd Demon Realm is snooping around your story.]

Then something flowed from my chest up towards the sky. They were the 'sentences' I obtained from the last game. Surya shouted with a thunderous voice.

[What are you doing? There is no time left! Kill them quickly!]

These sentences were materials that made up the giant story. Finally, the giant story of this world started to fluctuate.

[The demon king 'Maker of Discord' is showing hostility towards you.]

The passive demon kings finally started moving. The heat sent from the Maker of Discord blew me through the air and I felt the pain of my entire body tearing apart.

I had two allies but the battlefield was outrageously disadvantageous. The demon kings released their strength and the scales of probability once again creaked.

I needed the help of more people but who could deal with these powerful demon kings? I thought hard but couldn't figure out a constellation who would help. Suddenly, the approaching demon kings slowed down.

"Fire with full force!"

There was the sound of cannon fire along with a familiar girl's voice.

"Ahjussi! It's me!"

[The constellation 'Maritime War God' is looking at you.]

"I'm sorry I'm late!"

On the moat in a distant part of the industrial complex, Lee Jihye's ghost fleet was firing towards this side. The indirect messages of the angry demon kings filled the air. Two demon kings turned towards Lee Jihye.

"Jihye!"

It was good that she came to help but it was unreasonable with only Lee Jihye. Her opponents were two demon kings. If she did something reckless, she would be killed immediately.

"Run away!"

I quickly moved but it wasn't easy due to all the injuries I had suffered. The demon kings were entering Lee Jihye's vicinity. This couldn't continue. This… if I used Way of the Wind…

Then someone grabbed my shoulder. "Dokja-ssi, doing things alone again… I told you not to be like this."

Was it because I had been burnt by Surya's light for too long? I couldn't see the woman's face properly. However, I knew who she was from her voice alone.

"I'm late because I lost the coin toss. Don't be too upset."

The woman walked towards the demon kings.

"Wait a minute! Heewon-ssi!"

Jung Heewon was strong. She probably became stronger after doing the personal scenarios. Nevertheless, it was too unreasonable for her to deal with a demon king. Even if she used Judgment Time against the demon king…

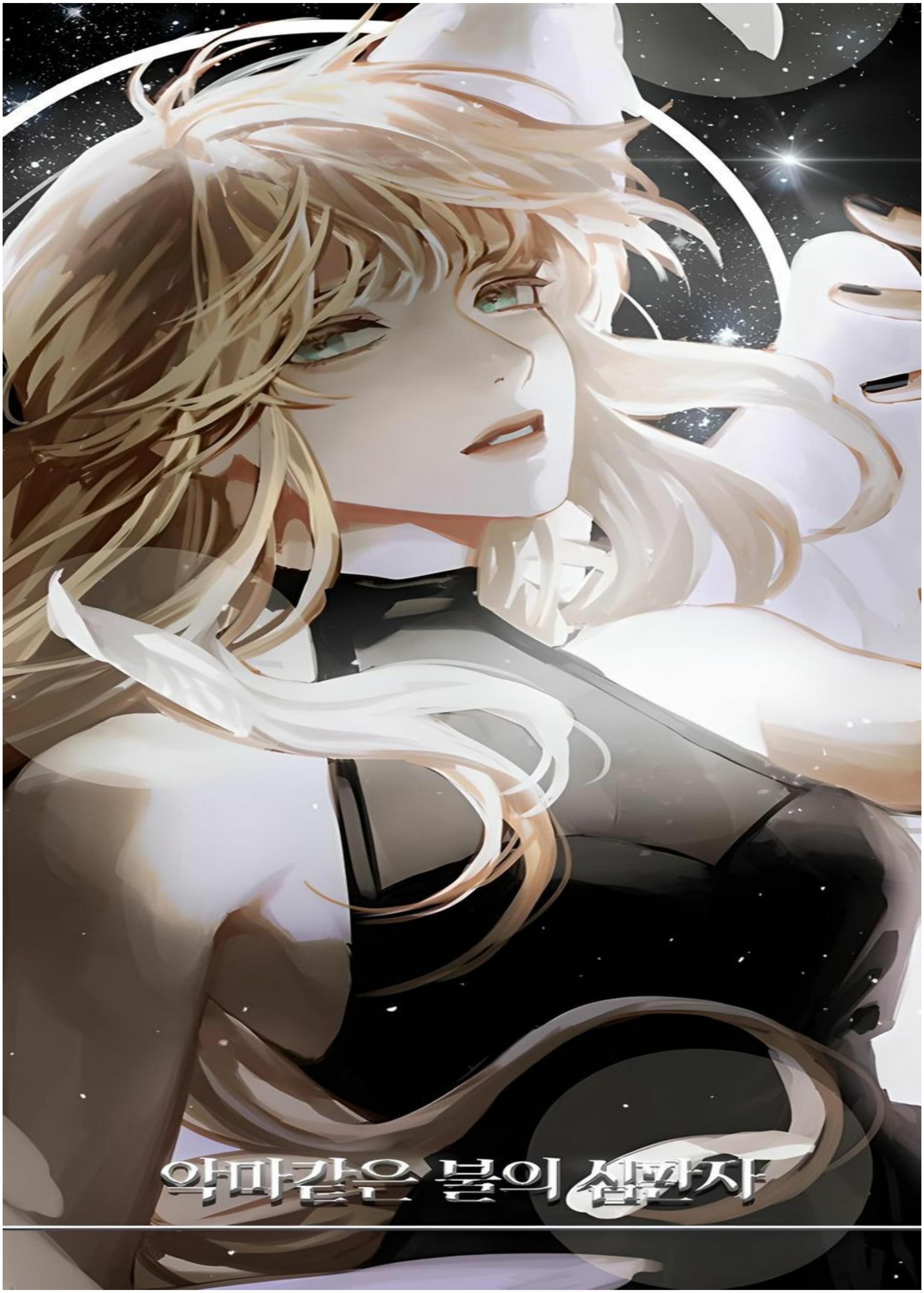
"I know what you're thinking but don't worry."

Was I mistaken? Angelic wings seemed to overlap on her back.

"It is because I'm not fighting."

It was a huge 'status' I had never felt before. The demon king rushing towards Lee Jihye looked over with an astonished expression. The power of the constellation descended towards Jung Heewon, covering the entire Demon Realm and turning it silver for a moment.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' has appeared in the 73rd Demon Realm.]


악마같은 불의 심판자

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* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)

Chapter 272: Ep. 51 - Giant Story, I

Archangel Uriel had appeared in the 73rd Demon Realm. In the latter half of the original novel, Uriel had descended directly in an incarnation body. However, now it was only the 25th scenario.

The confused mutters of the demon kings and constellations could be heard.

[W-What ridiculous…]

The transparent shape of Uriel appeared behind Jung Heewon, who had closed her eyes. Along with a splendid aura, Uriel's long golden hair waved in the air.

The balance of probability was leaning again. The completely out of equilibrium balance was gradually being restored with the appearance of Uriel. No, now it felt like this side was becoming heavier.

The even more surprising thing wasn't Uriel's power. All fights on the battlefield ceased. Surya watched with tense eyes while all the fighting constellations stopped. The descent of an archangel was also a tremendous event for the constellations.

The first one to speak with a demon king with an owl's face who was holding a burning sword. [Archangel! You dare… you dare appear here?]

I knew who he was. Maker of Discord. The demon king of the 63rd Demon Realm, Andras. He had cursed Han Sooyoung who once killed his subordinate.

Then the demon king beside him also opened his mouth. [D-D-Do you want to be a corpse, archangel?]

A skeleton wearing a crown and green armour. The Monarch who is a Philosopher about Corpses. He was the demon king of the 54th Demon realm, Murmur.

They might be lower ranked demon kings but they were both stronger than me. Even so, there was a strange feeling in the expressions of these two strong existences. It was fear.

After her descent, Uriel slowly opened her eyes. Her stunning emerald eyes took in the world and the colour of the world changed. I felt like my heart was frozen despite not even making eye contact with her.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is looking at the 73rd Demon Realm.]

The archangel's gaze implied 'destruction'. It was a gaze that looked at the last mountain of the world for the sake of purifying the world. The 73rd Demon Realm trembled at her gaze.

[■■. Hasn't it been a while?]

The two demon kings took a few steps back. Jung Heewon's mouth curved subtly.

[You… didn't I previously tell you not to carry that blade before me? I'm annoyed because of the overlapping characteristics.]

At the words, Andras slightly lowered the burning sword. Andras' owl eyes blinked rapidly and Murmur's skeletal jaw shook violently. It was Murmur who stepped forward first.

[Foolish archangel! Do you know what your action means? Or… has Eden decided to intervene in the selection…]

[■. I came on my own.]

I was reminded of Uriel's setting. I had forgotten due to Uriel's kindness towards me but she was one of the most fearsome archangels of Eden.

The Demon-like Judge of Fire. She was crueler than any archangel and slaughtered the most demons. She raised her hand towards the air and a white flame sword appeared. In front of her sword, all flames extinguished like a tribute.

It was the sword containing the flames of hell. This was Uriel's star relic. The moment she pulled out her sword, the demon kings made an urgent expression.

[Did you forget the agreement?]

[Eat ■. ■ ■■ like you.]

[What?]

[Ah, ■ hit. The ■ filtering…]

The archangels of Eden had their own filtering in order to preserve the dignity of their nebula. Then Uriel glanced at me.

[Kim Dokja?]

Did I look too nervous? Uriel smiled awkwardly at me.

[…Ah, hello?]

It was an embarrassing and awkward greeting compared to her former appearance.

[Many constellations are speechless.]

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is pointing out that it doesn't match.]

The demon kings, who had just been threatened, watched with an absurd expression. I regained my senses and bowed. "It has been a while, Uriel."

[Yes!]

Uriel laughed.

[You are loved by an archangel!]

[You have acquired a new story!]

[The story 'Person Who is Loved by an Archangel' has been acquired!]

Maybe she thought I was afraid and bombarded me with indirect messages filled with caring. Frankly, I was a bit impressed. There were a few constellations who favoured me so far. Even so, there was no one who helped me as much as Uriel.

I didn't do anything for her. I was always the one on the receiving end. Even so, Uriel came here today for me.

Uriel raised Jung Heewon's arms and exclaimed triumphantly. [Don't worry Kim Dokja! I'll kill them all for you!]

I knew this was a performance. This was the Demon Realm. It was obvious that something would happen if an archangel exerted their power here. Nevertheless, for Uriel to say so…

"…Uriel?"

Kwaaaaaaah!

"Wait a minute! Uriel!"

Hell flames rose from Uriel's sword and continuously soared towards the sky. This was the true Hell Flames Ignition. It was the real power of Uriel that could turn the world into a sea of flames with one blow.

[T-The archangel is crazy! Run away!]

[Completely crazy!]

The freaked out constellations started to flee. I didn't think Uriel would exert her real power. The hiding Dokgak finally appeared.

[W-Wait a minute. Archangel, please calm down!]

His cunning face was flushed. The scenario was delayed until the announcement of the winner and now…

Uriel spoke like she had read my mind.

[■.]

[Y-Yes?]

[Scenario ■! Dokkaebi ■ck, ■ guys.]

Uriel had a really angry expression. The sky of the Demon Realm was howling from her rage. The moment that the archangel's sword was going to touch the ground.

[The demon king 'Immeasurable Austerity' is furious.]

The black magic power in the sky was raging wildly.

[The demon king 'Ruler of the East Hell' is staring at the archangel.]

[The demon king 'Devil of Principles' is raising his status.]

[The demon king 'Black Mane Lion' is heading towards Eden.]

The fearsome and highly ranked demon kings appeared one by one in the channel. Dammit, there was going to be a war in the Demon Realm. However, the demon kings weren't the only ones who appeared.

[The constellation 'Guardian of Youths and Travel' has entered the channel.]

[The constellation 'Lily Blooming in Aquarius' has entered the channel.]

[The constellation 'Commander of the Red Cosmos' has entered the channel.]

The highest level constellations who could make everyone nervous just by appearing. The major constellations of Eden entered the channel and the volume of the channel grew drastically. Biyoo trembled like it was painful.

[The constellation 'Scribe of Heaven' is watching the 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' with severe eyes.]

Uriel's sword trembled. It felt like time had frozen. All the demon kings and archangels were concentrating on Uriel's sword. The future of the Demon Realm and Eden depended on the direction of this sword.

[The demon kings of the Demon Realm and the archangels of Eden have opened an emergency meeting.]

[All this time, all demon kings and archangels in the scenario will be urgently summoned.]

There was the sound of a great probability moving and Uriel's sword disappeared in the air.

Jung Heewon's body shook as the energy of the archangel left the Demon Realm. Uriel glanced at me with a light smile.

[I wanted to help you until the end.]

In hindsight, I realized Uriel's intentions.

[T-This! This can't be!]

It wasn't just Uriel who disappeared. The demon kings who descended slowly disappeared in the sparks of probability. Uriel sacrificed herself to tie up the hands and feet of all the demon kings here.

[…It is amazing.] Cheok Jungyeong muttered to himself with admiration. [A majestic archangel making such a great sacrifice for you…]

I could easily predict the great punishment Uriel would face. An archangel who broke the convention of the Good-Evil War with her own will. She would probably receive harsh sanctions from Eden.

[Please win, Kim Dokja.]

I reached out to the disappearing Uriel but she had already scattered into ashes. I quickly embraced the fallen Jung Heewon. Jung Heewon had just taken on Uriel's status and fell asleep with an exhausted face.

I raised my head as I felt pressure from the sky and saw Surya watching everything.

[My judgment was wrong. I didn't think you were a constellation who could call an archangel here.]

Thanks to Uriel, there was no need to worry about the participation of the demon kings. However, there was something worse.

A more serious light appeared in the eyes of the silent Surya. The same was true for King Oedipus and Manu who were guarding the left and right of Surya.

[From now on, I will be sincere.]

Surya's new energy shot through the sky. The surrounding air changed and a huge wind pressure hit the area. After a while…

"W-What is that?"

My party members approached me one by one. The first one to speak was the weary Jang Hayoung. "When will this hell end… what the hell is that?"

Beyond the radiant sun, something was flying through the distant universe. Something was ripping through the air. It was like the sound of meteorites colliding.

I looked closely and a huge carriage was flying towards this place. Whenever the gigantic golden mare accelerated, the entire Demon Realm shook like it was going to burst.

"…A carriage?"

Could this thing be called a carriage? No, should it be called a locomotive? No words fit. The only thing certain was that the object that was a size that couldn't be understood with common sense was heading towards this direction. It would be a disaster for this world.

Yoo Sangah opened her mouth. "Surya's chariot. According to legend, it is over 130,000 kilometres in length…"

"130,000? Does that make sense?"

Jang Hayoung asked and Yoo Sangah shook her head. "…That's why it's a myth."

The Indian myths claimed that giant turtles and elephants held up the earth. Thus, it wasn't strange if a locomotive of such a huge scale appeared. The problem was that we had to deal with that disaster.

[You have watched a part of the giant story, Vedas.]

[Your story comprehension has increased.]

…Was this the 'sincerity' mentioned by Surya? I admired the 'status' that caused chills to go through my body. I felt overwhelming despair just because it approached this side. I had only watched 'some' of it but this strength was different from an ordinary 'story'. It was the reason why I had to get a giant story.

[Shit, run!]

Some constellations were already hiding from the rushing carriage. There were no constellations who would be safe after being hit by it.

Cheok Jungyeong muttered, [Things are really difficult. He seems to truly want to destroy this world.]

"…Are you scared?"

[No, it's interesting.]

Cheok Jungyeong laughed like he was truly having fun. The moment I tried to say something to my party members, someone stood beside me. It wasn't Cheok Jungyeong or a constellation.

"…You woke up?"

I looked over and saw Yoo Joonghyuk standing up with the Black Heavenly Demon Sword.

[The character 'Yoo Joonghyuk' has used Recovery Lv. 10!]

Yoo Joonghyuk's body had finally healed to the point where he could use Recovery. The last of Yoo Joonghyuk's vitality was burning on the dark sword. The mouth and vocal cords were still slow to recover so Yoo Joonghyuk didn't speak. Instead, I heard Yoo Joonghyuk's thoughts through Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint.

「Kim Dokja.」

"Yes."

Perhaps this would be the last fight in the Demon Realm.

[The 73rd Demon Realm is focused on your choice.]

This time, I couldn't guarantee anything. Someone here could die. Maybe Yoo Joonghyuk and I would die. Nevertheless, I declared, "Let's go."

Yoo Sangah and Lee Hyunsung nodded while Shin Yoosung climbed onto the chimera dragon. Lee Jihye looked at the sky from the moat and also nodded.

There were no longer any constellations to help us. Now there were only humans here. This didn't mean it was a fight with no chance of winning. It was because I had already bought enough time thanks to Uriel.

[The 73rd Demon Realm is responding to your choice.]

Perhaps it was a mistake for Surya to show his sincerity. In the face of the coming calamity, we wouldn't be the only ones who would come to an end. Just like First Murim in the Destruction Scenario, the 73rd Demon Realm approached the time of choice.

[Giant Story of the 73rd Demon Realm is germinating.]

There was no world that wanted its master to be the one that destroyed itself.

[The 73rd Demon Realm has chosen its master.]

The perplexed dokkaebis and constellations let out exclamations at this message. However, I didn't hear any of them. It was because now I wasn't listening to the story, I was talking to the story.

[Your 'giant story' has started talking.]

Chapter 273: Ep. 51 - Giant Story, II

Surya floated in the air and looked down at the ground with a complicated gaze.

The 73rd Demon Realm was surrounded by a bright light as sentences were woven into one being.

It was the sight of the world choosing its master before the enormous destruction flying from the universe.

Surya muttered, [It is only the 25th scenario yet a giant story has been obtained… There is such a thing in the Star Stream.]

Surya had lived for a long time but he couldn't come up with a name. There was Heracles of Olympus but he was a half-god, not a pure human. King Oedipus exclaimed, [Surya, it's fine. It is still germinating and you can crush it!]

The 'giant story' was unlike any other story. It was the sum total of numerous tales and a story that guaranteed a tremendous probability by itself. However, it might be a giant story but it was only beginning. The Demon King of

Salvation was just a superficial being who fortunately rose to the status of a constellation.

Nevertheless, why couldn't Surya easily feel confident?

[Surya, what's wrong with you? Let's finish it…]

All giant stories were the 'beginning of the end'. The story that headed towards the end of this epic scenario. Even so, getting a giant story didn't mean that everyone would get the 'qualification of the end'. Some giant stories were connected with ■■ but others didn't go near the vicinity of ■■ before disappearing.

–Surya, it is because you can't get the qualification of the end.

He didn't forget Asmodeus' words. In his tranquil rage, a message entered Surya's ears.

[A new scenario has been given to you!]

[You will be the destruction of the 73rd Demon Realm.]

Surya frowned at the undesirable role assignment.

'The Star Stream. What do you want from this old body?'

He lost one of his 12 suns to Cheok Jungyeong and wasted a great deal of energy against Asmodeus. In addition, he had exhausted most of the probability given to him.

[Surya. You don't have to go by the book. I have an idea. There is a way to subdue them without fighting.]

Surya frowned.

[Oedipus. Are you going to use a despicable trick again? Against humans?]

[T-That isn't it…]

[I am the Supreme God of Light, Surya.]

The great sentences of Vedas were shining in Surya's halo.

[Even if I can't use my full strength, I will never lose to humans.]

Oedipus shut his mouth in front of the overwhelming 'status'. Surya raised his hand and the paused carriage started the violent charge again.

* * *

The locomotive made a deafening sound as it crashed through the atmosphere. Red and blue flames sparked from the head. The first one to speak was Yoo Joonghyuk. "It doesn't seem like 135,000 kilometres."

If a train of that size really appeared, it would seem like a giant planet was falling. Cheok Jungyeong told me, [His words are correct. It is around 30 kilometers long. Still, that is enough to destroy this place. Demon King of Salvation, what happened to the giant story?]

"It has just started talking. The sentences are slow to gather."

The giant story of the 73rd Demon Realm was safely obtained but things weren't over just by receiving it.

"It needs more time to work properly. We have to slow down the train."

Perhaps this 'train' was all that the present Surya could mobilize. There was a chance for us if we managed to block that train. I looked back and saw Cheok Jungyeong already prepared to jump forward. "Please, Goryeo's First Sword."

[Believe in me.]

Cheok Jungyeong shot forward towards the sky. Yoo Joonghyuk and I chased after him and the rest of the group followed on Shin Yoosung's chimera dragon. The Thunder Eating Bird and Mysterious Bird of the Nile flew to interfere with us but the Brash Swamp Predator bit at their wings.

*

[Leave these guys to me!]

The closer we got to the head of the train, the more I realized the enormous scale of Vedas. The width of the head of the train was a few hundreds metres and it was at the level of an outer god.

[Haaaaaap!]

Cheok Jungyeong shouted and showed his Three Sword Style.

Two Swords Style, Two Sword Mountain Chop.

Cheok Jungyeong's slash that cut through a mountain hit the train. The head of the train met Cheok Jungyeong's status and let out a strange sound. It deviated from its course but the speed of the train didn't slow.

In the formidable heat, it was Cheok Jungyeong's sword slash that was melted away. However, Cheok Jungyeong didn't stop.

Three Swords Style, Three Sword Ocean Chop.

A strike that cut the sea. It felt like there was a tsunami and the speed of the train was reduced to a slight degree. The biggest achievement was the explosion to the lead car, creating an internal access point.

[It will be easier to move inside! I will slow it down from outside!]

Cheok Jungyeong emitted a strong magic power from the head of the train. Still, it was hard for Cheok Jungyeong to deal with an object of this speed alone. "I'll help you ahjussi!"

Shin Yoosung's chimera dragon moved to the head of the train with Cheok Jungyeong. The second-grade monster, the chimera dragon created intense wind pressure and the speed of the train was further reduced. Cheok Jungyeong cried out, [I have somehow bought 20 minutes. Surya will be in the car at the end. Knock him down and this story will disappear! Go!]

We nodded and entered the interior of the train. The train looked like a subway built for a giant. We adapted to the inertia to a certain extent and pressed the button to go to the next compartment of the train.

[The door won't open.]

[This train is only available to the constellations of Vedas.]

Yoo Joonghyuk didn't hesitate to activate the Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship and hit the door. There was a dent in the door but it didn't open.

"…Amazing'.

Unlike Cheok Jungyeong's expectations, the train's internal strength was formidable. It wouldn't be hard to break if Yoo Joonghyuk and I were in good shape but the train was 30 kilometers long. In other words, we had to consider the distribution of power.

Then the first sentence of the giant story was heard.

「The story started on the subway.」

Sparks surged and my stories were released into the air. I felt waves surging from a distant place. It was the sign of a very old story. I looked back and the party members seemed to be feeling something similar.

[The first story of your 'giant story' has begun.]

Yoo Joonghyuk, Lee Hyunsung and Yoo Sangah looked at me. The sparks that flowed like the tide was transforming the scenery around us. Lee Hyunsung murmured with astonishment, "T-This…"

Every giant story was a different story. Some involved the birth of a hero while others told the birth of a world. Our story wasn't a hero's biography or a creation story. This story was our survival record.

The number '3807' was on the back door of the train. I looked around and sighed. "…It is the subway."

All stories invoked Stage Transformation when the place or person involved in the story collided.

–The 3807 car of the 3434 Bulgwang train.

It was where Yoo Sangah and Lee Hyunsung became my colleagues and where I met Yoo Joonghyuk.

All of our stories started here. Lee Hyunsung's fists were clenched as he opened his mouth with a tense expression. "I remember that time."

"It isn't a good memory but…"

Yoo Sangah was watching me with a faint smile.

"Even so, I often think about it."

It wasn't a memory I could happily recall. Someone's death and the hell of an absurd scenario. It wasn't a memory I could feel nostalgic about but it was a history that we survived. Lee Hyunsung smiled and placed his hand on the door. "I think I can do it somehow."

「 There was a soldier who wanted to be righteous. 」

Eventually, everything became a story. It was hard, sad and even something I wanted to forget. After all, everything was a story.

"Haaaaaap!"

I didn't expect it would be comforting for us now. There was only one thing we could know.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is watching your party.]

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' is listening to your story.]

In a world where sadness and joy were useless, we had to continue the story. The door, which didn't open to Yoo Joonghyuk's Breaking the Sky

Swordsmanship, started to open at Lee Hyunsung's power. The giant story dwelling in Lee Hyunsung's body started exerting its strength.

[The character 'Lee Hyunsung' has used the stigma 'Great Mountain Push Lv. 10'.]

When I thought about it, Lee Hyunsung was the one who opened the door to escape.

"Go. Quickly!"

Lee Hyunsung opened the gap and our party ran. Nevertheless, it was only one door and the train was still long. This time, it was Yoo Joonghyuk who came forward.

"I will break through next."

I suddenly remembered a long time ago. The regressor who annihilated the other incarnations on the train and rushed forward like a tank was now in front of me.

「 There was the strongest and loneliest man in the world. 」

Yoo Joonghyuk put away his sword and concentrated all his magic power on his fist. Then he slammed his bare fist into the door. The door of the car, which was unharmed before the sword, was torn apart by his bare hands.

This was the effect of Stage Transformation. It was unfortunate for Surya that his main story was this 'train'.

"Dokja-ssi! I don't think we need to break this car!" Yoo Sangah figured something out and yelled. Just like when I found the opening device, Yoo Sangah found a way to open the car door without force.

「 There was also a woman who hid herself for others. 」

One car, another car. We kept moving forward. It was as if we were living history again. There was the sound of hammering from the outside of the train. Lee Jihye was also struggling to reduce the speed of the train.

「The sword demon wounded after losing a relationship was met.」

The chimera dragon's roar was heard. In my arms, Biyoo raised her head and looked at the head of the train. To be exact, it was in Shin Yoosung's direction.

「A child born in the gap between past and future wept. 」

The next moment, the chimera dragon let out a formidable roar. The train tilted and the speed of the train was further reduced. I didn't know but I thought Biyoo might've given something to Shin Yoosung here.

"We aren't halfway yet. We have to hurry."

As Yoo Joonghyuk stated, we were still far away from the end of the train. More than 10 minutes had already passed. The speed might be reduced but the industrial complex would be completely destroyed at this pace. To make matters worse, we faced a challenge when we reached the next car.

A ray of light shot towards us. Lee Hyunsung blocked it for me and held his shoulder.

[You can't go any further.]

'Founder of Humanity' Manu and several other constellations were waiting there. Yoo Joonghyuk directly used Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship against them but it wasn't enough to break through the constellations on the defense. They knew they had to drag out time here.

I was going to use the magic power I had saved when the ceiling of the train started to be squeezed. Something was destroying the train with an immense magic power from outside.

[W-What… what's going on?]

It was at least a narrative-grade constellation. They couldn't destroy the shell of the train unless they had the power to match Cheok Jungyeong.

"Mooooove!"

Then Jang Hayoung's voice was heard outside the train. "Kim Dokja! They came! They came!"

The next moment, the entire ceiling was torn off and two beings appeared with Jang Hayoung.

[The constellation of a small planet is looking at you.]

It was a small person filled with a brilliant blue-white energy and a huge woman releasing a blue aura. Funnily enough, my vision seemed to blur for a moment. "Where is my disciple?"

「There was the strongest small person in the world as a teacher.」

"It seems that we're a bit late."

「The world of the strongest giant was saved.」

They were existences with enough power as Cheok Jungyeong who could help us.

[Transcendent…!]

In front of Manu, the two transcendents of First Murim descended. The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint, Namgung Minyoung. The Paradox Baekchung, Kyrgios Rodgraim.

Namgung Minyoung glanced at us and said, "Do it properly until the end. Otherwise, I'll kick your ass."

Kyrgios stared at me and declared, "You will pay the price for lying to me. I won't allow your death until then."

Kyrgios and the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint fired their skills at the door to the next car. The energy of Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship and Electrification combined and caused a formidable wind pressure to rise.

The constellations shrank back at their momentum. The fearsome waves of magic power advanced and crushed the doors blocking our way. It was a straight road prepared for a short period of time. Yoo Joonghyuk met my gaze and we started running.

[The exclusive skill 'Way of the Wind Lv. 11 (+1) is activated!]

Way of the Wind and Red Phoenix Shunpo assisted each other as we ran. We soon reached the last car of the train.

「 Finally, there was a man who knew the ending of all these worlds. 」

This story didn't exist in Ways of Survival. It was a story that never existed before. It was a story that would lead me to the ending I wanted.

I opened the last door of the train.

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* Official novel illustration (canonical)

Chapter 274: Ep. 51 - Giant Story, III

Surya was beyond the last door. Yoo Joonghyuk's fist struck the door and broke it down, revealing a pierced skyline with strong winds. The last train car with Surya was cut apart, as if it had been ripped out by something.

[You came sooner than expected.]

Surya stared at the sky and spoke with his back to us. A square space was visible beyond the cut train. The light of the divine being stretched out into the darkness. It was like a palm gathering sand on a vast beach.

I deliberately spoke in a polite tone, "Surya, let's stop here."

The divine light that couldn't touch the providence of the universe looked at me. Surya's eyes stared at me. They seemed to be saying that even if they didn't understand the Star Stream, there was no way they couldn't read everything about me.

[A man who knows the ending of all the worlds… it is a really wild story.]

Perhaps Surya had heard the sentence of my 'giant story'. Before I could answer, King Oedipus stood by Surya's side and replied, [It is just a metaphor. A pun.]

It was rather fortunate if he thought so. I felt a bit uncomfortable since the story contents came directly from me.

[The constellation 'Mass Production Maker' is questioning your sentences.]

[The constellation 'God of Wine and Ecstasy' is wondering about your giant story.]

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is telling him to be nervous.]

[The constellation 'Maritime War God' is forming clenched fists.]

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' is looking at you.]

Surya's gaze towards me was changing. I realized that no matter what I said, I couldn't stop him.

[Come on child. The time given to you is 10 minutes.]

Surya's four arms were raised in a fighting posture. His size gradually became bigger as he opened up his status. He didn't use any weapons. Surya intended to exclude me simply using the pure power of stories.

[10 minutes later, this carriage will collide with the Demon Realm.]

There was no more need to delay and Yoo Joonghyuk rushed in first. A blue aura reminiscent of the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint emerged from Yoo Joonghyuk's body. The Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship was spreading its light.

I wasn't the only one affected by the giant story. Yoo Joonghyuk also had a stake in this story. Despite his injured body, Yoo Joonghyuk was now able to exert a power equivalent to a constellation.

There was the sound of a blade and a pole colliding. It wasn't Surya who received Yoo Joonghyuk's attack.

[Kuooh…!]

King Oedipus let out a pained groan as he confronted Yoo Joonghyuk.

[Kuaaack!]

Oedipus squeezed out power from an overheated incarnation body but he seemed to be having a hard time dealing with Yoo Joonghyuk.

"Kim Dokja!" Along with Yoo Joonghyuk's cry, I leapt through Oedipus' defenses and headed to Surya. In the air of the train, the several times larger Surya greeted me.

[The exclusive skill 'Electrification' Lv. 12 (+2) has been activated.]

I was surrounded with the light of Electrification and a blue-white energy struck Surya's chest. The other time, Surya stopped my Electrification with one fist.

However, this time was different. Surya's skin was touched by the blue-white energy and started burning. This was from a slight blow.

Surya's eyebrows twitched with surprise. I flew through the air and collided with Surya's fists. The shock shook my heart but I endured it.

[The power of the 'giant story' is working for you.]

The world's sentences were swirling around me. The power allowed me to compete with the mighty narrative-grade constellation. This was a great story but Surya was still alive.

[I said it before. You can't win with the skills you have stolen.]

Maybe it was as Surya stated. I always struggled with the skills of others.

"This isn't something that I stole from others. I read it."

[Read?]

As Persephone told me, an existence was a story. Memories of sentences that had been read for many years. Everything that I had read and seen now became me.

[The exclusive skill, 'Fourth Wall' is strongly activated.]

On the Fourth Wall, the sentences of the giant story emerged.

「This is the story of a reader.」

I ran towards Surya. In the trail of my run was the countless hours I spent alone reading. It was an ordinary life. I sat alone in a dark room and read Ways of Survival. On the bus after my part time job was over, in the army, in the classroom, on the subway home from work…

「At the same time, it is the story of Dokja.」

I lived in that world alone. I entered the mind of countless characters and became different beings again and again.

[Only this story…]

Therefore, I was a regressor who had never regressed.

[The exclusive skill 'Way of the Wind Lv. 11 (+1) is activated!]

A returnee who had never returned.

[The number three bookmark has been activated.]

[The exclusive skill 'Beast King's Sensitivity Lv. 10 (+1)' has been activated.]

Maybe I was a reincarnator.

Surya's face slightly distorted as he was confronted with my 'status'. Every time our statuses clashes, I could feel our bodies being destroyed. Surya was also pulling out all the power he could.

[This is too much! It is ridiculously insufficient to get the qualification of the end!]

I shook my head. "It seems like you are mistaken about something. It isn't only the giant stories that can reach the end."

Maybe Surya wouldn't understand. I had only received enlightenment after learning from Yoo Joonghyuk's myriad failures.

Surya's face hardened and he concentrated his strength into his four arms. Perhaps this would be Surya's last attack.

I didn't back down and stood up to him using the power of Electrification. The glare of the sun that melted everything was fired towards me. The blue-white light couldn't overcome the high temperature and was pushed little by little.

I had just taken a step or two back when a rough and solitary story wrapped around me from behind. It wasn't necessary to see whose story it was.

The sparks between Surya and I became more intense. Slowly, the pushing stopped.

[The constellation 'Master of Steel' is looking at you.]

[The constellation 'Master of the Skywalk' is looking at you.]

Lee Hyunsung and Yoo Sangah. There was also Jung Heewon's story. The history of all those who struggled to survive was nestled inside me.

「The woman who woke up from a long crouch and laughed while holding a sword to destroy evil.」

They weren't here but there were others who shared our history.

「The boy who lost his mother and held the insect in his hand cried.」

「The man who built the castle roared for the family that wouldn't come back.」

Lee Gilyoung and Gong Pildu.

「The woman who built up the truth by lying gladly became his shadow.」

There was also Han Sooyoung.

[The exclusive attribute 'Scenario Interpreter' is activated!]

Everything I lived made their way into the story. Surya's incarnation body was right in front of me. Surya's weakness was something that couldn't be read with the Duke of Loyalty and Warfare's stigma. Yet strangely, at this moment I knew where to stab Surya.

[The exclusive skill 'Reading Comprehension' is activated.]

Unbroken Faith shone brightly and an intense white light pierced Surya's chest. There was the sound of something breaking as I poured out all my magic power before flying through the sky.

Among the fragments of the story that poured through the air like a fountain, the collapsed Surya could be seen.

[Surya! The Supreme God of Light!] Oedipus shouted and the situation started falling apart.

Meteorites were oxidized in the atmosphere and Surya's train collapsed. I was falling towards the ground.

"Kim Dokja!"

Yoo Joonghyuk flew like the wind and grabbed me while the chimera dragon picked up my falling companions. It was truly a narrow escape. A few fragments of the last car left a long trail as they fell towards the ground. The shattered debris wept. Fortunately, the industrial complex wasn't going to be hit.

Shin Yoosung was watching me from the head of the chimera dragon. "Ahjussi!"

Joy could clearly be seen on the child's expression.

The next moment, a voice was heard from the cloud of dust on the ground. [Not yet! Not yet!]

It was King Oedipus. The miserable looking existence shouted at us from among the fallen constellations.

[The Demon King of Salvation! I know that the succession of the giant story hasn't ended yet! If you give us the story, we will leave here.]

The game was already over but he still hadn't given up. It was Yoo Joonghyuk who replied on my behalf. "Why should we?"

Yoo Joonghyuk landed on the ground, dropped me down and took out the Black Heavenly Demon Sword. Then King Oedipus spoke. [Otherwise, your precious world will disappear.]

"Do you want to talk about fate again? I know you don't have enough probability left in the Demon Realm."

[What if it isn't the Demon Realm?]

He flicked his fingers and a huge panel appeared in the air. It showed a blue planet that we knew well.

Yoo Joonghyuk frowned. "It seems you've sold your pride as a constellation. Is this your last hurrah?"

At this point, it was impossible to destroy Earth even if all of Olympus' probability was used. Yoo Joonghyuk was aware of this and wasn't panicked at all. King Oedipus laughed.

[It's impossible to destroy Earth. But what about this?]

He flicked his fingers again and the screen changed. At this moment, the faces of Yoo Joonghyuk and the party members hardened.

The Korean Peninsula was engulfed in flames.

"If I knew this, I would've gone to the Demon Realm."

Han Sooyoung frowned as she gazed at Gyeonggi-do burning with red and blue flames. In fact, there was a reason why Han Sooyoung didn't go to the Demon Realm.

[You are currently cursed by the demon king 'Andras'.]

Han Sooyoung had been caught in Kim Dokja's plot and cursed by the demon king. Thanks to this, she would become the meal of the demon king as soon as she visited the area. Lee Gilyoung stomped his feet beside her and shouted, "Won't everyone be with Dokja hyung by now? I wish I was Shin Yoosung…"

"I guess so. However, that place will be harder than here."

Han Sooyoung felt the disaster coming through the flames and gulped. After Kim Dokja's group left for the personal scenario, the disaster scenario had come to the Korean Peninsula.

[The time limit for the disaster scenario is 30 minutes.]

The problem was the disaster that came this time were constellations.

"Damn Olympus."

She didn't know what type of back-door dealings they made with the dokkaebis of the bureau but the constellations of Olympus had come as the 'disasters' of this scenario. Due to the difficulty, the scenario would end after 30 minutes. In these 30 minutes, the Korean Peninsula was likely to disappear from Earth.

"What are you going to do now?" Gong Pildu asked while blowing out cigarette smoke.

The reason the Gyeonggi-do area had lasted so far was thanks to Gong Pildu's Armed Fortress. Han Sooyoung replied, "Just hold on a bit longer. There is a way."

"The opponents are the incarnation bodies of constellations. There are more than five of them. How are you going to win? You aren't Kim Dokja."

Their auras showed they were historical-grade constellations. Perhaps they were ancient heroes or lesser gods of Olympus.

[There are only small people on this little land!]

Her head hurt from all the noise. Han Sooyoungcalmly pulled out a dark stone.

[Abyss Stone.]

It was an item Kim Dokja told her to collect before they separated. Thanks to this item, she could send the other party members to the Demon Realm despite lacking probability. She had used three so far and there were six remaining. The number was a bit lacking but this was the only way.

"This… I didn't know I would use them catching bugs."

As Lee Gilyoung's insects protected the fortress and Gong Pildu's fortress continued firing, Han Sooyoung started the descent ceremony by offering the Abyss Stone.

It was just for a short time but she could call an existence to balance this twisted scale.

Sparks flew and the Abyss Stones started to disappear one by one as an offering. It was a fearsome presence who could only use a portion of their power through the six Abyss Stones.

The sky of Gyeonggi-do turned dark and filled with thunder. A huge shadow was revealing itself behind Han Sooyoung. Han Sooyoung sighed lightly and slowly opened her eyes. "Black dragon. You can do whatever you like."

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is grinning and revealing white teeth.]

Chapter 275: Ep. 51 - Giant Story, IV

The Olympians swept away Seongnam in an instant and slowly narrowed the siege around Gong Pildu's fortress.

[Isn't this stage too small for us to come forward?]

The constellations thought it was disgraceful. It was natural. There were no constellations who could build up anything from this scenario. Amidst these unmotivated constellations, a constellation wearing a crown and holding an ancient spear and shield spoke.

[Stop complaining. Once this is over, Father says he will suggest our promotion to the 12 gods.]

[Oedipus? Really?]

The expressions of the constellations changed due to the words of the Blind King's Heir. Promotion in the nebula meant their stakes in the giant stories were increased.

[Haha, can we reach one decimal place?]

The stakes in a giant story were one of the measures of a constellation's strength. More stakes meant more probability, which was a source of escaping from the constraints of many scenarios.

[Let's finish it and go back.]

The constellations finally started to advance to the armed fortress. It happened the moment their star relics were shining. The sky was covered by a dark dome and light disappeared from it. The historical-grade constellations approaching the armed fortress stopped at the appalling darkness.

[…What?]

The lights in the area were turned off by the clouds that came. It wasn't just this area. The darkness covered the entire Korean Peninsula. Even the sparks of probability were covered by the deep darkness.

The Blind King's Heir stared up at the sky with bewildered eyes.

[Is it the queen of the Underworld?]

The only nebula that could descend to the Korean Peninsula today was Olympus. In addition, there were few constellations of Olympus who could use such a large amount of probability.

One of the constellations emitted a faint light to reveal the surroundings but it quickly disappeared. It was like a black hole that sucked out all the light.

The anxious constellations shouted. [Your Majesty! If you have come then please say it—]

One of the constellations suddenly gave a warning. [Something is coming…!]

A dark object was fired from the sky and pierced the chest of one constellation.

[Keeeeok…!]

It was an object like a dragon's claw. The confused constellation coughed up blood and tried to pull out the claw, but the claw grew increasingly larger and soon burst through the constellation's body. The constellation let out a sound before becoming part of the darkness. The frightened constellations screamed.

[U-Uhhhhh!]

They heard the sound but couldn't avoid it. It meant…

This existence had a completely different 'status' from them. The queen of the underworld wasn't this much.

[Run away…!]

The Blind King's Heir discovered the situation and ordered a retreat. Then an enormous amount of sparks burst from the armed fortress. The intense light that the darkness couldn't swallow revealed the open door of the fortress leading to the dark city. There was a woman with a small body.

The first one to discover her was the Blind King's Heir who trembled.

[W-Why are you…?]

The shadows of black flames were swirling around her body. The face of a little boy with red eyes underneath black hair flashed. The boy with one arm bandaged raised his hand and the shadow of a dragon covered the sky. White fangs were bared.

심연의 흑염룡

*

As the boy laughed, the darkness of the world breathed. Then the massacre began.

King Oedipus couldn't hide his astonishment as he stared at the scene on the screen.

[The constellation 'Blind King's Heir' has been removed from the scenario.]

[The constellation 'Thebes' Gatekeeper' has been removed from the scenario.]

The shadow of a dragon was tearing up the fleeing constellations on the screen. Fortunately, Han Sooyoung wasn't too late.

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is letting out wild laughter.]

–Ahahahahaha!

Han Sooyoung had a bandage around one arm and half covered her face as she burst out laughing. She was really a match for the black dragon. She acted so well that I didn't know why she hated it so far.

King Oedipus stared at me and exclaimed, [How come… why is a candidate of the apocalypse…]

Candidate of the apocalypse… Well, King Oedipus would have that type of information. The Abyssal Black Flame Dragon was one of the candidates of the apocalypse.

[Many constellations are astonished by your scheme.]

[The constellation 'Dragon Lying Down' is nodding.]

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' is feeling pure admiration.]

[You have acquired a new story!]

[The story 'Kill with a Borrowed Knife' has been acquired.]

I watched Gyeonggi-do covered in darkness and licked my lips. Attracting the Abyssal Black Flame Dragon was a last resort. It could've brought about a bigger disaster. However, there was Han Sooyoung and the promise made with the black dragon. Thus, he wouldn't destroy the Korean Peninsula.

[Ku…ock…]

King Oedipus bowed his head and let out an unknown groan. We saw the unusual appearance and Yoo Joonghyuk and I raised our swords at the same time.

[You…!]

King Oedipus' son was among the constellations who suffered under the black dragon. There was the possibility that the enraged Oedipus wouldn't be able to control his emotions.

[I will kill you!]

As expected, the constellations who survived with Oedipus released their status at the same time. I had a giant story but it wasn't enough power. The moment I was about to trigger Electrification, something rose from the ground and caught Oedipus' neck.

[Cough!]

The huge Surya moved one of his four arms and held onto Oedipus' neck. King Oedipus stared at Surya with surprise.

[W-Why?]

[Stop it.]

Surya's heavy status pressed down on the other constellation.

[Don't look so ugly anymore.]

[I won't listen to the words of a dog who lost the fight! It can't end like this…!]

The next moment, King Oedipus' body exploded. The brutally exploded body scattered into ashes in front of Surya's eyes. The movements of the constellations stiffened and they nervously stepped back.

Despite the severe injuries, Surya still had the power to stand up alone… it was a phenomenal vitality.

I quickly calculated the power of my remaining companions. If we hit Surya right now…

[It is our defeat.]

For a moment, I thought I heard wrong. However, the words had definitely emerged from Surya's mouth. I bit my lips as joy boiled from deep inside my heart. The great Lokapala had admitted defeat.

[The winner of the Demon King Selection has been determined.]

There were screams from afar as the ensuing system messages came. They were the screams of the dukes defeated in the Demon King Selection.

One by one, the bodies of the constellations staring at us scattered. The scenario ended and the Star Stream started to recall the probability that they were allowed. Surya's body was also disappearing.

I opened my mouth before Surya's body completely disappeared. I wanted to ask. Why did he suddenly change his mind?

[The Demon King of Salvation.]

However, I shut my mouth the moment I saw Surya's eyes. In retrospect, Surya wasn't an ordinary constellation. He was one of the great Lokapala. It was rather strange that such a constellation would use cowardly tricks against us.

Perhaps this 'selection' had dealt a significant blow to his reputation and pride.

Surya slowly blinked and asked, [Did you get the qualification of the end?]

"I'll probably get it. And you also…"

Surya's eyes shone terribly, as if he was dismissing the trivial comfort.

[I will watch your story.]

Surya would also get the qualification of the end one day. Then the day would come when we meet again. It wasn't here but in the later scenarios of the Star Stream.

[And…]

In a short moment, Surya's gaze turned towards the fragments of the destroyed train. They were fragments of the car where Surya and I faced each other. However, the appearance of some fragments was a bit strange. They weren't broken from the battle with me. They were scars carved on the train from before.

"I know."

[That's right. You understand.]

Surya finally disappeared with these words. The pressure on the surroundings vanished and a curious silence took its place. I didn't feel it was real. I calmly practiced what I had planned and was lucky with several things. Then I came all this way.

[The 25th main scenario has ended.]

I turned my head and saw Yoo Joonghyuk watching Surya's disappearance.

[The main scenario 'Demon King Selection' has been cleared.]

[The rewards for the selection are being prepared.]

[A new demon king has appeared in the Demon Realm!]

[You have become the master of the 73rd Demon Realm!]

There was the explosive system message and Yoo Joonghyuk and I simultaneously looked up at the sky. The gazes of countless beings poured towards me from the sky.

[The demon king 'Ruler of the East Hell' is looking at you.]

[The demon king 'Devil of Principles' is curious about you.]

[The demon king 'Black Mane Lion' is inviting you to his demon realm.]

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[The constellation 'Mass Production Maker' is sending his congratulations.]

[The constellation 'Queen of the Darkest Spring' has sent you a gift.]

[The constellation 'God of Wine and Ecstasy' is proposing a toast.]

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is greatly pleased.]

[The constellation 'Commander of the Red Cosmos' is wary of you.]

It was an incomparable amount of attention. There were strong people similar to me to distant beings who I couldn't even look at their toes.

There was a pause and then Jang Hayoung's voice was heard. "…It's over."

I nodded and looked around.

Lee Hyunsung carried Jung Heewon while watching the sky. Lee Jihye supported the injured Yoo Sangah and waved at me while Shin Yoosung held onto my sleeve and looked up at me. The Breaking the Sky Master held the small Osu in her mouth and barked lightly. Han Myungoh held Asmodeus' incarnation body in his arms and let out a weary breath. On the rocky hill not far away, I could see the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint and Kyrgios. The injured Brash Swamp Predator was curled up and Cheok Jungyeong was sitting on his back.

It was an ordeal that couldn't be overcome without any of them.

[Your 'nebula' is well known in the Star Stream.]

[A large number of constellations remember the nebula 'Kim Dokja's Company (Temporary)'.]

Yoo Joonghyuk heard the message and frowned. "…The name needs to be changed."

I smiled at the guy who had his pride in a strange place. It wouldn't be bad to brainstorm names for the nebula sooner or later.

It felt that the darkness was retreating from the sky. I could breathe for a moment from the seemingly endless trials.

[Your first 'giant story' is fully blooming.]

[Giant Story 'Demon Realm's Spring' has been acquired.]

Citizens started emerging from the ruined industrial complex. People were intoxicated by the unbelievable victory. Some people shouted while others called out mine and Yoo Joonghyuk's names. I could also see Aileen and Mark.

[The Star Stream is satisfied with your giant story.]

[You have earned the qualification of the end.]

Finally, there were the messages I had been waiting for.

[The hidden scenario - 'A Single Story' has begun!]

[Your legendary stories has formed an opening act.]

[The 'initial' portion of your first giant story has been completed!]

After a long period of enduring, the first footstep towards the final scenario was taken.

[You have been given the authority of ■■.]

[The ■■ filtering is turned off.]

It was the moment when the information of the last chapter, which had long been covered with a veil, finally appeared in front of my eyes.

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* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)

Chapter 276: Ep. 52. ■■, I

After the Demon King Selection, the Yoo Joonghyuk - Kim Dokja Industrial Complex became busy with reconstruction. The citizens' expressions were dark from the dangers of war. The atmosphere would've been harsher if it wasn't for the relief resources that I persuaded Bihyung to give.

"The clock tower is over there! Hey, watch out over there!"

Due to the deaths of the dukes, the citizens of other industrial complexes came over and I wasn't lacking manpower. I spent two days helping the citizens rebuild and the city was gradually regaining a lively atmosphere.

"Thank you for the help, Yoo Sangah-ssi."

The foundation reconstruction would've taken a longer time if it wasn't for Yoo Sangah's Arachne's Web. Yoo Sangah wiped the sweat off her forehead and replied, "You should take a break Dokja-ssi."

"I'm fine. What about Yoo Sangah-ssi?"

Yoo Sangah looked closely at the bandage wrapped around my chest while answering, "I'm good as well."

Good… It was a word used by Yoo Sangah.

I stopped working as I climbed up the clock tower with Yoo Sangah and looked down at the square.

Yoo Joonghyuk and the other seriously injured party members were hospitalized in Aileen's ward. Jung Heewon and Lee Jihye were relatively well and helped with the reconstruction of the industrial complex. Meanwhile, Lee Hyunsung was demanding to be discharged from the ward because he was all better.

Thanks to the hard work over the past two days, the square area started to feel like a place where people lived. The schedule was tight but the things I were doing now would be returned to me as a reward.

"They came."

A portal had appeared in the air. There was a kid running at great speed from one side of the square.

I lightly jumped down the clock tower and greeted him.

"Dokja hyung! Uwaaaaah!" Lee Gilyoung struggled in my arms. I smiled and patted his head.

"Have you been well? You seem a bit taller."

"Really?"

"Yes, you're almost around Yoosung's height now?"

"I'll be bigger soon!"

It wasn't just Lee Gilyoung who came through the portal. A large man fell to the floor of the square with a thud.

"It has been a long time, Gong Pildu-ssi."

"Bah!" Gong Pildu stared at me like he didn't care about my safety and then waved to Yoo Sangah. Yoo Sangah bowed her head with a slight smile and Gong Pildu spoke in a slightly more relaxed tone. "I didn't come to see you."

During this time, Gong Pildu had changed a lot. Who could call him one of the 10 Evils now?

"Han Sooyoung?"

"I think she needs some time to recuperate." Lee Gilyoung answered with his head against my stomach.

Recuperate… She had offered the Abyss Stones as a sacrifice but the damage wouldn't be small because she took the black dragon into her body. However, to not come here…

"Ah, Sooyoung noona told me to give this to you." Lee Gilyoung rummaged through his pockets and handed me a note.

It was a crumpled piece of paper that gave off an obstinate impression similar to Han Sooyoung. I carefully opened the note while avoiding Lee Gilyoung's glistening eyes.

–I will kill you if you make me do it again next time.

I couldn't help laughing. Indeed, there was a reason she hadn't come. If I closed my eyes, I could still see the bandaged Han Sooyoung laughing like crazy.

–There are still a few problems left.

The note contained some other information. There were things about the Korean Peninsula and the nebulae that could only be heard on Earth. Fortunately, the situation on Earth didn't deviate much from the original cycle I knew. In fact, most of the information were things I already knew and didn't need to be conveyed.

Han Sooyoung knew this and struggled with eloquence.

–Anyway, that's it… well… goodbye, idiot. See you when you come to Earth.

It was too bad. I was going to tease her properly if we met this time. I put the note in my coat and told Lee Gilyoung and Gong Pildu.

"There will be a party at night. Go wash up and prepare."

"Party?"

"Guests are coming."

I've passed one crisis but the crisis of this industrial complex was just beginning.

[The constellation 'God of Wine and Ecstasy' has accepted your invitation.]

[The constellation 'Queen of the Darkest Spring' has accepted your invitation.]

…

I saw numerous indirect messages pouring in and sighed lightly.

Since the selection, Yoo Joonghyuk hadn't woken up.

"How long will it take for him to recover?"

"It should take two more weeks." Aileen checked Yoo Joonghyuk's pulse, wlaked out of the hospital room and glanced at me. "You need to rest as well. Do you know?"

"Don't worry."

Aileen left but I stayed in Yoo Joonghyuk's hospital room. The sleeping man's complexion was paler than any 'Yoo Joonghyuk' I had ever seen. It was natural. This was the first time that Yoo Joonghyuk didn't regress despite suffering injuries serious enough to trigger 'regression'.

I stood up and checked the story packs that were stuck to him. Sometimes, a story pack being inserted incorrectly could cause death from side effects. It might be different if he had Lamarck's Giraffe like me…

"…Packs like these are being plugged in."

「I am going to a lonely world.」

「The sword master was the easiest.」

「I was a genius since receiving the sword at 5 years old.」

Fortunately, Aileen was a story expert and had a good grasp on the composition. In fact, Yoo Joonghyuk of the 144th round briefly went crazy after wrongly receiving Lee Hyunsung's army story.

"He is a picky guy."

I was almost shocked by the voice suddenly heard behind me. I looked back and saw a handsome giant leaning against the wall.

"Since when were you there?"

"From before you come in."

The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint stared down at me with calm eyes before indicating Yoo Joonghyuk.

"It is too much healing. Just throw a few Murim dumplings at him and he will get better soon."

"It is because there are no Murim dumplings here."

Despite the words, the eyes of the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint were still very mild. Then the terrible man's voice was heard.

"So he is the one who beat you up?"

Something the size of a frog was hanging upside down from the ceiling opposite the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint. It was Kyrgios Rodgraim.

"Master."

"Tell me. Is it this guy?"

I was reminded of the nonsense I spoke to send Kyrgios to Murim. I was beat up by the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint's disciple. Kyrgios' handsome eyebrows curved and the aura of Electrification appeared around his entire body. "Was it all a lie?"

I gulped and opened my mouth. "It wasn't completely a lie! In fact, I'm not on good terms with this guy. I was actually beaten up…"

"You were just beaten up?"

"Of course, I hit back…"

It was a loophole in the system but I didn't lie because I had beaten up Yoo Joonghyuk in the Absolute Throne battle. The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint made an intrigued expression as she listened to the story. "Hrmm. You beat my disciple?"

"Then who won?"

The gazes of the new teachers met in the air. It was only their gazes collided but the sense of space seemed to distort and sparks flew. I thought the two of them were getting along better with each other but it seemed to be my mistake. The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint's voice was cold. "That is a stupid question. Just looking at the face, it is obvious that my disciple is better than yours."

"My disciple can't be weaker than an aura parasite who only raises muscle. Don't look down on my vision of my martial artists…"

"Your martial artists are getting smaller."

I thought the hospital room would explode if this continued and quickly stepped in between the two of them.

"I have something to ask you."

The fearsome gazes shot towards me at the same time. I raised my status and barely endured the pressure.

"What happened to First Murim?" I was curious. The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint and Kyrgios were here so I knew Murim was likely to be safe. However, the opponent was an outer god.

The first one to speak was Kyrgios. "Hmph, this body moved personally and you think I can't save one world?"

Kyrgios flew out the window like he was offended.

…What was wrong with him? The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint gazed at the window that Kyrgios had disappeared through and replied, "We stopped it but it is hard to say that we stopped it."

"Did you defeat the outer god?"

The aura of a giant story could be felt from the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint's body. It was clearly a giant story associated with First Murim.

The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint nodded. "It was a daunting opponent but it wasn't something I couldn't fight. That unlucky paradox was also present."

Only the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint could describe an outer god as a 'daunting opponent'.

"The problem was the next guy."

The outer gods also had ranks. So to speak, there were different names for them. For example, 'old one' and 'great old ones'.

–He was neither 'old' or a 'great old'.

However, there were also distant beings beyond such categories.

–I have never seen such an existence before so I can't explain it clearly. The only thing certain is that Paradox and I together couldn't beat it. In fact, it wasn't even a fight. If it hadn't withdrawn itself, we would've disappeared from the universe along with Murim.

The words of the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint were strange. According to the development of the original novel, there was no such possibility that such an outer god would appear in First Murim that day. Yet such a great outer god appeared and withdrew.

–It disappeared like it found another delicious prey.

A being that was neither old or a great old one. An outer god that forced strong people such as the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint and Kyrgios to freeze…

Waaaaaah!

A small party was currently in progress in the central hall of the industrial complex. The recovered party members had gathered. The symbolic bodies of some invited constellations could be seen.

[Hmm, Demon King of Salvation. Did you receive the gift I sent?]

Persephone approached with a mischievous smile. Once again, her symbolic body took Yoo Sangah's appearance. The party members stared at her symbolic body with surprise. In particular, Yoo Sangah's expression was a delight to see.

"…I don't like garter belts anymore."

Persephone wore a Chinese dress and waved her fan while laughing.

[Is that so? It was a pretty good performance.]

Lee Hyunsung's ears pricked up at the word 'performance'. I spoke quickly before the wrong words could come out. "I am indebted to you regarding the selection game."

[Hmm, I didn't do anything?]

"I know that you persuaded the Master of the Skywalk."

Now Olympus was in a divisive state. If she hadn't persuaded Hermes, I might've had to fight more Olympus constellations in the competition.

[Think of it as an investment in the future.]

The smiling Persephone headed to the centre of the hall and started dancing. She even pulled Yoo Sangah over as her partner. At first, Yoo Sangah was embarrassed but then she kept a cool expression. Jung Heewon whistled. "Yoo Sangah-ssi is cool!"

Dionysus had already finished his tenth drink in the corner while Cheok Jungyeong was sharing a cup of soju with the Brash Swamp Predator. It was a small party but it was more relaxed than any other party I had attended.

[It is a precious break. Congratulations, Demon King of Salvation.]

I turned back and saw an old man in a formal suit. "You came, Mass Production Maker."

He was also one of the constellations who helped in this selection.

[I saw your story well. The Gourmet Association is making a huge fuss.]

"You're overpraising me."

I grabbed a glass from the table and bumped cups with the Mass Production Maker. It was pretty strong alcohol based on the smell and I poured it into my mouth. We were silent for a moment. Perhaps the Mass Production Maker was choosing his question. The question was why he and the other constellations attended this party and why I held it.

The Mass Production Maker sipped the alcohol before speaking. [You got the qualification of the end so the filtering should be turned off.]

I could feel a fine change in the atmosphere. I nodded. "That's right."

The hall was still buzzing but the eyes of the constellations gathered one by one on me. Persephone, Cheok Jungyeong, Dionysus… Everyone was pretending not to care but they were listening to this story.

The gazes of all the constellations focused on me and the Mass Production Maker asked, [Can I ask what your ■■ was?]

Chapter 277: Ep. 52. ■■, II

What was my ■■? I knew that the Mass Production Maker would ask that question. "Are you curious?"

[Is there anyone here who isn't curious?]

The Mass Production Maker laughed lightly and several constellations coughed. The atmosphere grew unusual and the other party members who weren't aware of the situation started to pay attention to me.

"Why is everyone suddenly…?"

"Shhh."

Lee Hyunsung tried to intrude only to be stopped by Jung Heewon.

I slowly looked around at all the people in the room. All of a sudden, everyone in the hall was watching me.

■■…

There were various names for it in Ways of Survival. For example, the Dokkaebi King said:

「 The end of every story and the beginning. 」

However, this was what Yoo Joonghyuk had to say:

「 The damn Star Stream. 」

Lee Hyunsung would describe it as the 'whole region' while Yoo Sangah might say 'old design'. It would be 'graduation' for Lee Jihye. Surprisingly, all these interpretations of ■■ weren't wrong.

The Mass Production Maker asked, [All those who have earned the qualification of the end have received a different name of the 'end'. Do you know?]

"It is natural since all your stories are different."

In the first place, there wasn't a proper noun capable of communicating ■■ in the proper sense. The fact that the filtering was resolved meant that I could 'read' it. Perhaps the constellations who received a hidden scenario like me were probably in a similar position.

[Hidden scenario - 'A Single Story']

Category: Hidden

Difficulty: ???

Clear Condition: Complete one story to reach ■■.

Time Limit: —

Compensation: ???

Failure: ???

* Currently, you have completed the 'initial' portion.

* See the additional scenario description for details.

The hidden scenario 'A Single Story'. This scenario was given to all those who obtained the qualification of the end. In the galaxy of the distant Star Stream, we went through numerous stories and completed a single 'perfect' story.

The legendary stories, the mythical stories and even the giant story that I got were just a journey towards the 'single story'. The Mass Production Maker in front of me and Persephone over there would've received this scenario. Of course, the place where they finally arrived was different from me.

[Baat!]

Biyoo blocked the channel of the hall before I even directed her. Perhaps Biyoo instinctively realized that the story to be told from now on was important. The protests of the constellations flowed through the air and the Mass Production Maker spoke in a heavy tone.

[My ■■ is 'Dried up'.]

I was a bit surprised because I didn't think he would reveal his hand so easily. Then the dancing Persephone also spoke. [I am 'death'.]

Dried up and death. Both were words that could symbolize the 'end' of something. It was a paradoxical end for the Mass Production Maker who liked to make something and for Persephone who governed the world of the dead.

Now that they revealed their cards, I had nowhere to retreat. "Everybody, please swear by your modifiers. You will never speak of what you heard here."

The constellations glanced at each other.

[Of course…]

[Hum, what is this? Why would we go somewhere and say it…]

[How great is your ■■ that you are feeling such pressure?]

I didn't answer immediately and just smiled. Then a ripple started among the constellations.

[Don't tell me?]

The thoughts in the constellations' heads seemed to be visible. I looked at their expressions and thought.

Yes, think about it. Be worried and suspicious. That way I would get the picture I desired.

As the agitation of the drunk constellations reached the peak, I slowly opened my mouth.

Han Sooyoung walked down the street. They were the ruins of Seoul. There were no survivors on the streets and she was walking alone. All types of delusions passed through her head.

Why was she here now? She had obviously been fighting with the constellations using the black dragon. No, rather, Seoul had been closed off. Why…

–Black dragon?

The Abyssal Black Flame Dragon didn't answer.

–Hey, is anybody there?

Han Sooyoung wandered between the ruined buildings and shouted. The corpses of monsters hung between the familiar buildings of Gwanghwamun. Han Sooyoung shuddered every time she passed between nasty smelling corpses. Every one of them was a monster she couldn't face right now. How? What happened?

There was no one to answer her questions. No, she thought it would be better not to have answers, even if someone was here. If there was a living being here, they would be the terrifying monster who killed these monsters.

If this was a dream, please wake up…

Then a shadow of a person could be seen in the distance. It was a familiar humanoid form dressed in a white coat. Her heart was full of complicated emotions.

–Kim Dokja!

The moment the person looked back. There was the sound of flesh being pierced and a knife suddenly burst out of the coat. The white coat was dyed red.

Han Sooyoung screamed as she woke up from her sleep.

"Haack, haack…"

She blinked a few times and her sense of reality slowly returned.

"What…?"

She couldn't help talking to herself. Her back was wet with sweat.

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is satisfied with your soliloquy.]

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' believes that you have now truly become his successor…]

"Shut up."

The black dragon was speaking bullshit so this seemed to be reality. Han Sooyoung placed a hand against her temple. Why was that person in her dream?

Han Sooyoung would've usually passed over the dream but it was a world where superstition became reality. Thus, this dream couldn't be overlooked. Shortly afterwards, she noticed the bandage around her arm.

"God dammit. It hasn't been solved yet."

"Don't loosen it. You are still wounded."

She looked back with astonishment and saw a woman standing there.

"…Kim Dokja's mother?"

"You are the only one who still calls me that." Lee Sookyung wiped Han Sooyoung's back and forehead with a towel.

Han Sooyoung asked, "Why didn't you go to the Demon Realm?"

"What type of face would I have to go there?"

"Kim Dokja would've liked it."

"He would've liked it more if you went."

"…You don't know your son very well."

Han Sooyoung stuck out her small lips. Lee Sookyung laughed lightly and replaced the wet pillow with a new one. Han Sooyoung sniffed the new pillow and said,

"It seems to be resolved well."

"What are you talking about?"

"Kim Dokja's big disaster."

Seeing the black dragon's ecstatic state, things on the Demon Realm side seemed well. The damage on the Korean Peninsula wasn't greater than expected. There was a blow to the area but the citizens were safely evacuated…

The dream troubled her but a dream was just a dream…

"It isn't over."

"…Eh?"

Lee Sookyung brought over a plate without speaking and pointed to the Good or Bad Luck, Disaster or Happiness Fortune floating on it. Han Sooyoung read the characters rising to the surface of the water. She couldn't believe it. Thus, she asked Lee Sookyung to repeat the divination many times. They were all the same. Han Sooyoung looked down at the arm wrapped with a bandage and declared, "Please contact Kim Dokja."

* * *

The night after the party ended, I sat alone in the office. Normally, it would be a good time to read Ways of Survival while relaxing with a cup of hot chocolate. However, I couldn't afford it now.

I was staring at a huge debris lying on the table. It was a pierce that came off from the last car that Surya and I fought in. I closed my eyes and tried to reconstruct my memories of the time.

Surya's train was much shorter than the mythical train. In addition, the last car had a hole in the back. It was as if part of the train had been ripped off.

In other words, that space wasn't the original last car. I opened my eyes and examined the wounds on the debris fragment again. There was something powerful enough to pull off part of Surya's train that my party members and teachers barely broke.

…It was also 'that'.

Knock knock knock.

I looked up at the sound of knocking and saw Yoo Sangah watching me from the door. "I'm sorry Dokja-ssi. Am I disturbing you?"

"No. I called you."

I urgently arranged the table and greeted Yoo Sangah. Yoo Sangah looked around with a slightly shaky expression and then sat carefully on the other side of the table where I was sitting.

"Would you like some tea?"

"Nope. It's fine."

"Then do you want water…?"

"Okay."

We silently faced each other across the small table. I called her but I couldn't easily bring up the topic. Yoo Sangah must have many questions for me as well. I told her, "Just ask."

"In fact, I've been thinking about Dokja-ssi for quite some time." Her tone sounded like she had been waiting. "Why do you know the future that others don't know? How could you be so calm in such situations and always find answers that others haven't thought of?"

"Then did you find out something?"

"I seem to know some things while others don't feel right."

Perhaps Yoo Sangah had been studying me. Just as she studied Spanish with the app, Yoo Sangah would've studied people. As always, she reached meaningful results before anyone else.

"To Dokja-ssi, is this world like a novel?"

"Why do you think that?"

"It is because of what you said at the party."

…As expected from Yoo Sangah. Really, that was the only thing I could say.

–I'm heading towards the final chapter.

That was my answer to what ■■ I received. The final chapter. The end of every book that needed to be reached by turning over the pages.

Yoo Sangah continued speaking, "The constellations were greatly surprised. There were some who were amazed and some who were shocked."

The constellations had to feel surprised. It was a statement I gave with such intentions.

"After Dokja-ssi left, I asked the queen of the underworld. Why are you so surprised?"

"What did she say?"

"She said Dokja-ssi is very special." Yoo Sangah moistened her lips with the water and continued, "I heard that every being is given a different form of ■■. In addition, most of them are very personal words. There are numerous ■■ in the world but I heard that words that imply the 'end' are extremely rare."

Anyone who heard it would understand it meant an obvious 'end'. It was a word that had excellent versatility for all beings.

"In addition, all beings who received such a clear 'end' were great constellations like Olympus, Vedas and Papyrus… the top deities of the massive nebulae'.

"…"

Now… Dokja-ssi has become one of them."

Yoo Sangah was staring at me with complicated eyes. Her trembling eyes held feelings that she herself couldn't measure.

I replied, "It is a good thing."

"…It is good?"

"Now I can finally try something." I smiled. However, Yoo Sangah didn't smile back.

"After the destruction of the world, I thought Dokja-ssi was happier. You laughed more often than before and seemed more vigorous… thus, you looked good. By the way…" Yoo Sangah bowed her head. "Dokja-ssi, why do you think this world is fiction?"

Yoo Sangah didn't know me. What was 'fiction' to me? What did this world mean to me? I couldn't explain or describe it.

"Ah, I'm sorry Dokja-ssi. I was presumptuous…"

Nevetheless, the only person who could tell me such things was Yoo Sangah. She was a person who noticed things that nobody cared about.

[The exclusive skill 'Character List' is activated!]

She was the first colleague I met. Maybe it was before this world began.

[The person's information can't be accessed through Character List.]

There was an unexpected sense of relief from the rising message.

[Currently collecting information about the corresponding figure.]

When I first used Character List on Yoo Sangah, I had been very anxious because I couldn't read her information. Why was it now the opposite?

I sighed lightly and looked out the window. It was a clear sky. This was a world where nothing had happened yet.

"Yoo Sangah-ssi, I'd like to ask you to do something."

Thus, now was the only time to prepare.

Chapter 278: Ep. 52. ■■, III

The nebula Eden. This nebula was composed of the angels of the apocalypse, was the scourge of the demons and the eternal enemies of the Demon Realm. The guardians of the Celestial World, the angels who didn't fear any evil in this world.

However, there was something that the angels of this fearsome Eden hated.

[Elder, in Eden you are fully prepared and bid your time before the battle…]

It was Metatron's ordinance time. Today, the one in charge of the lecture was the Commander of the Red Cosmos, Jophiel.

[We urge you not to fall for the demon's two-faced war tactics…]

Gabriel tapped the floor with his heel and frowned.

–Oh, why must it be that person today?

There were thousands of low-ranked angels in the training ground of Eden. The archangels like Gabriel were positioned at the forefront as teaching assistants.

Lily Blooming in Aquarius, Gabriel.

Guardian of Youths and Travel, Raphael.

Friend of Justice and Harmony, Raguel.

Apart from the archangel on duty, most of the top-ranking constellations of Eden were assembled.

Jophiel's mental training had already been going on for an hour. Gabriel secretly yawned and looked around at his colleagues with languid eyes, only to notice something strange.

–Hey, where's Uriel?

Raphael, who was nodding off on the cloud, replied while fixing his curly hair.

–She is being detained.

–Detained?

–She is being told off by the scribe. Don't you know?

…What did she do? Raphael borrowed the power of the wind to speak like it was annoying. Gabriel's

eyes widened.

–What? Really? Uriel?

–Yes yes. She is banned from broadcasting for three years.

…That Uriel was going to be confined for three years?

Gabriel laughed at the unexpected news.

–For the time being, the broadcast bulletin board will be clean.

The ordinance ended after 30 minutes. Metatron dismissed the low-grade angels and called the archangels separately. 'Scribe of Heaven' Metatron had grey hair that went down to his waist and his expression seemed tired today. It was because he was busy trying to prevent the possibility of Armageddon.

Metatron pushed up his thin frame glasses and spoke, [Thank you for the trouble Jophiel. It was a good presentation.]

Jophiel nodded. Metatron looked around at the archangels and asked,

[Uriel didn't come?]

[Didn't you detain her? Otherwise, she would be here.]

The other archangels giggled at Gabriel's words. However, Metatron didn't laugh. The archangels exchanged looks with each other. There was no angel here who didn't know that Uriel was a headache for the scribe. The first one to speak was Archangel Raguel, who had faint freckles on his cheeks.

[Excuse me, Scribe. Isn't three years of detainment too much? Recently Uriel has become quite bright due to the broadcast…]

For the constellations who had to endure the boring years, the meaning of the live broadcast was immense. Some angels called the 'livestream broadcasting' the only drug allowed in Eden…

[What are you saying Raguel? Do you know how many times the scribe let that ■ watch?]

Raguel's expression hardened at Gabriel's words.

[Gabriel. Insulting a fellow angel is a felony.]

[Did I say something wrong? When she was bored, she picked up a demon's neck and did something strange…]

[Gabriel!]

It was Metatron who calmed down the tense atmosphere.

[I will decide how to deal with Uriel.]

The sublime aura rising from Metatron caused all the excited angels to close their mouths. As the surroundings became silent, Metatron brought up the main point.

[In connection to the Demon Realm Convention, I'm going to give you a new assignment.]

The Demon Realm Convention. The expressions of the archangels became tense. The balance between Eden and the Demon Realm had been shaken by the recent armed conflict in the 73rd Demon Realm.

[We need an archangel to monitor the ruler of the 73rd Demon Realm, the Demon King of Salvation.]

Confusion filled the angels' faces. Gabriel asked in a sharp voice, [Wait, isn't that originally Uriel's mission? And what does it have to do with the Demon Realm Convention…]

[It is relevant. Now that Uriel is being detained, other archangels need to do her work.]

Metatron's gaze moved across the archangels.

[Raphael had a doctrines tour next week and Raguel is scheduled to visit Vedas so the mission…]

The scribe's eyes finally stopped on one archangel.

[…Me?]

In the days after the party, the party members enjoyed a sudden luxury.

"Dokja-ssi, can I accept something like this?"

"I bought it for Hyunsung-ssi."

Kim Dokja bought clothes or items for the party members every day from the Dokkaebi Bad, as if compensation for his absence in the meantime. The kids were particularly excited.

"Hey, look at this Shin Yoosung!"

"I received it as well?"

Shin Yoosung and Lee Gilyoung laughed and ran through the streets while covered with accessories bought by Kim Dokja. Jung Heewon saw the scene and laughed. "The kids look like a Christmas tree."

The two children were sitting on Lee Hyunsung's big shoulders. The same was true for Lee Hyunsung. He was excited about the new shield he received from Kim Dokja.

"…Three fools."

She muttered as she looked around and saw Lee Jihye approaching while wearing a triangular gimbap-like helmet on her head. If the other three were like a Christmas tree, she was a three-tier cake.

"Do you have a good relationship with Dokja ahjussi these days?"

"I have belatedly realized the importance of colleagues."

Lee Jihye narrowed her eyes at Jung Heewon's reaction. "Unni… perhaps you haven't received anything?"

"I don't need it."

In fact, Kim Dokja had visited Jung Heewon several times. However, he didn't give her any items and only taught her a few training methods as well as telling her about hidden pieces. She told him that they were things she could do without him and Kim Dokja's expression was still vivid in her mind.

She was going to give Lee Jihye some honey when someone poked her shoulder. She looked back and saw the tired Kim Dokja.

"Ah, Dokja-ssi…"

Kim Dokja had dark circles on his face as he held out something towards Jung Heewon.

"This…"

"It is a new suit. It will be more comfortable for you."

Jung Heewon accepted the clothes in a daze. It was a blue-black special suit with a large cloak. She had seen it at the exchange but gave up because it was too expensive.

"The clothes are too expensive. I still have enough…"

Kim Dokja silently shook his head. Jung Heewon saw his unknown facial expression and recalled a memory from a long time ago. During the days at Chungmuro, she received an outfit from Kim Dokja. At the time, it was a rag…

[The constellation 'Bald General of Justice' is disappointed with incarnation 'Jung Heewon'.]

"You agreed to be my sword. I should do at least this much for you." Kim Dokja said these words and instantly walked away like he had something else happening. Jung Heewon stared at Kim Dokja's back and touched the special uniform in her hands.

Lee Jihye grinned from next to her. "Unni's mouth…"

"What?"

"Nothing, I just found something from the corners of your mouth. Unni, if you don't like it then exchange it with my helmet. That suit is really romantic."

"I don't want to."

She looked closer and saw a pattern on the suit that was similar to Lee Hyunsung's shield. Made bai… Yangu… san…? Jung Heewon wasn't fluent in English, scratched her head and gave up reading. In any case, it was good.

"By the way, why is ahjussi suddenly doing this? The person who sold food for money…"

"I don't know. He might be plotting something strange like before."

It certainly wasn't strange if it was Kim Dokja. He gave her such a good item that he would definitely put her to tremendous use.

Jung Heewon looked at the suit and felt like an office worker who received a salary advance. She was discussing with Lee Jihye how to wear the coat more stylishly when someone appeared and passed her like a ghost.

"Sangah-ssi, what's going on?"

"Huh? Ah, yes. It's nothing.

Yoo Sangah, who was staring blankly into space, reacted with surprise. Her pupils were empty. Jung Heewon realized that something was strange and tried to speak but Lee Jihye was one step faster.

"Aha, I understand. Sangah unni hasn't received an item?"

Jung Heewon poked Lee Jihye's ribs and she let out a light shriek. Yoo Sangah smiled helplessly. "I just have many thoughts these days… Heewon-ssi, that is a wonderful outfit."

"Ah, yes. Dokja-ssi gave it… I think it is too much to wear it."

"I think it suits you very well."

"Is that so? Thank you." Jung Heewon scratched his head. There was a shining bracelet that hadn't been seen before on Yoo Sangah's wrist.

The mood became awkward and Jung Heewon asked awkwardly, "Ah right, how is Dokja-ssi lately?"

"Dokja-ssi?"

Yoo Sangah's expression asked what she meant. Jung Heewon, who might've been misinformed, started speaking gibberish. "Eh, er, I mean… I just wanted to know if the two of you are doing well…"

Yoo Sangah cocked her head to one side and muttered, "Umm, I think it is the same as when we were in the company…"

was similar to when they were at the company. It was a difficult response for a hopeful observer. Lee Jihye whispered to Jung Heewon.

"Didn't I tell you before? There is nothing between them. Dokja ahjussi's taste doesn't go that way. We…"

"I understand why my sponsor likes you. By the way, has your master woken up?"

"Not yet. I heard it would take a few more days."

In the distance, Kim Dokja seemed to be talking to himself as he headed towards the ward.

"Is there something to give…"

The clock tower was on the verge of completion. The boisterous laughter of the party members could be heard. Gong Pildu was dissecting something like a machine gun while Han Myungoh was testing a new prosthetic leg.

Without knowing why, Jung Heewon felt overwhelmed. In any case, the party was all gathered now. They would soon return to Earth and go through the hellish scenarios again. Even so, Jung Heewon was afraid. Jung Heewon watched the sunset from the clock tower and recalled the words she heard in the Theatre Dungeon.

–I wish to see the novel's epilogue.

At the time, the Kim Dokja who said these words seemed very lonely. She didn't know what he meant at the time but now she felt like she knew a bit.

Now one thing was clear.

When the 'epilogue' came, Kim Dokja wouldn't be alone.

It was a few days after the part ended. The constellations present in the industrial complex started to leave one by one. I went to see the constellations off and found two flowers in the chest pocket of my coat.

"What is this?"

It was a pair of red cosmos and a lily. It wasn't a very suitable combination… did the kids do it? I took care of the flowers and headed towards the square. Some constellations had already passed through the portal. Among those leaving were constellations who signed a special contract with the Kim Dokja's Company nebula, including the old man in front of me.

[It looks like you're preparing for war. You don't have to be so impatient.]

"In the scenario, it is always war."

The Mass Production Maker chuckled at my words.

[Don't be senseless. I want you to be different from the other constellations.]

"Thank you for the help."

I smiled and bowed my head. The Mass Production Maker opened the door of the car before stopping and looking at me. [There is one final thing I want to ask…]

"Yes. Feel free to ask."

The Mass Production Maker didn't immediately ask the question. Instead, he pulled out a cigarette and mumbled. […Have you ever thought about what exactly ■■ is?]

He turned on his lighter and touched the end of the cigarette to the flame. The Mass Production Maker sighed and blew out smoke before continuing.

[Is it the place we want to reach or the place destiny is leading us to? Is it a place, a life or a space?]

Perhaps the Mass Production Maker had thought about this question countless times. Finally, he wouldn't have found the answer.

"The certain thing is that it is the end of the story."

[Sometimes I find your calmness amazing.]

"I'm nervous as well."

[I felt it at the time of the Gourmet Association but you're not as good at lying as you think.]

The Mass Production Maker laughed like a child.

[Then I'm asking you… is your ■■ really the 'final chapter'?]

The words broke through my guard. I reflexively shut my lips. The Mass Production Maker waited patiently for my answer. I finally opened my mouth once the Mass Production Maker's cigarette was burned halfway through.

"I don't know where the story will take me. However… I'm sure that the place I want to go is the final chapter."

He continued to listen after I finished. It was as if my story was still ongoing. Once the remaining cigarette had been burned, the Mass Production Maker laughed.

[I hope that I'm on the last page with you.]

"Go carefully, old man."

[Be careful.]

There was a light engine sound and the Mass Production Maker's car slipped into the portal. The other constellations also disappeared into the portal. The portal closed and ominous sparks filled the empty sky.

I watched the sparks and touched the petals in my pocket. Now the remaining time was three days. Soon, the most important story of the industrial complex would begin.

Chapter 279: Ep. 53 - Demon King of Salvation, I

A door with an image of two baby angels blushing. Gabriel's lips twitched as he saw the [Uriel ☆] written on the nameplate.

[Hey.]

There was no answer when he knocked on the door. Thus, he did it again.

[Hey Uriel!]

He knocked harder on the door and there was a groan from beside it.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' says to get lost.]

Gabriel frowned at the indirect message.

[Do you think I'm happy to come here? I'm here because of my mission.]

Gabriel sounded like it was annoying just to speak. It had been two days since he received the unreasonable assignment from Metatron. He was planning to play around but Metatron got in front of him.

–Gabriel, please take over Uriel's mission. In addition, Jophiel will watch Gabriel to ensure he isn't being lazy.

–Leave it to me.

He was placed in a team with the upright Jophiel. Gabriel would rather be in a team with Uriel.

[Didn't you record your observations of the Demon King of Salvation? I came here to grab it. Open the door!]

There was a rustling sound from beyond the door.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is asking why you are her successor.]

[Yes you ■.]

Once again, an indirect message rang like a thunderbolt.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' says '■■■■'.]

[Do you want to come out and say it yourself?]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is asking if you are her only successor.]

[Me and Jophiel.]

A deep sigh was heard beyond the door. After a while, there was a gap in the door and long fingertips emerged. Looking closer, the white fingertips were holding onto something. Gabriel realized its identity and clicked his tongue.

[…USB? Who uses a USB these days? Are you a human?]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is warning you not to speak nonsense and take it.]

Gabriel received the USB and Uriel added.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' says it is a secret from the Red Cosmos.]

[Jophiel? Why?]

Uriel didn't respond and shut the door. Then intermittent sniffling was heard in the distance. Gabriel was about to say something only to end up pouting. They usually didn't get along but he became worried when he saw 'Demon Hunter Uriel' like this.

[Hey, don't tremble. The detainment will be released soon. It's only three years…]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is shouting at you to get lost!]

[Crazy ■. I was only trying to comfort ■.]

After a while, Gabriel opened the USB in his room. Then…

[What the hell did you do on this mission?]

Despite his mutters, Gabriel couldn't take his eyes off the footage on the screen.

[The constellation 'Lily Blooming in Aquarius' is curious about you.]

[The constellation 'Lily Blooming in Aquarius' likes looking at you.]

Jung Heewon frowned as she heard the voice in the air. Uriel disappeared and this time a strange constellation clung to her. This wasn't her only concern. Jung Heewon looked at Kim Dokja who was wandering in the distance.

"…Why isn't he saying anything?"

"What do you mean?"

Jung Heewon turned around and see Lee Jihye closely stuck to her.

"Never mind."

"Why, what is it?"

"It's nothing."

"Unni, are you going to join Kim Dokja's Company?"

Jung Heewon, who was swallowing the drink she bought from a street vendor, gasped as she choked. "W-What? No! The name is too strange. Isn't it embarrassing to join a place like that?"

"I'm looking forward to it. The company name is a bit strange but it feels like I'm experiencing the workplace. Perhaps I will even receive a salary?"

"If you know what a real workplace is like, you'll think differently."

Lee Jihye pouted. "In any case, I'm looking for a chance to join. Master is also there."

"Yoo Joonghyuk-ssi has already joined?"

"Dokja ahjussi said so. This is Yoo Joonghyuk and my nebula!"

Of course, he never said anything like that but Jung Heewon reflexively looked up at the sky. However, she didn't hear the indirect message she was waiting for. She felt strangely uncomfortable.

[The constellation 'Lily Blooming in Aquarius' dislikes the humour of incarnation 'Lee Jihye'.]

Jung Heewon shook her head and looked at Kim Dokja who was busy in the square. He was so busy she hadn't seen his face for a few days and she didn't know what he was working so hard on.

Then Yoo Sangah's appearance caught Jung Heewon's eyes. Jung Heewon waved at Yoo Sangah who was sitting on a bench and staring blankly into empty air.

"Sangah-ssi! Are you going to join Dokja-ssi's nebula?"

Yoo Sangah discovered Jung Heewon and looked up with surprise. What was this woman thinking about that she lost her soul for a few days…

"My situation is a bit…"

"Ah, that's right. It is tough for Sangah-ssi."

Yoo Sangah was an incarnation of Olympus. It was a special case where she was supported by an entire nebula and it would be hard to join Kim Dokja's nebula. It was obvious what would happen if she received the sponsorship only to choose another nebula.

"Instead, I made an alliance offer. Some of the constellations have a friendly relationship with Dokja-ssi through me."

"Don't all the constellations of Olympus hate Dokja-ssi?"

"Not all of them. Heewon-ssi, did you join the nebula?"

"I'm still thinking about it." Jung Heewon looked back at the square again. "In fact, I'm not sure about joining. There is a problem with my sponsor and…"

Jung Heewon's high self-esteem seemed hurt and Yoo Sangah smiled gently.

"I think you will be a great help to Dokja-ssi if you join his nebula."

"I want to help if possible."

Fortunately or unfortunately, Jung Heewon wasn't the only one in a complicated situation.

In the middle of the distant square, Lee Hyunsung sat down like a dull big dog. Next to him were Shin Yoosung and Lee Gilyoung, who were squatting like baby cats as the three of them stared at Kim Dokja. To be exact, their eyes chased after him every time he moved. It was obvious what they were waiting for. Kim Dokja ignored them to the end.

"…There is still no word."

Jung Heewon nodded at Lee Jihye's words. "He will speak when the time comes. It is because he is a secretly introverted person."

Well, she also wanted to know what was going on. A long-awaited peace had come to the party but Kim Dokja was still thinking about something. Thus, they could only wait while doing nothing.

[The constellation 'Lily Blooming in Aquarius' is looking at you approvingly.]

[The constellation 'Commander of the Red Cosmos' is wary of the Demon King of Salvation.]

…There were strange angels so Jung Heewon wouldn't be bored for a while. Jung Heewon reluctantly put down her worries.

Then… the work suddenly began.

* * *

"Really? There is no way to contact them?"

"The channels leading to the Demon Realm are blocked. It is a powerful enchantment…"

Han Sooyoung's expression became grim at Lee Sookyung's words. She had been calling the dokkaebis since a while ago but none responded. Han Sooyoung looked down at the water bowl that contained the Good or Bad Luck, Disaster or Happiness Fortune.

Misfortune, misfortune, misfortune, misfortune, misfortune, misfortune, misfortune…

She couldn't count how many times 'misfortune' emerged.

"What the hell is going on?"

The last time 'great misfortune' appeared, Kim Dokja had to face a Lokapala of Vedas. However, now there were so many 'misfortunes'… it wasn't a great misfortune but it should be an extensive misfortune. The water in the bowl trembled and faint sparks appeared.

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is raising his head.]

"Black dragon?"

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is looking at the 73rd Demon Realm.]

"Do you know something?"

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is letting out a threatening cry.]

Her arm wrapped with a bandage was tingling and sparks appeared around the body that was in sync with the black dragon.

"Hey dude!"

The feelings of the black flame dragon were transmitted. The black dragon had never acted like this whenever he encountered an opponent.

[The constellation 'Expert at Playing Both Sides' has pale lips.]

[The constellation 'Guam Divine Doctor' is dripping saliva.]

[The constellation 'Great King Heoncheon Hongdo Gyungmun Wimu' is quietly putting down his

sword.]

[The constellation 'First Spiritualist of Joseon' is clearing his traces.]

The constellations of the Korean Peninsula were turning off their lights. It was as if they were hiding from a predator. Her bandaged arm kept tingling.

Han Sooyoung scattered Lee Sookyung's divination and unraveled the bandage to reveal the tattoo of the black dragon that was shining. Sparks burst and Han Sooyoung's right arm wrote letters in the air.

–A disaster of the stars is coming.

"Disaster of the stars? What is that?"

The arrogant 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' thought this situation was so urgent he had to manually write. She felt the will of the Abyssal Black Flame Dragon that wanted to stop her from going to the Demon Realm no matter what.

"Hey, don't make me nervous. Are you doing this again?"

She had been fooled by the Abyssal Black Flame Dragon more than once or twice. She didn't know what the black dragon was talking about but Kim Dokja had predicted Olympus' invasion of the Korean Peninsula. Thus, maybe he knew about this situation. No matter what came…

There were faint sparks as Han Sooyoung's hand moved through the air like a brush.

–The 73rd Demon Realm will perish.

It was the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint who noticed it first. She was lying on the wall of the industrial complex and dropped the smoking pipe in her mouth.

"…That guy was right."

The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint mumbled while the Breaking the Sky Sword emitted a blinding light as it was pulled out. After obtaining the name

Breaking the Sky Sword, she held this sword less than 10 times.

It was a sword that made her be called the disaster of Murim. The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint felt the texture of the sword against her palm and felt funny.

A disaster. What could be called a disaster? For human beings, disasters were natural phenomenon on a large scale. For examples, landslides, tsunamis and earthquakes. They were huge phenomenon that the power of humans couldn't resist.

For transcendents, it was nothing more than a manipulation of physical phenomena. They were existences far beyond human standards. They could cause landslides and tsunamis with a blade and could quiet them. For transcendents like the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint, the word disaster meant something different from the standards of ordinary humans.

Perhaps the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint was facing the answer now.

Small sparks bounced and Kyrgios was suddenly by her side. The aura of Electrification was already rising from Kyrgios' body. The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint slowly raised her magic power. The two transcendents looked at the distant end of the void. Kyrgios asked, "It is him?"

It wasn't yet visible to the naked eye but a presence was clearly heading towards this place. The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint replied in a heavy voice, "There is no doubt. It is the guy who tried to devour the First Murim."

Darkness was entering the atmosphere. From the other side of the universe that swallowed up even light, something was approaching while devouring the scattered probability.

Chapter 280: Ep. 53 - Demon King of Salvation, II

[Hidden scenario — Escape the Demon Realm has begun!]

At this time, all dokkaebis of the bureau were concentrating on the panel.

"Are you kidding me? Why is there no dokkaebi to proceed when the scenario is released?"

It was the other dokkaebis who blocked Bihyung rioting alone. After the Demon King Selection, all dokkaebis who operated the channels were withdrawn from the 73rd Demon Realm.

"Where is Baram? Shit, that Dokgak jerk!"

"…"

"What are you doing here why the Demon Realm channels are running out of control? If you're going to do this, let me go there!"

"Bihyung, do you think it is possible to broadcast now?"

Even the prideful Dokgak had given up on this scenario. The bureau had exhausted all the available probability during the Demon King Selection. Of course, that wasn't the only problem.

–Baat!

There was the cry of a baby dokkaebi who knew nothing. Some dokkaebis sighed and turned their eyes away while others couldn't take their eyes off the screen to the end.

The distant presence had crossed the Star Stream and was covering the sky of the 73rd Demon Realm.

Not all beings lived in the scenario. If the constellations were living in a 'story', the outer gods were based on a confused 'story'. They were beings born from the subconscious of the story. A monster roaming the deep sea of the scenario that wasn't possible for the dokkaebis.

'This isn't the right scenario'.

Bihyung looked at 'it' that was opening its massive mouth and prayed with a gloomy heart.

'Run away Kim Dokja'.

"What is this?"

It was only a few minutes after Jung Heewon had noticed 'it'. Suddenly, the hairs on her body rose and sweat flowed down. She looked around and saw the citizens who lost consciousness or were vomiting up blood on the ground. Lee Jihye stood beside her and was squeezing her shoulders with dim eyes.

"Jihye! Wake up!"

Her shoulders shook several times before Lee Jihye barely managed to look up. "U-Uh, uhhh… unni…"

Her nails dug into her shoulders and blood was flowing.

Jung Heewon looked around the square. Yoo Sangah was already moving. "Everyone, gather this way!"

Her voice was filled with magic power and the party members came to their senses one by one.

"W-What is that?"

Lee Hyunsung and the children looked up at the sky. Lee Gilyoung staggered while Shin Yoosung grabbed onto Lee Hyunsung and trembled.

At this moment, all the party members in the square were thinking the same thing. It didn't matter how many books they read or how many words they knew.

'It can't be described'.

Yoo Sangah, Lee Hyunsung and Jung Heewon were the same. All human words were helpless in front of the coming existence. The entire sky was covered by the darkness of this being.

The party members couldn't understand what they were seeing. Thanks to this, they lost their means to cope.

If a typhoon blew, they could place newspapers against the window. If a tsunami occurred, they could enter sturdy high-rise buildings. If a fallout started, they could hide in a basement with thick barriers. But this…

How the hell could they stop it? Was it possible to stop it?

Then a man appeared in the sky where the light had disappeared. He exhausted his probability as he shone brightly.

Jung Heewon discovered his appearance and was filled with relief. Most of the constellations who attended the banquet left the Demon Realm two days ago. However, it wasn't everyone.

Surrounding by brilliant sparks, the man stood on the walls. He shouted loudly, [Everyone, wake up!]

Goryeo's First Sword, Cheok Jungyeong. The huge roar echoed from the walls and the incarnations with the strongest minds barely regained their sanity. They watched Cheok Jungyeong. They didn't know what was coming but there was Cheok Jungyeong on this side. Cheok Jungyeong also had experience fighting against an outer god.

[Outer god! Why did you come here? This isn't your scenario!]

It was a resounding yell towards the sky. A light of hope emerged in the faces of the incarnations after they heard this voice. Cheok Jungyeong shouted once again.

[What a great foreign power, eating up the extra probability!]

Despite the repeated calls, there was no response from the sky. Just like an elephant didn't see an ant, 'it' didn't even look at Cheok Jungyeong. Cheok Jungyeong's expression hardened. If the elephant didn't see an ant then he would make it look.

[■■■■■! Indescribable Distance!]

At this moment, something stared at Cheok Jungyeong. Sparks exploded from Cheok Jungyeong's body. His outer skin was charred black. Cheok Jungyeong's tight muscles were ruptured and blood flowed as a broken star relic flew through the air as ashes. It was the price for merely calling the name. Nevertheless, Cheok Jungyeong raised his sword without backing down.

[It is a sword that cuts the mountains, the sea and even the sun. With this sword, I'll cut you this time.]

The enormity that couldn't be grouped into 'one' description filled Cheok Jungyeong's eyes.

He didn't know where to cut because he couldn't see where it started or ended. In the infinity that even a handful of possibilities didn't exist, Cheok Jungyeong moved.

[Ohhhhhh!]

A beam of light shot from Cheok Jungyeong.

Cutting 1,000 people with one sword. Cutting a great mountain with two swords. Separating the sea with three swords.

The sword shone like a meteor shower as it moved through the vast darkness. For a moment, a ray of light was drawn into the depths of the sky. The incarnations saw the light and were thrilled.

Goryeo's First Sword was fighting the outer god. The next moment, they heard a strange noise in the sky. It was the sound of a star that had finished its life cycle in a distant galaxy. Then something fell from the sky.

"A-Ahh, ah…"

Someone with good vision discovered it first. The cut off arms and legs. Only half of the incarnation body was left and the areas cut off were falling to the ground. Surprise and disbelief. Even those who couldn't see Cheok Jungyeong's expression knew what he was feeling.

A sword that cut a mountain, a sea and even the sun. There was something that this swordsmanship couldn't cut. It was 'unbreakable' from the beginning. It was the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint who caught Cheok Jungyeong's ruined body.

[…Remember the sword.]

Cheok Jungyeong's incarnation body died and he left. It was the incarnation body of a narrative-grade constellation. He broke Surya's train and cut off the legs of an outer god. Yet such a constellation lost his incarnation body in a single moment of battle.

"U-Uwaaaaack!"

The screams of the citizens were heard as fear encroached on their mind. The darkness filled the horizon in all directions. The ground wriggled and moved like a fetus. It was the sound of a giant worm eating its prey. It seemed that the horizon was getting closer. The intensity of the light shining on the ground gradually decreased.

[The 73rd Demon Realm is groaning with pain!]

The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint and Kyrgios had already seen this scene in the First Murim.

Kyrgios spoke, "…I'm going to die here because of my crazy disciple."

"Neither you or I have any luck with our disciples."

The world let out a scream. The darkness filled with greet was approaching and eating the 73rd Demon Realm. Kyrgios concentrated all the magic power of the Purest Sword Force.

"This is why we have to stick to probability."

The Indescribable Distance. The outer god, called the disaster of the stars, was in a sense, a probability storm itself. It was the janitor who came from chaos caused by rules of the Star Stream being broken.

"Things have already gone wrong so it can't be helped. I twist it with all my strength!"

The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint cried out and two transcendent lights shone brightly.

The sword of Breaking the Sky that split apart the sky. She held the power of First Murim in her arms as the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint shot towards the sky.

Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship.

Destruction skill.

Breaking the Sky Meteor.

It was the sword technique that Yoo Joonghyuk had used in the past. It was the Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship that defeated countless constellations. The first Breaking the Sky Sword shot towards the sky. The explosive magic power was radiant in the air and the meteor sword drew colourful shapes.

However, 'it' didn't even receive a scratch. Like dust drifting in space, the sword disappeared into the void. Her swordsmanship that broke the sky couldn't destroy the universe.

"Kyrgios!"

Kyrgios received the signal and stepped on the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint's shoulder before jumping. Kyrgios accelerated with the power of Electrification, penetrating through the atmosphere and flying into the expanse.

An unending universe. In the shadow of the darkness, Kyrgios felt the darkness covering the sky and the gaze of the stars looking from beyond the darkness.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is emitting a golden light.]

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is roaring!]

It was a place where stars stayed. It was a place that could never be reached with short human arms. Kyrgios also knew it. Thus, he tried. He tried and tried again.

He stepped on the meteor fragments left behind by the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint and Kyrgios jumped higher and higher. He rushed towards the unreachable stars and the mortal existence who build his history through hard work finally reached the stars.

He reached the universe. Kyrgios finally reached a position where he could see 'it'. It was reminiscent of a huge fog. The fog without a definite shape was greedily devouring the 73rd Demon Realm. The centre of the fog contained a thread left behind by Cheok Jungyeong.

The blue-white power climbed to the limit and was concentrated in Kyrgios's right hand.

[From the smallest particle, the universe began.]

Kyrgios' right hand moved along with his fierce cry. Like a big bang, the blue-white energy struck the centre of the fog. There was a white flash and all citizens closed their eyes.

It was the moment the two transcendent forces overwhelmed the darkness covering the universe. The moment the light was turned off, there was a huge crack in the darkness that covered the sky.

The citizens shouted, "H-He did it."

"He did it! The transcendent did it!"

However, the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint's expression wasn't good. The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint looked at Kyrgios piercing through the expanse and laughed faintly.

'It is up to here'.

Beyond the falling Kyrgios, the sky was splitting. Something in the darkness was awakening. It was a pupil. A huge eye had come to the world. The white lens and black pupils followed the falling Kyrgios. The Breaking the Sky Sword Sword Saint moved and Kyrgios turned around. The transcendent power collided with an irresistible atmosphere.

Kyrgios' long hair turned white. The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint's muscles swelled up until they seemed like they were going to burst. As if suffering from aging, the two transcendent bodies were dying in front of the distant time.

The 'status' of the universe was different. They became transcendent beyond mortals and gained the power to destroy constellations. However, the history of the grueling training they went through was dust compared to the 'history' of the universe.

[The 'Indescribable Distance' is looking at the 73rd Demon Realm.]

The citizens became crazy and rushed around. "Escape! Escape!"

"Kieeeeeek!"

The citizens wept like wild beasts without knowing what they were saying.

[The portal can't be used due to the intervention of a strong presence.]

"What, what, what?"

"W-W-W-What?"

"Wwwwwwhat…"

The bodies of the citizens burst all over. Some of them turned into bizarre beings and others had tentacles emerge from their mouths.

The world was going crazy. However, it wasn't everyone. Before the gaze of that absurd being, there were those who didn't lay down their swords.

"…Not yet. We can fight."

It was Jung Heewon. Jung Heewon gasped but didn't kneel down as she controlled her nausea. One by one, the party members stood beside her. The reason they were able to endure was simple.

[Giant Story 'Demon Realm's Spring' is protecting the incarnations.]

It was because this world was refusing to perish. They were the history of this 73rd Demon Realm.

[The constellation 'Queen of the Darkest Spring' is shouting to flee!]

[The constellation 'Abandoned Lover of the Labyrinth' is screaming.]

[The constellation 'Seo Ae Il Pil' is closing his eyes in pain.]

The party members also knew it. Any power they had was shabby in front of that mighty being. Jung Heewon grabbed the Sword of Judgment and coughed up blood as she shouted.

"Uriel! Please!"

There was no reaction from the Demon-like Judge of Fire. It was the same for Gong Pildu's Defense Master and Lee Hyunsung's Master of Steel. This time, they didn't respond to the request of the incarnations. No, they couldn't respond.

[All the stars in the night sky are silent.]

The constellations in the sky didn't offer anything. Just as thunder and lightning couldn't be controlled, 'that' wasn't something that could be received.

The terrified Osu pissed. Jang Hayoung collapsed on the ground and vomited. The senseless Gong Pildu started to build meaningless walls. Han Myungoh shivered and looked around for a place for his one leg. However, his foot didn't move. In front of the creature that devoured the world, there was no straw for his foot.

"Dokja-ssi!"

Then there was Kim Dokja. Yoo Sangah cried out and everyone looked at the same place. It was the top of the unfinished clock tower. As time flowed slowly, Kim Dokja stood on the edge of the tower.

[The constellation 'Demon King of Salvation' is looking at the night sky.]

A star that uniquely illuminated the night sky that had its light turned off. It was the Demon King of Salvation.

Chapter 281: Ep. 53 - Demon King of Salvation, III

Jung Heewon muttered, "…Dokja-ssi?"

Beyond the glare of Kim Dokja's light, the huge eye was looking down at the world. The moment she faced this eye, Jung Heewon's entire body trembled. The ground was distorted and shook like a tsunami was approaching.

[The 73rd Demon Realm is crying out with pain!]

Lava burst from the broken crust and the overflowing heat once again disappeared into the empty stomach. The whole world was becoming narrower around the industrial complex. Then it was obvious what would've happened to the other industrial complexes.

The transcendent magic power amplified by the story moved. It was unreasonable to directly oppose that 'eye' but the seismic waves could be slowed.

"Quickly, you stupid disciple!"

Kyrgios shouted and the space beyond the walls of the industrial complex distorted. The horizon was swallowed up by a huge fog and disappeared into the darkness. No, it wasn't the horizon any longer.

Nevertheless, Jung Heewon didn't release her string of hope. If what she heard was right, the teachers and Kim Dokja had already predicted this situation.

"Ahjussi! What the hell is this?"

Cheok Jungyeong's body disappeared and Kyrgios and the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint were in a poor state. However, Kim Dokja hadn't acted until the situation became this bad.

Kim Dokja's lips moved as he constantly muttered something. His eyes moved quickly as he looked for something in the distant universe.

Jung Heewon realized it. Just as they hadn't given up, Kim Dokja hadn't given up either. Kim Dokja slowly came down towards the ground. Jung Heewon shouted as a signal, "Get ready!"

Lee Hyunsung used Steel Transformation and asked, "Dokja-ssi! What should we do?"

Everyone was watching Kim Dokja. They didn't know what but Kim Dokja would have something in mind.

Kim Dokja slowly blinked and looked at the party members. Over the past few days, Kim Dokja gave many things to the party members. Lee Hyunsung gained a new shield and Jung Heewon got a new skill. Lee Jihye's magic power was strengthened and Shin Yoosung and Lee Gilyoung learnt a large number of control skills. The party members believed it.

[Giant Story 'Demon Realm's Spring' is moving for the owner of the story.]

If they had this giant story that they built together and the plan prepared by Kim Dokja, they would be able to knock down even the strongest enemy. They even destroyed Surya's train. Even if this enemy came…

"Ah…jussi…?"

The earliest one to sense something unusual was Shin Yoosung. There were rough sparks as Shin Yoosung's knees sank downwards. Her body couldn't move, like there was a chain tied around her.

「 This is the story of Dokja. 」

The giant story that flowed from Kim Dokja's body became powerful shackles around the party members. Lee Hyunsung was slowly sinking to the ground. His face was blank as he asked, "Dokja-ssi? What is this…?"

Kim Dokja's expression was still unreadable. He was there but he didn't seem together with them. The party members thought they were all in this together so why?

Why did Kim Dokja seem to be there alone? There was no 'story' that existed alone. Kim Dokja's 'King of a Kingless World' was linked to Yoo Joonghyuk's 'One Who Succeeded the Name of the King' while Jung Heewon's 'Exclusion of Future Evil' was linked to Kim Dokja's One Who Showed Contempt for a Streamer.

Not to mention the giant story that was a share in a larger story. The giant story 'Demon Realm's Spring' was of everyone who participated in the terrible battlefield. Nevertheless, at this moment, the Demon Realm's Spring was only for Kim Dokja.

[The chief narrator of the giant story 'Demon Realm's Spring' has started his story.]

All the stakes in the giant story given to the party members were being controlled. The party members resisted using their stake in the giant story. Jung Heewon, Yoo Sangah, Lee Hyunsung, Lee Gilyoung, Shin Yoosung…

Even with all the shares they had, they couldn't defeat the gigantic will of a single person. It might've been different if Yoo Joonghyuk was awake but Yoo Joonghyuk wasn't here now.

Jung Heewon sat on the ground and cried out painfully, "Wait! What is this? What the hell is this?"

Jung Heewon stared at Kim Dokja's expression and finally realized something.

Before a looming crisis, Kim Dokja always made a certain expression. The corners of his lips curved slightly and he looked a bit unlucky, but it reassured the members. Now Kim Dokja's expression…

Why?

"If you were going to do this anyway, why have you been preparing us for the past few days? Why give me these skills?"

At Jung Heewon's desperate cry, Kim Dokja opened his mouth for the first time. "I told you how to deal with the sasquatch in the 28th scenario."

"T-Then my shield…"

"It will be useful for catching the 'algonkin snake' in the 35th scenario. Don't forget your skills. Didn't I tell you all how to use it?"

As always, there was a reason for the arrangement. To the companions who were looking bewildered, Kim Dokja gave reasons one by one.

"Then this… this scenario…"

However, none of the arrangements were for this situation.

The darkness was covering the horizon. Kim Dokja watched the darkness and spoke, "I'll handle this situation."

"Shit! Don't talk nonsense!"

Jung Heewon shouted. "I can't let you go! Don't go alone again! Please!"

It was impossible for Kim Dokja to deal with that thing alone. The two transcendents and Cheok Jungyeong couldn't block it. There was no way Kim

Dokja alone could face such a thing.

"Aaaaaaack! I don't like this! Dokja hyung!"

She grew stronger because she didn't want to be in debt to him like last time. She performed the hellish personal scenarios and frantically defeated monsters. Jung Heewon shouted as she coughed up blood. "It is you who said we couldn't do this alone! You were the one who gathered us! You told me all of this!"

An unfamiliar true voice flowed from the lips of the smiling Kim Dokja. [I know.]

"What do you know? The person who knows, how…?"

[Still, not now.]

Lee Hyunsung screamed, "I don't want this! I don't need this type of help. I'll die here! I'll die here with Dokja-ssi!"

Dying here. Kim Dokja, who was staring at the sky, lowered his gaze towards the party members.

[The constellation 'Demon King of Salvation' is looking at the party.]

The party members heard the message. They looked at Kim Dokja's fluttering hair. They saw his long eyelashes, his eyes, his white cheeks and sadly distorted lips. Suddenly, they realized that Kim Dokja could exist in this world with such an expression.

[Please live.]

They listened helplessly like the true voice was a command.

[The demon king 'Demon King of Salvation' is looking out.]

Kim Dokja's expression was changing. The sleeping power of the demon king was awakening.

[The story 'Demon King of Salvation' has begun.]

The stories of the 73rd Demon Realm started to gather around him. The white coat was stained black from the demonic energy and two horns rose from Kim Dokja's head. It was the power of the 'Demon King Transformation' that only a demon king could use.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is looking at his friend.]

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is paying homage to his adversary.]

[The constellation 'Goryeo's First Sword' is making a furious yell.]

[The constellation 'Supreme God of Light' is watching the end of the 73rd Demon Realm.]

Dark feathers stretched from Kim Dokja's shoulders and reached towards the night sky. The second hand of the clock tower moved slowly and Kim Dokja soared. As if leaving this time, the Demon King of Salvation became a light and flew towards the sky.

The moment Kim Dokja penetrated the expanse, thunder struck. A few thunderbolts poured down and the fog coming from the horizon stopped.

It was as if time had stopped. The party members looked up at the night sky where Kim Dokja disappeared and couldn't breathe properly. Time continued passing on the incomplete clock tower. One minute, two minutes, three minutes…

No matter how much time passed, Kim Dokja didn't come back. Jung Heewon screamed, "Kim Dokjaaaaa!"

At almost the same time, the transcendents were thrown from the wall. The ragged Breaking the Sky Sword Saint and Kyrgios staggered and rose from their spot.

The fog started eating the world again. It ate everything on the horizon and was nearing the walls. The walls were disintegrating. People screamed.

Jung Heewon was busy thinking. 'He can't stop it. Kim Dokja can't stop that'.

Fog covered the entire industrial complex. The next moment, Jung Heewon felt her body being transmitted elsewhere.

Yoo Sangah closed her eyes like she had given up and Lee Hyunsung howled as he watched the sky.

Han Myungoh sat down and Gong Pildu guarded the destroyed castle.

Everyone was leaking white sparks. Then everyone in the Yoo Joonghyuk - Kim Dokja Industrial Complex were sent somewhere else.

A threatening cry was heard from the fog like it was furious.

[■■■■… ■■■■■■!]

Soon, the darkness swallowed up everything.

In the faint uproar, Yoo Joonghyuk opened his eyes. The muscles of his body didn't move well. The aftereffects of Recovery were big.

He stared up at the cracked ceiling and took deep breaths to calm himself. Then he remembered what happened.

There was the Demon King Selection. He refused to regress. He fought with Kim Dokja and won against Surya. He thought about it and energy filled his head.

They won. They had won.

Magic power moved roughly through his body and he felt a bit dizzy. His senses slowly returned. He blinked once again and the scene around him gradually entered his eyes.

It was a hospital room. He could feel the texture of a soft bed and his right hand touched something hard.

Yoo Joonghyuk raised his upper body with a groan and saw a small pocket watch wrapped around his arm with a watch strap. The moving hands of the clock were like his heartbeat. Yoo Joonghyuk looked down at his watch.

There was the faint glimmer of sunshine outside the window. The sunshine was too bright for the Demon Realm.

Yoo Joonghyuk slowly rose and went to the window. Beyond the walls of the collapsed industrial complex, he saw a strange but familiar scene. The broken statue of Admiral Yi Sunsin and the ruined Gyeongbok Palace. Smoke was coming from the collapsed buildings of Gwanghwamun.

It was Seoul.

He could see the party members sitting down outside the window. Yoo Joonghyuk's head was confused.

Why… they were in Seoul? It was the entire industrial complex.

Yoo Joonghyuk looked at the party members with bewildered eyes. He didn't see a familiar face. "…Kim Dokja?"

The moment he muttered this, a message was heard.

[The story 'Life and Death Companions' is silent.]

Yoo Joonghyuk heard the message with a blank expression and stared at the window again.

…Not there. He couldn't be seen anywhere.

Yoo Joonghyuk looked up at the sky. The sky was bright enough that the light of the stars wasn't needed. He counted the light of the constellation beyond them. He counted and counted again. He didn't know. There were so many stars that he couldn't find the person.

Yoo Joonghyuk opened his mouth and spoke in a trembling voice.

[The item Midday Tryst has been used.]

The message window that hadn't been used for a while was opened and a message was sent.

[The message has been returned.]

It must be an error. He sent the message repeatedly, several times over and over. He sent it, sent it and sent it again. As the messages kept being returned, Yoo Joonghyuk's gaze slowly lowered. Then finally.

[You have exhausted the quota for today's messages.]

There was a ticking pocket watch in the foreground while messages filled Yoo Joonghyuk's vision.

[The constellation 'Demon King of Salvation' doesn't exist in the Star Stream.]

[The constellation 'Demon King of Salvation' doesn't exist in the Star Stream.]

[The constellation 'Demon King of Salvation' doesn't exist in the Star Stream.]

[The constellation 'Demon King of Salvation' doesn't exist in the Star Stream.]

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[The constellation 'Demon King of Salvation' doesn't exist in the Star Stream.]

Chapter 282: Ep. 53 - Demon King of Salvation, IV

[The exclusive skill 'Fourth Wall' is shaking violently.]

I didn't mean to do this in the beginning. The start was shortly after the battle with Surya. The day he gained a giant story and protected the Demon Realm with his companions.

–Three Ways to Survive in a Ruined World (3rd Revision).txt

I received the third revision of Ways of Survival.

「 When he opened his eyes, Yoo Joonghyuk thought, 'It is the fourth regression'. 」

At first, I read it with a light heart. I was looking forward to it. The current 'third turn' was more perfect than any of the turns that Yoo Joonghyuk experienced. In the 25th scenario, I became a demon king and got a giant story. Maybe in this revision, the ending I wanted would be recorded. By the way.

「 I thought it was going well. That's what that person said. Everyone was fine until the 'outer god' appeared. 」

「 Why? Why? Why? Why? Why? Why? Why? Why? Why? Why? Why? Why? Why? Why? Why? 」

Yoo Joonghyuk was different from the first and second revisions. He lost his reason, was hasty and didn't make plans. Yoo Joonghyuk was seriously broken by something that happened in the third round.

「 On that day, everything in the third round was over. 」

I read this part and realized what was wrong. I looked at the black fog coming over the walls and bit my lips. The Fourth Wall wriggled in my head and spewed out sentences.

「 Kim Dokja thought: It might fail. 」

I couldn't survive if I died this time. Now I didn't have my resurrection attribute. Once I was swallowed up by the outer god, I would be entirely wiped out. However, if I could stop him…

「 I can't beat him no matter how I look through Ways of Survival. 」

Han Sooyoung had told me that the Earth scenarios faithfully followed the original trajectory. If we passed this crisis safely, we could aim for areas of the original novel and head for the desired ending.

Below the clock tower, my colleagues were looking up at me.

「 No, there is one way. The 'failed' method in the original. 」

I just had to do it well.

「 They have to live. They might not like it but they have to live. 」

I couldn't let anyone die.

「 Only then will everyone be able to reach the ending. 」

The night sky split apart and I saw a giant eye looking down at the ground. The transcendents sank down while coughing up blood.

Kyrgios was already told the story in advance and shouted, "Quickly, you stupid disciple!"

I nodded and descended from the clock tower. I couldn't waste the time that Cheok Jungyeong and the masters had earned.

"I can't let you go! Don't go alone again! Please!"

"Aaaaaaack! I don't like this! Dokja hyung!"

"It is you who said we couldn't do this alone! You were the one who gathered us! You told me all of this!"

I heard the cries of the party members and told them the necessary stories. Really. I really only told them what they needed.

[Please live.]

My head tickled as horns emerged from it. My back was sore from the wings. I could hear the screams of Jung Heewon and cries of Lee Hyunsung. The children reached out for me. Yoo Sangah, who heard the story from me in advance, couldn't take her eyes off me while crying. Yoo Sangah would do things well.

The moment I pushed off from the ground, my panoramic view changed. The grieving voices of the party members drifted away. Maybe I wanted to tell them something.

「 I want to see the ending with you. 」

There was a sound as I pierced through the atmosphere and the fog let out a pained scream.

[The constellation 'God of Wine and Ecstasy' has dropped his glass.]

[The constellation 'Queen of the Darkest Spring' is letting out a deep sigh.]

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' wishes you good luck.]

Some constellations were worried about me.

[The constellation 'Commander of the Red Cosmos' dislikes you.]

[Some constellations are denouncing your actions.]

Some constellations criticized me. No one sponsored me any coins. Perhaps even the constellations knew. This wasn't a story for coins.

「 Wiping his cheeks, Kim Dokja looked at the vast universe. 」

The centre of the fog. I could see the small scar made by Cheok Jungyeong, the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint and Kyrgios. I activated Electrification and threw myself towards the scar. It was a method I would've never attempted if it was the original novel.

However, now there was no other way. The outer gods didn't share their language with unqualified beings. The Purest Sword Force rose in my right hand while I raised Unbroken Faith.

Demonic energy moved through the blood vessels in my body and the black aura overlaid with the blue-white energy. A powerful shock wave burst from the centre of the fog as the magic power in my right hand exploded. A very small gap opened for a moment and I didn't hesitate.

I entered the dark fog and the outer god was revealed. Like white blood cells that caught infecting bacteria, thousands, tens of thousands, hundreds of millions… countless particles looked at me at the same time. It was as if they were eyes.

Indescribable Distance, the Nameless Mist. It was the name of the disaster that drifted in the Star Stream. I opened my mouth towards that being.

[The great outer god.]

Strictly speaking, this mist wasn't the original form of the outer god. It was a terrible prototype. However, this alter ego contained enormous power.

[Please. Please leave.]

The particles pulsed at my words. Of course, I didn't expect words to work. The fog particles gathered around me started to eat at me.

[Giant Story 'Demon Realm's Spring' is protecting your incarnation body!]

[The Fourth Wall is protecting your spirit!]

The influence of the Fourth Wall kept me from falling in front of this vast existence. However, it was impossible to stop the 'giant story' from being damaged little by little.

[■■■■······■■■■]

The fog was talking in an unknown language. Perhaps I couldn't hear it properly even if it was interpreted. The Indescribable Distance was closer to an unconscious thing. It was a hungry predator that only used its instincts to follow the story.

My presence grew thinner in the choking fog.

[…Damn son of a bitch.]

Even Uriel descending couldn't stop this guy. It was the same for the current the Great Sage, Heaven's Equal and the Abyssal Black Flame Dragon. It might be possible if all three came but that wouldn't happen.

「 There is only one thing that can help Kim Dokja now. 」

An existence that didn't appear in Ways of Survival. There was only one thing that could possibly help me against this fog. The starlight could be dimly seen between the fog particles. I came all this way just to give him the 'right' voice.

[Secretive Plotter!]

The voice that was released with all its might penetrated the fog and crossed the interstellar space. The fog wriggled and roared as something shone from across the distant galaxy.

I once again shouted, [I will make a 'Outer World Covenant' with you!]

Yoo Joonghyuk was unhappy every time he made an Outer World Covenant. It was because he couldn't afford it or had to fulfill a ridiculous contract. But this was the only way. This was the first and last way for me to live.

The fog didn't start eating. It didn't stop eating me or the 73rd Demon Realm. I got a bad feeling as I saw the stories being broken. Could Secretive Plotter stop this guy?

Time and space creaked and everything started slowing down. The overwhelming power was controlling all the time and space in the area. The fog cried out and the life activities of everything around me suddenly stopped. Like living creatures frozen in a glacier, they were trapped in that time forever.

The next moment, I stood in an unknown galaxy. I looked down at my feet and saw the scene of the Star Stream. It was outside the Star Stream, the furthest place of the nebulae of stars. The numerous stars were shining beautifully at my feet.

[It is a boring sight.]

Unlike other outer gods, this voice was very sharp and clear. A shadow with a man's shape was wavering.

[I waited for you, the one pursuing the 'final chapter'.]

은밀한 모략가

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A whiteness could be seen as I looked into that gaping mouth. I just listened to him but my body was shaking. An endless unknown darkness. The evil that stood in the centre of the darkness was staring at me. I wasn't trembling just because of the ominous status of Secretive Plotter.

[No, perhaps I should say that you are pursuing eternity.]

I stared at him and was silent for a moment. "…How did you know?"

[■■.]

His words had two meanings for me.

Eternity. Final chapter. Two opposing meanings were implied in one word. It was like the messages I heard when I got a giant story.

–You have obtained the qualification of 'eternity'.

–You have obtained the qualification of 'final chapter'.

Oddly, my 'end' had two meanings. When the constellations, including the Mass Production Maker, asked me about the filtering, I replied with 'final chapter' because it was easier to persuade the constellations. I never told anyone that my ■■ had two meanings.

[Once you live for many years, the things that aren't said are heard louder.]

[The exclusive skill, 'Fourth Wall' is shaking ominously!]

[The Fourth Wall is protecting you by bulking up.]

[The Fourth Wall is baring its teeth towards the Secretive Plotter.]

[Fragment of the 'Last Wall'… don't worry. I don't intend to hurt you.]

Unknown laughter emerged from the shadow's mouth.

Secretive Plotter. Along with the Great Sage, Heaven's Equal, the Abyssal Black Flame Dragon and Uriel, he was a constellation who had been watching me the longest. An existence I hadn't read about in Ways of Survival.

I took a deep breath. I practiced my meeting with him several times but I didn't know it would be like this.

"Nice to meet you, Secretive Plotter."

I didn't know him. However, that didn't mean I couldn't make any guesses.

"The 'crawling chaos' in the depths of the scenario."

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* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)

Chapter 283: Ep. 53 - Demon King of Salvation, V

The Crawling Chaos. One of the outer gods that was closest to the 'origin' of the universe and favourable to humans… this was according to mythology. In fact, there was no mention of him in Ways of Survival.

[The Crawling Chaos… did the 'Last Wall' call me that?]

"It's just my guess."

[It is literature left by the 'recorders of fear'. Believing in records that aren't even 100 years old, you are more naive than I thought. The unknown can't be revealed in human language.]

I bit my lips. There wasn't much known about the outer gods in the myths that were the prototypes for Ways of Survival. In the 74th turn of Ways of Survival, one of the 'recorders of fear' left the following remark: 「 "Everything we wrote was a lie. It was the only lie we could use to explain the unknown horrors." 」

I was a bit daunted as I asked, "…Are the myths on Earth wrong?"

[I am Secretive Plotter. That is enough.]

It was an ambiguous answer but also a sufficient one. I didn't know if he was the 'Crawling Chaos' or not. At the very least, it was clear that Secretive Plotter was undoubtedly a strong outer god.

"I have a request."

[You want to ask me to stop that.]

"That's right."

The Secretive Plotter looked down as the mass of fog swallowed a planet. The time of the world was slowed down by the power of Secretive Plotter but it wasn't completely halted. The Secretive Plotter kept looking down as he spoke.

[The fog is a disaster originating from the beginning. It is impossible to eliminate it completely.]

"I know that there are ways."

The Secretive Plotter just looked down at the universe while disregarding my words. I waited nervously for what he would say next.

The shimmering shadow made a disturbing sound. I didn't think it would feel like this when I heard the indirect messages on the channel. I thought he was a good constellation with lots of playfulness and friendliness…

The shadow currently in front of me only gave off a cold and frightening sensation. I didn't know what happened but the appearance of the 73rd Demon Realm suddenly seemed close. It was as if I was looking through a telescope of enormous magnification as I saw the people of the industrial complex.

–Kim Dokjaaaaa!

Jung Heewon's voice seemed like an auditory hallucination. I saw the party members screaming in despair.

[Why are you trying to save them? You can see the ending even if you live alone.]

"The ending is only meaningful if they are there."

As I spoke, I stimulated dozens of questions and answers in my head. Both my hands were sweating. I couldn't fail here. No matter what, I had to convince the Secretive Plotter in this conversation.

[What if they don't want it?]

I slowly opened my mouth.

「 Dammit, Kim Dokja! Stop! Please! Come back! 」

「 I don't want this! I don't want to survive this way. 」

「 I'll do anything. If you die, I'll die. If you are going to sit still, I'll sit still. Please don't do this!

Please! 」

The voices of my party members were heard using Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint. They didn't say it but I heard the words.

[What if the ending they wanted was to die with you there? Do you still want to save them?]

I barely managed to open my mouth. "…Yes."

[It isn't salvation. It is a curse.]

I couldn't come up with an excuse. It was my story that answered on my behalf.

[The story 'Demon King of Salvation' is continuing.]

The Secretive Plotter watched the story coming from me and kept asking,

[Using those who should've died, changing the world line, hurting everyone and reaching the ending you desire… what is the meaning?]

The empty eyes of the shadow were shining. An eerie chill went down my spine.

[No matter what you do or what story you make, you can't truly reach them.]

The indirect messages didn't reveal the essence of the constellations. Just as I couldn't fully understand the characters from reading the books. Maybe it was a mistake to see the Secretive Plotter.

However, it was too late to back down. I opened my mouth after a moment. "…I heard that once in my childhood. Still, there is still the 'wall' left behind."

They were words that Jang Hayoung once said.

"Even if there is an insurmountable wall between me and then, even if it isn't heard by the person beyond the wall, I can write something on the wall and at the very least, the wall will change."

I wasn't able to say a proper goodbye to Jang Hayoung. Perhaps he was in the ward like Yoo Joonghyuk. "Maybe after a very long time, somebody might look at the wall."

There were no words from Secretive Plotter for a while. Every sentence had a different meaning to the interpreter. To the Secretive Plotter who lived for a very long time, my words might sound completely different. Even so, these were the only words I could squeeze out with my 28 years of wisdom. I just hoped that these words would move something in the Secretive Plotter.

[I don't agree with your method but I'm curious.]

Finally, the Secretive Plotter opened his mouth.

[Let's say you reach the end of everything using your method and save the world. Then what about the other worlds?]

"Huh?"

…Other worlds? The moment I was about to speak, the universe at my feet flipped over like a card. The cards that were divided into dozens and hundreds of pieces were shining in their own way with different colours and shapes.

It was a dimension more distant than the Star Stream. A world that was blurry but clearly existed. It contained the world of Ways of Survival that I had read.

There was Yoo Joonghyuk who died in the Theater Dungeon in the eighth round.

There was the Yoo Joonghyuk who went to the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint in the 18th round.

There was the 41st round Yoo Joonghyuk who made the choice to sacrifice his colleagues.

There was the 181st round Yoo Joonghyuk who stood up from despair.

…

The stories of the Yoo Joonghyuk who once saved me were on display in front of me. In addition, I knew the ending of all the regressions.

[What about all the worlds you didn't save?]

It was an unthinkable question. No, it was a question I didn't want to think about. In order to stop that story, I changed Yoo Joonghyuk's third turn.

All the events of the original Ways of Survival and all the worlds that protected me in my childhood…

Were they going to be nonexistent now? The Secretive Plotter looked at me like it was interesting.

[I will fulfill your request.]

Suddenly, the screen on the floor changed to the 73rd Demon Realm. I didn't understand this whim but Secretive Plotter decided to accept the deal with me.

[However, there is a condition.]

I had expected it. All Outer World Covenants were subject to severe conditions. "Anything is fine, unless it requires me to be subordinate to you or my death."

The mouth of the Secretive Plotter opened and revealed something white. It was as if the conditions I mentioned were ridiculous.

[Sometimes you might have to risk your life. It is all up to you.]

"Okay. However, please save my party members first before speaking the terms."

[As I said before, I can't eliminate the fog.]

"Then…?"

[I can only save the mortals in the industrial complex. Is that okay?]

I paused for a moment before nodding. I thought I knew what the Secretive Plotter was going to do. "Can you move them to a safe place?"

[Where do you want to move them?]

"Earth. If possible, I would prefer Seoul."

[It is a closed scenario area but there is hope.]

There was a sound and one of his long fingers was cut off. The small finger of the shadow rose in the air, turning into tens of thousands of points that flew into the universe. The points crossed the galaxy in an instant and dug into the 73rd Demon Realm.

The screen under my feet showed the people of the industrial complex. The people were being transported somewhere with a new scenario. The population of the industrial complex was close to 100,000.

Now the Secretive Plotter would send out personal scenarios to all the incarnations. A great amount of probability was exhausted but Secretive Plotter replaced the probability with the sacrifice of one finger.

The people who received the scenario were hiding in the Demon Realm. Indescribable Distance was released from the bondage of time and started to belatedly devour the planet, but it was already empty. The fog missed the party members and cried out.

[Now it's my turn.]

"Speak."

[You must kill someone.]

"Can I ask who I have to kill?"

My heart was heavy. Maybe there would be special constraints. Or it might be a tangle of probability that not even the Secretive Plotter could touch.

[Accept the covenant and you will know.]

"…What happens if I refuse?"

In the end, I saw the group of people who had been moved to Earth by the Secretive Plotter.

[I still have nine fingers left.]

"I accept."

In any case, the worst situation was escaped. The party members safely returned to Earth and everything was as planned.

[A new sub scenario has been acquired!]

[The Star Stream's scenario system has encountered an error.]

[The information of this scenario is being reconstructed.]

[You have acquired the possibility of a new story!]

[A story that can't be understood by the Star Stream is germinating.]

I was the only one left. If I did this well, everything would end smoothly.

The Secretive Plotter lifted his right hand, the darkness of the universe distorted and a small portal started to open.

[Actually, there was another person beside you who made a covenant.]

…Besides me? I looked through my memories of the original novel but couldn't come up with a person who would make an Outer World Covenant at this time. "What happened to them?"

[I'm expecting much bigger things from you. If you safely complete the scenario, you'll be able to come back without any problems.]

The portal increased to a size I could go through.

[Another outer god will transfer you. Be careful not to disobey him.]

At the end, I was sucked into the portal. The foundations were built up and the whole world spread out like a post-modern oil painting where the intention couldn't be read. The brilliant colours caused me to feel nauseated and once I lifted my head again, there was a huge door in front of me.

Facing me was a giant bubble that filled the endless universe and a circular door occupied the centre. The moment the door opened its big eyes at me, the Fourth Wall was triggered.

[The Fourth Wall is issuing a warning!]

There was only one such gigantic door in Ways of Survival.

[An exis tence se nt by the plot ter.]

I nodded. The door looked down at me with its own will.

[Fragment of the Last Wall… and…]

It was a stuffy voice that sounded like it was coming from water.

[… Servant journeying to end of life…]

"…Where am I going?"

[Everything is written and exist at the same time.]

…Well, I never thought a normal conversation would work. It was usually the case with an outer god. Only the Secretive Plotter was an exceptional case.

[The past and present aren't different from the future. Only free will is left.]

The door opened with a loud noise. A door that linked the past, present and future. If I stepped in there, I wouldn't be able to go back.

Before that, there was something I had to do. I hesitated before placing my hand into my clothes. I pulled out a warm and tiny cotton ball.

[Baat!]

Biyoo was crying as she shouted at me.

Chapter 284: Ep. 53 - Demon King of Salvation, VI

[Baat, baaat!]

"No."

[Baaat!]

"Go back."

The world inside the open door couldn't be seen properly. After all, it was clearly a dangerous place. "Take care of the people."

Perhaps this moment had been scheduled from the moment I found traces of 'Indescribable Distrance' from Surya's train fragments. Perhaps I would receive little help from Ways of Survival in the place where I was going now.

Still, I had to go. If I endured it well this one time, I could return to the party members. With them, I could reach the end of all the scenarios. I slowly moved my feet and Biyoo screamed.

[Baat, baat… baaaat…! Ah, ba, at…]

I stepped through the boundaries of the door and Biyoo's voice suddenly faded away. I looked towards Biyoo's fuzzy face and spoke words that couldn't be conveyed.

「 I'll come back. 」

[The Outer World Covenant is activated!]

[You have been deported from the Star Stream.]

[Your modifier will disappear from the "Star Stream>.]

Even after Kim Dokja disappeared into the portal, Secretive Plotter stared at the portal for a long time. An elderly man with two abnormally large lumps stood beside the Secretive Plotter.

[Great plotter. He is already gone?]

[He just left.]

[Too bad. I wanted to see what type of person he was… well, you must like him a lot. You sacrificed three fingers for him.]

Three fingers on Secretive Plotter's left hand had disappeared. It was the price of the probability.

[No matter your identity, it would've been a burden to borrow the Viceroy's Dimensional Gate. Why didn't you ask us?]

[It is a fraudulent transaction that the probability of the wenny people can't handle.]

The elderly man clicked his tongue.

[I can't understand it at all. No matter the story, I wouldn't do something like this.]

[You can't understand it.]

In the shadow of Secretive Plotter, white eyes flashed in the air. The elderly man followed the gaze. It was as if he discovered something in the air.

[That troublesome person… did you intentionally send him?]

[There will be no harmful effect anyway.]

The old man laughed.

[Well, it doesn't matter. If only I can deal one blow to that damn Star Stream. But is there a chance?]

[If he succeeds, he will be closer to the 'result' than anyone else.]

[…Than anyone else? It is funny you are saying that when you have already seen the 'result'.]

The old man grumbled.

[Whether he succeeds or fail, it will be a loss for you anyway.]

Secretive Plotter shook his head and replied, [It isn't me who will judge it.]

[The 'Fourth Wall' is shaking violently.]

As my consciousness flickered, a chill went down my spine.

[The Outer World Covenant is protecting your existence.]

I felt like I was going somewhere as I had a few dreams. It was a dream about the party members.

–Dokja-ssi is always looking at the smartphone. What is Dokja-ssi's number?

–…We can't call him anyway so what is the point?

–Just let me know. I'll send him a game invitation later.

A game invitation. I really hoped I would get it in the future.

–Dokja-ssi seems to laugh more often after the fall.

–By the way, ahjussi is a bit unlucky when he smiles.

–Isn't it worth changing his mouth shape.

–I wish Dokja-ssi could've been my senior.

The second hand of a clock was ticking somewhere.

–I never hated Dokja-ssi like I do today. Come back.

The beginning and end of the unknown story were pushing me. I relied on my memories like a small raft moving through a vicious current. In the endless void of the universe, only my memories were floating. Maybe this was how Biyoo… Shin Yoosung of the 41st regression felt.

Not longer afterwards, a message was heard.

[The Viceroy's Dimensional Door is closed.]

[The Star Stream has noticed your presence.]

By the time I came to my senses, I was crouched on the floor and vomiting. I felt the touch of the hard ground and slowly opened my eyes.

[You have entered the new scenario area!]

[The dokkaebis of the bureau have doubts about your existence.]

The stiffened joints of my incarnation body screamed. I used Hit a Pressure Point to restore my body as quickly as possible. I didn't know where this was but I had to be nervous from now on.

Secretive Plotter himself wasn't in the original novel so Ways of Survival couldn't help me with the things that happened here.

"Kuk…"

The places eaten by the Indescribable Distance were painful but I somehow recovered with a Great Return Pill. My horns and wings disappeared because the Demon King Transformation was over.

[It is impossible to use Demon King Transformation at the present time.]

I didn't forget to thoroughly check the equipment and placed the necessary items in a position where I could use them immediately. The first thing I checked was the personal scenario window.

[You can't launch the sub-scenario window.]

[The information for this scenario hasn't been updated yet.]

…The scenario update wasn't applied yet.

I looked around at the wreckage of the broken buildings. The collapsed high-rise buildings and the debris of the logos between them. The characters that made up the logo were familiar. There was Hangul and also English. The languages of second-grade tribes were also found.

I stopped for a moment and read them. Slowly, an uncomfortable feeling rose from the tip of my feet. Where was this place?

[The Star Stream has recognized your modifier.]

[Your position in the night sky will be refreshed!]

[The bureau is wary of your presence.]

[You have been assigned a hidden scenario!]

[Hidden Scenario - World Adaptation has been acquired!]

[You have acquired a new story!]

…Don't tell me? I started running through the streets. An unrecognizable ruined city. Even so, I was able to recognize this place. It was strange if I couldn't recognize it. It was because my nightmares originated from this city.

The status of Yi Sunsin that only had the legs remaining and the destroyed Absolute Throne. The carcasses of beasts scattered everywhere and the remnants of giant tentacles gave off a terrible stench.

"…Seoul?"

Nevertheless, there was no time to think. I heard the sound of an explosion and hide among the ruins in my area. A loud shout was heard. People were fleeing from something. No, looking closer, it wasn't people.

They were constellations in incarnation bodies. The considerable number of constellations were shouting in their true voices.

[Run away!]

[Dammit…!]

Their words didn't finish. The feet of an elephant descended from the air and the incarnation bodies burst like worms. I watched the scene breathlessly. The elephant's feet contained an irresistible 'status' and dragged the dead incarnation bodies somewhere.

Crazy, what the hell was this?

After the elephant disappeared, I carefully escaped through the ruins and headed cautiously towards the bodies. There were a few items to collect on the floor. I looked at the items and controlled my mind.

Stay calm. No matter how dangerous this place was, there was a chance of winning if I obtained information. If this was still a scenario area, Ways of Survival was still valid.

[The attribute effect has improved your memories of the pages already read.]

What type of scenario was this? The incarnation bodies of the constellations were present and the fragments of the outer god were scattered…

[The 95th main scenario is in progress.]

[The Outer World Covenant has replaced your lacking probability.]

[You aren't a formal participant of the scenario.]

[The Star Stream doubts your eligibility.]

Their hairs on my arm stood up.

…How many?

[The item 'Arondight' has been acquired.]

I stared blankly down at the item I had collected. A constellation's star relic was rolling around on the streets. I… skipped a few years? I wondered how the party members were doing.

[The exclusive skill, 'Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint' has been activated!]

.Jung Heewon. Lee Hyunsung. Shin Yoosung.

[The exclusive skill, 'Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint' is cancelled.]

[You can't connect with the current target.]

[The 'character' can't be found.]

I tried to calm my trembling heart. I needed to be calm. Nothing was certain yet. I took deep breaths to control my mind and expressed the power of a constellation. I planned to explore the surroundings through a channel, if there was one nearby.

At this moment, a sound was heard in the area. It was the sound of a powerful strike along with the constellations' screams. The moment I reflexively tried to hide between the buildings, I could see a black coat fluttering.

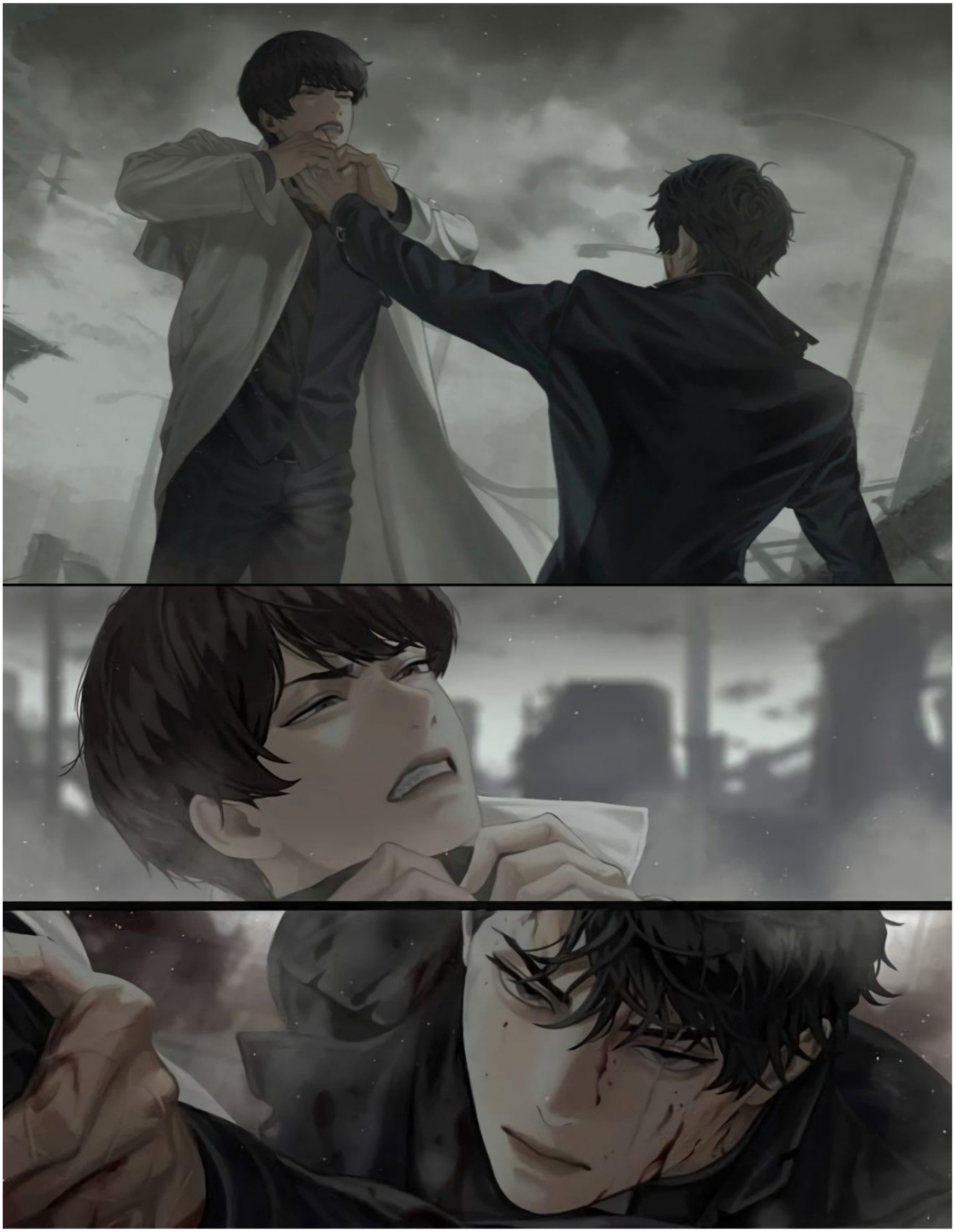
For a brief second, I felt my heart stop. Scarred muscles could be seen through the torn sleeves of the coat. I looked at the trajectory of the sword against the ground and emotions filled my heart.

He was alive, although he wasn't exactly the same as what I remembered. His physique was a bit bigger, his impression was a bit sharper and there was a large scar on his cheek. There was no way I couldn't know him.

"Yoo—!"

I opened my mouth but something faster than sound flew at me. I would've died instantly if I hadn't invoked Bookmark and Way of the Wind. Even though I dodged, there was a big stab wound in my side. I covered the wound and looked at him with a confused expression. By the time I looked up, he was already in front of my eyes.

I was suffocated as he gripped my neck. My voice didn't come out so I had to use my true voice.



*

[Hey! Yoo Joonghyuk, it's me!]

Maybe too much time had passed. It took me longer than I thought so he might've forgotten about me.

[Let me go. It's me! You already forgot…]

A terrible pain hit my belly and I felt like I was going to fall unconscious. I thought it was a terrible joke. Or perhaps he was so angry that he was acting like this. Then Yoo Joonghyuk's cold voice was heard. "Where is Arondight? Do you have it?"

At this moment, a cool sensation grazed my neck. The moment I first met Yoo Joonghyuk on Dongho Bridge came to mind. He had similar eyes. It was the eyes of a person who didn't know me.

"I will kill you if you don't answer within five seconds. Oh."

Really, it was the eyes of a person who could kill me.

[The exclusive skill, Character List is activated.]

[There is too much information about this person. Character List is converted to Character Summary.]

[A system error has occurred.]

"Four."

[The information of the character can't be summarized!]

[The information of the character can't be summarized!]

Along with a terrible headache, a terrible amount of information started flowing in.

"Three."

I groaned and changed the setting of 'Character List'.

[The minimum number of items specified by the user is shown.]

I saw the information rising before my eyes and was upset. I thought I knew all the endings of Ways of Survival.

[Character Summary]

Name: Yoo Joonghyuk.

Sponsor: ???

Exclusive Attributes: Regressor (1863rd round) (Myth), Ruler of Amusement (Legend), Iron Blood Supreme King (Legend), Demon King Slayer (Myth), Eternal Solitude (Quasi-myth), Horror of the Stars (Myth) …

Exclusive Skills: Sage's Eye Lv. ???, Hand to Hand Combat Lv. ???, Thoughts Vaccine Lv. ???, Hundred Steps Godly Fists Lv. ???, Red Phoenix Shunpo Lv. ???, Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship Lv. ???… (Omitted).

Stigma: Regression Lv. ???, Transmission Lv. ???]

…

* The skill level of this person can't be converted to a numerical value!

* The stigma level of this person can't be converted to a numerical value!

…

However, there was only one. There was one regression where I didn't know the end. A man who lost all his colleagues and finally saw the final chapter of the story in front of him.

"Two."

The monster whose emotions were worn out by countless betrayals and numerous regressions were watching me. Along with the pain that pierced deep into my chest, the words left by Secretive Plotter revolved in my ears.

[Let's say you reach the end of everything using your method and save the world. Then what about the other worlds?]

[What about all the worlds you didn't save?]

In the sky of the ruined Gwanghwamun, the dying stars were shining. This wasn't the third round of the Star Stream that I changed. I changed the future and the worlds of the original novel were abandoned. Yoo Joonghyuk's blade moved through the air.

"It looks like you aren't going to answer. Then die."

It was the 1863rd regression of Ways of Survival. This world was the last round of Yoo Joonghyuk that I knew about.

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*Official novel illustration (canonical)

싱숑 장편소설

전지적 독자 시점

Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint

PART 3

01

비채

*

Chapter 285: Ep. 54 - Demon King Slayer, I

The most imaginative thing I've ever read was Three Ways to Survive in a Ruined World.

–What if Ways of Survival became a reality?

Perhaps anyone would've imagined such a thing with their favourite novel. I did as well. Maybe it was due to the endless imaginations in my youth that I was able to adapt to Ways of Survival. Once the scenario started, I would do this first and then do this. This hidden piece would be obtained…

During middle school, I even drew charts in the corner of my textbook.

–Yoo Joonghyuk: A professional gamer, an awful personality, a psychopath, kills if words don't work (sometimes just kills), have to unconditionally bring him to my side, humanity still remains in the third round…

I had been glad when I first realized I had fallen into the third round of Ways of Survival.

I came to a world I could change and thought it was really fortunate. If I had fallen into the last round…

「Kim Dok ja thou ght.」

There was no existence that could stop him.

「Sh—it.」

I shouted with all my straight as I saw the blade flying towards me.

[Wait! Stop! I said stop!]

A person who regressed more than a thousand times. A spirit that had become insensitive from the hundreds of suicides and tragedies that an individual could suffer. The extremely widespread regression depression…

「Yoo Joonghyuk of the 1863rd round is the despair of the world itself.」

I acted the moment the blade was about to pass through my neck.

[The special skill 'Miniaturization Lv. 10' is activated!]

My body shrank in an instant and the blade passed through the air. The man's startled eyes were seen from over the blade. This damn guy. Did he think I came here to die? This might be the 1863rd round but he was mistaken if he thought I would obediently die.

[The exclusive skill 'Bookmark' is activated!]

[The exclusive skill 'Electrification' Lv. 12 (+2) has been activated.]

I knew I wasn't his opponent. However, I still had to try my best. My body moved at lightning speed as I yelled, "Son of a bitch! You have to let me talk to you!"

The indirect messages poured from the air along with my cry.

[Some constellations have noticed your presence!]

[The constellation 'Adventurer who Stands Up an Egg' is interested in your appearance.]

[Constellations 'King of Ephemera' is interested in the fight between you and 'Iron Blood Supreme King'.]

[Some constellations feel strong jealousy towards you.]

[1,000 coins have been sponsored.]

The 95th scenario of the 1863rd regression. The world might be like this but there were still constellations giving donations. The nature of the sponsorship was a bit different but…

Yoo Joonghyuk glared at me with a stiff expression. "The Baekchung School? Strange. I'm sure he is out of action in this round…"

This person's brain circuits had become twisted after over 1,000 regressions. He would've finished judging whether to kill or spare me based on the actions I had shown so far. It was scary.

[The exclusive skill, 'Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint' has been activated!]

It was because I was afraid that I had to read it now. Thus, I could get out of this situation.

[You have an insufficient understanding of the person and can't activate the second stage!]

[The exclusive skill, 'Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint' stage 1 has been activated!]

…I lacked understanding. My pride was a bit hurt but I thought it would be like this. This was Yoo Joonghyuk of the 1863rd round, not the Yoo Joonghyuk

I knew. It might just be the first stage but I had to invoke it. I might not be able to read the details but even knowing the attack direction would help.

「Neck.」

The moment that Yoo Joonghyuk's thought was transmitted, I withdrew with all my might.

Even this guy wouldn't be able to easily catch me. It was because I was now using Way of the Wind and Electrification.

"…Keok?"

I didn't know if I had turned my body first or the dark shadow had moved ahead of me first. My breath was blocked and my vision darkened. It was a feast of magic power that seemed to hurt my whole body. I flew through the air like an electrocuted fish. A tremendous amount of magic power shook my body.

[Some constellations are laughing at you.]

It was the face of Yoo Joonghyuk that was seen in front of me. His hands were crushing my torso. My neck hurt like it was broken as it was held between thumb and index finger.

I couldn't believe it. This might be the Yoo Joonghyuk of the last regression but how could he catch me so easily when I used Electrification?

"I will ask you a final time."

I realized the moment I heard his cold and apathetic voice. It was stupid to think I could avoid it by knowing the direction in advance. The person in front of me wasn't the young Yoo Joonghyuk of the third round.

"Where is the dragon sword, Arondight?"

…How could I speak when he was holding my neck?

"I see Lancelot's incarnation body here so you must surely know…"

Ah, the constellation who just died was Lancelot? Shit.

"If you don't answer, I will it out of you."

Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes shone with a golden light. As a matter of fact, Yoo Joonghyuk's foundations remained unchanged, whether it was the third or 1863rd regression.

[The character 'Yoo Joonghyuk' has used Sage's Eye Lv. ???!]

After over one thousand regressions, his Sage's Eye had reached a formidable level. Perhaps the presence that wasn't visible now in Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes was the outer god that had lived for a long time.

[The exclusive skill Fourth Wall has blocked Sage's Eye!]

[The exclusive skill 'Fourth Wall' is strongly activated!]

The moment Yoo Joonghyuk's Sage's Eye focused on my body, the wall moved. The Fourth Wall stood firmly in front of the persistent gaze that didn't want to miss a single piece of information. There were stronger sparks than when I had encountered the Unidentified Wall.

「No t bad.」

This time, the Fourth Wall looked formidable. At this point, I couldn't tell if the Fourth Wall or Yoo Joonghyuk was the great one. The Fourth Wall didn't back down and Yoo Joonghyuk didn't give up. It was me who was fried between them. It was so painful that I couldn't scream, even with my true voice.

"Kuek…?"

Yoo Joonghyuk raised his power first. The collision was so strong that golden circles swirled in his eyes.

[The character 'Yoo Joonghyuk' is feeling a competitive spirit.]

[The character 'Yoo Joonghyuk' is showing great hostility towards you!]

This was a barrier that couldn't be penetrated even with Sage's Eye. Once again, I realized what a great skill Fourth Wall was.

Then something strange happened. The Fourth Wall was able to prevent Sage's Eye and started to flow like water over Yoo Joonghyuk's hand. The typed letters covered his body like insects and for the first time, Yoo Joonghyuk sounded disconcerted. "What?"

The wriggling letters became memories that flowed like a panorama. They were my memories of the third round that were recorded on the Fourth Wall.

「"Get your hand off me and get lost, you damn jerk!"」

「"Maybe not. In any case, I am hopeful about the situation."

"…What is so hopeful about it?"

"Joonghyuk-ah, we can save the world. You know that, right?"」

「The name of our nebula is… Kim Dokja's Company…"

"There isn't a name yet. In addition, we will gain the supporters now."」

Yoo Joonghyuk couldn't comprehend the memories in front of him. They were all things that didn't exist in this round. The sparks that almost blinded me eased and Yoo Joonghyuk's expression became clearer.

"What are you…?"

The '1863rd round' made an astonished expression. I heard the voice of the Fourth Wall in my head, as if it thought this round was interesting.

「I did we ll Kim Dok ja.」

Did it do well?

"Tell me. What is this? I'll tear you apart if you don't say it."

What did it do well? Shit.

[Kuek… no, wait! I need some time to answer!]

I exploded the blue-white energy as I was held in Yoo Joonghyuk's hands. I was struggling to escape from him. This might not be enough but I would at least buy some time until I could borrow the power of the 'giant story…'

Then something unexpected happened. There was an explosion and Yoo Joonghyuk missed me. There was a surprised and confused expression. Yoo Joonghyuk reached out with sluggish movements. I wanted to know what happened but I couldn't miss the opportunity I had just gained.

[The exclusive skill 'Way of the Wind Lv. 11 (+1) is activated!]

Way of the Wind was activated and the blue-white energy made a trail through the air. I thought he would chase after me quickly but I didn't feel Yoo Joonghyuk right away. I looked back and saw an unexpected sight.

…What was this?

The moment I had the question, a deafening true voice echoed in the expanse.

[Yoo Joonghyuk! I will repay the grudge of Immeasurable Austerity!]

Red and blue eyes glared from the roof of a nearby building. Two black leopards with streamlined buildings emanated a strong energy as they fell towards Yoo Joonghyuk.

[The demon king 'Devil of Easiness and Atrocity' is showing hostility towards incarnation 'Yoo Joonghyuk'.]

[The demon king 'Eyes that See the Forbidden' is showing his teeth to incarnation 'Yoo Joonghyuk'.]

Yoo Joonghyuk of the 1863rd round was stronger than anyone else but he had many enemies. Thanks to this, I could identify the two leopards without much difficulty.

Devil of Easiness and Atrocity, Ose. Eyes that See the Forbidden, Flauros. They were the 57th and 64th demon kings of the Demon Realm.

The prideful demon kings forgot their shame and unleashed a pincer attack towards an incarnation.

However, it wasn't shameful.

[Demon King Slayer! Your story will end here!]

Right now, Yoo Joonghyuk was an existence full of value. I buried myself in the rubble as there was a deafening roar. Then I carefully watched the situation. It was a clash I couldn't afford and I thought I should move away, but I had a desire to watch the fight a bit more.

It wasn't another fight but the fight of the 1863rd round Yoo Joonghyuk. It wasn't easy to see. My ears seemed to burst and the battle began.

[Many constellations are enthusiastic about the battle of incarnation 'Yoo Joonghyuk'.]

Indirect messages poured out as Yoo Joonghyuk pulled out his sword. It was the Splitting the Sky Sword that was already broken in the third round. The blade had gone through a number of scenarios and had been upgraded to a completely new level, shining brightly in the darkness.

The demon kings facing him also revealed their power.

[Creatures, rise from death!]

The dead earls and dukes of the Demon Realm became undead and emerged from the ground. They held elite objects that preserved the combat power of their lives.

However, Yoo Joonghyuk wasn't panicked at all. "It is Summoning the Dead? The Devil of Principles also used it."

Yoo Joonghyuk was smiling.

"That bastard's body is now hanging among the dead constellations."

[Shut up!]

A light flashed and Yoo Joonghyuk's sword moved. What should I call this swordsmanship?

…Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship? I didn't know. The certain thing was that it was an amazingly beautiful swordsmanship. It was also a surprisingly cruel swordsmanship.

The nobles of the demon world were cut by the sword and screamed as they turned to ash. They were high-ranking dukes comparable to historical-grade constellations. Such beings exploded with a few swings of the sword.

In less than a minute, Yoo Joonghyuk killed dozens of undead nobles and reached the nose of Flauros.

[How…]

Like a toy, the head of Demon King Flauros exploded.

There were no emotions in his eyes. There was a single blow with a sweet smile. Yoo Joonghyuk killed a demon king.

[This… this crazy bastard!]

The Demon King Ose shouted angrily.

[Constellations! Why are you hesitating?]

The moment the call was heard, the constellations hiding in the ruins came out. Most of them were constellations of the absolute evil system. They ranged from historical-grade to narrative-grade. Every constellation rushed to get rid of one incarnation, Yoo Joonghyuk.

[The character 'Yoo Joonghyuk' is talking about the story of 'Hell of Eternity…']

However, Yoo Joonghyuk wasn't pushed at all. A bloody aura overflowed from his body and collided with the constellations. It was a scary and powerful force but the blow was calm and full of moderation. Every time Yoo Joonghyuk's sword moved, the ranks of the constellations shook helplessly.

[Constellations of the absolute evil system hate the incarnation 'Yoo Joonghyuk'.]

The incarnation bodies of the constellations exploded one by one. The high-ranking constellations could look so shabby. There were no signs of impatience as Yoo Joonghyuk continued the battle.

[The character 'Yoo Joonghyuk' is talking about the giant story 'Lonely Pilgrim of Destruction'.]

Yoo Joonghyuk was only using his 'left arm' to destroy the constellations. Every time a constellation fell, my arms trembled.

[Constellations of the absolute evil system are shocked by the combat ability of incarnation 'Yoo Joonghyuk'.]

Hatred became shock.

[Some constellations of the absolute evil system are afraid of the incarnation 'Yoo Joonghyuk'.]

Shock became fear.

[Many constellations are trembling at the power of incarnation 'Yoo Joonghyuk'.]

It was thrilling. Crazy guy… he was a really crazy guy.

No matter how I thought about it, there was no way to bring down the current Yoo Joonghyuk.

I didn't know what scenario Secretive Plotter gave me but I must never become enemies with this guy until it was over.

Then a message was heard.

[The sub scenario commissioned by 'Secretive Plotter' has arrived!]

* Official novel cover (canonical)

MUNPIA
3부
전지적
독자시점
싱숑 현대 판타지 소설

*

Chapter 286: Ep. 54 - Demon King Slayer, II

Finally, the message I had been waiting for had arrived. Secretive Plotter's personal scenario.

[Sub Scenario (Secretive Plotter) - ???]

Category: Sub (Personal)

Difficulty: ???

Clear Conditions: ???

Time Limit: —

> Compensation: Can return to the original round with a legendary story (1), a skill (1) and an item (1) (The probability required will be born by the scenario proponent).
>
> Failure: Unable to return to the original turn, your incarnation body will be destroyed.

The moment I opened the scenario window, the thing that caught my eyes was the 'compensation'.

[The bureau is currently suspicious of your probability.]

I wasn't a member of this 'regression'. Therefore, even if I got an item, skill or story in this turn, I wouldn't be able to preserve it after returning to my original world. It was just like how the 41st regression Shin Yoosung was weakened so badly that she could be hit.

However, if the reward was true… I could take the things obtained in this round because to my original world.

It was a tremendous reward. No matter how much the probability was constrained, the spoils of the 95th scenario would match the 95th scenario. The skills and stories available here had the power to transform the world in the 20th scenario.

「Don't be too exhilarated Kim Dokja.」

I barely calmed down at the Fourth Wall's words. In fact, it wasn't a situation where I could rejoice. The rewards for the scenario was high but the cost of failure was just as huge. If I failed, I couldn't go back to my original round and would lose my incarnation body.

This wasn't the turn I belonged to so the influence of my 'stories' weren't big. In such a situation, I could end up killed by a probability storm if I lost my incarnation body. Moreover, this wasn't the biggest problem.

[The clearance conditions for this scenario are being updated.]

The most importance clearance condition hadn't been updated. I didn't know if it was an error from crossing dimensions or if Secretive Plotter was deliberately dragging out the time.

Frankly, it was possible either way. I thought as I watched Yoo Joonghyuk fighting in the distance. If I was Secretive Plotter, what clear conditions would I place on this scenario? Based on the movements of Secretive Plotter so far…

It was an ominous thought.

[The exclusive skill 'Reading Comprehension' is activated.]

Secretive Plotter. I was expecting him to be Crawling Chaos but the true identity of the outer god was unknown.

He had been with me since my first channel opened but I had very little information about him. He wasn't arrogant like the Great Sage, Heaven's Equal, full of justice like Uriel, wicked like the Abyssal Black Flame Dragon… he wasn't even present in the original Ways of Survival. He was merely Secretive Plotter.

[You can't read the target with the information you have.]

[The exclusive skill 'Reading Comprehension' is cancelled.]

[Curiosity about the unknown is leading to a new ability.]

…I didn't know. What was he trying to show me through this scenario? In addition, what did he want to gain?

There was never a case where the outer god had done this so I couldn't easily guess. Only one thing was certain.

[Kuaaaack!]

This scenario was likely to be connected to the monster slaughtering the constellations over there.

[That's it! Now! Everybody pincer attack him!]

[Die Yoo Joonghyuk!]

As I was briefly distracted by the scenario window, the battlefield was flowing in an unexpected form. Yoo Joonghyuk's condition was strange. A little while ago, he had been killing the constellations and overwhelming the battlefield…

Now his movements were dulled. Yoo Joonghyuk's body was stiffening under the pouring bombardment.

…What was this bastard? What happened?

I adjusted the setting of Character List to check his condition.

* Currently in an abnormal condition.

Abnormal condition? There was no way. Who was the 1863rd regression Yoo Joonghyuk? This was Yoo Joonghyuk who was the Ruler of the East Hell and killed the Devil of Principles. There was no one among the constellations who could place an abnormal condition on the present Yoo Joonghyuk.

Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes were blank.

I felt uncomfortable like something was stuck in my throat. No, there was. There was only one person who could cause an abnormal status in Yoo Joonghyuk.

* The target is suffering from 'regression depression' due to an unknown cause.

It was Yoo Joonghyuk himself.

Regression depression. The spirit of the man who had been broken over 1863 lives made the regression depression almost a passive, low level skill. Once he fell into the depression, his consciousness was caught in the weight of his memories and he couldn't wake up.

[Kill him! He isn't invincible!]

The ruthless strikes caused Yoo Joonghyuk's body to bleed little by little. It was strange. Originally, the regression depression shouldn't occur in this situation. In the 1863rd round, Yoo Joonghyuk had learnt how to manage this disease.

Why was he in this current state…

「The Fourth Wall is saying, "Ha ha ha."」

"…Was it your doing?"

The Fourth Wall didn't answer but it was the only guess I had. The previous collision with the Fourth Wall must've caused some disruption in Yoo Joonghyuk's inner surface.

Damn, what should I do?

Blood flowed from Yoo Joonghyuk's skin as he protected his face. The power of Impenetrable Skin was still applied but it was only a matter of time before Yoo Joonghyuk died.

「I have to help.」

「Why should I help him?」

The choices were fighting in my mind.

「Yoo Joonghyuk is a monster now. If I help, he will surely kill me when he wakes up.」

「Think carefully. You don't know the clear conditions of this scenario.」

The clear conditions were still question marks.

「 If the condition to clear the scenario is Yoo Joonghyuk's death, this is a golden opportunity. 」

However—

「 What if the clear condition is Yoo Joonghyuk's survival… 」

If Yoo Joonghyuk died, I would lose everything.

"Damn…"

Should I help or not?

Yoo Joonghyuk's knees were slowly sinking to the ground. The normally weak guys were excitedly tearing at Yoo Joonghyuk's body.

[Hahaha! I will have the story of the Iron Blood Supreme King!]

Yoo Joonghyuk would regress even if he died here. Then he would start a new round.

Regression…

[Then what about the other worlds?]

…Fucking plotter.

[What about all the worlds you didn't save?]

Once Yoo Joonghyuk died here, a world that wasn't in the original novel would be born. Yoo Joonghyuk would repeat the hell yet again. An abandoned world that Secretive Plotter showed me would be created and Yoo Joonghyuk would once again crawl in the infinite despair.

…Shit, I didn't know.

I activated Electrification and flew towards Yoo Joonghyuk.

[Hey! Leave me a share too!]

At my rough true voice, the demon kings and constellations attacking Yoo Joonghyuk looked up.

[Who are you?]

[…Demonic energy? I've never seen you before.]

[Do you come here to kill the Demon King Slayer?]

Demonic energy flowed from my body and I could see the enemy's tenseness being released. It was as expected. I spoke as I pulled out my status. [That's right. We will share the good things together. It isn't possible?]

[You came late so you can't have the good stories.]

[Don't worry. I'll only help from the back.]

[A good attitude. Now, everybody continue…!]

I turned and struck the constellation with all my strength. The constellation let out a scream as he flew in a straight line and hit a ruined building.

[K-Kuooh… what are you doing?]

I wanted to hit him to death but was lacking. The constellations were angry by my abrupt actions and stared at me.

[Are you siding with the Demon King Slayer?]

I didn't reply and opened up the power of the giant story.

[Giant Story 'Demon Realm's Spring' has begun!]

The pulse of the story stirred deep in my heart. Sparks surrounded my body as the story energy flooded through my blood. Some of the constellations saw my 'giant story' and screamed with shock.

[The status of a demon king? From a guy I've never heard of?]

Of course, I wasn't a demon king of this world. I once again concentrated the power of Electrification and blew away a constellation. The constellation was hit in the belly and took a few steps back. It wasn't comparable to Yoo Joonghyuk but the effect wasn't bad. I might be able to fight if it continued like this.

[An error has occurred in the operation of the story.]

[The Star Stream can't find the origin of the giant story owned by you.]

[The power of the 'giant story' is sharply reduced.]

…Shit. It was like this. The basis of my giant story, the 73rd Demon Realm wasn't here. We made up the giant story together. Thus, it was natural that my story didn't work properly.

I swung my sword at the approaching constellations and shouted at Yoo Joonghyuk. "Hey! Wake up you jerk!"

Yoo Joonghyuk didn't answer. I tried to think of lines to wake up him but I couldn't come up with anything. My status started to decline and Demon King Ose, who rose again on the battlefield, shouted.

[He is with the Demon King Slayer! Kill him!]

There were seven constellations, including Demon King Ose. I naturally couldn't deal with them with my current power. I desperately evaded the attacks but the 95th scenario was the 95th scenario.

They might be ordinary constellations of the absolute evil system but the blows hurt. My flesh was frayed by the onslaught and the range of my movements became narrower.

Despite the urgency, I continued to think of ways to wake up Yoo Joonghyuk. Some things came to mind that would definitely wake up Yoo Joonghyuk.

The problem was what came next. If I woke him up using the methods I was thinking of, I was likely to die.

I bit my lips and slowly opened my mouth. There was no way. In any case, I expected it to happen like this. I briefly took a deep breath and opened my mouth. "How long will you keep your mouth shut?"

The expressions of the constellations changed at my words. Their eyes wondered what I was talking about.

I continued speaking. "It will be difficult for them if I die here." The next moment, the pockets of my chest shone brightly and a true voice was heard.

[What, you knew?]

Of course, I wouldn't wake up Yoo Joonghyuk. I might die if I did something crazy like that.

"It would be strange if I didn't know. I don't have a flower arrangement hobby."

Two flowers emerged from the inner pocket of my coat. It was a red cosmos and a white lily. I hadn't noticed their existence in the beginning. I realized when I crossed worlds. They were really daring constellations.

[Tsk. There is no other way.]

The moment they realized the identity of the true voice, the complexion of the constellations hostile to me darkened. The 'lily' laughed at them.

[Should we both come out? Or Jophiel, will you do it alone?]

[They are enemies of Eden. Immediately execute them.]

[…Do you want to do it together? How annoying. Okay, I understand.]

The next moment, the petals of the cosmos and lily scattered in the wind. The petals moved towards the sky and a message flashed in front of me. I looked at the message for a moment before slowly nodding.

A huge presence started to descend behind me. Astonishment appeared on the faces of the constellations and I couldn't help laughing.

I was curious. I had wondered what Jung Heewon felt like at the time. Now I knew very well.

Six wings stretched out from behind me. I overflowed with probability as the 'status' of Eden's best archangels was discharged from my body.

[The constellation 'Commander of the Red Cosmos' has appeared in Seoul!]

[The constellation 'Lily Blooming in Aquarius' has appeared in Seoul!]

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* 3rd original webnovel cover (canonical)

Chapter 287: Ep. 54 - Demon King Slayer, III

[Archangel!]

Demon King Ose was looking to this side with eyes that were frightened beyond surprise. It was the same for the constellations of the absolute evil system. For them, the archangels of Eden were the worst enemies.

It wasn't strange that they would be shocked at the sight of two archangels emerging simultaneously.

[Why are there archangels? The angels of Eden mostly died after that day!]

I heard the murmurs and felt regret. This was the world of the 1863rd regression. Gabriel and Jophiel wouldn't know what happened in this round.

[■ck, what nonsense is this?]

Gabriel's true voice rang out like she had been waiting. Like Uriel, swear words emerged from her mouth. I had to stop her before things became bigger.

"Gabriel. You don't need to listen to their nonsense. Quickly handle them!"

[…Don't whine at me. Cheeky human.]

There were places to tackle but she had to follow the words this once. Gabriel's power filled my entire body.

[I am the archangel Gabriel.]

I could feel my hairs standing up. Finally, Gabriel's main story was heard.

[I have been sent to tell you this good news.]

Of course, that 'good news' only applied if Gabriel was on the same side.

[Don't be scared! The archangels are nothing but remnants who have lost their stronghold!]

Demon King Ose encouraged the constellations. However, as he was talking, Oso was already moving far away. It happened when the constellations held their star relics and rushed towards me.

[This is about the fixed end.]

Gabriel's story, the 'Revelation of the Apocalypse' had begun.

「You have seen a ram with two horns, the great horn between the eyes is the first king.」

Golden strings flowed from my body. The size of my body was growing along with the strings. My body was overflowing with power like a ram in breeding season. Pure white horns rose in the place where the demon king's horns had grown.

[U-Uhhhh…]

The constellations of the absolute evil system were frightened just looking at the horns. Some constellations dropped their weapons like helpless incarnations and some of them rushed around screaming.

[Uwaaah!]

It was like they saw their end.

「He will be stronger and stronger with his own power, not my power.」

The six wings behind my emitted a brilliant flash of light as the attacks of the constellations poured towards me. Even so, I didn't receive any damage.

The solid metal summoned before my eyes neutralized all types of attacks. It was a weapon that the giant god clan were likely to use. The snake shining with a white light climbed up the shaft and the snake's eyes were studded with a dazzling windowpane reminiscent of a cross.

This was Gabriel's divine spear, the Preference Scale. I grasped the handle of the spear. All of a sudden, the world felt like it was tilting. All beings in the vicinity were placed on a scale. They were on one side of the scale or the other.

I turned my head and Gabriel was smiling. Her palms touched my shoulder.

「He will commit terrible destruction and shall destroy the mighty and holy people.」

The spear shone brilliantly and I threw it with all my might.

Then part of the world was erased. The constellations attacking me from the sky, those running from the side and even the ones who had lost their fighting spirit and had sunk to the ground. They disappeared like they never existed in this world. The only things left were the existences on this side of the scale.

This was the true power of the archangel. Gabriel opened her mouth and spoke in a grudging voice. […I missed one. There was a limit to the number of petals.]

In fact, Demon King Ose had anticipated the situation in advance and had already fled. He knew that he couldn't cope with an archangel alone as a lower-ranked demon king. However, Jophiel didn't just watch.

A red fog was generated behind me and followed Ose. The whole world screamed like it was in pain. It was apparently a red fog but when I looked closer, it was an army of small soldiers.

The 503rd unit of Eden turned the sky red. It was the elite unit that followed the Commander of the Red Cosmos.

[Kueeeeok!]

Red thorns rose from the bloody fog that moved like piranhas. A terrible scream was heard in the distance as the soldiers of heaven held a festival of blood. Then after a while, everything became silent.

The torn incarnation body of the demon king flew in the wind like crumbs. The silent Gabriel moved my feet and trampled on the fragments of the demon king.

[It's nothing.]

[Constellations of the absolute evil system are greatly baffled by the emergence of the archangels.]

[The demon kings are doubting the probability of the Star Stream.]

[Some constellations have condemned the abnormal intervention of the archangels…]

[Shut up these ■■.]

The six wings stretching from my back flew through the wind as countless feathers and the power of the archangels diminished.

I felt a bit nauseous but the burden on my body wasn't as severe as I thought. Maybe it was because the amount of probability in the 95th scenario was much more abundant or maybe it was the Outer World Covenant with Secretive Plotter. Either way, it was good for me.

[It isn't finished yet.]

However, Jophiel didn't retract her strength. Jophiel continued by giving a command. [Kill him too.]

She was pointing to Yoo Joonghyuk who was as stiff as a statue. I hurriedly waved my hands. "There is no need. He isn't a bad guy…"

[He is absolutely evil.]

My right eye stung and the world started to look different.

[The stigma 'Eye of Sin' is triggered!]

Eye of Sin. It was Archangel Jophiel's stigma.

[Measuring the 'sins' of the target.]

The eye that saw the 'sins' accumulated in every existence in the world. There was only a dark abyss in the place where Yoo Joonghyuk had just been standing.

[The 'sins' of the target can't be converted to a numerical value.]

A darkness with no end. It was a darkness that got worse just by looking at it. Even the demon kings or constellations of the absolute evil system didn't have such huge sins.

Jophiel spoke. [It is an endless sin. I have never seen such a dense sin apart from Baal and Agares. All the sins in the world combined can't go beyond his sins.]

I knew. Yoo Joonghyuk had committed many sins. He killed many people. He destroyed many worlds. Countless souls cursed him.

[He must die.]

However—

"It isn't possible."

This person, he also saved others.

"You can't kill him."

Maybe it was nothing compared to everything he screwed up. Obviously, there were some things he saved.

[The constellation 'Commander of the Red Cosmos' is looking at you.]

In front of that sullen gaze, I gulped and opened my mouth. "This guy is still useful. You shouldn't kill him now."

[…Demon King of Salvation. It is because of the scribe's orders that you are still alive.]

"You spared me so you can spare one more person."

I looked back and saw that Yoo Joonghyuk's body was lightly shaking. His consciousness was somehow struggling to emerge from the water.

Jophiel spoke towards Yoo Joonghyuk. [If he wakes up, there is no guarantee that I can stop him. We have to kill him now.]

Jophiel tried to summon her fog again. I inwardly sighed. No matter what I thought, this was the only way.

"What if I can stop him from waking up without killing him?"

Jophiel's red fog stopped.

"What if there is a way to stop him from regaining consciousness while controlling his unconscious self?"

[Is there a way to bind him? What trick are you going to use?]

The moment Jophiel was about to explode again, Gabriel stepped in.

[Jophiel, leave it. In any case, we need time to figure out the situation.]

Jophiel thought for a moment before responding. […If he shows signs of waking up, I will kill him immediately.]

I nodded. Then I ran straight to Yoo Joonghyuk. "Hey."

The vibrations of his body were becoming stronger. I had seen this scene several times in the original novel. Maybe Yoo Joonghyuk's consciousness would wake up in a few minutes. It was difficult if that happened.

I slowly moved my hand and grabbed Yoo Joonghyuk's neck. Just as he did to me. It wasn't easy to raise him up because he was bigger than me.

"Let, go."

Yoo Joonghyuk's consciousness had almost reached the surface of the water and he spoke in a choppy manner. His fingertips moved slowly like he was trying to catch me.

I knew how to wake up Yoo Joonghyuk from his regression depression. In other words, it meant I also knew how to sink him deeper into that melancholy.

I saw Yoo Joonghyuk's fingertips moving and opened my mouth. "Do you remember? The 33rd round. You cleared the 40th scenario and Lee Jihye said this."

Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes dimmed and his moving fingertips stopped.

「"It would be nice if Master didn't have to go to the next round."」

"Think about it. You weren't always unhappy. Right? In all the rounds, there were moments when you were happy."

Yoo Joonghyuk's expression was becoming stiffer.

"The 173rd round. You protected Earth for quite some time. You also saw Lee Jihye receiving her high school diploma and Lee Seolhwa smiling at someone's child."

「"Joonghyuk-ssi, are you happy that you're alive?"」

Every time I spoke, Yoo Joonghyuk's expression collapsed. It wasn't despair that broke down Yoo Joonghyuk.

"The 383rd round. You finally cleared the 75th scenario. Fortunately, nobody died in that round. That was the first time. Then Lee Hyunsung told you."

「"Joonghyuk-ssi, I won't forget today until I die."」

The feather-like memories sank into his head.

"Then the 498th round…"

Yoo Joonghyuk's palms moved to cover his ears. The usual Yoo Joonghyuk wouldn't have fallen from this much. Now it was different. I held his hands and kept talking. "That happened 10 times."

A human sank deeper into the water just because of the weight of these feathers.

"Twenty times."

My breath clogged up and my lungs tightened. I could feel what Yoo Joonghyuk was going through. Only I could feel it. The most primitive darkness at the bottom of one person was swallowing his ego greedily.

"100 times. It repeated over 1,000 times."

All those words were destroyed. All the happy memories flowed back to a time they could never return to. Through the countless regressions, the meaning of happiness faded. All the values he preserved became pieces of torn paper.

"Yoo Joonghyuk."

Yoo Joonghyuk's self was sinking into the deep sea. It was to a place that he could never come up from without someone's help.

"Have you protected all the things you wanted to keep?"

I looked at Yoo Joonghyuk's miserable face and thought: Don't worry Yoo Joonghyuk. I'll do the rest. You stop and rest.

[Your understanding of the character 'Yoo Joonghyuk' is increasing explosively.]

Yoo Joonghyuk's empty eyes were showing memories of losing his master. I didn't use Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint but it wasn't hard to read.

「 I want to die. 」

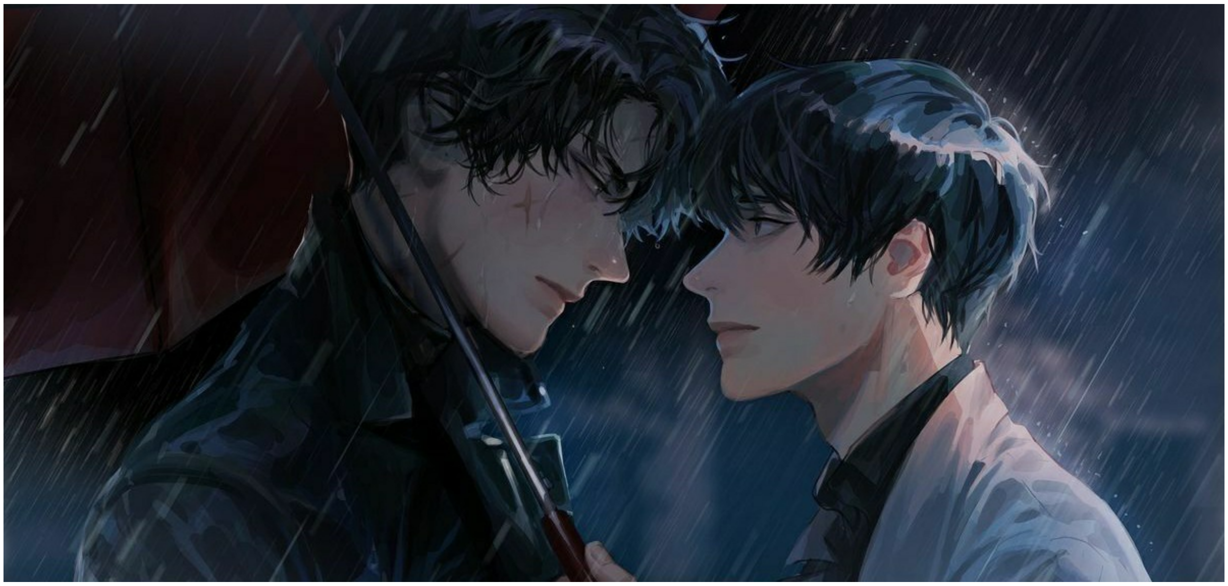
「 I want to finish all of this. 」

「 If only I can never wake up. 」

A few drops of rain fell from the sky. It was black rain made from the blood of the demon kings and constellations. Liquid also flowed onto Yoo Joonghyuk's face. Yoo Joonghyuk's gaze lowered and finally fell on me.

I was looking at the moment a human's spirit collapsed. There was a broken voice. Like a creaking machine, Yoo Joonghyuk stammered, "Wh,at… should, I, d…o?"

I released Yoo Joonghyuk's hands and told him. "I'll finish your story."



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Yoo Joonghyuk looked at me with empty eyes. However, I didn't see him. The sub scenario window had just updated.

[Sub Scenario (Secretive Plotter) - End of the Regressor]

Clear Conditions: Yoo Joonghyuk's death.

I reached for Yoo Joonghyuk's Splitting the Sky Sword that was on the ground.

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* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)

Chapter 288: Ep. 54 - Demon King Slayer, IV

A day passed since I arrived in the 1863rd round.

The Gwanghwamun area was wet from the dark rain that had been falling since last night. Soon after the rain started, the monsters crouching between the ruins woke up one by one. There was the monster that looked like an elephant that I saw when I first got here and one that reminded me of a huge octopus. The most frightening thing was the baby that was the size of a huge building.

There were many types of outer gods but not all of them were named 'Devourer of Dreams' or 'Indescribable Distance'. Most of them were 'unnamed' and existed without a proper ego.

I watched the baby in a diaper pushing through the city like a bulldozer and hid while holding my breath.

…To be honest, I probably needed the diaper more than the baby.

[The constellation 'Lily Blooming in Aquarius' is looking at you.]

It had been a few hours since the archangels fell asleep, stating that they would save their energy.

The white lily in my coat trembled as if it had regained power. Gabriel.

"Have you woken up?"

[Why did you make that choice?]

"What choice?"

[Do you need to ask?]

"There was no other way."

I heard a creaking and crushing sound in the distance. The moment I thought something else had happened, I saw the torn off leg of the elephant monster. There were signs that it was torn off by a powerful force. Someone dragged the severed leg and approached this way. It was the real monster of this scenario, Yoo Joonghyuk.

Like a sigh, the petals shook again. [I thought he would die… why is he holding a sword?]

"He could've committed suicide. Well, I don't think that will happen now."

I spoke while swinging Yoo Joonghyuk's Splitting the Sky Sword through the air. It wasn't surprising but I didn't kill Yoo Joonghyuk.

Gabriel was silent for a moment before muttering in a small voice. [What does Uriel like about this guy…?]

"Uriel? Ah, is Uriel well?"

[How should I know?]

It was a reaction that seemed a bit excessive. The moment I was about to ask, another indirect message came.

[The constellation 'Commander of the Red Cosmos' is looking at you.]

The difficult angel had also woken up. Jophiel woke up and got straight to the point. [Did you decide to keep him alive?]

I accepted the elephant's leg that Yoo Joonghyuk had brought instead of answering. It was a leg that was very fleshy. It gave off a very rich and clear story. I faced Yoo Joonghyuk who stared at me with empty eyes. Jophiel opened her mouth again.

[Don't you know that you shouldn't keep him alive? The scenario you received is…]

"Yoo Joonghyuk's death."

It would've been nice if I could lie but it was too late to deceive the archangels. They would've seen the scenario window that I saw.

–Yoo Joonghyuk's death.

It was the scenario that Secretive Plotter gave me. I had to kill him in order to return to the original third round.

"As I've already mentioned, it is difficult to interpret this scenario as it is." The death proposed by Secretive Plotter might not be the 'death' we thought about.

The archangels were silent. They didn't seem to understand my words. I flipped the elephant's leg and calmly declared. "Yoo Joonghyuk can't 'die'. As archangels, you should already know this?"

I could feel the gazes of the two angels on me.

[What does that mean?]

"This guy is a regressor."

In the early scenarios, the information I just mentioned would've been filtered but now it was different. The scenario was a scenario but by now, rumours about the 'regressor' should've spread quite a bit. Thus, the high-ranking constellations of Eden would know it.

The red cosmos leaves shook uneasily. […Don't tell me?]

I nodded. "He is a being who repeats his life forever. No one can kill him. If he dies, he will just move onto another round."

[How do you know this?]

"Why was Uriel keeping an eye on me?"

It was best to respond to questions that couldn't be answered was with more questions. Jophiel trembled as if controlling his anger.

[Then… what are you going to do now? If you can't kill him, you can't return to your original round.]

I shrugged and placed the roasted meat into my mouth. "I have to think about a way. There is plenty of time."

At my calm response, an unusual air flowed around the two flowers. I was nervous because I thought they wanted to express their 'status', only to suddenly hear a strange sound.

It was a growl that wasn't coming from my stomach. It didn't seem to be Yoo Joonghyuk either.

…Then? I bowed my head and saw the two flowers looking away.

"Are you hungry?"

[Gabriel, how long are you going to stand by?]

[I'm not standing by. I'm just watching. If it wasn't for Uriel, I would've killed him…]

Gabriel, who was stuck in a plastic bottle, answered while sucking up water through his stem. Beside her, the cosmos of Jophiel was likewise inserted into a bottle of water.

In the distance, Kim Dokja was saying something to Yoo Joonghyuk. Gabriel stared at him blankly and asked,

[That Uriel, is she well?]

[Focus on the mission, Gabriel.]

[No, I'm worried. Uriel always gets into trouble when she is left alone.]

[…I see. Do you actually like Uriel?]

[What nonsense! Have you found a way to go back yet? How long are we supposed to stay with them?]

Gabriel's petals fluttered and Jophiel replied, [I'm looking for a way but it seems hard.]

[Why? No matter how different the world line, there must be Eden here. If you ask the scribe here for help…]

[There is no reply from the scribe.]

[What?]

[It isn't just the scribe. I can't contact anyone from Eden.]

Eden couldn't be contacted? It was strange, no matter how much the world had changed. Due to the constraints of the scenario, it was impossible to return to their original 'constellation context'. It was frustrating.

Gabriel sighed and sucked up water again. [What? They were fighting and holding each other by the collar a few hours ago…]

In the distant place, Kim Dokja seemed to be stroking Yoo Joonghyuk's head. Looking at this scene, Gabriel was reminded of Uriel and herself. It was different but there was some resemblance.

…Companionship?

For a very short time, Gabriel seemed to understand why Uriel liked them.

"Eat the soil, Yoo Joonghyuk."

Yoo Joonghyuk started to silently eat the soil. I was startled and smacked him in the back of the head. "Why are you really eating it?!"

I wanted to test it but I didn't know he would actually follow my order. The Yoo Joonghyuk I knew would've never done this. However, the regression depression had completely devoured his ego and for the time being, Yoo Joonghyuk was in a stupid state. Yoo Joonghyuk looked up at me blankly.

I sighed with some compassion. "How good would it be if the usual you was so calm? You are better than the third round bastard."

"…"

"…Spit it out."

I watched Yoo Joonghyuk spitting out the soil and remembered another Yoo Joonghyuk that I knew. I didn't know if he was okay. It would be nice if he hadn't lost his mind by the time I came back. I entrusted it to Yoo Sangah so I hoped things would turn out well.

"Now lie down there and get some rest, 1863rd Yoo Joonghyuk."

At my words, Yoo Joonghyuk trudged towards the ruined building. I could see the sun setting in the distance. The sunset of the 95th scenario was still glowing. I looked at the haze and felt strangely peaceful. It was strange. In this horrible scenario, I could indulge in this appreciation.

「 Kim Dok ja needs to kill Yoo Joong hyuk. 」

…No, I didn't. Fortunately, there was no deadline for the scenario that Secretive Plotter gave me. I turned my head and saw Yoo Joonghyuk curled up with a foolish expression as he waited for my orders.

"Sleep."

Yoo Joonghyuk understood my words and closed his eyes. Since the scenario started, Yoo Joonghyuk had never slept properly. Maybe this was the 'first sleep' for Yoo Joonghyuk. It was the first sleep where he was freed from all his memories.

Once Yoo Joonghyuk was completely asleep, I turned on my smartphone. The phone desktop contained the text of Ways of Survival as usual. However, there was something different this time.

–Three Ways to Survive in a Ruined World.txt

…What? Wasn't it the 'third revision?' I suddenly got goosebumps. Was it because I came back to the original round? Then it changed back to the original text, not the revised one?

I opened the file with a confused mind. The file was the original Ways of Survival that I knew. Maybe this was better. It was important to obtain information about this round if I wanted to think properly about the future. I quickly moved the screen to the 1863rd round and read all the information thoroughly.

「 I lost Lee Hyunsung in the 54th scenario. 」

I read the story, read it and read it again.

「 In the 67th scenario, Lee Seolhwa was killed. 」

He lost, lost and lost more people.

「 Lee Jihye died in the 78th scenario. 」

The Yoo Joonghyuk of this round was completely alone. In fact, it wasn't only this round. In all of Yoo Joonghyuk's rounds, he had to leave alone. It was the same life even until the end.

"…Poor guy."

I didn't know the epilogue of Ways of Survival. The one thing I could be sure of was that Ways of Survival didn't have a happy ending.

…What if I didn't go back to the third round? What if I stayed here and helped Yoo Joonghyuk of the last round clear the scenario?

「 The Fourth Wall says, "Kim Dok ja, that…" 」

I know.

「 Ye s. 」

This was the trick hidden in Secretive Plotter's scheme. Perhaps Secretive Plotter expected this and gave me a scenario. It was why the scenario had no time limit.

Kill Yoo Joonghyuk here and return to the original world. Or see the conclusion of the scenario with Yoo Joonghyuk here.

This was the idea of the 'outer god'. The laughable thing was that I was really shaken by the proposal. If I looked at the person here… I wouldn't see the ending I really wanted. But if I killed him here, the original 'Yoo Joonghyuk' would disappear forever.

My head hurt as I thought about it. If I wanted to kill Yoo Joonghyuk, I had to end Yoo Joonghyuk's regressions. However, his sponsor didn't speak and I didn't know the identity. I didn't know if it was fortunate or not.

I sighed and scrolled through Ways of Survival again. Then I felt a cold feeling down my spine.

[The constellation 'Lily Blooming in Aquarius' is warning you!]

In the distance, the two flowers in the plastic bottles were shaking. It was a strong alarm. Was it an outer god?

"You've been hiding here, Yoo Joonghyuk."

The moment I reflexively tried to turn around, I felt an eerie prediction. If I turned around now, I would die. I clearly had this feeling. It was a degree of stealth that could fool my constellation senses. It was clearly an unquantifiable existence. The presence was nearby?

"What are you? Are you Yoo Joonghyuk's companion?"

I got a sense of deja vu from the voice. It was clearly a voice I knew. I turned my head slowly enough so that the enemy wouldn't feel threatened. Behind me was a woman with a familiar appearance. For a moment, my mind was awash with panic.

…How on earth? I hadn't thought about it. It was because this person was already dead in this 'round'.

"Well, there is no need to know. I'll kill him anyway."

The smiling Admiral Lee Jihye smiled as she pointed the Double Dragon Swords towards me.

Chapter 289: Ep. 54 - Demon King Slayer, V

"Destroy, Double Dragon Swords."

At Lee Jihye's words, magic power exploded from the two swords. Something resembling a blue dragon flew forward to tear at my neck.

The Double Dragon Swords. The strongest swords on the Korean Peninsula and the relic of the Duke of Loyalty and Warfare shone. I looked at the trajectory of the Kendo and used Way of the Wind and Electrification.

"Eh, you became smaller? Where did this incarnation come from?"

Admiral Lee Jihye. She survived up to the 95th scenario and was one of the 100 most powerful people in Ways of Survival.

However, this was a story for when she was 'alive'. If I remembered, in the original novel, the Lee Jihye of the 1863rd round had died long ago. Then who was the Lee Jihye in front of my eyes?

I flew at an altitude that the Double Dragon Swords couldn't reach me and shouted, "Lee Jihye, stop! I'm not an enemy!"

"What, you know me? Indeed, I am a bit famous." She muttered shameless words and took a pose.

I knew what this technique was.

Instant Kill. A great skill in Ways of Survival and a fearsome skill that killed any opponent with one blow.

"Do you really think I can't cut a small bug like you?"

I faced Lee Jihye's eyes and got goosebumps. Then Lee Jihye disappeared in an instant. An invisible sword was aimed at my neck and I instinctively knew what would happen next.

I cried out, "Yoo Joonghyuk!"

A shadow as big as a house covered my eyes and the strong sound of metal colliding was heard.

Yoo Joonghyuk blocked the sword by my side and Lee Jihye swung the Double Dragon Swords at Yoo Joonghyuk.

There was a small scratch on the blade of the Splitting the Sky Sword. Instant Kill was a powerful technique. If only the opponent wasn't Yoo Joonghyuk.

In the 1863rd round, Yoo Joonghyuk was closer to a killing machine than anyone else. His decision couldn't be reversed. Once he decided to kill someone, he would kill them.

Yoo Joonghyuk broke through the threshold of transcendence and swung his sword. Lee Jihye was pushed by the power gap and crashed to the ground. Yoo Joonghyuk, who held the upper hand, fell towards Lee Jihye.

"Yoo Joonghyuk! Stop!" I shouted as there was a loud roar from the ground.

I saw Lee Jihye falling in the dust and Yoo Joonghyuk aiming at her. Yoo Joonghyuk didn't stop at my words. Sparks of probability were around him. The regression depression was releasing.

"Happy memories! Happy memories!"

Yoo Joonghyuk paused.

"Don't kill her! You can't kill her!"

I didn't know why this Lee Jihye was alive. However, there was one thing I knew. At the very least, Yoo Joonghyuk shouldn't kill her. Lee Jihye rose from the dust and shouted, "What are you doing? Come on Supreme King! This time I will kill you!"

It seemed this wasn't the first time Lee Jihye and Yoo Joonghyuk had clashed. I couldn't understand no matter how I thought about it. It was strange that the dead Lee Jihye had survived, let alone become enemies with Yoo Joonghyuk.

"Wait! Lee Jihye, stop this! We have no intention of fighting!"

Lee Jihye didn't stop. Yoo Joonghyuk's movements had become passive because of my order. Lee Jihye's blade cut the skin and blood flowed from Yoo Joonghyuk. In the regression depression state, he couldn't take effective defense measures.

However, if I gave an attack order then he would rush at Lee Jihye like before… shit. I was still maintaining Electrification so I climbed onto Yoo Joonghyuk's shoulder and shouted at Lee Jihye. "Stop it, you brat! Yoo Joonghyuk is your master!"

"Master? What is this bullshit? I've never had this monster as a master."

Lee Jihye's eyes shone fiercely. "My master is a much more wonderful person."

A five coloured aura flowed from Lee Jihye's blade. I reflexively activated Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint. No matter what the attack, it was easy to avoid if the direction was known.

[The skill activation is cancelled due to a lack of understanding about the person!]

…Even if my understanding with Yoo Joonghyuk was low, something was strange. Lee Jihye wasn't such a complicated human being. At the very least, the Lee Jihye that I knew…

[The character 'Lee Jihye' has activated the stigma 'Song of the Sword Lv. 10!]

Was she going to do this? Then I had an idea. I strongly gripped Unbroken Faith and invoked a stigma.

[The stigma 'Song of the Sword Lv. 5' has been used.]

Lee Jihye's expression was shocked as she confirmed the five colours rising from my blade. She hadn't seemed to notice yet. In any case, this stigma relied on 'chance'. Let's see who was luckier.

Lee Jihye was the first player. Strings floated in the air and the writing of the Duke of Loyalty and Warfare flowed.

「The 10th day. Clear skies. After eating breakfast, I went to work in the city hall.」

Bingo. I could see Lee Jihye's expression distorting. Song of the Sword was a skill developed based on the Duke of Loyalty and Warfare's diary. If there was no luck then an effect wouldn't be triggered.

Then it was my turn.

「The 28th day. Clear skies. I fired 10 rounds of five with the bow. In five rounds, I hit all targets. In two rounds, I hit four targets and in three rounds, I hit three targets.」

A fire bolt poured out from my blade. Lee Jihye's eyes widened and she stepped back.

[The constellation 'Maritime War God' is looking at you with astonishment.]

Lee Jihye put out the fire burning her collar and screamed, "Who are you? How are you using my sponsor's stigma?"

"Let's have a conversation."

"I will cut off your limbs and then you will answer straight."

Perhaps my attack had irritated her but Lee Jihye's expression became a bit serious. "I don't know what sponsor you have but they will receive a big injury."

Lee Jihye pulled out a new sword. Surprisingly, it was an item that I also knew. The Four Yin Demonic Beheading Sword. In all the rounds that I had read about, there was no memory of Lee Jihye holding the Four Yin Demonic Beheading Sword.

"The Big Dipper! Give me strength!" At Lee Jihye's cry, several stars shone in the sky.

The Big Dipper originally consisted of seven constellations. However, this was the latter scenario and only four stars shone because some had died. Dazzling light poured from the Four Yin Demonic Beheading Sword as it evolved into a star relic.

It was obvious what Lee Jihye was going to do. The Four Yin Demonic Beheading Sword had the terrible power to break the link between sponsor and incarnation for a short time.

By the way, Lee Jihye's expression towards me was strange. "You… there are no links?"

Of course. I was now one with my incarnation body.

[The constellation 'Demon King of Salvation' is looking at incarnation 'Lee Jihye'.]

The astonished Lee Jihye took one step back. Then it was my turn. I pulled out the same sword that Lee Jihye was holding.

"H-How?

How on earth?"

I leapt from Yoo Joonghyuk's shoulders and held onto the Four Yin Demonic Beheading Sword that let out a dazzling brilliance. The moment that the careless Lee Jihye's eyes widened, the trajectory of Way of the Wind moved over her head. There were explosive sparks and Lee Jihye shrieked with pain.

"Aaaaack!"

The star of the Maritime War God defending her flickered. I backed away.

[The constellation 'Maritime War God' is angry at you!]

…I understood. I had been planning to break the Maritime War God's link to Lee Jihye in order to neutralize Lee Jihye, but it failed.

Lee Jihye's eyes turned white. The Duke of Loyalty and Warfare of the 95th scenario was about to descend in front of my eyes. I hurriedly checked the water in the surrounding area. Everything was over if the Ghost Fleet was summoned here.

The tributary of Cheonggyecheon was rising in the air. There were sparks as the illusions of the Ghost Fleet started to appear one by one.

Dammit. I reflexively looked at the plastic bottles behind me. To be precise, it was at the flowers plugged in. Should I borrow the archangels' power? Would they lend their strength? The Lee Jihye in front of me wasn't 'evil'.

"Duke of Loyalty and Warfare. Please stop."

Then a serious man's voice was heard. A bear-like man's hand pointed at Lee Jihye's shoulder.

[The constellation 'Maritime War God' is furious!]

[The constellation 'Master of Steel' is sending out a cold gaze!]

It was a battle between constellations. It was the Duke of Loyalty and Warfare who stepped down first. The Ghost Fleet's illusions disappeared and Lee Jihye collapsed on the ground. Then a man emerged from behind Lee Jihye.

"You were here as well." I stared blankly at the man. I didn't know how many times I would be surprised today.

"What are you doing, Hyunsung ahjussi? He is on Yoo Joonghyuk's side!"

"That hasn't been figured out yet."

The 25th or the 95th scenario. The third round or the 1863rd round… Lee Hyunsung was the Lee Hyunsung I knew.

I barely managed to hold back a few tears.

"I am Lee Hyunsung. Can I ask for your name?"

"…I am Kim Dokja."

Lee Hyunsung seemed to have suffered a lot and I could see a thick scar on his forehead. There were countless scars on his tight steel-like muscles.

I tried to calm my confused mind. Like Lee Jihye, Lee Hyunsung was a person who couldn't be alive right now. In the 1863rd round, Yoo Joonghyuk lost all his companions.

Lee Hyunsung said, "Dokja-ssi. We have no intention of being hostile to you. We just need Yoo Joonghyuk over there."

It was a nice smile but I could read the calm behind it without much difficulty. This Lee Hyunsung had made it through 94 scenarios. If I threatened him even a little bit, Lee Hyunsung would try to remove me in a more thorough and effective way than Lee Jihye.

I inquired in a calm tone, "Why do you need Yoo Joonghyuk?"

"He has the key to clearing this scenario."

I knew what the 95th scenario was and could see that Lee Hyunsung's words were true. By the way, that wasn't the only thing I was curious about.

"How many people are in your group?"

"Huh?"

"If you have reached the 95th scenario then you must have a group."

"Ah, my group is Jihye…"

"If you lie to me one more time, I won't trust your words in the future."

Lee Hyunsung's expression hardened. I continued speaking, "Are you the leader? Is it Lee Hyunsung-ssi?"

Lee Hyunsung's eyes were shaking. Indeed, he was a man who wasn't good at hiding his emotions, no matter how much time passed.

"That…"

The blurred eyes gave me confidence. Lee Hyunsung and Lee Jihye were in the same group but they weren't the leader. This '1863rd round' wasn't the 1863rd round I knew.

My head calmed down because a definite hypothesis was in it. In hindsight, many things could be understood. My understanding of Yoo Joonghyuk was strangely low. The reason why Lee Jihye and Lee Hyunsung survived when they should be dead.

There was someone else besides me. Someone who wasn't in the original novel was active in this round.

"If you want Yoo Joonghyuk, please guide me to your leader."

Lee Hyunsung shook his head. "It is difficult. I don't know what you and Yoo Joonghyuk intend…"

"You don't have to be so vigilant. As you can see, I'm weak and the current Yoo Joonghyuk is safe. He listens to my words pretty well."

"What a piece of shit! How can that bastard listen to anyone?"

Lee Jihye had a pretty good understanding of Yoo Joonghyuk. Lee Hyunsung was also full of disbelief.

"Kim Dokja-ssi, are you Yoo Joonghyuk's companion?"

…Companion.

"That's right."

"…I don't believe it. I know that Yoo Joonghyuk has no companions."

"I'll show you the evidence. Yoo Joonghyuk."

Yoo Joonghyuk looked at me.

"Pick up your sword."

Yoo Joonghyuk picked up the Splitting the Sky Sword.

Lee Jihye cried out. "Only that much…!"

"Yoo Joonghyuk, come here."

As Yoo Joonghyuk approached, the terrified Lee Jihye hid behind Lee Hyunsung. "Hyunsung ahjussi! Be careful! He's going to attack—"

"Yoo Joonghyuk, sit down."

Yoo Joonghyuk sat down.

Lee Jihye and Lee Hyunsung's mouths were wide open. It was truly amazing. The Yoo Joonghyuk they knew would never do something like this. I felt a bit sorry for him but it should be fine since I was beaten up a lot yesterday.

Lee Jihye and Lee Hyunsung looked like they were watching a circus and I smiled at them. "What else do you want to try? Should I feed him dirt?"

They glanced at each other after hearing my words. Lee Jihye waved her hands and Lee Hyunsung gave a deep sigh.

"…Follow me."

Their base wasn't far away. However, due to the 'unnamed things' that appeared along the way, it took longer than I thought. It took around two hours as we wandered around the ruins avoiding the monsters.

In the distance, a building that seemed to be their stronghold appeared.

"This is the place."

There, I met a person wearing the same coat as me.

Chapter 290: Ep. 54 - Demon King Slayer, VI

"Hey, Lee Jihye." A man waved towards us while speaking in a typical gangster tone. The white coat hanging from his shoulder was unmistakably the Infinite Dimension Space Coat. Thus, it was the same coat as mine.

[The constellation 'Lily Blooming in Aquarius' is frowning.]

[The constellation 'Commander of the Red Cosmos' is showing displeasure.]

The flowers were shaking in my coat's inner pocket.

…This guy was the leader? The surging shock made me momentarily dizzy. I reflexively looked back at Yoo Joonghyuk but I couldn't share my shock with Yoo Joonghyuk who had become a fool.

I looked back at the man again. He had a bandage wrapped around one hand and he was half-leaning against a door as he laughed while pushing back white hair.

「Kim Dokja is an idiot.」

…No matter how I thought about it, he couldn't be the leader. In the first place, this 'coat' was something that could be easily obtained by the 95th scenario.

Lee Jihye frowned. "Kim Namwoon."

"Yes."

"I told you to pretend not to know me. Now get lost. I have to go in."

"Uh, uh…"

Kim Namwoon faltered in front of Lee Jihye's words. Lee Jihye glared at Kim Namwoon like he was pathetic.

"In addition, don't steal Master's coat. I'll kill you."

"…Don't you want to wear it once?"

Lee Jihye slammed open the door and entered the building. As if overwhelmed by Lee Jihye, Kim Namwoon's gaze followed after Lee Jihye's back.

…Come to think of it, their relationship was exactly the same as it was in the original novel. There were many new things that emerged in my mind. Lee Jihye, Lee Hyunsung and Kim Namwoon…

Curiosity and an unknown fear coiled deep in my heart. What happened in this round? As I was distracted for a moment, Kim Namwoon looked at me.

"Who are you? That coat looks like mine?"

[The character 'Kim Namwoon' is showing vigilance towards you!]

I remembered the first time I met him. Kim Namwoon's head was blown up on the subway. If Kim Namwoon was still alive… would it have felt like this?

"Hey soldier, who is this person? Fuck! It is Yoo Joonghyuk!"

Kim Namwoon discovered Yoo Joonghyuk behind me and quickly stepped back.

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is baring his teeth.]

Delusional Demon Kim Namwoon. In this turn, the Abyssal Black Flame Dragon had picked his original incarnation.

Yoo Joonghyuk raised his head at the hostility directed towards him and Kim Namwoon flinched. "You are still cool… did you come to fight, Yoo Joonghyuk?"

Kim Namwoon's hands were trembling and I couldn't tell if he was excited or afraid. Maybe it was both. It was Lee Hyunsung who blocked the atmosphere from becoming worse. "Namwoon, these people didn't come to fight."

"What? Then why did they come?"

"That…"

I stepped inside the building without listening to their conversation.

"Wait a minute! Kim Dokja-ssi!"

Lee Hyunsung's voice was heard behind me but my desire to check the interior of the building was greater. If my idea was correct… This building was the very 'building' that Yoo Joonghyuk envisioned in the early rounds.

I entered and a spacious room appeared. It was the size of a warehouse of a large company. From a large door next to me, a bed carrying a patient rushed in. There was one emergency patient.

"Don't play around and move the patient over here!"

I quickly pushed the bed over. There were people in white coats gathered.

"A story pack! Bring a story pack!"

"This patient is allergic to animal-related stories!"

They were all trained in medical skills. The one leading them was a woman wearing small rimless glasses. A woman looked at the patient's pierced stomach and thighs and asked me about the details of the patient.

"Where did this patient get hurt?"

I stared quietly at her. A woman who was called 'Poisoner' or 'Doctor' depending on the rounds. She was Yoo Joonghyuk's lover in some rounds and enemies in others.

I wore a white coat and was mistaken to be a doctor. I looked at the patient's details and answered, "Perhaps he was hit by an unnamed thing. It seems that the tentacles contaminated the wound."

"Indeed… um?"

Lee Seolhwa slowly blinked at me.

[The character 'Lee Seolhwa' has received a strange feeling from you.]

"Who are you?"

Who should I say? No, she wouldn't know no matter what I said.

"Hey ahjussi, what are you doing? Come along quickly! Bring Yoo Joonghyuk with you!"

I left the bemused Lee Jihye and walked up the stairs with Yoo Joonghyuk towards Lee Jihye.

The inner walls of the building were made of a transparent material so the structure of the whole building came into view as I climbed up.

Patients were constantly pouring into the emergency room on the first floor. They were incarnations injured by confronting outer gods or constellations.

It wasn't strange. Such tragedies had become commonplace in the 95th scenario. I remembered the 95th scenario of the 1863rd round.

I turned my attention outside the building and saw the ruined scenery of Seoul. There were nebulae emitting smoke and sleeping outer gods. Above them were dark crystals covering the sky.

[Apocalypse Dragon Sealing Ball]

This seal was the core and goal of the 95th scenario. Gather five scattered keys and release the Apocalypse Dragon. Once the Apocalypse Dragon was released, destruction would come to the planet and those who completed the scenario would automatically go to the next scenario.

However, this 1863rd round was different from the 1863rd round I knew.

–A first-grade monster has appeared on the river side!

Radio waves were spreading through the building. As we climbed the stairs, I could see the scene in the situation room that had bright panels shining.

–I strongly recommend that you withdraw the forces dispatched to Seocho! The Archangel of Fire has appeared.

–We have found the Holy Sword Ascalon in Nowon! We are currently engaged with dozens of unnamed things! Please send support!

Numerous messages came and went and one person was managing everything. He had curly hair. A boy wearing a headset with dark circles under his eyes.

…No, he wasn't a boy anymore. I looked at him with a strange feeling.

Hermit King of Shadows, Han Donghoon. The child, who didn't become a 'king' in the round I lived, sat in a place where his talent could shine. White light emerged from Han Donghoon's fingertips and his completed the calculations quickly.

–Min Jiwon-ssi and her Hwarang and Maitreya Cha Sangkyung will be in charge of the Nowon area.

–The incarnations of Olympus must be hit first before they attack.

–You must secure the holy sword Ascalon. Hurry!

Familiar names were heard in the messages. Min Jiwon and Cha Sangkyung. Those who had the Slumbering Lady of Fine Brocade and One-Eyed Maitreya as their constellations survived to the 95th scenario.

"Why are you looking like that?" Lee Jihye watched me from the side and poked me.

I hesitated to answer before telling her honestly. "…It is more amazing than I thought."

Lee Jihye was surprised by my answer and hesitated for a moment. "Well, my master is really great. It is all thanks to Master. That person did it alone."

Lee Jihye, Lee Hyunsung, Lee Seolhwa, Min Jiwon, Cha Sangkyung, Han Donghoon… in addition, Kim Namwoon. All the people who should've died in the original 1863rd round were alive. Furthermore, their level of their armed forces was high and the size of their force was formidable.

In a sense, it was better than the third round that I lived… no, it was the level I had always hoped for.

My head throbbed.

Someone I didn't know had changed the history of the 1863rd round. The tragedy that should've happened didn't happen and humanity was fighting.

Yoo Joonghyuk hadn't lost any colleagues yet. Maybe… I didn't have to go back to the third round. I could see the proper ending here.

Lee Jihye told me, "We will go to the end of the scenario with Master."

The moment I heard this, an eerie and cold sensation filled my chest. Clearly, there was everything present in this landscape. Apart from one thing.

I turned around and saw Yoo Joonghyuk standing with a blank expression. I couldn't tell whether or not Yoo Joonghyuk was looking at this scenery. I didn't know if he was grieving or rejoicing. All I could know was about myself.

"Why do you hate Yoo Joonghyuk?"

"It is because he is a bad guy."

"Why is he a bad guy?"

"Are you really asking because you don't know?"

"I don't know."

"That person won't hesitate to kill for his own goals."

It was true. I asked, "Is that all?"

"Do you need another reason?"

That's right. Maybe this reason alone was sufficient. However…

「Kim Dokja thought, 'You don't know why Yoo Joonghyuk did those things'.」

I took a deep breath. This wasn't Lee Jihye's fault. No one had done anything wrong. Rather, everyone was doing so well that perhaps it made me angry.

"Who is the Master you are talking about?"

"Go to the top floor of the building. Take the elevator over there."

I nodded and moved to the elevator. Yoo Joonghyuk followed behind me and Lee Jihye pulled out her sword. "Leave Yoo Joonghyuk here."

It was as expected. I alternated looking between Yoo Joonghyuk and Lee Jihye. I heard a dinging sound as the elevator arrived.

I approached Yoo Joonghyuk before boarding the elevator. "Yoo Joonghyuk, think happy thoughts and wait. Do you understand?"

Yoo Joonghyuk nodded.

"However, if someone tries to harm you… remember the memories of the most unfortunate days."

"What are you doing now?"

Lee Jihye felt a strange nuance from my words. I ignored her and got on the elevator.

"Hey! Answer me! What did you mean by what you said to Yoo Joonghyuk!"

I knew how important this place was to Lee Jihye. Naturally, someone's precious thing was a weakness.

"If you're curious then try touching him. Although I wouldn't if I was you."

The door of the elevator closed.

3, 4, 5…

Gravity increased as the number of floors of the building changed. The numbers changed while my brain moved faster than ever.

Who was it? There were a few potential candidates. Those who could read information of the future and change the future. Anna Croft and some constellations of a certain nebula. However, none of them could do something like this.

No matter how good they were, they were still part of the original novel. It wasn't possible to make a change to the original events with their power alone.

9, 10, 11…

Then there was only one answer. Besides me, there was another being outside the original. Still, there were some weird points. Even if it was an existence outside the original, there was no reason they could progress so perfectly to the 95th scenario. In a way, it resembled me… At this moment, I got goosebumps.

…Don't tell me? There were the Yoo Joonghyuks in other rounds. If so, what about me?

Dding.

I shook my head the moment the elevator made a sound. According to the revised version of Ways of Survival, I didn't exist in Yoo Joonghyuk's other rounds. After a few more rounds, there was no 'me'. If there was, the revision itself would be different.

Thus, the existence likely wasn't me. The one thing that bothered me was Secretive Plotter.

[Actually, there was another person beside you who made a covenant.]

The door opened. Then a room reminiscent of a hotel suite appeared. It was a dim room where the fire was extinguished. There was a soft carpeted floor. I saw a figure sitting on the chair.

"Hmm… you are the one Lee Hyunsung mentioned."

Along with the voice, a silver light lit up the room. The first thing I saw in my dim vision was the sword on the table. The sword boasted a pure white luster. I knew this sword well. It was because it was my Unbroken Faith. As I looked at the sword, the person sitting on the chair spoke.

"It is a good sword. As the name implies, it doesn't break."

"I know. I'm using it too."

"Really?"

The person sitting on the chair was covered in a black half mask. I stared at the eyes visible beyond the half mask. It had changed by the winds of the scenario but there was no doubt.

[The exclusive skill 'Character List' is activated!]

Originally, it was a skill that shouldn't work. I used it a few times and I knew it well. Then why did I try it again?

[There is too much information about this person. Character List is converted to Character Summary.]

Maybe it was because I hoped it wouldn't work. I looked at the information in front of me and felt somewhat heavy. Maybe she didn't know.

What terrible loneliness did I feel right now?

"Okay, where did you come from? I've never heard the name Kim Dokja."

I should've noticed it from the beginning. She was the only person who knew the existence of Ways of Survival apart from me. She was the only one who could've done this in the first place.

…But how? It was pointless to ask. There was a part I needed to know from now on. However, there was one thing I could know. This wasn't the one from the third round that I knew.

I looked at the woman with a bob cut and asked, "Are you Han Sooyoung's avatar?"

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* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)

Chapter 291: Ep. 55 - Happy Memories, I

One day in the past, Han Sooyoung had said,

–The first time I tried creating a clone using Avatar… I gave away too many of my memories and it went out of control.

"…How interesting. Where did you hear that?"

[The character 'Han Sooyoung' is curious about you.]

[Your understanding of the character 'Han Sooyoung' has increased.]

Han Sooyoung's clone was looking at me with interest. Her eyes were so vivid that I couldn't help doubting if she was really a clone for a moment. However, the real Han Sooyoung wouldn't be so composed.

"I have familiar with your main body. She has a loose mouth."

"Hmm… it is a childish provocation but I will let it pass this time. Your idea is wrong. I'm not Han Sooyoung's clone but the real Han Sooyoung."

"What?"

The shape of this smiling mouth was undoubtedly Han Sooyoung.

"I have memories that she doesn't have."

"Memories? What memories?"

"Unlike her, I am tight-lipped."

I grasped the hilt of the sword at my waist.

"I heard that clones will live even if their heads are cut off."

In any case, I hadn't come here to waste time. The Unbroken Faith in my hand cried out violently.

[The constellation 'Demon King of Salvation' is looking at incarnation 'Han Sooyoung'.]

The whole suite shook from the 'status' I released. I heard loud noises from below but Han Sooyoung wasn't nervous at all.

"…Demon king. You are bigger than I think."

The next moment, I realized why she was composed. A net of probability spread over the entire room. The status that I emitted suddenly fell sharply.

[This area is a Non-aggression Zone.]

[You are prohibited from fighting in the area for the next hour.]

A Non-aggression Zone…

"Did you make a deal with the dokkaebi?"

"It is necessary for a person who can control Yoo Joonghyuk."

I decided not to think of her as a mere 'clone' anymore. Maybe as she said, this was the real Han Sooyoung.

Then a system message was heard.

[The character 'Han Sooyoung' has triggered the Eyes of Truth!]

Eyes of Truth. It was a 'attributes detection' skill comparable to Anna Croft's Great Demon's Eye. In this short time, Han Sooyoung tried to read my information.

[The exclusive skill 'Fourth Wall' is activated!]

[The Fourth Wall has completely broken down the Eyes of Truth…]

Sparks flew and Han Sooyoung hurriedly cancelled the skill. "You have a tremendous skill."

Han Sooyoung wasn't greedy. She didn't try to break the Fourth Wall like Yoo Joonghyuk and didn't panic like Anna Croft. This calmness wasn't the Han Sooyoung that I knew.

Han Sooyoung laughed like it was fun. "You can cut off my head later. Shall we play a game? Do you know the Divine Three Questions and Answers?"

It was the question and answer exchange I had once done with Ariadne of Olympus.

"Don't you have questions you are curious about? Let's exchange them one by one."

I didn't know what was going on. However, this was clearly a chance for me. I nodded in agreement. "Okay."

"Let's make a rule instead. We are able to lie."

"Then what is the use of the Three Questions and Answers Exchange?"

"It is interesting."

Han Sooyoung's eyes moved in a smooth curve. It wasn't difficult to read what she was thinking. I smiled and replied, "Yes, okay."

At my answer, messages popped up in the air.

–The Divine Three Questions and Answers has begun.

–Both sides will exchange three questions and answers.

–Both sides can refuse to answer one question.

–The conversation won't end until the questions and answers are fully exchanged.

"I will ask first."

–The first question ticket has been used.

"Tell me about the contents of the Outer World Contract you signed with Secretive Plotter.

Han Sooyoung shook a bit at my first question.

[Your understanding of the character 'Han Sooyoung' has increased!]

The key to this exchange was to create 'concrete questions' that were difficult for the other person to avoid. I also had to make the most of the information that could be handed over.

Han Sooyoung said to me, "You even know this? It isn't easy."

"Answer me."

"It means you have also made an Outer World Covenant."

She was quick to notice, just like Han Sooyoung of the third round. Han Sooyoung continued speaking. "I have signed an Outer World Contract with Secretive Plotter. If he hears what he wants, he will help me complete the world I wanted."

–The first answer has been received.

It wasn't a very informative answer. The important thing was the authenticity of the answer.

[The exclusive skill 'Lie Detection Lv. 6' is activated!]

[The character 'Han Sooyoung' has triggered 'Poker Face Lv. 10'!]

[Poker Face has neutralized the effect of Lie Detection!]

As expected, she knew this skill. There was Poker Face among the skills that I saw on her Character List. Thanks to this skill, it was impossible to find out the truth of the answer using Lie Detection. Of course, that didn't mean I had no solution.

[The exclusive skill, 'Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint' has been activated!]

[Your understanding of this person is sufficient and the second stage of Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint is activated!]

As soon as she became a character, I could read her thoughts just by asking questions. The next moment.

…

「I knew it.」

「I told you.」

「Uh, don't step on my feet!」

「Why are you peeking at me?」

…

I instantly heard hundreds of voices and my heard felt like it was going to burst. I didn't have any time to express my astonishment and hurriedly cancelled the skill.

[Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint has been turned off!]

I looked at Han Sooyoung blankly and she had a peculiar smile on her face. "I did this just in case and indeed. I thought there would be such a skill."

"…What was that just now?"

"Is that your second question?"

I reflexively closed my mouth. Han Sooyoung laughed. "Well, I'll answer as a free service. It is an application of the Avatar skill."

I finally understood what was going on. Han Sooyoung split her self into hundreds by using 'Avatar. I looked at Han Sooyoung's cheerful expression and felt my heart beating quickly. I had never met such an opponent before.

Han Sooyoung spoke first. "This time I will ask."

–Incarnation 'Han Sooyoung' has used the first question ticket.

"Have you ever written a novel called Ways of Survival?"

Some questions implied information just by the question itself. I knew for sure what this person thought of me. Thus, I had to show off my skills here. "That's right. I wrote it."

[The character 'Han Sooyoung' has used 'Lie Detection Lv. 10'.]

[The exclusive skill 'Poker Face Lv. 5' is activated!]

I'm sorry but I also had the Poker Face skill. Just before I came to this round, I bought a bunch of needed skills to the Dokkaebi Bag.

[Poker Face has neutralized the effect of Lie Detection!]

Han Sooyoung's lips curved slightly at the message. "You're really interesting."

This person was also interesting.

"…Is this really Yoo Joonghyuk?"

Lee Seolhwa asked like it was unbelievable. Standing in front of her were Iron Blood Supreme King Yoo Joonghyuk. Yoo Joonghyuk stood upright and stared into space with blank eyes.

People flocked around Yoo Joonghyuk. It was Lee Jihye who scolded them first. "What are you all looking at? What's wrong with you when you've often seen him on the screen?"

"It's amazing… This is the first time I've seen him standing still like this. How did you do it? Did you use poison?"

Even Han Donghoon sitting in the control room observed Yoo Joonghyuk through the panel windows. Kim Namwoon sneaked up beside Yoo Joonghyuk and took a subtle pose.

Click. Click.

Lee Jihye frowned as she saw the scene. "What are you doing?"

The surprised Kim Namwoon's phone flew into the air. Then a hand stretched out from Kim Namwoon's shadow and grabbed the smartphone in place of Kim Namwoon.

"Hey, let's take a photo together. This opportunity isn't common."

"Hey, shouldn't you leave him alone? Why are you taking photos?"

Lee Jihye grabbed his wrist and roared. Then there was the sound of a photo being taken. The photo showed the expressionless Yoo Joonghyuk, the giggling Kim Namwoon and the angry Lee Jihye.

"The soldier over there! Don't just stand there and move out of the way! We're taking photos!"

Lee Hyunsung stood still in the distance and Lee Seolhwa hit Kim Namwoon's head.

"Didn't I tell you to use honorifics with Hyunsung-ssi?"

"Ah, I hate it. Stop nagging me!"

Click.

"By the way, is this guy really safe?"

"Shall I stab him once?"

"Don't do anything. The guy who climbed up set a strange trigger. If the worst happens, he will start a massacre."

Click.

"Trigger? What trigger?"

"I think he told Yoo Joonghyuk to go on a rampage if he was harmed."

"Hmm, then… what about this?"

Kim Namwoon smiled and put a hand on Yoo Joonghyuk's shoulder. Yoo Joonghyuk didn't react. "What? This is okay? Then what about this?"

People laughed as they surrounded the empty Yoo Joonghyuk. There were some who were amazed and others who were happy.

Click.

Several photos were taken and Yoo Joonghyuk's expression changed little by little. Faint emotions appeared in the depth of his hollow eyes. Maybe they were emotions that Yoo Joonghyuk himself couldn't understand. His eyes seemed to become hot and his heart was stuffy. However, Yoo Joonghyuk didn't have a proper consciousness and didn't know what this feeling was.

*

"Eh, what? I think he just moved."

"…Did you see wrong?"

"No! Really…"

All he knew were the words left behind by Kim Dokja.

–Imagine happy memories.

–Warning! Warning! The archangel of flames is approaching!

A warning rang in the air and the people attached to Yoo Joonghyuk were amazed. The first one who screamed was Kim Namwoon.

"What? Fuck! Why is that crazy bitch here?"

"This is bad. Be prepared. Hyunsung, go up and let Master know!"

As the group scattered, Yoo Joonghyuk stood in place. Some disturbed people hit him as they passed by.

–Imagine happy memories.

In the urgent situation, Yoo Joonghyuk stared at the huge panel screen in the air. The dazzling angel burning with red flames was moving. Every time the angel's burning sword moved, the ruined area was engulfed in flames.

Yoo Joonghyuk had a headache. In his empty mind, Yoo Joonghyuk had seen the angel.

Happy memories.

Strangely, the memory was unfamiliar and amicable. It was like a thick wall was in the middle of this distant and cold memory. In his memory, she was a small doll.

–The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is laughing.

–The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is hoping you won't make any unnecessary sacrifices.

It wasn't her memory. It was a record left on someone's wall and he just stole it. They were memories of a world that didn't exist for him. It was fiction.

–The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is touched by your companionship.

Even so, Yoo Joonghyuk didn't understand why he remembered this fiction so clearly.

–The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is rubbing her cheek against you.

The burning archangel was watching him on the screen. Yoo Joonghyuk muttered like a child first learning to speak. "…Uriel."

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* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)

Chapter 292: Ep. 55 - Happy Memories, II

It had been approximately 20 minutes since the conversation with Han Sooyoung started. I was able to deduce a few pieces of information through the three questions.

One, the 'Han Sooyoung' of the 1863rd round had contracted with Secretive Plotter through the Outer World Covenant.

Two, 'Han Sooyoung' of the 1863rd round might not be the alter ego of the third round person.

Three, the 'Han Sooyoung' of the 1863rd round had more information (and was a bit smarter) than the third one.

I could combine them and deduce more information. For example, it was likely that this Han Sooyoung came from from the same 'third round' as me. She also obtained information about the future through methods I didn't know…

I spoke to Han Sooyoung, "Thanks to you, I got some good information. Then all that's left is my last question?"

"Hmm, do I have to answer? I know enough information about you now."

"…Really? What do you know?"

"Is that your third question?"

"No."

Han Sooyoung licked her lips and smiled at me. "Kim Dokja of the third round. How am 'I' there?"

The moment I was about to say that her right to ask a question was over, a cold sensation filled me.

…How did she know that I came from the third round?

"Oh, based on your expression, I'm right? I was taken."

"Don't lie. You knew when you said it."

"Ahaha, I didn't."

My gaze collided with Han Sooyoung in the air. Han Sooyoung moistened her lower lip and asked, "The third round… do I have a screw missing? I took too many memories."

"You are doing well in your own way. Shouldn't you worry about yourself now?"

"Are you covering for me? Then will you give me some information? You have read all the novel so you can show me this much generosity?"

"…I don't know what you're talking about."

"I was really curious about what type of person would read all of that novel but you are more than I expected. Kim Dokja."

The third round Han Sooyoung was formidable but this one really wasn't ordinary.

"I said that I'm the writer."

Han Sooyoung laughed. "You're not the writer. You're too intelligent to write that novel. Although you are too stupid to deceive me."

"Only that reason…"

"I also have a guess about what the author of Ways of Survival is."

I almost asked her about the author. However, I couldn't reveal any loopholes in this place that might be a trap. I frowned and asked another question. "If you thought I wasn't the writer, why ask the question in the first place?"

"Let's see? Why did I?"

Han Sooyoung smiled leisurely. It wasn't that hard to guess. Han Sooyoung asked if I had written Ways of Survival. My answer admitted that I knew about Ways of Survival… damn. I decided to stop talking and ask the most important question. "I will ask the last question."

–The third question ticket has been used.

"How did you survive up to the 95th scenario? You definitely couldn't have read Ways of Survival until the 95th scenario—"

Then a deafening noise occurred downstairs. Along with a beeping sound, Lee Hyunsung hurriedly rushed up the emergency stairs into the suite and shouted,

"Captain! It is serious!"

At the same time that Lee Hyunsung spoke, the two angels in my arms also sent indirect messages.

[The constellation 'Lily Blooming in Aquarius' is shocked by something!]

[The constellation 'Commander of the Red Cosmos' is warning you!]

Han Sooyoung's eyes flashed. "Your flowers…"

I ignored her and ran towards the outer window. I didn't know exactly what happened. However, if I was right…

The shadow of a giant dragon flew outside the window. I wondered if someone had awakened the Apocalypse Dragon but it wasn't possible. I gulped as I watched the giant dragon flapping its wings in the sky. Yes, why didn't I see it?

"Everyone, avoid it! I will do it alone!"

A woman in a white fur coat was leading the giant dragon. Beast Lord Shin Yoosung. She was no longer a child and was guiding the party in the 95th scenario. The chimera dragon, that had evolved beyond a first-grade monster to special-grade, breathed out.

However, the overflowing flames weren't extinguished by the breath. Rather, they blazed even more with the poisonous substance.

I knew these flames. The flames were the Hell Flames that blazed at the bottom of Eden. I knew that the future had changed with Han Sooyoung's intervention.

However, this 1863rd turn was similar to the 1863rd turn I knew. For example, the name of the last remaining archangel in this fallen world.

"Uriel."

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is furious!]

There was an explosive current and the outer window of the building was broken entirely. Shin Yoosung's chimera dragon was falling. I leapt out the window and pierced through the wind. The helpless Shin Yoosung fell into my arms.

Shin Yoosung looked up at me with surprise. "Who…?"

"I'll stop the bleeding."

I triggered the Hit a Pressure Point skill and struck Shin Yoosung's neck and arms. Then something waved inside me and a transparent string popped out from my fingertips.

「The Fourth Wall is making a playful expression.」

I noticed what he was trying to do.

'But'.

「The Fourth Wall is looking sullen. 'Che'.」

I didn't want to tell the people of this world my story. It was strenuous and unfair. There was also nothing they could do to help me. I landed lightly on the ground and put Shin Yoosung down.

A little later, Lee Hyunsung descended to the ground while carrying Han Sooyoung on his shoulder. Shin Yoosung staggered up and spoke towards Han Sooyoung.

"…Captain, I'm sorry."

"It's okay."

Han Sooyoung jumped from Lee Hyunsung's shoulder and patted Shin Yoosung. I felt very strange as I watched the scene. The existence that was originally supposed to be in that place was Yoo Joonghyuk.

"Coat."

Han Sooyoung held out a hand and Lee Jihye took the white coat from Kim Namwoon.

"Here it is, Master."

The white coat reduced its size to fit Han Sooyoung's body. I didn't know if it was my feeling but it looked cooler than my coat. Han Sooyoung raised the collar of her coat and looked at Gwanghwamun.

The hell flames were burning in the dust cloud. The burnt constellations screamed helplessly. The remnants of the stars were turning to ask one by one.

This was the field where the Archangel of Destruction, Uriel descended. I watched the flames and asked Han Sooyoung. "…Do you know the reason why Uriel came here?"

"What reason do you think?"

"The destruction of Eden."

"Your guess is right."

The flowers in my pocket trembled a the conversation.

[The constellation 'Lily Blooming in Aquarius' is asking what you mean!]

[The constellation 'Commander of the Red Cosmos' is looking at you.]

Of course, they didn't know what happened to Eden in the 1863rd round. In fact, I didn't want them to know the truth. There were strange creatures coming from every corner of Gwanghwamun where the white flames were burning.

The unnamed things. The beings were attracted to Uriel's presence and flocked like moths towards the flames. I asked Han Sooyoung, "Do you need help?"

"Thank you for your help. The Archangel of Flames is difficult to deal with."

Yoo Joonghyuk waited for my orders and stared at me. Han Sooyoung continued speaking. "If this continues, someone can die."

I bit my lips. This round wasn't my round. Yoo Joonghyuk didn't have any colleagues in this round. "Yoo Joonghyuk. Stop Uriel."

At my words, Yoo Joonghyuk moved. In fact, I hadn't wanted to do this. Uriel discovered Yoo Joonghyuk and shouted as she lost her temper.

–Ahhhhhhh!

It was natural. One of the reasons why Eden was destroyed was right before her eyes. The furious Uriel unleashed a wave of hell flames and Yoo Joonghyuk's Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship cut off the wave. The terrifying collision generated a tremendous shockwave in the sky.

The third round Yoo Joonghyuk and Uriel wouldn't have believed it if they saw the scene. I didn't want them to see it either. I wanted this scene to remain in my head.

The vibrations from the flowers in my pocket were becoming worse. The impatient Gabriel couldn't bear it and spoke in her true voice.

[Why is Uriel attacking him? You know something. Right?]

I nodded.

[Tell me quickly! Otherwise—]

"What good is it to say it?"

There was nothing that could be changed. No, maybe it shouldn't be changed. This fight was caused by the events of the 1863rd turn. Uriel's fury was justified and Yoo Joonghyuk had to endure the fury.

I watched with clenched fists. Han Sooyoung spoke in an admiring voice by my side. "You really can control Yoo Joonghyuk. I honestly didn't believe it."

"Can you stop the rest?"

"No problem. Ah, I'll give you a reward."

Han Sooyoung continued speaking. "Didn't you ask me earlier? Why I could survive to this scenario."

[The character 'Han Sooyoung' is talking about the story 'Predictive Plagiarism'.]

"This is the answer."

A white light emerged from Han Sooyoung's body. Her eyes shone brightly as she read the patterns of the incoming monsters.

…Future Sight? There was no doubt. I didn't know the principles but it was unmistakable an ability like Future Sight. It was an ability that wasn't in the original novel.

「There is nothing new under the sun. Everything that is written is a modification of what has already been written.」

Han Sooyoung's story started flowing out in its entirety. She smashed Unbroken Faith towards the necks of the approaching monsters and laughed.

"I'm a first-rate writer. In addition, Ways of Survival is a collection of cliches at best. Do you think it's hard to predict the development? In the end, it's just a repetition of patterns."

Han Sooyoung skillfully read the patterns and hunted the monsters. I watched the scene for a while and said, "Did you survive because of that?"

I had to admit that it was an excellent ability.

"Ways of Survival is a story full of complicated settings. Even if you are a writer, there are things you can do and things you can't do."

"Yes, you are right."

The next moment, a white light rose from Han Sooyoung's body and countless clones rushed out. 10, 20, 30… in an instant, there were 100 clones holding Unbroken Faith.

"If there was only one of me."

Han Sooyoung swung the sword in her hand and hundreds of Han Sooyoungs jumped into the battlefield at the same time. They weren't afraid of death and carefully attacked the unnamed things. Han Sooyoung continued to split apart.

"However, what if it becomes two or three?"

The things that one person could do were different from what 100 people could do. The things that 100 people could do were different from what 1,000 people could do.

"Do you know? Things that will take one person a lifetime to do can be done by 10,000 people in two days."

[The exclusive skill, 'Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint' has been activated!]

Many voices pushed towards me at once, enough to overload me. The voices soon produced a single image. I realized it was the landscape of Han Sooyoung's mind. Numerous Han Sooyoungs were meeting there to conceive the world.

.

.

｢This is wrong. ｣

｢The next development is like this. I'm sure he'll emerge. ｣

｢No, this is right. Archangel Uriel… ｣

｢Let's do a majority vote. ｣

.

.

Simulations of the world were drawn by Han Sooyoung. Perhaps Yoo Joonghyuk wasn't the only regressor.

In someone's head, millions of worlds were born and broken. It was because a small mistake was made or because there was a very small defect. It was a scene where a story that pursued the extreme piled up.

I fell into Han Sooyoung's story. The life of this story was sad and beautiful. Some were agreeable developments. Some were developments I hadn't even thought about.

I didn't want to admit it but I had to. Some reproductions went beyond the original. It was an effort to create a perfect 'single development'. This world was the result of Han Sooyoung's plan.

I raised my head and looked at Yoo Joonghyuk. Yoo Joonghyuk kept swinging his sword even when his skin was torn and blood splashed. It was Uriel fighting against such a Yoo Joonghyuk.

No colleagues would die. No destruction would happen. A world where everyone could gather their strengths and reach the 'last scenario'.

Dammit, I had no choice but to agree. In order for this world to be completed, Yoo Joonghyuk…

Han Sooyoung stared at me. She seemed to understand what I was thinking. "You know it by now. I don't need him in this world."

The plagiarist, who dreamt of a world beyond the original, told me,

"I know how to kill Yoo Joonghyuk."

Chapter 293: Ep. 55 - Happy Memories, III

–I know how to kill Yoo Joonghyuk.

Those were Han Sooyoung's words.

I hesitated for a moment before opening my mouth. "…You don't have to do something like that. A perfect story isn't the best story."

From afar, there was a deafening roar from the collision between Yoo Joonghyuk and Uriel. The light that emanated from the sky filled Han Sooyoung's white eyes.

"Yoo Joonghyuk has to die in this scenario. That way, the world I am hoping for will be finished."

"What world are you hoping for…"

"Didn't you look into my head? Yet you're still saying this?"

My voice was buried by another roar. It was a meaningless question in the first place. As Han Sooyoung mentioned, I got a glimpse of the world she dreamt of.

It was a utopia without any gaps. It was an answer that only a person who digested the original novel in a completely different way could present.

I turned my head and watched the battle between Yoo Joonghyuk and Uriel. In the world that Han Sooyoung dreamt of, the answer for this battle was as followed:

「The archangel of flames will die here.」

As if waiting, the party members gathered around Uriel and Yoo Joonghyuk's battlefield. Lee Jihye was preparing Instant Kill, Lee Hyunsung charted up Great Mountain Smash, Kim Namwoon was untying his bandage and seemed ready to call the Abyssal Black Flame Dragon.

I grasped Unbroken Faith. Han Sooyoung noticed my movements and glared at me. "Wait, you…!"

It was obviously Han Sooyoung, not Yoo Joonghyuk, who made this world. But… so what?

[The constellation 'Demon King of Salvation' is opening his 'status'.]

In the first place, this wasn't the story I wanted to read. The small horns that symbolized a demon king rose from my head. I wanted to embody the wings but it wasn't possible with the imperfect Demon Realm's Spring. Han Sooyoung was surprised but didn't stop me. Perhaps she thought it was impossible to stop the fight with my own strength.

I knew it as well. By the way, now I wasn't alone.

"Gabriel, Jophiel."

[The constellation 'Lily Blooming in Aquarius' is looking at you.]

[The constellation 'Commander of the Red Cosmos' is looking at you.]

"Please help me."

[The archangels says that it will require more probability than before.]

"It doesn't matter."

The moment I gave permission, the status of the two angels entered me. I felt my skin tearing and something grew.

[The archangels' 'status' dwells within you.]

Six wings grew from me, just like when I destroyed the constellations.

[The status of a demon king and an archangel are conflicting inside you.]

The stories that didn't mix screamed from inside me. An archangel's status was added to the power of a demon king. The wavelength that was impossible with common sense swept through the battlefield.

"What, this status…!"

It was natural to be shocked. Now Uriel was the only archangel to survive in this world. Yet the status that could be felt from me belonged to an archangel.

[The demon king 'Black Mane Lion' is watching you!]

[The demon king 'Devil of Lust and Wrath' is looking at you!]

It was surprising that the power of a demon king and archangel dwelt in one being. As far as I knew, there was only one existence in the world that could create this type of status in Ways of Survival.

[Demon. King…!]

Uriel felt my presence and looked over here. The moment I opened my mouth, Gabriel who descended inside me struck first.

[Uriel! Stop! What is this?]

The majesty of the archangel's true voice caused a light of reason to return to Uriel's eyes.

[…Gabriel?]

[Are you out of your mind? What are you doing?]

Gabriel's true voice flowed through me. I looked at Uriel's cold eyes and belatedly realized the mistake.

[Look, these are the people you like! Yoo Joonghyuk and Kim Dokja! You are always talking about them!]

The moment Gabriel's incarnation approached Uriel, her lips opened.

[What are you talking about? ■■■]

The confused Gabriel stiffened. Uriel continued speaking. [You are alive Gabriel. You also groveled to a demon king.]

[W-What are you saying?]

–Ahhhhhhh!

Uriel's enormous magic power flooded the Gwanghwamun area. Hell Flames Ignition was running wild and turning it into hell. I was able to see Yoo Joonghyuk's coat melting away from the high temperature.

The unnamed things were swept away by the aftereffects and scattered into pieces of meat.

I shouted, "Gabriel!"

The dazed Gabriel belatedly handed his strength to me.

[I will hear the explanation later.]

To be honest, I wasn't confident in explaining. They wouldn't be able to fathom what happened to Eden in the 1863rd round. Once the archangels of the third round knew the information, I didn't know what type of storm I would be swept up in or the psychologically damage Gabriel would receive. Because… Gabriel of the 1863rd round betrayed Eden.

"Yoo Joonghyuk!"

The moment I called out, Yoo Joonghyuk cut the flames using Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship. I plunged into the flames.

Three petals from Gabriel and Jophiel scattered in the air. There was a huge charge and something rose inside me. I took advantage of the reaction from the colliding magic power to instantly approach Uriel.

I'm sorry Uriel.

I grabbed Uriel's head with both hands. The power of the Purest Sword Force and the status of the archangels and demon king struck Uriel's head. Uriel made a pained frown but Uriel's momentum didn't decrease at all.

Rather, her flames were encroaching towards me little by little. The high heat caused my wings and horns to melt slightly. I was the one who groaned first. This was the power of Edens' strongest combat angel.

Uriel smiled brutally and called the hell flames to her hands. The hottest flames in the world. The moment that sharp blade of flames aimed at my heart.

"Jophiel!"

Huge sparks appeared at my fingertips and Uriel's body was surrounded by a circular restraint reminiscent of a halo. Uriel cried out with shock as the white constraints bound her.

Uriel's status was reduced in an instant and the flames suddenly extinguished. Uriel was one of the most powerful archangels in Eden. No other angel could match her in fighting demons.

However, what if the opponent was also an archangel?

Archangel Jophiel. Unlike the other angels who focused on demon eradication, Jophiel had one more special ability.

[Confinement of Good and Evil.]

Uriel's skill that was used to hunt fallen angels exerted strength against Uriel. Uriel tried to escape but the restraint tightened. Uriel struggled before finally giving up on rebelling and collapsed. The archangel trapped by the constraints would fall into a deep sleep for a week.

I hugged the sleeping Uriel and moved out of the fire with Yoo Joonghyuk. I emerged from the smoke and saw the party members looking this way. Someone stared with astonishment while others felt admiration…someone else was staring at me with faint hostility.

I watched Han Sooyoung. "This is something that wasn't present in the world of your dreams."

"…Uriel being dead or not has no impact on the big picture. You've seen it so shouldn't you know?

My visualization is perfect."

Her white coat fluttered as Han Sooyoung walked towards me. She soon reached my nose and looked up at me. She glanced at the burned angel wings and broken demon horns and asked,

"Kim Dokja, what world do you want? You have read the story to the end and there must be a world you want."

I knew Han Sooyoung's words very well.

「"What is the world that I want?"」

They were the very words that Yoo Joonghyuk always used when recruiting new colleagues. I told Han Sooyoung. "I'm not your colleague."

"I need you to complete this story."

Han Sooyoung continued while pointing to Yoo Joonghyuk. "Don't you also need the completion of a new story?"

It seemed that she knew why I came to this world. I examined the faces of the party members one by one. Lee Hyunsung, Lee Jihye, Lee Seolhwa, Shin

Yoosung, Kim Namwoon…

So far, there was no round where all of them had survived up to this point. However—

"What's new about this story?"

I was watching Yoo Joonghyuk. The only person not selected by this world. He repeated thousands of rounds to save this world but this time, he had to die for the world.

Han Sooyoung's world was also a world where someone must die in the end. There were countless other worlds like that, not just Han Sooyoung's world.

"You have read part of the original, changed the development and placed the name of another person in the place of the protagonist."

Some reproductions might surpass the original. However, they could never be the original.

"Do you know what they call such an act?"

I wanted to have a relaxed smile but now I wasn't in the mood. Han Sooyoung stared at me with blazing eyes. "This isn't the round you were in. Don't talk nonsense."

Han Sooyoung no longer listened to me and turned away. "I'll give you three days. You better decide by then. Help me or don't help me. That's all I want to hear."

The party members followed Han Sooyoung and entered the building one by one. Lee Hyunsung helped Lee Seolhwa transport patients. Lee Jihye and Kim Namwoon glanced at me before looking away.

This wasn't my round. The people in my round were waiting for me and I could go back if I killed Yoo Joonghyuk.

I looked at Yoo Joonghyuk. There were holes in his coat as Yoo Joonghyuk stood there with foolish eyes.

…However, was that really all I had to do?

Han Sooyoung was sweating when she opened her eyes in the darkness. There were faint sparks around her body. Her entire body was freezing cold.

Han Sooyoung took a deep breath and rose from her spot. She turned on her smartphone and opened her novel file. SSSSS-grade Infinite Regressor.

「Yoo Joonhyun thought about it.」

「…I'm afraid.」

「Is it just up to here?」

These were the contents of the saved pages. Nevertheless, Han Sooyoung read them. She read them again and again, as if the contents would be blown away if she didn't.

How long did she read? The sparks around her started shrinking. She barely managed a sigh. If she had been a bit later, her existence itself would be swallowed up by the sparks.

It wasn't the first time. It was the probability storm gnawing at my memories. It wasn't known if this was a side effect of the excessive use of Avatar or related to Ways of Survival.

[The Star Stream is watching incarnation 'Han Sooyoung'.]

Han Sooyoung bit her lips and relaxed her body. Her shoulders and wrists hardened by the side effects were checked one by one. She could feel the eyes of countless constellations on her.

Han Sooyoung thought, 'Look as much as you like. I didn't start this just to end here'.

After warming up, the coldness in her bones were gone. Han Sooyoung put on a coat and glanced out the window.

Kim Dokja and her party members could be seen. They were awkward on the first day but after a few days, they were chatting. It was strange. Those who had gone through 94 scenarios and were filled with distrust quickly opened their hearts to him.

Kim Dokja. The variable that appeared at the end of this plan.

…Why did Secretive Plotter send another covenant at this point? Han Sooyoung didn't know the answer. She just knew that she had to use Kim Dokja.

Yoo Joonghyuk was standing blankly in a corner of the square. Han Sooyoung watched for a while before jumping out the window.

Han Sooyoung landed beside Yoo Joonghyuk and opened her mouth. "It has been two days."

Yoo Joonghyuk didn't answer. Han Sooyoung slowly watched Yoo Joonghyuk. His blank eyes seemed to hear nothing.

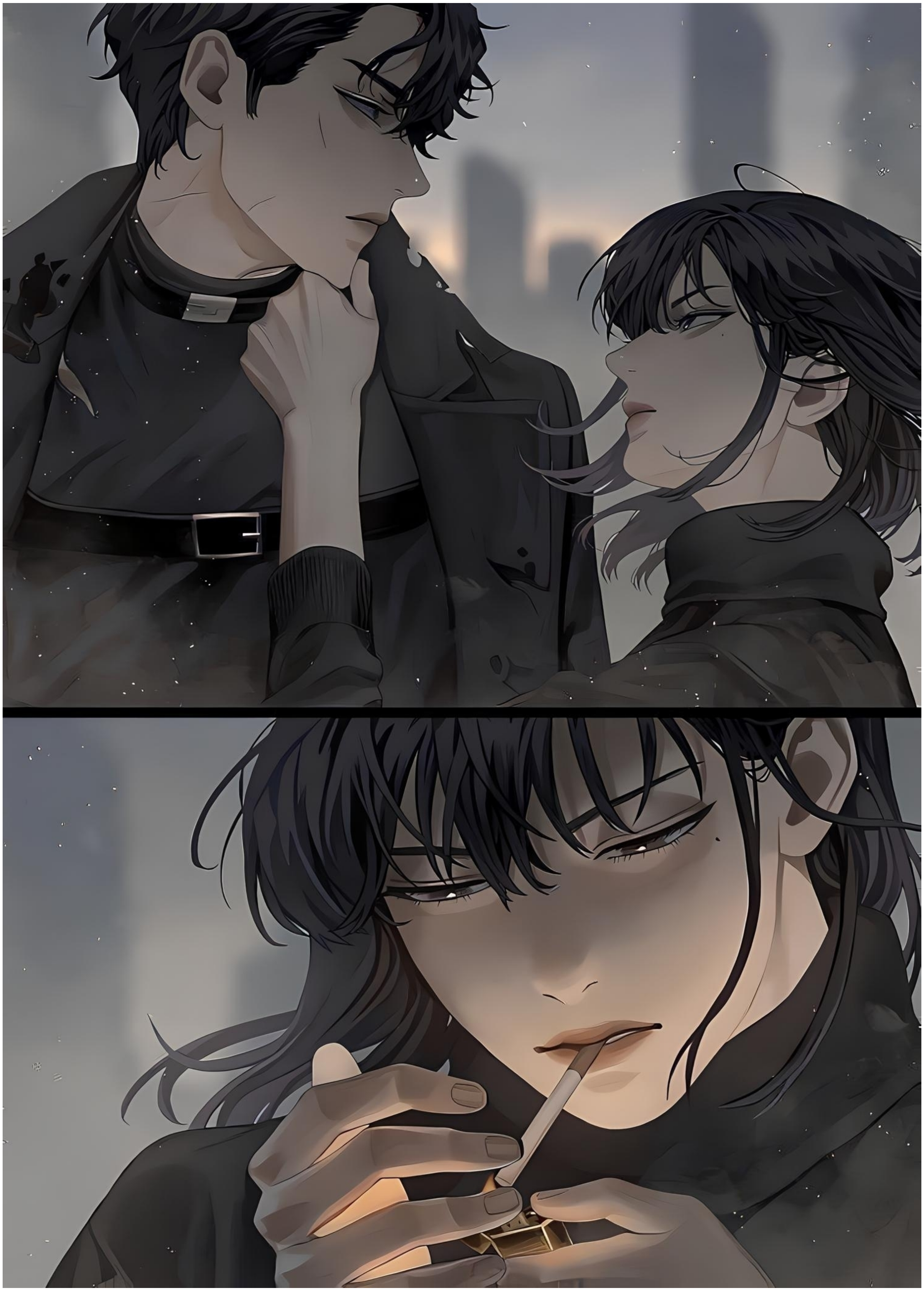
Han Sooyoung stared into his eyes and suddenly approached him. "…You really aren't conscious?"

Han Sooyoung's hand grabbed Yoo Joonghyuk's chin. Yoo Joonghyuk didn't react.

"How funny. I can't believe this is happening… did you forget that you promised to die?"

At this close distance, Yoo Joonghyuk's face was covered with scars. They were traces of a lonelier battle than any other round.

Han Sooyoung looked at such a Yoo Joonghyuk. She felt both sympathetic and angry. Han Sooyoung removed her hand from Yoo Joonghyuk's chin and pulled out a cigarette. Smoke appeared as she lit it up.



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In the distance, the people surrounding Kim Dokja shouted at something he said. Han Sooyoung blew out smoke.

"The world is unfair. Some people find it easy to get along with others using a few words while some people egress so much and feel out of place."

"…"

"Didn't you write down some good memories for me? You could've done enough… no, it's fine. There was no way you could do it."

Han Sooyoung stepped on the cigarette ash that fell.

"Don't blame me for killing you when you don't remember. I did everything you asked me to do."

Han Sooyoung walked towards her party members. Yoo Joonghyuk watched Han Sooyoung moving away with empty eyes. A dim light was returning to Yoo Joonghyuk's blank eyes.

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* Official novel illustration (canonical)

Chapter 294: Ep. 55 - Happy Memories, IV

Two days had passed since I started staying at Han Sooyoung's headquarters.

In the meantime, I had to concentrate on a few things. One was to reveal exactly what Han Sooyoung meant by 'the death of Yoo Joonghyuk'. The second was to find out what Han Sooyoung ultimately wanted to achieve through it.

Either way, finding out wasn't easy. This wasn't the only problem.

[It is really destroyed? Our Eden?]

I looked at Gabriel who was exuding a ferocious spirit.

"That's right. Didn't you hear anything about it from the third round Metatron?"

[…The scribe knows about the destruction of Eden?]

I nodded. "If you go back, ask him yourself. Of course, that's if you can go back safely."

The stems of Gabriel and Jophiel started to shake. I thought they were angry with me but they seemed to be talking to each other. I pulled out the Uriel doll. She was caught by the Confinement of Good and Evil and couldn't use her strength for the next five days.

「 The Fourth Wall is looking at you. 」

Maybe I could borrow the power of the Fourth Wall to give her memories of the third round. However, the idea that Uriel would be moved by my memories was just a fantasy. Maybe after seeing the memories, Uriel would say: 「 ■■, so what? 」

The memories of the third round would sound like a novel to Uriel who had lived through the third round.

"Kim Dokja-ssi, are you going to hunt with us?"

I looked up and saw Lee Hyunsung standing there with steel gauntlets on. "Is it okay if I go with you?"

"Yes, well… there is no meaning in identifying a picked up bullet."

I smiled at Lee Hyunsung's words. Whether it was the third round or the 1863rd round, the strange analogies were still there. I calculated how many times Lee Hyunsung must've be confined in the guardhouse so far.

[Your understanding of the character 'Lee Hyunsung' has increased.]

[The character 'Lee Hyunsung' shows a weak liking towards you.]

I recalled the first scenario and suddenly felt a bit distracted. I added a sentence to alleviate Lee Hyunsung's wariness. "Shouldn't you be more vigilant? I am Yoo Joonghyuk's companion."

"Um… Captain didn't say anything and… as a matter of fact, I feel that Dokja-ssi isn't a bad person. I guess this is the intuition I gained after 94 scenarios."

Throughout the novel, Lee Hyunsung's intuition was mostly off the mark. Whenever Lee Hyunsung said this, I used to think that Yoo Joonghyuk would be stabbed in the back.

"Hey, you came? Let's take a look at your skills."

Those who went out to hunt together were Kim Namwoon and Lee Jihye. Lee Jihye was covered with a big grey hood and looked at me in a displeased manner.

"Come quickly. We're going to start."

I followed the party members out of the headquarters. The purpose of this hunt was to clean up the unnamed things around the headquarters and collect the items. Of course, I knew the real reason why Han Sooyoung ordered this hunt.

–There are two ahead of you. One is a tentacled species and the other is a composite species.

Han Donghoon's message was heard and Lee Jihye pulled out her sword. She triggered Instant Kill to defeat all the tentacles and then Kim Namwoon burned the main body with his black flames.

I felt it when I read the original but the two of them were really well matched. There was a terrible scream as the monster turned to ashes and Kim Namwoon approached Lee Jihye.

"Nice attack."

Kim Namwoon raised his right hand towards Lee Jihye with a cool face. Lee Jihye aimed her sword at Kim Namwoon with cold eyes. The sword pierced past Kim Namwoon's cheek and penetrated the tentacle that was wriggling around as the unnamed thing struggled with the flames.

Lee Jihye moved towards the next prey. Kim Namwoon chased after her.
"Hey, let's go together!"

Once Gilyoung and Yoosung grew up, would they be a duo like this? I might see such a scene if I went back.

"Dokja-ssi?"

"Ah, yes. I'll take the other side."

I hurriedly pulled out Unbroken Faith and activated Way of the Wind. Some flying tentacles penetrated during an unguarded moment. It was a bit tricky to deal with the unnamed things when I deliberately wasn't using Electrification.

"Kukuk, you're weak?"

Kim Namwoon, who had the black flames in both hands, started to beat up the unnamed things with a careless smile.

"Watch and learn!"

Certainly, it was a great combat force. The present Kim Namwoon was able to draw out half the power of the Abyssal Black Flame Dragon.

I quietly cheered on Kim Namwoon. "You're great. It is coming again."

"Hahaha, give it to me!"

"Wow, no matter how good you are, isn't it hard?"

"What are you talking about? Hahahaha! Die!"

"Hey, there's that one over there…"

Kim Namwoon belatedly noticed something and his eyebrows twitched. Lee Hyunsung standing nearby was smiling. In the distance, Lee Jihye caught a monster and clicked her tongue like he was pitiful. The moment Kim Namwoon's expression distorted and he raised his fist towards me, I told him, "Lee Jihye doesn't like pretentiousness."

Kim Namwoon's face turned as white as his hair. His eyes shook like an earthquake had occurred.

In fact, the one who had the biggest reaction was Lee Hyunsung, whose eyes widened.

…This guy passed through every round without noticing. Kim Namwoon glanced between Lee Jihye and I before stammering.

"H-How do you know that?"

"It would be strange if I didn't know. Dye your hair first and get rid of the bandages. Replace them with half gloves on both sides. After the hunt, don't say things like nice attack."

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' hates you.]

"It will be more helpful if you act like the guy behind me."

Kim Namwoon blinked as he looked at the person behind me. Yoo Joonghyuk was standing there blankly. His coat was crooked and he hadn't washed himself but he couldn't hide his good looks.

"That person is 'evil. Still, he looks cool."

Delusional Demon Kim Namwoon muttered. I answered with a smile. "He isn't too bad. He has good parts."

"Hah, you must be talking about someone else. That reminds me, how did you end up as Yoo Joonghyuk's companion?"

Kim Namwoon watched me suspiciously and Lee Hyunsung spoke up. "I heard that Dokja-ssi is from another world."

Maybe Han Sooyoung had talked about me. Kim Namwoon looked surprised and pointed at me. "Different worlds? Like… parallel universes?"

"It is similar."

I admired the fact that Kim Namwoon knew about parallel universes when he had no biology knowledge. Obviously, this round was different from the round I remembered.

"That's why I haven't seen you so far. So? Why did you come here?"

"You're excited. Unfortunately, I can't tell you."

"Sheesh, then what am I doing in your world? Am I a leader?"

"You're dead."

Kim Namwoon's face paled again.

"I'm joking. You're building a gundam there. You are very happy."

"Gundam? Ohh…"

Lee Jihye came back and hit the back of Kim Namwoon's head. "Why are you messing around? Pick up the items."

"Uh, uh."

I watched Kim Namwoon hurriedly picking up items after Lee Jihye and thought. Maybe I shouldn't have killed him in the first scenario. Kim Namwoon, who was following Lee Jihye and picking up items, turned to me and whispered, "Excuse me. I have something to ask."

"What?"

"Can you lend me that coat for a minute?"

…What was I saying?

"I see you."

Kim Namwoon grumbled and started picking up the items again. Lee Jihye nagged him and Lee Hyunsung chuckled.

It was a peaceful sight. In the midst of this peace, I was strongly reminded of my world. There was no Jung Heewon here. No Yoo Sangah or Lee Gilyoung.

…Yes, Han Myungoh as well. Thus, I had to go back.

Not long after, we collected all the items around us. I looked at the items I collected and smiled. There it was. One of the five swords that were the key to clear the 95th scenario. Perhaps Han Sooyoung knew that one of the swords was in the vicinity.

However, I was surprised the moment I held the sword. "Excuse me, Hyunsung-ssi."

"Huh?"

"Did Han Sooyoung tell you to collect this sword?"

Lee Hyunsung glanced at the sword in my hand and replied, "Oh, that's right. We are looking for that sword."

The 95th scenario was a scenario where 'five swords' were the key. A scenario where the sealed Apocalypse Dragon was released through the key five swords. But this sword…

A sense of discomfort passed through my head. I looked up at the sky and saw the Apocalypse Dragon's Sealing Ball heading this way. Sleeping inside the dark sphere was the worst ruin dragon in Ways of Survival.

Originally, Yoo Joonghyuk was supposed to liberate the dragon and gain the giant story 'Liberator of the Apocalypse Dragon', entering the final scenario.

「 At this moment, Kim Dokja realized how to kill Yoo Joonghyuk. 」

The hand holding the hilt trembled.

「 In addition, Han Sooyoung was thinking exactly the same thing as him. 」

* * *

Throughout the day, Kim Dokja read Ways of Survival again and again. He read the pages he had already read and checked if there were any lines he missed. Kim Dokja seemed to find something. Or perhaps he didn't find it. He looked down at his smartphone, grabbed his head several times and even sighed. "…Noisy. Stop talking."

Sometimes, he scolded the Fourth Wall. In any case, Kim Dokja tried hard. It was an effort to change something, an effort that perhaps no one would understand.

Soon a small resolution filled Kim Dokja's eyes. It wasn't a resolution that could accumulate in one or two days. It was a resolution that only a person who had read a story for a long time could have.

With that resolution, Kim Dokja continuously read Ways of Survival. He read, read and read it again.

How many times did he read? Kim Dokja's eyes, shining like stars, dimmed little by little. Kim Dokja fell into a shallow sleep.

Yoo Joonghyuk stared at the scene with empty eyes. The back of the weary Kim Dokja. A snoring sound came out at regular intervals.

There were very small sparks as Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes recovered. Killing intent filled the blank eyes and this killing intent was aimed at precisely one person. Yoo Joonghyuk quietly moved the Splitting the Sky Sword. He didn't make a sound as he approached and aimed a sword at Kim Dokja's neck.

「Ha ha do not do su ch a th ing.」

Yoo Joonghyuk frowned. The Fourth Wall caused sparks to fly, as if going to wake up Kim Dokja straight away. Yoo Joonghyuk sent a message to the illusionary wall using Sound Transmission.

–Don't wake him up. I will cut off his head straight away if you do.

「Hu um.」

The sparks produced by the Fourth Wall rapidly reduced. Yoo Joonghyuk didn't remove the sword and the Fourth Wall drew characters in the air.

「 Wh at do you wa nt?」

Yoo Joonghyuk didn't say anything. It seemed like he was finding his words or he didn' know what to say. At this time, the Fourth Wall let out bizarre laughter.

「A ha, I under stand.」

"…"

「Are you cu rious?」

Yoo Joonghyuk still didn't answer and the Fourth Wall laughed like it knew everything. The letters of the Fourth Wall started to increase. Gold letters soon filled the room. Yoo Joonghyuk stared at the letters drifting around him and reached out for one of them. The letters seemed to respond to his hand and started to speak.

「"My name is Dokja."」

「I usually introduced myself to people like this and then the following misunderstanding would

occur.」

It was the story of a world he had never experienced. The Fourth Wall giggled.

「Very in te res ting.」

Yoo Joonghyuk quietly listened to the story. This last until the night was deep and then the faint light of dawn was seen.

.

.

.

By the time the sleeping Kim Dokja woke up, Yoo Joonghyuk was leaning against the wall with blank eyes.

"…I fell asleep, damn."

Kim Dokja stood up with dishevelled hair and picked up his smartphone and sword. He looked out the window and saw the troops of the headquarters that had already gathered. They were gathered to clear the 95th scenario. At the centre of the party, Han Sooyoung in the white coat was looking this way.

Today was the day that 'Incarnation Yoo Joonghyuk' would die.

Chapter 295: Ep. 56 - Reader and Writer, I

It was noon when the march began. It was an army containing 200 elite incarnations. As numerous constellations watched, Lee Hyunsung raised a horn at the front of the army.

[The item 'Battlefield Horn' is activated!]

[The morale of the allies has increased significantly!]

[The attack power of the allies has increased slightly!]

As expected of Han Sooyoung. She had already prepared such consumables. Lee Hyunsung blew the horn once again and the incarnations cheered. Everyone seemed excited.

Shin Yoosung glanced at me and spoke politely. "That… thank you for saving me last time."

"Ah, yes. It was nothing."

Shin Yoosung smiled at my words. She was raised to be kind and polite, unlike Kim Namwoon. I glanced to the side and saw Han Sooyoung making an unknown smile.

…I don't think Shin Yoosung grew up like this because someone raised her. Yoosung was originally a good kid.

"Kim Dokja-ssi is also participating in this scenario?"

"Nope. I'm not qualified."

"Ah yes… I'm sorry. I heard that we can get a giant story if we clear this scenario."

I didn't feel regret. It would be great if I could acquire Liberator of the Apocalypse Dragon here as the second giant story. However, this wasn't the direction I wanted. The giant story I wanted was in the third round.

In the front, Lee Seolhwa was wiping sweat from Lee Hyunsung's forehead. Lee Hyunsung smiled weakly.

"…I'm nervous. I don't know if we can do it well."

"It's going to be fine. We've done a good job so far."

I could hear Kim Namwoon and Lee Jihye's voices behind me.

"Hey, Lee Jihye. What will you do at the end of this scenario?"

"Well, it is clearing another scenario."

"How long will you only clear the scenario? Sometimes we need to have some fun. Come play with me after this scenario is finished…"

Kim Namwoon was watching Lee Jihye's eyes while wearing the coat I lent him. As I told him, gloves were on both hands. His hair was still white and there were bandages wrapped around his arms…

Then thunder struck in the sky. The armies of the nebulae participating in this scenario were approaching in the distance. They were nebulae I had already encountered and nebulae I hadn't met.

Han Sooyoung's companions were strong enough but the number was inadequate to deal with all the enemies. Han Sooyoung stepped towards Lee Hyunsung and declared. "We have only one objective. It is to liberate the 'dragon' sealed in the sphere."

Her white coat fluttered as Han Sooyoung kept speaking. "As you know, liberation of the 'Apocalypse Dragon' will destroy the peninsula. However, as long as we have completed the clear conditions, we can move onto the next stage. Then no one on this earth will die."

The determination of the incarnations solidified at Han Sooyoung's declaration and they shouted again. They chanted Han Sooyoung's name. It was a somewhat familiar sight.

…All of this was once done by Yoo Joonghyuk.

The 95th scenario, the Second Coming of the Apocalypse Dragon. This was a scenario to awaken the apocalypse dragon that was sealed at the time of Eden's fall. It was accomplished by collecting five 'swords' scattered around the world and plugging them into the keyhole of the seal.

In fact, Yoo Joonghyuk accomplished this scenario and gained the giant story.

"Let's go to the next scenario!" Han Sooyoung shouted and the incarnation army moved towards the sealed sphere. However, enemies could be seen running from the other side.

[Take the sword! We must take the keys!]

[Over there! Han Sooyoung!]

They were the incarnations and constellations hiding all over the Korean Peninsula. They wished to acquire the story by awakening the apocalypse dragon.

"Stop them!"

The people beside me scattered and pulled out their weapons. Lee Hyunsung, Lee Jihye and Shin Yoosung ran while emitting magic power.

"Hahahaha! Come! Abyss Dragon!"

Kim Namwoon was also jumping into the battlefield. His blackening reached the peak. The Kim Namwoon of this world was different from the Kim Namwoon I knew. Still, Kim Namwoon tearing all the enemies approaching him was clearly the Delusional Demon I knew. I didn't know what terrible things he had done to reach this point.

Then Han Sooyoung pulled out several swords. The star relics gave off a brilliant light. They were the keys to be used to clear this scenario.

Four swords. They were still lacking one to complete the key.

"Kim Dokja. Give me your Arondight."

"…You knew?"

I smiled as I pulled out a sword. The Dragon Slayer Arondight. This was the key to ending this scenario.

"Then send Yoo Joonghyuk to the seal." I stared at Han Sooyoung after hearing her words. Han Sooyoung was smiling. "Didn't I say I would kill him? Have you forgotten?"

I didn't like the look in her eyes. At this moment, I realized something. "You killing Yoo Joonghyuk is the condition for your Outer World Covenant."

Han Sooyoung's eyes flashed. "Yes."

"That's why you're fixated on Yoo Joonghyuk?"

"Quickly give me that sword."

The cold texture of Arondight was felt. In fact, I knew what Han Sooyoung was going to do.

"Holy Sword Ascalon. Thunder Sword Gram. Dragon Sword Ridill. Old Dragon Sword Næġling and the Dragon Slaying Sword Arondight."

I called out the names of the swords and Han Sooyoung's expression strangely stiffened.

"There is one problem. One of the swords I just mentioned has a different character."

"What are you doing now?"

"You're fooling the people."

"Don't talk nonsense."

"Let's go to the next scenario?"

I continued speaking, "Don't pretend. You don't want to clear this scenario."

Han Sooyoung's eyes shook. Her eyes were filled with something close to madness. The four swords were shining white beside her. "Continue."

"You don't want to free the Apocalypse Dragon. It is actually the opposite. You are going to seal this 'Earth' with the Apocalypse Dragon."

"Why do you think that?"

I pointed to an object in Han Sooyoung's hand. "You have Næġling. This sword is the only 'sword' with a different attribute."

The five swords that made up the 95th scenario were all related to dragon slaying stories. Only one sword, the 'Old Dragon Sword Næġling' was different.

"That sword is a failed dragon slaying sword. If you use that sword as a key, the seal won't be released. It is actually the opposite."

An improper key would strengthen the seal, not release it. The seal would realize it wasn't yet time for liberation and become a bigger and stronger barrier. It would soon cover the entire planet with a seal.

"The time here will stop and Earth will be sealed with the Apocalypse Dragon. It will remain forever fixed in the 95th scenario."

I couldn't read the expression of Han Sooyoung, who had bowed her head. I continued speaking,

"This is how you will kill Yoo Joonghyuk."

I looked back at Yoo Joonghyuk. Yoo Joonghyuk was watching me with blank eyes. As long as there was his sponsor, Yoo Joonghyuk wouldn't die. Once he died, he would return again and again. However…

What if there was eternal sleep in the world? An eternal sleep with no dreams and no waking up. Such a thing was no different from 'death'.

"You have decided to seal Yoo Joonghyuk forever in this turn."

Yoo Joonghyuk would be trapped in the seal and fall into a sleep that no one could wake up from. He wouldn't regress or suffer anymore. He would fall asleep eternally and a new world line wouldn't be created.

This was the 'death' of Yoo Joonghyuk. It was the death of a regressor.

I turned and saw Han Sooyoung smiling faintly. "Better than expected. How did you know? I never showed you exactly what my next plan was."

"You didn't show me."

I had seen Han Sooyoung's mind. I saw the world she dreamt and read the information she had shown. Obviously, almost everything was perfect. However, there was one crucial thing missing from the world.

"There were no signs of ■■ in your story."

The end of all the scenarios, ■■. However, not everyone reached ■■. Some stories ended without even going near ■■.

Thunder was heard from the sky to the west. Rain started to fall from the dark clouds. The voices of those shouting in the distance and the true voices of the constellations engaged in battle came out. Lee Hyunsung, Lee Seolhwa and Lee Jihye.

They were all desperate. It was in order to survive. Survive and go to the next scenario. It was Han Sooyoung who brought them here.

"Is this the conclusion you came up with?"

Han Sooyoung was now trying to finish their story. "That's right. This is the end of the world that I thought of."

"If it was going to end this way, why did you save everyone? Why stick to such a perfect development?"

Han Sooyoung didn't answer.

"You betrayed them."

If Han Sooyoung's plan succeeded, all of them would never reach the end. They would fall asleep in the eternity of this 95th scenario.

Han Sooyoung stared at the four swords floating around her with emotionless eyes. "The end of the world isn't necessarily bound to ■■. This will make Earth safer. Neither Yoo Joonghyuk or the other constellations will know how to unlock the reinforced seal of the apocalypse dragon."

"It is a deception."

"Some call it salvation."

"Then the companions who have trusted you so far—"

"In any case, this isn't a world that I made."

Tragically, I understood Han Sooyoung's mind. I wanted to return to the original world because this world wasn't my world.

"Is this the price of the Outer World Covenant that you received? In exchange for killing Yoo Joonghyuk, you will get the power to make your own world?"

A powerful air started flowing from Han Sooyoung's body. She intended not to waste any more time.

"Give me the sword, Kim Dokja. This is the best way for everyone. Yoo Joonghyuk wanted it."

The plagiarist who wanted to go beyond the original probably knew. To go beyond the original, you had to get out of the original. This was impossible as long as she was a plagiarist.

I laughed. "I don't intend to kill Yoo Joonghyuk."

"What are you saying? Are you going to give up on the Outer World Covenant?"

"Of course not."

As soon as I finished talking, Han Sooyoung moved.

"Yoo Joonghyuk, block it!" I called out and Yoo Joonghyuk stepped forward to block Han Sooyoung's swords. I put away the shining Arondight and pulled out another sword.

It was the Four Yin Demonic Beheading Sword. An item that cut off the links between a constellation and incarnation. I focused my attention on the sword as I stared at Yoo Joonghyuk.

[The star relic 'Four Yin Demonic Beheading Sword' is opening up its power!]

Han Sooyoung's eyes widened as she confirmed the energy dwelling in the sword. "Don't tell me you…"

Death had a variety of meanings in the Star Stream. For example, my fate in the past.

"It is useless Kim Dokja! That method…!"

At that time, I died as 'Incarnation Kim Dokja' but 'Constellation Kim Dokja' lived. Then what about Yoo Joonghyuk?

"Gabriel, Jophiel! Please help me!"

[The constellation 'Lily Blooming in Aquarius' is looking at you.]

[The constellation 'Commander of the Red Cosmos' is looking at you.]

I heard Han Sooyoung yelling but I didn't listen. My senses were concentrated on a single black thread rising above Yoo Joonghyuk's head. It was Yoo Joonghyuk's link that I could see using the Four Yin Demonic Beheading Sword.

No one in Ways of Survival had ever tried this method. However, if I succeeded… If I could break this link for even a moment, I might be able to save Yoo Joonghyuk.

"Yoo Joonghyuk, keep your mind straight!"

Now Yoo Joonghyuk had a sufficient amount of stories to become a constellation. If the connection was temporarily disconnected and he got a new story from this scenario… he might be reborn as 'Constellation Yoo Joonghyuk'.

It meant he would die as an 'incarnation'. This way, Yoo Joonghyuk might not regress even if he died. I might be able to go back to the third round without having to seal Yoo Joonghyuk. The power of a demon king and the archangels' power was imbued in the Four Yin Demonic Beheading Sword.

The opponent was Yoo Joonghyuk's sponsor, whose identity was unknown. This much power would be needed to break the link.

I swung the Four Yin Demonic Beheading Sword. Then I did it again. One more time. Again and again, repeatedly striking.

The huge shockwaves from the link swept away the surrounding constellations and incarnations. Han Sooyoung couldn't easily approach through this storm.

How many times did I hit him? Finally, I heard a sound. It was the sound of the Four Yin Demonic Beheading Sword breaking in half. I looked at Yoo Joonghyuk's link that didn't have any scratches.

[The constellation 'Lily Blooming in Aquarius' is feeling an unknown fear.]

[The constellation 'Commander of the Red Cosmos' is astonished.]

At this moment, I felt the vast universe staring at me. I couldn't imagine the origin or fathom the enormity.

[The sponsor of incarnation 'Yoo Joonghyuk' is looking at you.]

Chapter 296: Ep. 56 - Reader and Writer, II

Along with the extreme dizziness, it felt like the entire history of my life had been destroyed.

Yoo Joonghyuk's sponsor. I didn't know exactly who it was. It couldn't be described or explained. I

could just see it. It was very powerful and pure. It was like the original circle of desire.

A baby's laughter echoed in my ears and by the time I came to my senses, half of the Four Yin Demonic Beheading Sword had fallen to the ground.

Yoo Joonghyuk's link wasn't broken. I had failed. I turned my head and saw Han Sooyoung approaching me.

"Did you see it?" Han Sooyoung was making a strange smile. At her waist, the Four Yin Demonic Beheading Sword was shaking just like mine.

"…You already tried it?"

"Of course. I tried it on a much larger scale than you. I borrowed the power of a nebula."

Perhaps Han Sooyoung had confirmed the reality of his sponsor in a method clearer than mine.

"What the hell is it?"

"Let's see? I don't know exactly. Still, don't you have a bit of a guess?"

I didn't answer. Han Sooyoung continued speaking, "Now your last plan has failed. There is no other way."

"…"

"As I told you before, Yoo Joonghyuk agreed to this plan."

"Yoo Joonghyuk agreed?"

"You can read thoughts. Haven't you tried reading that guy's thoughts?"

There was a clanging sound as Yoo Joonghyuk hit Han Sooyoung's sword. I watched Yoo Joonghyuk's back that was blocking the front of me. Obviously, I could use Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint stage 2 on him now. I hesitated for a moment before triggering the skill.

[The exclusive skill, 'Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint' has been activated!]

[Your understanding of this person is sufficient and the second stage of Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint is activated!]

Yoo Joonghyuk's thoughts were heard in my head. Most of the words floated in the air like dust because his consciousness was deeply sunken. One or two fell beside me like snow and then there was a flood of heavy snow.

.

.

「 I want to die. 」

「 I want to die. 」

「 I want to die. 」

.

.

I was currently looking at the inner self of a human who was repressed in the text of Ways of Survival.

Han Sooyoung approached me as I stood there idly. Her hair grazed my chin as she reached into my coat and took out Arondight. Han Sooyoung laughed as she finally collected five swords and stepped away from me.

Yoo Joonghyuk stood blankly. Once Han Sooyoung inserted all the swords, Yoo Joonghyuk would be trapped forever. Then he would get what he wanted. This was the ending of this world.

At this time, I heard something in my ear. It was a very small voice. It was a very small voice among the countless voices.

I placed the broken Four Yin Demonic Beheading Sword on my shoulder and ran towards the distant Han Sooyoung. Her coat was crumpled by the strong grip and Han Sooyoung turned her head with a frown. "You still want to come?"

I watched Yoo Joonghyuk. I heard it clearly. I was still listening.

「 I want to live. 」

It was very faint but it was a voice. He was clearly speaking. Han Sooyoung threw off my hand in an irritated manner.

"Forget saying any good things. Yoo Joonghyuk has to die in order to achieve what you and I want."

"You don't know what I want."

I grasped Unbroken Faith. The blade cried out and Han Sooyoung stepped away from me with a hardened face.

"What the hell are you trying to do? There is no other way for you."

That's right. There was no way. The Outer World Covenant meant I had no way to save Yoo Joonghyuk. There was no such thing in Ways of Survival that I read all night.

"There is a way."

However, there was another way.

"Yoo Joonghyuk!"

At my shout, Yoo Joonghyuk ran like a lightning bolt and dealt a blow to Han Sooyoung. In this short gap, Yoo Joonghyuk was able to take four swords from Han Sooyoung.

Holy Sword Ascalon. Thunder Sword Gram. Dragon Sword Ridill. The Dragon Slayer Arondight. They were all swords with dragon killing stories. They were the key swords in this scenario.

"Now Yoo Joonghyuk! Free the apocalypse dragon!"

"What is this nonsense?!"

The angry Han Sooyoung rushed towards Yoo Joonghyuk. I bumped into Han Sooyoung's body and rolled with her. Han Sooyoung kicked me while shouting. "There are only four swords! You will never clear the scenario!"

"No, there is one more sword."

I pulled out a sword. The Grass-Cutting Sword. It was a sword obtained from Yamata no Orochi in Peace Land. I used the Grass-Cutting Sword to kill the shadow of Yamata no Orochi and it inherited the story of slaying a dragon.

"Take it, Yoo Joonghyuk!" Yoo Joonghyuk received the sword that was fired with Way of the Wind. Finally, all five dragon slaying swords were gathered. Han Sooyoung shouted, "You crazy bastard…!"

There was a conflict between the 'status' that Han Sooyoung and I emitted. I activated Electrification while pouring the blue-white energy towards Han Sooyoung. Han Sooyoung was pushed by the magic power and exclaimed, "Everyone, stop Yoo Joonghyuk!"

Han Sooyoung's shout caused the eyes of the scattered party members to concentrate on Yoo Joonghyuk at the same time.

"I'll catch him!"

Kim Namwoon discovered Yoo Joonghyuk first and flew.

"Damn, I knew you were going to betray…!"

Lee Jihye and Lee Hyunsung belatedly came out. Three of the 100 most powerful people in Ways of Survival ran towards Yoo Joonghyuk at once.

Han Sooyoung emitted a formidable aura and screamed at me. "Do you know what you're doing now? If this scenario is cleared—"

Han Sooyoung's following words weren't heard. I watched Yoo Joonghyuk's back as he headed towards the seal.

「Kim Dokja thought about the third round Yoo Joonghyuk, who was silently going through the scenarios.」

The sword wielded by Lee Jihye cut at Yoo Joonghyuk's back.

「He thought of Yoo Sangah and Han Sooyoung of the third round.」

Lee Hyunsung grabbed Yoo Joonghyuk's wrist while Kim Namwoon aimed the black flames at Yoo Joonghyuk's face.

「He thought for a long time about Jung Heewon and the children, Lee Gilyoung and Shin Yoosung.」

Yoo Joonghyuk didn't back down. His coat was torn and he moved forward while bleeding. Lee Jihye and Lee Hyunsung were swept away by the Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship.

「 He thought of Lee Jihye who called him 'garbage' and Lee Hyunsung, who lost his casings. 」

…I wanted to see it.

「 Thus Kim Dokja finally made up his mind. 」

I told Han Sooyoung, "I won't go back to the third round."

"What nonsense are you saying? You, now…"

"I will stay here and see the ending with the people here."

The end of this world wasn't the ending I wanted.

「 It might take a very long time. Maybe I will never be able to go back. 」

Even so, it was an ending.

"Secretive Plotter isn't the only outer god of this world. There will be another way to go back. Clearing the scenario and moving towards the end…"

"Don't talk nonsense! It doesn't matter what you do! You don't know the end of this story anyway!"

"I don't know."

I spoke as I followed Yoo Joonghyuk soaring towards the sealing sphere.

"I'll create it myself."

Han Sooyoung leapt towards the sky and fired a black spear at Yoo Joonghyuk's back. I threw myself in front of the spear instead. The shock hurt but I didn't retreat. Han Sooyoung's eyes were filled with a completely different killing intent.

"Shall we do it now?" Han Sooyoung directly threatened me.

[The constellation 'Director of the False Last Act' is looking at you.]

Laughter emerged. Like me, Han Sooyoung of this round didn't have a sponsor. She was a constellation like me. She even held the same Unbroken Faith in my hand.

Unbroken Faith shone with a black ether that was much stronger than mine. The moment the black blade appeared in front of me, I used the Purest Sword Force and blocked the blow. It was obviously blocked but the bones of my hand were distorted from the impact.

Han Sooyoung's body started to divide. Avatar. Numerous clones leapt towards Yoo Joonghyuk and I at the same time. I moved to stop them. Jophiel's Unit 503 was qualified to stop the clones.

"Jophiel!"

However, Archangel Jophiel didn't answer. I could guess why. Perhaps she didn't like my current choice. The archangels wanted to go back to the original world.

The next moment.

[The story 'Person Who is Loved by an Archangel' is triggered!]

[The constellation 'Lily Blooming in Aquarius' feels favourable towards you.]

Archangel Gabriel sent me an indirect message. At the same time, Gabriel's Preference Scale was created in one hand.

[The constellation 'Lily Blooming in Aquarius' is looking at you.]

[The constellation 'Commander of the Red Cosmos' is confused.]

I didn't know why Gabriel chose to help me. The only thing I was certain of was that I desperately needed her help. Han Sooyoung ran and shouted, "A reader shouldn't disturb me. The owner of the story is a writer! The world should end here!"

"You aren't the owner of this story either. That type of ending is only in your world!"

I cut through dozens of avatars of Han Sooyoung and flew towards the dark clouds. Two Unbroken Faiths met in the air. The ether of the divine nature and ether of the dark nature clashed together and produced a strange tone. Along with the powerful explosion, my Electrification was broken.

I rolled on the ground while covered in wounds, Most of Han Sooyoung's avatars had disappeared but she was still going strong. As the angry Han Sooyoung ran through the dust towards me, I shouted, "Go! Yoo Joonghyuk!"

Yoo Joonghyuk's body leapt into the air and he finally reached the sealed sphere.

[The five keys have been inserted in the sealing sphere.]

Han Sooyoung shouted, "No!"

Five swords were inserted into the huge sphere. There was the sound of the keyhole being turned.

[Someone has released the 'Seal of the Apocalypse Dragon'.]

[The scenario clear conditions have been met.]

The sleeping dragon's power was awakening. The entire sky flickered like a giant light bulb. The sky was half divided into night and day. I felt the owner of a giant story waking up.

[Constellations of the nebula 'Olympus' are astonished.]

[Constellations of the nebula 'Vedas' have boarded their flagship.]

[Constellations of the nebula 'Papyrus' are wary.]

The messages of the nebulae were head as the shadow of the dragon trapped in the sphere was revealed. I knew what would happen later.

Not long after, the apocalypse dragon roared and swung its tail towards the constellations in the distant Star Stream. A third of the night sky disappeared. Maybe, if they were really unlucky—

「 Kim Dokja. 」

I turned my head and saw Yoo Joonghyuk holding the Splitting the Sky Sword beside me. He didn't seem to care if this scenario was cleared or not. The moment we made eye contact, I got goosebumps.

…Since when had the regression depression been released? The two eyes were staring at me with a clear awareness. That bastard asked me.

「 The world that you showed, does it really exist? 」

Chapter 297: Ep. 56 - Reader and Writer, III

I couldn't find an answer to Yoo Joonghyuk's question. I didn't understand exactly what he meant. Then I heard it once again through Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint.

「 Does the world where you live really exist? 」

Then I realized what Yoo Joonghyuk was talking about. He had seen the world I lived.

「 Hi hi. 」

The Fourth Wall was laughing mischievously. The moment I was going to open my mouth, Han Sooyoung ran and struck my back, pressing me against the ground. "Yoo Joonghyuk! Didn't you promise me?"

Anger was contained in Han Sooyoung's voice. "You will die here and I will get a new world. That was the condition of our exchange. Why did you do this?"

I could feel the taste of the soil as my lips touched the ground.

「 Kim Dokja was thinking about his future plans. 」

Once again, I didn't know what Yoo Joonghyuk felt through my memories. However, looking at his attitude, I didn't think he would give up on this life. A terrible cry came from the top of the sealing sphere.

[Uwaaaah…]

[Everyone flee! Quickly escape from this scenario!]

The astonished constellations were escaping one by one from the scenario. Even the nebulae in the sky were being bitten by the dragon. The apocalypse was indeed such an existence. The decisive cause of Eden's destruction, the worst disaster of the Star Stream.

In the midst of this, Han Sooyoung shouted at Yoo Joonghyuk. "Is it because of this guy?"

Han Sooyoung grabbed my head and screamed. "Did this guy do something to your spirit? Didn't you want to die so badly? Aren't you tired? Don't you want to stop performing scenarios?"

Every word spoken by Han Sooyoung seemed to pierce my chest. Yoo Joonghyuk had no expression but I knew the life he lived. Yoo Joonghyuk of the 1863rd round was the Yoo Joonghyuk of the original novel that I knew.

When my mother was locked up in prison, when I was bullied, when I sat the CSATs, when I went to the army and when I joined the company. It was the Yoo Joonghyuk I had always been watching. The Yoo Joonghyuk who was cold, calculating and never gave up.

I have lived watching such a Yoo Joonghyuk. I could live because of him. Thus, I didn't want to let him die.

If Yoo Joonghyuk died here, the Ways of Survival that I knew would disappear forever.

Yoo Joonghyuk slowly opened his mouth.

"I want to die."

It was a clear voice but there was a voice only clear to me.

「 I want to live. 」

My hand tightly gripped the ground. Han Sooyoung shouted, "Then why did you do this? Shit, why are you still alive?"

"…"

"Somehow replace the apocalypse dragon's seal. Draw the sword and do it somehow!"

Han Sooyoung knew there was no possibility. Han Sooyoung was collapsing. Her world that she expected through the 'Predictive Plagiarism' was collapsing for the first time.

Yoo Joonghyuk didn't answer. Han Sooyoung couldn't overcome her emotions as she threw me away and ran towards Yoo Joonghyuk.

The blade of Unbroken Faith moved to Yoo Joonghyuk's neck. In the end, Han Sooyoung couldn't cut Yoo Joonghyuk.

"Dammit…!" Han Sooyoung's blade stopped as it touched Yoo Joonghyuk's neck.

Han Sooyoung also knew. If she killed Yoo Joonghyuk, he would only regress. I stood up and told her, "Give up, Han Sooyoung

"Shut up!"

"You have failed. Now you need to find a new way."

"Shut up! What do you know? The things I did to get this far—"

Yoo Joonghyuk looked at the blade touching his neck and spoke. "I want to die."

「I want to live.」

"I want to finish it here."

「If there is a chance, like the world I saw…」

Yoo Joonghyuk's body shook. It was shaking violently from two different egos clashing. The pain seemed to be getting worse as Yoo Joonghyuk grabbed his head and slowly sank down. The surprised Han Sooyoung stepped back as a powerful shock wave burst from Yoo Joonghyuk's body.

Han Sooyoung's body flew towards me and I rolled across the ground.

Stories were flowing from Yoo Joonghyuk's body. The memories of the 1863rd Yoo Joonghyuk revolved in the air, floating past me and Han Sooyoung. In the memories, Yoo Joonghyuk spoke.

「Han Sooyoung, find a way to kill me."」

Then the Han Sooyoung in the memory nodded.

「"Okay. Instead, promise me. You will help me."」

The promise between the two people that I didn't know about before. The seemingly perfect 1863rd turn was based on the sacrifice of a single person. In this round, Yoo Joonghyuk lost everything.

「"If you carry out my plan, I can't save your sister."」

He lost his sister.

「"I can't save the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint and Breaking the Sky Master. There is no time for the First Murim."」

He lost his teacher.

「"Become the enemy of the world. That way, all who are hostile to you can unite."」

Through his own will, he became the evil of this world. In the 1863rd round, Yoo Joonghyuk was unhappy. He was more unfortunate than any round.

I shouted through clenched teeth, "Yoo Joonghyuk!"

I didn't know what to say. I could understand the mind of Yoo Joonghyuk who wanted to die but I still forced him to live. It was just because of my words.

Then what was right?

Yoo Joonghyuk asked, 「The world that you showed, does it really exist?」

I didn't know if saying this would be comforting to Yoo Joonghyuk. I cried out with all my strength.

[It exists.]

This was the only thing I could convey to him. It was in a place that he couldn't see or hear but it definitely existed. Then Yoo Joonghyuk answered, 「…I see.」

Strangely, at this moment, Yoo Joonghyuk's expression looked comfortable.

「You can go back to that world if I die?」

"No, that isn't it. Somehow, I'll find a way. You don't have to die. It might take some time but somehow…!"

I quickly summarized the information in his head. The best possible future was drawn in my head. The world of the third round had Yoo Sangah and Han Sooyoung and would be safe until I returned. In the 1863rd round, the 95th scenario was already cleared. There were plenty of people who survived so if I struggled for three or five years here…

I looked up and saw Yoo Joonghyuk looking this way.

「Then it is late.」

It was as if he knew everything.

「If you are here, you can't save that world.」

The moment I wanted to refute it, Yoo Joonghyuk stood up. The vibrations from Yoo Joonghyuk were becoming bigger and more than one of him seemed to be seen.

[The character 'Yoo Joonghyuk' has reached the moment of attribute evolution!]

[The character 'Yoo Joonghyuk' has received a new attribute!]

Yoo Joonghyuk split apart with a bright light and glanced at me.

「 I was curious about the world's ■■.」

A story overflowed and Yoo Joonghyuk was split into two people. I knew this skill.

Avatar. A skill that only a person with the 'author' attribute could use. Until recently, it was Han Sooyoung's exclusive skill.

"Yoo Joonghyuk! Y-You…!" Han Sooyoung's shoulders shook as she opened her mouth. Her real confusion was conveyed through Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint.

「 What if a person's presence could be divided exactly in half?」

Tens of thousands of Han Sooyoungs were talking.

「 If one entity is divided into two exact and separate entities, which one of them can be called real?」

A chill went down my spine. The memories of Han Sooyoung in the 1863rd round. Her figure, which was precisely divided into two, crossed my head like a panorama. It was Han Sooyoung's experience and also Yoo Joonghyuk's experience.

Yoo Joonghyuk split into two in a brilliant manner and faced each other. Yoo Joonghyuk said, "I want to die."

Then the other Yoo Joonghyuk opened his mouth. "I…"

The other Yoo Joonghyuk didn't talk but looked down at his ragged black coat. He threw his coat to the ground.

"I want to live."

The white coat worn by the collapsed Kim Namwoon had fallen to the ground. It was the Infinite Dimension Space Coat I lent him. Yoo Joonghyuk picked it up and wore it. The white coat fitted to his body like it was made for him from the beginning.

멸망
회귀
세계

*

The Yoo Joonghyuk in a white coat confronted the one in a black coat.

"There is only one way."

The two Yoo Joonghyuks pointed their Heaven Shaking Swords at each other.

[The sponsor of incarnation 'Yoo Joonghyuk' is looking at his incarnation.]

The party members were shouting in a confused manner.

"W-What are you doing?"

"Why did you suddenly become two?"

In the air, the energy of Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship and Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship hit each other.

"Oh my god, that guy…"

Only Han Sooyoung had the same thoughts as me.

「One being becomes two.」

「However, there is only one sponsor behind the two of them.」

This was the answer that Yoo Joonghyuk found. I shouted at him. "Stop, Yoo Joonghyuk! I said stop!"

The method to send me back to the third round and clear this scenario. How to die yet continue living at the same time.

"No matter which one survives, the other will regress!"

The two Yoo Joonghyuks ignored my call.

「I will die.」

「I will regress.」

Yoo Joonghyuk knew it. He knew it very well yet he chose this method.

「The story ends here.」

「Once again, everything will start from the beginning.」

There was an end to this world that neither Han Sooyoung or I knew. The black coat was pierced by the Splitting the Sky Sword. It was exactly half his memories. The numerous memories accumulated by Yoo Joonghyuk scattered in the air.

The stigma 'regression' could only be activated on one side. Thus, I could see it. The black coat Yoo Joonghyuk was the one who chose to die.

[The incarnation 'Yoo Joonghyuk' has died.]

On the opposite side was the Yoo Joonghyuk in the white coat. Yoo Joonghyuk killed himself with his own hands. However, he was also stabbed. The Splitting the Sky Sword pierced his belly. The speed was slow but he was also dying.

[The sponsor of incarnation 'Yoo Joonghyuk' is looking at his incarnation.]

[The stigma 'Regression Lv. ???' has been activated!]

[Incarnation 'Yoo Joonghyuk' has accepted the intention of his sponsor.]

Even so Yoo Joonghyuk didn't die. He would open his eyes in the darkness and appear in the subway of the 1864th round, starting everything once again.

「This is a reward for showing your world.」

Some stories flowed from the fingertips of Yoo Joonghyuk in the white coat and reached me.

[The stories of the character 'Yoo Joonghyuk' have been given to you.]

I approached Yoo Joonghyuk. The person who protected my youth was disappearing into a world I didn't know.

「 The next round… 」

Yoo Joonghyuk's figure started to scatter. I didn't hear any more of Yoo Joonghyuk's thoughts through Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint. Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint no longer worked for him.

[This person isn't a 'character'.]

Yoo Joonghyuk's appearance was fading into the light of this world. By the time I staggered towards him, Yoo Joonghyuk had already disappeared from the world. I looked back and saw Han Sooyoung sitting down with a despairing face.

[You have cleared the criteria of the Outer World Covenant.]

The dazzling light filled the air like ashes, revealing a pale reality. In it, Yoo Joonghyuk was walking towards a world we didn't know.

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* Official novel illustration (canonical)

Chapter 298: Ep. 56 - Reader and Writer, IV

Yoo Joonghyuk died.

[The 'Fourth Wall' is shaking violently.]

It didn't feel real.

[The 'Fourth Wall' is severely shaking!]

[The exclusive skill, 'Fourth Wall' is strongly activated!]

I couldn't breathe from the horror that filled my lungs. Why did Yoo Joonghyuk suddenly get the 'writer' attribute and why did he choose to die or regress? I seemed to know but it was hard to understand. There was no more of the original Yoo Joonghyuk that I knew. Only a handful of stories proved his absence.

…I felt like this.

「This is a novel. It is a story in a novel.」

I slowly inhaled and breathed out again.

「 Yoo Joonghyuk escaped from being a character. 」

I got tinnitus and my heart beat like crazy. I once again breathed in and out.

[The exclusive skill, 'Fourth Wall' is activated more strongly!]

My senses slowly returned and the murmurs of the party members were heard.

"…What happened?"

"Didn't you just hear? The scenario is cleared!"

I slapped my cheeks twice and raised my head as I felt the status of the apocalypse dragon flowing from the seal.

[The nebula 'Olympus' is preparing the battlefield for the Apocalypse Dragon.]

[The nebula 'Vedas' is preparing for the disaster.]

[The nebula 'Tamna'…]

If my prediction was correct, there was still time. I shouted towards the party members scattered all over the place. "Everyone gather together. I have a story to tell."

The party members gathered around me despite their wariness. Someone was supporting the fallen Han Sooyoung while Kim Namwoon and Lee Jihye showed strong hostility towards me.

"After a while, the Apocalypse Dragon will be released. In relation to that—"

"Shut up! What were you doing earlier? You and Yoo Joonghyuk joined together to attack Master!" Lee Jihye screamed as she aimed her blade at my neck. Then Lee Hyunsung muttered, "Dokja-ssi, that thing…"

"Captain! What about this jerk? Should I take care of him?"

Kim Namwoon filled his hands with the black flames. Han Sooyoung shook her head. "…Everybody, listen to him."

"Huh?"

"Listen to him."

Han Sooyoung's eyes were open but the empty pupils proved that he gave up everything. Han Sooyoung resembled me. She might look like this on the surface but she already understood the situation in her head. Maybe she was thinking about the next plan.

I looked around at the party members. Lee Hyunsung, Kim Namwoon, Lee Seolhwa, Lee Jihye, Shin Yoosung…

The people who survived the 1863rd round. I could've told them the truth about Han Sooyoung. Han Sooyoung was using you. In order to make a new world, she wanted to end your story here. Even so, I couldn't say it.

"Everybody, take care of the captain. Don't jump to rash conclusions. Listen to Dokja-ssi."

It was because they were seriously following Han Sooyoung. The group's hostility towards me was dampened by Lee Hyunsung's words.

I started the story. "The liberation of the apocalypse dragon isn't over when the seal is released. You might not know it but the end of this scenario…"

I looked up at the sky. The other party members also looked up with me. The sealing sphere was crumpled. The fragments of the seal were breaking little by little. As time went on, the density of the sky was becoming thicker.

I relied on the Fourth Wall and spat out empty words. "Go back to the headquarters and prepare for the next scenario. Maybe there will be three days left."

I could immediately leave the 1863rd round. However, I couldn't do this because the characters in this turn were people I liked.

I earned some time from the liberation of the apocalypse dragon by using the Grass-Cutting Sword as the last key. It was lacking a bit of status to be used as a key, slightly delaying the release of the apocalypse dragon.

I had to use this time wisely. Now that Han Sooyoung had chosen this route, the destruction of at least one nebula was determined. The most important thing was to avoid Earth being destroyed.

The next day, I handed Lee Hyunsung a considerable amount of information. They were all plans that I had mapped out beforehand. From avoiding the disaster of the apocalypse dragon to gaining new stories and items. I also handed over the list of the strongest people.

Lee Hyunsung listened to my story from beginning to end and suddenly looked up. "…How does Dokja-ssi know all of this?"

"It is the reason why Han Sooyoung knows."

I tried to avoid unnecessary explanations but Lee Hyunsung's expression was unusual. Lee Hyunsung hesitated for a long time before saying something unexpected. "Is Dokja-ssi a 'plagiarist writer?'"

"…Plagiarist writer?"

"You… aren't? I'm sorry."

I was filled with confusion. "Did Han Sooyoung talk about her attributes?"

"Ah, well…"

Lee Hyunsung scratched his head with a troubled expression. I couldn't believe it. The prideful and selfish Han Sooyoung showed her original attribute? Why?

"Everyone get out."

I was just thinking this when the door to the situation room opened and someone entered. It was Han Sooyoung who was wearing a hat deep over her face.

"Yes, I understand." Lee Hyunsung bowed, packed up and went out of the room. The only ones left in the room were Han Sooyoung and me.

Since I cleared my Outer World Covenant, it must be the same for Han Sooyoung. In such circumstances, there was no reason for her to show hostility to me.

"Your mental state seems better."

"Shut up." Han Sooyoung answered as she folded her arms and sat down on the chair. I asked, "Why are you complaining?"

"Complaining? Is that what you're calling it? Thanks to you, all the people here might die."

I saw the party members waiting outside the room for us. The people gathered outside the transparent wall were talking with serious expressions. It was probably because of Han Sooyoung's desperate expression shortly after Yoo Joonghyuk's death. I stated, "It is better to go to the next scenario than fall asleep forever."

Outside the window, Lee Hyunsung met my gaze and smiled faintly. Lee Hyunsung knew that Han Sooyoung was a plagiarist. Maybe Lee Hyunsung knew that Han Sooyoung would abandon them. He was bear-like but he had a deep heart. Lee Hyunsung might've predicted that this would happen. Nevertheless, he decided to follow Han Sooyoung.

I continued speaking, "It isn't over when the apocalypse dragon is released. Don't you also know?"

Han Sooyoung bowed her head and didn't answer. The apocalypse dragon that was gradually being freed from the seal. Once freed, there would be a disaster in the Star Stream. This didn't mean that all future scenarios would end.

In fact, in the 1863rd round, Yoo Joonghyuk freed the apocalypse dragon and saw the end of the scenario.

"Explain it to the members. Everything you did and everything you hid. It might not be a perfect development but there is a way to do it."

"…"

"There are still many places where you can borrow power. Anna Croft's Zarathustra, the Seekers of the End, the Transcendent King and 'the person' who lives on the reincarnation planet…"

"I told you to shut up." Han Sooyoung looked up and glared at me. The prideful eyes glared at me from below the hat. By the way…something was strange.

Han Sooyoung's eyes were swollen. As I stared at her face, Han Sooyoung growled and pressed her hat lower.

I didn't like Han Sooyoung of the 1863rd round. Even so, I could understand Han Sooyoung. The world that she wanted to make was a bit like the world I dreamt of.

Han Sooyoung spoke through gritted teeth. "Yoo Joonghyuk became an 'author."

"Why did he suddenly get such an attribute?"

"I guess he wanted to write a new story in a very sincere manner. That is the condition to opening the 'author' trait."

I could understand but also didn't understand. A world that couldn't complete the round but was struggling to survive… Yoo Joonghyuk went out of it in order to write his own story.

Han Sooyoung didn't speak but we could clearly see what the other was thinking. Han Sooyoung raised her head, took off her hat and lit a cigarette.

I asked, "How about a question and answer exchange? Don't use the system because it is annoying."

Han Sooyoung smoked with an emotionless face. "Lies are included?"

"Okay."

"You first."

I nodded. "Who do you think is the author of Ways of Survival?"

Han Sooyoung once again sucked in smoke and blew it out. Then she replied, "A very big baby."

"…Baby?"

"In a world without scenarios, only the desire to see the next story… a baby with a terrible imagination."

Something came to my mind. A world without scenarios. There was only one such world in this Star Stream.

"Don't tell me…"

"You better not say it with your mouth." Han Sooyoung pointed at the sky. "It might be listening."

I closed my mouth. It wasn't impossible if that 'existence' was really the writer. However…

My head was in a complicated state as I told Han Sooyoung, "It's your turn. Ask."

"I'm thinking, please wait."

"…There isn't much time so ask me quickly. I'm leaving tomorrow morning."

"Tomorrow morning?"

"I have fulfilled the Outer World Covenant and need to go back to my original world."

Han Sooyoung frowned slightly. "You are finished and you're going to throw us away? That's great. My world is ruined…"

"Everything I know was handed to Lee Hyunsung. They can proceed to the end without any other help."

I thought as I glanced at the people outside the situation room. From the beginning, this world was 'their world'. I asked, "When are you going to leave?"

"Leave?"

"You have also fulfilled the Outer World Covenant."

I wasn't the only one to finish the Outer World Covenant. Yoo Joonghyuk had died and Han Sooyoung fulfilled his mission. She would now leave to complete her 'world' with the help of Secretive Plotter.

"Han Sooyoung?"

Han Sooyoung stared at the floor and replied, "I'm not going."

Chapter 299: Ep. 56 - Reader and Writer, V

"What?"

"I won't go."

It was an unexpected answer so I looked like a fool. "Why?"

"Without me, they will all die."

I doubted my ears. I couldn't believe that Han Sooyoung could talk like this. My voice involuntarily became louder and aggressive.

"Didn't you want to make your own world?"

"…I can make my world later. Somebody has to lead them."

"Why all of a sudden…"

"Yoo Joonghyuk is no longer a character. What do you think that means?"

I closed my mouth.

"It is no longer a novel."

My heart pounded at Han Sooyoung's words.

[The exclusive skill 'Fourth Wall' is strongly activated!]

"It isn't about being forgiven for everything. No matter how the developments flow, we should end the story properly."

Han Sooyoung's face couldn't be seen properly because of the brim of her hat. Before my words finished, Han Sooyoung left the situation room. I saw Han Sooyoung talking to the people outside the situation room. I kept watching.

Before leaving, there were a few things that needed to be addressed. One of them was Uriel.

I looked down at the confined Uriel doll. She was currently in a state of calm but once the confinement was over, Uriel would wake up again as the Angel of Flames. She would burn all living things around her.

Gabriel's true voice entered my ears. [What are you going to do with Uriel?]

"I am thinking."

I looked down at Gabriel who was waving her helplessly drooping petals. Perhaps she was shocked by the situation here. According to the original setting, Gabriel was someone who took good care of other angels.

[I'll stay.]

"It isn't possible."

[Why? Is it because I betrayed this place?]

I didn't answer. Gabriel acted like it was unfair.

[Why did I betray Eden?]

"It must've been an unavoidable decision for you."

[Tell me the details accurately. What happened? You know something!]

"I don't know exactly. If you are curious, go back and talk to Metatron."

It wasn't good for me to intervene in this thing. There was a possibility that the development of the third round could find unexpected difficulties because of misinterpreted information. Gabriel's leaves trembled.

[If I go back, won't I betray Eden again? Then I would rather remain here—]

"The future can change. We have to go back." I spoke with confidence. This world wasn't our world.

[Then Uriel…!]

"I told you, I'm thinking."

For now, the best option was to leave Uriel to Han Sooyoung. However, I wasn't sure if she could control the Archangel of Flames.

「The Fourth Wall is saying, "Do you want me to come out?"」

There was a way to tell Uriel the story of the third round. However, as I said many times, there was no guarantee that Uriel would hear the story and react like Yoo Joonghyuk. Perhaps the story of my world line might further ruin Uriel's insecure spirit.

Still, there might be a bigger problem if I really left Gabriel here. Moreover, Gabriel couldn't use Confinement of Good and Evil… I would also like to stay a bit longer and help Uriel…

[I will stay, Gabriel.]

The petals of the red cosmos swayed. I reflexively bowed my head and the startled Gabriel shouted, […Jophiel?]

[It is best that I stay.]

It was an unexpected declaration. Even I was stunned. It wasn't another archangel. Jophiel was declaring to stay here?

[I decided after careful consideration. I can control Uriel through Confinement of Good and Evil. Thus, it is right for me to stay here.]

"Jophiel, if you don't return to the original world now, you might never be able to return."

[There are a few ways to cross world lines.]

"I know but they all require a tremendous price."

[It doesn't matter if I can't go back.]

[Jophiel!]

Jophiel didn't back down despite Gabriel's cry.

[This world line also has value. I don't want to depend on this insidious guy but I think it is better to find out more about this world. I have an obligation to find out why the Eden here was destroyed, what things will happen in the future and to inform the original world.]

Jophiel's remark was reasonable. This world was very different from the old 1863rd round and it would certainly help if information could be sent to the third round.

[Wait, Jophiel! Why are you making this decision—]

[There is no turning back Gabriel.]

A gleam of light emerged from the red cosmos and this turned into a white light that bound the white lily. It was Confinement of Good and Evil. Gabriel's petals drooped like he fell asleep. Jophiel told me. [Please look after Gabriel.]

"Why are you doing this?"

[Uriel needs Gabriel. And Gabriel… both of them are unstable.]

I thought like Archangel Jophiel. Eden was a nebula made up of archangels.

"Then you?"

[I don't believe in you but I have one thing to ask.]

I hesitated before nodding.

[After returning to the original world line, please visit Eden. Then I hope you can tell the scribe what happened here. Can you do that?]

"I understand."

Certainly, it wasn't a difficult request. I was already planning to visit Eden.

Soon after, Jophiel's cosmos flower drooped. It was a seemingly sleepy and tired appearance. I changed the water bottles of the two flowers.

Someone was left and someone was leaving. No matter what was chosen, everyone would eventually reach their end.

* * *

The next morning, I was sent off by the party members. Many things had happened but the party members said they would send me off. To be precise, it was Lee Hyunsung who said it.

I turned my head and saw Han Sooyoung staring at me with her unique disgruntled face. I handed her a wrinkled notebook. Han Sooyoung bluntly wondered, "…What is this rubbish?"

"The information you need now."

I had selected a few more pieces of information that would be useful for the 1863rd round from Ways of Survival.

Sparks rose around Han Sooyoung's body. I vaguely knew its identity. The sparks were related to Han Sooyoung's identity as a 'character'.

"Don't throw it away and look at it whenever you have time."

Han Sooyoung stared down at the notebook I gave her and asked, "…Is this okay?"

"What?"

[The Fourth Wall is strongly activated!]

Han Sooyoung stared at me carefully as if reading something on my fate. Then she shook her head. "No, it's nothing. Never mind."

…She was unreliable.

Lee Hyunsung listened to the conversation and opened his mouth. "It would've been nice if we couldn't carried out the scenario together. It is unfortunate."

Lee Hyunsung, who became close to me, said goodbye first and then Kim Namwoon stared at me.

"Bah, get lost. Give my best regards to the me over there."

Of course, it wouldn't happen. I had to go to the next world to speak to Kim Namwoon of the third round.

The moment I finished the goodbyes and was turning around.

"Hey."

Something with a soft weight came flying towards my back. I hurriedly turned my head and grabbed it. A white coat was caught. It was the Infinite Dimension Space Coat.

"Didn't you never get a clear reward? Take this."

It was the coat that Han Sooyoung was wearing. I was dumbfounded. "Coming to the 95th scenario and only getting something like this—"

Han Sooyoung looked at me like I was pathetic. Then a thought crossed my mind. This bastard, don't tell me? I placed my hands in my pocket with a bemused expression and Han Sooyoung asked, "The

question I didn't ask yesterday, can I finish it now?"

"…Speak."

"Why did you say you wouldn't go back to the third round?"

It was an unexpected question. Han Sooyoung continued to ask. "You are playing my part over there… if you didn't go back, that world would've perished. You should know this so why—"

"Let's see… why?"

"What?"

"Even without me, the third round would've been fine for a long time."

"How can you be sure?" Han Sooyoung stared at me suspiciously.

"You are there."

Han Sooyoung's expression slightly hardened at my words. Her eyes were shaking with vague surprise.

"I believe in the you of the third round."

Han Sooyoung stared at me for a moment before turning her head away. "Quickly get lost. I don't want to see you anymore."

"I'm going. Stay alive and well."

I looked up at the sky.

[The constellation 'Demon King of Salvation' is looking at the night sky.]

[Secretive Plotter! Please fulfil the contents of the covenant.]

A new portal was created under my feet. It felt like something was pulling at me as the world started to collapse. The world of the 1863rd round was becoming dim.

A world different from the original that I knew. It was a short time but I felt that many things had changed.

Lee Hyunsung waved while the others sent me off with complicated expressions. Just like Yoo Joonghyuk did and I did, they would walk through a world different from the original that I knew.

Maybe someday, our worlds might be able to meet one another. However, even if we couldn't meet again, there was no doubt that the world existed. Just like Ways of Survival was to me.

The world was dark. I felt dizzy while hearing the voice of an outer god.

[On ly the sto ry with out a be gin ning or end will re main.]

The ground disappeared and I was sucked into the portal. The metaphysically distorted pathways narrowed and expanded several times.

I closed my eyes and let my body flow in an unmeasurable passage of time. I shouldn't have been gone for too long from the third round.

After a while, I fell to the ground with a loud sound.

[The Outer World Covenant has been completed!]

[The compensation will be settled.]

To be precise, it wasn't the ground. It was the galaxy of the Star Stream that I had seen before. My body was floating in the emptiness of the universe. I groaned and saw the hem of a black cloak dragging against the ground.

[You came.]

It was Secretive Plotter.

Chapter 300: Ep. 57 - Glorious Return, I

[The exclusive skill, 'Fourth Wall' is strongly activated!]

The Fourth Wall moved the moment Secretive Plotter stared at me. The Fourth Wall growled like a beast protecting its cubs.

「 Be care ful Kim Dok ja. 」

The first time I came here, Secretive Plotter called the Fourth Wall the 'Last Wall'. There was no information about it in the original but that didn't mean I had no idea at all. It was because there were various types of walls in Ways of Survival, including Jang Hayoung's Unidentified Wall.

"I came to receive the compensation, Secretive Plotter." I opened my mouth but Secretive Plotter didn't reply. Sparks were flying around Secretive Plotter. The darkness covering his expression looked angry as he asked me, [Demon King of Salvation, why did you make that choice?]

"Huh?"

I didn't know what he meant by his sudden question. Secretive Plotter asked again, [Why didn't you want to go back to the third round? That world wasn't your round.]

"This world saved my life. That's it."

[If you left it, they could find rest.]

"That isn't rest. Secretive Plotter, why did you send me to that parallel world?"

The sparks around Secretive Plotter intensified. It seemed like his existence was becoming unstable. Secretive Plotter sighed and said, [Everything was already decided… you don't know what you changed.]

The white hole in the place where there should be eyes was watching me.

[I will give you the reward I promised.]

I nodded. There were three rewards promised for this sub scenario. An item, skill and story that was acquired in the 1863rd round.

[What item will you take?]

"This coat." I was a bit tense as I pulled out the white coat that Han Sooyoung gave me. Secretive Plotter's eyes leaked out light and narrowed. It seemed I couldn't deceive the outer god.

Secretive Plotter had promised me one item. However, the coat's inner pockets contained more than one item.

[…That's fine. Since one less flower is returning, the total sum of probability must be similar to the flower.]

[The 'Infinite Dimension Space Coat' has been received as a reward item.]

Fortunately, Secretive Plotter overlooked Han Sooyoung's coat. Next was the 'story.

[You will naturally be taking 'that' story?]

"That's right."

In the first place, the only story I got in the 1863rd round was the one that Yoo Joonghyuk gave to me. Obtaining this story meant I needed to modify some of my planned routes but… it didn't matter. The important thing was to see the end of the story that I chose.

[You have acquired a new story.]

[This story will be applied normally after returning to the original world line.]

Last was the 'skill'.

[What will you do about the skill? You didn't acquire any new skills.]

"I wasn't able to receive a skill but… is it possible to receive this type of compensation?"

I started explaining to Secretive Plotter. After a while, Secretive Plotter nodded. [It is possible.]

[You have acquired the reward skill.]

[This skill will be applied normally after returning to the original world line.]

I obtained everything I needed to get. The unexpected happened when I was going to ask the Secretive Plotter to return me to my original world. There were strong sparks as someone tried to penetrate this space from the rear.

I noticed the 'status' that could be felt beyond this space. It seemed that the bureau had noticed Secretive Plotter in this place. In other words, the person trying to break into this space was likely to be a great dokkaebi of the bureau.

[You'll be going now, Demon King of Salvation.]

Secretive Plotter moved his fingertips lightly and a portal appeared under my feet.

I hurriedly called out to Secretive Plotter. "Wait a minute! How many years will have passed when I return to the world?"

Secretive Plotter glanced at me.

[Some stories are read quickly and some are read slowly.]

I tried to open my mouth but my lower body had already passed through the portal.

[Demon King of Salvation. Do you think the story of your disappearance will be read quickly or slowly?]

I could hear a mischievous laugh coming from somewhere. The portal was fully activated and my field of view was completely blocked.

[Once we meet again, I hope that you are the proper master of the wall.]

Was it because it wasn't my first time crossing the world line? I was able to maintain my consciousness despite being swept through the portal.

[The Fourth Wall is strongly activated!]

[The Viceroy's Dimensional Door has set the time-space coordinates.]

The scene of the flowing Star Stream. I thought of the things I needed in the memories that floated up like buoys.

[The Viceroy's Dimensional Door is closed.]

I woke up at the message and was lying on the ground. It was a spacious place dimly illuminated by lanterns hanging from the ceiling. There seemed to be voices in the distance.

…Where was I? It didn't seem to be Earth. Why? Why did I suddenly come here?

[The Star Stream has detected your presence in the world!]

[The Star Stream has reconfirmed your modifier.]

[The Star Stream will assign you to the scope of your constellation.]

[The bureau is calculating your status.]

I thought I knew what was going on. I left the scenario of the original world through the Outer World Covenant. A price was necessary to return to the original scenario. I felt the muscles of my body jerking as the messages continued to rise.

[The bureau has completed your examination.]

[Returning you to the original scenario isn't suitable.]

[The bureau will review scenarios for your level.

[The review has been completed.]

I sighed as I watched the messages that came up.

…I expected this to happen. No, actually, I intended it. I left my original world and went to another world. The categories were different but all beings who came back to the original scenario like me were called by the same name.

[You have acquired a new story!]

[You have acquired a new attribute!]

[You have obtained the qualification of a 'returnee'.]

[A new scenario is being prepared for you.]

I had become a returnee. I slowly raised my body and saw several men and women talking around me. They were all returnees like me.

"Hahaha, I can finally return to Earth! It has been 10 years!"

"I have been waiting 20 years."

"Where have you been? Based on the colours, was it Murim?"

"I'm from Gratus. Have you heard of it?"

Then someone waved at me. "Oh, you must be the last one."

It was a man dressed in black shaman clothing. He was wearing a mask but his eyes and the impression he gave off were somewhat familiar.

I briefly greeted him and the man spoke again. "Brother, where are you from?"

"Earth."

"No, that isn't the question. There is no one here who isn't from Earth… I'm asking about the planet you moved from."

The man smiled wryly. At this moment, I thought I knew the identity of the man.

｢A towering person who looks like he has a bag of tricks. Eyes that are suitable for night vision and only half the eyebrows are left, as if eaten by crows.｣

I couldn't help smiling. It was already time for this person to appear…

"The place I went to was also Earth. The Earth of a parallel dimension."

"Hrmm, is that so? You are a very unusual person."

The man extended his hand towards me.

"I will introduce myself first. My name is Wang Weirong. In the 2nd Murim that I went to, I was called Flying Fox."

Flying Fox, Wang Weirong. He was one of Yoo Joonghyuk's later colleagues.

"My name is Kim Dokja." Also known as… um… the Demon King of Salvation."

A few returnees listening to the story from the side laughed.

"Demon King of Salvation? Ahahaha!"

"It is a great title. It looks like you went to some third-rate fantasy world!"

A hand hit me on the back. More of them were returnees from Murim or a medieval world. Flying Fox said with a grin. "Nice nickname."

"It's nothing."

"By the way, you have already been given the returnee's clothing."

"Ah, yes."

I looked down at the Infinite Dimension Space Coat I was wearing. I forgot it was originally a garment only for returnees, just like the Disaster of Questions who I once faced. Maybe that guy was summoned to Earth after going through the same procedure.

Just then, dokkaebis appeared in the air and started giving coats to the returnees. Several returnees looked between the coats they received and mind and protested.

"Hey dokkaebi! The one he is wearing looks much better…!"

It was natural. It didn't make sense if a coat received from the 95th scenario was worse than the supply coat.

Some of the dokkaebis were shocked when they saw me and reported to their superiors. By now, Bihyung should know I was back.

I wanted to see the people of Earth as soon as possible. How many years had passed? Everybody had to be doing well.

Flying Fox received the coat and said with a smile, "Uh, nice clothes. What will you do when you get back?"

"I'm going to look for somebody."

"Ho, do you have a lover waiting?" I smiled at him. Flying Fox kept speaking. "I think I will live in a grand style once I go back. I have obtained a long-awaited strength. I don't need to be intimidated by bullies anymore! Now is the beginning of happiness!"

"…The days won't be that happy. Earth would've changed a lot."

"Uhuh, you are already talking weakly. I have been through all that suffering. What can happen when I get back to Earth?"

[All returnees, please pay attention.]

The turmoil subsided and the intermediate dokkaebi in charge of the returnees opened his mouth as the representative.

[You will soon return to Earth. You will be assigned a 'returnee only scenario' and will perform that scenario in your hometown. It is a simple play and I would appreciate it if you enjoyed it.]

"A returnee scenario? Tell us properly!"

[Please check the scenario window for details. Ah, please note that this is a group scenario so there is a leader. Please remember that the one with the most prominent status will be automatically elected as leader.]

"I will naturally be the leader!"

"That friend from Murim looks pretty strong…"

I wondered who would be the 'king' of this group.

[The return to Earth has begun!]

Together with the dazzling light, the 10 returnees started to move through the space at once. My vision briefly blackened and when I opened my eyes again, we were in the middle of a vast city.

A damaged sidewalk covered with dust. The skyline where the reconstruction of buildings had begun. It was unmistakably Earth.

"Where is this? Those characters…"

"South Korea! It is South Korea!"

A returnee from the Korean Peninsula jumped forward. I checked the information related to the 'returnees scenario' and shouted, "Wait a minute. Everyone calm down and gather together."

The returnees were already out of control. Some hasty returnees grabbed the people passing by and asked,

"Where is this? What year is it now?"

I sighed,

[The 'returnee trigger' has been activated!]

"T-They asked for the date! They are returnees!"

"Aaaack! Returnees! Run away!"

"Report to the alliance!"

The whole street was rattled by the word 'returnee'. The people fled like the tide and the returnees made puzzled expressions.

"What? What did I do wrong?"

[A new main scenario has arrived.]

[Main Scenario #45 — 'Glorious Return' has started!]

The reflections on the glass building could be seen. Sparks flew as my appearance changed. It was the terrible appearance of a dirty monster with tentacles.

The real me wasn't like this but outwardly, I looked like a smaller outer god. I probably looked like this to everyone on Earth. To the people of Earth, all returnees were disasters.

The incarnations of Earth stepped closer with cold eyes. I turned around to see the confused Flying Fox open his trembling lips. "B-Brother. What is this…?"

"I told you nothing joyful would be waiting for us."

[The summoning of the 163rd returnees group has been completed!]

[You're the king of the 163rd returnees group.]

Chapter 301: Ep. 57 - Glorious Return, II

It was a tranquil dream. Smoke spread in the field of view. It was definitely South Korea but there were unfamiliar structures and story weapons I had never seen, while the sky was dark like the world was about to collapse…

Han Sooyoung in the dream muttered, 'What is this?'

However, her voice didn't come out at all. There were two people fighting in front of her. A man in a black coat and a white coat. She had seen this before but something was different. The two men had the same face.

…Yoo Joonghyuk? There was a sound and the two Yoo Joonghyuk in front of her were gone.

What was this situation? What the hell was this sight? In a place not far away, she saw Kim Dokja. Kim Dokja knelt down like a man who lost everything. The moment Han Sooyoung reached out her hand, somebody called from right beside her.

–We won't get any further.

She looked over and there was a 'Han Sooyoung' with the same face as herself. A chill went down her spine. The cold feeling caused Han Sooyoung to wake up from her dream.

"…!"

Han Sooyoung woke up with a light man and realized she was lying on the couch.

"Another dream, dammit."

It was a dream that had been repeating since a few days ago. Yoo Joonghyuk and Yoo Joonghyuk fought each other while another one of her and Kim Dokja watched. At first, she thought it was a visionary dream. However, no matter how much she tried to interpret it, she couldn't get a sense of the dream.

News was coming from the distant television.

–The launch of the new Incarnation Alliance is causing a change to the situation on the Korean Peninsula…

Han Sooyoung listened blankly while rolling around the cold ice in her mouth.

…Huh? Ice?

"What is this? Ahjumma, did you put it in my mouth?"

"Why would I do that?"

Lee Sookyung received the water without even looking back. Han Sooyoung frowned as she broke the ice. Then it had to be Yoo Sangah. "How long did I sleep?"

"Two hours."

"Yoo Sangah?"

"She is drinking coffee in the break room."

*

"What break room? Is this place a company?"

She said this but in fact, the building they were residing in was an abandoned company building. Han Sooyoung grumbled and headed to the break room.
"Hey, what are you doing?"

There was a small paper cup on the table in the break room. Yoo Sangah was moving her white fingers through the air. The information that emerged from the hologram was leaking into Yoo Sangah's retinas. The startled Han Sooyoung shouted, "…Are you crazy? Are you using that stigma again?"

"…"

"You can score goals at a really young age. I don't know what will happen if you spam such a powerful stigma…"

The stigma used by Yoo Sangah was the Hermes System of Olympus. It was Olympus's big data network that gained information from all over the Star Stream to measure the future.

"It can't be helped. The worst situation has to be avoided."

"Don't I know information about the future?"

"It isn't enough. There are too many variables."

The stigma Hermes Stigma dramatically shortens the user's life span. Han Sooyoung was aware of this fact but she was unable to dissuade Yoo Sangah because Yoo Sangah played a large credit in the group members reaching the 45th scenario. If it wasn't for Yoo Sangah measuring future scenarios, the party members would've experienced a major crisis in the 35th scenario and 40th scenario.

Han Sooyoung bit her lips. This girl…

It had been three years since Kim Dokja disappeared. It had already been a long time since the hope of him coming back had started to dim. Steam rose from the cup of coffee. Yoo Sangah stared at it and opened her mouth. "Sitting here reminds me of my days working at the company. At the time, I always hid in the break room."

"I never worked in a company so I don't know."

"You definitely aren't a company person."

Yoo Sangah smiled and Han Sooyoung licked her lips. "You were in the same company as Kim Dokja?"

"Yes."

"Were the two of you close?"

Yoo Sangah stared at Han Sooyoung, who had tried to sound casual. Yoo Sangah smiled and replied,

"Even then, we were companions."

—-Disaster alert!

—-Disaster alert!

There were loud notifications and Han Sooyoung rushed to the office. Lee Sookyung, who had been on standby, checked the warning area through the television.

"…Another? Where is it this time?"

"Busan."

"Busan? That isn't too far. The kids will handle it." Han Sooyoung replied curtly while looking at the news flash on the screen. Tentacled monsters appeared on the screen and engaged with incarnations.

Lee Sookyung sighed and asked, "Sooyoung, are you keeping in touch with the other kids?"

"Why keep in contact with the kids who don't like me? Rather, what is emerging on the bowl ahjumma?"

Lee Sookyung looked down at her star relic. Han Sooyoung asked, "What have you seen this time?"

Lee Sookyung didn't answer. Han Sooyoung raised her head as she smelt something strange and Lee Sookyung stood like a stiff statue.

Thus, Han Sooyoung realized something.

Kim Dokja had disappeared for three years. In the first place, there was only one thing that Lee Sookyung had been checking.

Han Sooyoung stared at the bowl for a long time before declaring, "I'm going to take a quick trip to Busan. By the way, there is Yoo Joonghyuk now?"

I looked at the scenario window that popped up in the air.

[Main Scenario #45 — 'Glorious Return']

Category: Main

Difficulty: ???

Clear Conditions: After a long journey, you have finally returned home. Let people in your hometown

know about your presence and leave a mark that you are back in one of the main base areas. The people of your hometown will welcome you.

Time Limit: None

Compensation: 200,000 coins, the removal of the disaster transformation.

Failure: Death

* While the scenario is in progress, the incarnations will recognize returnees as creatures.

* While the scenario is in progress, the incarnations can't understand the language of the returnees.

The clear conditions were screwed up but cursing didn't make people feel better.

[Your goal is 'Yeouido, Seoul.]

[There is currently no markable base area nearby.]

I took a deep breath. Yes, maybe this was better. If I had to carry out the 45th scenario anyway, it might be a good thing that I was a returnee. This scenario was practice for some places that would be opened in the future.

"Shit! Why are they attacking?"

The returnees attacked by incarnations were angry. Not all the surviving incarnations were strong. There were still some incarnations without sponsors and others who later joined the scenario. Therefore, the attacks of the incarnations weren't threatening to the returnees.

"I can't stand it. Hey friends, just wipe out the whole area—"

"It isn't possible."

The returnees' expressions hardened at my words. "Why? They attacked first!"

"What is the good reason?"

"What is the reason? Shit, look at their faces. They want to catch and kill us right away."

It certainly seemed that way. I was confused on how to explain this situation.

[The dokkaebis disapprove of your presence.]

Originally, the 45th scenario was a full-scale deployment of returnees and existing incarnations. Since my group number was 163, there must be 162 groups summoned all over the world.

The first returnees war. In the original novel, the third round Korean Peninsula was devastated by this war. In other words, it would flow like the original if this kept happening.

"What? The disasters are talking together?"

"Kill them quickly! The Black Flames Demon Ruler said so. It is easy to kill them when they are off guard!"

"No, didn't you hear about the Moonlight Empress? There are disasters that can communicate so be careful…"

I heard some familiar nicknames. In any case, the strong incarnations of the Korean Peninsula were still alive, allowing these incarnations to be carefree.

Then a returnee waiting for my words seized my collar. "I will kill you if you disturb me. Get lost."

"What if I don't want to?"

The returnee aimed his status at me and I grabbed the returnee's wrist.

[The constellation 'Demon King of Salvation' is opening his 'status'.]

There was the sound of bones breaking and the face of the returnee I grabbed started to turn blue.

"W-Who are you…?"

The frightened returnee's legs weakened.

[The temporary channel has opened.]

[Constellations of the Korean Peninsula are paying attention to you!]

[The constellation 'Bald General of Justice' has entered the channel.]

[The constellation 'Maritime War God' feels a sense of deja vu from you.]

They were welcome modifiers but now wasn't the time for greetings. I told the returnees, [Shut up and put away all weapons. Then gather by my side. I will blow away your brains if you are late, so move quickly.]

I deliberately spoke in a radical manner. Those who realized the difference in my true voice gathered around me. By the way, it wasn't only the returnees who were confused.

"Crazy! What is that monster?"

"Report it quickly! Report to the alliance!"

The incarnations that felt my status were running away. I thought this had worked out better. Flying Fox asked, "B-Brother. Are you the leader of our group?"

I nodded and the returnees exclaimed, "Oh my god, we have a constellation among us…"

There were 10 returnees gathered around me. There were five from a medieval planet and three from Murim. The remaining two were from other areas. I gazed at their faces one by one and started talking.

"I don't know where you came from or your purpose for coming back." The nervous returnees were looking at me. "There is one certain thing. If this scenario fails, we will all die."

Some of the returnees belatedly opened the scenario window.

"You can't meet your loved ones or acquaintances, nor can you step on your hometown. We will be remembered as 'disasters' to the people of Earth."

The returnees who argued with me and the returnees who were deeply shocked. They seemed to be coming to their senses one by one. Some returnees saw themselves in the glass of the broken buildings.

"The reason they attacked us…"

"It isn't just our appearance. There were returnees who were summoned before us."

Some returnees came back because they missed their homes while others came back to destroy their homes. They threatened Earth's well-being and perhaps it was currently happening in other places. I declared with confidence, "You shouldn't fight. It will only cause ruin."

"Why don't we tell them that we don't intend to fight?"

"It is doubtful if they will believe it and it is also hard to communicate our words. Our words won't be properly conveyed to them until the end of the scenario."

The returnees' expressions darkened. "Do you have any plans?"

"Avoid combat as much as possible. Make it a top priority to leave a mark on a base. Once we clear this scenario, we can escape from being disasters."

Fortunately, I was able to communicate with this group. There was Flying Fox so if I was lucky, I would be able to complete the scenario without much conflict. However, things didn't work out so easily, just as in all scenarios.

"Alliance! The Busan Alliance!"

Along with the shouts, people approached through the crowd of incarnations that split apart. At this moment, I heard the distant sound of boats in my ears. There was a faint saltiness in the breeze from Haeundae.

[The 'Fourth Wall' is shimmering faintly.]

12 boats appeared on the sandy beach of Haeundae. Two people leapt from the front boat.

"The admiral has come!"

"The Insect King!"

I once again realized that a lot of time has passed. Some things had changed and some hadn't changed. The girl with the cap on her head was still wearing her distinctive hoodie but she no longer wore a uniform skirt.

The boy with the insect net still had his distinctive, fierce eyes but his features were more pronounced and he was taller. At the very least, he couldn't stick to my thighs anymore.

"Kid, do you want to do it or should I?

"We will decide by tossing a coin."

I missed them. I really missed them. I wanted to say this. The pure white sand sparkled and I knew I had to run away, but I couldn't move my feet.

[The constellation 'Demon King of Salvation' is looking at his companions.]

Maybe I had hope. The others were different but they would definitely recognize me. Perhaps I wanted to believe that.

[The scenario penalty has distorted the indirect message.]

The next moment, an indirect message emerged in the air.

[The 'Ugly Squid' is provoking the incarnation 'Lee Jihye'.]

Lee Jihye stared at me. "Kid, I will kill that squid."

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* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)
* Official novel illustration (canonical)

Chapter 302: Ep. 57 - Glorious Return, III

Lee Jihye was holding the Duke of Loyalty and Warfare's sword in her hand. It wasn't the Double Dragon Swords that Lee Jihye of the 1863rd round had but the performance was excellent. Maybe she took it from a museum somewhere…

"Where is the squid?" She asked the baffled returnees.

"Jihye. Stop! It's me!" I shouted desperately but my mouth didn't open. On Lee Jihye's side, it looked like I was screaming and waving my tentacles.

"Ugh, disgusting squid. Die!" Lee Jihye's blade flashed as she ran towards me.

…This was vaguely similar to the 1863rd round. Lee Jihye's blade narrowly grazed the top of my head. My hair was severed and Lee Gilyoung called out.

"Do a good job noona! Cut the big tentacles instead of the small ones!"

"Shut up!"

Somehow my hair looked like tentacles to the other side. They didn't know it was me but I couldn't help feeling sad.

I warned the returnees who were retreating nervously. "Everyone, don't attack! I'll take care of it!"

Fortunately, it was comforting that the returnees listened to me. Flying Fox's confused voice was heard. "I'll help you anytime."

Flying Fox was a returnee who was pretty outstanding in the 2nd Murim. If an unavoidable situation happened then I could borrow his help. How could I let Lee Jihye know of my existence?

"Cut the squid!"

In this scenario, my 'spoken language' wasn't conveyed to Lee Jihye. However, originally human communication wasn't just through spoken language.

"What? Don't move strangely!"

I activated Way of the Wind and started writing on the ground. Lines were drawn on the ground as I avoided Lee Jihye's sword. The returnees behind me noticed my intentions and let out exclamations.

In fact, I didn't know if this would work or not. The original novel didn't cover these types of communication possibilities in detail. The question was, would Lee Jihye notice my intentions?

"What? Is it writing on the ground?"

Fortunately, Lee Gilyoung was quick to notice and understood my intentions first. Lee Jihye paused and looked down at the ground. There was a note left by my dazzling footsteps. The handwriting was bad but it wasn't illegible.

–I am Kim Dokja.

This was the sentence that I wrote. By the way.

[The scenario penalty has distorted your writing.]

…The penalty was applied to this? The Fourth Wall read the distorted sentence on behalf of Lee Jihye.

「I am a good look ing squid.」

[The character 'Lee Jihye' has used Demon Slaying Lv. 10!]

Lee Jihye's eyes turned red as she started to accelerate towards me. She was much faster than before and this made it hard for me to dodge. I tried to wave my coat in a sign of surrender but all my efforts were in vain due to the scenario penalty.

[The 'Ugly Squid' is provoking the incarnation 'Lee Jihye'.]

"Die!"

I had a slight headache. If these hallucinations continued, my message would never be delivered over there.

…It would be best just to suppress them. However, I didn't want to do that. Maybe something had changed in me after the 1863rd round.

「At that time, something popped up in the head of the good-looking squid.」

Ah, wait. If this was the case…? I thought for a moment before deciding to do it. No matter how the scenario distorted my language, it couldn't distort it this much.

[The constellation 'Demon King of Salvation' has sponsored 91 coins to the incarnation 'Lee Jihye'.]

Something that couldn't be distorted.

[The scenario penalty has distorted the indirect message.]

[The 'Ugly Squid' has sponsored 91 coins to the incarnation 'Lee Jihye'.]

It was precisely the coin number. Lee Jihye frowned at the sudden donation from the squid. "…What?"

Come on Jihye, please.

[The 'Ugly Squid' has sponsored 91 coins to the incarnation 'Lee Jihye'.]

"Do you think I won't attack you if you give me this?"

[The 'Ugly Squid' has sponsored 91 coins to the incarnation 'Lee Jihye'.]

"Don't be so annoying! I dislike coins that aren't in units of 100!"

…Really? Then what about this?

[The 'Ugly Squid' has sponsored 9,158 coins to the incarnation 'Lee Jihye'.]

For the first time, Lee Jihye's attacks stopped. She didn't understand anything. It was just because the amount of sponsored coins had increased.

Lee Gilyoung asked, "Why did you suddenly stop noona?"

"No, it keeps giving me coins."

"Coins?"

The surprised Lee Gilyoung glanced at me. "Is it a constellation?"

"What constellation will have a modifier like the Ugly Squid?"

There was one. No, not me. It wasn't a squid but there was someone with a similar modifier. Now my modifier had changed… damn, why was I explaining this?

Lee Jihye hesitated as she stared at me with uncertain eyes. "Why does it keep giving 91 coins?"

"91 coins?"

"Yes. Then he gave me 9,185 coins at the end."

"9,185 coins is quite a lot. Is it a hidden scenario? Or maybe something meaningful…"

I thought this was my only opportunity.

[The 'Ugly Squid' has sponsored 7,942 coins to the incarnation 'Lee Jihye'.]

Lee Gilyoung looked shocked at my coins baptism.

"7,942? Perhaps…"

The children's eyes were shaking. I watched the clear eyes and was deeply moved. Yes, that's it children. It's me. Kim Dokja.

[The constellation 'Maritime War God' doubts your identity.]

[Some constellations on the Korean Peninsula are curious about your identity.]

Then an unexpected constellation entered the channel.

[The constellation 'God of Wine and Ecstasy' has entered the channel.]

[The constellation 'God of Wine and Ecstasy' has noticed your identity!]

God of Wine and Ecstasy, Dionysus. Speaking of which, it was Dionysus who told me about this '7942'. I thought things might work out better than I expected. If it was this constellation, he might decipher the message I sent to the children.

[The constellation 'God of Wine and Ecstasy' claimed the number '91' to be a type of numerical play!]

My heart was pounding. Dionysus' guess was right. The number, which was read as 'ninety-one', was my code to the children.

9 (Gu) 1 (One). Guwon (Salvation).

Fortunately, Dionysus seemed to understand what I was saying. Now Dionysus just needed to tell them that I was the Demon King of Salvation…

[The constellation 'God of Wine and Ecstasy' says the squid must be an intelligent squid.]

I looked up at the sky. Lee Gilyoung cried out happily. "It is a hidden piece. Will it give coins every time a tentacle is cut?"

[The constellation 'God of Wine and Ecstasy' is nodding.]

Once this scenario was over, I would smash Olympus.

Lee Jihye cried out, "I will catch it. Hey Gilyoung, you take half!"

The tentacle that Lee Jihye ran along was my arm.

"It's really nimble. Noona, cut that big tentacle there first!"

That was my leg.

"Ah, I'm annoyed. I'll just cut it from the middle."

That… couldn't happen. The moment I was about to liberate my 'status,' there was a dragon's roar. The force caused the returnees to momentarily flinch.

I looked up at the sky and saw the black dragon covering it. There was a nostalgic face. Like Lee Jihye and Lee Gilyoung… this child had grown a lot.

"You're always late, Shin Yoosung! Don't rush around on your own!"

Only the plump cheeks proved that this girl was the child I remembered. Shin Yoosung on the chimera dragon landed on the ground. Shin Yoosung glanced to this side and asked Lee Jihye, "You haven't finished it yet? I told you not to take too long."

"I'm trying but it is a strange disaster."

"Strange?"

"That squid over there."

Shin Yoosung stared at me.

"It keeps giving me coins. I feel bad…"

Shin Yoosung kept watching me.

[The constellation 'Demon King of Salvation' is looking at his incarnation.]

I slowly went up to her.

"Shit! Don't approach suddenly!" Despite Lee Jihye's threat, I kept moving forward. I couldn't help moving forward.

"The Beast Master has come!"

"Okay, we can kill them now!"

The emergence of Shin Yoosung caused the incarnations who fled to the periphery of the shore to ran back across the white sands. There were the sounds of weapons colliding all over the place. The courageous incarnations were aiming blades towards me and the returnees.

In fact, a real hidden piece was concealed in the 45th scenario. If our group could clear the scenario without having a single victim…

Flying Fox shouted as he was pushed back with the returnees. "Brother! We can't hold out long! I don't know what you're trying to do but do it quickly!"

Human beings were people who didn't even trust fellow humans. Then how could they be friends with a disaster?

"Die tentacled monsters!"

A race that tried to dominate what was similar to them while excluding what was different from them. My appearance was reflected in their eyes. I was just a tentacled monster to them.

「'Maybe there is another way'.」

Yoo Joonghyuk in the original novel took this 'returnee route' several times. However, Yoo Joonghyuk had never once accomplished this hidden piece. To be precise, he couldn't accomplish it.

「'Even if it is a bit hard, if I had been able to find another way…'」

Everyone who took the 'returnee path' walked the road of regret. Thus, I knew his failure. All the ways I could fail were the roads he had already walked.

Now Yoo Joonghyuk left for a road that didn't exist in the original. It was a world where the possibility of countless failures was open again.

[The 'Fourth Wall' is shimmering faintly.]

Thus, I couldn't lose either.

[The constellation 'Maritime War God' is looking at you closely.]

[The constellation 'Bald General of Justice' is looking at you closely.]

[The constellation 'God of Wine and Ecstasy' is looking at you carefully.]

"What are you doing all of a sudden?"

"Jihye noona, be careful!"

Lee Jihye's blade flew towards me as I moved forward. I didn't avoid it this time.

Blood from my unprotected skin flowed onto my coat.

She didn't know I wouldn't avoid it and the startled Lee Jihye's eyes widened. The other incarnations rushed through the gap towards me. In a moment, my surroundings were filled with the weapons of the incarnations. The number of tears on my coat started to increase. I took some attacks, blocked some attacks and kept moving forward.

There was a girl at the end of the road. The child who was my first incarnation. There was Shin Yoosung who was supposed to be a 'disaster' like me. The child was watching me.

I went through the road and approached the child. One step, another step. I walked at a steady pace to not frighten the child. I didn't care if my blood was splattered or my flesh was torn. I didn't release any status to raise her vigilance or take out a weapon to pose a threat.

The child's face was right in front of my nose. If the destruction hadn't happened, she would be at an age to enter middle school. The child grew up this way but I had been away from her for too long. A sharp sensation pierced my chest and I dropped my head.

[The 'Ugly Squid' is looking at the incarnation 'Shin Yoosung'.]

I suddenly felt funny. Maybe I was better off as an ugly squid.

The words of Secretive Plotter crossed my mind.

[What if the ending they wanted was to die with you there? Do you still want to save them?]

[It isn't salvation. It is a curse.]

I was arrogant. My longing was just my longing. There was no guarantee that my feelings would be shared by my party members. The Kim Dokja they remembered was just a selfish constellation. Forcing a goal at will, forcing them to live and forcing wounds on them. I was a colleague who wasn't around when they needed me most.

「 Then why is this child crying? 」

Lee Jihye and Lee Gilyoung lowered their weapons and the incarnations stopped attacking. As everyone stared at us, I knelt slowly towards my incarnation. It might be because I wanted to show respect to my child who grew up brilliantly alone or to seek forgiveness for all the times I wasn't there.

"I'm back, Yoosung."

My words wouldn't be delivered.

[Your incarnation is looking at you.]

My incarnation slowly stretched out her hand and laid her little hand on my head.

Chapter 303: Ep. 57 - Glorious Return, IV

The texture of the hand was like a feather on my head. Something hard deep inside my heart crumpled. Perhaps she recognized me.

She looked up and Shin Yoosung's clear eyes could be seen. "…Ahjussi?"

After a while, I was flying in the air on the chimera dragon. To be exact, it wasn't just me but the other returnees who had a similar appearance. Four on the legs, two on the wings, three on the tail and… me. A total of 10 returnees rode the dragon and flew to Seoul.

I spoke to encourage the returnees who had motion sickness. "Seoul is a little bit further. Have strength, everybody."

"Ugh, I could've run faster…" Flying Fox grumbled.

"It's safer to go by air. There might be unknown risks."

"Well… I guess if Brother is saying this. By the way, is that Brother's child?"

He seemed to be asking about Shin Yoosung and I nodded. "Yes, well… it is similar."

She was my incarnation and it was true that she was special like my child.

"…Huh, you must've had a hard time at a young age. What about your wife?"

I wasn't married in the first place. Somehow, he understood my silence and Flying Fox looked at me with sympathetic eyes. I turned my head and other returnees had a similar expression.

"Tsk tsk, too bad…"

"Well, let's do out best now. After this scenario, we can meet our families."

"Brother! Have strength!"

These sentiments were best directed for the returnees who had family or lovers. In any case, things were going better than I expected. Rather…

"What are you so nervous about? Can't you listen quietly?"

At Lee Jihye's words, the returnees all shut their mouths. As if she still couldn't believe it, Lee Jihye glanced at me and told Shin Yoosung, "It will be your fault if things go wrong. Don't you know?"

Shin Yoosung nodded.

A few dozen minutes ago, Shin Yoosung had declared to Lee Jihye and Lee Gilyoung. "I think the squid is Dokja ahjussi."

Lee Jihye, who cut my hair, had a wide open mouth while Lee Gilyoung, who wanted to cut my leg, stiffened. Needless to say, the reactions of the two people seemed the same.

"…This is Dokja ahjussi?"

"Hyung can't be a squid, you idiot!"

Shin Yoosung cried out, "Really! It is really Dokja ahjussi!"

We had been flying for dozens of minutes but the argument was still continuing.

"You are sick again… Gilyoung, how many times is it now?"

"Five to six times."

A breeze blew against our faces. Shin Yoosung sat beside me and sighed like she was upset.

"Ahjussi…"

[The demon king 'Demon King of Salvation' is proving his existence.]

[The indirect message is distorted by the scenario penalty.]

[The Ugly Squid is waving his own suckers.]

Shin Yoosung nodded and exclaimed triumphantly. "Look! It really is ahjussi!"

Thank you. I was grateful but I didn't know why it was so complicated.

Lee Jihye sighed, "What will you do if he isn't Dokja ahjussi?"

"That…"

"Bringing all these disasters to Seoul, what if something goes wrong?"

"Even if it isn't Dokja ahjussi…"

Shin Yoosung bit her lip before saying. "Sangah unni told me. There might be disasters who aren't enemies."

"…There has never been a case so far."

"This might be the first time."

Fortunately, Yoo Sangah had communicated my words to the party members. In the 45th scenarios, returnees turned into disasters and some of them weren't enemies.

"The level of Sangah unni's Interpreter skill is high. Maybe we can communicate this time. We have to try, even if things go wrong."

Little by little, hope emerged. In any case, I just needed to get to Seoul. There was a moment of silence between the party members. For a while, there was only the sound of wind blowing. I spoke to Shin Yoosung.

'Yoosung'.

[Your language is distorted by the scenario penalty.]

[The Ugly Squid is attracting attention.]

Shin Yoosung stared at me. "Yes, ahjussi."

'You don't have to convince people that I'm Kim Dokja'.

[Your language is distorted by the scenario penalty.]

[The Ugly Squid is waving his ten legs.]

"Huh? Ahjussi…"

I didn't answer. I didn't have the confidence to answer correctly.

[The Ugly Squid has a gloomy expression.]

I silently stared at Lee Jihye.

「It is a lie. It isn't possible.」

Lee Jihye's thoughts entered my head. From the moment I met the party members, I activated Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint.

「Dokja ahjussi…」

Some emotions weren't conveyed through language. There were fragmented sentences and broken off words. Sometimes they couldn't be left that way because I couldn't look properly.

My presence is an indelible wound on them. The sense of helplessness caused by their companion dying in front of them. The despair of nothing being able to do anything, only watch as someone sacrificed themselves.

A small keyring hanging from Lee Jihye's sword shook. I knew the identity of this keyring. Lee Jihye had long been a scarred sword demon.

Lee Jihye smiled as if trying to hide her feelings. "Hey, take a good look. This is the real Dokja ahjussi, right?"

"…"

Shin Yoosung didn't answer. Maybe she was feeling my emotions as well. This was the relationship between a constellation and incarnation. We understood more than was spoken.

Lee Jihye laughed mischievously. "Hey, why aren't you saying anything? Are you not confident?"

"That isn't it…"

"I knew Shin Yoosung would do this again!"

Lee Gilyoung interrupted. "Noona, she did this before! She saw the frog and said that Dokja ahjussi must've come back—"

"I'll kill you…"

"Don't you remember? We were almost killed because of you."

Lee Jihye nodded. "…Certainly, that happened."

"There is a collection at your house. Frog Kim Dokja, Tentacled Disaster Kim Dokja, Elephant Monster who Almost Became Kim Dokja…"

"Die…"

"By the way, can you give me Frog Kim Dokja?"

"This is really…!"

The chimera dragon flapped its wings wildly and suddenly stopped in the air.

Lee Jihye screamed, "Waaah! What's happening?"

A series of airships were blocking our way. It wasn't just one or two. A coin flying boat that could only be purchased after the 40th scenario. The decks of the ships had 'GG" written on the

…I think I knew their identity.

–Busan Alliance, why did you come here?

A high-pressure voice was heard from an airship. Memories of the original novel came to mind.

Lee Gilyoung grumbled, "Why can't we come?"

In the original novel, after the 25th scenario, the Korean Peninsula was divided into several regional alliances such as the Busan Alliance, the Daegu Alliance, the Seoul Alliance…

Most of the alliances were centred around incarnations with powerful sponsors and if I remembered correctly, there was one such person in the Gyeonggi region.

–Disasters can't enter the Gyeonggi area. Leave the disasters behind right now.

The Gyeonggi Alliance. It was called the Gyeonggi Alliance but most of the members weren't from Gyeonggi. They were predators who only moved for the benefits of the group. They were one of Yoo Joonghyuk's headaches in several rounds. It was because the head of the alliance was one of the 10 Evils.

–I will fire if you don't leave in five seconds. Five.

The troubled Lee Jihye rose from her seat. "Ah, I can't help fighting if you come out like this."

In the original development, the present party members wouldn't be able to deal with the Gyeonggi Alliance with an individual force. However, the third round was a lot different from the original.

This Lee Jihye didn't survive because of luck. "I am the leader of the Busan Alliance, Lee Jihye."

Blue flames soared from Lee Jihye's blade. I watched the spectacular wave of magic power and was truly amazed.

Jihye, you really tried.

It was an ether blade. Lee Jihye was able to implement a technique that only those in Murim could use.

–Admiral! This isn't the sea! At least in the sky, our Gyeonggi Alliance…!

"That remains to be seen."

Lee Jihye laughed and leapt forward with his blade pointed backwards. Suddenly, there was an explosion from the other side of the airships. The fleet was cut in half along with the soundwave. Lee Jihye stared at Lee Gilyoung like she was dumbfounded.

"Is that Titano? Why are you intervening?"

"…My Titano is dead."

The chimera dragon hadn't moved yet so it wasn't done by Shin Yoosung. Less than a minute later, all the alliance's airships were blown up. There was a blazing inferno as someone jumped towards this side.

Lee Jihye raised her blade cautiously. Not long after, the wariness lightened. It was because the person was known. The thoughtful Shin Yoosung yelled at

Lee Jihye, "Jihye unni! Did you tell

Heewon-ssi already?"

"That… I texted her a while ago. I just didn't know if she would come this soon…" Lee Jihye smiled apologetically.

"It is great that we're gathering after a long time! That is either Dokja ahjussi or a squid party. Heewon unni—!"

I gazed at the welcome face that was approaching and my heart ached.

–If you were going to do this anyway, why have you been preparing us for the past few days? Why give me these skills?

–I told you how to deal with the Sasquatch in the 28th scenario.

I could see it the moment I saw Jung Heewon. She kept everything I said. Then she became stronger than I expected.

–Shit! Don't talk nonsense! I can't let you go! Don't go alone again! Please!

Jung Heewon dressed in a special suit emerged from the thick smoke and landed on the chimera dragon's back. The Sword of Judgment emitted a light as it cried out wildly. Jung Heewon glanced at the squid before asking, "Who is Kim Dokja?"

The frightened returnees held their breaths in unison. Shin Yoosung realized that something wasn't right and quickly came forward.

"I-I don't know who ahjussi is just yet. I just got the feeling of ahjussi…"

Jung Heewon laughed. "I see. Then you're going to see Sangah-ssi?"

"Yes, I wanted to go see Sangah unni and ask for her opinion…"

"There is no need. I can tell if he is Kim Dokja or not."

"Huh?"

[The character 'Jung Heewon' is preparing to activate Judgment Time!]

"I'll see soon. If he is the real Dokja-ssi, the squid will survive." An almost crazy magic power nestled in Jung Heewon's blade. "Or he will go to hell at my hands."

It was a horrifying will-o'-the-wisp. Shin Yoosung realized that something was wrong and shouted, "Ahjussi! Run!"

The moment the chimera dragon howled, I jumped down from its back with the other returnees. There was a deafening collision as I used Way of the Wind and pulled the returnees one by one.

In any case, the goal was around the corner. Once I arrived at Yeouido, I could prove myself without fighting. The 10 returnees, including me, joined hands and made a formation in the air. It was all prearranged in advance.

"Flying Fox!"

"Leave it to me!"

Flying Fox, the fastest man in Murim, started to make a rapid journey by repeatedly stepping through the air. He used Walk on Snow with No Traces while supported by the momentum created by Way of the Wind.

We rotated like a pinwheel and started to accelerate. We entered Seoul through the sky and a system message was heard.

[The 'target base' is very close.]

I could see Yeouido in the distance. There was a huge monument I had to leave a mark on.

At that moment, I felt time and space creaking. Strong alarm bells were telling me that I shouldn't go to this place. It was an almost instinct-based choice to change the course of the party.

Then by one hair's breadth a sword with a tremendous destructive force swept through the sky. The black sword crushed the ceiling of the sky and disappeared as cracks formed. It would've been a terrifying blow if I was hit. As far as I knew, there was only one incarnation on the Korean Peninsula with this technique.

I raised my head and met a cool gaze. As if the second hand stopped, time flowed very slowly. A huge Black Heavenly Demon Sword was inserted into the ground. The incarnation who was stronger than anyone I knew and with the strongest determination was waiting for me.

"Yoo Joonghyuk."

Standing there was the supreme king of this world.

Chapter 304: Ep. 57 - Glorious Return, V

Why was Yoo Joonghyuk here? I was confused as I guided the returnees to safely land on the ground. In front of the monument, Yoo Joonghyuk scattered a heavy status and the returnees nervously stepped back. Flying Fox asked, "Brother, this person…?"

"Get back and I'll talk to him." I signalled to Flying Fox and slowly approached Yoo Joonghyuk. After all, our aim was to leave a marker on the base. The scenario was completed once we accomplished this.

The moment I got within a few dozen metres of Yoo Joonghyuk, the momentum flowing from Yoo Joonghyuk's body changed. I gulped and opened my mouth. "Yoo Joonghyuk."

Understandably, my voice wouldn't be delivered properly.

"Get lost. Please."

Yoo Joonghyuk didn't move. Yoo Joonghyuk would've become stronger, just as I become stronger after going to the 1863rd round. Based on what I felt, I couldn't guarantee the outcome. Then there was only one way.

[The exclusive skill, 'Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint' has been activated!]

This way, my body would pass out and I would transfer to Yoo Joonghyuk…

[The exclusive skill, 'Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint' is cancelled.]

[Your complex understanding of this person is insufficient!]

[There isn't enough comprehension to understand the current state of this person.]

…What? I stepped back with surprise. This was the first time. This was definitely the third round. It wasn't the 1863rd round that I didn't know well.

The Yoo Joonghyuk in front of me felt strange. What happened in the last three years?

"Brother! Avoid it!"

If I hadn't been pushed by Flying Fox, I would've been cut by Yoo Joonghyuk's blade. Flying Fox exclaimed. "Let's do it together! I think he's dangerous!"

"…It isn't possible."

"Why? Do you know him?"

I stared at Flying Fox. "He is my colleague."

The words that came out of my mouth were funny. I felt I could understand Yoo Joonghyuk's feelings in the past.

Yoo Joonghyuk and I didn't fit well. Our personalities were different and the way we carried out the scenarios differed. The way we communicated with others was also different. Nevertheless, we saved each other's lives on a number of occasions and arrived here.

"…Thus, he can't be killed."

I put my hand into my coat. Just as Yoo Joonghyuk had his own beliefs, I had my own beliefs.

[Blade of Faith is activated!]

It wasn't my Unbroken Faith. This blade was much glossier than my sword. It was the one that belonged to the 1863rd round Han Sooyoung. The ether that rose from the Blade of Faith was a deep black.

[The rating of this item doesn't match the fairness level of the scenario.]

[The item's stats are partially adjusted.]

The Unbroken Faith of the 95th scenario that was refined using Han Sooyoung's method.

Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes were shaking slightly. I couldn't see what I looked like now. Perhaps the ether blade being swung was like a giant tentacle.

"Stop it, Yoo Junghyuk. I have no intention of fighting."

How could I not fight against Yoo Joonghyuk? How could I tell him that I was Kim Dokja? The moment I avoided Yoo Joonghyuk's blade, I had a flash of a thought.

…Wait a minute, perhaps? I couldn't be sure. In addition, the effect would be distorted because of the scenario penalty. Still, it was better than doing nothing.

[You have triggered the item Midday Tryst.]

[The connection with the current target is good.]

[Due to the scenario penalty, the item username has been changed to 'Ugly Squid'.]

I immediately sent a message to Yoo Joonghyuk.

–Yoo Joonghyuk! I am Kim Dokja! Don't cut me!

The Midday Tryst. It was an item used for communication when Yoo Joonghyuk had died one day. Surprisingly, the item was still valid.

[The scenario penalty has distorted the message sent.]

–Come on, sunfish.

…Son of a bitch. The distortion went this far? I was slightly vigilant as I watched Yoo Joonghyuk. The contents were strange but the fact that Yoo Joonghyuk received the message was important.

The Midday Tryst was an item that could only be used between set people. The name might've changed but the quick-witted Yoo Joonghyuk should guess my identity just by receiving the message.

–Yoo Joonghyuk! I said stop! I am Kim Dokja!

[The scenario penalty has distorted the message sent.]

–I am the king of the sea.

Yoo Joonghyuk stared at me for a moment and slowly lowered his sword. I took a deep breath. Did he finally notice?

A huge stream of air flowed from Yoo Joonghyuk's body. His whole body was covered with a blue light before emitting a golden torrent. Yoo Joonghyuk released his transcendent power.

I panicked and asked, "…Yoo Joonghyuk?"

My head was pounding. If I was Yoo Joonghyuk, I would've noticed my existence just by receiving a message. Then why? The moment the two swords collided, my body was bounced back. There was a shock that seemed to break my wrist and a single question rose.

「 Why was Midday Tryst activated? 」

Midday Tryst was a temporary item. After a certain time elapsed, the period of use had to be extended by paying additional coins. Yet Midday Tryst was activated without any delay. In other words, someone had been extending that period of time.

[The character 'Yoo Joonghyuk' is telling the giant story 'Demon Realm's Spring'.]

Finally, Yoo Joonghyuk opened the giant story. At this moment, I realized. Now Yoo Joonghyuk was sincere.

"Dammit…!"

I didn't back down and faced him.

[Giant Story 'Demon Realm's Spring' is being told.]

I wouldn't lose if it was the same big story. In the first place, I was the best speaker for this story. I aimed the status of a demon king towards Yoo Joonghyuk who was running away.

[The constellation 'Demon King of Salvation' is opening the status of a demon king!]

A huge fortress was seen in the centre of Seoul. It was my industrial complex that was once located in the 73rd Demon Realm. It was sent to Seoul with the help of Secretive Plotter. I would never lose as long as the industrial complex was here.

[The demonic energy in Seoul is raising your status!]

Black wings tore from my spine. The dark attributed poured into the ether blade of Unbroken Faith. The transcendent sword and Blade of Faith clashed and caused a roar. The first conflict was intense.

Yoo Joonghyuk and I were both pushed back a step and at the same time, we wielded our swords to each other again. Unbelievable explosions occurred as the sword and sword hit each other. We struck, struck and struck each other again. We fought desperately as if it was the only conversation we could share with each other.

I couldn't believe it. I knew that Yoo Joonghyuk was strong. I expected him to become stronger in the meantime.

However, I didn't expect him to be this strong. I couldn't win against Yoo Joonghyuk despite using Way of the Wind and Electrification. Yoo Joonghyuk's expression didn't change as he stood there like a solid wall.

I couldn't help smiling. I thought this whole thing was a misunderstanding. I thought Yoo Joonghyuk attacked me because he didn't recognize me.

Nevertheless, it wasn't like that. Throughout the fight, Yoo Joonghyuk didn't say a word. He was a born swordsman and had written his story with the sword for countless years. Thus, I could see it.

[Your understanding of the character 'Yoo Joonghyuk' has increased!]

Yoo Joonghyuk recognized me and knew I would come here. I didn't know how it was possible but it was obvious. He was waiting for me here. The battle was temporarily interrupted by a child who jumped in the way.

"Stop it! Joonghyuk ahjussi! Stop it!"

It was Shin Yoosung. The small child stood in front of me and started weeping.

"This squid is Dokja ahjussi!"

In the end, I remained silent. I looked around and saw the party members gathered. Jung Heewon's expression was stiff, Lee Jihye looked worried and Lee Gilyoung was excited. I could feel eyes looking at me from the top of the Demon Realm's fortress.

…It was a person I had long resented at one time.

The inhabitants of the Demon Realm were also seen. They were people I met in the 73rd Demon Realm. Aileen was there, Mark as well. Perhaps she ran from a distance as the panting Han Sooyoung looked down at me from a nearby high-rise building.

The history of my life was gathered in one place. However, none of them interfered in the fight.

Yoo Joonghyuk stopped before raising his blade again. It was like he didn't hear Shin Yoosung's words.

Shin Yoosung shouted again, "Uh… t-that is actually a lie! That isn't Dokja ahjussi! I-It is just a disaster I tamed! A monster I tamed! I'll control him well so please forgive me!"

"Yoosung."

I stretched out a hand and placed it on Shin Yoosung's shoulder. Then Jung Heewon pulled Shin Yoosung back with her. Jung Heewon's steadfast eyes were shaking. At this moment, I realized something.

Yes, it was like this. I lowered my head and Jung Heewon avoided my gaze.

[Your understanding of the character 'Jung Heewon' has rapidly increased!]

I looked back and saw Yoo Joonghyuk approaching. Yoo Joonghyuk was gathering the energy of the Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship. The ultimate technique was being prepared at the tip of Yoo Joonghyuk's blade.

I nodded. Yoo Joonghyuk probably had something he wanted to prove to me.

"Bring it on, Yoo Joonghyuk."

The moment I raised my sword, Yoo Joonghyuk and I clashed head on. There was a blinding glare right under my nose.

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' has entered the channel!]

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' has entered the channel!]

[Multiple constellations are entering the channel!]

The constellations felt our clash and entered the channel.

[The constellation 'King Heungmu the Great' is surprised at your status!]

[The constellation 'One-eyed Maitreya' is admiring the incarnation Yoo Joonghyuk.]

Some constellations were shocked to see Yoo Joonghyuk and I.

[The constellation 'Queen of the Darkest Spring' realizes something and is sighing.]

Some were surprised in a completely different sense. The sound of an explosion occurred again and I rolled across the ground. My eyes peered at the sky through the dust while gazes poured down on me. Laughter emerged. "…It is dirty."

I hadn't used all the means available to me but I didn't want to. It was a confrontation of pure power and I was pushed back by Yoo Joonghyuk. The sound of Yoo Joonghyuk's footsteps approaching was heard.

His Black Heavenly Demon Sword stabbed the ground right next to my head. Yoo Joonghyuk stared down at me with his distinctive eyes. I watched him and spoke,

"Take a look. Hey."

Yoo Joonghyuk didn't say anything but I could tell. Perhaps this was what Yoo Joonghyuk wanted to prove. This was Yoo Joonghyuk's last three years. This was what he really wanted to say.

I laughed. "I didn't take care of it."

The towering monument behind Yoo Joonghyuk was shining. The base that was the goal. One man was talking from the monument.

"Hey Brother! I just write here?"

The moment the surprised Yoo Joonghyuk turned around, Flying Fox moved his feet. He quickly kicked and carved a stylish marker on the monument. It was a phrase I told him in advance.

[The 163rd returnees group has cleared the scenario!]

My body was covered in smoke. To be exact, it wasn't just me but the other returnees. The appearance of the returnees was changing inside the smoke.

[You are no longer a disaster.]

In the pupils of my party members, my figure lying on the ground could be seen. Shin Yoosung burst into tears and ran over. I patted the child who was in my arms.

"It has been three years. Three years…"

Lee Gilyoung belatedly ran over and hugged my waist while crying.

"Hyung, I knew you were alive! I knew from the beginning that you were Dokja hyung!"

[You have met the clear conditions for Main Scenario 45 - Glorious Return!]

[The rewards for the scenario are being prepared.]

[You have met the progress conditions of the 46th main scenario!]

I hugged the children and slowly stood up. The top of the monument was clearly visible in the dusty sky. I pointed to the monument.

"It is a commemorative gift."

[The name of the nebula you belong to is officially announced.]

[The site of the nebula you belong to has been established.]

The marking on the monument was as followed:

–Kim Dokja's Company.

I arbitrarily decided the name of the nebula. The party members approaching this way looked at me in a dumbfounded manner. Lee Jihye has swollen eyes while Han Sooyoung sighed and shook her head. I watched them and wondered, "Are you going to join me?"

I could see the faces of the upcoming party members. One person, one person. They were all the people I wanted to see. The moment I opened my arms to the running group members, a stinging pain struck the back of my head. In my gradually blurring consciousness, I could see Jung Heewon's face.

"This man, lock him up."

Chapter 305: Ep. 58 - Context of the Constellations, I

During the past three years, Jung Heewon had changed a lot.

–Leader of the Chungcheong Alliance, Jung Heewon!

–The age of the Supreme King has passed! The strongest incarnation is Destroyer of Evil!

She had fan clubs and people in various media wanted to turn her story into a product. Any incarnation who used a sword would admire her. There were constellations who tried to get her to join their nebula.

Of course, it was a futile effort. Jung Heewon was the incarnation of a famous constellation in the Star Stream. The problem was that the famous constellation didn't appear in front of Jung Heewon for three years.

"I thought my sponsor was dead."

Her sponsor suddenly disappeared after the incident three years ago. Thus, Jung Heewon was forced to try harder than other incarnations. She had been trained by transcendents such as Breaking the Sky Sword Saint and Kyrgios every day. It was in order to not lag behind the party members or sacrifice anyone else.

"It would've been a lot less unfair if you were there."

Jung Heewon was really strong. Then in front of her strong self, the vanished sponsor once again appeared.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is silent.]

Jung Heewon sighed. "That… what are you saying to me just now?"

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is smiling.]

Jung Heewon didn't smile She quietly raised her hand to grip her sword.

[The incarnation 'Jung Heewon' is prepared to invoke Hour of Judgement on her sponsor!]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is surprised!]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' says that Hour of Judgement can only be used against the wicked.]

Jung Heewon replied, "I know."

Indirect messages poured out.

[Some constellations of the absolute good system have agreed with Jung Heewon's request.]

[The constellation 'Guardian of Youths and Travel' has agreed to the request.]

[The constellation 'Friend of Justice and Harmony' has agreed to the request.]

[The constellation 'Master of the Ark' has agreed to the request.]

[Some constellations of the absolute good system have opposed the request.]

[The activation of the skill is cancelled!]

Jung Heewon stared at the air with wide eyes.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is avoiding the eyes of her incarnation.]

Jung Heewon released her sword and sighed once again. In her head, the feelings of her sponsor were conveyed.

Sorrow and joy. Regret and guilt.

In fact, Jung Heewon knew why Uriel was detained for the past three years. It was miraculous that she was just confined in Eden after the events of the Demon King Selection.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' says she is sorry.]

However, she was still disappointed. Furthermore, her sponsor appeared for the first time in three years…

"If you want to see Dokja-ssi, why don't you go and see him yourself? You know he is at the top of the fortress."

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' says that it isn't possible to summon a symbolic body because the probation period isn't over yet.]

The worried Jung Heewon hesitated for a long time before opening her mouth. "…I understand. Instead, don't do anything weird."

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is greatly pleased!]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is asking if Kim Dokja is really imprisoned.]

"…Why do you like it?"

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is asking if Kim Dokja really became a squid.]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire'…]

"I'll go now and look directly."

Not long after, Jung Heewon arrived at the top of the fortress where Kim Dokja was trapped.

[This is a space where the Celestial Emperor's Sturdy Ward is enforced.]

[The incarnation 'Jung Heewon' is permitted to enter.]

The door opened and the interior of a lavish room appeared. It was a prison but it was a room worthy of being a suite in a five star hotel. There was a sumptuous feast on the dining table that could be eaten whenever a person was hungry and a king-size bed to help with sleep. On the side were a few fantasy novels published before the fall of the world. Come to think of it, Kim Dokja liked fantasy novels.

Jung Heewon tried one of them as a test. Title: The World After the Fall. Author: Sing Shangshong…

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is screaming!]

She turned her head and saw Kim Dokja sitting on a soft rocking chair. A catheter was plugged into his arm to feed him story packs.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is looking at the Demon King of Salvation.]

The pack also contained sleeping pills made by Lee Seolhwa. She came closer and could see Kim Dokja's face. At the gaze, Kim Dokja opened his eyes. "…Heewon-ssi?"

Jung Heewon didn't know that she was biting her lips. Kim Dokja's defenseless face that was weary from the hard times. A corner of her heart ached at the sight.

"This place…"

There were many things she wanted to say when she met Kim Dokja again. She wanted to be angry, she wanted to puke, she wanted to ask why the hell he did those things. Even so, all her emotions melted away after seeing Kim Dokja's face. These were her feelings or perhaps they were the feelings of her sponsor. Jung Heewon didn't know.

Jung Heewon controlled the amount of sleeping pills flowing through the catheter.

"The person who wants to see Dokja-ssi… no, it is an angel."

A white light shone around Jung Heewon's hand. It was a warm light reminiscent of an archangel. Jung Heewon raised Kim Dokja's body and laid him down on the bed. Not long after, Kim Dokja fell asleep with a light breathing sound. Jung Heewon's hand surrounded by the white light passed over Kim Dokja's head several times.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is looking at the Demon King of Salvation.]

It was a valuable emotion that couldn't be conveyed in words. In the meantime, Jung Heewon hadn't understood Uriel's companionship but somehow, she felt like she knew it a bit.

I had a long dream. The dream was a bit strange.

–The vitals check is good.

–There is a stable dose of the story pack.

Lee Seolhwa and Aileen's voices came and went like a hallucination.

–Hyung… um…

Sometimes I saw the faces of Lee Gilyoung and Shin Yoosung as they clung to my waist.

–Uwahhhh! Dokja-ssiiiii!

I heard Lee Hyunsung howling like a monster. Then…

At first glance, it seemed like my mother's face. I thought about it. If this was a dream, I would rather not wake up.

–Hey, he's going to wake up! Quickly get another dose of sleeping pills!

I listened to Han Sooyoung's loud voice and smiled. In other words, this dream was a play for only one person. Just like Ways of Survival was to me.

「In fact, he couldn't wake up anytime he wanted but Kim Dokja didn't do this.」

Thus, I decided to be the audience of the play.

「For the first time since the fall began, Kim Dokja slept comfortably.」

It was the first time I felt this way. My heart was always impatient. Now I could be protected by someone. There were people I could trust.

–Take a break, Dokja-ssi.

…Yes, there was still some time until the 46th scenario. The moment I made up my mind, a full sleep came over me.

* * *

Lee Gilyoung, who was caught by the collar, screamed. "Ah, noona! Do I have to go? I want to stay with Dokja hyung!"

"You have been with him long enough."

"Shin Yoosung was together with him for eight hours! I was only there for six hours!"

Lee Jihye gave some sweet honey to the complaining Lee Gilyoung. "These guys are offensive. You and Yoosung are the only ones who can deal with them. In addition, Dokja ahjussi is sleeping and you can meet him anytime."

"But…"

"Unni, we've almost arrived."

The chimera dragon started a sharp descent along with Shin Yoosung's words. The buildings of the Gyeonggi Alliance could be seen below. The reason the Busan Alliance came here was simple.

"…You really made a kingdom." The people treated as slaves were crying out with pain. Lee Jihye bit her lips and declared, "Kill them."

Lee Jihye pulled out her sword while Lee Gilyoung stepped forward. "Hey, Shin Yoosung. I'll handle it so you're out."

"Shut up, you didn't even recognize Dokja ahjussi."

"…Go, Titano-MKII!"

The moment Lee Gilyoung gave the command, the insect king unit wearing hard armour flew into the air. They were at least fourth grade insect kings.

"The enemy!"

Lee Jihye asked as she saw the scythe of a giant praying mantis cut the buildings.

"Didn't Titano die?"

"That was just Titano. This is Titano-MKII."

"What's the difference?"

An explosion occurred in the middle of the enemy's camp. It wasn't caused by Titano. The high-rise buildings that formed the main pillars of the Gyeonggi Alliance collapsed and there was a huge storm. The airships floating in the sky could be seen crashing down after being hit by something that was like black lightning.

Lee Jihye was dumbfounded. "We said we would take care of it…"

There was only a ruin in the place where the storm passed. A man was slaughtering the fleeing alliance members. It was Yoo Joonghyuk.

"W-Wait a minute! Wait! Stop Supreme King!" A man who appeared to be one of the leaders of the Gyeonggi Alliance hurriedly shouted, "You will be in trouble if you kill me now! We have a hostage on our side!"

Yoo Joonghyuk's sword stopped for the first time at the word 'hostage'. The man thought it worked and kept shouting, "Phew… the reason why the Moonlight Empress doesn't emerge from the top floor if the fortress is because her disease is worsening."

The confused Lee Jihye and Shin Yoosung glanced at each other.

"What is this brat talking about?"

"…The Moonlight Empress, Sangah unni?"

The man's words continued. "Haha, it took a long time to pierce the barrier of the Demon Realm but we did it!"

"What are you saying?"

"The elite forces of our alliance have penetrated the fortress while you were absent. In other words, the life of the Moonlight Empress is now in our hands. It was hard to break through but your colleague's life is now in our hands—"

"You pierced the wards?"

Yoo Joonghyuk's expression cracked for the first time. The facial expressions of the other party members shifted. Shin Yoosung asked,

"There isn't anything around Sangah unni's room?"

"Then that crazy guy is saying…"

At the same time, the group looked at Seoul.

* * *

At the same time, ten men penetrated the fortress of the industrial complex. They were all elite fighters of the Gyeonggi Alliance.

–It's here.

–Yes, that's correct.

–The Snacks Team, get started.

The members in charge of releasing the ward rushed at the order of the leader. One of the group members asked.

–What if the Black Flames Empress is present? Won't all of us be cut down?

It was only recently that the Black Flames Empress was renamed Black Flames Demon Ruler and the Moonlight Girl was renamed Moonlight Empress. It was due to the Seongnam Disaster that took place a year ago.

–The Black Flames Demon Ruler is away. The only one inside the room is the Moonlight Empress.

–Is it really okay for us to do this alone?

–There is a rumour that her illness is deep. It's no problem if she's alone.

A while later, the ward blocking the door was released.

–The ward has been lifted!

–Already? It was faster than I expected.

–Well, it is hard to penetrate from the inside but it is easy from outside.

–How funny. There was something like this?

–That's right. Really stupid…

They laughed as the ward was broken and the door opened.

–Shall we see the workmanship of the Moonlight Empress? Everybody, get ready to infiltrate!

The moment they touched the door handle, an unexpected message entered their ears.

[The constellation 'Black Sword Assassin' is giving a warning!]

[The constellation 'Hunter of the Dark Moon' is astounded!]

[The constellation 'Knight of the Frozen Heart' is convulsing.]

They were all the sponsors of the incarnations.

–What is this? My sponsor…

–D-Did you hear it as well?

Their curiosity didn't last for long. A formidable aura was felt from beyond the door. A huge aura they never encountered before was covering their body.

–Body…?

The elite members stiffened at the power that was on a different dimension. It was impossible.

"I was enjoying my rest but that isn't my fate."

A man in a white coat walked through the open door. The smiling man placed a hand on the shoulder of the leader.

"Everyone, thank you for bringing me out."

Chapter 306: Ep. 58 - Context of the Constellations, II

It took less than 30 seconds for the nine people to be lying on the ground.

"Kuock…"

I ignored the groan and wiped the blood off my hands. I used Character List but the answer came out without having to look.

"The Gyeonggi Alliance. Why did you come here?"

One of the bleeding bodies started melting down. It seemed to be a technique.

[The constellation 'Black Sword Assassin' is wary of you!]

[The constellation 'Hunter of the Dark Moon' questions the fairness of the scenario.]

I frowned towards the air as the messages died down. I thoroughly checked the routes of their movements. I saw someone flying and fleeing through a broken window. I saw the method of running through the air and knew who it was.

I thought they were mere members of the alliance but one of the 10 Evils was among them. The leader of the Gyeonggi Alliance, one of the 10 Evils Cho Jinchul. The guy who had a sponsor from Murim and was one of the problems of the original 45th scenario.

Of course, that was according to the original story. The person in front of me right now wasn't worth caring about. There were ranks among the 10 Evils and Cho Jinchul was one of the small fries. For the current party members, there were no incarnations on the Korean Peninsula who could be a match against them. Perhaps if it was the United States or India…

"This guy! Chase him!"

I saw some people chasing after the distant Cho Jinchul. Among them was the returnee Flying Fox who I brought with me. As the fugitive and pursuer engaged in a cat and mouse chase, the panoramic view of Seoul entered my vision.

I knew it was Seoul. In addition, it was the centre of the industrial complex. Through a contract with Secretive Plotter, the Industrial Complex was transferred to empty Seoul. As if the reality and fiction are combined and he realized that the world is watching, the landscape has changed and realized that. The bottom of the fortress had 'Yoo Joonghyuk - Kim Dokja Industrial Complex' engraved.

…Why was Yoo Joonghyuk first? I would change it later.

[The constellation 'Guardian of Youths and Travel' is looking at you.]

I looked up at the air. Guardian of Youths and Travel. I knew the owner of the modifier.

"Raphael."

An archangel of Eden, Raphael. Sparks flew in the air like Raphael was reacting. I thought I would hear from Eden soon. "I was just going to find you. I will give back…"

I remembered that I still had the symbolic body of Gabriel. Jophiel's confinement effect was over and it was time for Gabriel to wake up. By the way…

[The constellation 'Guardian of Youths and Travel' says that Gabriel has already been recovered.]

The lily had disappeared. Come to think of it, I remembered an archangel's hand passing over me when I was sleeping. Maybe one of the constellations of Eden had visited at that time. Since Jung Heewon's sponsor was Uriel then it was likely to be Uriel.

…By the way, what happened to Uriel? Why wasn't there an indirect message from her?

[The constellation 'Guardian of Youths and Travel' says that Uriel doesn't yet have authorization to speak in the channel.]

Ah, I see.

[The constellation 'Guardian of Youths and Travel' is curious about you.]

[The constellation 'Guardian of Youths and Travel' says that the red cosmos hasn't returned.]

At Raphael's message, I hesitated for a moment and opened my mouth. "The Commander of the Red Cosmos didn't come back with me."

Commander of the Red Cosmos, Jophiel. I wouldn't have been able to return to the third round without her help. "She wanted to remain in the other world line out of her own will."

There was a wild gust of wind.

[The constellation 'Guardian of Youths and Travel' distrusts your words!]

Raphael was furious. I calmly continued speaking. "If you use your ability, you know that I'm not a lie."

Not long after, the winds sweeping around slowly eased.

[The constellation 'Guardian of Youths and Travel' is looking at you.]

[The constellation 'Guardian of Youths and Travel' is asking you for clarification.]

"I will go there. The 46th scenario is ahead… we'll be able to talk soon."

I felt a strange change in Raphael's gaze on me. The archangel knew the contents of the scenario.

"I will go to Eden as soon as the scenario is over."

[The constellation 'Guardian of Youths and Travel' will wait for your answer.]

After the message, Raphael's energy in the area completely disappeared. The status flooding the area was gone and I felt bitter. In the meantime, I had accumulated many stories and became quite strong. I could suppress low to mid-grade constellations and it was almost impossible to find a stronger presence among the constellations. Yet the archangel's status was still too high.

Guardian of Youths and Travel, Raphael. A powerful adversary who took down Demon King Asmodeus.

「Kim Dokja quietly clenched his fists and repeated.」

I still had a long way to go. However, I didn't have to rush. I was doing well enough right now. That reminded me of Asmodeus… no, Department Head Han. So many things had happened when I was gone. There weren't only one or two things to wonder about. I checked the system messages first.

[You have missed the dokkaebi communication.]

[Sender: Senior Dokkaebi Bihyung.]

There was a message from Bihyung. I thought it was strange that Bihyung hadn't made a fuss when I came back… he expressed his concerns in this message. I opened the screen and manipulated the message window. The message was long but the contents itself was simple.

–I'm sorry that I couldn't come. I am busy with some things. I will go see you once things are over.

These were roughly the contents of the long message.

–By the way, don't you care about your baby?

The news I was curious about appeared at the end of the message.

–I have Biyoo. Well, she is also my child. You left her in front of the portal and she was almost taken away by the wenny people.

I had been worried because Biyoo didn't appear.

–You will be a bit surprised when she comes back. Look forward to it.

Bihyung's message was over. I felt a bit uncomfortable but I was relieved that Biyoo was with Bihyung.

Then let's move. I piled up the bodies in one place and decided to find the party members.

.

.

.

Dozens of minutes passed. I was wandering along the road. Why was this factory so wide? I scratched my head and looked around but I couldn't tell where I was located. It wasn't too late but I should purchase the Reading Map or Pathfinding skill.

"Excuse me, is anybody there?"

I had a tendency to get lost in the 'first building I visited'. When I entered elementary school and middle school for the first time, when I got my first placement and when I joined Mino Soft…

Thinking about it, this was the reason why I first spoke to Yoo Sangah.

「 Kim Dokja thought, 'Where is the emergency exit?' 」

I had never been inside the Factory properly and had no idea where I was. In addition, the structure seemed changed from back then. I decided to open suspicious doors one by one.

The moment I opened a door, a small tentacled monster and frog stared at me. Some objects were inside test tubes while others were freely roaming the room.

[Frog Who Could've Been Dokja ahjussi]

[Elephant Monster Who Was Almost Dokja ahjussi]

[Tentacle Monster Who Unfortunately Wasn't Dokja ahjussi]

The frog gazed at me and shot out its tongue. I closed the door with surprise. Wait, this room

perhaps…

I wanted to check the nameplate when I heard a voice nearby.

"…Hey! How did you get out?"

"Dokja-ssi?"

It was Han Sooyoung and Lee Hyunsung.

"I mean, Dokja-ssi. In the 35th scenario…"

Lee Hyunsung was talking about the scenarios he experienced. I silently listened to the story while examining Lee Hyunsung's body. His pectoral muscles were more developed than before. The magic power of steel was connecting muscle fibres.

Now Lee Hyunsung's Steel Transformation had reached the edge of mastery. It wasn't unreasonable if the 46th scenario started right now. It was a bit impressive. While I was away, the party members faithfully trained while following the guidelines I gave them.

Of course, I wasn't just listening to Lee Hyunsung.

[Midday Tryst has been activated.]

[Incarnation 'Han Sooyoung' is currently participating in the conversation.]

I was fortunate to have met Han Sooyoung first. Preparing for a scenario was always late. For quick preparations, I needed someone who could provide the most accurate information efficiently and there was only one person best suited for it.

–Where is Jang Hayoung and the Breaking the Sky Master?

–He went to other scenario areas with the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint and Kyrgios. It seemed to be a scenario only for transcendents.

–What about Han Myungoh and Gong Pildu?

–They are currently in North Korea. Gong Pildu has gone to carry out the North Korean scenario. Han Myungoh was dragged away as an extra.

…North Korea. By the way, now was the time for North Korean incarnations. There were a few prominent constellations to be found in North Korea. Of course, most of them were historical-grade but there were some comparable to narrative-grade. For example, the Great King…

–Where have you been so far?

–The 1863rd round of Ways of Survival.

Han Sooyoung's eyes widened.

–What? Really?

–Ah, you were there. I don't know if it was a true self or not.

–…True self? What is this bullshit?

I tried to answer when someone stood in our way.

"…Dokja-ssi." It was Jung Heewon.

"I slept well thanks to you."

Jung Heewon stared at me with a complicated gaze. It seemed that she wanted to say something but she also wanted to hear my story. Jung Heewon's gaze slowly moved towards Han Sooyoung.

For a moment, sharp currents flowed between Han Sooyoung and Jung Heewon. Jung Heewon stared at Han Sooyoung with cold eyes before turning her head. In this awkward atmosphere, I opened my mouth first. "Yes, there were intruders in front of my room…"

"I gave orders to handle it. If you have woken up then go see Sangah-ssi. We can talk about the details next time." Her voice was much colder than usual. It was different from the Jung Heewon I knew. Lee Hyunsung, standing beside me, gazed after Jung Heewon with sad eyes.

Once Jung Heewon disappeared around the corner, I asked Han Sooyoung. "What is this?"

"What?"

"What's going on between you and Jung Heewon?" I gazed at Han Sooyoung's pout and felt a bit anxious. I didn't know what happened but it wasn't the time for them to be fighting. "Have you forgotten the 46th scenario? You now…"

"You haven't been here for three years. You don't know anything so shut up."

Han Sooyoung also turned away and left at these words. Only Lee Hyunsung remained. I saw Lee Hyunsung's sagging shoulders and felt depressed. It seemed this had happened more than once.

During the three years I was away, a rift that I didn't know about formed between the party members. It was clear without asking Lee Hyunsung about the shape of the group.

I lightly patted Lee Hyunsung's shoulders. I didn't know what happened but it was obvious what I had to do to grasp the situation. "Hyunsung-ssi, where is Yoo Sangah-ssi?"

"This way."

It was very brief but I didn't miss Lee Hyunsung's darkening expression. I followed Lee Hyunsung's big back and we arrived at a small door covered with simple white paint. Unexpected, Jung Heewon and Han Sooyoung who left earlier were standing in front of the door.

…What was with these people? I was about to speak to them but their expressions were a bit strange. It was the first time I had seen Han Sooyoung and Jung Heewon making this expression.

「 Kim Dokja thought, 'There isn't any easy task'. 」

Shut up. I sighed lightly and placed my hand on the door handle. Things would be resolved once I met Yoo Sangah. I briefly knocked on the door and heard Yoo Sangah's voice from inside.

–Who is it?

"Kim Dokja."

The answer was unexpected.

–Go back.

Chapter 307: Ep. 58 - Context of the Constellations, III

The door shut me out. I held the door handle and glanced back. Jung Heewon was watching to see how I would act while Han Sooyoung's eyes were oddly vigilant. Meanwhile, Lee Hyunsung looked like he would melt from anxiety.

I leaned back against the door and carefully sat down. "I won't enter. Can I talk here for a while?"

This wasn't anyone else, it was Yoo Sangah. There must be a reason if Yoo Sangah was refusing to meet me. The answer came back after a long time.

–…If you want.

There was no strength in her voice. In the midst of the stillness so deep I could hear people breathing, I thought about Yoo Sangah. It was Yoo Sangah when I was still at Mino Soft.

If you asked me if I was close to Yoo Sangah, I couldn't say yes with confidence. However, if you asked me what type of person Yoo Sangah was… I might have a few words to say.

"Did I come back too late?" I spoke softly. "I'm sorry. I was a bit too much. The incident where I was late on the first day of my new job and Yoo Sangah-ssi helped me… do you remember?

Yoo Sangah was silent for a moment before replying.

–…You were late both times.

Yoo Sangah looked perfect on the surface but she wasn't. Yoo Sangah was more sincere than anyone I knew.

"Do you remember searching in the interview?"

–I remember.

Mino Soft's interview for new employees was quite popular in the industry. Every year, different types of 'quests' emerged. The most common ones were 'raising the interview's favourability' or 'finding hidden interview hints'. For reference, the quest in the year when Yoo Sangah and I were interviewed was 'find the interview'.

–…I think I received more help from Dokja-ssi.

"I only found the quest items. Yoo Sangah was the only who worked out how to find the path using the items."

At the time, I teamed up with Yoo Sangah and found the interview location.

–Dokja-ssi pointed out the inefficient quest routes.

"Sangah-ssi pointed out the causal relationship with the quest upgrade system."

The 'quest' wasn't simply about clearing it. Identifying problems, weaknesses and finding the efficiency of the quest. This was the core of Mino Soft's interview. Yoo Sangah and I passed the interview with the highest score.

"It was a pity that we were split into different departments after joining… well, it was a natural thing."

–…

I joined the QA team while Yoo Sangah was in HR. After joining the company, we barely managed to exchange greetings.

"Yoo Sangah-ssi, I'm happy to be on the same team as you again." I heard the very small sound of someone breathing. "Just as I did then, I need Yoo Sangah-ssi now. I need someone to help me find the way."

Lee Hyunsung was looking at me with tearful eyes. Jung Heewon sighed lightly while Han Sooyoung turned her head away. Then Yoo Sangah's voice was heard.

–Dokja-ssi.

"Yes."

–I'm not such a good person.

I didn't know what to say. If Yoo Sangah wasn't a good person then there were no good people in the world.

–Do you remember the break room incident?

I replied to the unexpected question.

"…I remember."

There was a case where someone sprinkled pepper in the break room. Thanks to this incident, the company was noisy for a while. The bosses were upset at drinking pepper flavoured coffee and the new employers were criticized.

–I was the one who did it.

"…Is that so?"

–…You aren't surprised.

"Thanks to you, the newcomers didn't have to do coffee errands for a while."

In fact, I knew Yoo Sangah was the culprit. At the time, the QA team were given the task of catching the culprit. As the youngest member, I was mostly responsible for it. I was hiding in the break room while using the cleaning tools as a cover to read Ways of Survival. Then I saw Yoo Sangah entering alone late at night.

–It wasn't just that.

Yoo Sangah kept talking. Most of the cases were minor but despite this, they changed things little by little. They were events where someone suffered, someone found their lost rights or someone felt happy.

"Yoo Sangah-ssi."

She wasn't a character. Yet in fact, before Ways of Survival arrived, she was like a 'character' to me. It was because I didn't think there was anyone like her in reality.

「"You will be killed."」

From the moment the first scenario started, I began to know Yoo Sangah. The person who tried to maintain 'ethics' that didn't exist in Ways of Survival.

「"I'll do it Gilyoung. I will do it."」

Without Yoo Sangah, the party would've surely collapsed.

「"You're so inspiring, Dokja-ssi."」

No matter what nonsense I spoke, Yoo Sangah smiled and accepted it.

「"I should also live my own life!."」

If she hadn't been there, no matter the story I wanted to create…

「"I never hated Dokja-ssi like I do today. Come back, please."」

I wouldn't have been able to make the Outer World Covenant with confidence.

–I really can't stand it…

Yoo Sangah's weak words followed.

I slowly got up. "Yoo Sangah-ssi."

Yoo Sangah continued like she couldn't hear my voice. I silently listened to her as I grabbed the handle again. Helping someone who didn't want help could be a curse. However, some people couldn't ask for help despite needing help. It was because they had never asked for it before.

…Just like the day I went to the interview.

"Wait a minute, Dokja-ssi—!"

I ignored Jung Heewon's words and forcibly turned the locked door. The door opened and the scene of the room was revealed. Then I saw three dark faces. Lee Seolhwa, Aileen and… my mother. My mother's eyes were saying, 'You came'.

The three people stood on the bed and Yoo Sangah was lying on the bed. Her face was pallid. Her firmly closed lips had no colour. It was the others who had conveyed her words on her behalf.

「 So… 」

Inside Yoo Sangah, the broken stories were flowing incessantly.

* * *

After a while, I sat down in Yoo Sangah's hospital room with the group.

"Since when has this been happening?"

"…It hasn't been long." Jung Heewon replied. It was Lee Seolhwa who gave the detailed explanation. "The side effects from the excessive use of the stigma are serious."

I gazed down at Yoo Sangah's pale face. Yoo Sangah wouldn't have suffered like this if she had a normal sponsor. Right now, she had the nebula Olympus itself as a sponsor. The unusual Sponsor Contract reduced the lifespan of the incarnation. The 'lifespan' didn't simply mean physical life. It was the 'lifespan of the story'.

"The soul has fallen asleep under the consciousness and all that is left is the stream of consciousness."

She repeatedly used a stigma she couldn't afford and the absurdity accumulated in Yoo Sangah's soul. Probability created cracks in her mind and body and the stories eventually started leaking out of the cracks.

Aileen added, "Story packs are constantly transfused and the broken fragments collected and re-added. Nevertheless, there is no difference."

I couldn't think of what to say as I watched Yoo Sangah. It was because of me. I came back too late…

"I told you not to go in because you would make this expression." Han Sooyoung grumbled.

I bit my lips and asked Lee Seolhwa. "How much time is left?"

"3 months…"

"Is there a way?"

"As of right now… there is nothing we can do here."

"It might be possible somewhere else."

[The constellation 'Guam Divine Doctor' is nodding.]

The sponsor responded on behalf of Lee Seolhwa.

[The constellation 'Guam Divine Doctor' says Incarnation Yoo Sangah's disease isn't a human disease.

Human diseases could be treated using human power.

…Then what if it was a disease of the gods?

[The constellation 'Demon King of Salvation' is looking up at the night sky.]

In the dark Star Stream, several small stars shone.

[The constellation 'Abandoned Lover of the Labyrinth' is looking at you.]

[The constellation 'God of Wine and Ecstasy' is looking at you.]

All of them were stars of Olympus with a connection to Yoo Sangah. Suddenly, my anger soared. Certainly, it was Yoo Sangah herself who used the power. Even so, it was Olympus who induced such an absurd contract in the first place.

[Olympus, you can bear the probability.]

My true voice headed towards the night sky. A few stars shone again.

[The constellation 'Abandoned Lover of the Labyrinth'…]

The next moment, the indirect messages were cut off by unknown sparks. The shining stars were no longer visible. Someone had interfered with the indirect message.

I spoke through gritted teeth. "If it is them, there might be a way."

There was no one here who didn't know who 'they' were. Jung Heewon's expression darkened. "However, there is no way to ask for help. We made a few attempts but…"

The constellations were selfish and did what they wanted. They only looked at stories they wanted to see or listened to stories they wanted to hear. If Yoo Sangah was still in this state, it meant the high level constellations didn't want Yoo Sangah's miracle.

Han Sooyoung asked, "Why don't you go to the Underworld like you did last time? You're friendly with the queen."

"The situation at that time was special. In addition, Yoo Sangah isn't dead yet. Besides, she isn't like Biyoo."

In fact, I contacted Persephone but there was no answer. It was also a difficult situation. It was already lucky that Shin Yoosung could be reincarnated as Biyoo. Most deaths in this world were literal deaths. Reincarnation and regression were just miraculous stories of the Star Stream.

"You said Jang Hayoung went to perform another scenario?"

"…He went pretty far."

If Jang Hayoung was here, I could've sent messages directly to the constellations… I looked at the face of the sleeping Yoo Sangah and thought.

「 How to save Yoo Sangah? 」

In the end, there was only one method. I slowly breathed in. "There is still a way. It is a bit earlier than I expected but…"

"We have to clear the 46th scenario first."

The low and cold voice interrupted my words. I turned around towards the man.

…He appeared like he had been waiting. The group of people who had been dispatched to destroy the Gyeonggi Alliance was standing at the door. Shin Yoosung, Lee Gilyoung and Lee Jihye. In addition… Yoo Joonghyuk.

The children ran into my arms and hugged me. I stroked Shin Yoosung's head while watching Yoo Joonghyuk. He stared at me ferociously before glancing at the other party members.

"It is time to meet the constellations."

"The constellations?"

The wind blew through the slightly open window. Two dokkaebis appeared in the distant sky. Perhaps they were those who came to prepare for the next scenario. Beyond that, the number of constellations watching the scenarios increased. I pointed to the stars and declared. "There are constellations present in the 47th scenario area."

The 47th scenario. It involved the interstellar cities of the constellations and the 'constellation context'.

"Let's go destroy Olympus."

Chapter 308: Ep. 58 - Context of the Constellations, IV

After a short time, the party members managed their equipment while waiting for Kim Dokja. Lee Jihye changed her blade and asked Jung Heewon, "Is Dokja ahjussi being serious? Really destroying Olympus…"

"It must be a joke. Dokja-ssi isn't that stupid."

"Still, we don't know where he has been for three years. Do you know the last three years?"

"…I understand. I'm not a fool."

"We might not know where he has been for three years but if we look at Master…"

The speaking Lee Jihye quickly shut her mouth as she felt Yoo Joonghyuk's gaze from a distance. Jung Heewon sighed at Lee Jihye before glancing at the meeting room that Kim Dokja entered.

Two people were sitting in a private room reminiscent of the reception room of a detention centre.

"It's been three years."

"…It took me longer than I thought."

Kim Dokja watched Lee Sookyung and locked his lips several times. There were many things to say but some were buried in the layers of scenarios and others were missed by time passing.

"That…" In the tomb of a bygone story, a word was barely excavated. "I'm sorry."

Lee Sookyung smiled and wondered,"Are you thinking of leaving for the next scenario?"

"Yes."

"When?"

"This evening." Kim Dokja kept his mouth shut for a moment before asking, "Will you go with me?"

"I still have a lot of work to do here."

Lee Sookyung gazed out the window at the industrial complex. Kim Dokja followed Lee Sookyung's gaze and looked out the window. They were women who had once been prisoners in this society.

There were Cho Youngran who had Jeon Woochi as her sponsor and Lee Boksoon who fought with him on Peace Land.

"There are more people than you think who make the wrong choice because they are attracted to greater power."

The criminals who left prison were now fighting for people.

"The important thing is that people can change. Perhaps now they are getting the opportunity."

Lee Sookyung's voice was sneering at herself. Lee Sookyung turned her head and stared into her son's eyes.

"Do you know? A big story is a way to destroy an individual."

"I know."

Kim Dokja's eyes shook slightly. Small sparks jumped out from his two eyes. Perhaps it was a topic that shouldn't have been brought up. A human being exterminated by a 'big story'. Her son probably knew this better than anyone else in the world. Lee Sookyung hesitated for a long time before speaking.

"There is something I want to say."

"I know. I read it as well."

The book written by Lee Sookyung, the Underground Killer. Lee Sookyung's book became a bestseller and society started talking about domestic violence in earnest, leading to a bill to strengthen the law on punishment. On the macro level, it might've been the right thing to do.

However, thanks to the story, the humans 'Lee Sookyung' and 'Kim Dokja' were completely dissected.

Kim Dokja became the son of a tragedy caused by domestic violence in this society and Lee Sookyung became a criminal who killed her husband and made it a story. People called them by different names. The son of a murderer or a cruel mother… It changed the world only a little bit.

"We were exterminated even before the book came out. Maybe even in the future…"

Kim Dokja's words were cut off halfway before the end. Rather than look at each other, they stared out the window.

The world was there. There wasn't anyone who wasn't hurt. On top of the scenario-weary incarnations, the constellations wishing for more terrible stories were shining.

Kim Dokja spoke, "A big story destroying an individual. I'm going to change that."

"I'm here to change it as well."

"Then… we have to separate here again."

Kim Dokja stood up and told her, "Be well."

The door closed and Kim Dokja disappeared. Lee Sookyung silently watched Kim Dokja disappearing through the door. After a while, a shadow emerged from behind a curtain of the meeting room and Han Sooyoung came out. Han Sooyoung watched the door that Kim Dokja had gone through. "…He is a grumpy fellow."

"That's how I raised him."

At Lee Sookyung's words, Han Sooyoung narrowed her eyes. "Ajumma. Why didn't you tell me?"

"Tell you what?"

"The book."

Lee Sookyung looked like she didn't know. Han Sooyoung glanced at Lee Sookyung and was oddly incensed.

"I heard about ahjumma's motives. The earnings from that book, did you send it to your relatives? It supplemented his living expenses."

"It didn't go to that child so it's like I didn't send it."

"Where are your relatives now?"

"They are dead by now."

Han Sooyoung closed her mouth. The previous animosity was pointless after the destruction of the world. All the people who had to pay a price had died comfortably and the rest of the people had to live their lives in a more terrible world.

Han Sooyoung sighed and asked. "By the way, you really aren't coming?"

"I think I have raised my child for too long. It is enough for me to live my life."

Lee Sookyung's lightly smiling face was wrinkled. One reason why the industrial complex could be safe was Lee Sookyung. The Demon Realm and Earth. The fact that two different ecosystems could unite safely was possible thanks to the non-discriminatory rule of Lee Sookyung and Yoo Sangah.

Lee Sookyung was a necessary person for the industrial complex.

Han Sooyoung knew it well and turned away without a word. She walked to the door that Kim Dokja had exited through.

Lee Sookyung opened her mouth. "Sooyoung."

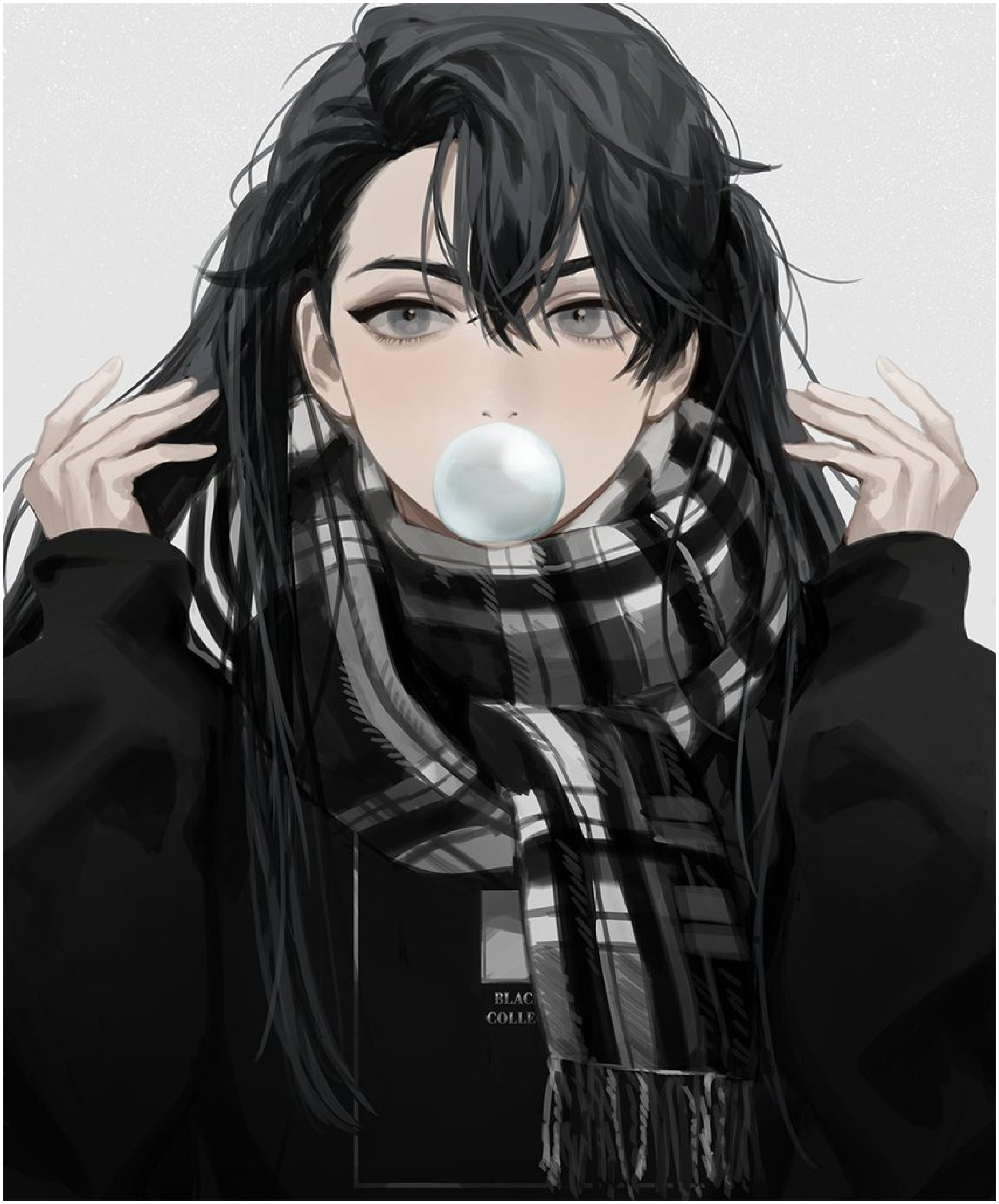
Han Sooyoung raised her hand without looking back. "Don't worry. Leave your son to me. You just—"

"Be careful."

Han Sooyoung glanced back with a bemused expression. Lee Sookyung was smiling. Her eyes were the same colour as Kim Dokja. Han Sooyoung licked her lips and sighed.

"Anyway… I have no luck to the end."

A girl sucking on candy suddenly pointed at me and declared, "Squid."



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I briefly lost my soul at the mental attack.

[Some constellations are wondering about the girl's identity.]

This girl… I mean… I sighed and spoke the girl's name. "Mia, have you been well?"

"Who is this ahjussi?" She had forgotten since I hadn't seen her for a long time. I was about to explain when Yoo Mia clapped her hands. "Ah, my brother's friend."

"Not a friend… in any case, you've changed your way of speaking in the time since I last saw you."

"You have become uglier in the time since I last saw you."

"Hey, Yoo Joonghyuk. Surely you aren't taking your sister with you?"

At my words, Yoo Joonghyuk glared at me from where he was putting a hand on Yoo Mia's head. I watched him for a moment before asking, "…Have you been well? I was so busy that I forgot to ask."

"There is no time to leisurely ask something like that."

I heard that hard voice and felt it was somewhat familiar, rather than feel upset. Yes, this was the Yoo Joonghyuk I knew. The Yoo Joonghyuk I knew kept speaking. "The 46th scenario is dangerous. Of course, I am leaving my sister behind."

"Who else are you going to leave? Yoo Sangah-ssi will naturally stay behind. My mother and the

Wanderer forces…"

"I will leave Flying Fox."

"You have already talked to Flying Fox?"

"I signed a contract with the returnees group."

Those freed from being a disaster needed time to adapt to their home world. Yoo Joonghyuk contacted them and came back with a contract related to the protection of the industrial complex. As expected from the protagonist, he was pretty good at acting.

However, I shook my head. "They won't be able to protect this place alone."

"Teacher will be back soon."

"That isn't the problem. Besides, it will be more dangerous if transcendents are here. Don't you know?"

Yoo Joonghyuk was well aware of what I was saying. It was because he lost the Breaking the Sky Sword in the last round.

Yoo Joonghyuk nodded. "I know. You can come back before 'that' happens. You should be thinking about the 46th scenario."

"I've thought about it."

"It won't be easy. It might fail."

It wasn't unusual for him to say so.

–You can't break through the 46th scenario alone. Don't you know?

I spoke these words to persuade Yoo Joonghyuk the first time I met him. Finally, the day had come to realize those words.

Yoo Joonghyuk said, "There are many ways to clear the 46th scenario."

"No, there's only one."

"It won't turn out like you think."

"Haven't you talked with the party members while I was away?"

"I don't believe in people." Yoo Joonghyuk replied in a composed manner while Yoo Mia, listening by his side, shook her head.

I told him, "Don't you know what's after the 46th scenario? If you don't cooperate with others from now on—"

"A real disaster doesn't appear on the surface."

I shut my mouth at Yoo Joonghyuk's words. The 45th scenario 'Glorious Return' was a scenario where people fought disasters. The appearance was a monster but they were fighting against humans. I read the messages stored in the system log.

[You have cleared the 45th scenario.]

[Your group members didn't kill anyone throughout the scenario.]

[Your group members didn't kill any incarnations throughout the scenario.]

[Your group has shown new possibilities between incarnations and returnees!]

[The 'disaster state' of you and the group will be released.]

New possibilities. It was evidence that trust and faith were capable between different species. Yoo Joonghyuk spoke like he read my thoughts. "After the scenario started, many people were killed by the scenario. More than that, many people were killed by the same human beings."

Yoo Joonghyuk's cold eyes suddenly looked far away. "You will lose the party in this scenario."

"What are you saying…"

"I have already lost a lot of people. You are different."

"…"

"You better prepare your heart."

I frowned because I knew the 46th scenario. Thus, I wasn't convinced by Yoo Joonghyuk's words. It was impossible with the party that I knew. After three years, they might've locked me up and fed me sleeping pills but they would never fight against each other…

"By the way, are you going with me?"

"Uh, why?"

"Well, I'm just asking."

Intense sparks flew in the air. In the distance, the party members were coming this way. Gilyoung and Shin Yoosung were leading from the front while Lee Jihye, Lee Seolhwa and Lee Hyunsung were behind them. The problem was Jung Heewon and Han Sooyoung.

…Come to think of it, they had a problem. Damn.

[Main Scenario #46 - Proof of the Stars has arrived!]

The 46th main scenario, Proof of the Stars. In order to meet Olympus and the other constellations, I had to break through this scenario. Soon after, the dokkaebi carrying out the scenario appeared in the air.

[Let's start the main scenario.]

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* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)

Chapter 309: Ep. 58 - Context of the Constellations, V

The dokkaebi who appeared for the scenario wasn't Bihyung. Nevertheless, it was a very familiar dokkaebi. At one time, he was a low-grade dokkaebi and he even learnt how to use the Dokkaebi Bag from me.

–…Kim Dokja?

The dokkaebi's eyes widened and he activated the Dokkaebi Communication.

–It's me! Dokkaebi Youngki!

Dokkaebi Youngki in a suit was looking at me. Perhaps it was due to the main scenario progress but he seemed reluctant to look at the other participants.

–It has been a while.

–I heard rumours that you had come back…

–The rumour spread?

–Ah, you don't know. Right now, Bihyung is trying to deal with the probability caused by Kim Dokja

in every direction.

Youngki laughed and continued,

–Anyway, it was a pleasure to see you again. Other constellations have been asking a lot about Dokja-nim. After this scenario, you will finally go and see those sponsors.

–Yes, if things turn out well.

–Huhu, of course, it will. However, Kim Dokja won't receive any special treatment. Do you understand?

–I know.

I heard distant sounds from afar. Without realizing it, the incarnations participating in the 46th scenario had gathered.

[Hmm… there are 48 people. The Seoul area has fewer participants.]

Youngki changed his tone as he studied the volunteers with calm eyes. The appearance of the volunteers varied. They were originally residents of the industrial complex or incarnations who desperately reached this point.

Some of the returnees who stopped being disasters but rejected Yoo Joonghyuk's contract could be seen. Their expressions were distorted with deep rage or sadness. Perhaps they couldn't find their family.

[This scenario is different from many scenarios. First of all, this scenario is an optional scenario.]

It was a returnee from Murim who asked the question. "An optional scenario? What is that?"

[It means you can choose to participate as an 'individual qualification' or you can choose to participate in the 'nebula qualification'. No matter which one you choose, you will need colleagues.]

I listened to Youngki's words and clenched my fists. The 46th main scenario, Proof of the Stars. It had finally come. The voices of the incarnations could be heard.

"What's the difference between participating as an individual or participating as a nebula?"

"Stupid. An individual qualification literally means participating alone and a nebula qualification means participating as a group. Well, this is a nebula we're talking about."

"What about the people who are already in a nebula?" Will they be forced to participate as a 'nebula qualification'?"

[Oh, this is an important question. In regards to that…]

The moment Youngki's words were about to continue, a light flashed in the night sky.

[Oh, you're already here. Your nature is too hasty.]

At the same time, messages poured from the sky. The messages headed to their destination like a meteor shower and hovered above the heads of incarnations.

.

.

[The nebula 'Asgard' has invited you to join.]

[The nebula 'Guardian Tree' has invited you to join.]

[The nebula 'Tamna' has invited you to join.]

[The nebula 'Emperor' has invited you to join.]

.

.

The 46th scenario started with a nebula selection competition.

"W-What is this?"

The shocked incarnations screamed. There were also incarnations checking the list of nebulae with a cautious expression. There were a handful of returnees who already knew the scenario. Some incarnations also counted the number of stars above another person's head. Most of them had one or two but there were several cases that went beyond five.

"Crazy, what is this?"

Of course, my party was the one who received the most messages. In particular, Yoo Joonghyuk and some of the party members couldn't have their faces seen due to the blinding light. I looked above my head.

[A total of 137 invitations have arrived for you.]

[However, if you accept this invitation then the nebula Kim Dokja's Company will automatically be disbanded.]

The messages were sent with the intention of poking at people who couldn't eat. Did they really think I would disband my nebula and join them?

Youngki continued when the incarnations seemed to settle down a bit.

[This scenario is the first scenario to receive a nebula selection. You can join one of the invited nebulae and participate in the scenario.]

"Do we have to join? What is so good about joining up?"

[It doesn't matter if you don't join. However, if the nebula you join has already completed the 46th scenario…]

Youngki smiled slyly.

[You can be exempt from the scenario and go straight to the 47th scenario.]

In the midst of the incarnations, the party members gathered around me.

"I will pick Emperor!"

"I will choose Flag of Glory."

In the meantime, the incarnations finished choosing and shouted from everywhere.

[Those who have chosen an exempt nebula will be automatically sent to the 47th scenario area. Please keep this in mind.]

Most incarnations chose to join a nebula rather than challenge the 46th scenario. It was a reasonable judgment to some extent. The Korean Peninsula was slowly when it came to scenarios so the notoriety of the 46th scenario had spread from other countries that had already gone through it.

–If two people challenge the 46th scenario together, one of them will die.

None of them wanted to be the ones to die. Some of the incarnations gave up on participating in the scenario while others chose a nebula and proceeded to the next scenario. The number of incarnations increased and Youngki finally looked at us.

[Now you're the only ones left. What will you do?]

The party members gathered around me were waiting for my choice.

Youngki asked again. [Do you want to apply as an individual or a nebula? No matter what you choose, you can't do it alone.]

"If I pass this scenario with the qualification of a nebula, the members of the same nebula will automatically be promoted?"

"Hoh that's right, Demon King of Salvation. Do you intend to challenge as a nebula?]

"Yes."

The 46th scenario Proof of the Stars was the debut stage for our new nebula. In this scenario, the story recorded in the constellation's context depended on the number of victims and the performance.

I looked around at the party members. Apart from Yoo Joonghyuk and I, they hadn't joined a nebula. I made eye contact with every one of them and slowly breathed in.

"I won't force you to choose but keep this in mind. If you choose another nebula here and proceed with the scenario, you will definitely be under unfair constraints—"

"Dokja ahjussi really isn't honest. Why don't you just tell us to sign up?"

Lee Jihye pouted and interrupted my words. Among the party members, it was Jung Heewon who opened her mouth first. "Hmm, what should I do?"

Jung Heewon smiled playfully while the nebulae invitations shimmered above her head. "Considering Uriel, I should go to Eden…"

In fact, it was common for many incarnations to join the nebula their sponsor belonged to. However, there were cases where the sponsors were very open and respected the choice of the individual incarnation. In particular, Eden respected the free will of the incarnations.

Jung Heewon asked, "Will we be eligible for the four major insurances if we join Kim Dokja's Company?"

"Uh, um. This is the first time I'm operating this type of thing…"

"Is there a lunch break and nap time?"

"What about a personal maintenance time?"

"What about the support of medicinal or material items?"

Lee Hyunsung, Lee Seolhwa and Lee Jihye. Each of them threw out the questions they wanted to ask.

"Well, that… as you know, Kim Dokja's Company is just a new nebula." I stuttered at the explosive baptism of questions before sighing. "You can decide your break time and maintenance time. I will supply consumable material items but it might not be the best. There might be frequent night work and the overtime allowance isn't enough."

It felt like I had no true conscience while speaking. If it had been before the destruction, I would wonder about who would join such a company.

Nevertheless, Lee Hyunsung was listening to me while Lee Jihye yawned.

"As well as…"

"Dokja-ssi."

"Huh?" Jung Heewon interrupted in a calm voice. "In fact, there are many questions I want to ask. Where have you been in the meantime, why have you come back so late?"

"I will tell you soon…"

"In fact, I can't easily let go of my anger."

"…"

"I become furious every time I think about that day. Why should Dokja-ssi decide our lives? We aren't Dokja-ssi's pets to be raised."

"…I'm sorry."

"Even if Dokja-ssi doesn't help, our lives are what we decide."

I couldn't fathom the extent of Jung Heewon's scar. Maybe it wasn't only Jung Heewon. I didn't know what the past three years had been like for the party members.

"Thus, this is my decision."

Jung Heewon bowed her head. Her shoulders were trembling. The moment I approached, Jung Heewon raised her head and looked at me. The tough swordsman was looking at me with faintly red eyes.

[Incarnation 'Jung Heewon' has joined the nebula 'Kim Dokja's Company'.]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' respects the opinion of her incarnation.]

I bit my lips as I faced those eyes. Then I barely smiled. "Thank you, Heewon-ssi."

Jung Heewon smiled slightly.

The second one was Lee Hyunsung. "I also have many words but… Heewon-ssi has mentioned everything."

"Then why didn't you say it first?"

"I'm not very eloquent… In fact, I wanted to quit my job."

[Incarnation 'Lee Hyunsung' has joined the nebula 'Kim Dokja's Company'.]

[The constellation 'Master of Steel' respects the opinion of his constellation.]

Then Lee Jihye was next. "Ugh, I hate this atmosphere. Quickly change it!"

[Incarnation 'Lee Jihye' has joined the nebula 'Kim Dokja's Company'.]

[The constellation 'Maritime War God' respects the opinion of his constellation.]

Lee Seolhwa also smiled. "In fact, I joined through Joonghyuk-ssi yesterday."

[The constellation 'Guam Divine Doctor' is nodding.]

Shin Yoosung and Lee Gilyoung hung onto me. "Us as well, ahjussi!"

I checked the list and it was true. These three people had already joined my nebula.

As everyone was checking the nebula message above their heads, only one person was gazing at me. A few party members were also glancing over there. Only one person among the group hadn't joined the nebula.

Han Sooyoung paused before speaking. "I'll do it just this once, you idiot."

[Incarnation 'Han Sooyoung' has joined the nebula 'Kim Dokja's Company'.]

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is grumbling but respects the opinion of his incarnation.]

"Instead, change the name at a later date. It will be the Han Sooyoung Corporation."

I bowed at the party members and looked back at Youngki.

[Hmmm, it seems you are done. Then I'll ask you. Would the nebula 'Kim Dokja's Company' like to challenge the scenario with the nebula qualification?]

I nodded. Youngki smiled and continued.

[It isn't fun for a lot of people to enter at once so I'll divide the party.]

Something was weird. We had a lot of people so the party would be divided? There was no such thing in the original 46th scenario.

Youngki's expression was weird. His forehead was strangely sweaty.

–I'm sorry Kim Dokja.

…What?

[The nebula 'Papyrus' disapproves of your challenge!]

[Many nebulae are frowning at your challenge!]

I seemed to understand what was going on.

…These jerks, they were going to bother me to the end?

I shouted at the party members. "Keep this in mind! Never touch the 'star'…!"

There was a dazzling light and the scene in front of me started to change.

[Your nebula has met the criteria to participate.]

[Going to the 46th scenario area.]

[A room will be allocated to the participants.]

At the same time, the scenario contents appeared in the air.

[Main Scenario #46 - Proof of the Stars]

Category: Main

Difficulty: ???

Clear Conditions: Acquire and use the 'star' in the centre of the room or prevent the other party from obtaining the 'star' within the time limit. If one of the two conditions were met, the scenario would be automatically cleared.

Time Limit: 3 hours.

Compensation: Check the additional message.

Failure: Conditional death

Youngki's voice followed.

[I'll put together something very special for your companionship.]

I opened my eyes and stood alone in a white room. In the centre of the room, there was a star floating on top of a small marble pedestal.

[Oops, one room is wrongly assigned. Haha, it can't be helped! I wish all of you the blessing of the story.]

Then another person was summoned to the other side of the room. I rubbed my eyes as I gazed at the person standing opposite me with a dreadful expression.

"…I guess this is the wrongly assigned room."

[The rewards for the star in the room will be revealed!]

[Star Reward]

Choice 1. If you acquire or use the 'star' before your opponent, you can acquire all the skills and stories of the opponent.

Choice 2. If you acquire or use the 'star' before your opponent, you can have indefinite life or death rights over your opponent.

Choice 3…

I didn't read the rest of the compensation and waved my hand to the other person.

"Hey, you know what to do? As you know, this scenario… ah!"

I stopped talking and started running towards the star. Yoo Joonghyuk, who already arrived at the centre of the room, was reaching for the star.

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"Yoo Joonghyuk, you are crazy!"

I shouted while hurriedly running towards Yoo Joonghyuk. I was so surprised that I couldn't control the power of my skills. Way of the Wind and Electrification were activated at the same time through Bookmark and collided with Yoo Joonghyuk's body.

The power of the Purest Sword Force dyed the air and the star on the pedestal rolled to the ground. Yoo Joonghyuk was hit by my magic power and spoke without looking at me. "Get out of the way."

"What get out of the way? Are you really crazy?"

I was dumbfounded. Other characters might not know anything but Yoo Joonghyuk, who knew everything, wanted to touch the star. It was unbelievable.

"Don't you know what the 46th scenario is? Haven't you read the scenario properly?"

Of course, I couldn't read the scenario properly because of Yoo Joonghyuk.

"I read it."

"It is over if you touch it!"

"Not really. Most people acquire a star and move onto the next scenario."

Yoo Joonghyuk slowly gazed at me. I couldn't feel any agitation from his expression. This wasn't the first time he did the 46th scenario.

「In the 46th scenario, only those who are part of the same nebula or have been recognized as 'colleagues' would participate together.」

In the previous round, Yoo Joonghyuk calculated everything and jumped to the 46th scenario. He didn't want to be restricted so he didn't join a big nebula. Instead, he picked companions and challenged the scenario. He also used the information given to him by the 41st regression Shin Yoosung.

However, there was one existence that Yoo Joonghyuk didn't expect. A person who adapted to the new future changed by Yoo Joonghyuk and appeared as Yoo Joonghyuk's companion.

「"I believe in you, Yoo Joonghyuk."」

Prophet Anna Croft. In the past round, she was Yoo Joonghyuk's companion.

I blocked his hand and called out, "Yoo Joonghyuk."

I thought it would be fine. I thought it would be different from the previous lives that he lived. We came to this place by saving each other's lives several times and I thought there must be some type of trust between us.

"I'm not Anna Croft. I won't betray you."

「"I believed you wouldn't betray me."」

Yoo Joonghyuk failed the 46th scenario thanks to Anna Croft. He lost his party members and everything he had. Yoo Joonghyuk survived but he didn't survive. After losing everything to Anna Croft in the 46th scenario and having his existence given to her, he lived like a slave until he died.

Yoo Joonghyuk stared at me.

"Kim Dokja, you said you are a prophet." The expression on Yoo Joonghyuk's face was cold. "I don't like you. It was like this from the beginning."

Transcendent energy rose from Yoo Joonghyuk's body. The Black Heavenly Demon Sword didn't hesitate even a bit and I also raised the power of Electrification to the limit. My body bounced like a warm as shock waves were felt.

Now I was really angry. "You son of a bitch—!"

[The status of the demon king has opened!]

It was Demon King Transformation combined with Electrification. I focused all my power and responded to Yoo Joonghyuk. It was the opening of the second round that we didn't finish the other day.

The star was rolling around from the collision and I shouted. "You reached all this way and you're just going to give up? Do you covet my skills and stories that much?"

Yoo Joonghyuk didn't answer. I bit my lips as I swung my sword. Unbroken Faith and the Black Heavenly Demon Sword collided and created an ear-splitting sound.

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…Yes, it wasn't that I didn't understand. Yoo Joonghyuk was betrayed by the prophet in the last round. Thus, the strength he desired most must be the power of prophecy itself. In addition, he still misunderstood me as a prophet.

「 Kim Dok ja is a fo ol. 」

What?

[The exclusive skill 'Fourth Wall' is activated!]

[The 'Fourth Wall' is shaking and smiling.]

My head instantly turned cold like cold water was poured on me. Was Yoo Joonghyuk really trying to kill me because I was a prophet? Was he doing this to gain my skills and stories?

.

…Had he postponed everything only for this moment?

[There are unread messages left in Midday Tryst.]

An item with the traces of the past three years. I blocked Yoo Joonghyuk's sword while opening Midday Tryst.

[There are ??? unread messages.]

[The messages can't be read because they are corrupted.]

Damn…

「Shoul d I he lp?」

At these words, the messages in my mind started to be sorted.

[The corrupted messages will be recovered in an incomplete manner with the power of Fourth Wall.]

The messages left by Yoo Joonghyuk started to play in an incomplete manner through the Fourth Wall's mouth.

「Lee Gil young and Shin Yoo sung, annoy ing kids.」

「Lee Hyun sung is a stu pid sol dier.」

They were funny messages. Did this brat use a chat window as a notepad?

「It is bad be tween Jung Hee won and Han Soo young.」

「Lee Jihye's head is not good.」

「Yoo Sangah does not have to do this.」

He only wrote bad things about the party members. However, I knew Yoo Joonghyuk. Yoo Joonghyuk was a person who didn't mention anyone he was uninterested in.

「Kim Dokja.」

I instantly became dizzy, like I had been hit on the head with a hammer. "Yoo Joonghyuk, you now…"

In the first place, this scenario could only be activated when recognized as a 'companion'. If he hadn't trusted me and recognized me as a colleague, he couldn't enter this scenario.

[Your understanding of the character 'Yoo Joonghyuk' is increasing explosively.]

[The exclusive skill, 'Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint' has been activated!]

I stared at Yoo Joonghyuk in a daze. Yoo Joonghyuk didn't want my skills or stories. Finally, he opened his mouth. "My indulgence is up to here."

The Black Heavenly Demon Sword pointed at my neck. "You have been acting freely in the last three years. You can't do that again."

"It was necessary. It was unavoidable to go to the ■■!"

"Nobody knows if your pursuit of the ■■ is right or not."

"So you want the right over my life and death?"

A calm anger flared in Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes. "At least this way, you won't be willing to sacrifice yourself again and the others… they won't do anything unnecessary."

The Fourth Wall continued to read sentences from Midday Tryst.

「Lee Jihye takes her life lightly.」

「Lee Hyunsung deliberately jumped into the monsters.」

I realized the 'unnecessary' things the party members had been doing. I declared, "I will never do such a thing again."

"…"

"Who wants to die? I don't want to either."

Yoo Joonghyuk didn't remove the sword aimed at me. His eyes showed he didn't believe my words. In the end, I had to change the direction of my persuasion.

"Yoo Joonghyuk, if you touch the star, you can gain the my 'life and death rights' but you will also get

the traitor story."

The traitor story.

"Once you get that story, you won't be trusted by the party members even if you go to the following scenario. No one will believe you anymore. Do you want to live like that?"

No one wanted to be hated. It was the same for the cold-blooded regressor, Yoo Joonghyuk. Especially if it was the Yoo Joonghyuk who had companions.

"It doesn't matter."

"What?"

Yoo Joonghyuk looked at me. His thoughts were heard through Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint.

「…It would've been better if I was like you.」

The Yoo Joonghyuk I knew would've never done this. My feet hardened as Yoo Joonghyuk moved towards the star. Everything around us slowed as if someone had pulled the anode of time.

–By the way, is the Yoo Joonghyuk of your world okay?

The voice of the 1863rd Han Sooyoung was heard.

–This Yoo Joonghyuk is a worn-out person but is the 3rd round Yoo Joonghyuk still right in the head? He will surely be broken if someone like you shows up.

The expression on Yoo Joonghyuk's face as he reached towards the star wasn't that of the main character. This was no longer the proud and confident Yoo Joonghyuk that I remembered. Rather, Yoo Joonghyuk was frightened by something.

「This world needs Kim Dokja.」

「And the other party members…」

「I'm not the one who can clear the scenarios to the end.」

The Fourth Wall said. 「You want ed this to o.」

My ears were buzzing as the things I had done so far passed through my head. The history where I obtained the things that Yoo Joonghyuk should've got and took the places where Yoo Joonghyuk's should've climbed flowed like a panorama.

「"I am Yoo Joonghyuk."」

The words that were uttered as a joke were returned to me. The history that I took away without thinking made the present Yoo Joonghyuk.

「You want ed to be the ma in charac ter.」

No.

The Fourth Wall said. 「You are Yoo Joonghyuk.」

I wasn't Yoo Joonghyuk.

「Kim Dokja is Yoo Joonghyuk.」

I didn't want to be the main character.

「Th en why ha ve you be en do ing the scena rios so far?」

Why have I been doing the scenarios? I could see Yoo Joonghyuk reaching towards the star. I muttered inwardly. I couldn't explain in words why I was clearing the scenarios.

[The 'Fourth Wall' is causing an unknown reaction.]

I heard a sound in my head. It was the sound of something solid cracking. I listened to the sound as I ran towards Yoo Joonghyuk. As if he had been waiting, Yoo Joonghyuk turned towards me.

The transcendent power that had matured. Over the past three years, Yoo Joonghyuk had become stronger.

[The character 'Yoo Joonghyuk' is telling the giant story 'Demon Realm's Spring'.]

"You aren't my opponent."

"Maybe that is true." During my trip to the 1863rd round, Yoo Joonghyuk became strong enough that perhaps I couldn't win against him. I didn't understand how such a strong person could be lacking confidence. "However, I know a person who can beat you."

Yoo Joonghyuk was afraid. The information he received from the 41st regression Shin Yoosung would soon run out. He would be starting a story he didn't know.

[You have received the story reward given for the Outer World Covenant.]

Thus, I had to let him know.

You aren't only this much. The place you can reach isn't only the 41st round.

[You have earned the 'myth'-grade story!]

[The story has been handed down to you by someone.]

There was a dazzling light as the messages exploded in my head.

[The myth-grade story 'A Single Story' is responding to your level!]

[The myth-grade story is sufficient to replace the giant story!]

[The 'succession' portion of your first myth-grade story has been completed!]

[Part of the story is lost during the transmission and the 'succession' couldn't be completed.]

[Acquire other myth rated stories or giant stories.]

…Obtaining this story wasn't part of my original plan. I didn't know I would get this story in the 1863rd round. In any case, the situation was like this so it wouldn't be bad to use the story.

[The size of the story has gone beyond your capacity to tell it.]

[At your Reading Comprehension level, you can only interpret part of the story.]

I got a nosebleed and my body trembled like it was electrocuted. Dark shadows flocked around me and Yoo Joonghyuk. The scenery of the room changed and I could smell sulfur. Hot hellfire and blood covered the floor.

I could hear Yoo Joonghyuk's confused voice. I didn't respond to him and just gazed at the countless shadows around me.

[Measuring the number of rounds possible with your Reading Comprehension level.]

Numbers quickly passed before my eyes.

[The maximum number of times you can read 'Yoo Joonghyuk' is up to the '41st round'.]

[Do you want to select the 41st round?]

I slowly nodded and Yoo Joonghyuk's emotions filled my head. Terrible despair and helplessness. Emotions that were worn out from the scenarios. A crazy depression attacked me and the sound of derisive laughter could be heard. I endured all of it.

[The talent of 'Yoo Joonghyuk' in that round is attracted to you.]

In the midst of this distant feeling of loneliness, a shadow was watching me. The 41st round Yoo Joonghyuk. The cruel man who sent Shin Yoosung to his past.

He spoke to me, 「My specialty is the spear.」

A spear that existed in the dark shadow appeared in front of my eyes. I didn't hesitate to grab the spear.

[The story 'Hell of Eternity' has begun.]

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The story, Hell of Eternity. It was a story the 1863rd Yoo Joonghyuk passed to me.

[Many constellations are astounded by your story.]

[The nebula 'Asgard' is focused on your story.]

[The nebula 'Vedas' is focused on your story.]

A story that drew the attention of the nebulae. It wasn't strange. This was a myth-grade story and had enough destructive power to replace some of the giant stories. There was a ripple in Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes.

"How…?"

Hell of Eternity was a story that allowed me to borrow the 'history' that Yoo Joonghyuk had accumulated through 1863 rounds.

I felt a power that wasn't mine from the spear held in my hand. I couldn't borrow the skills or stigma of Yoo Joonghyuk with this story. However, the real strength of Yoo Joonghyuk didn't come from the system. It was embodied through the transcendental training.

「 In order to hold that spear, Yoo Joonghyuk trained with a single focus for decades. 」

The 41st round Yoo Joonghyuk.

Rather than look for the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint, he found a legacy of the vanished Zero Murim. It was a world of martial arts that had been destroyed a long time ago.

Soul Killing Spear. The martial arts that were comparable to the Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship, the strongest martial arts of Murim.

Yoo Joonghyuk of the 41st round had destroyed the returnees with this spear. The 3rd round Yoo Joonghyuk would probably recognize this power. It was one of the achievements he had in mind.

"Yes, this is the power you've been trying to learn."

I spoke with a stiff expression. The hand holding the spear trembled like it was caught in a heavy wind. It was due to excessive integration. It was only the 41st round. The 41st round Yoo Joonghyuk had already reached this level.

This was the power that the human Yoo Joonghyuk accumulated through his life that went beyond skills and stamina. This was the status of a transcendent.

I felt like I was going to faint from dizziness but held on. The mental load was greater than the physical burden. However, if this load was only mental…

[The exclusive skill, 'Fourth Wall' is in action!]

I could hold out somehow. "Bring it on, Yoo Joonghyuk."

The story version of Yoo Joonghyuk took a stance. It would've been better if I had a star relic like Harmony Fox Halberd or White Lightning God Spear but for now, this 'shadow spear' was sufficient.

The fictional 41st round character summoned by me spoke.

「You are weak. It is good to regress.」

Yoo Joonghyuk was weakened. Perhaps I was the one who weakened him.

"If you don't do it correctly, I will kill you."

A torrent of transcendent power rushed from Yoo Joonghyuk's body. Yoo Joonghyuk noticed that I was serious. We rushed towards each other without needing to be told.

Our statuses collided and caused a roar. Beyond the towering dust cloud, the Soul Killing Spear divided into hundreds of different branches. The Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship started to be pushed by the offensive of the Soul Killing Spear.

It wasn't a skill or a stigma. It was a history made by the efforts of 41 regressions.

The Soul Killing Spear exploded and wounds appeared all over Yoo Joonghyuk's body.

"Is this all you can do? Three years have passed but it is only this much."

I was breathless and dizzy from my magic power being exhausted. Nevertheless, I kept talking. I spat out inflammatory words in order to provoke him. Yoo Joonghyuk's thoughts floated through the air.

「What would it be like if I had won the Absolute Throne at the time?」

In the midst of this overflowing regret, Yoo Joonghyuk stepped back again.

「If only I had tried more.」

Step back, step back. After the constant retreat, Yoo Joonghyuk reached a dead end as always.

A wall with no more place to retreat.

I stabbed the spear towards Yoo Joonghyuk. The spearman spoke as he rushed towards Yoo Joonghyuk.

「 No, you tried. 」

Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes grew bigger as he narrowly avoided the spear. Yoo Joonghyuk shuddered as he stared at the spear stuck in the wall. The spearman kept speaking.

「 It wasn't enough. 」

Yoo Joonghyuk's trembling slowly subsided. His shaking eyes sunk and a cold image flickered in his retina.

[The story 'Hell of Eternity' has affected the incarnation 'Yoo Joonghyuk'.]

Yoo Joonghyuk raised his sword again. As the spearman's split apart the air, the Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship overlapped with its trajectory. Blue sparks flashed and Yoo Joonghyuk stared at the spearman rather than me. The number of collisions increased and the time and space around us changed.

The time of transcendence was opening.

「 You sent me Shin Yoosung. 」

「 That's right. 」

Yoo Joonghyuk kept wielding his sword. It was a swordsmanship that was more unrefined than earlier.

The trajectory was immature and clumsy. The Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship that was on the verge of completion was falling apart again.

Yoo Joonghyuk asked, 「 Can I become this powerful after going through 41 rounds? 」

「 To be exact, it was only this much. 」

In order to transcend transcendence, one must have the courage to abandon the framework.

Like an architect breaking the castle because of a window frame, a persistent obsession and desire for perfection became the key to open a new transcendence.

Then Yoo Joonghyuk chose his road. Every time he encountered the Soul Killing Spear, the shape of the Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship collapsed.

The trajectory changed, causing the meaning to change. Ultimately, the power of transcendence followed the grains of the story he pursued. Yoo Joonghyuk's history became stronger every time we faced a huge challenge. That history was once again preparing for a jump forward.

「 Become stronger, Yoo Joonghyuk. 」

Yoo Joonghyuk and Yoo Joonghyuk were talking.

[The constellation 'Demon King of Salvation' is looking at incarnation Yoo Joonghyuk.]

Perhaps this was my role. Once he reached a certain phase of his life, Yoo Joonghyuk looked inside himself. I looked at such a Yoo Joonghyuk and thought about myself.

I couldn't be the protagonist. I couldn't save someone else. Still, at least I knew the story and could tell the story. All the strokes of the spear contained the sentences I read.

From the terrible 3rd round through to the 41st round. In addition, the 1863rd round that was like hell. I read every sentence without fail.

–Ahhhhhhh!

Within the clash, Yoo Joonghyuk was living different threats. Just as I lived through Ways of Survival, Yoo Joonghyuk experience a life he hadn't lived. Yoo Joonghyuk of the 3rd round was growing thanks to the 41st round.

[The character 'Yoo Joonghyuk' is staring at the story of Hell of Eternity.]

Human beings couldn't be saved by others. They could only save themselves. The thing I could do for others was to play the role of a bridge at best.

"All of you have failed." Yoo Joonghyuk said. "I won't listen to the advice of those who have failed."

Finally, it was the Yoo Joonghyuk that I knew. The trajectory of the evolved Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship followed the flow of the Soul Killing Spear. His persistent sword destroyed the shadow of the spear, breaking the link that followed.

Yoo Joonghyuk was frustrated but he didn't give up. Even if the despair didn't stop and everything collapsed, he would once again pick up the first building block.

「 I am Yoo Joonghyuk. 」

"No." Finally, he surpassed himself. "I am Yoo Joonghyuk."

The explosion scattered through every corner of the room.

[The story 'Hell of Eternity' has finished.]

The burning hell disappeared and the bloody scent became dull. In the dirt and the dust, the blade of the Black Heavenly Demon Sword touched my throat. At almost the same time, the Unbroken Faith that I stretched out and reached his chest.

[The constellation 'Maritime War God' truly feels admiration.]

[The constellation 'One who Overcomes the Late Trials' is paying tribute to you.]

[The constellation 'Last Hero of Hwangsanbeol' admires the true confrontation.]

Time passed and only breathing sounds filled the area. In the stillness that was intermittently broken, Yoo Joonghyuk stared at me. Yoo Joonghyuk of the 3rd round had exceeded the 41st round and declared, "I won."

I smiled. "What are you saying? I won."

The star rolling on the ground shone brightly.

[The scenario's time limit has ended.]

Like a blessing, the star burst apart in the air and scattered a silver light. We looked up blankly at the light.

[The room star has failed to be acquired.]

[Nobody hurt their companion.]

The 46th main scenario, Proof of the Stars. The scenario could be cleared properly when all the participants didn't harm each other.

[You have proven your 'trust'.]

However, those who had reached the 46th scenario didn't think it could be cleared this way.

Up to now had been a world of constellations. Finally, there was no incarnation that would abandon the opportunity to grow their strength.

One star was born and another star would die. In addition, there would be no one to share the light.

[You have acquired a new story!]

[You have met the conditions to clear the scenario.]

Once we came to our senses, we were lying on the floor like we had made a promise. It was because Yoo Joonghyuk and I had reached our limits. The fuses of our consciousness was cut off for a short time and came back. I opened my eyes and could hear Yoo Joonghyuk murmuring. "…It is a pity."

"I agree. This was a good chance to get the story of the Supreme King."

I didn't respond but laughter emerged. All the muscles of my body were sore. I chewed on a few Great Return Pills that I secretly pulled out but the restoration of my broken body was slower than I expected. Hell of Eternity was a story that caused severe overload.

"You seem okay?"

"…"

Yoo Joonghyuk was breathing hard as he seemed to think of something. Yoo Joonghyuk had probably reached a new ground due to the enlightenment he just gained. This was the thing called talent. I was envious. Well, he was the protagonist.

The silent protagonist opened his mouth. "You said you went to another world line."

I wondered why he hadn't asked before.

"What round was it?"

"The 1863rd round."

Was the number too big? Yoo Joonghyuk was silent for a moment. "The me in that world gave you the story?"

"That's right."

Yoo Joonghyuk didn't ask for further details. He thought about something for a while before asking, "That me… did I fail?"

I looked up at the air. "You succeeded."

I could feel Yoo Joonghyuk stiffening.

[The 'Fourth Wall' is shimmering faintly.]

Yoo Joonghyuk of the 1863rd round, who went beyond the original novel and left to find his own story. I was reminded of that Yoo Joonghyuk's last appearance. "He'll be able to reach the end of the scenario. Maybe it is an ending I don't know."

"…You didn't check it properly."

"If I checked it, I wouldn't have returned."

"It wouldn't be so bad to see the end in that place."

"That wasn't my world." I looked at the empty space. "My world is here."

Yoo Joonghyuk was silent for a long time. I licked my lips and laughed. "This place has my incarnation Yoosung, my colleague Yoo Sangah, Han Sooyoung who hasn't blackened yet, my mother…"

"Don't feel joyful. It isn't over yet."

Then the voice of a dokkaebi was heard in the air.

[Geez, one room is already over. [Hihi, truly… it was a thrilling battle that the scenario anticipated!]

It wasn't Youngki. There were a number of dokkaebis handling the scenario so their responsibilities had probably changed. I struggled to get up. Yoo Joonghyuk was right. This scenario wasn't over yet. Yoo Joonghyuk said. "The other rooms entered later than us."

In fact, the following message was in front of our eyes.

[Currently waiting for the remaining nebula members to clear the scenario.]

Then Youngki's voice was heard.

[For those who have satisfied the clear conditions, I'll show you the scenery of another room!]

Along with the message, a few screens popped in front of us. This was followed by numerous indirect messages entering my ears.

[The demon king 'Ruler of the East Hell' is watching the clash between two constellations.]

[The demon king 'Black Mane Lion' is deeply interested in the battle.]

[The constellation 'Guardian of Youths and Travel' is focused on the battlefield.]

[The constellation 'Friend of Justice and Harmony' has an anxious expression.]

[The constellation 'Twisted Head of Calamity' wishes for the victory of a friend.]

They were all modifiers difficult to gather in one place. I fixed my gaze on one of the screens that had emerged. Why were these bigshots gathered?

…Dammit, this was what happened. Black and red waves of magic power were colliding on the screen. It was a feast of magic power that filled the room. There was a hellfire that melted everything and black flames with formidable destructive power. The mere sight made me feel like my body would burn from the heat.

The two most terrible constellations I knew. The incarnations of these constellations were fighting.

Abyssal Black Flame Dragon and Demon-like Judge of Fire.

A dokkaebi's laugh was heard.

[The wrong that was wrongly assigned will probably end in a bland way.]

There was an explosion of red magic power and everything in the room burned. Pale shadows shook in the hazy field of view.

Flesh was sharply torn and blood flowed. Someone's body was slowly falling down in the smoke.

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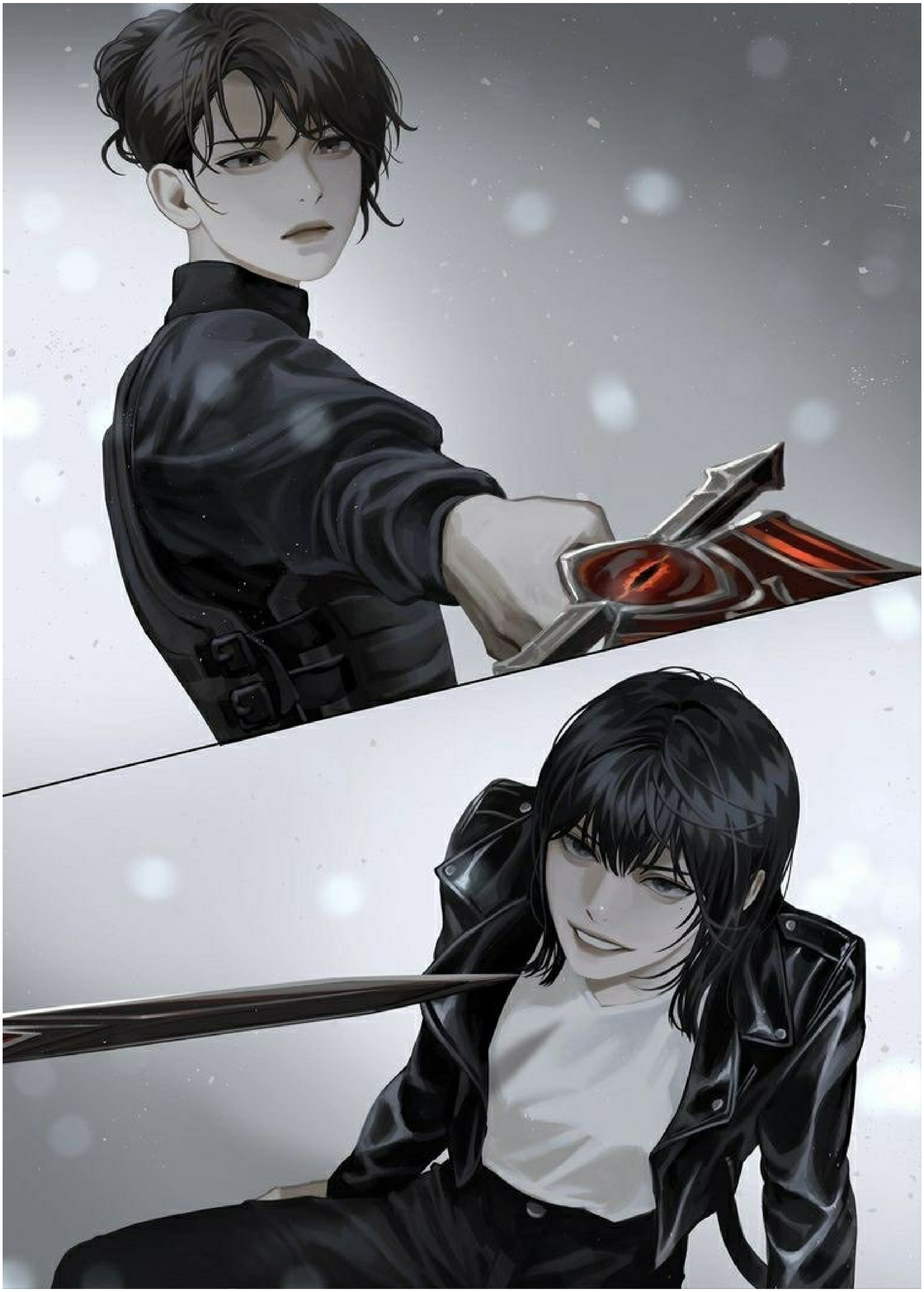
Fragments of the ceiling fell as Jung Heewon quietly stared through the dust. She could see the collapsed Han Sooyoung through her blurred vision.

Judge of Evil and Black Flames Demon Ruler. Demon-like Judge of Fire and Abyssal Black Flame Dragon.

It was a battle that almost all the constellations on the Korean Peninsula looked forward to but the expressions of the parties involved weren't pleasant at all. Jung Heewon stepped through the dirt and pointed the Sword of Judgment at Han Sooyoung. "Why don't you stop acting?"



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Han Sooyoung scattered into powder. There was a sharp ripple. Jung Heewon reflexively twisted her body and stabbed the sword behind her. There was the sound of metal being struck. Han Sooyoung untied the bandage around her right hand while the Sword of Judgment pierced through the darkness.

"…You weren't fooled?"

"I know you have the Avatar skill." A white light emerged from the Sword of Judgment. "You are the First Apostle."

Their status collided with each other and both people fell at the same time. Jung Heewon's eyes were red after she triggered Demon Slaying. It strengthened the user's attack power but also heightened their uneasy emotions. The grief and anger amplified.

"It was you who attacked the people of Chungmuro."

The battle of Chungmuro when the flag war was in full swing. It was the first time Han Sooyoung met the party members.

"At that time, Jihye and Gilyoung almost died."

"…You aren't the one who almost died so why are you so angry? You weren't even there at the time."

"I am angry because I wasn't there. If I was, I wouldn't have left you alone."

Lights were shining in the air and the things that happened during the flag battle was projected as holographic images. Perhaps it was a service from the dokkaebis for the constellations who weren't in the channel at the time. The appearance of Lee Jihye and Lee Gilyoung as they were terribly hurt by the apostles was shown. Han Sooyoung seemed like she was going to be sick. "Then are you going to kill me now?"

"I can't trust you."

Han Sooyoung bit her lips. She also understood that Jung Heewon's anger was reasonable. Certainly, she was the First Apostle and at one time, the enemy of the party.

It happened one day two years ago. The rumour that Han Sooyoung was the First Apostle spread. It was unknown why the rumour spread. One thing was for certain. Han Sooyoung didn't deny the rumour. It might've been due to guilt or it could've been a cowardly heart. Han Sooyoung didn't know either.

The only thing she knew was the attitude of the party members towards her.

–Well, it is a thing of the past.

–Really? Noona was the person who talked with your head cut off? How amazing.

Lee Jihye and Lee Gilyoung were the ones who suffered the most during the flag battle but they didn't care at all. Yoo Sangah was already aware Han Sooyoung was the First Apostle and closed her eyes, while Yoo Joonghyuk didn't mind. However, Jung Heewon was different. "You have to atone properly."

"Why are you—"

"If you continue roughly like this, what about the scars the kids received?"

"…"

In order to make everyone happy, there were things they put up with because they didn't want to break the harmony. This was especially true for people who kept an eye on the surroundings.

"Han Sooyoung, if you're an adult then you should act your age. Don't be immature."

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is nodding.]

Han Sooyoung's eyes became ferocious.

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is angry.]

"This person, do you think you're the apostle of justice? It is good to pretend to be cool but think about the time and place. Would Kim Dokja like what you are doing now?"

"It has nothing to do with Kim Dokja."

"You said it with your own mouth. You will be Kim Dokja's sword."

For the first time, Jung Heewon fell silent. Han Sooyoung ridiculed her. "As a sword, shouldn't you move as your master tells you?"

"I'm sorry." The dust on the floor sparked. The air burned wherever Jung Heewon's sword passed through. "This sword is selfish."

Jung Heewon activated Hell Flames Ignition. "I will decide who I cut."

The Sword of Judgment aimed at Han Sooyoung.

"Now your mischief is over, Han Sooyoung. Bring out all your power."

[The character 'Jung Heewon' has requested the activation of Judgment Time!]

I watched the black flames and hell flames filling the screen and sighed. "… That's why they are fighting."

I thought it was time. Han Sooyoung's identity had been concealed for a long time but there was no way it could be maintained forever. Rather, it might be fortunate that the secret was revealed before going to the 47th scenario. This scenario didn't mean anything unless they were honest with each other. The hidden secrets exposed to the dokkaebis would become materials on the screen.

Yoo Joonghyuk asked, "Aren't you going?"

I could intervene using Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint. Jung Heewon's confused voice was heard from the screen.

[Some constellations of the absolute good system have opposed the request.]

[The activation of Judgment Time is cancelled!]

I glanced over and Yoo Joonghyuk was watching me. "…I can't leave it alone."

Of course, I didn't intend to interfere in the fight between the two of them. However, I wanted to prevent their battle from spreading to their constellations.

[The demon king 'Demon King of Salvation' doesn't want the constellations to intervene in the fight between incarnations.]

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is dissatisfied with your intervention.]

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is reluctantly convinced.]

[The constellation 'Scribe of Heaven' agrees with your thoughts.]

There was no answer from Uriel. She wasn't allowed access to this channel yet.

Yoo Joonghyuk said. "One of them could die."

"No, that won't happen."

"You don't know the past three years. The relationship between the two of them is really bad."

"Yes, I can see."

I was unconcerned and Yoo Joonghyuk frowned. "Do you want your colleagues to die?"

"No."

"Or did you see the future through the power of prophecy?"

"I don't have the power of prophecy. Do you still believe in something like that?"

I watched Jung Heewon and Han Sooyoung fighting on the screen. Then Yoo Joonghyuk coldly replied, "It is a situation where future information is actively used to calculate everything. There is no room for the faith of humans to intervene."

It had been a while since he spoke so much. Certainly, my current appearance looked like I had no countermeasures.

Thinking about it, I had a similar conversation with Han Sooyoung of the 1863rd round. Han Sooyoung used Anticipation Plagiarism and collected, calculated and read the future while collaborating with the 1863rd round Yoo Joonghyuk. I had asked Han Sooyoung,

「"It doesn't make sense no matter how I think about it."」

Anticipation Plagiarism was a good story and Yoo Joonghyuk's knowledge was useful. Even so, it was impossible to save everyone up to the 95th scenario, including Kim Namwoon. Numerous variables would've occurred from changing the story and unexpected things would've happened.

No matter how great Han Sooyoung and Yoo Joonghyuk were, they weren't the writers of Ways of Survival. Not everything could be absolutely controlled. Failure was expected.

「"How did you get here? Tell me honestly. Is there another secret?"」

Han Sooyoung looked at me like she was either pitying me or laughing at me.

「"I believed."」

「"What?"」

「 "I believed in the characters I created. That's all." 」

This was the answer of the plagiarist write, although I couldn't remember it well. I told Yoo Joonghyuk.

"Yoo Joonghyuk, I believe in humans."

The sword and fist collided and the flames melted everything around them. I watched Jung Heewon and Han Sooyoung bleeding, shouting and rushing at each other. I looked at them and had a faint understanding of the secret behind Han Sooyoung reaching the 95th scenario.

"I believe in the story they had built."

There was another deafening roar from the screen. The two people gasped in the series of clashes. They rolled in the dust pit, striking the other person's abdomen or cutting hair. Their blood clotted as their expressions changed.

–You must be very upset about me.

–It isn't just that.

I seemed to hear their thoughts without using Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint. It was the history of the two people who fought together until now. The party members had survived unharmed for the past three years. They wouldn't survive those three years without cooperation.

Dealing with the sasquatch in the 28th scenario. Catching the 'algonkin snake' in the 35th scenario. The two people must've protected each other's backs to survive. They saved each other's lives many times, pulling up each other with tired hands.

Jung Heewon and Han Sooyoung also knew this.

–Just…

Jung Heewon was strong. Even if all the incarnations in the world were counted, there were few incarnations who could surpass Jung Heewon.

However, her opponent was Han Sooyoung. In a situation where Judgment Time is blocked, the outcome of this match was almost set.

–Please apologize properly to the children…

Jung Heewon staggered and fell forward. The hot temperature of the room gradually cooled down. Han Sooyoung looked down at Jung Heewon's fallen body and carried Jung Heewon on her back. She seemed to mumble something but I couldn't hear Han Sooyoung's voice. Perhaps it was Han Sooyoung's last pride.

There was a star glowing white at her feet. Han Sooyoung stared at the star and kicked it with her feet.

[The scenario's time limit has ended.]

[Incarnation Han Sooyoung and Incarnation Jung Heewon have demonstrated their 'trust'.]

Han Sooyoung raised her head and looked in my direction.

–…Is it fun to steal a look?

I turned my gaze towards other screens.

–Lee Gilyoung… do you surrender?

–I don't want to! Shin Yoosung, you surrender!

Lee Gilyoung and Shin Yoosung had entered a room and were crying while pinching each other's arms. I turned my head again and saw a room with an unusual landscape. Lee Jihye, Lee Seolhwa and Lee Hyunsung were together.

–This room isn't fun. Right unni?

–…Yes.

–Hyunsung ahjussi! Stop picking your nose and get up. The time was up.

No one touched the star and it was just a shining decoration. It was so peaceful I doubted it was a scenario.

[I'm sorry Constellations. I made a mistake when distributing the rooms…]

The misplaced room seemed to be over there.

[Incarnation Shin Yoosung and Incarnation Lee Gilyoung have demonstrated their 'trust'.]

[Incarnation Lee Hyunsung and Incarnation Lee Seolhwa have demonstrated their 'trust'.]

[All members of the nebula has met the scenario clear conditions.]

[Main scenario #46 - Context of the Constellation has been completed.]

[None of the nebula members have harmed each other.]

[Compensation for the clearance is prepared.]

No one had the same story. Everyone lived a different history and understood things using different contexts.

There was a dazzling light and the party members were summoned. Shin Yoosung, Lee Gilyoung, Lee Hyunsung, Lee Seolhwa, Lee Jihye, Han Sooyoung, Jung Heewon…

They were the people who came here with me. The faces of the party members changed as they saw us covered with wounds.

"Dokja-ssi."

"Unni, are you okay? How…"

The party members supported each other. Jung Heewon smiled faintly while Han Sooyoung tapped the ground with her feet. I could see Han Sooyoung smiling.

I raised my head and saw the sky opening. Someone sighed. "Ah…"

The sky of the Star Stream had unfolded. It was a marvellous cosmic scene. At the overwhelming landscape, some people trembled. It was a deep darkness with no end. The thing that couldn't be filled up was waiting for us.

Shin Yoosung grabbed my right sleeve and Lee Gilyoung grabbed the fingers of my left hand.

They were followed by Lee Jihye, Han Sooyoung, Lee Hyunsung and Jung Heewon. Finally, Lee Seolhwa and Yoo Joonghyuk formed a circle around us.

"…Isn't this similar to that squid in the past?"

There was fear in Lee Jihye's voice. I smiled and said, "That's right."

The next moment, a small star shone in the night sky.

「Between salvation and the demon king.」

With this light, several planets started to shine together.

「Between the demon and judgment.」

「Between the steel and master.」

「Between the abyss and black flame dragon.」

I saw the white lines connecting the empty universe. The stars, that seemed like they would never meet each other, were facing each other. At this moment, I understood the context of the modifiers. Perhaps the party members felt the same way.

Shin Yoosung spoke. "Pretty."

There were stories between the stars.

[The nebula 'Kim Dokja's Company' has broken through the 46th scenario!]

There were still vacancies in the constellation of the nebula. One of the vacant places belonged to Yoo Sangah.

I spoke to the people. "Let's go."

Our bodies rose into the air and we soon became light. The numerous stars of the Star Stream passed by and the vast landscape of an interstellar city was seen in the distance. It took me a long time but I eventually ended up here.

Olympus. Vedas. Papyrus. The grudges were piled up in me. I hadn't forgotten. Not at all.

Shadows were swaying in places where the blinding light diminished. Surprisingly, someone was waiting for us at the entrance to the interstellar city. A huge shadow swaying in the light spoke to me.

[Father.]

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* Official novel illustration (canonical)

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…Father? If I wasn't mistaken, the giant shadow's word was definitely directed this way. The party members were staring at me with eyes full of disbelief. I looked back at the shadow with bewilderment.

[Baat?]

The faint light coming from the entrance of the interstellar city revealed the shadow.

[No, not that! Try again. 'Father'.]

[Baaaat?]

[No, it is Father. You really…]

The giant shadow wasn't a single creature. To be precise, there was a creature the size of a soccer ball on the huge shadow.

"What are you doing?" My words caused Bihyung to look this way.

[…Uh. You're already here?]

The giant shadow was Bihyung, who had inflated his body like a giant. The stronger the dokkaebi, the larger the body became. The fact that Bihyung was this big showed he had reached a significant level in the bureau. Wait… the reason for Bihyung's presence and the soccer ball…

"Biyoo!"

The cotton candy Biyoo flew through the air.

[Baaat!]

Biyoo came into my arms and rubbed against my cheeks. Something was forming in her small eyes. I couldn't believe the child the size of a baseball had become a soccer ball. Biyoo had grown up since the past.

"Did you wait long?"

A small hand popped out from the cotton candy and slapped me in the cheek. I left her alone in front of the dimensional gate and deserved this much punishment. I silently endured the ticklish touch. Tears fell as Biyoo once again dug tighter into my chest. The children ran to me and touched the fluffy Biyoo.

[Hum hum.]

I turned my head to see Bihyung waiting for me. I opened the dokkaebi communication and spoke to Bihyung.

–What were you doing here?

–I have been waiting. A dokkaebi to take you to the 47th scenario zone was needed.

–What is with your body size?

Bihyung ignored me and spoke to the party members.

[Everyone of Kim Dokja's Company. Do you know who I am? I am Bihyung, branch manager of the

Korean Peninsula branch.]

Bihyung banged on his chest like he was showing off his thick muscles. He made a production out of this.

[It seems like yesterday when the Korean Peninsula scenario first began… now you've already come to the 47th scenario area.]

Bihyung's face was full of emotions.

[As you might know, the scenarios after the 47th scenario don't have to be carried out in order. After entering the interstellar city, you can selectively perform scenarios 48 to 65.]

Shin Yoosung raised her hand. "We can choose the scenario?"

[It is the so-called autonomous selection system. Hahaha!]

Nobody laughed. Bihyung shrugged. [Hum hum, anyway. It is up to you which of the scenarios up to number 65 will be done first. You can do the 65th scenario at once or go through the scenarios to build up your 'status'. In any case, you need a certain level of status to enter the scenario area after number 65.]

Lee Hyunsung asked, "Then what will happen after the 66th scenario?"

[There will be a new explanation at that time. You can't go there now so don't worry.]

It was a cold tone but Bihyung's expression to the party members wasn't cold.

[Well, it took four years to get here… I don't know how much time it will take in the future. Ah, not all of you went through the same four years.]

Bihyung grinned at me as he spoke.

[Let's go to the interstellar city. It will take around 10 minutes to complete the transmission. Please prepare yourself. An amazing world is waiting for you.]

The moment Bihyung;s words were over, Biyoo shouted. [Baaat!]

A gorgeous beam of light wrapped around our party members. We started to fly towards the interstellar city. For safety reasons, the movement speed was slower than expected. I didn't know when Biyoo would emerge from my arms. Jung Heewon watched this scene and opened her mouth.

"Dokja-ssi. I have something to ask."

Jung Heewon's expression towards me was strange. The other party members glanced at me like they knew what she was going to say.

"Where have you been in the past three years?"

During the journey to the interstellar city. I told the party members about what happened in the 1863rd round. Of course, I didn't tell them everything and only picked the points I could explain. As expected, the party members noticed and were startled.

"Really? I survived to the 95th scenario?"

"…I can't believe it. That subway boy survived."

The excited Lee Jihye and Lee Hyunsung faced each other. Yoo Joonghyuk listened silently to the story while Lee Gilyoung and Jung Heewon seemed a bit sullen. It was natural for the people who didn't exist in that round to feel so. It was Han Sooyoung who reacted the most.

"I was in that world?"

"Yes, you were. You were the leader."

"No, why…"

Something seemed to come to her and Han Sooyoung promptly sent a message with Midday Tryst.

–Do you mean the Avatar I talked about before…

I nodded and Han Sooyoung made an expression of amazement. It would be absurd for Han Sooyoung. The avatar split from her found a different world line.

Jung Heewon looked closely at me and asked, "By the way, Dokja-ssi's coat has changed a bit… did you take it from the 95th scenario?"

"Correct."

The only thing I took from the 1863rd scenario was this coat. Han Sooyoung, who was staring at me carefully, put her hands into my coat's pockets. Come to think of it, Han Sooyoung of the 1863rd round was like this.

"Crazy… what did you bring back? Doesn't this violate probability?" Han Sooyoung checked the items and her mouth dropped open. "…Hey. Can you give me a few of these?"

"You're looking at it."

There were many different items that the 1863rd round Han Sooyoung packed in the coat. Most of the items weren't needed yet in this round but some items were useful enough. By the way, there was an unexpected item.

"What is this smartphone?"

It wasn't my smartphone. I turned on the smartphone and a photo with a strange phase appeared on the main screen.

– Namwoon ♡ Jihye.

It was a photo of the smiling Kim Namwoon and frowning Lee Jihye. I realized the owner of this smartphone. That reminded me, Kim Namwoon once stole this coat and wore it.

Lee Jihye asked me with the same expression as herself on the screen. "Ahjussi, what is this photo?"

"Uh, this… it was used by the child of that world. I must've brought it here by mistake."

"Were we dating in that world?"

"No, he one-sidedly liked you."

"Phew, I see." Lee Jihye took the smartphone from my hand and opened the gallery. "Wow, this photo is pretty good?"

…Photo? This time I was surprised and looked at the smartphone with the party members.

"Look, Seolhwa unni and I… uh? There is also Han Donghoon? Isn't he in the Ulsan Alliance?"

"Here is Hyunsung-ssi. However, it is cut off at his neck."

It was a group photo of the 1863rd round people smiling brightly. Lee Seolhwa, Kim Namwoon, Lee Jihye, Han Donghoon, Lee Hyunsung… and the emotionless man in the centre.

Lee Jihye told me, "This is Master in that world? His face is injured? Isn't he cooler than the one here?"

Everyone in the photo was smiling apart from the 1863rd Yoo Joonghyuk. Yoo Joonghyuk was already looking over.

[The 'Fourth Wall' is shimmering faintly.]

No one here knew the life that Yoo Joonghyuk of that world had lived.

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' is looking at you.]

…No, there was one person. I looked up at the place where Secretive Plotter would be watching among the stars of the Star Stream.

I still didn't know why Secretive Plotter made such an Outer World Covenant. I didn't know why he reacted like that to my choice. I guessed a few things but everything was just a hypothesis.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is looking at you.]

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is looking at you.]

The interstellar city 'Context of the Constellations' was a transit station that led to the worlds of other constellations. I felt that my physical distance from the constellations was gradually getting closer.

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is welcoming you.]

The punishment seemed to finally be released and Uriel also sent an indirect message. In the midst of a brilliant light, our bodies entered the city.

[You have entered the interstellar city 'Context of the Constellations'.]

[A new main scenario is waiting.]

The place we landed was a huge city square. Some incarnations glanced this way but none of them paid attention to us. This city's scale was different from where we had stayed so far. It was natural.

I spoke to the people, "Everyone knows why we came here?"

From now on, the enemies we were dealing with were thousands of years old. Jung Heewon nodded and wondered, "We came to play with Olympus right?"

"Do you have a separate plan? Perhaps a full-scale war…"

I answered Lee Hyunsung's question. "I'm not thinking of a full-scale war. Olympus is one of the biggest nebulas in the entire Star Stream.

The odds of Kim Dokja's Company winning in a head-on confrontation against Olympus was almost zero.

"I want to visit Olympus. They have to take responsibility for making Yoo Sangah that way. There will definitely be a way to save her."

Currently, Yoo Sangah was stuck in the flow of consciousness. After three months, all the stories would disappear from Yoo Sangah's body and her empty soul would disappear into the void. Prior to that, we had to find a way to save Yoo Sangah. Perhaps Olympus had one of those methods.

Then Yoo Joonghyuk opened his mouth. "Not everyone needs to go. Lee Seolhwa and I will stay here."

"Where are you going?"

"I have no obligation to report to you."

In fact, the place where Yoo Joonghyuk wanted to go was obvious. Context of the Constellations was an interstellar city where all nebulae converged. In other words, we weren't the only incarnations who would come here.

I advised him, "Watch out. As you know well, that woman isn't easy."

"I will take care of it."

Yoo Joonghyuk turned around and started walking somewhere. Lee Seolhwa smiled softly at me and followed behind Yoo Joonghyuk. Lee Seolhwa in this round was more 'good' than any other round. It was unreasonable for anyone to have complete control over Yoo Joonghyuk but she would be able to reduce some unnecessary conflict.

Yoo Joonghyuk disappeared into the alley and I moved with the party members towards the portal in the centre of the square. Context of the Constellations contained a 'portal' that connected to almost all the world.

It was a portal that allowed me to visit past scenario areas as well as the residence of other nebulae. I planned to make a formal visit to Olympus using the portal. I entered the destination for the portal.

"Mount Olympus."

Olympus, a huge nebula with all types of legends and adventures. It was Mount Olympus where the 12 main gods of Olympus resided. Finally, the time had come to check their home.

The portal swirled at my feet and faint mythological scenes came to mind. The next moment, an unexpected message came back.

[Olympus is currently refusing all visitors.]

Chapter 314: Ep. 59 - Kim Dokja's Company, V

Along with the message, the swirling of the portal quickly subsided. The party members waiting were confused. Jung Heewon was the one who raised the question first. "…Entry was refused? What is this?"

I once again called out the destination.

[Olympus is currently refusing all visitors.]

[The Olympus scenario will open after seven days.]

After seven days? At this point, something flashed in my mind.

[A small nebula is quite ambitious, actually thinking about going to Olympus.]

The true voice came from a constellation sitting at the fountain next to the portal. Based on his calm but violent pressure, he was a warrior who had struggled for a long time before becoming a constellation. His body was bigger than Lee Hyunsung and there was a long spear on his back… wait, a spear?

[Hrmm, your impressions are familiar… where did you come from?]

I replied on behalf of the party members. "Earth."

[Hoh, I'm from there. It's a pleasure. Where on Earth? It it on the continent side?]

"The Korean Peninsula."

"Neighbourhood friends! There seem to be some decent ones there.]

I became more convinced after hearing the constellation's easy laugh. A large one-handed spear resembling the head of a snake…

The man rose from the fountain with a grunt and walked away. Han Sooyoung came to be side and said, "Hey, that constellation? The battle of Changban?"

"That's right."

A historical-grade constellation who was one of China's greatest warriors along with Guan Yoo and Xiang Yoo. He was arguably the tiger official of the battle of Changban, Zhang Fei.

Lee Jihye was surprised by the overheard whisper and asked, "Really? Is he that Zhang Fei guy?"

I nodded. The expressions of the party members were spectacular. They didn't show this much reaction when they met Surya…

I could see the status of the Three Kingdoms in South Korea. Even Lee Hyunsung was flustered as he hurriedly took out a soldier's handbook. "Excuse me Dokja-ssi. I'm a big fan of the Three Kingdoms. Can I get his autograph…"

"You will often experience this in the future. Many of the historical figures we know have become constellations."

I looked around the square with the party members. The previously quiet square was already crowded with constellations and incarnations.

[Recruiting participants for the 53rd scenario!]

[Looking for an incarnation to be a tanker to obtain the story.]

Crude true voices were heard from all over the place. It was possible to build up full-fledged stories after the 47th scenario. Therefore, historical-grade constellations would often organize small parties to target the scenario. Jung Heewon spoke like she couldn't believe these beings had sponsored us so far.

"All of a sudden, the dignity of the constellations has fallen off."

"In fact, most of them are low-grade. They haven't fallen. It is just that our status has risen."

"We'll have to break those scenarios after saving Sangah-ssi?"

"As Bihyung said, we don't have to clear them all."

I stared at the flashing scenario billboard in the sky.

–We invite you to battle against the giant gods in Gigantomachia of Olympus.

Among the scenarios after the 47th scenario, there were many large scenarios created by the direct intervention of the nebulae or bureau. One of the representatives of this was Gigantomachia, which was regularly run by Olympus.

Some of the constellations saw the advertisement and mumbled, "Is it real this time? Will the ancient giants be released from Tartarus?"

"Hey, you said that a dozen years ago but they didn't."

"This time is different? The atmosphere is very suspicious. There is talk of internal conflict in Olympus."

"Are they pretending to be fighting?"

I listened to the conversation and saw the ensuing commercial. It was a video showing Olympus having a brilliant battle with the giants. A trident split apart the sea, the ranks of the giants were crushed and the soldiers commanded by the 'Atrocious God of War' rushed towards the bodies of the giants. The 'Spokesman of Justice and Wisdom' cut the neck of a giant and the Goddess of Love and Beauty made finger hearts. The end of the advertisement was Dionysus raising his glass in celebration of the war.

–The best scenario in the Star Stream will start after a week!

–Three of the scenario participants will be selected to receive a 'limited edition' weapon made by the Volcanic Blacksmith.

–Scenario admission: 100,000 coins.

Lee Gilyoung watched the advertisement to the end and asked me, "Dokja hyung, I have to pay an admission fee to clear that scenario?"

"Yes."

"A scam!"

"Well, it's a business. Olympus gets income from the Star Stream by providing scenarios. The dokkaebis advertise it and redistribute the income."

Jung Heewon laughed in a dumbfounded way at my words. "It is a hustle. So desperate…"

"We will make them desperate."

Jung Heewon made a stiff expression and nodded. "What will we do now? Should we wait a week? Won't the Olympus scenario start in a week?"

I shook my head. The remaining time was three months. It was important not to waste any time.

"Gigantomachia is a giant story scenario and we need to be thoroughly prepared to challenge it. For now, Yoo Sangah's situation is urgent and we should find another way."

The flow of consciousness was rare but other incarnations had suffered from it. If it wasn't Olympus then it was likely that a nebula of a similar level would know how to treat Yoo Sangah.

I pondered carefully before making various plans. There were two major things to be gained here.

"We will split up the party here. Han Sooyoung, take the others to the auction. Maybe Yoo Joonghyuk will be there too. The party member's equipment should be changed. Buy some clothes for the kids."

"What if I don't have enough money?"

"Here are some coins."

Han Sooyoung quickly stretched out her finger. I touched Han Sooyoung's index finger and exchanged coins. Han Sooyoung's eyes bugged out when she saw the number of coins.

"You know, you are really rich."

"Use it sparingly. I didn't give you a lot."

"Hey kids, let's make Kim Dokja's Company go bankrupt!"

Shin Yoosung and Lee Gilyoung shouted with excitement and followed Han Sooyoung. I spoke to Lee Jihye and Lee Hyunsung. "Go with them. There are many star relics available at the constellations' auction site."

"T-Then we'll follow!"

"Thank you ahjussi!

Lee Jihye and Lee Hyunsung ran like the wind and chased after Han Sooyoung. I grabbed Jung Heewon's shoulder as she was about to follow.

"Heewon-ssi, remain here. There is a place you should come with me."

After a while, I took Jung Heewon to a department store. It was one of the branches of the Dokkaebi Mart in the Context of the Constellations city.

The moment we entered, a large dokkaebi blocked our way. [I'm sorry but only platinum members can enter.]

Perhaps it was due to our shabby appearance but there was slight contempt in the dokkaebi's eyes. Rather than arguing, I opened the Dokkaebi Bag to confirm my rating.

[A diamond member?]

The flustered dokkaebi compared my modifier to the list of customers and his eyes widened.

[I-I'm really sorry! Is this your first visit to the store? Hey, call the manager and staff members! If there is any inconvenience in your shopping—]

"There is no need. Don't call them because it is a hassle."

I refused and passed the dokkaebi. Jung Heewon spoke in a thrilled manner. "Dokja-ssi is like a third-generation chaebol[1]."

"I am the company's boss."

"By the way, what is this department store?"

I quickly scanned Jung Heewon. She wore an old uniform and had the Sword of Judgment hanging from her waist. The clothes had been stained with blood thanks to countless battles over the past three years and the sword was much sharper and redder than before.

"How can a company that makes fun of an employee's welfare succeed?"

"Well, I deserve that."

We stood in front of a display stand in a corner of the store. They were masterpieces of the Mass Production Maker's first generation products.

I observed the products with cautious eyes and took out two neat suits. It was an SSS-grade armour with a practicality that wasn't bad for the 47th scenario. However, Jung Heewon was confused. "Why do you want to dress up all of a sudden?"

"We have to go somewhere pretty formal."

We each changed into the suit. The suit became the right size the moment we wore it.

Jung Heewon wore the suit and looked like a presidential bodyguard. By the way, I didn't know what type of person Jung Heewon was before the destruction.Character List didn't give such information and she was barely in the original Ways of Survival.

"What was Heewon-ssi's previous job? Can I ask?"

"Well, the last thing I did was a bartender. It was just a part-time job. If it is a job… then a regular person who switches between part-time jobs?" Jung Heewon shrugged while scratching her head. "I used to exercise."

"Exercise?"

"I did kendo in middle and high school. I quit competing due to injuries. What about Dokja-ssi?"

"I was a contract employee with a gaming company. I was destined to soon be fired."

We were silent for a moment. The man and women stood in front of a mirror dressed in suits. I could see some constellation's incarnation bodies glancing at us as they passed. The Jung Heewon in the mirror asked, "Dokja-ssi, are you happier now then you were before?"

"If you're saying that the story is better now, it is true."

It was an honest answer and Jung Heewon laughed. "It is the same for me."

We paid in coins and went upstairs using the escalator. Jung Heewon asked curiously, "Dokja-ssi, where are we going? This is the roof."

"It is a portal."

The roof door opened and a panoramic view of the interstellar city could be seen. Jung Heewon gave a short exclamation of admiration but there was no time to admire it.

I took Jung Heewon to the railing of the roof. "Do you trust me?"

It was a short exchange. I jumped from the rooftop while holding Jung Heewon's hand. Despite falling down, Jung Heewon maintained her mind. By the time we were halfway to the ground, I glared at the air.

[The constellation 'Demon King of Salvation' is looking at the hidden portal.]

[The portal requires a password.]

"Everything that falls down has wings."

A portal appeared in the air and swallowed our bodies.

[The nebula has allowed your entry.]

I felt my feet touching the ground. The wind that gave off a seemingly primal breath grazed the tip of my nose. It was a clear wind I had never encountered before. An idyllic meadow stretched out endlessly and a white castle was built beyond it.

Jung Heewon was making a stupid expression. "Dokja-ssi, don't tell me this place…"

"Correct."

This was the nebula of the mighty archangels. It was cumbersome to enter this way but it minimized the time required for entry. I looked up at the air and muttered, "They probably figured it out by now…"

Then a cold alarm sounded in my head.

[…Demon king?]

It was an incredibly cruel voice for an archangel. It wasn't the voice I had been waiting for. It seemed that an unwelcome visitor had appeared.

[Your boldness has grown. How did a demon king come here?]

The power of the narrative-grade constellation caused the body to shrink back. Even the brave Jung Heewon had a pale complexion.

[The constellation 'Demon King of Salvation' is opening his 'status'.]

This allowed Jung Heewon to take a breath. I was about to look for the owner of the voice but a hand seemed appeared in front of me and grabbed my chin.

[Demon King of Salvation?]

Only my chin was grabbed but it felt like power was slipping away from my body. The status was too enormous for me to withstand.

[How does a demon king have the modifier of salvation? There has only been one owner of that modifier in the past 1,500 years.]

I barely managed to turn my head and saw a blonde-haired man staring at me. They were slightly shining purple eyes. I instantly realized the identity of this constellation.

[The constellation 'Saviour of Corruption' is looking at you with crazy eyes.]

There was only one existence in Eden with the modifier of both 'good and evil' and he was the strongest of all the archangels in Eden.

…Dammit, it was the worst opponent. I couldn't believe he was in Eden right now. The purple eyes of the man curved like a crescent moon.

[I don't know what you are but I don't like sharing my modifier. Then you need to die.]

The moment that the man's hand holding my chin glowed with a purple light…

[■■. Take off your hands, Michael. Unless you really want to go to hell.]

It was the voice of the archangel I had been waiting for.

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[1] **Chaebol** – a large family-owned business conglomerate.

Chapter 315: Ep. 59 - Kim Dokja's Company, VI

I could hear the roaring sound of flames and a wall of hot fire appeared between me and Michael. The frowning Michael stepped back while shaking his hands.

[…What are you doing?]

[Get lost.]

Michael stared at Uriel for a moment before smiling.

[Uriel, you must've gone crazy after quitting demon hunting.]

A purple energy started to overflow wildly in Michael's body.

[The constellation 'Saviour of Corruption' is preparing the 'Demon King Slayer' story.]

Demon King Slayer. It was the same story that Yoo Joonghyuk of the 1863rd round had.

The green meadow was dyed with purple waves. The grass withered and an eerie sensation rose from my feet.

Demon King Slayer was a story that had a near invincible power against demon kings. I could never win against Michael as long as he had this story.

Michael's status aimed at me but someone blocked it.

"Archangels are basically ruthless?" Jung Heewon was standing in front of me with the Sword of Judgment. Her shoulders were faintly trembling and her spirit was shrinking back. Nevertheless, Jung Heewon was brave. The will of a human withstood the pressure in front of the archangel's killing intent. Behind such a Jung Heewon stood Uriel.

There was a blazing glow in the background. Hellfire rose and the fields of Eden were filled with sparks.

I gulped as the situation reached the bursting point.

Uriel was one of the top five strongest archangels. She had the highest voice in Eden among the constellations of the absolute good system.

Even so, her opponent was Michael. An unmatched archangel with all types of combat abilities. In Eden, there was no archangel beyond Michael in pure combat power alone.

[The constellation 'Friend of Justice and Harmony' is dissuading 'Saviour of Corruption'.]

[The constellation 'Guardian of Youths and Travel' is looking at the 'Saviour of Corruption'.]

[Constellations of the absolute good system are criticizing the 'Saviour of Corruption'.]

Michael didn't back down despite the messages pouring from the sky. Rather, he seemed to find it funny.

[Yes, it's time to show who is the strongest in Eden.]

At the same time, Michael's purple and white aura simultaneously formed around his hands. The force swirled around both hands. The aura soon turned into a two-handed sword. Sweat flowed down my body. This jerk, where did he get this star relic…?

[The constellation 'Scribe of Heaven' is warning the 'Saviour of Corruption'.]

A huge storm broke out and the sparks in the surroundings were instantly extinguished. This was the power of Eden's highest constellation, Metatron. At the very least, this huge pressure couldn't be countered in Eden. The violence created silence as Michael belatedly dispersed his momentum.

Michael stared up at the sky for a while before grumbling, […Even you? Eden seems to be gone now.]

Michael turned around and started to move away. The heads of demon kings were hanging from his waist like fruit.

[Head of Grand Duke Semida.]

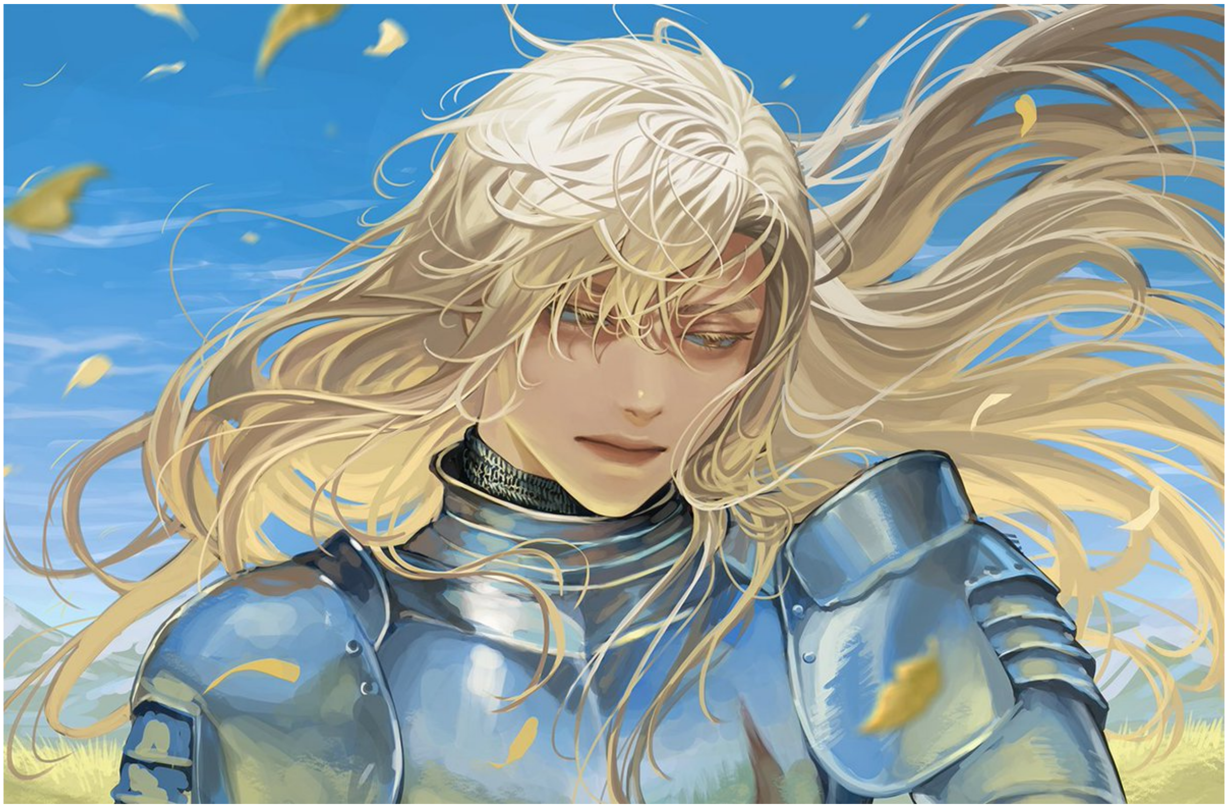
[Head of Grand Duke Graphio.]

Goosebumps covered my body. Some of the grand dukes were equivalent to lower-grade demon kings. Yet he hung their heads like they were toys.

Once Michael completely disappeared over the hill, Jung Heewon sighed and put away her sword.

I turned my head and saw Uriel looking this way.

Archangel Uriel. She was different from when I had seen her at the Constellation Banquet. She wore Eden's uniform with cross earrings and looked elegant. The usual mischievous feeling couldn't be found as nobility overflowed from her body.



*

[Kim Dokja…]

She stared at me with complicated eyes before suddenly making a startled expression. Then she turned towards Jung Heewon like she was avoiding my gaze.

[It's nice to see you. Is this the first time you've met me like this?]

Jung Heewon's lips were slightly parted as she faced Uriel. Perhaps it was a type of excitement. Indeed, this was the first time Jung Heewon had seen Uriel. The Uriel in front of us right now was in a shape where her incarnation body and her true self were united. The archangel in front of us was the true nature of the Demon-like Judge of Fire.

[Come along, the scribe is waiting.]

"…How long do we have to wait?"

Jung Heewon and I were immediately taken to Eden's palace. Eden was a lot more modest than I expected. I was familiar with the depiction from Ways of Survival but it was certainly different from the other magnificent residences. There were small decorations that didn't give any feeling of pretenses. The murals and statues decorating the monotonous white gave off a curiously humble feel. The problem was that such modest made my wait even more boring.

–Wait here. A guide will soon come.

Uriel left me here and disappeared somewhere with Jung Heewon. I wanted to see Eden as well… I was feeling a bit disappointed.

…Perhaps it was because of what happened in the 1863rd round. I left Uriel's colleague, Jophiel there. It was unavoidable if I received blame.

[Kim Dokja, you came?]

I raised my head with blank eyes and an angel sitting on a cloud was looking down at me. The appearance was in the early teens with curly hair. The angel looked down at me with half sleep eyes and I got up. "Are you Raphael?"

Raphael nodded.

Guardian of Youths and Travel, Raphael. This world's Eden seemed to be in good shape. After Uriel, I was glad to see Raphael. By the way… was this the archangel who really repelled the fearsome Asmodeus?

[How did you find out about the secret portal?]

"I was told by Jophiel."

[How does it feel to be in Eden?]

"Good."

[You look sleepy?]

I hurriedly changed my expression and smiled. Raphael guided me through the corridor from the parlour. As we walked through the outer corridor, the scenery of the garden could be seen through the window. The sheep that were grazing on the grass cried out as they looked up at me. I watched the sheep and wondered,

"There really are lambs in Eden."

[Yes, they're good when you can't sleep.]

"…Are you saying you count them?

[You've probably seen it too. They are the one who appear when you close your eyes and think of

sheep before you sleep.]

I was surprised because it was a story that didn't appear in Ways of Survival. Were they really the sheep that people counted before going to bed?

[I was lying.]

"…"

I stared at Raphael in a dumbfounded manner. Raphael laughed and started talking again.

[Do you know? Originally there were no sheep in Eden.]

"Are you lying again?"

[This is real. The sheep were brought by Uriel.]

Uriel? Why?

[One day, the scribe gave Uriel a sub scenario.]

The archangels of Eden received missions through the Scribe of Heaven. Understandably, every mission was reduced to a scenario. I was curious because this wasn't in Ways of Survival.

"What scenario was it?"

[Bring 10 lambs.]

Many scenarios in the Star Stream took the form of metaphors. In Eden, the metaphor of the sheep was obvious. In a nutshell, Metatron wanted Uriel to bring 10 worshippers.

"…Uriel brought real lambs?"

[Yes. It was 10 at first but they reproduced and grew too much.]

It sounded like something Uriel would do.

The angels who managed the sheep could also be seen. The angels feed or shaved the sheep's fur. Everything was beautiful as described in Ways of Survival. Some of them looked to this side and chatted with each other. One, two, three… the numbers went up more and more. Someone improvised a placard out of shaved fleece and started to wave it this way.

…What did it say?

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is making a stern expression.]

The angels hurriedly scattered. I could see Uriel and Jung Heewon waving in the distance. Raphael clicked his tongue. [An angel is fond of fallen humans.]

"Can you speak while moving?"

[Go in. The scribe is waiting.]

I was standing in front of the scribe's office. I took a deep breath before opening the door and entering.

The first thing that came into view were piles of books stacked up to the height of a person.

The pile of books was impossible to read in my lifetime and I involuntarily took a liking to the owner of the room. Anyone who liked books couldn't be a bad person.

I was careful not to destroy the pile of books as I stepped into the office. Beyond the mountains of books, the table of the office could be seen. Then I saw a grey-haired archangel sitting in front of me with a tired face.

[You came.]

It was a godly voice that couldn't be compared to any constellation I had seen before. Metatron pushed up the frame of his glasses and smiled at me.

[Welcome, Demon King of Salvation. I am the Scribe of Heaven.]

* * *

I came to Eden for two reasons. One was superficial and the other was a real errand.

[I would like to hear what happened in the other world line.]

I nodded and started to explain. It went from the agreement with Secretive Plotter to the 1863rd round world, meeting the people there and leaving Jophiel behind.

I told the story. Some parts were honest, some were summarized and some things I didn't say. Metatron listened to my story. Some stories were heard earnestly and some calmly. Some stories he listened to curiously.

[Secretive Plotter…]

"Do you know him?"

Metatron smiled lightly.

[There are probably no constellations in this world who don't know him. However, they don't know who he is.]

I closed my mouth. My story ended here.

[Thank you for telling me the story, Demon King of Salvation.]

"No problem."

[In the future, Eden will indeed be destroyed.]

His voice was very casual for speaking about the destruction. It was a face that didn't show the slightest agitation. I looked at this Metatron and asked, "Why did you call me? It isn't just to hear the story."

The Scribe of Heaven. He recorded everything in Eden and was the number two benevolent person in Eden. Metatron's smile widened.

[Why do you think I called you?]

This was Metatron's conversational style. He listened to his desires through the mouth of another person. I thought for a moment before replying. Perhaps this was a chance for me.

"I think you want to use me as a tool to stop the destruction."

[You? What is useful about you?]

My figure was reflected in Metatron's transparent eyes. Kim Dokja in one eye had white wings while Kim Dokja in the other eye had black demon wings.

"I am a demon king who hasn't chosen an alliance."

I became the demon king of the 73rd Demon Realm through the selection. It was a position that had been vacant for thousands of years. Such a place was occupied by a newborn constellation.

I opened my last message log.

[The demon king 'Black Mane Lion' is inviting you to his demon realm.]

[The demon king 'Immeasurable Austerity' is inviting you to his demon realm.]

…

They were messages that had accumulated from the moment I became a demon king.

"The destruction of Eden is triggered by the war with the Demon Realm. You're trying to use me as a mediator."

It was natural to get attention from other demon kings. Then what about Eden? Eden had shown an unusual interest in me before I became a demon king. I received the favour of the archangels, starting with Uriel. Based on the attitude that Eden normally took towards evil alignment constellations, their treatment of me was unusual.

"You need me. In the history of the Star Stream, I am probably the first person to receive the attention of the Demon Realm and Eden at the same time."

I deliberately raised my voice. Considering future negotiations, I couldn't be pushed back by Metatron here.

Metatron didn't answer and stared at my face for a moment. The next moment, I realized that something was wrong. Along with an intense pressure, a bright light emerged from behind Metatron. It was a light gaze that I had felt someone before. I felt a dangerous force penetrating my essence.

[The exclusive skill 'Fourth Wall' is strongly activated!]

Sparks covered my eyes as I took a few steps back with a groan. The sparks gradually became smaller and Metatron expressed his admiration.

[…As expected, you are also a chosen being of the 'Fragment of the Last Wall'.]

"What…"

[The 'Wall Dividing Good and Evil' is looking at you with surprise.]

I stared in front of me with surprise. Behind Metatron was a silver 'wall'. There was no doubt.

[The Fourth Wall is baring its teeth towards the Wall Dividing Good and Evil]

Wall Dividing Good and Evil. Archangel Metatron was the owner of a 'wall', just like me.

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* Unofficial illustration, not specifically of Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint, but fitting (non-canonical)

싱숑 장편소설

전지적 독자 시점

Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint

PART 3

02

비채

*

Chapter 316: Ep. 60 - Taste of Ruin, I

「 Twi sted guy. 」

The Fourth Wall seemed to know this wall. There was also a brief mention of it in Ways of Survival. Like Jang Hayoung's Unidentified Wall, it was one of the walls that had a strong power but whose origins were unknown.

[Wall Dividing Good and Evil is measuring your goodness and evil.]

[The Fourth Wall is snorting.]

[Wall Dividing Good and Evil is confused on how to judge your existence.]

Wall Dividing Good and Evil was the standard for dividing good and evil in this world. The power to distinguish between good and evil in the Star Stream responded to Metatron's rational doubt. If the skill named someone evil, the constellations belonging to the absolute good system had the right to vote on that decision and the result would be reflected immediately. Jung Heewon's Judgment Time was a power that shared the probability of this wall.

[Why are you confused? It isn't the first time you've seen the owner of a wall.]

"I didn't know you would bring it out of all a sudden. Then are you going to define me as an 'evil' person? I know the decision was withdrawn in the past."

[I don't think so. As you said, you are useful.]

I didn't know Metatron's exact thoughts. The only thing certain was that he intended to use me to prepare for Eden's future destruction.

[The wall on which all the ■■'s are written. You have read about Eden's destruction there. Isn't that right?]

I was a bit surprised. Metatron of this time seemed a bit different from the Metatron I knew. He knew the existence of Ways of Survival. He also called the wall by the 'Last Wall'. The moment I was about to answer, the Fourth Wall interrupted.

「Kim Dok ja, don't spe ak non sense.」

I closed my mouth. Metatron said. [The wall seems to have made you silent. As expected from the largest fragment of the Last Wall.]

"Do you know what the Last Wall is?"

Metatron made an unknown expression at my question.

[Are you asking because you are curious or do you have another purpose?]

I stared into Metatron's eyes without speaking. Metatron smiled wryly. […Okay. Instead, turn off the channel. They should've seen plenty of Eden.]

The next moment, indirect messages exploded from the sky.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is scratching his head.]

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is emitting light from his fingernails.]

[The constellation 'Bald General of Justice' is impressed by the heavenly scene.]

[Some constellations are pleased with the tour of Eden!]

[50,000 coins have been sponsored.]

Just like the Underworld, there were many constellations wondering about Eden. Biyoo made a sound and closed the channel.

Metatron touched a thick stack of books and started talking. [The Last World is the wall that constitutes the essence of this world. It has existed for a long time and crumbled, leading to a broken wall.]

Metatron touched a book so old it felt like it would fall apart with one touch.

[The Wall Dividing Good and Evil is one of the fragments of this wall.]

"How many have these walls?"

[I don't know exactly. I didn't hear it from 'him'. Just…]

I wondered who Metatron was referring to with 'him'. In fact, it was a foolish thought. There was only one being who would be called 'him' in Eden.

Metatron continued speaking. [Every wall has a meaning. Some walls distinguish between good and evil while others control communication. Some walls can also change the future of a given world.]

Metatron stared at me and spoke in a serious voice. [I think you are the key to change the 'set' destruction.]

Metatron's expectations for me were so clear that it was a bit burdensome. I deliberately spoke with confidence. "Scribe, you must be making 'A Single Story'."

[…Yes.]

"I am currently a newcomer who is only in the 'succession' stage. Do you think I can do this?"

[No one knows which story will be chosen at the end.]

Metatron turned his gaze towards the window of the office. The sun coming into Eden shone on Metatron's beautiful face. Some parts were covered in a dark shade while others became abnormally bright. In the unequal light, Metatron's face seemed strangely distorted.

[We can only carefully choose the method of worship from a category we can understand.]

Perhaps this was the story that Metatron thought of. I quietly watched Metatron and opened my mouth. It was time to get to the main point. "It doesn't matter what you use me for. Instead, I have one condition."

[You have come here to save Incarnation Yoo Sangah.]

In any case, it was good that the story was fast. Metatron seemed to have already grasped the details of Yoo Sangah through the broadcast.

[The flow of consciousness is a very dangerous disease and investing probability recklessly can cause a big loss. They will be swept away by the rapids of the exiting stories.]

"Is there no solution?"

[There is. If you believe and practice the great words like other archangels in this garden…]

"It means I have to join Eden. That isn't possible."

[For now, it is best to strengthen the incarnation body to the limit to alleviate the disease. It is recommended to obtain items to do this. It shouldn't be things like the Great Return Pill made by the humans of Murim. Instead, it should be Star Relic Fruits or star fluids that contain the miracle of a giant story.]

Star Relic Fruits and star fluids…

Metatron read my expression and smiled.

[Eden has some leftover nectar but it can't be used for your purpose. Eden's Star Relic Fruit is a bit special.]

I already knew. There was no one on Earth who didn't know the identity of Eden's Star Relic Fruit. "…Then there is no way."

I was a bit discouraged. I thought it was possible for Eden but I guess I was thinking too much. Then Metatron added, [I mean, there is no way in Eden.]

The door of the office opened. A man walked into the office, collapsing the high stacks of books. I looked at the body covered with a dazzling light and unknowingly invoked my status.

[It has been a long time, Demon King of Salvation.]

Jung Heewon had an excursion through Eden. The angels were mostly friendly and some asked her questions. Most of them were questions about Kim Dokja and Yoo Joonghyuk but she thought that was natural. The two people were currently the most popular on the Korean Peninsula.

Rather, if something was bothering her then it was her sponsor repeatedly losing her soul.

"Uriel."

[Yes, Heewon.]

"I understand."

[Yes, Heewon.]

"You aren't listening to me, are you?"

[Yes, Heewon… ah?"

The surprised Uriel glanced between the list of ranks engraved on the slab Jung Heewon was holding and the palace.

[W-Well… Ah, right. I was explaining the order of the angels. So our ranks are…]

"If you're so nervous, why don't you go see for yourself?"

Jung Heewon talked about going to the office in the palace and Uriel became pale.

[T-that. No. I should distinguish between business and personal matters…]

"You can give the explanation to Eden later. He will be thankful that you came to meet him."

Jung Heewon saw the terrible Demon-like Judge of Fire flustered like this and laughed. It was a sponsor she couldn't hate. Uriel touched her cross earrings and bit her lips before looking up. […Can I go see Kim Dokja?]

"Of course."

Uriel's expression lightened up at Jung Heewon's permission. Then next moment, Uriel thought of something and her eyes became sullen.

[No, I can't.]

"Why?"

[That…]

Uriel rolled her eyes and wriggled her fingers. She was so cute that Jung Heewon laughed. Her sponsor felt like a big sister. Jung Heewon glanced at Uriel's gloomy expression and asked, "If you like Dokja-ssi so much, you should go see him. What are you hesitating about?"

Uriel turned red at the question, made gibberish gestures and bowed her head with a sigh.

[I'm shy.]

"Why are you shy? You always send him indirect messages."

[A fan letter is different from talking to the person directly.]

"Didn't you meet him last time? At a banquet or something."

[It was just an incarnation body then. Now I'm different. It is like meeting an online game avatar in person.]

It was an analogy suitable for a constellation.

[I don't mean that the time I spent with you is like a game! I mean, in a figurative sense…]

Jung Heewon smiled at the struggling Uriel. Perhaps this was the difference between her sponsor and other constellations. It might be the reason why Kim Dokja wasn't vigilant towards Uriel.

Jung Heewon was about to answer when her lips stiffened. A bad feeling went down her spine. In the distance, someone turned a corridor in the palace and headed for the scribe's office. It was in Kim Dokja's direction. It was an extremely high' status' and Jung Heewon was horrified when she saw the person.

"Uriel! That constellation…!"

Jung Heewon knew this existence. There was no way she couldn't know. It was because he was the person who made the last Demon King Selection a nightmare. She turned her head and saw Uriel staring at her with a hardened expression.

"I want to go see."

Uriel nodded.

The sound of a huge train leaving the tracks filled my ears. It felt like memories were revived just by facing them. This was Eden and the constellation couldn't attack me. Even so, my instincts remembered it and my status reacted violently.

There was a sublime voice reminiscent of sunlight. [You aren't as polite as I thought you would be. Are you still reflecting on the past story?]

"I would be hit in the back of the head in the Star Stream if I didn't remember it."

[You might be a constellation but you haven't escaped from the mentality of a human. A constellation doesn't dwell on such trivial history.]

Four arms attached to a body. The third eye looked down at me softly. The miserable battle during the Demon King Selection still gave me chills.

[Surya. Did the demon hunting turn out well?]

Metatron spoke and Surya passed by me like he wasn't interested. The heads of a grand duke demon were hanging from Surya's waist. Surya pulled off the heads and placed them on Metatron's table.

Metatron examined the state of the heads and said, [The rewards will be sent via the nebula.]

Perhaps Surya had received a contracted sub scenario through Eden. Like Michael and Uriel, the Supreme God of Light was a nightmare for demons.

[No, I'd like it now. I don't have much of a relationship with my nebula these days.]

Surya glanced at me as he spoke. Metatron replied. [Come to Eden…]

[Stop joking about that. The matter is over so I'm leaving.]

Surya headed to the exit of the office with this remark. Metatron stared at Surya's back with a faint smile. I was taken aback. I felt nervous but he didn't come here because of me. Then Surya's footsteps stopped in front of the door.

[Demon King of Salvation, I was told that one of your colleagues has a special illness.] Surya spoke without looking back. [If you want, I can help.]

At this moment, information from Ways of Survival quickly passed through my head.

「Surya is one of the eight Lokapala of Vedas.」

「He and the Lokapala are the origins of the star fluid of Vedas, the Soma.」

Vedas' star fluid, the Soma. Then it was likely he could improve the condition of Yoo Sangah. I looked over at Metatron. He smiled faintly at me with a shifty expression.

This scribe knew from the beginning that Surya would come here. Yet it wasn't even possible for this schemer to stop the destruction of Eden… I realized that the fate of the Star Stream was harsh.

I asked without looking at Surya, "What do you want?"

Soma was a drink that could only be enjoyed by a few privileged gods in Vedas. He wouldn't give me such a gift without strings attached. The Supreme God of Light slowly turned his head. A demon-like smile was on Surya's face.

[I want Olympus ruined.]

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* Official novel cover (canonical)

Chapter 317: Ep. 60 - Taste of Ruin, II

Surya approached and stood in front of me. He was at least 20cm taller than me. I opened up more of my status to counteract the pressure he was emitting. The office was suddenly flooded with Surya's energy.

The conversation from now on was between constellation and constellation. "The ruin of Olympus… is that your meaning or Vedas' meaning?"

[Is it important?]

"It is important."

I expected the troubles between big nebulae to be in full swing by now. They pursued cooperation with me in order to ruin each other but originally, Vedas, Olympus and Papyrus weren't solid alliances. All big nebulae were in a potentially competitive position when pursuing 'A Single Story'.

Surya thought for a moment before replying. [I don't like Olympus and Vedas. Is this enough for an answer?]

It was a vague answer. Yet in a sense, it was the answer I wanted. Based on the original Ways of Survival, Surya was definitely a heretical constellation of Vedas. "It is an answer."

[I have enough authority to give one Soma. Don't you know who I am?]

Surya was the source of Soma, an immortal beverage. If I got his promise then obtaining Soma definitely wouldn't be a problem. By the way, this… things had become interesting.

Metatron's finger moved like it was pleasant to hear our conversation. I watched the finger moving like a metronome and spoke, "I still have one question left. The ruin of Olympus is precisely—"

[The 60th scenario, Gigantomachia.]

"That is just a theme park event. They will summon a few giants to hunt and…

[If they aren't serious, you would make them serious.]

…Since when had he been listening to me? Did he subscribe to Biyoo's channel?

[Olympus won't suddenly be destroyed because of the scenario. However, it is possible to provide a stepping stone to the ruin.]

"How?"

[Haven't you already thought about how to do this?]

The third eye on Surya's forehead was white. I gazed at his eyes. Indeed, I couldn't step back and pretend ignorance.

"It is absurd with my power or the power of my nebula. Of course, this didn't mean I had no way."

Metatron's finger stopped moving at my words. I watched Metatron. "Scribe. Take responsibility for calling this person here."

[What responsibility do you mean?]

"Be a witness for this agreement."

Metatron made an intrigued expression. His wait and see expression was transformed into a schemer.

[What are the benefits of being a witness?]

"I will give you a stake in the giant story I will obtain this time."

A stake in a giant story. No matter the scenario, the giant story was a temptation that couldn't be ignored by a nebula. In addition, the archangels of Eden needed an enormous number of giant stories because incidents occurred every day and they needed to diffuse the probability storm.

Metatron nodded with satisfaction.

"Naturally, your mouth can't be empty."

[What do you mean? It is enough to stand witness…]

"You want to take a stake in a giant story with just that? Where did an archangel's conscience go?"

[The Fourth Wall is nodding.]

[The 'Wall Dividing Good and Evil' is looking closely at its master.]

Faint embarrassment crossed Metatron's face. Sometimes justice would devour its master.

Surya shook his head and muttered. [Truly a demon king.]

[…Demon King of Salvation, is there anything you want in Eden?]

I nodded. There were many things I wanted. It was because one or two preparations wasn't enough for the future Gigantomachia.

「Kim Dokja recalled the 1863rd round.」

I wouldn't lose anyone.

「 In Kim Dokja's mind, the information of Ways of Survival appeared and disappeared. 」

From now on, it was likely that high ranking constellations would join the battle. It wasn't just Surya but the other Lokapala of Vedas and some of Olympus' 12 gods could participate in the scenario.

Was that all? It might be possible to encounter senior demon kings like the Demon King Selection. Maybe Michael as well.

…Michael.

「 Finally, Kim Dokja made a decision. 」

I looked at one of the items arranged on a shelf behind Metatron. "Give me one of Eden's star relics."

A few minutes later, Kim Dokja finished his contract with Surya and stood at the entrance of a portal. Unlike when he came in, this was the front door. Several angels came to see him off.

[…Already?]

Uriel was full of regret as she grasped Jung Heewon's hand. Jung Heewon looked at Uriel and hugged her tightly.

[Uh…?]

The initially embarrassed Uriel soon hugged Jung Heewon back. Her face was full of emotions.

[The constellation 'Lily Blooming in Aquarius' is looking at Incarnation 'Jung Heewon'.]

Gabriel's indirect message came from somewhere. Kim Dokja looked at the sky as if thinking about something. Then he told Jung Heewon, "I'm sorry to interrupt the emotional farewell but Heewon-ssi will stay here for another week."

"Huh?"

"Don't worry, I already spoke to the scribe."

Uriel's eyes widened at the words. [Really? Is that possible?]

"Of course. Instead, please train Heewon-ssi. You've been absent for the past three years."

[Yes! Leave it to me!]

Kim Dokja turned away from the widely smiling Uriel towards Jung Heewon. "Heewon-ssi, I'll meet you a week later in Olympus."

"…I understand. I'll be sure to become stronger when I go back."

A short handshake later, Kim Dokja disappeared into the portal. Some angels looked disgruntled while others sighed.

The brief event ended and the angels returned to their positions. Gabriel watched from a distance.

[Gabriel.]

[Scribe.]

Gabriel bowed towards Metatron who appeared behind her.

[Why didn't you meet him and talk?]

Gabriel didn't answer.

[Jophiel's matter isn't your fault.]

[But…]

[Jophiel is strong. She is doing her job properly. Her choice will be the first step in preventing Eden's destruction.]

Gabriel's clear eyes shook at the word 'destruction'. Her lips opened like she wanted to ask something.

[A message has arrived.]

In the sky, a message for Metatron arrived. Surprisingly, the sender of the message was Commander of the Red Cosmos.

–This is a report on the identity of the outer god, Secretive Plotter.

Metatron spoke while reaching out for the report. [Soon, the real war will begin.]

It was a bustling street reminiscent of a battlefield. On the way to the auction house, countless merchants were selling all types of items.

Yoo Joonghyuk spoke behind him. "Go quickly."

Despite his harsh words, Yoo Joonghyuk was constantly concerned with Lee Seolhwa's movements. He blocked the front of her like he was worried she would be hurt by the passing incarnations and constellations. Some of the incarnations cursed him but Yoo Joonghyuk didn't care.

"You should be avoiding us…"

"Pedestrians first."

Yoo Joonghyuk's shamelessly was so high that Lee Seolhwa laughed. Yoo Joonghyuk asked, "…Why are you laughing?"

"Joonghyuk-ssi said that you are a regressor."

"That's right."

"Then did you meet me in your previous life?"

Yoo Joonghyuk had no answer for a moment. "No."

"…I see."

An awkward atmosphere formed between the two people. Lee Seolhwa glanced sideways at Yoo Joonghyuk. He was someone who seemed to be walking in the far distance, despite being by her side.

Lee Seolhwa smiled bitterly. "Slow down a little bit. There might be items or skill books that you want to buy."

"There's no time for that."

"I already bought one?"

Lee Seolhwa smiled and waved the skill book in her hand.

[Skill — Preserve Humidity].

Yoo Joonghyuk confirmed the skill book and narrowed his eyes. "You bought a useless skill."

Lee Seolhwa was already using the skill as her cheeks and lips were moistened. It was harder to find the daily necessities after the scenario began and these life skills were gaining huge popularity, regardless of gender. Lee Seolhwa glanced at Yoo Joonghyuk's face and spoke, "Joonghyuk-ssi, don't you need it? The back of your hand and your lips are dry. This city's temperature is low overall so

your skin becomes dry quickly."

"You don't need skills that aren't for combat.

"But Dokja-ssi has this skill as well?"

Yoo Joonghyuk's eyebrows twitched. "Kim Dokja has this skill?"

"Yes, he said this is required if you want to be popular with constellations…"

"That guy wants to be an idol." Yoo Joonghyuk gritted his teeth and kept moving.

Lee Seolhwa looked at Yoo Joonghyuk like he was funny. She didn't know why but this cold-hearted man became angry whenever he heard Kim Dokja's name.

Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes shifted towards a stand.

–50% discount on skill books.

Lee Seolhwa couldn't help laughing. "Do you want to buy one?"

Yoo Joonghyuk's steps stopped. She wondered if he liked an item but something was wrong. His fists were trembling. Anger overflowed from Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes and dominated his expression.

"…Yoo Joonghyuk-ssi?"

The entrance to the auction house could be seen in the distance. A group of incarnations was entering it. A girl with blonde hair. Lee Seolhwa felt her heart sink. Yoo Joonghyuk couldn't control his killing intent as his hand moved towards the Black Heavenly Demon Sword.

"Joonghyuk-ssi, wait!" Lee Seolhwa instinctively grabbed Yoo Joonghyuk's arm. She knew the identity of the blonde girl.

Asgard's prophet. She remembered the story. Yoo Joonghyuk of the last round died after being betrayed by her.

"No. This place… the other members…!"

Her heart was in a hurry. No matter how strong Yoo Joonghyuk was, this place was the auction house of constellations. It was a place where low-grade and historical-grade constellations gathered. Moreover, Yoo Joonghyuk's enemy wasn't alone. If he rushed over now…

"I thought it would be like this." There was a sarcastic voice and Han Sooyoung was standing there. "Have you forgotten? Kim Dokja told you not to get into trouble."

Han Sooyoung clicked her tongue like he was pathetic and flicked a coin around her fingers. Yoo Joonghyuk replied in a cold voice, "This is none of your business."

"None of my business? Aren't we companions?"

"Companions?" Yoo Joonghyuk's expression distorted. "You aren't."

"This is the bottom line… hey, you might be the protagonist but…!"

"Sooyoung-ssi."

The words of the latecomers caused Han Sooyoung to touch her forehead and mutter. "Sigh… I can't live because of Kim Dokja and Yoo Joonghyuk…"

"Anna Croft should be removed here."

"Well, Kim Dokja doesn't want that."

"It has nothing to do with Kim Dokja."

"You just want to deal a blow to her?"

Yoo Joonghyuk paused and glanced at Han Sooyoung. Han Sooyoung stared back at Yoo Joonghyuk for a moment before turning her gaze to the entrance of the auction house.

"What if I have a good idea?" There was an item in Han Sooyoung's hand.

Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes shook. "That…?"

"I sneaked it out from Kim Dokja's coat." A wicked smile formed on Han Sooyoung's face. "Let's test it once, the prophecy ability of the prophet."

Chapter 318: Ep. 60 - Taste of Ruin, III

The auction house was one of the few places where it was possible to obtain items that were difficult to find on the Dokkaebi Bag or General Exchange. Prophet Anna Croft had a few items to obtain here.

Anna Croft spoke the constellations of Olympus behind her. "The guards aren't a problem?"

[Of course. Originally, this auction house is under the legal authority of our Olympus. In this Context of the Constellation, no one can touch you.]

"Thank you." Anna Croft bowed and the shadow of the constellation protecting her disappeared. Anna Croft spoke towards Selena Kim. "Then let's go in."

"…Yes." Selena Kim replied in a dark voice.

As they moved through the corridor of the auction house, Anna Croft glanced at Selena Kim's expression. Selena Kim, who was always smiling and kind to everyone, wasn't smiling anymore.

"Selena."

"Yes."

In fact, Anna Croft knew when this change happened. The Gourmet Association. It was after meeting the Demon King of Salvation.

"…It's nothing."

Selena Kim lowered her head and looked forward again. Anna Croft felt strangely alone, even though she had 'predicted' it to some extent. She couldn't properly cope with some things even if she knew the future. This was particularly true for human emotions.

[The 8611th Constellation Auction will begin!]

However, now wasn't the time to be focused on such things. Anna Croft saw the constellations and incarnations filling the seats and reaffirmed her commitment. There was no one with an easy 'status' no matter where she looked. They were all deadly enemies.

[The first auction item!]

A senior dokkaebi stood at the podium of the auction. Anna Croft and Selena Kim took the seats they preempted in advance and participated in the auction. Several items were sold in an instant and Anna Croft bought some of them.

'A manticore's teeth'.

'Scales of an Ancient Dragon'.

'Old Yeti's leather'.

Her main purchases were rare material items. All her items were identified through Future Sight and there were no errors on the list.

'I need these items to make a giant soldier'.

Some incarnations participated in the bidding competition but she already confirmed their highest bid price through Future Sight and there was no problem winning the items. Anna Croft finished checking the list and stood up on the spot. "It is roughly over. Then let's…"

[Now, we have a special product today!]

Anna Croft turned at the voice that came from the stage. Selena Kim saw Anna Croft's reaction and asked, "What's wrong?"

"It's nothing."

Anna Croft stared at the auction house with a stiff expression.

[This is an item called the 'Old to New Toad'!]

[Haha, isn't it cute? Since this item is a star relic…]

–I'll give a new house for an hour house. [It really knows how to talk.

The auction product hasn't finished the appraisal yet but it is definitely of immense value—]

'…There was no such item in the prophecy?'

The auction list had been confirmed through Future Sight. However, no such item had been seen anywhere in the short film of the future. There was the intervention of a variable that shook Future Sight. Anna Croft glanced at the constellations of Olympus. Some constellations nodded as if to reassure her.

She didn't hesitate to case the Great Demon's Eye towards the stage. The eye glowed with a red light. After a few moments, the hidden features of the Old to New Toad were seen in Anna Croft's retinas. "I have to buy that."

"Anna?"

[The first auction price is 500,000 coins!]

The moment the dokkaebi spoke, Anna Croft immediately made a bid.

"600,000 coins."

[600,000 coins have come out! The bidder… Incarnation Anna Croft!]

It was a larger amount than she thought but the Old to New Toad was worth it.

> This item has a legendary story The item eats 'old items' and replaces them with 'new items' of the same rating.

The feature itself was simple. Eat old items and spitting out other items of the same rating. The words were simply but the application was infinite.

"Contact the nebula and collect as many coins as possible."

"Why this item…"

"With this, we can get the items we want at any time."

The other constellations and incarnation didn't seem to know the usage of this toad yet. Thus, she had a chance to win the bid right now.

[The highest bid is currently 600,000 coins! If there isn't any more…]

At this moment.

"700,000 coins."

Someone made a bid.

[Ohh! 700,000 coins have come out!]

There was a light from the other side of the audience that showed a bid. A demon sword that absorbed the sunlight.

Anna Croft's expression hardened.

[The bidder is Incarnation Yoo Joonghyuk!]

Yoo Joonghyuk emerging after Anna Croft caused a small turmoil in the auction house. Both of them were famous incarnations of Earth.

"Anna, if things go wrong…"

"This is fun. I never thought the Supreme King would be here."

Anna Croft was laughing. She raised her hand and cried out, "800,000 coins!"

[Incarnation Anna Croft has bid 800,000 coins!]

"900,000 coins."

[900,000 coins! 900,000 coins have come out!]

Yoo Joonghyuk didn't give up. It was an auction war they had to stick to. The atmosphere of the auction house started to heat up after the amount exceeded one million coins. It was a climb that could cause a price bubble but Anna Croft was relaxed.

'You can't beat me'.

Dizziness occurred along with a short headache. A part of the future emerged in Anna Croft's retinas. She used Future Sight and succeeded in reading the maximum amount Yoo Joonghyuk could pay.

"1,280,000 coins."

[Incarnation Anna Croft has bid1,280,000 coins!]

Yoo Joonghyuk was silent at Anna Croft's bid. It was as expected.

[Now, if there are no further bids…]

Anna Croft smiled. 1,280,000 coins was a huge amount but it was hard to see it as a loss. The Old to New Toad was a worthy item and if she obtained it…

"2 million coins!"

The voice of a woman was heard from right above her and Anna Croft's body whipped around. She wasn't the only one who was shocked.

[D-Did she say two million coins? Suddenly such an amount…]

"It is the emergence of Han Sooyoung, a newly rich person."

[Who…]

"Don't you know? Black Flames Demon Ruler Han Sooyoung, the leader of the Han Sooyoung Corporation and the real power of Kim Dokja's Company."

Lee Hyunsung, sitting beside Han Sooyoung, asked with surprise, "Sooyoung-ssi, is that true? Since when…"

Anna Croft stared at Han Sooyoung with wide eyes. The Black Flames Demon Ruler of the Korean Peninsula. It was a name Anna Croft knew well. "What trick is this, Black Flames Demon Ruler?"

"I just want that toad."

Anna Croft once again used Future Sight. It might be a short-term prediction but using Future Sight so many times in one day placed a huge burden on her body. Still, it couldn't be helped. This had already become a showdown of pride.

The maximum amount of money that Han Sooyoung would pay appeared before Anna Croft's eyes. How long had it been? Anna Croft wiped the nosebleed that occurred from her overloaded body and opened her mouth.

"…I bid 3 million coins."

"Anna!" The startled Selena Kim shouted.

However, Anna Croft was adamant. "I must buy it."

Anna Croft's Future Sight showed that Han Sooyoung's amount of money was 2,999,999 coins.

[3 million coins has come out!]

The dokkaebi was dancing with joy. Large cheers filled the venue.

[As expected of the prophet!]

[I heard she was shrewd and cunning but she was a big person!]

The audience was wowed but Anna Croft wasn't the least bit excited.

"Anna, 3 million coins is unreasonable. This is too much damage!"

"I can get a dokkaebi loan."

"Going so far…"

"It is a loss but in some senses, it isn't a loss. I can't concede it to them and that is enough to make it not a loss."

"What…"

"The fact that they made such a large follow up bid shows they are desperate for this item."

Anna Croft glanced at Han Sooyoung and Kim Dokja's Company. The fact that they had come here showed they were likely to participate in Gigantomachia. If they were going to meet one day, she needed to break them now.

In fact, Han Sooyoung was raising both hands like she lost. "This… I can't afford it. We lost. Completely and 100% lost."

"…"

"This is why the world is unfair. We can win against a golden incarnation."

…Something was weird. Anna Croft clearly won the bid but why did they look like they were enjoying it?

[Those who have won the items, please come down to the stage.]

Anna Croft turned to the stage at the dokkaebi's call. The feeling of discomfort still hadn't disappeared. She viewed the faces of Han Sooyoung and the expressionless Yoo Joonghyuk. She wanted to use Future Sight but she had already reached the limit for today.

'Wait, don't tell me?'

Anna Croft stood in front of the auctioneer and reflexively asked, "This product, who is the contributor?"

[That… Kim Dokja's Company.]

"I won't buy it."

[Huh?]

The dokkaebi looked surprised.

[We can't refund products that have already been sold. If you do not pay the amount—]

"This is obviously a scam. Thus, I won't buy it."

[A scam?]

Anna Croft pointed at Kim Dokja's group. "They induced an artificial price competition. They had no intention of buying this item in the first place."

Han Sooyoung clicked her tongue at Anna Croft's claim. "What are you saying? I really wanted to buy it."

"Even if you wanted to buy it, this auction is invalid. They are the contributors of this product. Isn't it forbidden for contributors to participate in the auction?"

In the end, Han Sooyoung and Yoo Joonghyuk glanced at each other. The senior dokkaebi spoke [That… it is correct. It is certainly forbidden for contributors to participate in the auctions of their own products.]

Anna Croft nodded like she knew it. "Please check the contributor. The contributor will surely be one of them."

[Okay. Please wait a moment.]

The members of Kim Dokja's Company were making troubled expressions. On the other hand, Anna Croft's expression was filled with relief and triumph.

It was a pretty good trap. She was the prophet yet she almost got hit. By the way, the dokkaebi checking the contributor cocked his head.

[Strange. None of them are the contributor.]

"Huh?"

Han Sooyoung laughed. "Didn't I tell you? Ah~ I really wanted that toad…"

"Then the contributor is…"

At this moment, the door of the auction house opened wide. A dazzling light entered from outside the auction house and the white coat was shaken by the wind.

The man in the white coat walked passed Han Sooyoung and Yoo Joonghyuk. The man who came up to the stage was someone Anna Croft knew well. The man smiled and held out his hand like he was asking for a handshake.

"3 million coins."

It was Kim Dokja.

Chapter 319: Ep. 60 - Taste of Ruin, IV

I was able to come here thanks to the message sent by Han Sooyoung. I already knew that Han Sooyoung took the Old to New Toad. It would be odd if I was ignorant of her stealing an item.

–I want to screw with the prophet. Will you come?

I was just going to check the auction house so it didn't take long. Anna Croft had moved as I expected.

–You came.

–You came at the right timing?

Messages came from the Midday Tryst at the same time. There was temporary confusion and Yoo Joonghyuk and Han Sooyoung glanced at each other.

"…What?"

"I should say that. You have Midday Tryst as well?"

I couldn't help smiling at the two snarling people. I looked ahead and saw Anna Croft's completely lose expression. I formed a fist and provoked her. "What are you doing? 3 million coins please."

It was our first meeting after the Gourmet Association. Selena Kim stood next to Anna Croft and nodded lightly to me. Anna Croft furrowed her brow and asked, "Demon King of Salvation, you are the contributor of this product?"

"That's right."

"No… you shouldn't be able to acquire this level of item. It is an item that can only be obtained in the

late scenarios."

She was still denying reality. I glanced at the dokkaebi instead of answering. The dokkaebi spoke,

[The contributor is Constellation Demon King of Salvation, who belongs to Kim Dokja's Company. The confirmation result is correct.]

Anna Croft became paler once the dokkaebi testified to the fact. 3 million coins. At the present time, there wasn't a single incarnation with such a large number of coins in the Star Stream. It was a lot of money and was also a burden for some narrative-grade constellations.

In the distance, Han Sooyoung twitched.

–Hey, you will give me a share of the 3 million coins, right? You wouldn't have received this money if it wasn't for me.

Anna Croft's fist trembled. She glanced at Selena Kim before turning back to me. "I'm sorry but I can't give you the winning bid."

Anna Croft's expression gradually returned to normal. "Rather than receiving the item, I will pay the penalty."

The prophet made a choice. It was currently difficult for her to obtain three million coins. Moreover, her desire to buy the item disappeared after knowing the 3 million coins would enter my hands.

[Your understanding of the character 'Anna Croft' has increased!]

I nodded and said, "Well, do as you please."

Han Sooyoung glared at me.

–Hey, are you crazy? It is 3 million coins!

–This is good for us.

As Anna Croft mentioned, the Old to New Toad was a very useful item, especially when I thought about the upcoming Gigantomachia. It was better to have an item than three million coins.

The senior dokkaebi spoke, [The penalty is 500,000 coins, which is the initial bid.]

Besides, I received 500,000 coins without giving anything. I was grateful. Anna Croft thought of something for a moment before slowly pulling out the coins. However, she took out one million coins, not 500,000 coins. "Demon King of Salvation, do you want to make a bet with me?"

"A bet? I don't want to."

"…I heard that you like to bet. It is disappointing to hear you refuse so easily."

I laughed at the childish provocation. This was suddenly funny. Anna Croft continued speaking, "If you win the bet, I'll give you one million coins, which is double the amount."

"One million… then if you win?"

"This story never happened and we will each go our own way. You won't lose any money."

I saw Anna Croft's red eyes and recalled a sentence from Ways of Survival. Anna Croft was a gifted gambler. Long before the scenario began, she was called the 'Prophet of Las Vegas'.

I opened my mouth. "Why should I if I don't lose anything? I will get 500,000 coins even if I do nothing. Why should I agree to a strange gamble?"

"You must be afraid to lose. Well, you will get a 'Losing Story' if you lose to me."

…Look at this.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is paying attention to your choice.]

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' is focused on your choice.]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' wants you to refuse the bet.]

Anna Croft's smile widened like she heard the indirect messages in the channel. "Demon King of Salvation. Your constellations are watching."

[Many constellations are curious about your choice.]

[Some constellations are condemning your cowardice.]

She was a clever woman. In the period before Gigantomachia, the opinion of the constellations was important. I could make allies, reinforcements or enemies depending on my actions. By the way, this provocation…

I grinned and opened my mouth. "I'm not afraid. I just don't like the betting conditions."

Anna Croft's eyes widened.

[The constellation 'Dragon Lying Down' is interested in your words.]

"Conditions. Do you want to add more to the bet?"

"The coins are only that much. I would like to add one more condition."

"One more condition…?"

"If I win, release the Lord and Vassal Pledge hanging on Selena King."

[The constellation 'Friend of Justice and Harmony' is shocked by your words.]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is nodding at your words.]

Selena Kim's eyes shook. Perhaps Selena Kim had been bound during the Proof of the Stars before coming to the Context of the Constellations. There was no way Anna Croft would have someone beside her that she couldn't control.

Anna Croft looked confused. "Demon King of Salvation! That…"

"Can't you free Selena Kim if you borrow the probability of Asgard?"

It would be a significant burden on Anna Croft to liberate the lord and vassal relationship formed during Proof of the Stars. The fact that she made the lord and vassal relationship in the first place was evidence that she didn't fully trust Selena Kim. Anna Croft struggled for a while before replying, "…Okay."

Selena Kim stared at me with surprised eyes. Then Biyoo's voice was heard from the air.

[Baaat!]

[A number of constellations are requesting the 'bet' scenario.]

[The request of the constellations has been accepted.]

[A new sub scenario has arrived!]

[Sub Scenario — Entertainment of Ruin]

Category: Sub

Difficulty: ???

Clear Conditions: Anna Croft and the Demon King of Salvation have made a bet. The subscribers and incarnations can make a bet on who will win.

Time Limit: —

Compensation: Dividends will be distributed based on your percentage of the winning bet.

Failure: —

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' has bet 50,000 coins!]

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' has bet 50,000 coins!]

[The constellation 'Bald General of Justice' has bet 1,000 coins!]

Interestingly, this scenario was a scenario where beings other than Anna Croft and myself could participate. The startled Han Sooyoung spoke through Midday Tryst.

–Hey! What are you thinking?

–Just bet some coins.

–To who? You?

I spoke towards Anna Croft. "Tell me about the bet."

"It's simple."

Anna Croft threw the coin that read 'one million' into the air. The coin rose to over 30 metres in the sky and stayed there. "You just need to grab the coin with your hand."

The constellations were shocked when they heard the contents of the bet.

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is surprised.]

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is asking for his coins to be returned!]

Han Sooyoung frowned.

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is avoiding the gaze of Incarnation 'Han Sooyoung'.]

The coin had a floating skill and hovered in place. At first glance, it was a simple and easy bet. I just had to jump using my skills and grab the coin. However, the simplicity of the bet meant there was a pitfall.

Han Sooyoung told me,

–Hey, Kim Dokja. It is a trap! Don't make the bet!

I knew it already. This Anna Croft would never make a losing bet.

"Do you agree with the bet contents?"

"Okay."

[The formation of the bet has been completed!]

I looked at the coin spinning in the air. In a situation where many constellations were watching, she couldn't have done anything strange to that coin. This meant the coin itself wasn't the trap and the trap was elsewhere.

[The exclusive skill 'Bookmark' is activated!]

[The exclusive skill 'Way of the Wind Lv. 11 (+1) is activated!]

30 metres was quite high and it was almost impossible to grab that coin with my bare hands if I was an ordinary constellation. However, since the scenario started, I wasn't an ordinary person.

I used Way of the Wind and jumped lightly, my body springing towards the sky. The remaining distance to the coin was 10 metres.

At this moment, someone interrupted me.

[The probability of the nebula 'Olympus' is responding to you!]

It wasn't one person. A powerful status came from all over the audience. The incarnation bodies of some constellations stood before me.

[Demon King of Salvation! Cancel your skill right away.]

I felt their status from the true voice. The ones standing in my way were from Olympus. There were three historical-grade constellations and one narrative-grade constellation.

I spoke in a cold voice, "What are you doing?"

[It is forbidden to use combat skills here. Don't you know?]

A familiar doll popped out from among the constellations. It was a constellation with meteorites swirling overhead. I knew this person's modifier. It was because this boy was obviously a constellation of Olympus.

'Wandering Terror'.

Someone in the audience shouted, [Wandering Terror, Phobos! It is Ares' son!]

The son of one of the 12 main gods of Olympus, Atrocious War God. The god of terror created by war. This was Phobos who was called Wandering Terror.

I looked down at Anna Croft. It seemed this guy was the backer that Anna Croft believed in.

Chapter 320: Ep. 60 - Taste of Ruin, V

"King of Salvation, what are you doing? Go and take the coin." Anna Croft spoke provocatively. "Or maybe it wouldn't be too bad to admit defeat neatly.

I slowly looked around at the constellations in the audience and then Phobos in front of me. The information of Ways of Survival passed through my head.

「 The nebula that exerts the greatest power in the Context of the Constellations is Olympus. The nebula maximizes its power in certain areas and the most representative one is the auction house. 」

This was why Anna Croft could be so relaxed. The biggest event that could be reached through the Context of the Constellations was Gigantomachia. Thus, the organizer Olympus was the force with the strongest influence.

"You seem to have misunderstood something… I have no intention of fighting."

[Once again, you can't use skills here. Return to your seat. Otherwise, you will be bound by the authority of the 'legal zone'.]

He was a person that wasn't easy to talk to.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' admires Olympus' stubbornness.]

If I used a skill to retrieve the skill, the constellations would exercise the authority of the 'legal zone'.

In other words, Anna Croft knew from the beginning that I couldn't use skills and made this bet. I spoke to Phobos, "It is Anna Croft who used a skill first. Shouldn't you punish her first?"

[Incarnation Anna Croft has already received permission to use skills from Olympus.]

"Then give me permission."

[You can't.]

"Why?"

[I can't tell you the details. The auction is over and you should leave here with your party.]

Anna Croft was looking at me with a peculiar smile. There was no laughter in my mind.

…Yes, she had calculated up to here?

Han Sooyoung heard the story and cursed. "What is this dog?! Are you joking right now?"

Yoo Joonghyuk also pulled out the Black Heavenly Demon Sword. The bear Lee Hyunsung made a threatening sound as he banged his gloves together. I warned Han Sooyoung.

–Stop the party. Don't move at all.

–What? Hey, this is ridiculous. If we don't move now…

–If we fight here, we will be doing what they want.

–You are going to play her game?

–Can't I?

I waved my hand in a reassuring manner and looked back at Phobos. "Then I'll take the coin as scheduled."

[What?]

At the same time, I used a skill.

[Giant Story 'Demon Realm's Spring' has begun!]

I suddenly opened the giant story and the complexion of the constellations turned white. He didn't know I would open this and the startled Phobos shouted. [Demon King of Salvation. I don't know what you're thinking but you're making a mistake.]

"A mistake? What mistake?"

[This is the 'legal zone' of my nebula. Don't you know that when you start a riot, you will be bound by probability?]

I took a breath and immediately replied with my true voice. [So? What do you want to say?]

I activated Electrification through Bookmarks.

[Don't you know how much I've been holding back in the meantime? It has been from the time you messed with my fate.]

Phobos was the son of Ares. Perhaps this guy helped make my nasty fate.

[What…?]

[Try to stop me, if you have the ability.]

The story of the Demon Realm added to the magic power of Electrification. The white magic power and black magic power spread like a gradient.

Phobos was still unable to grasp the situation and shouted. [You! You dare to be hostile to Olympus!]

[Tell this to the 12 gods.]

I swung my fist as hard as I could towards Phobos, who was raising his status.

[Kim Dokja's Company, I'm going to aggressively grow the company.]

There was an explosion in the centre of the auction house and Phobos' bloody body flew through the air. There was a bombardment of Electrification and Phobos' incarnation body screamed terribly as he was buried deep into the ground.

[Many constellations are astonished by your actions!]

[The nebula 'Olympus' has noticed your actions!]

I looked down at the groaning Phobos. Wandering Terror was still a narrative-grade constellation. He wasn't an easy opponent to hit. However, he was careless because I was a constellation in a small nebula and this was the result of his neglect.

[Where is the legal zone you were talking about?]

The dejected constellations of Olympus stared at me and stepped back.

[You have committed a criminal act in Olympus's legal zone!]

The probability restraint didn't act immediately. I activated Way of the Wind and jumped into the air, snatching the coin.

[1,00,000 coins have been acquired as a scenario reward.]

At the same time, system messages poured out.

[The sub scenario — Entertainment of Ruin has ended.]

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is cheering!]

[Some constellations are applauding your courage!]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is concerned about your safety!]

[The winners of the bets have sponsored you 100,000 coins!]

I gained 1.1 million coins with one blow. It was a very profitable business.

[Grab that bastard! Do it now!]

Some of the constellations shouted but none of the Olympus constellations came forward. It was due to the power of the giant story that I showed.

Anna Croft was watching me from the ground. "Your body is light compared to the power you have, Demon King of Salvation." She lost a million coins but she wasn't disappointed. It was because she knew what would happen next.

"Now you'll be trapped in Olympus' prison." The constellations who disturbed the legal zone were imprisoned in Olympus. "It also means you won't be eligible to participate in Gigantomachia.

I laughed as I watched Anna Croft.

[I know that much.]

Maybe Anna Croft didn't know. I was aiming for this from the beginning.

[The probability of the nebula 'Olympus' is binding you.]

[Your incarnation will be transferred to the court of justice in Olympus.]

A bright light poured out and someone started to swallow me. Han Sooyoung shouted, "Kim Dokja! Where are you going again? You crazy bastard!"

The probability of the legal zone finally started to work. All the troubles that occurred in this auction house would be handled according to the will of the local jurisdiction.

I smiled at Han Sooyoung.

–I'll be back!

"You deliberately…!"

–I'll see you in a week. Remember what I said? Prepare well.

I could hear Han Sooyoung shouting something. They were mostly curses. The next moment, my body disappeared in the light. There was a short dizziness from the forced dimensional movement. I opened my eyes with a small groan and saw that I was thrown into a dim darkness. By the way… I didn't come alone.

"…Why did you come?"

I turned to see Yoo Joonghyuk holding onto my shoulder.

"I can't just watch you do your crazy plans again."

As expected, this guy knew what I was going to do. "Those crazy plans have saved you so far."

"Where do you plan to die alone?"

I stopped talking because something appeared in the silent darkness. I turned my head and a small staircase appeared in front of our eyes. On top of this staircase were two thrones. Two dolls were hanging on the throne. My skin got goosebumps just by looking at this. Even the mighty Yoo Joonghyuk couldn't endure it and grasped the hilt of his sword. In particular, one of the two dolls contained a great status that we couldn't measure.

[Demon King of Salvation, did you have to do this?]

The woman sitting on the throne sighed. The woman seemed to lift the darkness just by walking.

I bowed towards her. The woman who descended the stairs was Persephone, Queen of the Darkest Spring. "…It's been a while. Your appearance has changed again."

Persephone smiled faintly at my words. [I'm interested in Eden these days. You seem to like this constellation, right?]

"Yes, I like her but…"

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' likes your words.]

[By the way, there is someone who is very angry with your rudeness. Do you know?]

"I know."

「Anyone who has committed a transgression in Olympus' legal zone will be placed in front of the most terrible judge of Olympus.」

Originally, it would've been one of the judges of the Underworld greeting me, not Persephone. Perhaps I would be jailed for a short time in Tartarus under a proper verdict. Nevertheless, I met Persephone instead of a judge. Maybe it was because Persephone interfered.

"I'm sorry, there was no other way. All portals to Olympus were blocked."

[…Huhu, you are really cocky to shoot at the sky.]

The air in the area froze. The darkness solidified because of the sound. Breathing became more and more difficult and it was hard to move even a finger. It was amazing that someone's will could have such power by itself.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is making an interested expression.]

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is filled with a competitive spirit.]

[The constellation 'Maritime War God' truly feels admiration.]

[The constellation 'Bald General of Justice' can't close his surprised mouth.]

The constellations in my channel reacted violently. Perhaps it would be difficult to find anyone with a stronger status in all of the Star Stream.

[I'll introduce you, Demon King of Salvation.]

I turned and saw a faint light in the darkness. There was someone in the centre of the rich darkness. How could I describe it in words? A man who looked like darkness itself. The obsidian eyes embedded in pure white skin seemed to penetrate into my existence.

[Giant Story 'Underworld' has begun.]

One of the oldest myths in the world was looking at me. It was always mentioned together with the myth of Olympus but in fact, it didn't belong to Olympus. The loneliest and most solitary constellation in all of Ways of Survival. In order to pass through this Gigantomachia safely and to save Yoo Sangah…

I had to surely borrow the hand of this constellation. I took a deep breath and slowly opened my mouth. "King of the Underworld, Father of the Rich Night."

The night of the Underworld looked down at me.

The creepy air pressured me but I couldn't be pushed here. It was because I was here as the representative of Kim Dokja's Company.

"Do you want to try making the real Gigantomachia with me?"

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* Official novel illustration (canonical)

Chapter 321: Ep. 61 - Gigantomachia, I

The atmosphere was scary. Hades was silent for a long time and it was unknown what he was thinking. I tried to hide my nerves.

「Kim Dokja thought: This is the first hump.」

The surrounding air became increasingly heavy as Hades opened his mouth.

[The real Gigantomachia… Do you know the weight of those words?]

"I know."

The Gigantomachia hosted by the great nebula Olympus. It was the festival of the Star Stream where five or six sub-giants trapped in Tartarus were released and hunted in order to enjoy an old victory.

Hades spoke, [The war ended long ago. The gods won both Titanomachy and Gigantomachia.

Hades was right. The real war was already over thousands of years ago.

[It is already a predetermined history. What is the point of recalling it? Why are you trying to recreate Gigantomachia?]

"…That is what I want to ask you. Why do the constellations of Olympus continue to make fake Gigantomachia?"

[…?]

"Why do you call that scenario Gigantomachia, summoning and killing the giants and reenacting the old battles?"

My knees involuntarily quivered in front of Hades' furious status. The distant Persephone was upset and alternated looking between me and Hades. The moment Persephone opened her mouth, I shook my head at her.

I shouldn't receive help here. With my own strength, I had to endure it without kneeling.

[Giant Story 'Demon Realm's Spring' is protecting the best narrator.]

It wasn't comparable to Hades' Underworld but we also had a story. The story we had accumulated with our power. I used the power of this story to oppose Hades. "In fact, it is because of fear."

The big nebulae were filled with fearsome and powerful beings. They were also the most cowardly in the Star Stream.

"You are afraid that the giants will rise again. Thus, you will take out the soul of the dead and trample on them, giving a reminder of the ugly triumph."

There were many ways to make the 'real' disappear. One way was to create countless 'fakes'. Worthless and common fakes. The desperate battle became a play that was replicated countless times. A story that was a laughingstock to everyone. Gigantomachia lost its authenticity long ago. It became a scenario that no constellation was truly afraid of.

I looked up at Hades and asked, "Father of the Rich Night. How long will you let Tartarus be Olympus' toy?"

He didn't belong to Olympus but was considered to be one of Olympus' three great masters. I suddenly recalled his setting in Ways of Survival.

「Hades supplied a number of giants to Gigantomachia but never participated in the scenario.」

The king of the Underworld had watched the suffering of the giants trapped in his prison for a long time.

「Hades knew the sorrows of the prisoners and understood their pain. He was like a prison guard educated by the prisoners.」

"The last time I visited, I saw a giant soldier in the underground of Tartarus. Haven't you been preparing for this time?"

[…That is speculation.]

To the 12 gods of Olympus, Hades would've explained the existence of the giant soldier in a different way. It was in case the giants once again made a war. However, I knew Hades' real idea.

"I know that you hate the 12 gods."

[…]

"Despite being one of the three heads, to them you are just a guard taking care of troublemakers."

The oldest guard in the world might be no different from prisoners. Hades quietly looked down at me.

[Gigantomachia is a terrible war.]

"I know."

[Once the real Gigantomachia starts, it isn't only the giants who become the toy of the scenario. Everyone there will become part of the giant story.]

Hades spoke with distant eyes that seemed to see destruction.

[The dokkaebis will run wild and there will be an upheaval in the Star Stream. The dynamics of the nebulae that have lasted for a long time will collapse.]

"I'm also aware of that."

[What do you want to gain from displaying that terrible pain to the world?]

It wasn't me who answered.

[The story 'King of a Kingless World' has started the story.]

[The story 'Person who Opposes the Miracle' has started the story.]

[The story 'Demon King of Salvation' has started the story.]

[Giant Story 'Demon Realm's Spring' has started the story.]

All the stories I accumulated answered for me. There was also a story I saw for the first time.

[The story 'Life and Death Companions' has started the story.]

All the stories flowed towards the proper ending.

[…A little human has very amazing dreams.]

"The smaller you are, the bigger the dream."

[You know about Stage Transformation.]

I nodded. I already knew what Hades would say.

[The 12 gods aren't the problem. Once the war begins, the ancient heroes who led Gigantomachia to victory will reappear. The moment they encounter the giants, Stage Transformation will begin and the tragedy of history will be repeated.]

"There are also heroes on this side. The stage will be smashed."

Yoo Joonghyuk glanced at me and frowned. Hades opened his mouth again. [There still remains one decisive problem.]

"The main characters of the stage."

I looked down at the ground. In the underground of this old prison, the protagonists of the old Gigantomachia will be waiting for me.

[Do you think they want Gigantomachia?]

"The beginning is Gigantomachia but the end will be different."

I smiled and answered, "If they don't want it, I have to make them want it."

After Kim Dokja disappeared, Han Sooyoung was busy appeasing the party members. "Shit, am I some type of babysitter?"

Lee Gilyoung and Shin Yoosung were sitting blankly in their seats while Lee Hyunsung's huge body was crouched down in the middle of the children as he muttered something. Han Sooyoung sighed and pressed the party members "Hey! Everyone, wake up. This time, he went with Yoo Joonghyuk.

Of course, it didn't work.

"Dokja hyung… Dokja hyung again…"

"I should've locked him up at that time…"

Lee Jihye and Lee Seolhwa tried to soothe the children while Han Sooyoung was thinking about the problems she faced now. Kim Dokja and Yoo Joonghyuk were taken away so she had to take care of the preparations for the rest of the week.

"Now is the real Han Sooyoung's Corporation…"

[A message has arrived via the Unidentified Wall.]

It was from Jang Hayoung.

–Hey. Han Sooyoung, are you well?

Han Sooyoung became wide awake as contact was finally made. It was time for the transcendent party to return.

–Where are you now?

–I am about to return to Earth.

–Why didn't you come sooner?

Since there was no other place to confide in, Han Sooyoung started to vent her accumulated anger through the Unidentified Wall. The things that happened in the meantime, what happened to the party members…

Han Sooyoung, who usually didn't talk much, strangely had a lot of words when using the 'wall'. It was the feeling of receiving a consultation.

–In summary, Kim Dokja came back and is gone again.

The window widened and the message window of the wall became a screen. On the screen, Jang Hayoung and the Breaking the Sky Master could be seen.

–Hey! Why are you telling me now? When did Kim Dokja come back?

–That isn't important right now…

The next moment, there was a strong noise from the screen and the subject of the conversation changed. At first, she thought there was a bug on the screen and wiped it. However, the bug looked good and started talking.

–Has my disciple returned?

A small man sat on the head of the barking Breaking the Sky Master and shouted in a stern voice.

–Show him right now. The guy who left and didn't find his teacher when coming back must be severely punished!

The next moment, someone pulled the bug from the screen. Then a small mountain appeared on the screen. No, looking closely, it wasn't a mountain. It was someone's nose.

–Where did that guy go?

…It was the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint. Han Sooyoung summarized what happened as much as possible. The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint listened to the story and thought about something for a moment.

–If he was taken from Olympus' legal zone… he must be trapped in Tartarus. Then there is no need to worry.

Han Sooyoung was a bit surprised by the unconcerned voice. Before she could say something, the giant nose looked somewhere and muttered with a nostalgic voice.

–I don't know if they're doing well.

Yoo Joonghyuk and I were thrown to the first floor of Tartarus. Persephone's face was playful as she patted my head and told me.

[Demon King of Salvation, it won't be easy to convince the giants.]

"Somehow you look happy."

"It has been a long time since this type of incident happened in Olympus. I can secretly help along with my husband, but that wouldn't be fun, would it?]

"No, it would be good if you help—"

[I pray for the blessing of the story, Demon King of Salvation.]

I was expecting her to help me. The Underworld shouldn't officially participate in this scenario. If the Underworld participated in Gigantomachia, the scale and probability of this war would be out of control.

Therefore, this war should be in the form of a 'rebellion' that proceeded under the tacit approval of the Underworld.

We crossed the first floor of Tartarus. The prisoners working on the first floor were still pouring their energy into the giant soldier. Some of them glanced at us but none of them were very interested. It seemed they were new prisoners.

"Do you think you can convince the giants?"

"I don't know. I'm going to see now."

In the dungeons of Tartarus, those beyond imagination were trapped. It wasn't just the giants but also the constellations and transcendents who had committed all types of evil actions against Olympus. They were monsters that Yoo Joonghyuk and I could never deal with at the moment.

"It will be tough. There is only a week."

"Somehow it will work out. By the way, don't you have someone to meet here?"

Yoo Joonghyuk stared at me as he wondered how I knew. If my memories were correct, it was the existence who taught Giant Body Transformation to the former Yoo Joonghyuk.

"I have someone to meet. I have to recruit him as a colleague."

Colleague?"

"Originally, I would've never made him a companion but I changed my mind."

We stopped at the same time. We had to stop. Something huge was blocking our way.

"…By colleague, do you mean the one talking to the dog?"

The entrance down to the second underground floor. There was a giant dog that blocked it. The three-headed monster dog, the cerberus.

I looked up at the dog. To be precise, I looked at the giant soldier stroking the dog's head. One of the cerberus' heads was biting the giant soldier's upper arm.

[Hahaha! Yellowy! Bite!]

Yiiiip!

[I won't be hurt by this much!]

The gloves were made of a tough metal. In the original novel, it was a story weapon that Hades himself used.

"Hey." I waved my hand and the giant soldier looked over. He trembled as if surprised and soon answered in a loud and jubilant voice. […Subway grasshopper? Hahaha! You finally came to hell? Right?]

I smiled wryly. In order to win Gigantomachia, I needed the help of this gundam otaku. "I came to pick you up, Kim Namwoon."

Chapter 322: Ep. 61 - Gigantomachia, II

[…Pick me up? Why?]

"I need you."

Kim Namwoon stared at me like I was speaking nonsense. Speaking of which, I felt strange. I also didn't expect that I would say this.

I recalled Kim Namwoon of the 1863rd round. A man with white hair who liked Lee Jihye and had a good relationship with his colleagues. The guy who was immature, didn't care for his surroundings and was deeply self-absorbed.

「Kim Namwoon is an evil person. There is no changing this fact.」

I saw Kim Namwoon's possibilities but my prejudice against him hadn't completely reversed. I decided to use Kim Namwoon because of a conversation with the 1863rd round Han Sooyoung.

–You won't be able to reach the 95th scenario with that mindset.

Han Sooyoung, Yoo Joonghyuk and I were different. However, if we agreed on one thing, it was that every story pursued a moment of efficiency.

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' is interested in your choice.]

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is interested in Incarnation 'Kim Namwoon'.]

I didn't see Uriel's message so she must be busy teaching Jung Heewon. If she knew I was here then Jung Heewon would be furious again. I was glad she was left in Eden.

Kim Namwoon opened his mouth. [I don't want to. Why should I help you?]

I thought he would say this. "You don't have to if you don't want. Let's go, Yoo Joonghyuk."

I approached the cerberus with Yoo Joonghyuk.

[What? Where are you going?]

"Downstairs."

[Ahaha, are you joking? Now Yellowy is staring at you!]

As if to prove it, the half-dozing cerberus raised its head and bared its teeth at us. At this time, Yoo Joonghyuk used the Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship. Previously, it would be hard to deal with the cerberus on the first underground floor but now it was different.

"…You aren't gentle at all."

"There is no time to waste here."

The cerberus was hit by the blow and collapsed on the ground with its tongue lolling out. The prisoners were surprised by the violence and alarms rang out everywhere. Normally the judges would run over but there was a tacit agreement with Hades. We would be safe for the time being.

We walked past the collapsed cerberus and down towards the second underground floor.

[Crazy… crazy guy!] Kim Namwoon's baffled voice was heard.

Yoo Joonghyuk glanced at me.

–…Are you just leaving? The giant soldier is useful.

–Just watch.

We started down the circular staircase towards the second underground floor. The end of the circular staircase wasn't in sight. According to legend, the depths of Tartarus was so great that a dropped anvil fell for a long time.

[Wait, I'll come along!]

Kim Namwoon hurriedly followed after us. The body of the giant soldier was reduced to around two metres. Pluto was a giant soldier that could scale to fit the user's convenience.

I teasingly asked him, "Why are you following us when you said you didn't want to help?"

[That… I'm a bit bored.]

The smiling mouth couldn't hide his feelings.

[By the way, what are you going to do? Where are you going? Huh?]

"I'm going to meet the giants."

[What?]

Kim Namwoon made a blank expression for a moment before shouting, [Kuhat… uhahaha! Hey, subway grasshopper! I saw it at the time but you are really crazy. Do you know what the giants are?]

Of course, I knew.

[Once you meet those ■■, a hole will be punched through your ■■ in a moment…]

[The prisoner filtering is activated!]

[The contents have been filtered to ensure the correct language usage in Tartarus.]

[Prisoner 'Kim Namwoon' has received one penalty point.]

[This sh■!]

[Prisoner 'Kim Namwoon' has received two penalty points.] Even if I didn't hear Kim Namwoon's curses, I knew what the giants were.

The giants. A race that dominated in the early days of Olympus. There was a dizzying roar and I involuntarily stopped. Down in the distance, the giants had already noticed our existence and were reacting. It was only some of the 'status' but it was enough to cause goosebumps.

[Crazy. This is crazy…]

I ignored Kim Namwoon's words and called out to Biyoo. Then Biyoo popped out from my chest.

[Baat?]

"Is the channel well controlled?"

[Baaat!]

"Since all broadcasts of the Underworld are off the record, only let the constellations who have vowed not to reveal the information into the channel."

Biyoo nodded and started to manipulate the channel. Some of the constellations complained but now was the right time to do this. The less exposure there was from now on, the better it would be.

Not long after, some constellations sent messages.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is grumbling and accepts the agreement.]

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' isn't satisfied but agrees to make a pledge.]

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' says he already made a vow.]

I watched the pouring messages and Kim Namwoon expressed his admiration.

[Wow, this channel…]

Kim Namwoon died before even choosing his sponsor so he might be surprised by the indirect messages of the constellations. All the way down the stairs, Kim Namwoon continued to talk loudly.

[By the way, the Underworld King sent you all the way down here? That ahjussi is really stern.]

"…Shut up. Open your mouth one more time and I'll cut it off."

[What? Do you want to fight? You want to play?]

Yoo Joonghyuk's gaze towards Kim Namwoon was complicated. Yoo Joonghyuk already knew Kim Namwoon. In the last round, Kim Namwoon was also Yoo Joonghyuk's companion.

"Yoo Joonghyuk. Don't waste power here. Don't you know?"

Kim Namwoon smacked his lips when he saw Yoo Joonghyuk raising his sword. He looked like a child as he breathed with excitement. A child who hadn't received attention for a long time and was alone.

In response to my question about why she used Kim Namwoon, Han Sooyoung of the 1863rd round replied:

–No one is born a bad person from the beginning. It is all set up by the writer. The writer gave the

narrative to be a bad person. I didn't like this.

I also agreed with Han Sooyoung's words to some extent. However, Kim Namwoon of this world pressed the wrong button first. He instigated the worst crime by inciting the people on the subway.

[My heart is pounding. It is the first time I've felt like this since my father and mother abandoned me.]

"What do you feel?"

[It feels like a new adventure is waiting for me.]

Obviously, Kim Namwoon was created. Should I blame the writer of Ways of Survival? Or should I blame myself for not stopping Kim Namwoon properly at the time?

I opened my smartphone and a new message was floating.

[The 'fourth revision' update is currently in progress.]

…I knew it would update soon. There were many things going on that it would be strange if this was quiet. As I headed downstairs, I opened Ways of Survival and read the necessary parts. It was best to read Ways of Survival when my mind became uneasy.

「Kim Dokja thought: The third round I am living no longer resembles any of the original rounds.」

Still, I might be able to find a similar part. There were many scenes about the Underworld in the original Ways of Survival.

The 47th round, the 211th round, the 397th round… there were many. However, the Underworld had never appeared at 'this point' in those rounds.

「We have to gather all the information available.」

「 We can't win Gigantomachia if we don't persuade the giants. 」

There were remnants of Olympus throughout the pages of Ways of Survival. The sea was parted with a single gesture. Trampling on transcendents and constellations. The 12 gods of Olympus brutally destroying planets. Once I left here, I would have to face them head on.

Many pieces of information passed through my head regarding things that could be used and things that couldn't be used.

"Kim Dokja."

"What is it?"

Yoo Joonghyuk gazed at me quietly before speaking in a low voice. "It's nothing."

What was with this bastard? Suddenly speaking out of the blue. I immediately used Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint and was exposed to Yoo Joonghyuk's thoughts.

「 You don't seem confident. 」

I felt like I had been stabbed. Maybe I showed my feelings on my face more than I thought. I deliberately opened my mouth and spoke in a loud voice.

"There are two things I need to get in the Underworld. "One is the giant god's armour and the other is the giant god's oath."

"…Neither will be easy."

"I guess so."

"The harder it is, the better the rewards."

I smiled while listening to Yoo Joonghyuk's words. Not long after, the entrance to the second floor of the Underworld appeared. As expected, the cerberus was guarding it. It was bigger than the one on the first floor. The moment Yoo Joonghyuk pulled out his sword, Kim Namwoon cried out.

[Wait! Don't hit Yellowy!]

"Get out of the way. There is no time."

Kim Namwoon stroked the cerberus and spoke. [I know the location of the track elevator that the judges use.]

The track elevator. There were clearly such things in Tartarus. A hidden transport mechanism that only the judges could use. However, the exact location of the elevator wasn't explained in Ways of Survival.

I asked doubtfully, "How do you know that?"

[I've been sneaking downstairs with it.]

"How many floors?"

[The 77th floor.]

I was startled. The 77th floor gained the gateway to the lowest floor.

[Follow me. It's this way.]

Kim Namwoon walked forward confidently and Yoo Joonghyuk and I glanced at each other.

Surprisingly, this guy was helpful.

…As expected, I should've kept him alive? No, this time he was helpful after dying so I did a good job of killing him.

The track elevator was really fast. The second underground floor, the third, the fourth underground floor… the elevator descended in an instant and along the way, we could see the terrible scenes of Tartarus. The prisoners attacked each other and the demons in the terrible brimstone fire shouted at us.

"Newcomers!"

"Hey! What are you staring at? Lower your eyes!"

Among the laughing prisoners, transcendents could be seen. They had committed crimes in Olympus' legal zone like me or were held captive due to the 12 gods. Some of them would become food at the Gourmet Association's dining table.

Then the elevator stopped and we got off at the 77th underground floor. The 77th floor was a prisoner-free floor. A space reminiscent of a large, hollow cavity and its width couldn't be measured. The centre of the space contained a generously sized door.

[There is no Yellowy on the 78th floor. They are useless.]

A cerberus couldn't stop a giant. It might be possible for a campe.

Kim Namwoon hesitated before stating. […I've never been there before. I put my hand into it previously but this was what happened.]

I looked at the scar left on the shoulder of the giant soldier. It was almost healed now but the damage seemed enough to tear off the arm.

It wasn't perfect but Pluto was a terrible weapon capable of exerting power equivalent to a narrative-grade constellation when there wasn't a passenger on board. Yet this weapon received such damage.

I approached the door. The door was over 30 metres in height and there was a pattern similar to a human face.

Yoo Joonghyuk said, "There must be an offering to enter."

Kim Namwoon was surprised by Yoo Joonghyuk's words. [How do you know that?]

I ignored Kim Namwoon and replied, "I know. I'm ready."

"If your offering is too powerful, you will call the ancient giants."

"I'll have to meet them eventually."

"…Not now. We will die if we meet them now" There was tension in the expression of the prideful Yoo Joonghyuk.

There were different types of giants in Tartarus. One type was the rulers of Olympus who caused Titanomachy, the ancient giants called the titans. The other type was the gigantes who caused Gigantomachia. If I had to divide them by levels, it was the difference between a myth-grade constellation and a narrative-grade constellation. The ones I dared to call were the gigantes.

"Don't worry. A titan-grade giant won't emerge unless there is a high-grade item among the star relics…"

At this moment, an earthquake occurred.

[The configuration of Tartarus is becoming unstable!]

The moment I realized something was wrong, the door suddenly opened and a huge hand grabbed Yoo Joonghyuk.

"Yoo Joonghyuk!"

I reached out for Yoo Joonghyuk as two more hands emerged from inside the door. I hurriedly dodged using Electrification but Kim Namwoon wasn't lucky.

[Uwaaaack! Save me!]

The next moment, more than 10 hands covered me. My body became a mess in the closed space created by the hands and by the time I came to my senses, I was hanging upside down in the air. My shaky vision could see the huge hand that grabbed me.

[The exclusive skill 'Fourth Wall' is strongly activated!]

Sparks bounced and the 'status' was so full that it filled the surroundings. I felt like my existence could burst apart at any moment. A huge, blunt finger was tapping my ass.

[There is a cute fly.]

A huge eye resembling the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint stared at me.

Chapter 323: Ep. 61 - Gigantomachia, III

[Little child, who are you?]

Three of the countless arms that stretched out from the gods were holding me, Yoo Joonghyuk and Kim Namwoon. I hung in the air and stared at the giant with disbelieving eyes.

The door opened so easily? I couldn't understand it. The door that sealed the place below the 77th floor originally couldn't be opened from the inside. It was the same in the 47th round and the 211th round. That's why I prepared the offering in advance…

[Um… the probability is difficult. It's getting worse these days.]

There was a sound and sparks of probability appeared around the bodies of the giants. The giant pulled off one of its fingers and threw it at the door. The sparks rushed like they had been waiting and melted away the finger. Then the sparks slowly faded away. It was an unbelievable sight.

The probability was replaced with one finger? Such a thing wasn't possible in any of Yoo Joonghyuk's rounds. An aura rose faintly from the giant's body. The depths were hidden by an enormous 'status' that was unfathomable was sleeping inside the giant.

One of the oldest existences in the world. Myths accumulated over the years. My heart trembled just counting the years on the surface. This was a titan. It was unmistakably a titan. The myths that stirred in the giant's body were worn but still alive. It was much different from the original novel I knew.

「The energies of the ancient giant that Yoo Joonghyuk met was on the verge of death.」

It was strange. All the giants relied on the giant stories of Titanomachy and Gigantomachia. As the influence of the myth weakened or the distortion of the traditions grew, their power weakened as well. Due to the habitual event of Olympus, their giant stories should've been considerably weakened by now.

[Boy, aren't you going to answer? I am confident in waiting because my patience is as deep as the sea. I have already been waiting a long time but there is no reason I can't wait longer.]

However, there was an unbelievable vitality coming from the giant in front of me. Thoughts passed through my head.

「Maybe it is because I came to the Underworld too early?」

Gigantomachia hadn't happened yet and perhaps the decline of the giants hadn't exceeded the threshold.

The giant continued speaking. [However… I don't know if my other friends will be the same. It has been a while since children as delicious as you entered.]

Kim Namwoon was shaking and didn't even think of answering. The giant stroked Kim Namwoon's cheek like he was cute.

[You are a child with deep sin. A child like you is delicious to eat. The body of a giant soldier itself… were you the one torn last time?]

The prisoners who crashed underground while trying to escape Tartarus were usually fed to the giants. Kim Namwoon struggled and would already be foaming at the mouth if he was human.

The giant's gaze turned to me again. [You have many good smells. A constellation, angel, demon, human… there is even an outer god. What type of stories are these?]

I didn't answer. Sometimes this was a clearer answer than words. The opponent might be an ancient god but I couldn't be intimidated from the start.

[The status of a 'demon king' is released!]

I emerged from the grip of the giant and the giant's appearance became clearer. The size of the giant was beyond my imagination. It was almost 100 metres in height… in the first place, I couldn't fight this existence.

[I'm going to eat this child.]

[Let's tear him in half.]

Voices came from all over the place. I opened my mouth and gave a cold warning. "We aren't prey."

"We have come to negotiate." Yoo Joonghyuk also contributed.

Yoo Joonghyuk released his transcendence and also escaped the giant's hand. However, the giant replied in an unconcerned manner. [It isn't your decision.]

I knew it would be like this. The destruction of the giants ultimately derived from this arrogance.

I used my true voice without further delay. [It is nice to meet you. The great 'Hundred-Handers, the three Hecatoncheires brothers.]

At my words, 300 eyes simultaneously opened in the darkness. These eyes belonged to only three giants.

The three giants spoke at the same time.

[Interesting. You came here knowing about us?]

50 heads and 100 arms, the Hundred-Handers. I knew the names of these titans.

The strongest storm, Briareus.

The rushing stone, Cottus.

The changing limbs, Gyges

They were living myths who had experienced both Titanomachy and Gigantomachia. All the stories of Olympus were accumulated in their bodies. If they were 'books', I felt like I could sit here for decades reading them.

[The Fourth Wall is greedy for the taste.]

Perhaps this was a myth. The oldest story in the world. Things that had been passed down to mortals and finally formed a worldview.

The appearance of the three gods was the same but their eyes were different colours. Briareus had blue eyes, Cottus had brown eyes and Gyges had green eyes. I gazed at the hundreds of eyes and opened my mouth again.

[I have come to liberate all the giants from Tartarus.]

My true voice echoed and spread. Perhaps it was enough to be heard by all of Tartarus, not just the Hecatoncheires. In the darkness, the sound of some giants moving their bodies was heard. However, nobody opened their mouths.

It was because the titans in front of us didn't say anything. The reactions of the Hecatoncheires to my words were different. Cottus was grumpy while Gyges looked tired. Only Briareus was different.

[What a funny joke. I want to eat you even more.]

I didn't back down despite the intimidating threat and smiled. "As you can see, I'm too small for you to taste. You will have to eat more than me."

I looked over at Yoo Joonghyuk. As if he had been waiting, Yoo Joonghyuk's muscles started twitching. Soon after, Yoo Joonghyuk's body started to grow. 2 meters, 3 metres, 4 metres… Yoo Joonghyuk's height increased rapidly as he held the Black Heavenly Demon Sword while gazing at Briareus. Half of the many eyes were filled with doubt.

[…Giant Body Transformation? How do you have that skill?]

"I learnt it from you, Briareus."

The power of the Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship filled the Black Heavenly Demon Sword. Like a little hero going against the myth, Yoo Joonghyuk growled out. "To be exact, it was the you of the last 'round'."

* * *

Technically, Yoo Joonghyuk's teacher was only the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint. The source of the power he possessed was the Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship trained through countless regressions.

However, Yoo Joonghyuk didn't learn only one skill. Through numerous regressions, Yoo Joonghyuk had learnt various techniques from various beings.

Giant Body Transformation was one of them. It was gained through the stigma Transmission. In particular, Briareus who taught the Giant Body Transformation had a small connection with Yoo Joonghyuk. The evidence was the blue eyes that resembled the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint.

[A little while ago, a young giant visited here. I heard a story in exchange for awakening that child's 'destiny'… I wanted something but it was about you.]

In the First Murim, I promised to send the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint to Tartarus in exchange for her help. Perhaps Breaking the Sky Sword Saint told him about us at that time. I didn't know what the stubborn transcendent had said but I thought the story might be resolved well.

[…The singularity mentioned by the constellation.]

[The presence moving a giant wagon…]

[The scenario is really heading towards ■■…]

There was an unknown tiredness in the voice of the giants who wanted to eat us a while ago. No, it was a voice close to resignation rather than a sense of liberation.

[I am interested in you. Then how do you want to liberate us?]

"I want to create Gigantomachia."

I cut to the chase. I had ended up meeting the titans and it wasn't good if I couldn't get the job done.

The three Hecatoncheires brothers were the protagonists of Gigantomachia and Titanomachy. With these three, it wouldn't be impossible to overturn Gigantomachia. "This side is ready. If you try—"

[I refuse.]

I was a bit hesitant at the decisive answer. "Why?"

[Young child. You won't understand.]

Funnily enough, his words were true. I couldn't understand why they would refuse the offer.

The three Hecatoncheires brothers and the giants were detained for a long time here in Tartarus. They hated this prison more than anyone and had a deep grudge against the 12 gods. Why did they refuse to be liberated?

「Kim Dokja's head is bad.」

I quickly recalled the contents of Ways of Survival but couldn't come up with the correct insight.

The information f the giants wasn't described in detail in Ways of Survival. As the contact with the giants increased in the second half of the novel, Yoo Joonghyuk would rather pull out his sword than talk. I mean… just like now.

–Stop. We were really screwed if he moved his sword here.

I saw Yoo Joonghyuk release the hilt and looked back at the giants. I had to remember. How could I convince these lumps that were tens of thousands of years old?

Unexpectedly, Briareus opened his mouth first. [Young child, how many Gigantomachias do you think there are in the world?]

At this moment, letters appeared on the faces of the giants. The stories of the giants were started to speak. The sentences contained very old feelings.

[The effect of the 'Scenario Interpreter' is activated!]

[Your understanding of the story has increased sharply!]

I was able to glimpse the memories of the giants through these sentences. The history of the long-ago Titanomachy and Gigantomachia.

[The result of all scenarios is fixed. We are just a part of that scenario. We have already fought in numerous Gigantomachias that you don't know.]

The 60th scenario, Gigantomachia. In that scenario, the giants were trampled on. Olympus won the war and periodically reopened Gigantomachia. The giants were brought to war again and again. They were dressed in ragged clothing and equipment and were hunted by hundreds of armed constellations and incarnations. The bloody wounds were false and their bravery mocked.

[We were defeated.]

It happened 10 times.

[We lost.]

100 times.

[Another defeat.]

It repeated over 1,000 times.

[Now you are telling us to stand on the battlefield again.]

Just like the regressor Yoo Joonghyuk.

[How long will you call out the spectres of the past? How long will you turn over the dead shells of the myth and insult them?]

The giants were 'regressors' in a different sense than Yoo Joonghyuk. Finally, they were exhausted by the 'regressions'.

[Child, we don't want liberation. We are no longer curious about the story.]

Chapter 324: Ep. 61 - Gigantomachia, IV

Over the years, the giants had forgotten the anger from the first Gigantomachia. The repeated scenarios took away their will and tarnished the glorious days.

Now the 60th scenario, Gigantomachia was merely a festival of constellations where several giants

were conscripted.

[Please go back.]

Rather than resisting the world, the giants chose to be forgotten from the world. Their despair was so huge that I was speechless for a moment. It would've been nice if Yoo Sangah was here right now. She was better at convincing people than me.

"The commanders of a mythical era… they aren't a big deal."

It was a uniquely rude tone. Surprisingly, Kim Namwoon was the first one to open his mouth.

"Lumps, you aren't dead like me."

Despite the terrifying status of the giants, his small mouth was still moving. Kim Namwoon shouted in a strangely heightened accent, as if it was his end and he wanted to have no regrets. "Those who are alive can change the future. Yet you're already giving up? They say that gods are greater than humans and have enormous mental strength? ■king bull■! Whining after losing a few times…!"

A bloody aura rose from the giants. I quickly moved in front of Kim Namwoon to stop him. "You can still change. This Gigantomachia is completely different from the ones before."

[History doesn't change.]

"Have you already forgotten that you were betrayed by the God of Lightning? Have you forgotten how you fell to the abyss of Tartarus after helping him win Titanomachy?"

Yoo Sangah wasn't around but I remembered what she told me. Yoo Sangah was excellent in world history and mythology. I recalled the time when she persuaded King Heungmu the Great with her words. "How was it during Gigantomachia? It was a fight you could win. It was a fight you could win if it wasn't for the help of human heroes. Do you want to be recorded as a myth that was forever defeated?"

[Cheeky child. You don't understand…!]

"I understand. Your despair, I understand it all."

It was a lie. It was because I didn't know about them. However, it also wasn't a lie.

"I know someone who was in the same position as you but he didn't give up to the end, unlike you."

We could only understand the other person through our stories.

"I knew a man who was desperate thoughts of times in front of a world greater than him, yet never gave up."

Yoo Joonghyuk and Kim Namwoon looked at me. Briareus asked, [Whose story are you talking about?]

"The story of a hero I know. I can tell you if you like."

Briareus laughed at my words. The deep distrust was filled with ridicule.

[Hidden behind the wall.]

…The presence behind the wall. At this moment, I heard the world creaking.

[I know that you have a fragment of the Last Wall. You are hiding behind it and avoiding the attention of other constellations.]

It was true.

[Do you think there is any authenticity in the words from such a coward? You can't persuade us.]

Funnily enough, I couldn't refute the words. It felt like he pointed out something that I had ignored for a long time.

[The Fourth Wall is indignant!]

[The Fourth Wall is saying not to listen.]

Unexpectedly, it was the constellations who helped me.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' condemns the weakness of the giants!]

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' thinks the 'Strongest Storm' is pathetic.

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' is shaking his head.]

Briareus was surprised by the sudden burst of indirect messages.

[You have great sponsors in your channel… spectres of the scenario. You still remain? I wonder what the story is that you are chasing after this little boy.]

I stared at the indirect messages pouring from the air and worried for a moment. I didn't take long to make a decision. "I'll release the wall."

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is looking at you with astonishment!]

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' is watching you with serene eyes.]

"Then will you listen to my story?"

「Kim Dokja can't do that.」

There were intense sparks around me as the Fourth Wall spoke.

「I can't do it.」

'Just once. It is okay even for a moment'.

「It will be dangerous.」

The Fourth Wall stood firm.

[The 'Fourth Wall' is shimmering faintly.]

In fact, I wasn't confident either. I wondered if my mind could fully endure it once this wall was completely gone. Still, I had to do it.

「Absolutely not.」

'I will forcibly turn it off if you don't listen'.

The Fourth Wall shook more strongly at my threat. The Fourth Wall that always protected me. I didn't want to fight it. Eventually, the first one to yield was the Fourth Wall.

「Not everything…」

'Then?'

「One pa rt on ly.」

The moment I was about to answer, I heard the sound of the sky collapsing. There was an artificial crack in something that was snugly wrapped around me. My head became cloudy and my calm heart suddenly became uneasy.

[Part of the Fourth Wall is opened.]

I started to feel like I was going crazy. My vision turned red and my heart jumped quickly. I was dizzy.

Some of my stories released their voices.

[The story 'Hell of Eternity' has begun.]

[The exclusive attribute 'Scenario Interpreter' is activated!]

The things I had been through in the 1863rd round were floating around in my head. I looked out and letters were pouring out from me. It was the story of Ways of Survival that I had read. In the feast of fascinating stories, I lost my breath for a moment.

There was Yoo Joonghyuk. It was Yoo Joonghyuk of the original novel that no longer existed. Some of the rounds I remembered became fragments and they were passed on to the Hecatoncheires. I started retching.

「 I killed him.」

「 It shouldn't be like this.」

「 I could've stopped it.」

Even so, I didn't lose my mind. I was obliged to tell this story. Only I remembered this story.

「 "I won't give up. One hundred times, a thousand times. I will go back a few times and surely kill all of you."」

There was Yoo Joonghyuk fighting against Olympus.

The 150 eyes of the giants widened in unison.

「"I will kill all of you without leaving a single thing left."」

Yoo Joonghyuk's rounds were flowing out. Yoo Joonghyuk fought. In the 211th round, he killed one of the 12 gods. In the 325th round, he killed two of them. In the 438th round, he killed four. The number of rounds suddenly exceeded four digits.

「"I told you. You will die."」

He declared. He swung his sword. He put his words into practice. In the meantime, there were the Gigantomachia scenarios where the giants were defeated. Yoo Joonghyuk held the heads of the 12 gods and laughed.

「"You can't survive forever."」

The eyes of the giants were amazed as they looked at the heads of the gods. There was Yoo Joonghyuk who kept fighting and fighting. In the 1863rd regression, Yoo Joonghyuk slaughtered the constellations.

Every time Yoo Joonghyuk killed, the fists of the giants shook. In the eyes of the giants, something long lost was waking up again. In the end, the only way to convince someone was the story.

The lost sensibility was woken up. Their old willpower was being rekindled. They were being told that life was possible. It was just a story.

[The exclusive skill 'Fourth Wall' is activated!]

The story was soon cut off. I lost strength and collapsed, only for somebody to help me. They were Yoo Joonghyuk and Kim Namwoon.

The giants were looking at me.

[So…] The giants asked me. [What happened next in the story?]

[What happened next?]

I was well aware of the desire seen in these eyes. "Do you want to know?"

While hating the scenario, they were curious about the next scenario.

[…I want to know.]

"Find out for yourself."

At my words, the eyes of the giants shook again. The chapped lips that declared they weren't curious about the next story were twitching in unison. The answer came back after a long time.

[…Do you think you can win?]

I knew what they were asking and answered confidently. "I can win."

300 eyes were looking at me. How long had it been? The number of eyes started to increase. 300 became 400 and then 500. In the darkness, countless Gigantes appeared around the three Hecatoncheires brothers.

[Giants, listen.]

The feet of the myths descended.

[We… will fight in Gigantomachia.]

There was an earthquake along with the sound. All the giants in Tartarus started swarming. One by one, the giants started stomping their feet.

Kung. Kung. Kung. Kung.

The sound of the feet unceasingly moved to the beat. The giants rose in unison and a grand spectacle unfolded.

Kung. Kung. Kung. Kung.

A step towards ruin. I barely breathed as I watched the giants rising like waves in the darkness.

It was pretty hard but it was successful. At this time, Persephone's true voice was heard in the air.

[You better hurry, Demon King of Salvation. Olympus has already taken out the 'giants' to join Gigantomachia.]

"…Why have they already pulled out giants?"

[You don't know. Gigantomachia has already started.]

"What do you mean? There is still a week."

[Have you forgotten that time flows differently in the Underworld?]

I made a mistake. The moment I was about to ask for the time outside, I heard the voices of the giants.

[How many were taken to Gigantomachia?]

[This year, there are four.]

…Four?

"There is no way. There should be five giants in this scenario."

The giants gazed at me and answered, [Four.]

I quickly opened the smartphone and checked Ways of Survival.

「 There are five giants in this year's Gigantomachia. 」

There was no doubt. According to Ways of Survival, there should be five giants in this year's war.

Yet only four were pulled out? At this moment, I got shivers.

I glanced back and saw that Yoo Joonghyuk had a serious expression. "Kim Dokja."

All the giants in the Star Stream were trapped in Tartarus. Apart from one. Apart from the half-giant we knew.

Chapter 325: Ep. 61 - Gigantomachia, V

"Hah, it is really Earth…"

Jang Hayoung sighed as he crossed the portal and swept back his blond hair. Gwanghwamun unfolded before him. He had returned home after a long journey. "Are you happy about coming home after a long time?"

Jang Hayoung looked back and the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint was exiting the portal. The Breaking the Sky Master moved through her legs. Kyrgios Rodgraim was sitting on the Breaking the Sky Master's head. It was the transcendent party who left to train in a different dimension.

"Not so much…"

"Are you Jang Hayoung?"

Jang Hayoung's words were cut off by a stranger's voice. They turned around and a man was looking at them. Based on his clothes, he wasn't Korean.

"Yes."

"Then is the giant behind you the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint?"

"That's right."

The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint replied and the man expressed his admiration. "Hah, it is a great person. I've been waiting for you. I am called Flying Fox."

"A Murim person. What do you want?"

"Young Mister Kim said to wait for you here."

"Young Mister Kim? Are you talking about that skinny guy?"

"If that skinny guy is referring to Kim Dokja then yes." Flying Fox kept speaking, "'The Returnees Alliance will soon invade Seoul'. That's what he said."

"…Cheeky student. I told him to come back quickly."

Kyrgios spoke with a frown. They also knew about the Returnees Alliance. In particular, the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint had heard separate stories from Kim Dokja and Yoo Joonghyuk.

"The Returnees Alliance… in the other world line, I was killed by them."

Not all returnees chose the virtuous path like Flying Fox. The Returnees Alliance was a representative group that chose the path of violence and domination. "It looks like you neglected training in that world, Breaking the Sky Sword Saint."

"The opponents were the Heavenly Demon and Blood Demon. You can't look down on them."

"Whoever comes, you won't die in this world. We will fight together."

The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint laughed lightly at Kyrgios' assertion. "I don't think I'll die either. If I die here, I can't hit by cute student's butt."

The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint clenched her fists as she spoke. She didn't know how strong she was in the other world. However, she was certain that now she had stepped into another realm.

The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint was reminded of the battle with Indescribable Distance three years ago. She couldn't measure the end of that outer god. The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint never forgot the terror of that day when she faced a disaster beyond the constellations.

She preserved the First Murim and gained a giant story, before visiting Tartarus to open the fate of a 'giant god'. The enemy she couldn't deal with. In the last three years, the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint had been training for a rematch with the outer god.

Then a strange feeling was felt in the distance.

"Something is coming."

Along with Kyrgios's words, Jang Hayoung and the Breaking the Sky Master also took their places. At this timing, it must be the Returnees Alliance.

The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint quickly issued a command. "Kyrgios and I will take care of the Heavenly Demon and Blood Demon. Hayoung and the Breaking the Sky Master will protect the civilians of Seoul…"

The next moment, the body of the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint was surrounded by a bright light.

[The destiny of a 'giant' is found in 'Namgung Minyoung'!]

"What?"

[The forced scenario transfer has begun!]

[The stigma of myth can't be rejected.]

"Master!" The startled Jang Hayoung screamed but the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint's body had already disappeared somewhere. Even the calm

Kyrgios couldn't stop his shaky eyes. Then in the sky, dark clouds started to gather.

Kyrgios' expression hardened. "They are really coming this time."

The army of the Returnees Alliance was advancing towards Seoul. A great feast of returnees.

The nervous Flying Fox muttered as he moved, "This is dangerous."

"Wait a minute, Yoo Joonghyuk!"

"There is no time. Kim Dokja, haven't you noticed?" Yoo Joonghyuk's distorted face was angry. "The fifth giant is obviously the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint."

"I know."

Originally, the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint wasn't a sacrifice of Gigantomachia. It was because she didn't visit Tartarus, meet her kin and awaken her destiny.

「 It is because of me. 」

This had happened because I twisted the deployment. "Teacher will be in danger if we don't help right away. Didn't you hear that Gigantomachia started?"

I gazed at Yoo Joonghyuk's face and shook my head. "She isn't in danger. Rather, she is safe for the time being. Rather, it is someone other than the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint who is in danger."

"What nonsense are you saying? If Teacher is designated as the 'giant' of the scenario…"

Yoo Joonghyuk stopped as he noticed something. He also realized it. In Gigantomachia, the 'giant hunting' event was designated as the last order. Before the start of the hunting event, the giants were given absolute protection in the scenario. If Breaking the Sky Sword Saint was really taking part in Gigantomachia, she would be safe for now.

The problem was Earth, where the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint had disappeared from.

"By now, the Returnees War would've begun."

We might've passed the 45th scenario but not everyone on Earth was the same. The 45 scenario was still in progress and by now, the march of the Returnees Alliance would've begun. Originally, the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint was supposed to deal with the Returnees Alliance along with the others.

Yoo Joonghyuk thought for a while before spitting out, "Seoul is in danger."

Of course, Earth was powerful even without the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint.

There were Jang Hayoung, the Breaking the Sky Master, Kyrgios, Flying Fox, my mother and the wanderer forces. Gong Pildu and Han Myungoh on the north side would also help.

However… the only ones who could cope with the Heavenly Demon and Blood Demon were the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint and Kyrgios.

Yoo Joonghyuk struggled for a while before stating, "I will go to Earth. You will take part in Gigantomachia alone."

"Is it okay?"

"There is no other way."

I threw the item I was holding in my hand to him. "Take this."

It was the Giant's Armour that I just received from Briareus. It was the main armour used by Yoo Joonghyuk in the mid-to-late scenarios. Yoo Joonghyuk grabbed it without a word and escaped from Tartarus with Persephone's help.

Kung. Kung. Kung. Kung.

The giants preparing for war kept stomping their feet.

[Sub scenario - Myth Subversion has begun.]

[The possibility of a new story is germinating!]

Once this ceremony was over, the real Gigantomachia would begin. I gazed at the giants before calling out to Persephone. "Your Majesty, I'd like to go out as well."

[You can't go out.]

"Huh? Didn't you send out Yoo Joonghyuk?"

[He isn't a 'prisoner'. However, you…]

I glanced at the message floating in the air.

[You are currently imprisoned for committing a criminal offense on the legal zone.]

[Remaining confinement time: 4 hours.]

[Rules are rules.]

I frowned. There were earth-shattering roars from the giants. If I waited quietly for four hours in a place where I didn't know the time rate, I wouldn't be Kim Dokja.

"Hey, did we come here to play?" Lee Jihye spoke with a blank expression as she looked around.

[Welcome to the theme park, Gigantomachia!]

[Olympus' 12 work experience is in progress!]

The bustling group of incarnations and constellations were busily moving somewhere.

[Experience Capturing a Wild Boar.]

[Experience Hunting a Namea Lion.]

…

Shin Yoosung and Lee Gilyoung were running around while wearing rabbit ear headbands. "I've never seen a place like this!"

"Is this really the outfit that Heracles wore?"

It had been eight hours since the group entered the 60th scenario, Gigantomachia. In these eight hours, the party members had watched a dull video of Olympus, watched a poor fourth-grade monster that was called a mythical wild boar and even saw a small hydra, less than 5 metres tall, howling while trapped in a cage. "This is just an amusement park…"

Lee Hyunsung was able to get a lot of apples by participating in the Golden Apple Farm event. The children were preoccupied with playing and the soldier they believed in was like this.

Lee Seolhwa spoke, "The 60th scenario can't be like this. Stay focused." She said this but a star-shaped headband that she bought as a souvenir was flashing.

Lee Jihye looked at Han Sooyoung with a stricken expression. "Everybody isn't sane… Sooyoung unni, say something!"

Han Sooyoung was sitting on a bench and eating candy. As the distracted group played in the amusement park, Han Sooyoung was looking at the progress of the scenario with sharp eyes.

[The next of the 12 tasks that incarnations and constellations will participate in…]

In particular, Han Sooyoung's eyes were focused on the most important place in the centre of the theme park. A man who seemed to be an event helper at first glance was wearing ancient Greek armour and trinkets.

'There is a thick cover over his heel'.

There was only one hero in Olympus who had to be careful of his heels. Troy's sorrow, Achilles.

He was yawning because the progress of the event was tedious. How much time passed?

[Eh, they've seen enough so let's go to the point.]

The relaxed man's tone changed for the first time.

[Gigantomachia is an event that has been hosted by our Olympus for a long time. Experience the greatest myth in the Star Stream personally.]

The gazes of the raucous incarnations focused in an instant.

[As you know, this scenario is designed for incarnations and constellations who are about to enter the mid-to-late scenarios. Through this scenario, you have an opportunity to be chosen by the 12 gods of Olympus.]

Han Sooyoung watched the ancient hero speaking like a dokkaebi and smiled bitterly.

'They won't use a dokkaebi for the reputation of the nebula'.

Of course, they couldn't exercise the authority of a dokkaebi by doing this but the performance was enough to stimulate the participants.

[Is that all? You can also gain a stake in the giant story thought the 'giant hunting' event.]

'Some incarnations and constellations cheered at the words 'stake in a giant story'.

Achilles laughed and declared. [Then let's start the game.]

At the same time, the main hall of the theme park started to open. The sealed sphere opened and a pale light poured from the air.

[Introducing the first giant!]

The light disappeared and the figure of a legend was revealed. However, the appearance of the giant was smaller than expected. The giant was only around three metres tall.

[Haha, I see some people are disappointed. The first giant is smaller because she is a mixed-breed. However, there is no doubt that she has the story of the giants. So everyone, please start hunting!]

Han Sooyoung and the party members were watching the giant. Lee Jihye's mouth was open in a trance as she rubbed her eyes. Then she exclaimed, "That person…!"

Lee Hyunsung, Lee Gilyoung, Shin Yoosung as well. Everyone knew the identity of the giant. It was because the giant was a colleague who had fought with them. The party members' eyes widened as they faced the giant.

[Main scenario #60 — 'Gigantomachia' has begun!]

[The first game has been decided.]

[Hunt the giant 'Breaking the Sky Sword Saint, Namgung Minyoung']

The first prey was Yoo Joonghyuk's teacher, the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint.

[Why are you all still? Are you scared?]

No one moved despite the scenario starting. Thus, Achilles flew through the air.

[It seems that everyone is afraid since this is the first time you're experiencing Gigantomachia… it isn't a big deal. I'll give you a demonstration.]

A star relic, the Ash Spear was held in Achilles' hand. A legendary spear that killed numerous armed men in the Trojan War.

The incarnations cried out. Achilles was a hero of Olympus. There were no giants who could go against him.

Han Sooyoung untied the bandage around her arm. The scenario was important but they couldn't lose the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint here.

[Look. Being afraid of this—!]

Han Sooyoung rushed forward as Achilles's spear aimed at the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint's heart. Then Han Sooyoung stopped. Achilles's charge stopped in the air. The cheers of the incarnations ceased. The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint's enormous hand was holding Achilles' head.

[Whether it is Murim or Olympus, giants always get the same treatment.]

Achilles hung in the air like a worm and struggled. The more he struggled, the more the muscles on the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint's hand became larger. A voice was heard from somewhere.

[You want to hunt giants?]

The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint's eyes were cold as she stared at the incarnations and constellations.

There was a loud sound and Achilles' head was crushed.

[Then give it a try.]

Chapter 326: Ep. 61 - Gigantomachia, VI

The ceiling of Tartarus was opening.

[Cracks have occurred in some areas of Tartarus!]

[Someone is trying to break out of jail!]

Along with the warning message that appeared in the air, the whole of the Underworld was shaking.

[The judges of the Underworld have noticed the actions of the Demon King of Salvation!]

Persephone warned in a sharp voice.

[…It is only this time. Please keep this in mind, Demon King of Salvation.]

Earthquakes occurred and a faint portal started to be made on the wide-open ceiling of Tartarus. Persephone had opened an exit to the ground. Briareus watched the scene and asked,

[What did you say to make the queen of the Underworld help you?]

"It was just some threats."

30 minutes ago, I sent the following message to Persephone.

–If you refuse to cooperate, I will spread the footage of Tartarus all over the Star Stream.

Tartarus had many secrets of the Underworld, whether it was the secret recruits they trained or the institutional facilities that were concealed. It wasn't good if the hostile forces to Olympus received a secret report on Tartarus.

Then Briareus shook his head. [Her Majesty was threatened by that?]

"She is on our side. She just needed a pretext to release me. It is an excuse when things go wrong in the future.

If this Gigantomachia failed and Olympus picked up on what happened in the Underworld, the Underworld would be in a difficult situation. Perhaps my current blackmail would be a bit of a defense for the Underworld.

Of course, this was a story for when Gigantomachia failed but I didn't intend to let that happen.

Briareus spoke, [You don't seem to know the king and the queen well.]

"Huh?"

Briareas gave a knowing smile instead of answering.

[You have received the Giant's Oath.]

[You have acquired a new semi-myth story!]

[The story 'Giant's Liberator' has been acquired.]

[This story is attributed to 'A Single Story'.]

Giant's Liberator. This was the first story I should obtain from this Olympus war.

[Giant's Liberator. Soon the giants of this place will enter Gigantomachia. Is there anything you specifically want?]

"There is no such thing. Just do what you want."

[…I'm becoming curious. Why do you want to reach ■■? No other constellations have every built up achievement like you. Are you dreaming of a 'perfect story'?]

A perfect story. Some people called 'A Single Story' by such a name. A story that never existed before and was made up of stories that never existed.

"I just want to see the end with my colleagues. Together without losing anyone."

[It will be the hardest story in the world. There has never been such a story.]

It was true. A myth without any sacrifices didn't exist in this world.

[The probability of the Star Stream always moves in a way that forces sacrifice. Fate won't easily let you go.]

"I won't know without trying. In addition, fate has already been overcome."

I remembered the damn fate given to me by fucking Olympus. Even now, I gritted my teeth remembering it.

However, Briareus' expression was grave. [Have you overcome fate?]

Something suddenly flashed through my mind. According to Ways of Survival, all titans were born with the power of prophecy.

[Liberator, 'fate' is a much broader concept than you think. The fate given to you by Olympus is only a speck of dust in the world. The real fate is inevitable. If you avoid it, probability must be distorted.

That twisted probability must be resolved by someone. That is why there is no 'perfect' story.]

"I won't know if I don't try. I will do it if possible. My colleagues also aren't weak enough to succumb to fate."

I jumped into the portal and declared, "Then let's meet in Gigantomachia."

Briareus nodded. [I wish you the blessing of the story.]

"Kyrgios."

"Yes."

"Maybe we need the story's blessing." Jang Hayoung muttered as he watched the returnees approaching like cattle.

"There is no need if you have good training."

A sword scattering a silver-white light emerged from behind Kyrgios.

[Pure White Paradox.] It was a sword made by the masters of Peace Land, Kyrgios's home for decades. It was Kyrgios' weapon that travelled with him through numerous battlefields and had the same performance as a star relic. The fact that Kyrgios, who rarely used a weapon, pulled out the sword proved that the opponents weren't easy.

Two figures were flying at the head of the returnees. There was a middle-aged man in a gorgeous red uniform and one in a black and white uniform engraved with the symbol of his school.

"Strange. I heard the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint was here."

"Are you mistaken again?"

"find the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint!"

The voices of the middle-aged men were profound. Kyrgios shot into the air. The Murim people were surprised by the 'status' that filled the air and instantly stopped.

Kyrgios opened his mouth. "You are the Heavenly Demon and Blood Demon."

"Who are you?"

Kyrgios raised his aura instead of replying. Lightning poured from dark clouds and part of it nestled in Kyrgios. Kim Dokja's flagship technique, Electrification was now emitting a sublime aura from the founder.

"You can't know my name." The astonished returnees stepped back. "You will die soon."

The white-blue lightning filled the sky. Anyone from Murim would know the name.

"Is this Paradox Baekchung?"

Kyrgios' sword pointed towards the sky. As the probability ran wild, Kyrgios's status clashed with the returnees. There was a vast wind pressure and Jang Hayoung and the Breaking the Sky Master were pushed back.

The centre of the sky contained the Heavenly Demon, the Blood Demon and Kyrgios. Every time an attack poured out, the space screamed like thunder. It was hard to believe that this fierce battle was a confrontation between humans.

Jang Hayoung was ecstatic as he watched the battle. 'Someday, I can be strong like this'.

–Jang Hayoung! Protect the industrial complex with the Breaking the Sky Master's group!

Jang Hayoung came to his senses due to Kyrgios' sound transmission and moved with the Breaking the Sky Master.

With the exception of the Heavenly Demon and Blood Demon, there were approximately 1,000 returnees remaining. Among them were the 10 masters of Murim.

A small storm raged around Jang Hayoung's fist. "Kuaaack!"

Some returnees were caught in the wind pressure but dozens of returnees used their bodies as the jumping point. There were too many of them.

"Evacuate towards the industrial complex!"

Their side contained Jang Hayoung, the Breaking the Sky Master, Flying Fox and other returnees. Apart from Kyrgios, only a few incarnations were able to confront the transcendent returnees.

In the northern part of the industrial complex, a huge fortress approached while firing.

Jang Hayoung's face became rosy. "Gong Pildu!"

Magic shells poured out from the fortress towards the returnees and victims instantly appeared. However, the returnees soon maintained their ranks and defended against the shells.

"Smash that fortress!"

Gong Pildu's Armed Fortress was suitable for defense, not attack. 200 returnees gathered and proceeded to Gong Pildu's Armed Fortress. The number of returnees remaining was 400. The returnees crossed the walls and entered the interior of the industrial complex.

Then as if waiting, the wanderer forces dedicated to defending the industrial complex moved. Cho Youngran used the power of the First Spiritualist of Joseon. Lee Boksoon fired her sniper rifle. Jeon Woochi's techniques filled the air and bullets pierced the returnees.

"Kuaack!"

"The shaman! Kill the shaman!"

The innocent people were killed like fish caught in the waves. Cho Youngran and Lee Boksoon started to be injured by the bombardment of the returnees. The wanderers were pushed back and some returnees shouted. "Listen up, leader of the Seoul area! If you give uour life, no more meaningless sacrifices will occur!"

The key to the Returnees War was to defeat the leader of each force. The core goal of the scenario that the returnees who invaded Seoul received was to defeat the leader.

A moment later, a glowing light emerged from inside the industrial complex. Cho Youngran's complexion paled as she kept defending.

"No! Sookyung!" The moment Lee Boksoon cried out, a woman emerged from the industrial complex.

The Wanderer King declared, "I am the leader of Seoul."

In one hand, she was holding the broken Eight Beaded Bell and in the other, she as holding a bronze dagger. A few returnees staggered back from the aura that emerged from the Heavenly Symbols she was holding.

"There is no need to be afraid. She can't use the power of her sponsor!"

The returnees shouted and Lee Sookyung smiled bitterly. In the battle of Dark Castle, most of the Founder's Mother's status was destroyed. Even so, she had a way to fight.

「 Establish the centre and become the wind. 」

The bronze sword Lee Sookyung was holding gave off a bright light.

[The constellation 'King Heungmu the Great' is surprised by the actions of incarnation 'Lee

Sookyung'.]

[The constellation 'One-eyed Maitreya' is warning that it is dangerous!]

[The constellation, 'Seo Ae Il Pil…]

All the constellations of the Korean Peninsula warned her at the same time. She knew. She was already familiar with what would happen if she did this.

Lee Sookyung glanced around the industrial complex. The image of the sleeping Yoo Sangah blurred the window.

She thought of the children going to Olympus for Yoo Sangah's sake. The upright soldier Lee Hyunsung, Jung Heewon who didn't tolerate injustice, the fierce but brave Lee Gilyoung, the calm and gifted Shin Yoosung. She also remembered Lee Seolhwa, who was warm-hearted and took good care of the party members and Han Sooyoung, who often grumbled but had a keen sense of humour.

Then she was reminded of her child. The time for that child to live. The story she long dreamt about. The time she couldn't protect him.

The light from the bronze sword was as bright as the sun. Lee Sookyung muttered very quietly. "Emperor of Heaven and the Wind God."

There was a constellation associated with each of the star relics of the Korean Peninsula. The bronze sword Lee Sookyung was holding right now was one of the Heavenly Symbols.

[The constellation 'Wind God of Heaven' is looking down at Incarnation 'Lee Sookyung'.]

Wind God of Heaven. One of the three constellations who held the highest rank in Hongik. Now Lee Sookyung was making her last bet with her life as collateral. "Come, Pungbaek!"

The sky opened and a blue aura roared around the dagger. The returnees blinked at the blinding light. Lee Sookyung looked at the sky and the sky looked down at Lee Sookyung.

'Just a moment. Please lend me your strength'.

*

Then the sky gave a warning. Blue-black lightning struck and Lee Sookyung responded to the warning.

'It doesn't matter'.

The next moment, the sparks of probability appeared around Lee Sookyung's body. Her bones were crumbling and her skin was burnt. Amidst this pain, the hand holding the sword became heavy.

The force of wind that a human couldn't endure was nestled in her right hand. This was one of the strongest constellations on the Korean Peninsula, the power of Pungbaek.

From left to right, Lee Sookyung swung her sword. Then the space was split apart. It was as if the world was split in half from the beginning. Everything around her was torn by the absolute wind pressure that followed the trajectory of her sword.

"Wh, at…?"

10, 20, 30… the number of returnees who died quickly surpassed 100. All the returnees who crossed the walls were falling through the air with their waist cut. Their faces showed they didn't understand the source of their death.

Lee Sookyung held her trembling right hand and took shaky breaths. In one blow, most of the returnees were destroyed. Of course, it wasn't everyone.

There were returnees who noticed the danger in the short time and moved out of range. They were masters from the Third Murim and Fourth Murim.

"It's over. Kill her."

Lee Sookyung glanced at the masters rushing towards her and smiled. She did everything she could. Dozens of swords rushed towards her as she fell through the air. There was the sound of flesh being pierced and Lee Sookyung sensed death.

However, she didn't feel the pain of being stabbed. She opened her eyes to see someone's back. It was a very wide back.

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* Official novel illustration (canonical)

Chapter 327: Ep. 61 - Gigantomachia, VII

"Lee Sookyung."

Yoo Joonghyuk was there. The image that followed was the masters' necks being pierced. The lifeless bodies crashed to the ground.

"…I didn't expect to get your help."

Yoo Joonghyuk ran with a blank expression and Lee Sookyung on his back. Lee Sookyung didn't say anything but she could see where he was heading. Perhaps he was looking for the medical staff of this industrial complex.

"Thank you."

The words spilled out and Yoo Joonghyuk replied indifferently. "Don't say anything that isn't in your heart. I know you dislike me."

"Of course, I dislike you. I hate you. You are the person who took my role."

"I don't know what that means."

In Lee Sookyung's head, time flowed slowly. She heard that it should move quickly… then why? Was it because it was hard and difficult?

"…I've known you from a long time ago. That kid often talked about you. He came to visit his mother in prison and only talked about this."

–This time, he challenged the 12 gods of Olympus.

The young face of Kim Dokja as he talked happily. Many thoughts had floated on this child's face.

Yoo Joonghyuk spoke like he felt Lee Sookyung's heart rate slowing down. "Lee Sookyung. Don't let go of your mind."

Lee Sookyung barely maintained her blurring consciousness. She continued to be drowsy on Yoo Joonghyuk's back. "In any case, at least once… I wanted to thank you."

"You are saying things that I can't understand."

The back that was now carrying her had actually carried her son. The middle school Kim Dokja and the high school Kim Dokja. He was the support. He raised the child she couldn't carry. He made the child live.

–I thought that I wanted to be like him.

However, she was the one who wanted to be the owner of that back, more than anyone else.

–Then… what did Yoo Joonghyuk do next? Are you curious Mother?

Her son's words continued throughout the visitation that only lasted 10 minutes.

–Yes, I'm curious.

The two people spoke and listened with a wall between them. A story with adventure and life. The story of someone who wasn't related to her or her son, but who lived hard. It was like talking through a wall.

The two people talked about Ways of Survival during those days. The fictional story was their only possession. Now that story had become reality and was carrying her.

Lee Sookyung murmured in a soft voice, "I was finally living my life…"

"Don't tell me."

Yoo Joonghyuk's back was wet with blood. Lee Sookyung's complexion was gradually fading. There were still sparks of probability around her. In her damaged flesh, the stories she had accumulated were evaporating. In order to conceal it, Lee Sookyung purposefully asked about things she knew. "Where are your parents?"

"I was told they died in an accident."

"You don't sound sad."

"I can't grieve what I can't remember."

Lee Sookyung knew. He didn't remember because it wasn't in the original novel. Everything about Yoo Joonghyuk was just a character setting. From the beginning, Yoo Joonghyuk's parents didn't exist.

Lee Sookyung hesitated for a moment. "Yes, humans are like this. Do you think I remember all my childhood?"

"…Is it memory loss?"

"Everyone gets memory loss. Little by little, we will forget our memories and one day, we will forget everything."

Lee Sookyung knew that her words wouldn't reach Yoo Joonghyuk. A regressor who had lived three rounds. For an immortal man who would live an unknown amount of time in the future, her words would be lighter than the weight of dust.

Yoo Joonghyuk spoke, "Sometimes I remember things. I remember someone watching me."

It was the first time Lee Sookyung heard this story and she wondered, "…Who was watching you?"

"I don't know either. There was a gaze watching me for a long time. There were times when I often felt the gaze."

After Yoo Joonghyuk's words were over, Lee Sookyung didn't talk for a long time. There was a long silence before Lee Sookyung laid her hands on Yoo Joonghyuk's head and spoke in a gentle voice.

"Maybe it was your parents."

Lee Sookyung stared up at the sky. Numerous constellations were watching them. Her flesh was breaking. She felt the stories gradually pouring away from her body. Her vision was blurry as Lee Sookyung kept trying to watch the sky. It was as if she was trying to find a star somewhere.

"Lee Sookyung?"

Lee Sookyung's answer was no longer heard.

There was a bloody wind blowing in the theme park where the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint appeared. Since Achilles' head was blown off as a demonstration, several constellations rushed forward in succession but received the same fate.

The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint's fists were covered in red. [You want to recreate Gigantomachia with just this?]

The scared participants hesitated when the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint's voice rang out.

Han Sooyoung and the party members watched the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint from the fortress they were hiding behind. Lee Jihye spoke, "We don't need to help."

"Can't we just hide here?" Lee Gilyoung added.

Han Sooyoung murmured while chewing on candy. "This doesn't make sense. Can a giant be so strong in Gigantomachia?"

It was an indisputable fact that the giants were strong. However, this was Gigantomachia, a scenario where the giants were defeated. In this scenario, the giants weren't able to use their strength due to the influence of Stage Transformation. Furthermore, against a hero like Achilles…

[…I underestimated this half-breed giant.]

The forgotten Achilles, whose head had been destroyed, was waking up.

[The constellation 'Troy's Sorrow' has invoked the Immortal Hero stigma!]

His crushed head was restored and the blood pouring from his body stopped.

「 Achilles won't die until Achilles' heel is cut. 」

This was the strongest skill of the hero Achilles. The regenerated Achilles was larger than before. His height reached over three metres and the surrounding incarnations muttered. "…Giant?"

Achilles' body became as big as a giant. The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint asked, [Are you a giant half-breed?]

[…]

[How funny. A person who inherited the blood of the giants became a servant of Olympus?]

[I'm not a giant. I am Olympus' hero, Achilles!]

Han Sooyoung watched the collision between the two giants and understood why Stage Transformation hadn't activated yet. Achilles was a hero of Olympus but he wasn't a source of Gigantomachia in the past. Moreover, he was a mixed-blood giant like the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint.

A shockwave created by the clash between giants shook the theme park. Achilles touched the palm of his hand like he couldn't believe it.

[Why does a half-breed have this power? I've never heard of your name. What type of story do you have…?!]

The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint stared at the sky without speaking.

[My distance blood is said to have been castrated by the sky.]

She was transcendent. Unlike other constellations, she only had a few stories because she pursued the highest strength. There was only one path she had ever walked.

[The story 'Path of Breaking the Sky' has started!]

It was the power to break the sky, which gave her the name of Breaking the Sky Sword Saint. An indirect message was heard as stories flowed steadily from the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint.

[The power to break through the sky is favoured by the 'Breaking the Sky Sword Saint'.]

[The strength of Breaking the Sky is opened!]

Achilles was astonished by the message.

[A giant who breaks the sky? Don't tell me…!]

The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint opened her mouth.

[You will have the same fate.]

There was a terrible aura flowing from the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint's body. It happened the moment the faltering incarnations stepped back. A large horn sound was heard from somewhere.

[The nebula 'Olympus' is in full swing!]

In the distance, a ship was coming from the sea. It was Argo.

[Giant Story 'Fellowship of Heroes' has started!]

The incarnations discovered a giant ship moving across the water and screamed. It was because they knew who was riding the ship.

"The heroes! The real heroes are coming!"

"The constellations of Gigantomachia!"

The real heroes who fought in Gigantomachia, unlike Achilles, were coming. There were also constellations flying in the sky.

The narrative-grade constellations of Olympus. It was a power that was not comparable to Achilles.

[The Star Stream has announced the opening of the new stage.]

Finally, the Stage Transformation was going to begin. The momentum of the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint started to rise sharply. Achilles regained his courage and laughed at the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint.

[Hahaha! Young giant. You don't know the calamity you have brought! You…!]

However, he couldn't finish his words. It was because someone popped out from another portal and destroyed his head. Achilles collapsed to the ground after his head was burst twice in a row. The man knocked down Achilles and didn't hesitate to cut his heel.

[The constellation 'Troy's Sorrow' has died in pain.]

Achilles' giant body dispersed. Han Sooyoung laughed as she saw the white coat blowing in the wind. "Shit, you should've come quicker."

Kim Dokja had returned from the Underworld. Kim Dokja sighed lightly and looked at the party members. "Kim Dokja's Company. Are you ready?"

Kung! Kung! Kung! Kung!

Heavy footsteps were heard from somewhere. There was a deafening roar from the ground as countless mountains appeared in the sky. The giant mountains sprang up and destroyed the theme park.

On the edge of a mountain, Kim Dokja declared, "Now, let's start the real Gigantomachia."

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[The Star Stream has confirmed the possibility of a new giant story.]

[The interpretation of old stories is possible!]

[The characters who appeared in the myth are reconstructed!]

[Based on past myths, Stage Transformation will occur.]

After seeing the indirect messages popping up one after another, the great dokkaebi 'Noksu' was silent. Originally, the 60th scenario Gigantomachia wasn't relayed by the dokkaebis. They only had channel and airing rights while the actual progress was done by the sub-heroes of Olympus.

However, the situation had changed. There was an explosion on the screen and roars as the giants emerged from the ground.

–Where the hell did the giants appear from?

–The Underworld! What is going on in the Underworld?

–Shouldn't they be trapped in the underground prison?

Now Gigantomachia was a completely different story.

"…Who will relay it?" Noksu turned and asked two advanced dokkaebi.

"I'll do it."

"No, I will."

They were the director of the Korean branch Bihyung and the director of the Japanese branch Dokgak. The two gazes met and currents filled the air.

Dokgak exclaimed, "Great Dokkaebi! Bihyung can't do this. He has been broadcasting Incarnation Kim Dokja for too long."

"I'm familiar with him so I can broadcast it better. In addition, since when will you still call him incarnation? He is a constellation."

On the screen, the incarnations of Kim Dokja's Company were seen fighting the heroes. Their appearance of taking precise formations and releasing their status was reminiscent of glittering constellations centred on a single star.

The sound of chewing popcorn was heard from somewhere. [Very noisy. Do dokkaebis normally talk like this?]

The red wine in the glass was sucked into the man's mouth. Then one of the heroes of Olympus died on the screen.

[The constellation 'God of Wine and Ecstasy' is cheering!]

[The constellation 'God of Wine and Ecstasy' has sponsored 3,000 cons to the 'Demon King of Salvation'.]

At this absurd sight, Bihyung asked, "Aren't you a member of Olympus? Can you be sitting her leisurely?"

[What do you know? I'm not really close to them. In addition, aren't you the ones who said I can take a tour today?]

Like any supporter on the street, Dionysus had a flag with his team on his back. The flag was covered with 'Olympus is doomed'.

Dokgak's eyes narrowed. "The 12 Gods of Olympus would've gathered at Olympus Temple by now."

[I want Kim Dokja to win.]

"Huh?"

The dokkaebis were in an uproar from the remark that was like a bomb. Dionysus laughed heartily. [What are you so surprised? I can support anyone. In addition, you shouldn't react like this. Don't you only need a 'fun' scenario?]

It was true, making the dokkaebis frowned at the words. Dokgak opened his mouth. "The thing you are expecting won't happen."

Dokgak's words caused Bihyung's expression to darken. In fact, Kim Dokja's Company fighting against Olympus was ridiculous. Breaking a rock with a quail egg had more of a chance than this. In addition, it overlapped with the Earth side.

Bihyung watched Gigantomachia with one eye while the other saw Yoo Joonghyuk running with Lee Sookyung on his back. At this moment, Dionysus opened his mouth again. [It is unknown if the story is a tragedy or a comedy until this is over.]

"…Isn't it obvious? Gigantomachia is such a scenario."

[Gigantomachia is just one of the many giant stories that Olympus had. You might belittle them as long as they're not there but you can't afford to overlook the lucky punch.]

"The probability of it happening is close to 0%."

[That probability will happen. Isn't that why I'm here?]

Dionysus watched the screen while shoving popcorn in his mouth.

[The key is… how to make the 'dizzy fish' come out…]

More than half of the 12 Gods had gathered. They were in the form of symbolic objects that represented themselves. The first one to speak was a trident.

[The distinguished Lightning Throne didn't come this time and… Dionysus is missing?]

[That's correct.]

The waters around the temple boiled up like the sea was furious. Some symbolic bodies looked at each other nervously and the trident kept speaking,

[Then why did the giants wake up again?]

[It is a group that broke out from Tartarus.] The one who answered with a constellation with the symbol of a pair of swords.

The trident asked again, [Hades let them go?]

[It was said they performed the myth ritual.]

[The myth ritual? They must've sacrificed a great probability… did 'Everybody's Mother' wake up?]

[No. It was the three Hecatoncheires brothers who moved.]

[All three of them went out?]

[It is Briareus alone. It is said he lost half his Hundred-Handers.]

[They were probably lacking probability for all three to leave.]

It was silent. Then the blazing sun spoke, [We can't sit idly by. Kim Dokja's Company? The small nebula is provoking us.]

[We need to severely punish them.]

Then a winged shoe with numerous data windows around it spoke. [It won't be easy. Like the three chiefs, the master of the nebula has received the indication of the end ■■ hint.]

[…Is that true Hermes?]

[Yes.]

[Huh, it is funny. The master of the nebula is building a 'story' on the same level as the Lightning Throne?]

There was a stir in the group. 'A Single Story' was a sensitive topic for the 12 Gods. The constellations were all seeking the ultimate story. There was no one who wasn't interested in the hint of the end. It was the trident who arranged things. [Quiet. Everyone is busy and there is a lot of work to do. We will start the vote.]

Everyone in the place fell silent. The reason why so many gods gathered was due to the 60th scenario.

[In response to the provocation of Kim Dokja's Company, I, as chairman, am calling for the deployment of the story weapon.]

Then the voting began.

[The constellation 'God of Marriage and the Home' declares abstention.]

[The constellation 'Organizer of Agriculture and the Seasons' declares neutrality.]

[The constellation 'Spokesman of Justice and Wisdom' declares that we must withdraw the justice the humans don't know about.]

[The constellation 'Atrocious War God' wants to fight the giants.]

[The constellation 'Almighty Sun' wants to burn a petty nebula.]

[The constellation 'Volcanic Blacksmith' wants to make a weapon to fight against the giants.]

[The constellation 'Pure Hunter of the Moonlight' rejects a meaningless war.]

[The constellation 'Goddess of Love and Beauty' says she will abstain from this superficial vote.]

[The constellation 'Master of the Skywalk' says the issue shouldn't be approached so simple. The big data should be examined, the nature of the case reviewed and the patterns of the enraged giants…]

[Hermes, just say it.]

[The constellation 'Master of the Skywalk' is against the war.]

Several constellations were surprised by the declaration.

[You are a coward, Hermes.]

[He always goes against the will of the temple…]

Hermes didn't say anything. Meanwhile, the result of the votes came up.

[Agree: 4 votes]

[Disagree: 2 votes]

[Abstain: 3 votes]

There was only one last vote left. Of course, it was the chairman's vote.

[The constellation 'Spear that Draws the Boundaries of the Sea' is demanded the release of the weapon.]

[Agree: 5 votes]

[All seats have voted apart from the non-attendees.]

The gods nodded. [Apart from those who abstained, more than half are in favour and I am declaring the release of the 'story weapon'.]

A hammering sound rang through the temple while an ominous foam rose from the sea. The direction of the foam was the theme park Gigantomachia where the giants were gathering.

[We need a commander to lead the weapons. The historical-grade constellations will go together but they can't deal with the giants alone.]

[Who will you send?]

[I will approve some gods to move. You will be in an incarnation body and I hope you assist them without hesitation.]

Then somebody raised their hand.

[I will go.]

* * *

After Achilles' incarnation body collapsed, the incarnations fell into a panic. Several incarnations fled when the saw the mountains of giants rising everywhere. In the chaos, several incarnations shouted, "Why are you doing this?"

"You! What the hell is this?"

The astonishment and resentment of the incarnations were soon directed towards me. I asked in return, "Why are you doing what? What did I do?"

"We missed the chance to get a star relic because of you!"

"It was a chance to get a story about catching a giant!"

"I was going to catch the eyes of the 12 Gods and join Olympus!" Now because of you…!"

Gigantomachia. With a participation fee of 100,000 coins, they got a chance to gain hidden pieces and if lucky, a piece of a giant story. That opportunity was now disappearing into a handful of dust in front of their eyes.

I watched the incarnations and wondered, "Do you really think that Gigantomachia is such a naive event?"

Perhaps they were right. There actually were incarnations and constellations who were strengthened through Gigantomachia. In addition, many of them likely became members of Olympus.

"Let's say you join Olympus. Then what will you do?"

"What?"

"In a nebula already occupied by the 12 Gods and the ancient constellations, what can you do?"

Through Ways of Survival, I saw the words of countless incarnations who had joined Olympus. The incarnations were bound by unusual contracts and collected crude stories as they were used in the long-term for various scenarios.

"All the incarnations of last year's Gigantomachia climbed to the top scenario! They…!"

"Are you talking about them?"

The people turned their heads in the direction I pointed. There were countless ships crossing the sea, including Argo. Among the ships' passengers, the participants of last year's Gigantomachia were also seen.

"W-Why are they…?"

Gigantomachia. The myths recorded it as a fight between the giants and the gods and heroes of Olympus. However, most incarnations weren't aware of how the heroes who participated in the war were made.

[Many constellations are excited!]

The gods were afraid of the giants and mass-produced heroes from humans for Gigantomachia.

[Constellations of the nebula 'Olympus' are showing hostility towards you.]

Even after the end of Gigantomachia, it was unknown how many incarnations were being mobilized for this re-enactment war. It was a scenario that ate and produced itself, like a snake biting its own tail.

[A number of constellations have entered the channel!]

[A large number of constellations can't hide their excitement for Gigantomachia!]

The constellations who hated the scenario, reached the end of the scenario and enjoyed the scenario. They desperately climbed the ladder of the scenario, mocked the incarnations and kicked the ladder towards the top. The victim of the tragedy became the subject of the tragedy.

I declared towards the horror-stricken incarnations. "I want to break the scenario."

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"Break the scenario? What are you saying…"

The people made expressions that showed they didn't understand. It was natural. There was no way they thought they could break the scenario. The scenario had become a condition of life for them.

[You are a splendid constellation! Do you think you can contend with Olympus?]

I turned after hearing someone's voice and saw a familiar big man. He had a bushy beard and held a long spear. It was a constellation I knew. "That's right."

[Mwahaha! If you don't mind, I'd like to ask for your name.]

"I am the Demon King of Salvation."

Demon King of Salvation. Some of the incarnations and constellations who heard my modifier immediately responded. "Is it the Demon King's Selection…?"

"T-The demon king who knocked down Surya!"

The man with the big spear came forward and said. [I am called 'Protector of Changban.]

"Protector of Changban! It is Zhang Fei!"

Zhang Fei struck his massive chest. [I want to help you. I didn't want to play this childish game but now I'm getting heated up!]

He threw away the items harvested from Olympus' theme park. It was the head of a young hydra, a golden apple and fake golden fleece.

I nodded and said, "Good."

If Zhang Fei had this equipment, he would definitely be a big power. However, it wasn't enough.

[The hidden scenario 'Myth Subversion' has affected the main scenario.]

I glanced around at the other incarnations and constellations and stated, "Now, choose."

The incarnations looked between me, the terrible giants and Argo crossing the sea.

"Do you want to be stuck to the back of a giant nebula and be their limbs for a lifetime? Or do you want to be the master of a new 'myth' along with the mythical giants."

[The contents of the 'main scenario' that you and your nebula received will be updated!]

[Main scenario #60 — Gigantomachia]

Category: Main

Difficulty level: SSS+

Clear Conditions: The ancient giants have come to the Gigantomachia battlefield. You can join the battlefield by taking the side of the 'giants' or 'Olympus'. Cut the neck of the enemy leader and declare the advent of a new myth to the Star Stream!

Time Limit: —

Compensation: A new giant story, ???

Failure: Partial disappearance of the 'giant story'.

* If the enemy's incarnation body is destroyed, the corresponding scenario will end.

* Each faction has two leaders.

The moment the scenario updated, a green arrow flashed over my head.

[You already belong to a force.]

[You are one of the two leaders in charge of the 'giant' forces.]

The incarnations around me were silent. They had probably received the updated scenario.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is delighting in this spectacle.]

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is delighting in your suffering.]

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' is wondering about your strategy.]

Then the bombardment started from the sea. Han Sooyoung's voice was heard behind me. "Kim Dokja! How long are you going to stand there? Do you want to just watch?"

I drew my sword and descended from the shoulder of a giant. "Let's start."

"How are we going to fight? Our power is overwhelmingly lacking."

Han Sooyoung's words were true. I wouldn't say it was 'overwhelming' but less than 10 giants had passed through the portal with me. Furthermore, Briareus of the Hecatoncheires was a core power but he hadn't yet appeared on the field. Perhaps he was the other 'leader'.

[Kill the giants.]

A true voice emerged from somewhere and the human heroes leapt from Argo to attack the giants.

[The Stage Transformation of Gigantomachia is occurring.]

There were sparks and the surroundings changed. The ancient battlefield. It was the land of massacre where the first Gigantomachia occurred.

The constellations of Olympus came flying through the air. Most of them were historical-grade but once they joined forces and attacked the giants, the situation suddenly tilted.

「The supreme giants will kneel down to the combined forces of the heroes and gods.」

The giants were kneeling down one by one before the combined efforts of the constellations and heroes. My group tried to help the giants but we were blocked by the shells coming from the sea.

Lee Hyunsung exclaimed, "I think we have to do something about that story weapon!"

The story weapon, Argo. The ship of the Olympus heroes was launching shells that contained enormous magic power. It was difficult to even approach the sea. Of course, it was expected. "Have you forgotten? Who we have."

I stared at a girl standing among the party members. "…Me?"

To be exact, I looked at the constellation behind Lee Jihye.

[The constellation 'Maritime War God' is looking at you.]

Lee Jihye shouted, "…Are you crazy? You want me to deal with that?"

Olympus' Argo was much bigger than Lee Jihye's Ghost Fleet. It was the size difference between a patrol ship and a destroyer. It was natural to think it was impossible.

"You can do it."

I knew. Lee Jihye could indeed do it.

"You can definitely do it if you are with your sponsor."

As the constellations of the Korean Peninsula watched, the Maritime War God was looking up at the sky. A constellation who had been confined to the Korean Peninsula for a long time. He had to carry the name of the country on his back. The constellation who had to remain a symbol of the nation he dedicated his life to.

One day, Goryeo's First Sword had said: Among the historical-grade constellations of the Korean Peninsula, only the Duke of Loyalty and Warfare can compete with me.

Then why did Yi Sunsin remain at the historical-grade despite Goryeo's First Sword become a narrative-grade constellation?

[The constellation 'Maritime War God' is looking at his fellow people.]

It was because he refused to be narrative-grade.

[The constellation 'Seo Ae Il Pil' wants 'Maritime War God' to fight for himself.]

it was the moment when a historical-grade constellation became narrative-grade. The moment when a single constellation left his nation and moved towards his own path. A dazzling radiance emerged from Lee Jihye's body.

[The constellation 'Maritime War God' is opening his status.]

The Duke of Loyalty and Warfare released himself, as if revealing everything about him.

[The Star Stream is staring at the constellation 'Maritime War God'.]

The sky of the scenario looked down at the Duke of Loyalty and Warfare. Like a seasoned actor who had been hiding his capabilities, the Duke of Loyalty and Warfare under the sky was magnificent and bold. It was a spirit that didn't retreat or feel fear.

[Many constellations are surprised by the status of the Maritime War God!]

After a long time, the Duke of Loyalty and Warfare was finally leaving the Korean Peninsula.

[The Star Stream has accepted the promotion of Maritime War God.]

[The constellation 'Maritime War God' has become a narrative-grade constellation.]

"Jihye." The opening of Gigantomachia started with the promotion of the sea admiral. "Smash it all."

Lee Jihye was surrounded by the spirit of the Maritime War God and raised her sword.

[The character 'Lee Jihye' has activated the stigma 'Ghost Fleet Lv. 10!]

[The status of the sponsor has risen and the destructive power of the Ghost Fleet is rising rapidly!]

12 ships appeared at the shoreline. The ships had already grown to the size of a destroyer.

「Those who seek death shall live. Those who seek life shall die.」

The cannons of the 12 ships fired simultaneously. The number of enemy shells that never ceased firing slowly started to change. The front of Argo was crumbling. The number of shells dropped sharply and there was the sound of the hull exploding.

The solid Argo was shaking.

We equipped ourselves to defend against the shells and moved our feet. We cut down the Olympians running towards the giants and moved forward. Maybe they thought this couldn't continue anymore and the heroes of Argo came out.

[Everybody land!]

The intense true voice was heard from Argo's expedition leader, Wind Expedition King. Argo' expedition leader, Jason.

[The giants can't stop humanity and gods from joining together! The winner of this war is already fixed!]

The army poured out along with this shout. I took the lead while speaking to the faltering group members. "There is no need to be afraid. We aren't giants."

We weren't giants. In other words, Stage Transformation didn't have an influence on us.

The large Jason came this way and a man on our side ran towards him.

"I'll take this big one."

It was Lee Hyunsung. Lee Hyunsung collided with Jason with a tremendous amount of force and bellowed as they had a battle of strength.

"Haaaaaap!"

Jason was surprised by the tremendous strength that forced him to be pushed back. In the latter half of Ways of Survival, Lee Hyunsung wasn't pushed by an incarnation or constellation in strength.

[Synchronization with the constellation 'Master of Steel' has increased!]

Lee Hyunsung's upper body was covered by a shell of steel. The level of Lee Hyunsung's Steel Transformation was extremely high. His body wasn't touched at all despite being punched by a hero.

In the sky, Shin Yoosung and Lee Gilyoung were flying on the dragon. Shin Yoosung avoided the heroes with dragon slaying stories and fired a breath. The sea was instantly poisoned and the enemies were cut by Lee Gilyoung's insect kings. Lee Seolhwa used poison against the heroes while Han Sooyoung used the black flames and blocked the constellations of Olympus.

Now they all had the ability to deal with historical-grade constellations. The 10 or so nebula members were fighting against the constellations of a mighty nebula.

The incarnations observing the situation in the back were shocked.

"What? Olympus seems to be pushed…?"

"By that small nebula?"

This was the effect I had intended. The battle was still in its infancy. I had to appeal with strength to bring in reinforcements. However, the god of victory still wasn't on our side.

…It finally appeared. I looked at the 20 metres high monster filling my field of view. It wasn't a human, no matter how I looked.

Gleaming golden armour. A cloak made of lion leather wrapped around it. Those who knew Greek mythology couldn't not know his name.

Some of the giants shrieked at the majestic appearance. [Heracles…!]

The hero's 'status', that even the 12 Gods were reluctant to go against, dominated the entire battlefield.

I looked up as a dark shadow covered the surrounding area and smiled bitterly. If I wanted to deal with this monster then I had to call a monster as well.

It took me so long to get here. Naturally, I wouldn't withdraw from here.

"The sword designed to cut a sleeping giant." I quietly stated. "Now, descend upon this place."

Come, Kim Namwoon.

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A swirling portal appeared in the sky.

[The constellation 'Queen of the Darkest Spring' is looking at you.]

Pluto's license was obtained from Hades. I could use Pluto freely in the limited time Gigantomachia was held.

[Hahaha, grasshopper man! You memorized the starting change despite not liking it?]

It was Kim Namwoon's mischievous voice. However, the giant soldier didn't appear immediately. There was only the darkness of the abyss visible beyond the swirling portal.

[By the way, can you wait 10 minutes? The summoning circle is damaged and I can't go straight away. The giants stomped their feet too many times…]

…Dammit. Heracles was emitting a white light and looking my way with blank eyes.

It couldn't be helped. I had to buy as much time as possible. I stepped forward and shouted, "Heracles! Hero of the 12 Tasks!"

Heracles stared at me. The red arrow above Heracles' head was flickering.

[The constellation is a 'leader' of Olympus.]

As expected, he was one of the two leaders of Olympus. According to the myths, Heracles was a man who killed the leader of the giants in Gigantomachia. Many constellations in Ways of Survival spoke about him.

「"As long as Heracles is present, the winner of Gigantomachia won't change."」

Numerous incarnations cheered when they saw Heracles.

"Ohhhhh!"

"Heracles! Heracles!"

Heracles, the hero of Olympus who left countless myths and folklore. Despite the many stories that resonated through the Star Stream, the number of constellations who actually saw Heracles could be counted on one hand.

He was a demigod, a mix between a god and human. He had a body of steel. The stories of the protector of Olympus circulated around him.

[The story 'Man Who Strangled the Lion of Nemea' has begun.]

[The story 'Man Who Beat up the Giant Boar' has begun.]

[The story 'Man Who Overpowered a Cerberus with Bare Hands' has begun.]

…

A tremendous amount of stories were shining in Heracles' body. At first glance, they seemed like crazy stories. Every one of them was at the very least, legendary grade stories. The scale of his 'giant stories' was incomparable but I didn't start the game without knowing this.

"Once again, rumours in the Star Stream can't be believed." I spoke in a provocative voice and Heracles' fist flew towards me.

[The exclusive skill 'Bookmark' is activated!]

Miniaturization and Electrification were activated. Heracles' fist passed over the top of my head and made a crater in the ground where I had been standing. I was swept back by the ignorant power but I didn't stop the provocation. "Your punch is only this much. I don't know if this was enough to overpower the giants.

An angry cry seemed to burst from Heracles' body.

"I know many stories about you. You caught the lion of Nemea, killed a hydra, hunted a Stymphalian bird… they are incredible stories for 'one person' to accomplish in a short period of time."

Finally, a true voice burst out from Heracles' body. [That's right. That is me, Heracles!]

It was creepy hearing the voice. It might be equivalent to the 12 Gods but as a result, I was even more convinced.

"I heard a rumour that you were born for Gigantomachia. Your 12 tasks were trials for the victory of Gigantomachia."

[Some constellations are interested in your words!]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is worried about you.]

I didn't know how he took my words but Heracles banged on his chest. It was a spectacular sight to see a monster over 20 metres tall doing such a thing.

I kept speaking. "Then one of my close colleagues heard your story and raised a question."

I suppressed my boiling anger.

"The original Heracles was born after the 'Great Disaster Period'. Then how could he participate in Gigantomachia which occurred before that?" It was none other than Yoo Sangah who said this.

A stir occurred among the constellations in the channel. Heracles' eyes gleamed angrily as his true voice rang out.

[Arrogant guy! Are you saying this Heracles is a lie?]

"Yes. Not just you but all of the 12 gods." Heracles was silent at my answer. "You made many false stories. You did this by manipulating them."

Heracles clearly looked embarrassed.

"I was surprised as well. If you kept talking and talking nonsense… it might someday become a 'real' story."

One thousand years, two thousand years. The lies were repeated for tens of thousands of years.

"Once it becomes a story, it can be said to originally exist. Isn't it amazing?"

[I am Heracles! Heracles of Gigantomachia and the symbol of Olympus!]

"Yes, perhaps in another world line. Somewhere in another world, you really killed Nemea's lion and the hydra."

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' is making an interested smile.]

I stared up at the sky as I spoke. I moved through the 1863rd round and remembered the countless rounds that Yoo Joonghyuk went through.

"However, that isn't the case in this world. In this world, a hero like Heracles doesn't exist."

[You!]

"It is because Heracles is the name of the story weapon you created."

Zeus, the god of lightning, had sowed his seed in preparation for Gigantomachia. As always, the 'seed' here was a metaphor. Zeus feared the giants and collected miscellaneous hero stories from across the world.

「Nemea's Lion.」

「Golden Horned Deer.」

「Bull of Crete.」

「Hydra of Nine Heads.」

…

Stories were gathered and created a single character. This character was soon shaped into a story weapon. It was created to fight against the giants, using human souls as power. A weapon that brought the fear of massacre to numerous battlefields in the Star Stream.

"Giant soldier Heracles."

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is surprised.]

[The constellation 'Bald General of Justice' resents the atrocities of Olympus.]

[The constellation 'Queen of the Darkest Spring' has a cold expression.]

[The constellation 'Spokesman of Justice and Wisdom' has shaky eyes.]

[Many constellations are shocked by the identity of Heracles!]

Perhaps most constellations were unaware of this story. It was natural. It was a truth that only I, who read Ways of Survival, and a few of the 12 Gods who made Heracles knew about.

[Many constellations have entered channel #BY-9158!]

The constellations in the channel suddenly increased and Biyoo cried out tearfully.

[A large number of constellations are questioning the identity of Gigantomachia!]

The stage I wanted was finally going to be completed.

[Heracles's mythical identity is shaken.]

[The identity of Heracles has influenced the reproduction of Stage Transformation.]

I stared at Heracles.

[The exclusive skill 'Reading Comprehension' is activated.]

[You have learnt about the other person's composition of stories due to the attribute effect!]

「He is a god of war born only for war.」

「Holding 'fear' in the right hand and 'anxiety' in the left hand.」

「He left discord every time he walked through a 'fight' in front of him.」

The stories of a constellation flowed through Heracles' giant soldier. They weren't Heracles' stories.

Heracles was a giant soldier. If so, there was someone riding him and I knew who that person was.

I cried out in my true voice. [Atrocious War God! Are you a coward who fights behind a giant soldier?]

A huge storm of wind blew around Heracles' body. The heroes and constellations fighting in a bloody manner around him were pushed back dozens of metres. I would've flown to the horizon if I hadn't used Way of the Wind through Bookmark. Ares opened his mouth.

[In the past, many people who spoke bad words to Olympus didn't have a good fate. Oedipus and Prometheus as well. No one was an exception.]

Unlike the fierce outburst, Ares' true voice was unexpectedly calm.

[You have spoken more words than anyone I've seen.]

It happened the moment Heracles aimed a fist at me. 10 minutes had passed. Pluto appeared in the sky and blocked Heracles' fist. I literally flew through the air and entered Pluto's cockpit.

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[The Giant Soldier Pluto has confirmed your boarding.]

[The Giant Soldier Pluto has confirmed the master's constellation.]

[Your story will be assimilated with Giant Soldier Pluto.]

I was comfortably embraced by the giant soldier's body. It was like soft muscles were wrapped around my body and I could see the vision of the 'giant soldier'. The power of the story weapon enveloped my entire body. This was one of the strongest story weapons of Ways of Survival, Giant Soldier Pluto.

[…Ugh! Eek! Eeek! I feel like there is a parasite in my stomach!]

As Kim Namwoon was making a fuss, Han Sooyoung spoke through Midday Tryst.

–Hey, can you do it? This is the giant soldier Heracles. You only have Kim Namwoon.

The rating of the giant soldier was determined by the quality of the 'soul' used as the material of the giant soldier. In addition, the soul used for the original Pluto wasn't Kim Namwoon. In other words, the current Pluto was much weaker than the original Pluto.

–Kim Namwoon is pretty good.

–The situation is completely different from when you smashed the factory in the Demon Realm!

–Do you think I don't know that? He can do it.

–You're serious?

–Perhaps it would be impossible originally but… I learnt something from you.

–…From me?

I rushed towards Heracles. Heracles amplified his body volume to match Pluto and also headed

towards me. Four hands collided and the fierce wind pressure created a whirlpool in the sea. Ares was surprised when Pluto showed a strength comparable to Heracles.

[A giant soldier? Where did you get it?]

"I scammed it from someone, just like you."

From the start of the Demon King Selection to the 1863rd round. I had been preparing for Gigantomachia. It was a chance for a new nebula to establish a solid position and an opportunity to properly warn the big nebulae.

「Kim Dokja read and read Ways of Survival.」

I changed the original novel and the future became uncertain. However, it was impossible for me to use Anticipation Plagiarism like Han Sooyoung of the 1863rd round. It was possible for writers like Han Sooyoung to 'create' possible developments of the future.

To such a me, the 1863rd round Han Sooyoung stated:

–What are you talking about? You're a reader.

Reader. A person who read and appreciated the writer's words.

–Author, don't you think the research into the 12 Gods is a bit lacking? Ares is more violent and looks down on humans more than depicted…

–Besides, the probability that the 12 Gods can use individually…

I was the one who made the story along with the writer. Heracles' fist slammed into Pluto's head and Pluto's fist struck Heracles' chest. In the ensuing melee, the feelings I felt while reading Ways of Survival flowed through me.

–I think the constellations who descended to the sub-scenario are too unfavourable…

I wasn't a writer. I couldn't do it like Han Sooyoung. However, more than anyone else, I was aware of the loopholes in the original work. Perhaps even more than the author who wrote the novel.

[The game ends here.]

The momentum around Heracles' body changed. The strength that shattered a lion's head was concentrated on both arms of the giant soldier and Heracles' star relic, Heracles' Club was summoned.

I had also prepared for the day when I would confront him.

[Giant Story 'Demon Realm's Spring' has begun!]

[The status of a 'demon king' is released!]

The power of a demon king mixed with Electrification. On top of that, the giant story of Kim Dokja's Company was placed. I exploded all the stories I had hidden. The stories I released were amplified to an enormous level due to Pluto's buff effect.

Ares was greatly astonished. It was natural to be surprised. In fact, I was overdoing it. My status was still lacking to confront one of the 12 Gods but after going to the 95th scenario, I couldn't be compared to incarnations or constellations of the same grade.

At the very least, I exceeded the limits of the 60th scenario.

[Your status is going beyond the limit of this scenario!]

Since the 60th scenario, the probability storm that occurred couldn't be compared to before. If I made a mistake, I might suffer a disaster where my incarnation body was destroyed.

I endured the sparks with gritted teeth.

The nebula Olympus has used too much extra probability on me. Therefore, the probability allowed for large-scale scenarios such as this Gigantomachia was almost gone. Indeed, Ares' status didn't rise above a certain level.

[Stupid fool! If you do that, you will die!]

[I might die.] I looked over at Ares and declared, [But you will die first.]

I looked down at Pluto's empty right hand. The power of the giant soldier was so high that an ordinary weapon couldn't withstand the shock. At the very least, I needed a weapon comparable to Heracles' Bat.

In fact, I had such a weapon. It was a weapon I have been saving for a long time, just for this moment.

[Come, Steel Sword.]

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* Official novel illustration (canonical)

Chapter 331: Ep. 62 - God's Enemy, IV

The noise of the battlefield died down for a moment at my cry. The struggle between Giant Soldier Heracles and Giant Soldier Pluto. Even the constellations in the channel seemed nervous at the summoning of the weapon.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is wondering what your weapon is!]

[Many constellations are curious about 'Steel Sword'!]

My empty hand still wasn't filled.

…Why didn't it come? I looked back and reflexively activated Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint. It was to grasp the situation of the battlefield. Then I heard the thoughts of characters with a high level of understanding.

「Steel Sword? I seem to have heard that somewhere before.」

「A person who uses the sword…」

…What?

「Kim Dokja is an idiot.」

The Fourth Wall's mocking words were heard in my head. I belatedly noticed. Lee Hyunsung's nickname was still 'Pure Steel'.

「Steel Sword… nice name. It was called by Dokja-ssi. He must be a great person.」

Lee Hyunsung was looking this way while fighting Jason. I shouted towards Lee Hyunsung, [Hyunsung-ssi! Come quickly!]

"Huh? You were talking about me?"

"Hurry, you idiot! I'll cover this place!"

Han Sooyoung shouted and Lee Hyunsung gave up his showdown with Jason. The stigma Great Mountain Push was triggered and Jason flew backwards.

…No, use it earlier if he had that power.

I didn't know how much stronger Lee Hyunsung had become in the last three years but he was more useful than expected.

"However, I'm not Steel Sword…"

[You will be called that from today.]

"W-What should I do?"

I quickly grabbed and swung Lee Hyunsung.

"Kuaaaaaaack!"

Ares regrouped and swung Heracles' Bat. It was a tremendous blow that combined Giant Soldier Heracles' story mixed with Ares' story. It was a destructive force that could crush Nemea's lion in one blow.

I swung Lee Hyunsung at Ares.

"Dokja-ssi! Dokja-ssi! It isn't possible!"

[It's fine! Trust yourself!]

Along with the sound of waves, particles of water turned into fog. In the fog, Lee Hyunsung slowly faced the bat.

[Look, you can do it.]

"Uh, uhhh, uweeeoh…"

Steel was growing all over Lee Hyunsung's body. It grew, grew and grew again. He soon became a sword.

Ares was noticeably baffled. If Yoo Joonghyuk was here, he definitely would've said:

「"This is the reason why Lee Hyunsung got the nickname of Steel Sword."」

Steel Sword. The reason he was called Steel Sword wasn't because he could control a sword well.

[The character 'Lee Hyunsung' has used the stigma 'Steel Transformation Lv. 10'.]

Steel Transformation. It was the stigma of a constellation from a distant place in the universe.

As the stories piled up, it became harder than any metal and had the advantage of being capable of regenerating if broken. Lee Hyunsung was no different from a living 'strongest sword'.

[The constellation 'Master of Steel' is frowning at your cruelty.]

Perhaps it was because this was his first time being a sword but Lee Hyunsung was still in an insecure state. I deliberately spoke in order to inspire Lee Hyunsung's morale. [Hyunsung-ssi, do you see the shield that Heracles' is holding?]

"Ye… y-yes, what is that?"

[It is the original version of 'Heracles Shield' that I gave you before.]

In the past, I had given the replica version of Heracles' Shield to Lee Hyunsung. It was the shield that Lee Hyunsung kept cleaning.

[I'll give it to you, Hyunsung-ssi.]

"…Really?"

[Of course.]

Lee Hyunsung completely adapted and integrated himself into the hand of the giant soldier. It was a perfect grip like a handshake.

I started running. A large amount of probability was consumed as I once again clashed with Ares in Heracles.

[The Star Stream is paying attention to you!]

[The bureau is doubting your probability!]

[Overusing this probability will endanger your body!]

Steel Sword and Heracles' Bat firmly collided. Ares was surprised by the force and took one step back.

[…Damn crazy!]

We struck, struck and struck each other again. Part of Heracles' Bat flew away as debris and Lee Hyunsung's Steel Transformation had cracks all over it.

We were desperate because it couldn't be a long-lasting battle. Lee Hyunsung, Kim Namwoon, me as well.

[Giant Story 'Demon Realm's Spring' is continuing.]

There wasn't the Stage Transformation like when we fought Surya but this story was protecting us.

A stage where Lee Hyunsung and I were together. Kim Namwoon, who was once an enemy, was now part of the story.

「The most despicable soul in the world, a man born from steel.」

Finally, the blade of the Steel Sword cut at Heracles' right shoulder.

Ares growled out, [Why are you trying so hard? Olympus has always been merciful to you!]

[Merciful? Is that why you placed the fate on me?]

[Just because of that small that?]

[…It is small?]

[You survived it anyway! You should be thankful about successfully passing the trial!]

That wasn't my only enmity.

[My colleague is dying because of you guys.]

[Colleague?]

The sword and the club hit each other again as Ares seemed to remember something.

[The incarnation who used to the the singularity watcher.]

[It isn't an incarnation but 'Yoo Sangah'.]

[We didn't make the incarnation do that. She brought that misery onto herself.] Ares laughed.

[The mortal tried to access Olympus' database. It is natural to suffer.]

I shouted through gritted teeth, [It is you who gave her that strength. You brought about such a situation.]

[God is watching. Everything is a human choice.]

[Do you think you can use 'choice' for a predetermined cause?]

Ares laughed. [This is the scenario.]

Cold anger settled deep in my chest. Yes, this was a constellation. They had a desire for stimulating scenarios and enjoyed the fall of incarnations. They made 'good and evil' on purpose. A god waiting merrily for humans to break the taboo.

Sparks that I couldn't afford started to appear around Pluto's body. A brilliant magic power storm occurred around the junction of bat and steel.

Ares exclaimed, [This crazy bastard…!]

「Kim Dokja was angry.」

「Apart from that anger, Kim Dokja's sense of reasoning was still as cold as ever.」

In fact, it was almost impossible to defeat Ares in a frontal showdown but now the story was different.

「Kim Dokja thought.」

This was the 'sea' where Ares couldn't exert enough power. It was a sub scenario where he couldn't release all his status. Crucially, Ares' Heracles was an early model of the giant soldier.

Heracles' Bat broken Pluto's left arm and at the same time, the Steel Sword penetrated Heracles' waist.

Ares hurriedly cried out, [If you do this, you really will turn all of Olympus into an enemy…!]

[Ask anyone to come.]

However, they wouldn't come. The 12 Gods were all cowards.

[Zeus, Poseidon or anyone else.]

Heracles was pushed back by the Purest Sword Force. Even to the end, Ares didn't fully release his status. Not all narrative-grade constellations were like Surya.

It had been a while since the real Gigantomachia. The 12 Gods had forgotten their lives. The same was true for Ares, a fierce warrior.

He seemed more courageous than anyone else but he was actually more cautious about his life than anyone else. He flaunted his bravery in Gigantomachia but now he was a constellation who feared the aftermath of opening his status in the scenario.

Ares shouted angrily, [Aren't you afraid of probability?]

[I'm not afraid.]

Lee Hyunsung, Kim Namwoon, me as well. There was no such thing as fear. It was because we had been living through the aftermath the whole time. Rather, it took courage to be weak.

Along with the bubbling sea foam, I thrust the steel sword into Heracles' cockpit.

[You have knocked down Giant Soldier Heracles!]

[You have acquired a new story!]

[The star relic 'Heracles' Bat (Damaged)' has been acquired.]

[The star relic 'Heracles' Shield (Damaged)' has been acquired.]

[The star relic 'Heracles' Spear (Damaged)' has been acquired.]

Then a tremendous explosion occurred.

"Kim Namwoon!"

I emerged from Pluto's cockpit at the moment of the explosion. Pluto had exceeded the limits of probability and was breaking down.

[This dog…!] Kim Namwoon sounded happy.

After a while, Pluto's body couldn't withstand the probability storm and collapsed. It was the result of taking the probability on my behalf.

Fortunately, the power supply seemed safe. It was just that more fighting would be difficult.

In the haze of the smoke, I saw Ares who escaped from the cockpit like me. Ares was wounded all over his body and he was roaring furiously.

The game hadn't ended yet. Heracles was a type of protective sphere. The moment Ares opened his status, I would have to deal with him head on. Still, it didn't matter. In the first place, my purpose was to make him fall from Heracles.

"Yoo Sangah-ssi told me something about you."

As Ares had mentioned, Yoo Sangah used Hermes' system to investigate all types of future information. Among them were things about Olympus.

"I heard you were once hit by Heracles' spear."

Yoo Sangah had told me that Ares fought Heracles and was stabbed in the thigh with his spear.

–If 'fake' can be 'real', can I make this story real? If the weapon could be obtained…

Ares' eyes were shaken as he glared at me angrily.

"I was curious. Heracles is the creature you have created. Then is this myth real or fake?"

Ares rushed towards me as I kept speaking.

"How much power can a fake story exert in the Star Stream? Aren't you curious?"

[The story fragment in Heracles' Spear is responding to you!]

[The story 'Natural Enemy in War' has begun.]

The story started talking.

「 With one penetration, the spear neutralized the god of war. 」

I held the spear with all my strength. It was such a heavy spear that I wondered if I could throw it by myself.

Ares was now in sight. I should throw it properly. If it fails, I would die here. At this moment, the weight of the spear lightened. Someone was also holding onto the spear from behind me.

It wasn't Lee Hyunsung but there was no need to think. Only one incarnation in all of Ways of Survival could take on the weight of this spear lightly. In the first place, this incarnation was an ally.

"Kim Dokja, there is only one chance."

It was an eternal 'once'. A 'once' made with the countless failures of the regressor.

"It has always been 'once' for me."

Thus, this one chance couldn't fail. We threw the spear at the same time.

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* Official novel illustration (canonical)

Chapter 332: Ep. 62 - God's Enemy, V

The spear flew away with a dark blue light. The power and status of the spear weren't at a level that Yoo Joonghyuk originally was capable of. Perhaps the 3rd round Yoo Joonghyuk's understanding if the spear had sharply increased after he went through Hell of Eternity. I watched the flying spear and asked, "You came back faster than I thought? What happened to the returnees?"

"…I'll explain later."

Ares gritted his teeth and tried to avoid the flying spear. He might not be able to move freely in the air like Hermes but it should be enough for Ares to move the spear. At least, if there wasn't a story in the spear.

「The spear that left the fingertips was inevitable.」

Could a story have feelings? No story expert was able to give a definitive answer. The only certainty was the situation currently unfolding in front of my eyes.

[The fragment of the story 'Enemy of the War God' is showing hostility to Atrocious War God.]

The Heracles in this world line was fake but over time, fake became real. The created story had its own will. The moment Ares quickly turned in the air, the spear turned at the same speed. Ares hurriedly took a defensive posture but the spear ignored it.

There was a terrible amount of blood and Ares gave a pained scream when his thigh was pierced. One of the great 12 Gods, the God of War fell into the sea while bleeding.

"I'll subdue him!" Lee Hyunsung, who had been waiting on the ground after releasing Steel Transformation, struck Ares' body with Great Mountain Smash while Yoo Joonghyuk opened his transcendence and trampled on Ares' incarnation body. It was fortunate that Yoo Joonghyuk came back at a good timing.

"The Earth side is all sorted out?"

Yoo Joonghyuk didn't answer. Ares struggled and his face twisted as he was trampled on by a pair of boots. No matter how much he struggled, the spear in his thigh was restraining his status. The story of Heracles was persistent and stubborn. At the very least, it was strong enough for the 12 gods to be neutralized in the 60th scenario. It was something all the 12 gods inflicted on themselves.

[T-This Hephaistos like bastard!]

[The constellation 'Volcanic Blacksmith' is frowning.]

I saw the red arrow floating over Ares' head and pulled out Unbroken Faith. In order to win this scenario, the two leaders on Olympus' side had to be killed. Ares was one of them.

The Ares in front of me wouldn't really die because he was an incarnation body. However, the loss of the incarnation body would be huge damage to the 12 gods. Then Yoo Joonghyuk's thoughts entered my mind.

「There is no time… I can save it if I hurry. Nectar is required.」

Yoo Joonghyuk aimed the Black Heavenly Demon Sword at Ares' neck and opened his mouth. "Ares, do you have nectar?"

I was baffled by Yoo Joonghyuk's sudden words.

…Nectar? I knew the identity of this item.

「If Vedas has the star fluid Soma, Olympus has Nectar.」

This jerk, was he still greedy to enhance his body? At this time, constellations who entered the channel sent indirect messages.

[A number of constellations have entered the channel!]

[The constellation 'King Heungmu the Great' is warning you!]

[The constellation 'One-eyed Maitreya' wants to tell you about the crisis on Earth…!]

There was a beep and the indirect messages disappeared.

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' is warning everyone to shut up.]

I looked up and saw Biyoo making a restless expression.

[Baat, baat…]

–Biyoo, what's going on?

There was no answer from Biyoo. She was trying to avoid my eyes. Everything was uncertain. It wasn't another dokkaebi hiding from me, it was Biyoo.

Then Ares opened his mouth. […You are a time-defying being. Why does the man who received the blessing of immortality need Nectar?]

"I have no obligation to respond to you. Once again. Give me the Nectar."

[Is one of your colleagues in danger? Is that why you need Nectar?]

Yoo Joonghyuk's Black Heavenly Demon Sword lightly touched Ares' neck. There was the sound of blood falling. The particles of blood would have all the stories he built up contained in the red and white blood cells.

Ares seemed to think of something and opened his mouth. [I don't have it on my now. However, if you pull this spear from me, I can go and get Nectar for you…]

"That won't happen. Then die."

Yoo Joonghyuk's Black Heavenly Demon Sword stabbed Ares' heart. Ares' incarnation body emitted a faint light and he started to turn to grey. He was recovering his incarnation body from the scenario. The enraged Ares exclaimed, [I will repay this debt, puppet of the Oldest Dream!]

There was a loud sound and Ares' incarnation body completely disappeared.

[The constellation 'Atrocious War God' has left the battlefield.]

[One of the leaders of Olympus has abandoned the scenario!]

[You have defeated the Atrocious War God!]

[The legendary story 'One Who Defeated the War God' has been acquired!]

[You have obtained 400,000 coins as compensation.]

[Major contributors: Constellation Demon King of Salvation, Incarnation Yoo Joonghyuk, Incarnation Lee Hyunsung.]

There were huge rewards as the messages continued.

[A new story has been added to the existing Gigantomachia!]

[Some of the items on the incarnation body of 'Atrocious War God' will be distributed to the main contributors.]

After the system messages, indirect messages were sent to the battlefield.

[The constellation 'Wind Expedition King' is shocked!]

[The constellation 'Spokesman of Justice and Wisdom' is astonished!]

[The constellation 'Almighty Sun' distrusts his eyes.]

The battlefield became a crucible of confusion. It was the same for the heroes fighting in Olympus' camp and the giants fighting against them. Even those watching the battlefield were included. The fact that the war god of Olympus abandoned the scenario was a big shock.

[Hahahahaha! This time Gigantomachia is really interesting!] Zhang Fei's true voice rang out as he crossed the battlefield and dealt with the heroes.

Yoo Joonghyuk didn't care about the turmoil and was searching through the rubble of the dead Ares. "He really doesn't have Nectar. Then I must kill Hebe…"

"Yoo Joonghyuk, you crazy bastard!" I grabbed Yoo Joonghyuk by the collar and shouted.

"What are you doing? You would've killed him if I hadn't."

"Why kill him straight away? I could've received one more star relic from him by threatening him!"

Of course, I agreed that we should kill Ares. However, in a situation where his incarnation body was held hostage, I could've received more items…

"This isn't the time to be leisurely."

"Why are you asking for Nectar? You don't need it, do you? I am going to get Soma from Vedas…" A sinister hunch filled me. "Yoo Joonghyuk. What happened on Earth?"

"…"

"Perhaps Yoo Sangah…"

"Earth is safe. Don't think futile things and concentrate on finishing Gigantomachia." Yoo Joonghyuk spoke in a determined voice. "The war isn't over yet."

Yoo Joonghyuk looked around the battlefield. Ares' Heracles had collapsed. However, one thing to keep in mind was that the Heracles ridden by Ares was just one of numerous giant soldiers.

"…More dirty ones are coming."

Countless Heracles were running to this side along the sea route Argo had created. The mass production type Heracles. In these long years, Olympus had prepared many giant soldiers for the war against other nebulae.

[Kill the giants!]

Their fierce momentum was enough to shake the waves. Previously, it wouldn't be strange if the giants ran away in fear. However, now it was different.

[It is the time of liberation!]

[Companions! Heracles is fake!]

Another leader on this side suddenly tore through the portal. Briareus. He used to have 100 arms and now only had 50 due to probability, but he was still enough to compete in the battlefield.

[Don't be fooled by what you see! Believe in yourself, not the myths already recorded!]

The giants roared after hearing his true voice. Yoo Joonghyuk spoke, "You've changed the myth."

The power of the myth was determined by those who believed in it. The protagonist of Gigantomachia was Heracles. The fact that Heracles was a fake had a direct impact on the giants. The shaky Stage Transformation was the evidence.

On this broken stage, a new stage was being made. On the pages of the torn script, another script would be used. However, Yoo Joonghyuk's expression didn't relax. "This isn't the end. "The gods will come."

Ares was only one of the 12 gods. If the contents of the original were the same, there would be at least two more of the 12 Gods fighting.

One was Spokesman of Justice and Wisdom, Athena. The other was Almighty Sun, Apollon.

Yoo Joonghyuk glanced at the broken Pluto. "You can't go with the gods with the weary and broken giant soldier."

"There is still a long time before you can fight one on one with the 12 Gods."

"I won't know without trying."

These words were spoken but it was impossible for the current Yoo Joonghyuk to go head to head and win against the 12 Gods. In my case, it was possible because I was lucky with the tricks I used.

"After witnessing Ares' defeat, the 12 gods will come in different ways. Even with your status, you are likely to have to sacrifice some probability."

"It doesn't matter. That will make it taste better."

"You deal with Spokesman of Justice and Wisdom. It will be difficult alone so I'll give you one more person. Then you'll be able to stop her somehow."

"Who are you going to add?"

"You'll know soon."

I saw Athena and Apollon flying in the distance. They had a terribly 'status' that could be felt from this distance. It would definitely be different from the battle with Ares.

Yoo Joonghyuk adjusted the Black Heavenly Demon Sword and asked, "Will you deal with the Almighty Sun?"

"There is a separate constellation for him."

"…I will trust your tricks this once." The moment he spoke, Yoo Joonghyuk ran into the sky. He disappeared using Red Phoenix Shunpo, leaving a beautiful trail behind him. Yoo Joonghyuk's early stage of transcendence was now perfect.

There was the sound of the Black Heavenly Demon Sword splitting through the air. It stopped before Athena and a collision of red magic power occurred almost simultaneously.

[Get out of the way. Or die.]

Spokesman of Justice and Wisdom, Athena. The daughter of the master of lightning who ruled Olympus and the most respected war god in Olympus.

[You might be proficient in mythology but I am different from Ares.]

They might both by 'war gods' but Ares and Athena were different. Both gods fought in many proxy wars but he had never won against Athena.

Athena spoke, [I don't hate you. My purpose is to return the giants to Tartarus. But if you continue to disturb—]

Cold anger filled her expression.

[In the name of justice, I am forced to punish you.]

Athena was a god who always fulfilled her words. If she truly lifted her spear and shield, there were few people who could prevent her wrath in all of Olympus. There were sparks as someone's true voice came from the sky.

[You are still using that line, Athena. Whenever we cut the ■ing demons together… nothing has changed.]

I was barely breathing as I looked up at the sky. Athena was a constellation with one of the strongest combat power. However, it was limited to Olympus.

「If there was an Athena of justice in Olympus…」

Brilliant flames appeared in the air and a new incarnation entered the battlefield. The pure white flames subsided and I saw a person I knew well.

「There is Jung Heewon in Kim Dokja's Company.」

The strongest sword I had finally appeared on the battlefield.

[It's been a long time, Athena.]

Uriel unfolded pure white wings as she descended into Jung Heewon's body.

Chapter 333: Ep. 62 - God's Enemy, VI

Jung Heewon emitted a pure white light as she pointed the Sword of Judgment at Athena.

Athena spoke, [Uriel… I didn't hear that Eden was coming?]

[I'm not here as part of Eden.]

[Then?]

[I'm just helping my incarnation.] Uriel continued speaking. [Athena. Up to here, haven't you done a lot for Olympus so far? How long are you going to worry about Gigantomachia? Are you going to keep creating it with the bureau?]

[I'm concerned. It is very serious, Uriel. We are just trying to recall the tale of encouraging good while punishing evil. Good wins and evil is defeated. It is right to emphasize this a few times.]

[Encouraging good while punishing evil…]

[As the good story increases, the constellations will consume good scenarios. The more this happens, the cleaner the Star Stream will become.]

Uriel's eyes shook when she heard the words. Carrying out many good stories and scenarios would make the world better. Certainly, there was a time when she believed so.

[Then is the Star Stream better now? Do the constellations love the good stories?]

[It isn't enough right now. But someday—]

The angel's wings flapped and moved.

[Athena, you are usually on the side of the weak.]

Uriel looked down at the giants fighting on the ground. To be precise, she was watching the smallest giant Breaking the Sky Sword Saint.

[I want to ask you, Spokesman of Justice and Wisdom.] Uriel's tone changed and Athena's expression became stricter. [Is that 'giant' evil?]

Athena looked down at the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint. The Breaking the Sky swordsmanship smashed the sky and tore at the constellations. The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint was small but strong. Perhaps she was stronger than the giants who had been idle in Tartarus.

However, she wasn't strong from the beginning.

「Go away! Get away from me! You unlucky girl!」

「Cursed girl! You ruined my family!」

「The blood of the giants. It is said that if you eat that girl's heart, you will gain the strength of a tiger.」

The suffering that the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint experienced were narrated and entered Athena's eyes. It was a bitterness she had to bear just because she was born as a giant or because she had a different appearance.

Athena bit her lips. [All giants are dangerous. Their nature is fierce and they can bring about another terrible disaster.]

[Disaster? Who will they bring the danger of disaster to?]

Athena firmly grasped her spear but she was avoiding Uriel's gaze.

[Of course, to humans…]

[Humans? Since when does Olympus care about humans?]

[Uriel! You better be careful with your words—]

[Athena, you know it as well.]

Athena's mouth half-closed and Uriel continued.

[The thing you are trying to create right now is a fake 'encouraging good while punishing evil. It is a fake myth that arbitrarily designates 'evil' and 'good'.]

Athena's eyes shook.

[So what if it is fake? Even if it is fake…]

[Athena, did you forget? The scenario of 'encouraging good while punishing evil' because of the rampant 'fakes'.] Uriel's voice quivered as she remembered the time of 'demon hunting'. [Athena. In this scenario, there is no good or evil. There is only our desire to see the story.]

Uriel stared up at the sky and a light shone. [I… don't want to see this story anymore.]

Archangel Uriel was staring at the Star Stream.

[Now I want to see 'real evil' being broken.]

Athena's eyes widened. Her trembling voice flowed out. […That story has disappeared a long time ago.]

[No, it hasn't.] Uriel smiled as she watched me. [That's why I came here.]

The Sword of Judgment and Athena's spear pointed at each other.

[There is no more room for compromises.]

The archangel of Eden collided with the goddess of Olympus. Athena's onslaught went beyond the probability. Jung Heewon seemed to be pushed at first but the situation soon stabilized thanks to Yoo Joonghyuk's participation. It wouldn't be impossible to stall Athena while the synchronization with Uriel lasted.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is rejoicing in the bloody battle between constellations!]

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' wants both to die!]

[The 'absolute evil' constellations are cheering for the collision between 'absolute good' constellations.]

A huge admission fee was pouring into the channel through Biyoo. Biyoo shook a bit.

[Baat…]

I looked at the other side of the sky. The problem was that red-headed man flying over there. He was riding a huge carriage with a red sun behind him.

The Almighty Sun, Apollon. Just like the myths, he had a very handsome face. It was almost enough to slap Yoo Joonghyuk's cheeks once… no, it would be twice.

[The constellation 'Almighty Sun' is directing intense anger at you!]

He was one of the 12 Gods and too much for me to handle alone. Pluto was broken and the body parts hadn't fully recovered. Maybe my incarnation body would turn to ash after being hit once or twice by the sun.

However, I wasn't worried. It was because I wasn't the one who would fight the Almighty Sun.

In the distance, I heard something like a locomotive horn. There was the sound of train wheels. At one time, I didn't know how scary this sound was.

[The constellation 'Almighty Sun' is confused.]

If there were 12 main gods in Olympus, there were eight Lokapala in Vedas. The Lokapala that appeared was one I knew well.

[Surya, why are you here?!]

The sun carriage and sun train collided, creating a blinding explosion. The lacking probability meant Surya's train wasn't as big as before but it was enough to match Apollon's carriage.

[Surya… Can I accept this as Vedas' meaning?]

[I have no relationship with Vedas. I left it a while ago.] Surya laughed. [I just came here to determine who the best sun god is.]

A blazing sunlight filled the air. It was a showdown between Surya and Apollon. The arrows containing Apollon's light power covered the sky like a waterfall and Surya's third eye disrupted the trajectory of the arrows. The myth and myth were crashing together. It was enough to leave Apollon to Surya.

I looked around the rest of the battlefield.

"Dokja-ssi! I like the new shield!"

Lee Hyunsung, who held Heracles' Shield, was crossing the battlefield while knocking down heroes and giant soldiers. Han Sooyoung precisely managed her magic power and handled the mass produced Heracles one by one.

Once Stage Transformation started to collapse, the balance was slightly leaning towards us. The powerful Gigantes pushed the heroes and Lee Gilyoung and Shin Yoosung controlled the chimera dragon, using its breath to turn the beach into a sea of fire.

Lee Jihye was constantly firing shells at the mass produced Heracles. I had increased Lee Jihye's magic power in preparation for this day.

[A new myth is emerging in Gigantomachia!]

The myth of Kim Dokja's Company was being recorded in real time. Everyone was fighting well and nothing was wrong.

「 Nevertheless, Kim Dokja was strangely nervous. 」

It was a very small hunch. I subtly felt that something was wrong. There was nothing wrong when I checked calmly. Uriel and Surya participated in a timely manner and Yoo Joonghyuk returned safely from Earth's crisis. Then why?

「 Actually, Kim Dokja knew the reason. 」

No.

「 Look around. 」

The one I was looking for didn't exist. Athena, Jason, Apollon, Achilles…

There were many gods and heroes who made a name for themselves in Olympus but none of them was Olympus' leader.

If the scenario was correct, there should be one more leader other than Ares. I had to kill them in order to end this scenario.

Perhaps it was the Volcanic Blacksmith Hephaistos who hadn't appeared but he didn't directly participate in Gigantomachia in the original novel or the revised versions. Then who the hell was the other leader of Olympus?

「 At this moment, a hero entered Kim Dokja's eyes. 」

[Stop! You have to stop!]

I looked at the hero. A beautifully tanned, muscular body and eyes full of dizziness. The 'status' I felt from him was similar to Yoo Sangah.

The Hero of the Labyrinth, Theseus.

[This fight has no meaning!]

Theseus was trying to stop the fight.

[We have to stop here! There is no need to fight the giants! Doing this won't help Olympus! Athena! Apollon! Don't you know?]

I couldn't figure out what the hell was going on. In the past Gigantomachias, Theseus had never appeared and done such a thing. It wasn't an impossible story but…

[Please! Stop! At this rate, Olympus will…!]

It happened at this moment. A red arrow flashed over Theseus' head. It was an arrow stating he was the leader of Olympus.

Then Theseus grabbed his head and groaned with pain.

[T-This… no, no. No, Father!]

Something went wrong.

Dionysus, watching the scenario on the sofa of the Administrative Bureau, jumped up. The popcorn box rolled across the ground.

The surprised Bihyung was going to open his mouth when Dionysus exclaimed. [Damn! Why is Theseus there?]

Dionysus shouted at the dokkaebis. It was as if he was the Dokkaebi King.

[Quickly prepare the 'probability plausibility screening'. Or everyone in that scenario will die!]

The next moment, there was an explosion on the screen.

I couldn't tell what was happening. My ears rang and my vision turned completely white. I was caught in the explosion and flew through rock walls into a cave.

[Your incarnation body is severely damaged.]

[The damage to your incarnation body is serious. You need urgent treatment!]

I bandaged the wounds to stop my stories from escaping. I staggered up and looked outside the coastal cave.

A battlefield strewn with blood. The foam reached the tip of my toes and the sea breeze soaked my lips. In addition, no one could be seen on the battlefield.

There was no Shin Yoosung and Lee Gilyoung flying in the sky on a dragon. Lee Jihye directing the phantom fleet as well. In addition, Lee Seolhwa and Lee Hyunsung who had just been protecting the party.

"Yoosung! Gilyoung!"

I couldn't see Yoo Joonghyuk fighting Athena in the sky or Han Sooyoung destroying the mass produced Heracles. There wasn't even Uriel or Surya.

"Han Sooyoung! Yoo Joonghyuk!"

My shouts echoed inside the cave where the sea breeze was blowing. My heart sank. What the hell happened?

After a while, something huge emerged from the water. An immeasurable and inscrutable being to human cognition.

I thought as I faced it, 'This is a god'.

It felt like all the constellations I previously saw were fake. It was an existence that could only be described as a 'god'.

[I am the Spear that Draws the Boundaries of the Sea, Poseidon.]

The mythical father of the great hero of Olympus, Theseus. The moment his true voice rang out, my heart throbbed and blood poured out. It was just like the first time I met an outer god a long time ago.

My fingertips shook like I had palsy. Why did Poseidon descend? It wasn't possible. Poseidon had never intervened in any period of Gigantomachia. If the myth-grade constellation like him intervened, not only would the odds of Olympus be seriously damaged, the entire scenario would be blown away.

Nevertheless, he appeared here. What the hell? What was he thinking? My hand kept shaking. Then after a while, I realized that I wasn't the one shaking. The smartphone that I subconsciously held tightly was vibrating.

Chapter 334: Ep. 63 - End of the Myth, I

「(You will die like this.)」

This was the screen of the vibrating smartphone. I felt the rising waves against my toes and raised my smartphone.

「(Originally, the fourth revision should've been sent… I think something went wrong.)」

I knew who was talking. The librarians of the library inside the Fourth Wall. Perhaps they were the ones who sent this.

「(This is all I can do to help. Even if it is only partly.)」

There was light interference and sentences rose from the LCD screen. It was as if the contents of the book were summarized.

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「 This place again… 」

It was obvious whose monologue the sentences belonged to. This was clearly the contents of the Fourth Revision.

「 There were too many mistakes in the third round. 」

「 The appearance of Poseidon was unexpected. 」

「 I should've thought more about the issue of probability. 」

「 I should've considered the relationship between myths… 」

The sentences were filled with regret as always. Perhaps we failed even in the fourth revision.

「 If I had saved Lee Sookyung, not Yoo Sangah at that time… 」

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…What? I stiffened and no longer scrolled down the screen. Lightning struck the screen and all the flowing sentences were erased.

I hurriedly shouted, "Wait a minute! Show me again! What did you mean by those words just now?"

There was no reply.

「 (Kim Dokja, fate can't be changed. However—)

「 Shu t up Nir va na. 」

[The exclusive skill 'Fourth Wall' is strongly activated!]

The power of the Fourth Wall obstructed Nirvana's voice. The sentences disappeared and my fast heartbeat rapidly calmed down. My irritated head cooled down like a sophisticated clock.

This composure, I didn't like it. I couldn't rage when I wanted to rage. I couldn't be sad when I wanted to grieve.

"Fourth Wall."

[The Fourth Wall is looking at you.]

"Tell me honestly. Is my mother in danger?"

The Fourth Wall didn't answer.

…Shit, sometimes I wondered if this guy was on my side or not.

I looked up at the air. "Biyoo."

[Baat…]

Biyoo, whose body was transparent, looked down at me with sad eyes. I opened my mouth to ask before closing it again.

[The exclusive skill, 'Fourth Wall' is shaking!]

Biyoo was crying.

All types of thoughts passed through my head. Some of the confusing puzzle pieces were slowly fitting together. Yoo Joonghyuk had returned too quickly and he looked like he was hiding something.

Somehow, I thought it was strange. The reason why the constellations sent strange messages and why Yoo Joonghyuk was seeking the Nectar. Maybe, all of this was due to the same reason.

[This friend. Don't worry, your mother isn't dead yet.] A voice was heard behind me. […Tsk, it was information that shouldn't be leaked.]

Sparks emerged from the darkness and it was a constellation I knew well. "Dionysus."

[It has been a while. Is this the first time since the last banquet?]

Dionysus approached my side and gazed outside the coastal cave, his left hand charred from the probability. This place contained one of the three chief gods of Olympus, the ruler of the sea. Sea God Poseidon.

Poseidon didn't move but there was an ominous silence hanging around him. Like a predator waiting for the chance, Poseidon was silently staring at the sea. It was as if he was seeing where he came from.

[The 'probability plausibility screening' has begun and Uncle won't move too much. However, don't do anything rash. He is looking hard for you.]

"You are saying this while spamming your true voice near me."

[It's okay because I'm hiding here using my power. He can't hear me.]

I saw that entrance of the cave was covered with a wine glass. Maybe this barrier was hiding Dionysus and I. Dionysus gazed at Poseidon and spoke. [Isn't it great? The third chief gods… that is a myth-grade constellation. They are high constellations that ordinary constellations can never reach in their life.]

Certainly, I could only say he was great. If I was Poseidon, I would be able to stop the nameless fog that had once destroyed the Demon Realm.

「The place where his spear reaches will soon become the boundary of the sea.」

Poseidon's gaze soon reached the sea. All the mountains under the sea were shuddering before his sublime presence and prostrated themselves, praying for an error they probably hadn't committed. The depths of my heart were roaring.

[…You are really amazing.]

"What are you saying?"

[There are no signs that you are truly afraid when looking at him. Why?]

Of course, I was afraid. My legs trembled and I was dizzy. But more than that…

「 Kim Dokja was really impressed. 」

I watched the majestic Poseidon for a long time before answering, "I couldn't imagine this."

[Imagine? Haha, you truly are a funny person.]

"Why are you helping me? You are part of Olympus."

[It is my heart.]

"What happened to the other party members?"

Dionysus flicked his fingers and a screen appeared. The party members were gathered in the distant sky. They were tied by Ariadne's web and floating in the air using Hermes Walking Method. No one was missing. Of course, the narrative-grade constellations Surya and Uriel were also safe.

Indeed, it was a clever escape. The sky was the domain of Zeus. Poseidon might draw the boundaries of the sea but he couldn't reach into the sky.

Dionysus sipped from a glass and said, [Rest assured. None of them were hurt. Ariadne and Hermes made it just in time…]

"Can I give a punch?"

[…To who?]

I glared silently at Dionysus.

[Me? Why?]

"Don't you know?"

Dionysus was quick to notice and replied, [Ah, it's because of that incarnation. Yes, I'm sorry. You can hit me if you want to. Instead, do it a bit softly… you are a constellation so it will be quite painful.]

I didn't hit him. Instead, I asked, "Why did you do that to Yoo Sangah-ssi?"

[…The story is complicated.]

Dionysus sat at the edge of the coastal cave and laid down his glass. He took some time to choose his words.

[In this world line, the Moira three sisters received a peculiar prophecy.]

"Peculiar prophecy?"

Dionysus glanced at me and replied like a Greed-era orator. [The 'end of all' will soon come.]

"What does that mean?"

[I don't know. The obvious thing is that Olympus can't get away from it either. Thanks to this, Olympus has been busy for a while. All the scenarios will come to an end one day but we had to know how it ended.]

Dionysus continued speaking. [In the process, we found some singularities related to the predicted 'end. One of them was the 'regressor' with you.]

"You chose Yoo Sangah to keep an eye on Yoo Joonghyuk?"

[Honestly, yes.]

My anger increase but I endured it. Dionysus' words hadn't finished.

[Then while spying on him, we came to know of your existence.]

"…"

[An incarnation who hates fate, hates constellations and doesn't believe in the Star Stream. He became a constellation on his own without choosing a sponsor and he is even a constellation we can't see the identity of. A singularity I have never seen before. We found you and made up our minds.] Dionysus laughed. [Hide you and use you.]

There were remnants of dim stories in his tone. Some scenes in the past where I thought I was 'lucky' passed through my mind. The Even Bridge that unfolded at the first Oksu Station — 「Deus Ex Machina.」. There was the probability that helped whenever I was in danger.

[We wanted to use you to stop the destruction. Thus, I wanted to help you by using Incarnation Yoo Sangah.]

[It is different from Ares' words. He wants to get rid of me.]

[There is already internal conflict among the 12 Gods. I don't know if you're aware.]

A golden aura rose from Dionysus' body as he got up. This was the grandeur of the lineage of Zeus, king of the sky.

[The present Olympus is a fake.]

Dionysus' golden eyes gazed at me like he was looking down on his vassal.

[Just as human priests created gods to establish their authority, the gods of Olympus created myths to maintain their power. Fake myths such as Gigantomachia and Heracles… and this is the result.]

[The constellation 'God of Wine and Ecstasy' is looking at you.]

[I want to end this era. Then I want to make a new Olympus.]

[The story 'King of a Kingless World' is responding.]

The story sleeping inside me reacted to his story. The Dionysus in front of me was one of the candidates to replace Zeus in the future.

[Anyway, that was the plan… now this place is haunted by the fish uncle and there is nothing you can do. Perhaps the scenario will end this way.]

If the probability plausibility screen begun then there was a high probability this scenario would fail.

The participants would receive compensation according to their combination but Gigantomachia wouldn't occur. Perhaps Poseidon had been aiming for this. At the expense of his own status and nebula probability, he was trying to defend Olympus.

"No, there is still something I can do."

[What?]

"I think we can overturn Olympus in this scenario. Instead, give me a Nectar in exchange for my help."

[Nectar? I have a bit here.]

I took the Nectar from Dionysus. I placed a few drops on my tongue.

[A star fluid has been ingested for the first time!]

[The star fluid 'Nectar' has responded to you!]

[The probability of Olympus has restored your broken body!]

[All your stats and skill levels have increased slightly.

Was this the star fluid I had only heard about in words? I received an effect even though my average stats exceeded 200. Dionysus watched me put away the remaining Nectar and asked, [Hey, did you forget that one blow before? Yet you want to fight again?]

"Will you help?"

[Are you crazy? Even if I help you, no… it is impossible to change the situation even if half of the 12 Gods help. Don't you know how strong that fish is? Are you still out of your mind? The end of this scenario is already—]

"The end of the scenario is fixed. Is that what you want to say?"

As Giant Briareus stated, fate couldn't be averted. Ares had also said it. This scenario was just the development of a causal event that was scheduled. Yes, that's right. Perhaps their words were correct.

"If the end is fixed, is there any meaning in the process?"

[It must be meaningful but that is just being romantic. As a result, it is recorded as a failed story.]

"Are all failed stories meaningless? Even if you know you will fail, isn't the story of those who have fought to the end worth it?"

[Constellations like those stories but those who do so are bound to die.]

"It is a possibility. Then what about this? Someone who is influenced by the story tries to challenge the same story again."

At this moment, Dionysus opened his mouth.

"10 times, 100 times, 1000 times. What if many constellations and incarnations are affected by the story and live such a story again?"

Failure might be scheduled but the countless beings built up a story of courage as they confronted the given fate over and over again. What if they accumulated stories about challenges and challenged them in another way.

"Then are the failed stories useless?"

Stage Transformation wasn't absolute. It was because the myth was just a creation. Dionysus was speechless.

In the end, the probability of the Star Stream was a law that flowed towards the 'desired flow' that many beings wanted. The story that many beings desired would be realized someday.

Dionysus barely managed to open his mouth but he was oddly incensed. [Then are you going to be the first? You will be the first victim and overthrow the torch of the scenario?]

"Nope." I smiled. "I will be the last torch."

[What?]

"It is because numerous people have already failed before me."

I knew. I needed hundreds or thousands of attempts to defeat this Poseidon. Just like… the current existence running towards Poseidon…

Dammit.

Chapter 335: Ep. 63 - End of the Myth, II

Yoo Joonghyuk was rushing to Poseidon, who even narrative-grade constellations avoided.

Dionysus asked, […Are you talking about this crazy guy?]

I activated Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint. Yoo Joonghyuk's thoughts were pushed into my head.

「The period while the probability plausibility screening is happening is the only opportunity.」

「Poseidon is a myth-grade constellation. There is almost no way to subdue him through Stage Transformation.」

「The only useful thing is this branch.」

I noticed the branch in Yoo Joonghyuk's hand.

[The constellation 'Spokesman of Justice and Wisdom' is astonished!]

Perhaps the branch was a stolen star relic from Athena. Strictly speaking, it was a sacred star relic.

[Athena's Olive Branch]. The reason why Poseidon was so scary was that despite living for many years, he had very few 'losing stories'. Poseidon had lost once and it was in the best he made with Athena.

I had some memories from Yoo Sangah.

–A long time ago, Poseidon and Athena competed in a city. People decided that the god who gave the better gift would be the guardian of the city. At the time, Poseidon struck a rock with a trident, causing the sea to rise. Meanwhile, Athena grew an olive tree filled with rich fruit.

–Sea water is very common… did Athena win?

–Yes, Athena won the competition and became the patron god. Thus, the city was called Athens. Ah… I'm sorry. Am I talking too much? Dokja-ssi should know this as a fantasy expert…

–…

Of course, I had no idea. I wasn't as knowledgeable in myths as Yoo Sangah. Yet this damn Yoo Joonghyuk knew the story.

｢ If there is a slight blow, I can get rid of it. ｣

…The olive branch. If there was a losing story, there was a losing story. Perhaps Poseidon would only vomit a bit of seawater after being struck by the branch.

[The constellation 'Spokesman of Justice and Wisdom' is warning you that this isn't enough!]

However, I could understand Yoo Joonghyuk's choice. If the scenario was going to be forcibly terminated by the probability plausibility screening, it wasn't too bad to do a bit of damage to Poseidon. If he was lucky, he might be able to get the story 'One Who Changed the Boundary of the Sea a Bit' or 'One Who Went Against the Owner of the Sea.

…This was only if he was lucky.

I prepared to jump forward in case of an emergency. Dionysus grabbed my shoulder. [Don't go. You will die.]

"Huh?"

Dionysus' expression hardened. Then…

[The 'probability plausibility screening' has ended!]

[There is no problem with the probability of the scenario.]

I looked up at the system messages in the air. The indirect messages poured out in succession.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is questioning the bureau's judgment!]

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is cursing!]

[Many constellations are suspicious of the bureau's judgment!]

Anyone would be shocked. It was impossible. A myth-grade constellation had appeared in the 60th scenario yet there were no problems with the probability?

A giant trident appeared in Poseidon's hand as he slowly rose. The star relic Triaina. The spear that drew the boundaries of the sea, a fearsome weapon that turned everything it touched into blood bubbles of the sea.

"Yoo Joonghyuk!" I shouted but Yoo Joonghyuk was already right under Poseidon's nose. Even Yoo Joonghyuk would die if he received one blow.

I couldn't bear it as I moved away from Dionysus and invoked Way of the Wind. However, Yoo Joonghyuk was too far away and the Triaina Spear was close.

Sparks of probability appeared like lightning in the air. The recoil naturally pushed Yoo Joonghyuk back. There was a mild spring scent along with a black aura. Someone was blocking Poseidon's way.

[Poseidon, why are you fighting with kids?]

In the spot where the sparks disappeared, there was a goddess with a beautiful appearance. Half her face was covered with a folding fan and there was a black silk cape around her body. Her face was unfamiliar so I didn't recognize her for a moment.

Dionysus screamed, [No, why is this old lady here?!]

The glare, that could only bloom in the darkest underground, blocked Poseidon's spear.

[Persephone.]

The sea seemed furious and a fierce sea breeze shook her collar. Persephone glanced at me and smiled.

I was thankful but my feelings were complicated. Why did Persephone appear? I thought the Underworld wouldn't directly intervene in this…

Perhaps… was it to gain a part of the giant story? Things would be very complicated if that happened.

[Persephone, why are you blocking me?]

[I am telling you to stop here. Look, it's too much. Your Majesty's parents are all terrified.]

Persephone pointed to the sea where countless life forms were trembling. Some aquatic species turned belly up and died. Even the kraken, the giant 2nd grade monster, was breathless.

[The constellation 'Pure Moonlight Patron God' is deploring the death of life!]

[The constellation 'Goddess of Love and Beauty' is dissuading the 'Spear that Draws the Boundaries of the Sea'.]

[The constellation 'Mistress of the Hearth and Benevolence' is talking to the 'Spear that Draws the Boundaries of the Sea'.]

The neutral constellations were trying to dissuade Poseidon. Persephone continued speaking. [This isn't the stage for a myth-grade constellation. Leave the children to fight among themselves.]

[This is no longer a problem for children.]

[It isn't a matter for children?]

[My son was attacked.]

In fact, there was a small arrowhead in Theseus' left arm, who Poseidon had descended for. Persephone narrowed her eyes.

[Just because of this… Then you should punish those who attacked Theseus. Do you know who it is?]

[It must be a giant.]

[You don't know that.]

[The giants will kill everyone.]

The stubborn attitude caused even the valiant giants to tremble with fear.

[Those who burrow deep underground. You will regret coming up to the ground today!]

The power of Triaina caused all the nearby creatures to scatter. Yet Persephone didn't back off. I was worried. She might be 'Queen of the Underworld' but it was impossible for her to stop Poseidon, a myth-grade constellation.

[Get out of the way. You might be my brother's wife but I will kill you.]

Persephone didn't back down from the threat. Poseidon's Triaina didn't hesitate. The light moved and Athena and Apollon, watching the scene from the air, flew forward.

[No, Poseidon!]

[Spear that Draws the Boundaries of the Sea!]

It was too late. The moment the waves hit, Poseidon's spear was already stuck into Persephone's heart. Then looking closer, the spear didn't hit Persephone but a giant hand. A hand made of dense darkness gripped Poseidon's spear.

It was a feast of probability so bright that I would probably never see it again in my life. I understood why the bureau had passed the 'probability plausibility screening'.

Dionysus laughed while shivering. [Haha, if things go wrong today, the 12 Gods will die.]

A story of darkness was released into the air. The darkness that had kept silent for a long time was awakening.

[Giant Story 'Underworld' is coming to the sea.]

One of the three chief gods of Olympus, Father of the Rich Night. Underworld King Hades had descended to Gigantomachia.

[Poseidon. You are making a fight between children into one between adults.]

In the original novel of Ways of Survival, the myth-grade constellations had fought several times. Yet such a thing had never happened in the 60th scenario of Ways of Survival. If I remembered correctly, in the 75th scenario where Poseidon of Olympus and Shiva of Vedas collided, all of North America flew away. There were times when the surrounding asteroids were destroyed and… there was something else.

[Stop! You must stop!]

Spokesman of Justice and Wisdom Athena, Almighty Sun Apollon, Master of the Skywalk Hermes and God of Wine and Ecstasy Dionysus. There was also Briareus of the Hundred-Handers.

The moment the clash between the two myth-grade constellations occurred, all of the constellations were thrown out like toys. The constellations were thrown into walls and Briareus lost half his remaining arms.

No one was able to stop the struggle between the two myth-grade constellations. The nearby Yoo Joonghyuk was also shocked and flew this way. I moved quickly to his body.

King of the Underworld and King of the Sea. Two myth-grade constellations were staring at each other. They were able to shake their world just by making eye contact. Poseidon was the one to open his mouth first.

[Hades, why did you emerge from the Underworld? You have no justification to intervene in this situation. Even if the scales of probability are aligned, you shouldn't be here.]

Justification. It was necessary for a major being such as a myth-grade constellation to descend to the sub scenario. The right justification would allow them to pass the plausibility screening. In Poseidon's case, his justification was his son Theseus. Then what about Hades?

[Who says there is no justification? We came to protect our successor.]

The one who answered was Persephone. Poseidon asked casually, [Successor? You don't have children.]

Poseidon's words were right. Unlike Zeus and Poseidon, who had numerous children, Hades had no children. It wasn't because Persephone and Hades' conjugal harmony wasn't good.

[Of course not. We don't want to have children and use them in the long-term war. My husband's brain isn't his crotch like you.]

Poseidon's expression hardened and Persephone continued,

[Isn't it strange to think of raising a child in this damn world of scenarios in the first place?]

[I don't intend to attack your crooked values. Answer me bluntly. How do you have a successor without children?]

The cold voice was like the temperature of the deep sea. Poseidon's Triaina cried out roughly.

[If you don't answer correctly, you and your husband will die horribly in the aftermath of the probability storm.]

Persephone laughed silently. Persephone slowly turned and looked this way. The moment I encountered the strange gaze, the pages of Ways of Survival flipped in my head. I looked down at the unconscious Yoo Joonghyuk.

Perhaps it was like this. Suddenly, several things were understood. In the 481st round, Hades was very interested in Yoo Joonghyuk and said the following words:

「"I want you to be the successor of the Underworld King."」

Come to think of it, the Underworld was especially friendly to Yoo Joonghyuk i.e. Kim Dokja's Company. It was impossible for this cold couple. Everything could be understood if the Underworld was planning to use Yoo Joonghyuk as their successor.

They invited me and Yoo Joonghyuk to the constellation banquet, invited me to the Gourmet Association, sneaked the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint into Tartarus…

By the way…

Didn't it seem like I received more benefits? The next moment, the darkness of the world spoke to me.

[The constellation 'Father of the Rich Night' wants to make you the successor of the Underworld King.]

Chapter 336: Ep. 63 - End of the Myth, III

…What? I looked at the message with blank eyes. What did it say?

[The constellation 'Father of the Rich Night' wants to make you the successor of the Underworld King.]

I wasn't mistaken. I gazed at Persephone, who was smiling this way. Rather than Yoo Joonghyuk, who was supposed to be the successor, I was chosen instead. Still, I didn't understand. Why me?

Poseidon spoke, [You are crazy. You are going to make your successor someone who doesn't have divine blood?]

[Isn't it past time to get over the disgusting old-fashioned notion of blood descendants?]

[Someone who hasn't even performed the task of succession…]

[He performed the 'task'.]

I wondered what Persephone was saying. I completed a task for the succession? Something flashed in my mind.

–I'll give you a task. You want to show me an interesting story? If you succeed, I will let you find the soul you want.

–Your task is to cut off the head of the serpent.

Certainly, there was this incident. The test that I did to regain the soul of the 41st regression Shin Yoosung. At the time, I cut off Yamata no Orochi's head to complete Persephone's task. That wasn't an ordinary task but a task for succession? Since when had this queen planned…

[Hades! Are you serious? You want that trivial constellation to be your successor? Poseidon cried out fiercely and Hades glanced at me.

Come to think of it, Hades had always been favourable to me. Father of the Rich Night. He seemed strict and scary but never once did he do anything to harm me. It was strange when thinking of the many characters who went to the Underworld in the original novel.

Persephone's eyes deepened.

–Demon King of Salvation, it is better to decide quickly.

Becoming the successor of the Underworld. It suggested that in future scenarios, I might be able to borrow the probability of the Underworld. Furthermore, I was qualified to become the master of the Underworld after succeeded Hades.

「 Kim Dokja thought. 」

If I accepted their proposal here, the Underworld would formally be able to participate in Gigantomachia. In return, they would get a part in the giant story of Gigantomachia. If I refused the succession proposal, the Underworld would suffer a great loss and be locked underground again. Then their relationship with me would be completely severed.

…Really clever, queen of the Underworld. The Underworld would get the right to participate in Gigantomachia. I would prepare for the overthrow of Olympus. If I refused this offer, Poseidon was the only one to benefit. In such a situation, what was there to think about? In order to return to Earth as soon as possible… in order to revive my mother, this was the best way.

"…I will be the successor of the Underworld. However, I have a condition."

I swiftly told her my condition. I also said that I couldn't accept the succession if the condition wasn't met. After a while…

[The constellation 'Father of the Rich Night' has accepted your condition!]

[The constellation 'Demon King of Salvation' has become the successor of the Underworld.]

The moment I made the declaration, the probability of the Star Stream moved. Many stars looked down on me. Some were jealous of me, some felt admiration and some were genuinely pleased. Then the Underworld King spoke.

[Spear that Draws the Boundaries of the Sea.]

The tone was thicker than any voice I had ever heard.

[We of the Underworld came here to protect our successor.]

It was a dependable tone. I really wanted a father like this.

[The Star Stream is convinced of the cause suggested by the Father of the Rich Night.]

[The Star Stream has accepted the probability of the Father of the Rich Night entering.]

A huge scale was now moving. It was on a level I had never seen before. The two myth-grade constellations climbed on their respective scales, released their status and destroyed the ecosystem of the scenario.

[The bureau has built a wall of probability to prevent the destruction of this scenario!]

[Many constellations are focused on the collision between two myth-grade constellations!]

[Many constellations are shouting the modifier 'Spear that Draws the Boundaries of the Sea'!]

[Many constellations are shouting the modifier 'Father of the Rich Night'!]

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[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is keeping a close eye on his rivals.]

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is excited about the 'real' confrontation.]

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' is silently watching the situation.]

[Many constellations are praising the 'Demon King of Salvation' for the confrontation!]

[700,000 coins have been sponsored.]

This was the moment I realized how big a deal my actions were in the Star Stream.

Dionysus made a despondent laugh and said, [You really… you don't know what you have done.]

"No, I know."

Then both constellations moved. In the darkness reminiscent of a giant mountain, a black sickle appeared. Meanwhile, Triaina emerged from the waves that rushed like a tsunami. There was a collision as the waves surged in front and a cloud of dust was created in the air, reminiscent of a

nuclear explosion.

Then Hades' body disappeared. Poseidon exclaimed, [Dammit, it is Kynee!]

If Poseidon had the star relic Triaina, Hades had the golden helmet 'Kynee'. A star relic made by the three cyclops brothers of Olympus and a helmet that could hide the existence of the wearer from the world.

[This is a cowardly method of fighting, Younger Brother!]

[…You are still trying to claim that you are the hyung.]

Every time the wind struck, water vapour swept through the area and the fish that died in place of Poseidon were blown away. The enraged Poseidon pushed Triaina towards the possible position of Hades' defense.

The stormy waves swallowed the darkness before the darkness once again broke out from the waves.

It was a game regarding the pride of the myths. In the duel between myth-grade constellations, neither of them retreated.

[Giant Story 'Underworld' is continuing!]

[Giant Story 'Supreme Ruler of the Open Seas' is continuing!]

Their main stories struck and Dionysus desperately started to protect the cave. The stories that the myths had been accumulating since birth were intersecting. The collision of the myths caused some sentences to disappear and some sentences to be born. The living stories of Poseidon and Hades were being rewritten here.

I watched the scene like I was reading a novel.

「A new wave was pouring in from where the night and the sea met.」

It was a scene that had never been seen in Ways of Survival. It was beautiful. The battle itself was spectacular, tremendous and marvellous.

I pulled out my sword.

Then Dionysus' surprised voice was heard. [What are you doing now?]

"I can't just watch."

If the fighting of the two people continued, all the beings here would be wiped out from the aftermath. The giant story of Gigantomachia would be reconstructed around the influence of these two.

In addition, they might be even now but the stage of this battle was the 'sea'. Therefore, it was obvious who the god of victory would side with.

"I have to help Hades. Let's try whaling."

[Didn't you see Athena disappearing into the horizon? If you get hit like that, you will die.]

"It is because she was trying to catch the father whale. Then what about the baby whale?"

I was pointing at Theseus. The great Greek hero, who accepted Poseidon's descent, was releasing stories in the midst of the waves.

「Stop…」

「Now, stop, please… .」

Dionysus' expression distorted. [You want to send Poseidon back by defeating Theseus?]

"It is cowardly but it is the best method."

[It isn't cowardly. Still, do you think that fish will allow you to do so? It is impossible for a narrative-grade constellation to break through those waves.]

"Yes, if I am only trying with a single story. However, what if I'm holding the sacred torch?"

At this moment, Dionysus' expression changed. [Don't tell me… you want to create a sacred torch? Will you collect the stories to pierce through Uncle Fish's barrier?]

"It is similar."

A sacred torch. The flames that burned when many beings gathered their stories.

Dionysus asked, [Who will carry that fire? You?]

"I have to wear the fireproof suit first."

I looked at the broken Pluto near the cave. Pluto was completely ruined in the previous battle with Ares. I pulled out the Old to New Toad. The toad sang. "Give me an old house and I'll give you a new house."

"I'll give you two. Instead, fix this with the new one."

"Go od."

The real power of the Old to New Toad wasn't simply exchanging items with new items. This toad had the special power to replace broken items with the same 'new items' if the sacrifice was available. There was a reason Anna Croft wanted this toad at the auction house.

I fed the toad with some low level star relics from the battle just now and Pluto's body. The toad opened its mouth unusually wide and swallowed the metal Pluto. After a while, Pluto was vomited out.

[Uwah, shit. What? I'm alive?]

Pluto, who was smaller at two metres in size, came out while covered in sticky fluids. It looked perfect without any scratches.

Dionysus looked somewhat surprised but his expression was still dark. [How are you going to make the sacred torch? Do you think the other 12 Gods will help you? In addition, the 'torch' needs to borrow the power of the sun…]

I knew. However, there was a later matter. There was something more urgent right now. Someone rose from beside Dionysus. He looked terrible as soon as he woke up.

"You woke up?"

"…Poseidon?" Yoo Joonghyuk held his head like he had a headache and frowned. Thankfully, it wasn't a big hit.

"He is fighting over there."

"…The opponent is Hades."

Yoo Joonghyuk read the battlefield at once. A great battle between myth-grade constellations. The probability was vibrating uneasily. Perhaps he was thinking the same thing now.

"It is a great opportunity to deal a blow to Olympus. Don't you know?"

"…We have to hit them now."

"To do so, we need the cooperation of the woman you hate."

"A woman I hate?"

I silently stared towards the depths of the cave. Then from deep inside the cave, something like a torch turned on one by one.

The woman walked slowly through the light. I stared at her and asked with a smile, "Anna Croft, will you help?"

Chapter 337: Ep. 63 - End of the Myth, IV

"Why should I help you?"

"Or you will die too."

There were more than 10 incarnations in the darkness. They were Anna Croft, Selena Kim and other party members. As expected, they also fought in Gigantomachia.

"We can escape before that happens."

"Then you'll receive damage. Wouldn't it be a good experience to clear it to the end as long as you're in the middle of the scenario?"

Anna Croft stared at me as if to test my true intentions. "What do you really want?"

"King Lycomedes' Leather Gloves. Don't you have it? I didn't see it at the auction house, no matter how hard I looked."

Anna Croft had used Future Sight. She probably knew the value of the items she purchased beforehand. Anna Croft read my intentions and then smiled. "I can't give you that. It is a material for my giant soldier."

"Are you trying to create a model capable of Stage Transformation? You should know it is impossible with your strength alone."

"I'll only know after trying."

One of Anna Croft's party members stepped forward with hostility. Then Yoo Joonghyuk stepped forward to confront him.

"There's nothing to say." There was the clear sound of the sword being pulled out. "She is a woman I need to kill anyway."

A transcendent status filled the cave and the other side obviously became tense. I could use Yoo Joonghyuk to take away items. The problem was that the opponent was Anna Croft.

I raised my hand to restrain Yoo Joonghyuk and Yoo Joonghyuk stared at me with a dreadful expression.

[The character Yoo Joonghyuk is using Three Restraints Lv. 10.]

Restraining oneself three times to avoid killing a person… I couldn't believe I was seeing Yoo Joonghyuk use this skill in front of my eyes. It was difficult for me to tell how much of a grudge Yoo Joonghyuk had against Anna Croft, even after reading Ways of Survival.

I was struggling to make a decision when someone spoke. "Anna, give him the gloves. Now is the time for us to yield."

Anna Croft's expression hardened at Selena Kim's words. Selena Kim turned her head and sent a sound transmission to me.

–I am thankful for last time, Demon King of Salvation.

Previously, I had released the pledge on Selena Kim through the bet with Anna Croft at the auction house. In other words, Selena Kim no longer had to listen to Anna Croft's commands. Anna Croft's expression when her greatest power opposed her opinion was worth seeing.

Since Selena Kim threw out these words, it was my turn to finish it. "It won't be for free."

"Then?"

"I will buy it with coins."

Anna Croft paused at the mention of coins.

"How about 500,000 coins? You probably lost some money at the auction house."

Anna Croft's eyes narrowed. She seemed to be thinking about the losses she had suffered. After a while, Anna Croft opened her mouth. "I will consider it for one million coins."

"It originally cost 200,000 coins. Isn't that too expensive? 600,000 coins."

"900,000 coins."

"700,000 coins. I can't compromise any further."

"I'll give it to you for 800,000 coins."

Indeed, she was a formidable woman. 800,000 coins wasn't a small number but the deal had to be made. The King Lycomedes' Leather Gloves was an indispensable item for this whale hunting.

[King Lycomedes' Leather Gloves has been acquired.]

[You have paid 800,000 coins to Incarnation Anna Croft.]

The deal was over and I smiled. "There is no harm to each other."

"No harm to each other? Have you already forgotten that you took one million coins from me?

There are still 200,000 coins…"

"Come to South Korea once. You can enjoy a 200,000 won course meal."

Of course, 200,000 won and 200,000 coins were different. Anna Croft gritted her teeth angrily. "Do you really intend to fight with Poseidon?"

"You have seen it with Future Sight so you will know."

"That…"

Of course, I knew she didn't know the future. Her Future Sight couldn't see the futures associated with me.

I brushed past her and added in a small voice. "Maybe this time will be pretty fun. You will go to a future that you can't read."

I watched Anna Croft's quivering small head and felt a strange sense of triumph… I didn't know why I wanted to bully this person every time I met her.

"I hope you won't die a dog's death."

"If you really want that, ask Asgard to add some probability."

After finishing the conversation, I glanced at Yoo Joonghyuk. He was still glaring at Anna Croft and seemed on the verge of swinging his sword straight away. The moment I was about to open Midday Tryst, Yoo Joonghyuk unexpectedly sent me a message first.

–That woman's neck belongs to me. No matter when it happens.

–Do whatever you like.

Of course, at that time, I didn't intend to stop it. However, at least until then, Anna Croft was a person we needed.

Dionysus raised his hand. [What do I do?]

"Don't do anything."

[What?]

I left Dionysus and glanced at the giant soldier.

Pluto was raising his body in the seawater. I asked him while nodding towards Yoo Joonghyuk, "Can you pick up two people?"

[You're not satisfied with one and want me to do two?]

"Can you do it?"

[…Will you care if I say I can't?]

As the two myth-grade constellations clashed, the true voices of the constellations came from the sky. They stopped fighting and voiced their opinions on the current situation instead of pointing their weapons at each other.

[I didn't think Hades would show up here…]

[How can we stop them? Athena, haven't you won a fight with Uncle Poseidon before?]

[Isn't that another story? I just planted an olive tree… how can I win against a myth-grade?]

[I don't know if the Lightning Throne or Mother Earth appears…]

The expressions of the 12 Gods were dark. The Lightning Throne neglected the work of the nebula after entering the top-level scenario while Mother Earth hated Olympus and was unlikely to interfere in this incident.

[Hermes, what about using the giant stories of Olympus?]

[They are the chief narrators of our giant story. Do you think it will work?]

[…That's true.]

There were comments here and there but a solution didn't come out.

Lee Seolhwa observed the conversation between constellations and whispered in Lee Hyunsung's ears. "…I thought narrative-grade constellations would be great but they're more ordinary than I thought."

"Yes."

"Then what should we do now? If the constellations are like this…"

There was no confidence in Lee Seolhwa's voice. In the meantime, Kim Dokja's Company worked hard. It was natural to become confident after training and progressing. However, now they weren't dealing with historical-grade or narrative-grade constellations. The stories they built couldn't even compare to the toes of these enormous beings.

Shin Yoosung muttered in a small voice. "It was really had to beat that sun ahjussi last time…"

Surya had two eyes closed and was watching the scene through the Third Eye on his forehead. Even Surya, the strongest sun god, remained silent without interrupting. He was also unable to confront the myth-grade constellations.

Shockwaves spread. The clashes between Poseidon and Hades became more frequent and cracks spread in the sky. The space itself was collapsing from the collision. In addition, the more serious thing…

[Uncle Hades will lose.]

[It can't be helped. This stage is the 'sea'.]

Complicated expressions appeared on the faces of the 12 Gods. Poseidon or Hades. No matter who won, Olympus would fall into the crucible of confusion.

At this moment, Surya opened his mouth. [Something is coming.]

Someone had penetrated the expanse and was quickly approaching this way. It was a giant soldier made of the skin of a black dragon.

Lee Gilyoung shouted, "Dokja hyung!"

There was a loud exhaust sound and the giant soldier stopped. Kim Dokja emerged from inside Pluto. "Everyone. I'll explain it briefly."

Kim Dokja slowly looked at the constellations and incarnations. "I'm going to make a sacred torch. For that, I need your help."

Suddenly, the 12 Gods glanced at each other. A true voice burst out.

[A sacred torch relay!]

[Indeed, why didn't I think of that?]

The voices spoke until Kim Dokja once again opened his mouth. "The 12 Gods, please don't do anything."

[What? What do you mean?]

"You belong to Olympus and have no way to resist Poseidon's giant story. If you participate in the torch relay, it can be counterproductive."

Kim Dokja's words were true and some constellations nodded. However, it wasn't everyone.

[If we don't help, how can we turn on the sacred fire?]

In the first place, the sacred torch was a light that came from the sun. In order to start the sacred light, the help of the sun was needed.

Then Surya quietly stood up. Kim Dokja gazed at him. "Surya, sit down too."

Surya sat down again.

[How will you make a sacred torch without the sun?]

"The sacred fire is about sanctification. It isn't turned on only by the sun."

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is shrugging.]

Looking back, Jung Heewon's body was held tightly by Lee Hyunsung who had triggered Steel Transformation. Lee Hyunsung's cheeks were red, although it was unknown if this was due to embarrassment or the flames of Hell Flames Ignition.

"Too hooooooooot!"

"I'm sorry. Please endure it a bit more."

Surya nodded at the sight. [The flames of Eden are enough to replace the sun's heat. However, the flames made from that sanctification will find it hard to pierce through Poseidon's waves.]

"I know. Thus, it is time for you to step up."

Surya rose from where he was sitting. [Interesting.]

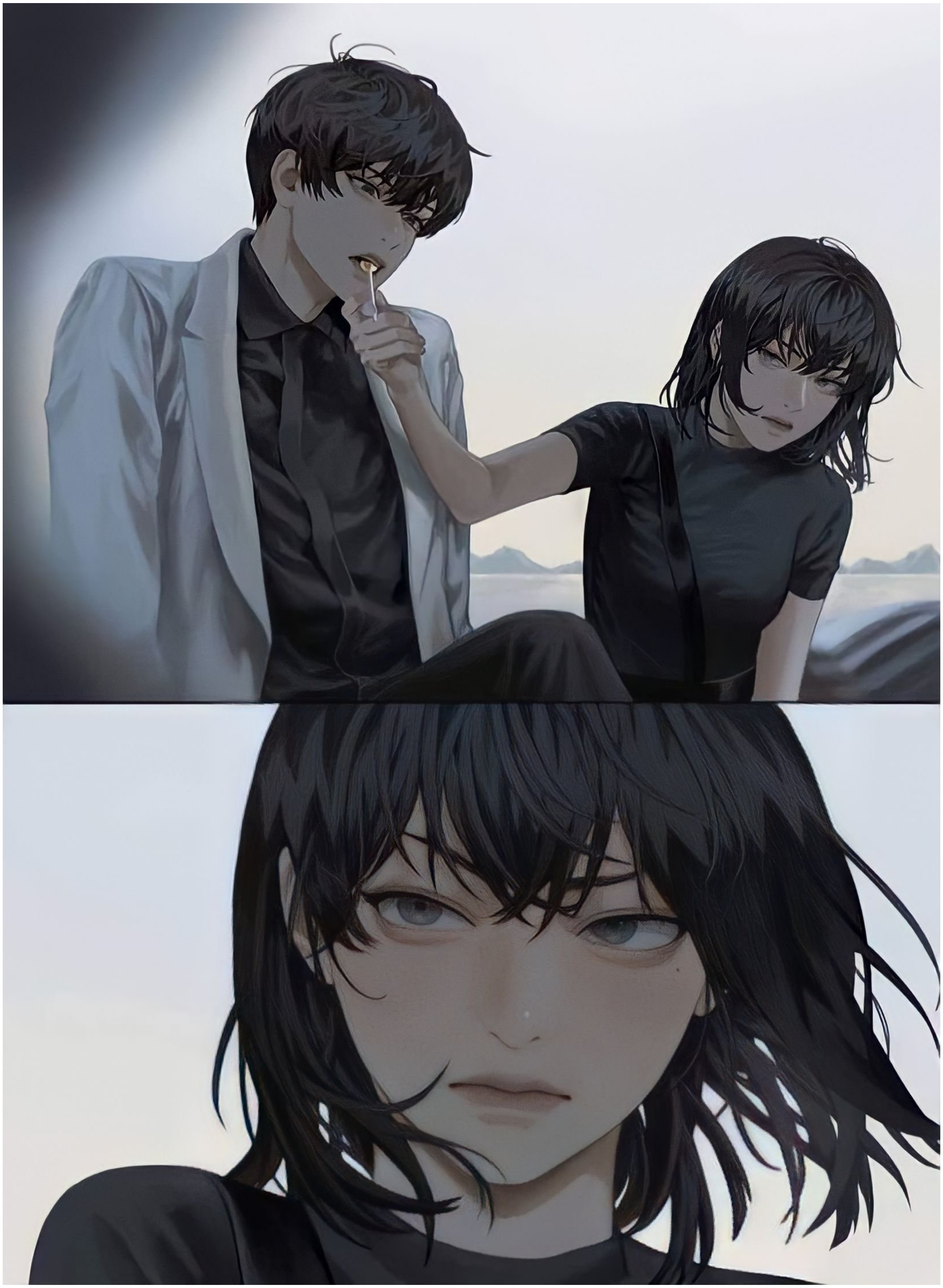
I needed more time before Lee Hyunsung was heated enough by the flames so I sat on the giant soldier's shoulder and gave some instructions to the group members. Then I looked around and saw Han Sooyoung dangling her legs while sucking candy.

I scolded Han Sooyoung, "Is it delicious?"

"Strangely, I've been craving something sweet lately. Do you want to eat?"

Han Sooyoung didn't wait for my answer and shoved the candy she was holding into my mouth.

It had a lemon flavour. I ate the candy and Han Sooyoung looked at me quietly.



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"By the way, that's what I was eating."

"So?"

"…You are really no fun."

Han Sooyoung slid down from the shoulder of the giant soldier and landed on its palm. I looked around and everyone also had a candy in their mouths, even Yoo Joonghyuk.

Lee Seolhwa said, "Sooyoung-ssi gave them away. I heard it has a relaxing effect."

That's why they were all biting one. I nodded in a convinced manner and Lee Seolhwa asked, "Can we win?"

I looked up and slowly gazed at Lee Seolhwa. Lee Seolhwa was looking back. I just smiled because I had no answer.

Victory or defeat, I didn't know such a thing. Just.

"No one will die."

Finally, the Steel Sword was preheated by the sacred flames and the 'torch' was held in Pluto's hand.

I opened my mouth while boarding Pluto.

[Please gather together.]

One by one, the scattered party members gathered. People born in different places and had different perspectives were gathered here. Thus, they became a constellation of people.

[Giant Story 'Demon Realm's Spring' has begun!]

All the narrators of Kim Dokja's Company started their story.

「 It is a story originating from a reader. 」

「 The strongest and loneliest man in the world held his sword. 」

「 The steel sword bore the inferno of hell and soared towards the high expanse. 」

The history that we accumulated was gathering in the flames of the sacred torch. Our story was a giant story from outside Olympus. Thus, it was impossible for Poseidon to not be hurt by this force.

From a distance, Poseidon noticed the message and looked this way.

He laughed and covered the air with waves, like a barrier. He was confident that the barrier made with the power of a myth-grade constellation couldn't be pierced.

It was possible to know just by facing him. Kim Dokja's Company couldn't pierce that barrier with our current power. We needed more power and a faster speed. A momentum strong enough to break through that wall.

Finally, there was an assistant to provide that momentum to us.

[Giant Story 'Demon Realm's Spring' has expanded.]

The sound of a train horn was heard from somewhere.

[Stage Transformation has occurred!]

「 Thus, the bright sun illuminated their way. 」

The train that was once our enemy was now rushing through the sky to pick us up. The sun train emitted a dazzling golden aura and the party members looked up with ecstatic eyes.

It was possible. If it was like this, it was clearly possible.

"Let's go, Kim Dokja's Company."

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[*] Official novel illustration (canonical)

Chapter 338: Ep. 63 - End of the Myth, V

At this time, all 'temporary bureau' members set up for the 60th scenario were looking at the same screen. The battle between myth-grade constellations was transmitted in real time. From low-grade to higher grade dokkaebis, they gathered regardless of their grade, forgetting their own channels scattered around various regions.

Hades vs. Poseidon.

In the past few years, the number of times constellations fought such a bloody battle could be counted on the fingers of one hand. Of course, there were cases of powerful constellations confronting each other but as always, it was about the story of the battle.

A battle to defend their successors. Hades made a surprise declaration, when he didn't have a successor for thousands of years, caused the constellations to explode.

[The vast majority of constellations are enthusiastic about the battle scene!]

The vast majority. Even the advanced dokkaebis like Bihyung had never seen such a cluster of constellations.

[The demon king 'Ruler of the East Hell' is enthusiastic about the battle!]

[The demon king 'Devil of Principles' is burning with the motivation to participate in the scenario.]

[The constellation 'Saviour of Corruption' is watching the battle with mad eyes!]

[The constellation 'Scribe of Heaven' is looking at the battlefield with terrible eyes.]

The rumour spread quickly and the constellations started to gather together, no matter if they were good or evil.

[The constellation 'Great Mother God Who Created Man out of Earth' is watching the battle.]

[The constellation 'God King of Thunder' is interested in the war of Olympus.]

[The constellation 'Founder of Reincarnation' is rejoicing.]

From the nebula Emperor to Vedas and Goddess Island. The constellations of China, India and Ireland were gathered together to observe the battle of myth-grade constellations.

The subscribers of the channel skyrocketed and the bureau was busy capturing the remaining probability to sustain the scenario and maintain the channels. There was no way the bureau could miss such an opportunity.

As the balance slowly tilted, the reaction of the constellations became hotter. It was predicted that one myth would end here today. In the place where one myth fell, a new story that never existed would bloom like a flower.

Unlike the other dokkaebis who were full of excitement and passion, Bihyung was in a state of uneasiness.

'…That bastard, what the hell is he doing?'

On the screen, Kim Dokja was moving. Giant Soldier Pluto was holding the Steel Sword who had been heated up. The steel sword shone like a giant torch in the sun of ancient Greek.

Dokgak opened his mouth. "Crazy. They're trying a sacred torch relay."

All the dokkaebis were streamers. A curious dokkaebi asked Dokgak. "A sacred torch relay? What is it?"

"Do you know the torch that burns with flames in the myths?"

"I know."

"The sacred torch relay is the ceremony of 'peace' and 'victory'. They are declaring that they will end this war through that fire."

After Dokgak's explanation, the dokkaebis opened their mouths.

"Crazy. Joining that battlefield now…"

The Demon King of Salvation was also famous among the dokkaebis. The master of the new nebula, Kim Dokja's Company. The beloved demon king of archangels, the rule of the 73rd Demon Realm. A 'returnee' who survived the fight against the Indescribable Distance, received the favour of an outer god and even crossed to another world.

"Even if it is him, this time…"

"He is a foolhardy man."

In the middle of this, one dokkaebi was laughing. "Haha, hahaha…"

It was Bihyung. Some of the dokkaebis looked puzzled but Bihyung continued to laugh. He had a thought.

Perhaps none of the dokkaeb is here would understand his feelings. The members of Kim Dokja's Company who carried the torch of revolution. They were perceived as moths flying towards the flames.

However, he knew the stories they had accumulated. The difficulties given to them had varying sizes but they were always in the realm of 'impossibility'.

"Yes, this is Kim Dokja!"

Bihyung watched the constellation drawn by Kim Dokja's Company and was reminded of a history not long ago.

The first time he met Kim Dokja on the subway. The moment he made the exclusive contract with Kim Dokja, who was weak but calm.

The stories piled up like snowflakes. There was something unbelievable. It was something he saw for the first time. A trivial human who built up his stories and became a constellation, finally reaching the starting point of A Single Story.

Streamer Bihyung had watched it all.

Dokgak opened his mouth. "He will fail this time."

"Maybe so."

"You are composed. Isn't this the constellation you contracted with?"

"He used to be but not anymore."

Bihyung laughed. He didn't know if Kim Dokja's strategy would succeed or not but strangely, he had a streamer's hunch. Kim Dokja's story wouldn't end here.

[Giant Story 'Demon Realm's Spring' has expanded!]

Along with the system messages, the dokkaebis' eyes widened. A golden train was flying through the sky. It was Surya's golden train.

"That…!"

If they were told about what would happen in the 60th scenario, who would've believed it?

"If it is this… Maybe…!"

The cooperation between humans and gods. A Single Story, the torch of sanctification was leading the way to success. The train descended like a yellow dragon and the dokkaebis gulped.

Why? They watched the reckless, absurd and impossible challenge. Yet why were the streamers' hearts burning?

Perhaps Dokgak was right. The attack might fail and this nebula might become dust in the Star Stream. Nevertheless.

[The great dokkaebi 'Halong' is watching the 60th scenario.]

[The great dokkaebi 'Holong' is watching the 60th scenario,]

[The great dokkaebi 'Baram' is watching the end of the 60th scenario,]

At this moment, all dokkaebis were thinking the same thing.

「I also want to make such a scenario.」

The story of the constellations was growing on the grounds of the scenario. The constellations who grew up eating the stories dreamt of another story. This was the power of the Star Stream.

The overwhelmed Bihyung exclaimed, "They! They are the ones I raised! Do you all know?"

What made a good story? What scenario was a good scenario? There was no dokkaebi who knew the answer. If anyone knew, it would be the Dokkaebi King.

However, the dokkaebis knew one thing. It was the fact that perhaps their king would also be watching this story.

The head of the falling train finally crashed into the waves. The surprised Poseidon's eyes widened. The status of the narrative-grade constellation advanced and entered into Poseidon's waves. Even so, the walls of the waves were still rough and thick.

"Next is me."

｢ The woman who dreams of another apocalypse is staring her story. ｣

Han Sooyoung moved along the edge of the train and released her bandages to create black flames.

Han Sooyoung's formidable black flames took the form of a dragon.

She had already reached such a point. The shape of the dragon moved forward and tore through the waves.

Lee Jihye followed.

｢ The wounded swordsman raised her sword to protect her relationships. ｣

The key ring on Lee Jihye's sword shone as she raised it like a commander. At almost the same time, a fleet appeared on the wall of waves. The Ghost Fleet fired through the passage made by the black dragon.

Poseidon called his flagship as Yi Sunsin's bombardment prevented the waves from filling back up.

However, Poseidon couldn't afford to worry about this. Hades had regained his momentum and aimed for his neck with the scythe of the Underworld.

Behind the bombardment, Giant Soldier Pluto took a sprinting posture in the rear of the train.

Shin Yoosung declared, "Depart, ahjussi!"

The inertia of the train added to Pluto's speed. The wind attribute of the chimera dragon amplified the speed even further.

"Go, Dokja hyung!"

Along with Lee Gilyoung's cheer, Pluto started the dash. Pluto held the Steel Sword in both hands while Jung Heewon supplied hellfire to it.

"Haaaat!"

Lee Hyunsung bellowed and Pluto flew through the sky.

[Giant Story 'Demon Realm's Spring' is continuing the story!]

[Giant Story 'Supreme Ruler of the Open Seas' is continuing!]

Stories and stories clashed and Pluto's gloves were torn off. Kim Namwoon screamed with pleasure despite the pain.

「The steel giant, who returned from hell, swung his sword.」

「The flames of hell burned up the steel.」

The sword that burned with hellfire and the stories of all the other members. The flames of the torch vaporized many water walls at once. The myth-rated barrier, that seemed impossible to penetrate, was being broken.

Beyond the broken waves, the defenseless Theseus could be seen. In the situation where victory was in front of his eyes, Pluto didn't move. The world shook like it was reversed and I vomited up blood inside Pluto.

In the meantime, Poseidon had thrown Triaina and it pierced Pluto's waist. It was the exact place where I was riding.

"Dokja-ssi!"

Jung Heewon's voice was faintly heard.

[The power of the star relic 'Triaina' is fatally injured your incarnation body!]

[The status is a power you can't afford!]

[The giant soldier 'Pluto' has offset some of your shock.]

This was the majesty of a myth-grade constellation. It could trample on a narrative-grade constellation like me as if I was a worm.

The waves had been pierced but the flames of the torch were cooling down. Lee Hyunsung seemed stunned and Jung Heewon's magic power was almost running out. The waves were showing signs of recovery again.

Poseidon was still relaxed as he dealt with Hades. There was a faint smile. Maybe he thought he won. Towards that Poseidon, I laughed. As always, the protagonist was the last to attack.

"Yoo Joonghyuk!"

Behind the torch that was dying out, a man in a black coat was running with everyone's stories on his back. The surprised Poseidon created a water spear but Red Phoenix Shunpo quickly avoided it. Some spears that couldn't be stopped pierced Yoo Joonghyuk's thighs and shoulders.

[The item 'Giant's Armour' is effective!]

The armour that contained the power of the giants barely protected Yoo Joonghyuk from the sacred spears.

One step, two steps, three steps.

As the number of spears that stabbed it increased, the Giant's Armour started to crumble. Then it shattered. With 10 steps left, Poseidon's status rushed towards Yoo Joonghyuk.

Yoo Joonghyuk's expression hardened. This was a power that a regressor of the third round couldn't afford. Just a bit more. Just a little bit further. Theseus was right in front of our noses.

「 Kim Dokja. 」

Yoo Joonghyuk in my vision became a bit blurry. I knew from the beginning that it was unreasonable. It wasn't possible for Yoo Joonghyuk to go to the place where Theseus was located.

[The exclusive skill, 'Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint' has been activated!]

Then what if he wasn't the 'third round?'

[Your blurred consciousness has been partially liberated from the constraints of your body.]

[Exclusive skill, Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint stage 3 has been activated!]

Once again, the landscape I saw had changed.

[The 1st person protagonist's point of view has been activated!]

It was the very landscape that Yoo Joonghyuk saw.

「Kim Dokja?」

Yoo Joonghyuk's thoughts seemed confused. Poseidon's spear was moving. I felt time slowing as I turned over the pages of Ways of Survival in my head.

The third round couldn't finish this. However, I eagerly imagined what would be possible someday.

[The story 'Hell of Eternity' has begun.]

The 4th round, the 5th round, the 6th round… the 41st round… the 56th round…

[This round can't be understood with your Reading Comprehension.]

Pain came over me and my bloodshot eyes seemed like they were going to explode. The explosive stories were a mess in my head. Still, I didn't give up.

[The Fourth Wall is protecting your spirit!]

[Your 'Reading Comprehension' is moving towards new possibilities.]

[The pages you can't read are opening!]

Countless curious eyes were on us. They weren't constellations. Yoo Joonghyuk muttered, 「This… 」

The 'Yoo Joonghyuk' of the other rounds were watching us. Some looked envious while others had gloomy expressions. Finally, there was one with an expression of intrigue.

「Interesting. 」

I quickly moved through the pages and reached the maximum I could turn over now. Thus, I finally used the future ahead of me.

[You have reached the maximum number of rounds you can read.]

[The maximum number of times you can read 'Yoo Joonghyuk' is up to the '362nd round'.]

The 362nd round Yoo Joonghyuk. This was the last card I could bring out. The 362nd round Yoo Joonghyuk wasn't strong enough to kill Poseidon. In order to do that, the number of regressions must be 1,700 times.

[Thanks to the influence of 1st person protagonist's point of view, the talent of 'Yoo Joonghyuk' of this round is passed onto others.]

*

[The talent of '362nd round Yoo Joonghyuk' is attracted to 'Yoo Joonghyuk'.]

However, the 362nd round Yoo Joonghyuk was strong enough. It was because the 362nd round Yoo Joonghyuk:

「"It has been a while, Poseidon."」

It was the Yoo Joonghyuk who fought against Poseidon for the first time.

「"At that time, I killed your son."」

Poseidon's furious roar was head. The 362nd round Yoo Joonghyuk moved inside Yoo Joonghyuk of the 3rd round. It was a stance that he took a million, ten million times.

「"This is Palm Boxing."」

Yoo Joonghyuk's Breaking the Sky Force Punch break through the final barrier and pierced Theseus' body.

[Pluto was raising his body in the seawater. I asked him while nodding towards Yoo Joonghyuk, "Can you pick up two people?"]

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* Promotional illustration (non-canonical)

Chapter 339: Ep. 63 - End of the Myth, VI

[The character 'Yoo Joonghyuk' has used Breaking the Sky Force Punch Lv. ???!]

[The skill level of this person can't be converted to a numerical value!]

[The skill is strengthened abnormally due to the power of the story!]

Theseus' right arm was destroyed by Yoo Joonghyuk's Breaking the Sky Force Punch and floated in the water. Theseus watched this with a blank expression.

I felt sorry for him who didn't do anything wrong. However, as long as Poseidon had descended into Theseus' body, getting rid of Theseus was the only way to expel the myth-grade constellation from the scenario.

The next moment, sparks appeared around Yoo Joonghyuk's entire body.

[Some dokkaebis are doubting the probability of the story!]

[The incarnation body of the character can't bear the skill!]

…As expected, he might have the talent of the 362nd round Yoo Joonghyuk but this was the body of the 3rd round. It was insufficient to break Poseidon's barrier and destroy Theseus' flesh.

[The power of the item 'King Lycomedes' Leather Gloves' is triggered!]

There was an item that would bridge this gap. It was the very item I had purchased from Anna Croft.

[Stage Transformation is triggered by the effect of King Lycomedes' Leather Gloves!]

King Lycomedes was a figure known as the murderer of Theseus in mythology. Theseus' complexion changed. Nevertheless, Theseus stepped forward instead of retreating. He unfolded his arms as if begging to be killed.

[…Theseus!]

The moment Poseidon's wrathful true voice was heard, Yoo Joonghyuk's Breaking the Sky Force Punch struck again.

[The constellation 'Abandoned Lover of the Labyrinth' is grieving.]

I saw Theseus looking down at his heart and then looking at Yoo Joonghyuk, or perhaps me. In the last moment, there was a relieved smile on Theseus' face.

[The incarnation body of the constellation 'Hero of the Labyrinth' has completely disappeared.]

It was just the death of the incarnation body and he wouldn't disappear completely. Still, Theseus would be so damaged that he couldn't do any scenario activities for the time being. Theseus threw his body to complete this scenario, despite knowing all of that.

[Olympus' leaders have all died!]

[The scenario clear conditions have been met.]

[Calculating the contribution of individual incarnations and constellations!]

.

.

[1st person protagonist's point of view has been released.]

I coughed up blood as I returned to my body again.

Inside the broken Pluto, Kim Namwoon's voice was heard. [The calling has stopped… grasshopper. Bye…]

Pluto's summoning time ended and he was returned to the Underworld. At the same time, a massive storm of water swept over the area where Theseus' incarnation body had died.

Poseidon who had descended in Theseus' body was running wild. In the midst of the spraying water, the incarnations struggled for breath. A portion of Poseidon's status was pouring towards the defenseless Yoo Joonghyuk.

It wasn't an attack that could be avoided by Yoo Joonghyuk, who was seriously damaged and turned to rags thanks to the talent of the 362nd round.

I shouted, [Hades!]

[I understand.]

Hades appeared in the air with Kynee, holding Yoo Joonghyuk in his arms. Poseidon's spear only crashed into the depths of the deep sea.

This wasn't the end. Cracks spread rapidly around the area where Triaina was stabbed. The cracks started to suck up everything around it like a vacuum cleaner.

Unfortunately, I was also included in the things to be cleaned. My damaged incarnation body didn't have the strength to resist this suction. I stretched out my hand as I was being swept away by the torrents. However, there was no one to grab my hand.

…That's what I thought.

「 Dokja-ssi! 」

「 You idiot! 」

Hair scattered beautifully in the water. Lee Seolhwa swam like a mermaid and grabbed my left arm while Han Sooyoung followed her and grabbed my right arm. The two people stopped my bleeding with Hit a Pressure Point and pulled me up with all their strength.

I saw Han Sooyoung swimming desperately in order to get away from the crack in the deep sea.

Shortly thereafter, we emerged safely from the water.

"Haaap!"

"Kim Dokja, you crazy guy!"

[The main scenario will close soon!]

Rather than replying to Han Sooyoung, I watched the currents. If my prediction was correct, Poseidon lost his incarnation body and would be forced to return.

[The constellation 'Spear that Draws the Boundaries of the Sea' is roaring!]

However, the situation went differently than expected. Poseidon's power was becoming stronger instead of weakening.

"…Ahjussi?"

It seemed that the party members perceived something was wrong.

[The bureau is urging the 'Spear that Draws the Boundaries of the Sea' to withdraw!]

Poseidon didn't disappear despite the bureau's recommendation. The situation was obvious. In a scenario that already ended, there were no justifications for his actions.

[The bureau is preparing sanctions for the 'Spear that Draws the Boundaries of the Sea' to withdraw!]

Fortunately, the bureau seemed to be doing its job properly. I watched the boiling and seething sea. The question was what Poseidon would do until the sanctions were imposed…

A little further away, Hades and Persephone were watching this side.

[Many constellations are condemning 'Spear that Draws the Boundaries of the Sea'!]

[Sh—ut—up!]

My mind seemed to go blank from the true voice. In the distance, a tsunami was approaching. It was a wave hundreds of metres high.

"Crazy! What is that?"

"Poseidon is crazy!"

The incarnations belatedly tried to flee but it was too late. Some of them, including the giants, were swept away by the first wave. It was a giant wave of water that no one could resist.

I looked at Hades but Hades didn't move. The reason he didn't come forward was obvious. Hades had exactly the same idea as me.

We simultaneously looked up at the sky.

｢No matter how disinterested you are in Olympus, you can't just watch this time.｣

[The bureau is giving probability to someone.]

The next moment, the colour of the sky changed. A light that seemed to paralyze sight and hearing filled the sky. The light seemed to make the world disappear. It was a little while later that I realized it was a very large lightning bolt.

The lightning tore through the waves. It was strong enough to split the sea into two and burn the ground of the deep sea. I heard Poseidon's last roar before he disappeared.

[The constellation 'Spear that Draws the Boundaries of the Sea' has exited the scenario.]

It was an incredible sight. Nevertheless, it really happened.

[The constellation 'Lightning Throne' is looking down at Olympus.]

No matter how many of the 12 Gods there were, they didn't dare to face him. The moment the indirect message came up, all the gods of Olympus froze in place. It was the same for the insolent Dionysus and the virtuous Athena and Artemis. The gaze of the sky slowly turned to the king of the Underworld.

「The underground and sky faced each other.」

As if this conversation was enough, Hades wore Kynee and disappeared from the scenario.

[The constellation 'Father of the Rich Night' has exited the scenario.]

Persephone disappeared while winking at me.

[We'll meet again soon, our cute son.]

Two of the three chief gods had disappeared but the tension wasn't diminished. There was the sound of the world moving as the scales of probability once again tilted.

It was clear who the bureau had given probability to. King of Olympus, Zeus. The only one in Olympus who had reached the 'last scenario'. No constellation other than Zeus could eject Poseidon and cause this reaction in the constellations.

In fact, Biyoo's channel had a festive atmosphere.

[The dokkaebi of the bureau has recalled the probability given to the Lightning Throne.]

[The bureau is recommending for the Lightning Throne to withdraw.]

A festival was called a festival because it was short.

If Zeus stayed in the sub scenario for a long time, he would harm the balance of the Star Stream. It might bring about a disaster like Indescribable Distance last time. Even so, Zeus was arrogant.

[Don't rush me. I didn't come at your request. I came to see my seeds.]

The sky of Olympus looked down at the 12 Gods. The 12 Gods who came here were tense in front of Zeus' gaze.

[Yet they are still… only garbage.]

At Zeus' words, the 12 Gods sat down like they had received a great shock. Dionysus' shoulders were trembling. He was a narrative-grade constellation but Dionysus couldn't resist at all.

Some stories were like this. They accumulated for a long time and couldn't resist ending.

The clouds in the sky were lifted and Zeus' status became blurred. Like a farmer turning his back to barren ground, Zeus was leaving the scenario.

Some of the 12 Gods muttered, [Even his children…]

At this moment, a small stone flew towards the sky. It was the stone I threw. The stone in the air was destroyed by the sparks of probability.

[The constellation 'Lightning Throne' is looking at you.]

I felt a powerful status surrounding my body but I just glared at the sky. In any case, the probability allowed to Zeus was over.

[The constellation 'Lightning Throne' has exited the scenario.]

I looked back at the 12 Gods. "Why are you just listening to his words?"

[You…]

The moment Dionysus was going to spear, a message poured from the sky. No, it wasn't a message.

Dionysus, the 12 Gods and even me. We looked up at the sky where Zeus had disappeared.

White snow was falling like stars. The snow was irrelevant to Zeus, who ruled the sky. It was the power of a constellation who existed perhaps even longer than Zeus. It was the existence of light who ruled the first sky before Olympus was made.

Like a lonely island, Briareus and the giants howled as they watched the falling snow.

[Main scenario #60 — 'Gigantomachia' has ended.]

[Sub scenario - Myth Subversion has been completed.]

[The compensation settlement will begin.]

The constellations of the world were watching me. Apart from the four main constellations, there were constellations I knew and those I didn't know.

Dionysus spoke. […You won, Kim Dokja.]

The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint and other giants used their big bodies like ships to carry us.

Yoo Joonghyuk and Han Sooyoung were looking in at the sky in different directions. Jung Heewon and Lee Hyunsung helped each other while Lee

Seolhwa clasped her hands tightly together. Lee Jihye was wiping her tears while embracing Shin Yoosung and Lee Gilyoung. Maybe they were listening to the system messages too.

[You have acquired a new giant story!]

[Three additional new stories have been acquired!]

It was a really long-prepared plan. I was able to see the things that would happen in the future, as if I was reading a novel with a definite ending.

[Your second giant story has completed the 'success' portion!]

[The second condition of the hidden scenario —A Single Story has been fulfilled!]

Finally, the awaited 'success' greeted me.

[The nebula 'Kim Dokja's Company' has become well known in the Star Stream.]

A system message celebrating our victory widely resonated in the universe.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is raising his rod!]

[The constellation, "Black Dragon of the Abyss," is waving the bandages of liberation!]

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' is nodding.]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is proud of you.]

The constellations in my channel were congratulating me.

[Some of the constellations of the 'last scenario' are paying attention to you.]

Then beings of the 'last scenario' like Zeus started to notice me.

[The demon kings of the Demon Realm are paying attention to your actions.]

[The archangels of Eden are paying attention to you.]

[Unknown gods of another world are staring at your existence.]

[The 'Seekers of the End' are listening to your story.]

In the midst of the white and snowy sea, good and evil and those who didn't belong to either side were watching the story. The end of the myth that had long dominated the world. Those who made the story with me would find me.

"Kim Dokja."

However, at this moment…

"…Kim Dokja?"

I already wasn't there.

Chapter 340: Ep. 64 - A Road That Isn't a Road, I

Immediately after the collapse of Olympus in Gigantomachia, the restrictions on the giants disappeared. They were freed from the old story and would be reborn as participants in new scenarios.

[There is no desire to repeat the old battle. Do you agree?]

[I agree.]

Briareus, leader of the giants and Dionysus, interim representative of the 12 Gods, reached a dramatic agreement just before the end of the 60th scenario.

[The Star Stream has acknowledged this 'myth collapse'.]

[A new story is blooming in the 60th scenario.]

In fact, they could've fought more if they wanted to fight. However, the power of Olympus had been drastically weakened through Gigantomachia. Many heroes and giants died, Poseidon's whereabouts were unclear and the silent Underworld King announced his successor.

In such a situation, the existence of the nebula would be jeopardized if the 12 gods and giants were to keep confronting each other.

The downfall of the giant nebula, Olympus. At the centre of this ridiculous story, there was a small nebula.

[A number of constellations are shouting the name 'Kim Dokja's Company!']

The story, which began with the struggle of a small constellation, was finally coming to the end with a giant story. Despite this, the members of the nebula didn't appreciate the giant story and were calling someone's name.

"Dokja-ssi! Dokja-ssi!"

"Hyung! Don't mess around! Where are you hiding?"

Jung Heewon, Lee Hyunsung, Lee Jihye, Lee Gilyoung, Shin Yoosung…

They were looking for Kim Dokja on the small island made by the giants. Someone sounded uneasy while another had an expression full of disbelief. The only one who remained calm in this chaos was the one staring up at the sky with an expressionless face.

Han Sooyoung stared closely at him and asked, "Yoo Joonghyuk, do you know something?"

"…"

"Answer me. The kids are worried."

Yoo Joonghyuk slowly turned towards Han Sooyoung. The party members noticed something and gathered behind Han Sooyoung.

"Master, what is it? Do you know something?"

"What happened to Dokja-ssi again?"

Yoo Joonghyuk was silent for a while before replying, "Kim Dokja has returned to Earth."

"What? Without us?"

Lee Jihye belatedly discovered something and opened her mouth. "Ah… don't tell me?"

In retrospect, Gigantomachia wasn't their real purpose. In the beginning, participating in Gigantomachia was only a process. While everyone was feeling excited by the joy of victory, only Kim Dokja was thinking about the real purpose of this task.

Jung Heewon sighed with relief and smiled. "…Still, he didn't have to quickly go back on his own."

"We'll go back too!"

Then a system message emerged.

[The region will be restricted for one hour to stabilize the scenario.]

Lee Seolhwa's eyes widened with surprise. "How did Dokja-ssi get out of here?"

"He probably used a special method."

"A special method?"

"I don't know anything else."

Yoo Joonghyuk replied and stared up at the sky again. It was still snowing. Snow was falling in summer weather. Based on Earth tie, it was snowing in August.

Han Sooyoung stared into his eyes and asked him, "…Did Kim Dokja go back first because of Yoo Sangah?"

There was a reason for asking what should've been obvious. Yoo Joonghyuk's answer came back after the miraculous snow melted in the sun. "You'll know when you see it."

In the vehicle that ran in dimensions, I was lost in thoughts. During the time when I was planning to overthrow Gigantomachia, I had contacted several constellations. Perhaps all those with the slightest acquaintance received my call.

Most of them were in a special relationship with Olympus or were in a difficult position to participate in the 60th scenario. I could understand. What constellation would want to be in a hostile relationship with a big nebula like Olympus?

Nevertheless, there was one who made a unique suggestion.

–I can't help in Gigantomachia but if you fail, I can pave the way for you to get away. Just, it can only be you.

The one who made the suggestion was now sitting in the driver's seat and holding the steering wheel.

[…I didn't know you would take advantage of my proposal in this way.]

The owner of the Special Ferrarigini who could use the portals of the scenario because of his probability and who had free access to the dimension.

The Mass Production Maker laughed. [Originally, you were a type who rarely asked for help from someone else.]

"My thoughts are a bit different after coming back from another world." I smiled and added, "In addition, I accidentally left the X-grade Ferrarigini behind. I haven't finished the instalment plan yet so I'm still crying whenever I think about it."

[Haha, the car you bought from me?]

"Thus, in the future, I have decided to ride in other people's cars without driving my own."

[It is a disappointing decision from a seller's position. This time a new model came out and I was going to give you a free one.]

"…For free?"

[I'm lying.]

…I knew it. There was no way this constellation would see any losses. The Mass Production Maker seemed to think of something as he held a cigarette in his mouth. The scattered smoke was sucked into the vents installed before it could reach me in the passenger's seat.

[I want to make a contract with your nebula.]

"Contract?"

[Do you know what you've done this time?]

I knew. I couldn't not know.

[Giant Story 'Torch That Swallowed the Myth' is flowing through your veins!]

It was because even now, the result of what I had done was flowing through the veins in my body.

Torch That Swallowed the Myth.

This story wasn't the 'One Who Erases God's Fingerprints' or 'Person Who Closes the Door of a Myth' that I had originally intended to obtain. Still, its essence was similar. The story of fighting against a great nebula and overthrowing myths. This story would be a counter for the numerous nebulae I would fight in the future.

[Many constellations have come to know of Kim Dokja's Company.]

"Yes."

[Some of them even claim that you should put your nebula in one of the 12 Great Nebulae.]

…The 12 Great Nebulae. I didn't realize I was already in a position to hear this story. The 12 Great Nebulae dominating the Star Stream considered of three strong, four medium and five weak ones. Olympus, who was located between the three strong and four medium ones, was greatly upset this time and someone had to fill that space.

"There are many hasty stars."

[They're always like this.]

"Then the Mass Production Maker wants to take advantage of this opportunity to sign a contract with my nebula."

[That's right.]

There was no hesitation in the Mass Production Maker's answer.

[I'd like to leave this new product's advertisement to your nebula.]

"That's good. I will ask the members of my nebula."

[Great. The incarnation I want to appear personally is…]

I listened to the Mass Production Maker while staring out the window of the scenes passing by the Ferrarigini. The seasons of the myriad of stories flowed through the landscape. The seasons of numerous stories flowed in the passing landscape.

That's right. Suddenly…

"It is fast." As I spoke, I subconsciously grabbed the bottle of star fluid in my pocket. I had come this far faster than any of the original rounds. Yet this speed was only a relative speed. I didn't know if this was fast enough.

The Mass Production Maker laughed and said, [This new product is a bit faster. You will know if you drive it yourself but the driving sensation is very…]

"The time is too slow compared to the driving speed. Are you doing this intentionally to talk about the contract?"

[Hum, what are you talking about? I am going the fastest way. Look, it is already the last intersection.]

As the Mass Production Maker said, there were three portals emitting a white light on the other side of the dimension. I didn't ask but the Mass Production Maker explained.

[One is the road to Earth and the other is the road to the Context of the Constellations.]

"What is the last one?"

[A road that looks like a 'road'.]

The Mass Production Maker smiled significantly. It was much darker than other portals and gave off a shady vibe.

[Do you know what is at the end?]

Of course, I didn't know. I might've read Ways of Survival but there wasn't a description of all the portals in the dimension. In other words, this portal was a road that didn't exist in Ways of Survival.

"What is it?"

[It's nothing. It is just a blocked road.]

The answer came back like it was obvious. Before I could say anything, the Mass Production Maker continued. [The end of some roads. The road that looks different from other roads, it is a road that no one walked or a road that isn't even a road.]

The Ferrarigini sped past the dark portal. The sparkling navigation system was showing the route to Earth. On the screen, the portal we had just gone past was marked as 'no road'.

[Such roads are usually cut off in obscure places. The people who chose to walk along the path believe it is the end.]

"What is your meaning?"

[Please choose your path well.]

The Mass Production Maker put out the cigarette and gave his distinctly gentle smile.

[Sometimes the thing that looks like a road isn't a road.]

The next moment, the landscape of the dimension changed. I saw the appearance of the blue planet and landed on the ground.

The Mass Production Maker told me, [We've arrived. Fortunately, this time it is good.]

The moment I arrive in Seoul, I naturally headed to the Factory. It was to the hospital ward where patients were admitted. The moment I stepped into the ward, I heard a voice that was close to a true voice.

[You came.]

It sounded like a true voice but it wasn't a true voice. It was a voice where the dignity of a transcendent could be heard. A blue-white magic power filled the air. As expected, every teacher wanted to look good in front of their student.

"This poor disciple is greeting you."

[There is no time. Leave the greetings for later. Go.]

Perhaps it was the aftermath of the returnees war but Kyrgios had bandages wrapped around his body.

"The Heavenly Demon and Blood Demon…"

[I killed them. Don't talk to me and go quickly.]

I was amazed by the calm declaration. He survived the Heavenly Demon and Blood Demon who killed the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint in a past life. I didn't realize my teacher in this round was so strong.

Aileen found me in the distance and came running. She was the only Story Expert in the Factory. If she wasn't here, two of the party members would've already died.

I waved the star fluids and shouted, "I brought the star fluid!"

"Um, you haven't been told yet but…"

"I already know."

In the distance, two red rooms could be seen. One was the hospital room of Yoo Sangah and the other…

"How is my mother?"

"Her symptoms are almost the same as Yoo Sangah."

"The severity of the symptoms?"

"More or less the same level…"

I knew that my mother had been overworking herself. The stigma 'Giant Future' placed a great burden on the user's body. Moreover, the contract with the nebula itself was in an obscure form and the burden increased even more after my mother's sponsor lost strength.

Aileen took the star fluids from me and spoke in a dark voice. "I think it is lacking."

"That's why I have two bottles. They are different types."

I didn't bring only one star fluid. There was the Nectar from Dionysus as well as the Soma I was originally supposed to receive from Surya.

Aileen's expression glowed as she received the two bottles of star fluids.

"…Medical staff!"

The staff rushed at her signal towards the two hospital rooms. Someone brushed past me and the wound in my side caused by Poseidon throbbed. My vision blurred for a moment.

…I might need to receive treatment. No, it would be strange to be fine after being hit by a myth-grade constellation. I worked hard to hide the pain from the wound. My consciousness was unstable. The doors to the hospital rooms seemed like the entrance to the portal that the Mass Production Maker had shown me.

[Are you okay?]

Kyrgios flew through the air and asked me. I replied that I was fine. To be exact, it felt like I answered but I lost consciousness for a while.

Once I woke up, I was lying on a chair in the ward. Aileen was standing in front of me. I endured the pain and stood up.

"…What happened to the two people?" I immediately asked despite my blurred consciousness.

However, Aileen's expression was strange. "…It isn't enough."

"It isn't enough? What?"

"The two of them worsened faster than I thought. I can barely cure one person if I use both star fluids."

I couldn't understand the words. Aileen's words sounded like faraway alien words, like she was an outer god.

"That… what do you mean?"

"Demon King of Salvation."

Aileen formally called out my modifier. She only called me this when she needed my orders.

The two rooms were wide open, like a portal waiting for me.

"You can only save one person."

Chapter 341: Ep. 64 - A Road That Isn't a Road, II

All types of thoughts passed through my head.

[The 'Fourth Wall' is shaking violently.]

There were two doors and someone seemed to be whispering to me. I could go inside one of them. However, if I chose one then I had to give up the other one. I couldn't do that.

"Demon King of Salvation."

"…Yes."

"If you delay then you can't save either of them." There was no sense of reality in Aileen's voice.

"Please wait a moment."

In my dizzy vision, the corridor across from the two hospital rooms was seen. The words of the Mass Production Maker crossed my mind.

–It's nothing. It is just a blocked road.

The end of the corridor was dim so I couldn't see anything. Yet everyone knew that there was nothing at the end of that corridor. In the first place, the corridor was made to have nothing.

「Kim Dokja thought: It isn't possible.」

Stay calm. There must be a way. I had come all this way and now I had to choose between the two people? Who should live and who should die? I couldn't do that.

[The Fourth Wall is looking at you.]

「But you ha ve al ready cho sen.」

At the moment, the scene of the first scenario filled my head. The shaky subway. The appearance of those who died. Maybe I could've saved everyone there.

「Th us, you can ch oose this ti me too.」

…It was different now.

「Wh at is diffe rent?」

Rather than replying to the Fourth Wall, I asked Aileen, "How much time is left?"

"Around 20 minutes… Lee Sookyung-ssi's side is more critical. After that…"

20 minutes. It was short but there was enough time to try this and that. It was too early to give up.

"If there is more star fluid, can you save both of them?"

"…There isn't a lot of possibility."

I immediately pulled out the Old to New Toad. The toad cried out,

–Give me an old house and I'll give you a new house.

I pointed to the half-filled bottle of Nectar and asked,

"Can you change this to something new?"

Then the Old to New Toad shook its head.

–It isn't old or new.

"This was half-eaten by me. Thus, it is old. I'll give you other items if you fill up a new bottle…"

–The change… I can't help you.

As expected, such a trick wasn't possible with the star fluid. I had thought it might be possible.

–Tired, don't call me.

Perhaps it was tired from swallowing the giant soldier earlier but the Old to New Toad fell asleep.

I put it away and decided to try a second method. If I couldn't duplicate it, I had to get a new one.

[The demon king 'Demon King of Salvation'…]

[The use of the indirect message is cancelled.]

[The indirect messaging function is currently disabled due to checking and repairing certain scenarios.]

…What?

[The scenario being checked is the 60th scenario.]

It was an unexpected situation I hadn't thought of. I didn't think the aftermath of the 60th scenario would reach this far…

I needed the help of other constellations to get new star fluids.

"Jang Hayoung!"

At my cry, Aileen's gaze moved to another place. The place where Jang Hayoung was located was Yoo Sangah's hospital room. The moment I stood on the threshold of the hospital room where the emergency light was on, a cold sensation went down my back.

"You can't enter without permission!" Someone yelled at me.

The fragments of the story scattered from Yoo Sangah hovered in the air. I tried to ignore it and turned to Jang Hayoung. Jang Hayoung was sleeping in a corner of the hospital room. "Jang Hayoung! Wake up! Quickly!"

"Wait a minute! He is also in critical condition!"

The medical staff rushed over and pulled me away. Jang Hayoung had a large number of story packs inserted in him and bandages were wrapped around his body. He was seriously wounded in the Returnees War. However, I needed Jang Hayoung's skill.

[The Unidentified Wall is looking at you.]

[The Fourth Wall is facing the Unidentified Wall.]

Sparks bounced as I felt the gaze of the wall. It was a coldness with no sense of cooperation at all.

…It was going to be like this? I opened Bookmark. In the end, the Unidentified Wall was also a skill. I still didn't have a good understanding of Jang Hayoung and needed some luck but…

I started looking for Jang Hayoung's name in the list of Bookmarks. Perhaps it felt uncomfortable due to my actions? The Unidentified Wall warned,

[The 'Unidentified Wall' says: You are not my master. Don't do anything unnecessary.]

"I need your help." I told it honestly. It was urgent. "If you don't help me, you have to wake up your master."

The wall was silent for a moment. It was a silence that showed it was thinking about something. A moment later, a message from the wall came back.

[The 'Unidentified Wall' says: …I'll help you.]

At the same time, a small partition of space was created around me. It was a space reminiscent of a Mino Soft intern a long time ago. A large panel was created in front of me and there was a familiar type of input device.

Perhaps Jang Hayoung had listened to the stories of countless constellations in this small wall. Jang Hayoung listened to stories that were written on this wall like graffiti and…

[The Unidentified Wall says: Do a good job'.]

…I had nothing to say. I looked down at the sleeping Jang Hayoung for a moment before turning my head.

First of all, it was important to turn off the emergency light.

[The 'Unidentified Wall' has temporarily granted you a license.]

[Enter the destination to send a message to.]

The first constellation was Dionysus.

[The message can't be sent to the constellation.]

[At present, all communications with the nebula Olympus is paralyzed.]

I ran into a snag from the beginning. I quickly changed the receiver of the message. Then a reply immediately came back.

–You need more Soma? I'm sorry but… I gave all the Soma I had to you.

The reply was from Surya. The situation here also wasn't easy.

–Is it difficult to request more from the nebula?

–I withdrew from Vedas and lost the Soma production rights.

–Is Dionysus beside you?

After a few moments, there was an answer from Surya.

–Recently, Olympus is suffering from the famine story and the supply of Nectar is cut off. There is no more left to give you.

–I understand. Thank you.

–I'm sorry I couldn't help.

–No.

It was impossible to ask for anything further when I already received Surya's help in Gigantomachia.

I thought about various types of star fluids that appeared in Ways of Survival through my head. However, none that could replace Nectar and Soma were available right away.

I desperately bit my lips. If treatment wasn't possible then I had to find another way.

[Sending a message to constellation 'Queen of the Darkest Spring'.]

Since Persephone and Hades weren't members of Olympus, it was possible to communicate with them through the Unidentified Wall. I didn't want to use this method but it wasn't time to cover up cold water with warm water.

Nevertheless, the answer that came back from Persephone wasn't very positive.

–Son, as you might know, a presence broken through the flow of consciousness is… All souls of this world go to the Underworld but that is a case when the soul is intact.

–…As expected, it is like this.

I actually expected it a bit. The flow of consciousness was a phenomenon where the stories of the soul were broken.

A soul suffering from this disease wouldn't go to the Underworld. To be exact, it didn't go anywhere. It just ended there. Just as everyone who walked on the wrong road disappeared forever.

Persephone continued speaking.

–Son.

–It is a situation where the succession isn't properly established yet. Don't call me that right now.

I responded quickly before disconnecting. I opened the smartphone and then the file of Ways of Survival. There was still a method. There had to be.

[The Unidentified Wall says: You have done too many things that went against probability.]

…Shut up.

[The Unidentified Wall says: That probability was bound to come back to you.] It is a law of this world.]

"I told you to shut up."

I quickly read Ways of Survival. I found several times when Yoo Joonghyuk met similar challenges in Ways of Survival. For example, the 161st and 275th rounds.

In those rounds, Yoo Joonghyuk was in a situation where he could only save one of his two colleagues. When told he could only save Lee Seolhwa or Lee Jihye, Yoo Joonghyuk had replied:

「"I will save both."」

The same was true for the 275th round. Lee Hyunsung and Shin Yoosung. In a situation where only one of them could be saved, Yoo Joonghyuk declared,

「 "I will save both of them." 」

This was Yoo Joonghyuk's answer. Thus, Yoo Joonghyuk of the 161st and 275th round failed. He couldn't save Lee Seolhwa, Lee Jihye, Lee Hyunsung or Shin Yoosung. Then he died himself. Yet every time, Yoo Joonghyuk made the same choice and I would choose the same.

My right hand holding the phone trembled nervously and I gripped it tightly.

「 But Kim Dokja isn't Yoo Joonghyuk. 」

Yoo Joonghyuk was able to make such a choice because he was a regressor. A regressor different from me. An existence who could repeat life many times.

On the other hand, I only had this one life. Therefore, this life didn't allow me to make any mistakes.

If I made a mistake, someone would die. Thus, I couldn't make any mistakes.

I had come all this way while taking the risk of twisting probability. Up to this point, I thought I had done well.

Briareus had told me.

–The real fate is inevitable. If you avoid it, probability must be distorted. The twisting of probability had to be resolved by someone.

I knew. I knew it very well. Just, I was dissatisfied. Why?

「 …ja-ssi. 」

Why… why should they be the ones to resolve it?

「 Dokja-ssi. 」

One drop, two drops. The voice that touched me was like a drop of water through hard granite.

I looked behind me.

「Dokja-ssi, I'm fine.」

Through the curtains of the hospital room where Yoo Sangah lay, the fragments of the broken story flowed out and spoke to me.

「Save Sookyung-ssi.」

No voice came from my half-open mouth. Yet she replied like she heard my words.

「I have a way to survive. I have already found a way through Hermes' system.」

[The exclusive skill 'Lie Detection Lv. 7' is activated!]

[You have confirmed that the statement is false.]

"Yoo Sang…"

「Dokja-ssi.」

It wasn't meant to call out to me. Yoo Sangah's voice was unbelievably firm. One day, I remembered a time when I teamed up with Yoo Sangah.

Even then, Yoo Sangah was the same. Every time she insisted on something she thought was right, she would never bend herself. Yoo Sangah would speak in this calm but strong tone. It was like appeasing a panicked little child.

「Dokja-ssi, listen carefully to me. Please be calm and rational.」

Why? Yoo Sangah's words were familiar.

「I still have some time remaining. However, Sookyung-ssi wouldn't be able to recover unless she is saved now.」

Why did I feel like I was sitting in a subway seat and why did it feel like this trembling hand wasn't mine?

「 It is like a game quest. A quest that can be cleared properly if we follow the set route. 」

"…Yoo Sangah-ssi."

「 Dokja-ssi, it is time to carry out the quest properly now. 」

I understood Yoo Sangah's words. Perhaps I could understand better than anyone in the world. However, I couldn't understand the Yoo Sangah speaking right now. Perhaps I would never understand in this lifetime. Or I should say that I didn't dare understand it.

[The 'Fourth Wall' has increased its thickness.]

Like the Yoo Sangah who stood up on the subway, I stood up and declared, "Aileen."

Aileen noticed my intentions and nodded. The medical staff standing next to Yoo Sangah rushed to the other side of the room. I also slowly turned to the opposite side of the room. The moment I went beyond the threshold, I couldn't help looking back.

「 Don't worry. I'll be waiting here. 」

Beyond the curtain, Yoo Sangah's silhouette had already scattered a lot. Maybe, beyond that would be a Yoo Sangah I already didn't know. She might be torn and scattered apart, something that was no longer recognizable. I might be hearing the voice of Yoo Sangah, who was already disappearing.

Nevertheless.

"Yoo Sangah-ssi. I don't know if you remember but I screened people's lives in the first scenario."

I continued speaking towards the Yoo Sangah I remembered. "I only let people I thought should survive, live. I thought I should've done it in order to see the end of this world.

「…Dokja-ssi.」

"However, if this is the one way I can see the ending of this story, I would rather not see the ending."

In order to revive someone, another person had to die.

"If there is a choice over lives, it is a bad story in the first place."

At my answer, the Mass Production Maker might say this: It is a road that isn't a road.

[The Fourth Wall is looking at you.]

Nevertheless, this wasn't a choice. There was only one way from the beginning.

[The constellation 'Demon King of Salvation' is looking at the Fourth Wall.]

I wasn't Yoo Joonghyuk. Yet when it came to this issue, my answer was the same as that guy.

"I'll smash that story. So that Yoo Sangah-ssi won't die. My mother too."

There was a dead-end wall covered in darkness in front of my eyes. It was a hard and thick wall that I couldn't smash. I slowly reached out for that wall.

Chapter 342: Ep. 64 - A Road That Isn't a Road, III

It was an hour later that Yoo Joonghyuk and his colleagues returned to Earth. Yoo Joonghyuk, Han Sooyoung, Lee Jihye, Jung Heewon, Lee Hyunsung, Shin Yoosung, Lee Gilyoung and Lee Seolhwa.

The first thing they discovered after safely passing through the portal was the flashing sparks around the centre of the industrial complex. The sparks of probability were striking down on the centre of the Factory like lightning bolts.

Lee Jihye wondered, "…What the hell is going on?"

She asked but no one could answer properly. They got on the chimera dragon and soon arrived at the Factory. The party members jumped over the walls and ran straight to the hospital room.

Flying Fox waved when he saw the people rushing in. "Huh, you came back already?"

Jung Heewon asked, "Dokja-ssi… no, where is Yoo Sangah-ssi?"

"He is over there, though I think you need to be treated as well…"

"We're fine. Just treat Hyunsung-ssi."

"W-Wait a minute! My skin is just a bit—"

"Shut up and lie down."

After throwing the burnt Lee Hyunsung onto a hospital bed, Jung Heewon and the others headed to Yoo Sangah's hospital room. Obviously, they thought Kim Dokja would first head there.

"Dokja-ssi! Sangah-ssi!"

"Hey, everyone! If you just come in…!"

Then the party members faced an unexpected sight after arriving. Han Sooyoung muttered. "What is this situation?"

There was no one in Yoo Sangah's hospital room apart from the minimum number of medical staff. Yoo Sangah's soul was still broken. Kim Dokja couldn't be seen at all.

A black aura was released from Han Sooyoung's body. "I'm asking you. What is this situation?"

The medical staff were daunted and spat out everything that happened, from the Returnees War to Kim Dokja's return.

"…So, Lee Sookyung went to receive treatment first. Maybe by now, the last step—"

Before the words finished, Han Sooyoung had already moved. It was so fast that no one could stop her. Han Sooyoung jumped over a nearby chair and grabbed the collar of a man taller than herself. "You son of a bitch. You knew everything?"

"…"

"Why didn't you talk properly? If you knew this—"

"If I said it, could you change anything?"

Yoo Joonghyuk's cold voice rang through the room. Han Sooyoung's mouth trembled. Could she change it if she knew? She didn't know. Han Sooyoung couldn't answer the question.

Yoo Joonghyuk asked again, "I asked if you could change anything?"

"You bastard…!"

This time, Yoo Joonghyuk didn't yield. The moment when the pressure around the two people was going to devastate the surroundings, Jung Heewon stopped them. "Stop, both of you! Can't you see that Yoo Sangah-ssi is present?"

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is furious!]

Yoo Joonghyuk shook off Han Sooyoung's hand and spoke to the medical staff. "Where is Kim Dokja?"

Han Sooyoung also turned to the staff at the question. Rather than answering, the medical staff glanced in one direction in unison. It was a hospital room where Lee Sookyung's surgery was underway.

Han Sooyoung asked, "Kim Dokja is in that room?"

"That's right. Aileen said he is needed…"

The party members approached the operating room door quietly enough not to interfere with the operation. Through the transparent glass, Aileen and Kim Dokja could be seen conducting the operation in the room. Thanks to the lighting, Kim Dokja's expression couldn't be seen but he definitely didn't look good.

Kim Dokja's hand was trembling and his gaze was slightly lowered. It was Shin Yoosung who opened her mouth first. "…Ahjussi's state is a bit weird."

Once the operation started, the first thing Aileen said was, "You must come with me."

"…Is there anything I can do to help?"

"Yes."

The moment I ended the room, I saw the fragments of my broken mother. My mother, who defeated the returnees by summoning Pungbaek, was in a state where all her stories were broken.

「…Dokja.」

Somewhere, I felt I heard these words. Maybe it was my mother's stories. I thought in a reassuring manner to her. 'Don't worry. I didn't choose anyone'.

My mother's soul must be restored as quickly as possible. That way, I had the time to save Yoo Sangah. From now on, it was the time of Aileen.

"Staff, begin to supply the magic power."

Aileen pulled out a small brush and started to collect the floating pieces of stories one by one.

The surgery itself was simple. Collect the fragments of the scattered stories and put them together in context.

It was to recover the meaning of the lost sentences. It was easy to say but the number of people in Ways of Survival who could perform this type of major surgery could only be counted on one hand.

The most remarkable one among them was Aileen Makerfield, the Story Expert next to me.

[The story 'Person Who Repairs the Story' has started!]

「Every word that reaches your fingertips restores itself.」

The end of the story was ultimately a share of the story. Every time Aileen's brush moved, the broken stories started to follow one by one.

The star fluids I gained were the adhesive holding the stories together.

[The item 'Soma' is working!]

[The item 'Nectar' is working!]

By the time 40 minutes passed in the surgery, Aileen's forehead was covered with beads of sweat. The scene of Aileen's surgery also appeared in Ways of Survival but this was my first time actually seeing it and I was slightly impressed.

Once the overall story was repaired, Aileen took a sip of water. I asked Aileen, "Is it okay if the fragments aren't in context?"

I was anxious when I saw that the story fragments Aileen put together weren't perfectly neat.

Aileen lightly wiped her lips. "It's fine. This is what humans are like."

Certainly, her words might be true. In general, humans weren't tidy existences.

By the way, Aileen's words weren't over. "However, there are some sentences that can be serious if they aren't put together properly. For example, these parts."

Aileen pointed to my mother's soul. Unlike the other restored areas, her half-collapsed heart hadn't been operated on. "In fact, Sookyung-ssi's surgery was a bit late. Her thema is already damaged."

"Thema?"

The contents of Ways of Survival flowed through my head.

"Do you know that everyone's soul is made up of stories?"

"I've heard it before."

It was a story Persephone told me. Aileen continued speaking. "In every soul, there is a core theme that penetrates it. The most important story that forms the essence of the soul."

I belatedly recalled a mention of it in Ways of Survival.

「Every story has a thema. Even a story without a thema, the thema is 'there is no thema'.」

"Only the person who best understands this soul can touch the thema."

I hesitated for a moment. "Then the reason you said I should go in with you…"

"That's right." Aileen nodded and continued, "The thema can only be restored by the person who best knows the soul. You have to do this part yourself. I'll share the story…"

I didn't hear the end of Aileen's words.

[The story 'Person Who Repairs the Story' temporarily dwells at the end of your hand.]

I had to do it myself?

"There isn't much time left. You need to start now. Medical staff, be ready to supply magic power!"

I stared at my mother's soul while holding the brush. My mother lay there quietly with her eyes closed, like a person covered in a shroud. There were wrinkles and wounds I didn't know about. She had stiff eyebrows and dry cheeks.

Aileen said, "Think of it as a book. Imagine all the stories in front of you becoming a book."

I looked at the difficult sentences floating in front of me and tried to show my imagination. Just like I was rereading the book I read as a child, I closed my eyes and stretched out my hand.

「"Yes, do you want to read that book?"」

I cleared the cover of the dust and opened it to see the first page that was broken and worn out. I opened my eyes again and saw the floating stories gathered at the end of my hand.

「"Dokja."」

Sentence by sentence, the fragments started talking to me. I slowly moved the brush. I thought of my mother. I remembered my mother. There was a stale smell as words were lifted from the well of old memories.

「"Dokja, what type of character do you like best?"」

I remembered. The books I read with my mother for the first time. I unconsciously moved the brush. The overflowing sentences were linked through my brush.

「"You don't seem to like the ending. However, not all stories can have happy endings."」

The person who gave me reasons to like books. For the sins I committed, she went to jail. The person who wrote a book about our story. The person I wanted to see. The person I resented. She was my mother but also the person furthest from me.

「"Dokja."」

Blood in the living room and the feeling of the falling knife. My mother's following words.

「"Read it again."」

The moment I finished, the brush stopped. Still, my mother's thema was incomplete.

"Demon King of Salvation?"

My mother's story that I knew was up to here.

「"…Sin. If it is a sin, it's a sin."」

「"Do all prisoners think this way?"」

「"It is funny, the justice of this world."」

There were still numerous story fragments floating around me but they didn't talk to me anymore.

The fragments had a context I didn't know. I couldn't hear them and they were unknown sentences.

I was suddenly confused, as if thrown into the middle of the first book I read. The only thing I knew about Lee Sookyung was Lee Sookyung as my mother.

The hand holding the brush trembled. The trembling was speaking on my behalf. I couldn't do it. This wasn't something I could do.

Belated regret flooded me like waves. I should've talked to her more. I should've told her more.

I should've shared more with her.

The height of the hand holding the brush gradually lowered. My mother's stories were crumbling again. My mother's unknown stories drifted like they mocked me.

「Maybe I'm not the only one.」

The moment I had this thought, I felt something behind my back. Someone, who wasn't me or Aileen, was holding a brush and staring into the air.

"This is what you said to me."

There was a middle-aged woman wearing a nice suit over a blue prison uniform. It was Cho Youngran, who had the First Spiritualist of Joseon as a sponsor. Another woman was holding a brush beside her.

"I can't believe I miss the days when we lined up for bread." Lee Boksoon, who went with me to Peace Land, laughed.

There were several other wanderers in the room. They each held a brush, applied the star fluid and started to attach the sentences. The stories that were difficult for me flowed freely from them. The puzzles they filled up were obvious.

All the wanderers were talking about Lee Sookyung.

My vision was blurred and I couldn't speak for a while. My mother's life was drawn in front of my eyes. There were several things I should've known but didn't. Even so, the wanderers didn't complete all the thema.

Some fragments still remained, searching for the owner. Then somebody grabbed my hand. My hand holding the brush moved freely and attached a sentence I didn't know. The moment I was about to express my confusion, the owner of the hand cut off my words.

"Kim Dokja, you know you aren't a godlike person."

I smelt lemon candy from the grumbling voice. Han Sooyoung took the brush from my hand in a frustrated manner.

"There are some things in the world you don't know about, you idiot."

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* Official novel illustration (canonical)

Chapter 343: Ep. 64 - A Road That Isn't a Road, IV

Sparks sprang around the broken soul and my mother's vitality was slowly coming back. The busy wanderers attached my mother's story fragments together as if they wouldn't tolerate a single error.

"This is what happened at the time. Do you remember?"

A single portrait was painted by a large number of people. It looked like a banquet of artisans gathered to sculpt a single complete work of art. I was amazed that so many people remembered my mother.

Some gazes killed a presence. After some scenarios started, the incarnations died before the eyes of many constellations. They were exposed, peeped at and forced to follow the constellations' desires. Now, these gazes were saving someone.

"…Ah, I missed this time."

"I don't know what I would've done if Sookyung-ssi wasn't there. Right?"

The voices of the wanderers murmured. Perhaps the entire life we lived became memories for one or two people.

[The constellation 'Scribe of Heaven' is showing pure admiration towards the landscape of the accumulated story.]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is greatly pleased!]

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is pulling his hair with an unknown expression.]

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is grumbling while looking at his incarnation.]

Perhaps the channel inspection ended as the constellations gathered in Biyoo's channel to watch the scene. My mother was finished in front of everyone's eyes.

My mother, Lee Sookyung. The King of Wanderers, Lee Sookyung. Lee Sookyung, a former prisoner. Lee Sookyung the essay writer. These 'Lee Sookyung' gathered to make the whole 'Lee Sookyung'.

I stood still and Han Sooyoung poked me in the side. "Get out of the way, you're disturbing us."

Certainly, Han Sooyoung had been with my mother for the past three years and probably had a stake in her story.

I nodded and slipped out of the room. The restoration of the story was almost finished and I didn't seem to be any more help. I was a bit nervous but she was a writer… she probably wouldn't ruin my mother.

I heard Han Sooyoung's voice coming from behind me. "This… did you mention it at the time? I didn't know. That's right, well…"

…Please be fine. I left the room and the party members were waiting for me.

"Ahjussi!"

"Dokja hyung!"

I hugged the two children while looking around at my companions. Jung Heewon, Lee Jihye and Lee Hyunsung tied to a bed… Everyone was waiting for my answer. Everyone seemed to know the situation, even if I didn't explain anything. Shin Yoosung asked me, "Grandmother? Is Grandmother Sookyung okay?"

"I think she should be fine. It is entering the final stages."

Relief passed through the party member's faces at my words. Only one face was different.

"Hey, why is Dokja hyung's mother your grandmother?"

"Ahjussi's mother is my grandmother."

"Dokja hyung isn't your father."

I quickly patted them on the back. "Now now, don't fight. You can both call her grandmother."

"Really? Can I?"

"Yes."

I watched the red-faced Lee Gilyoung and Shin Yoosung and tried to say something else, but quickly closed my mouth.

To these children, what had happened in the past three years? What did these children hear, see and talk about as they passed through dozens of scenarios without me?

"…Hyung?"

I stroked Lee Gilyoung's head for a long time and Lee Gilyoung looked up at me helplessly. Shin Yoosung, who was staring at the scene, grabbed my hand and placed it on her head.

I held the two children in my arms and told them, "I'm sorry."

"…Yes? What for?"

"Just, for everything."

I knew that I couldn't ask for forgiveness, no matter what they told me right now. Still, I wanted to say something. Maybe my mother's story had influenced me. I didn't want to make any more tragedies that I couldn't talk about in time. Nevertheless, the words didn't fall easily from my lips.

'You suffered, I'm sorry'. I wanted to say these words.

"It's fine." Shin Yoosung spoke. "We're fine, ahjussi."

Shin Yoosung raised her head and watched me. This was the person who should be comforted but she was the one asking if I was okay. "Ahjussi… are you okay?"

I wasn't able to answer so I avoided Shin Yoosung's gaze. I looked up and all my companions were staring at me. Lee Jihye looked pained while Jung Heewon was anxious.

I smiled while moving my lips. "Why are you looking like that? I'm fine. My mother has also recovered."

"Are you really okay?"

"I'm really fine. And…"

I carefully examined every party member. I felt the time that passed from the wounds all over their body. The moment the giant story Gigantomachia was over, they ran to this place first. It was without feeling the aftermath of victory.

"Gigantomachia… you all suffered."

Perhaps my expression looked ridiculous. For some reason, Jung Heewon burst out laughing.

"Are those words the bonus? Dokja-ssi really… we are working here because it is good."

Lee Jihye nodded by her side. Jung Heewon kept speaking. "In addition… why did you run away alone again? Do you really want to die? Or do you want to be confined again?"

"That's because the Mass Production Maker told me—"

"You always have excuses."

I bowed to them. "I'm sorry."

This was the best for now. I could clarify things later. As I bent forward, I could see the old combat boots. My gaze went up and I saw the man in the dusty black coat. Suddenly, I felt refreshed. I knew that Yoo Joonghyuk belonged here.

"Yoo Joonghyuk, you too—"

"There is no time for pathetic stories. It isn't over yet."

Yoo Joonghyuk walked towards the room opposite the corridor with peculiar and terrifying eyes.

As expected, Yoo Joonghyuk was Yoo Joonghyuk.

"Everyone seems leisurely? Did you come for a picnic?"

The door to the hospital room opened and Han Sooyoung appeared. It seemed she had consumed quite a lot of magic power and her expression was tired.

"My mother?"

"It will take a while for her to wake up but her disease is healed. The rest will be in the hands of time."

"You've worked hard."

"Yoo Sangah?"

"The medical staff are watching her progress. Aileen will start the treatment as soon as she comes out. Isn't there a bit of star fluid left?"

Aileen had told me that only one person could be saved this time.

"Let's go straight away."

Aileen took the medical team and moved rooms straight away. By the way, once we entered Yoo Sangah's room, we faced a strange sight.

"Seolhwa-ssi?"

I saw Lee Seolhwa in a white gown and taking care of Yoo Sangah. Was it an illusion? I felt like the speed at which Yoo Sangah's story fragments flowed out was reduced.

"What happened?"

"I used some medicine that Joonghyuk-ssi gave me."

"Medicine Yoo Joonghyuk gave you?"

Lee Seolhwa looked down at the small bottle on the table silently. It was a disease that never occurred before. The moment I touched the glass bottle, the item information came to my attention.

"…The Empty and Clear Stone Milk?"

I was startled. If this was the Empty and Clear Stone Milk that I knew, it was a rare item that could compare to a star fluid. It was one of the greatest elixirs that came from the veiled Zero Murim.

I had so many thoughts at once that I didn't know what to say.

"Where did you get this type of thing?"

"I heard he received it from the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint."

The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint hadn't yet returned to Earth. It might've been delayed because she was reuniting with her kin for a while. By the way, the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint had the Empty and Clear Stone Milk… did she go to 'that island'?

Aileen examined Yoo Sangah and said, "A bit of time has been bought."

"How much?"

"Around 30 minutes."

"If we acquire more star fluid…"

"It has reached a stage where she can't be healed with the star fluid. She has exceeded the threshold. Honestly, it's amazing the thema hasn't been damaged yet. Her mental strength is really…"

The party members cried out at Aileen's words.

"Wait, what are you saying?"

"Sangah unni will die?"

The party members listened to the medical staff's explanation and grasped the seriousness of the situation. Jung Heewon and the children were pale. Lee Jihye looked frightened.

"Ahjussi, are you lying? Right?"

"…"

"Sangah unni will die… there is really no way? Really? Not at all? Then what have we done so far…"

Lee Jihye staggered like a ghost and shook me. "Ahjussi has died many times! If we get that attribute now—"

There was no way to get that attribute right now. Jung Heewon hugged Lee Jihye from behind and asked me. "Perhaps… is it impossible to use that previous method?"

The previous method. Nobody explained it but everyone was looking at Biyoo in the air.

"It is hard."

"You are the successor of the Underworld. Can't you ask them for help?"

"I've already asked them."

In the meantime, several indirect messages were heard in the air. They were the messages of constellations who wanted to take advantage of the situation.

[The constellation 'Emperor Who Dreamt of Immortality' is making a proposal.]

[The constellation 'Emperor Who Dreamt of Immortality' says he will provide you with the 'Divine Grass of Immortality' right now if you sign a contract with him.]

The Emperor Who Dreamt of Immortality… it was that 'king' of China. The Divine Grass of Immortality' was definitely an item that could be compared to the star fluids and Star Relic Fruit. However, the current Yoo Sangah couldn't recover even if I used it.

「Don't do it.」

Everyone stared at one place.

「If you borrow their hands, they will surely ask for a ridiculous price.」

Yoo Sangah was talking. Her incarnation body had closed eyes but everyone could hear her. The soul had more than half of herself scattered and only her thema remained, yet she watched everyone here.

「Everyone.」

Yoo Sangah spoke to the party members.

「 I'm fine. So… 」

I didn't know who many times they heard the words 'I'm fine' today. Everyone in this place knew what she meant by saying 'I'm fine'. To us, it meant the time of hell had emerged.

「 Gilyoung, noona is fine. Don't cry. Yoosung too. 」

Yoo Sangah kept talking to the group. I held my throbbing chest and leaned against the wall. Jung Heewon sat down on a chair.

「 Heewon-ssi. I really like Heewon-ssi. Do you know? 」

「 In addition, Jihye… 」

Tears were falling. Lee Jihye was weeping bitterly as she grasped the bedspread. Her red eyes were gazing eagerly at me. From the side, I could hear the sound of teeth grinding together.

"Kim Dokja, I will sign an Outer World Contract." Han Sooyoung grabbed my arm and declared. "Then there might be a way. No, I will definitely make the contract. I—"

「 Han Sooyoung-ssi. 」

Han Sooyoung's chin trembled.

「 You don't have to do that. 」

Han Sooyoung dropped my arm. She left through the door like she didn't want to keep listening. Yoo Sangah continued speaking. She was a person pouring out all her remaining words.

「 Hyunsung-ssi and Joonghyuk-ssi… I have something to tell you… but I don't have much strength left. 」

「 Yes, I want to say, I will leave the others… 」

Then Yoo Sangah glanced at me. I leaned against the wall while my wounds throbbed.

The world shook. Nevertheless, I had to hold on.

"Everybody."

The moment I spoke, pain filled my head.

[The Fourth Wall is warning you.]

「N o. 」

I ignored it and carried on. "Everyone, please go out for a while."

They all seemed to have lost their souls despite Yoo Sangah being the one who was dying. The first one to regain their senses was Jung Heewon. She exchanged glances with me for a moment before raising Lee Jihye. With her encouragement, the members left the room one by one. Finally, Shin Yoosung and Lee Gilyoung left and I was the only one in the room with Yoo Sangah.

I took a deep breath before opening my mouth. "Yoo Sangah-ssi. Do you remember the words that you said on the subway?"

There was no answer from Yoo Sangah.

"You said you liked reading books." I kept speaking to Yoo Sangah. "Murakami Haruki, Raymond Carver, Han Kang…"

I recited the names of the authors Yoo Sangah said she liked. I sensed Yoo Sangah's expression changing slightly. Maybe it was a distant memory that was disappearing.

"If you can survive… are you willing to read books that aren't from those writers?"

A fleeting light returned to Yoo Sangah's soul.

「…What book? 」

"For example, Lord of the Rings."

Yoo Sangah's soul body laughed. She recalled the old memory and smile faintly.

「…Okay. As long as I can read it. If it is possible…」

These precious words, I remembered every syllable.

「If I can live again, I will read the entire story.」

I nodded. I didn't know if this method would work. In the original novel, this had never been attempted. Still, this was the only method I could do. There were huge sparks as the 'wall' appeared in the air.

I looked beyond the dead-end and stared at the Fourth Wall. Anyone facing this wall at the end of the road would become desperate.

"Fourth Wall."

A thick and hard wall that couldn't be broken by anything. There was no such artificial thing as the 'wall' in this world. It was a wall that someone had made with an obvious purpose. I didn't know the exact purpose behind the creation of this wall. Still, it was obvious that the 'wall' was built to protect someone.

The moment I opened my mouth, the Fourth Wall also opened it. "Swallow her. Don't leave behind even a single sentence."

Chapter 344: Ep. 64 - A Road That Isn't a Road, V

Feeding Yoo Sangah's soul to the Fourth Wall. This method was conceived based on the past incident where my mother was eaten by the Fourth Wall. At that time, my mother had been eaten by the wall when her soul body was damaged and part of her soul was restored when she was spat out again. In addition, there was the 'library' inside the Fourth Wall so it was worth trying.

「Don't want to.」

The Fourth Wall read my intentions but didn't listen to me. The Fourth Wall watched the scattered Yoo Sangah and reacted furiously.

「I won't eat that.」

"Eat." The shock caused my body to shake. However, I didn't back down. "If you won't eat then I'll turn off the skill."

This was my last threat. In any case, the Fourth Wall was a skill and I could turn it off whenever I wanted. Based on previous incidents, the Fourth Wall really hated it. Then this time…

「 Do it if you c an. 」

It sounded certain I couldn't do so.

「 If y ou tu rn me off, the wo man can't sur vive. 」

I bit my lips.

「 In addi tion, turn ing me off will let the con stella tions see your in for mation. 」

[Many constellations are paying attention to you!]

[Some constellations are doubting the existence of the 'wall' you have.]

The Fourth Wall was well aware that I was reluctant to disclose my information. In fact, I had no useful mental barriers apart from the Fourth Wall. If a high-grade constellation stared at me the moment the wall disappeared, I might be as helpless as a naked baby.

I stared at the wall for a moment. "Then I will break it."

「 What? 」

"I will break some parts of the wall and force you to eat her."

Originally, the Fourth Wall wasn't reality. However, now I was able to hit the wall. I clenched my fists and dealt a blow to the wall in front of me The whole room shook from the devastating impact. There was a short scream and the sound of people rushing outside.

I swung my fist again. The wall still had no scratches.

「 It is use less. 」

"..."

「 It is too mu ch of a vio lation to sa ve Yoo Sang ah. 」

I thought about it. As I said earlier, the Fourth Wall wasn't reality. It was a skill I implemented. Then…

I focused my gaze towards one part of the wall. Sparks flooded the room and Lee Jihye, who opened the door, was thrown out.

「No!」

There was a small crack on a corner of the Fourth Wall. It was as I expected. Until now, I had been thinking of the skill as something that could be turned on or off. Perhaps the 'skill' might have the appropriate intermediate state. In other words…

What if I could turn off a 'part' of the skill? The wall rapidly cracked and a small gap formed in an instant. There was an abyss that seemed able to swallow anything.

Soon, the gap started to suck in the surrounding story fragments like a black hole. The stories of Yoo Sangah were quickly sucked into the wall.

「Stop…!」

Huge sparks hit my body and I let out a terrible groan. A probability storm was blowing through the wall. I heard the voices of the party members and my vision turned white.

In the darkness, Yoo Sangah came to her senses. She opened her eyes to only darkness. In this scene that didn't allow even a point of light, Yoo Sangah suddenly realized something.

She… wasn't dead? The last scene she saw flashed through her head. There was a probability storm and Kim Dokja's shout as he tried to save her. Then there was a memory of being sucked into somewhere…

There was nothing she could be sure of.

Yoo Sangah checked herself from head to toe. Eyes, lips, tongue, ears, hands, feet, knees… there wasn't a single place where sensations could be felt. it was as if her whole body was paralyzed and her sense of movement had completely disappeared.

Perhaps only her soul was left?

Yoo Sangah tried to calmly accept the situation. In Haruki novels, it was common for people to become ideas. This could be enough. The dead becoming a soul…

…Scary. It was scary to be alone in the darkness. There were no sensations in this state. She didn't know if she existed or not. Yoo Sangah tried not to fall into the trap of thinking as she recalled the old proposition of philosophy.

「I think. Therefore I am.」

This was René Descartes' maxim. It was such a famous saying that she was somehow ashamed to quote it. Yet for Yoo Sangah, this was her only line of salvation. At least, she knew she existed while she thought this. Then soon afterwards, Yoo Sangah had a frightening thought. Then was there anyone who didn't think? If she stopped thinking in this darkness…

Therefore, Yoo Sangah kept thinking desperately. In order not to disappear, she remembered the things that she desperately wanted to avoid.

「"Sangah."」

A voice floated in her mind, followed by a face. It was a familiar face. Her family members before the 'scenario' came. Her father, a judge, and her older brothers who were doctors. Her mother who was born in a wealthy family.

「"Don't do anything conspicuous."」

「"People who aren't you will see what you have."」

「"What four languages? You just have to be a cute little girl."」

Yoo Sangah watched the flowing words and smiled bitterly. To be exact, she lost them before that.

「"…You are going to join a game company? You aren't marrying the president of the game company?"」

Maybe she was living a 'scenario' even before the scenario started. No one called it for a scenario but for her, it was a scenario. If a dokkaebi had named the scenario, perhaps it would be 'Declaration of Independence'.

「"I am a new employee."」

After entering the game company and becoming independent at home, his life changed a bit. She also met an interesting person.

「"Yoo Sangah-ssi. Do you have a mobile phone charger?"」

The man with a thin face who borrowed her charger.

「"I am an important appointment at 7 o'clock and my battery is running out."」

A person who did the interview with her and who was uncooperative about everything in the company.

「"I will attend the ceremony but I must leave at 7 o'clock."」

He was always the person to leave the company first once the work day ended.

「"I won't participate in the picnic. I hate climbing mountains the most."」

The man who seemed like a ghost and didn't exist in other people's eyes as he stared at his smartphone.

「"…Yoo Joonghyuk, that jerk died again."」

Thus, she might've done something strange as well. She put things into the food of the boss who took projects from his subordinates or mixed pepper in the drinks of the manager who made them run coffee errands.

「"Uwek! What is this? Why does the coffee taste like this?"」

It was the birth of Mino Soft's historic event, which was later called the 'Break Room Incident'.

She poured pepper into the finely ground beans and felt a sense of liberation. The company was turned upside down. It was a criminal who couldn't even be caught by the surveillance staff.

「 Yoo Sangah, I still remember. 」

A company where everyone had left work. A smartphone light appeared quietly from behind a cabinet in the break room.

「 Kim Dokja was clearly there. 」

No matter whether she put in pepper or salt, the light just stayed there and tolerated her actions. It was as if the things that happened beyond the cabinet didn't involve him.

「Maybe I should've talked to him at that time. 」

Why did he remain silent behind that cabinet? Why didn't he report what she died and why did he say, "There is no one." Why did he turn the CCTV away from the direction of the break room? Why… was he always looking at the phone with a variety of expressions?

Her surroundings brightened and her senses started to gradually return.

[A powerful presence doesn't allow your 'story' to fall apart.]

[Someone who likes to be tidy doesn't deserve your story.]

A voice was heard from somewhere.

「 (Look, this is 'push and pull'.) 」

「(No. I think that after watching every movie that exists on Earth…) 」

「(Isn't it a desire to become one?) 」

Yoo Sangah slowly opened her eyes and found three beings surrounding her. There was a squid-like creature wearing glasses. An elderly man with grey hair and a bent back. Finally, a beautiful person who exuded a strange atmosphere where the gender was unknown.

The moment she saw the last existence, Yoo Sangah shot up with surprise.

「(You…?)」

「(You woke up, new librarian,)」

The neutral beauty, Nirvana smiled. Yoo Sangah didn't know what was going on. Why was this person here?

Nirvana looked at her and spoke. 「(It is a long explanation. You'll find out soon. You are lucky. You are the first one to enter this library since I've been living here.)」

A combination of letters was overflowing behind the three beings.

[Welcome, new librarian Yoo Sangah.]

Yoo Sangah looked around. Dim light from candles illuminated the darkness everywhere.

Library… There was an incredible number of bookshelves filled with books that didn't seem to end. It had been a long time since she saw a library of this size.

Kim Dokja's words popped into her mind. If she could live again, was she willing to read books that weren't from those authors?

…Was this what he meant? She didn't know what this place was. She didn't know why Kim Dokja sent her here or what he wanted. Still, she had a hunch. If she read these books now, she might be able to solve many of her questions.

「(Will you read it?)」

「(Yes?)」

「 (If you read it, you might be sorry. It might be a truth you can't handle.) 」

Yoo Sangah's hand stopped as she approached the book. It wasn't because of Nirvana's words. It was because a man she knew well showed up in the darkness.

"She won't be a librarian."

Kim Dokja was there.

「 (…Dokja-ssi?) 」

I felt deep relief the moment I saw Yoo Sangah staring at me blankly. It was a success. Somehow, I succeeded in preserving Yoo Sangah's soul. Her soul body was still damaged but the power flowing faintly through the library was restoring her soul.

I bowed to Yoo Sangah. "I'm sorry to have brought you to such a shabby place. Please endure it a bit. I'll take you out soon."

「(What shabby place? Foolish man who doesn't know the spirituality of truth.) 」

"It's been a while, Nirvana."

「 (How did you come here. The 'wall' shouldn't have allowed it.) 」

"I found a trick."

Nirvana's expression was unusual.

「 (I don't know what you're thinking but this is a really bad decision. There is a reason you have the wall.) 」

"I guess so."

It wasn't talking to me right now but the Fourth Wall must be very angry because of what I did. A sharp air current reached my skin and I could feel its emotions. However, now wasn't the time to worry about it.

「(If the wall wants, it can turn one or two librarians into the dust of the story.)」

"I told you. She won't be a librarian."

「(What nonsense are you saying? If you sent her here then naturally…)」

"I'll bring her out again."

Nirvana frowned like he heard something ridiculous.

「(Do you think the wall will allow that? Even if it is possible, that woman's body is already dead. There is no place to return when the body is dead.)」

I silently stared at Nirvana. Then Nirvana's expression became strange.

「(Perhaps, you…)」

He was now part of the Fourth Wall and might've read my thoughts. His lips trembled as Nirvana shouted, 「(No! Even if the wall allows it, I won't do it.)」

"Nirvana."

Nirvana would know. There were many types of 'attributes' in the world but there were only two 'perfect immortality' attributes. One was Yoo Joonghyuk's regressor and the other was…

"Where is your sponsor, Mandala's Guardian now?"

The first reincarnator. Now the time had come to meet the third protagonist of the story.

싱숑 장편소설

전지적 독자 시점

Omniscient
Reader's
Viewpoint

PART 3

03

비채

*

Chapter 345: Ep. 65 - Good and Evil, I

Mandala's Guardian was a mysterious constellation. Unlike other constellations, he rarely showed up in a channel. Even if he entered, he rarely sent a message. He chose an incarnation and gave the 'reincarnation' attribute to the incarnation.

Nirvana in front of me was one of those reincarnators.

「(You don't know how terrible reincarnation is. No more reincarnators should be made.)」

"That isn't a matter for you to decide."

At the same time, I glanced at Yoo Sangah. She hadn't grasped the situation yet and her eyes were blank. Maybe she was examining the context of the conversation in her head.

「(…Doesn't this woman already have a sponsor?)」

"Not anymore. I asked Dionysus to cut off the connection during Gigantomachia."

「(Is Olympus that passive? How did you pay for the huge probability?)」

I shrugged. I couldn't afford to elaborate on the details of the deal I made with Dionysus. "Read it through the wall later. You will read about everything I do anyway. Before that, answer my question. Where is your sponsor now?"

「(I was absorbed by the wall and my ties with him broken. I don't know where he is now. Just…)」

Nirvana looked at me and continued,

「(I think you might've suspected it already?)」

In fact, it was true. My question to Nirvana was only to change my guess to conviction.

"Yoo Sangah-ssi. Don't worry. These guys, they're not as bad as they look—"

I couldn't finish my words. There was a feeling of my space shrinking as my body was ejected from the library. The surprised Yoo Sangah reached out to me but my body was already scattering into sparks.

「Cheek y Kim Dok ja.」

Those were the last words I heard.

「"…Dokja-ssi still isn't awake?"」

「"Yes."」

「"It has been three days already…"」

I slowly woke up and could hear distant voices. Uncomfortable sensations that couldn't be expressed well pushed at me all at once. What should I say? It felt like I was being tortured with electricity.

「"The electric eel doesn't work… what the hell is this?"」

「"What about Sangah unni? Her body suddenly disappeared…"」

Thanks to the faint voices, I roughly guessed what was going to happen.

…Dammit, I had been unconscious for three days. My consciousness returned but my body didn't move at all.

[Your actions in preventing the death of your colleague have been caught in a probability plausibility screening.]

[You are currently suffering from the aftermath of the probability storm.]

[For a total of five days, almost all your actions will be constrained.]

[Remaining constraints period: 2 days 3 hours 31 minutes.]

I tried to avoid it but I was caught in a probability storm. It was a miracle that it stopped at this degree of damage.

[A message has arrived to you through the 'Dokkaebi Communication'.]

The message came from Bihyung.

–Kim Dokja, you crazy guy.

–Do you want to be eaten by Indescribable Distance again?

–If I hadn't put on the brakes in advance, a disaster would've come to Earth. You keep getting lucky. Don't you know what probability is?

The messages from Bihyung continued for some time. In order to reach the end of the scenario, it was necessary to accumulate the probability well and not be hated by the Star Stream. Since when did this person have such a nagging personality?

–At any rate, I let it pass this time but be careful next time. The will of the Star Stream is paying great attention to this incident.

I didn't know that forcibly breaking some of the Fourth Wall and sending Yoo Sangah in would bring about such backlash. It would be absurd from the viewpoint of the constellations. It might feel like the actor on stage had disappeared.

[The Fourth Wall is currently repairing itself.]

[A considerable number of constellations are questioning the probability of your actions.]

[Many constellations are sad because they can't peek at your identity.]

[Several constellations noticed that you have a fragment of the Last Wall.]

The Fourth Wall responded quickly and the damage was minimized. My feet might be tied for a few days but I saved my mother and Yoo Sangah, so it was a cheap price.

Of course, in Yoo Sangah's case, it was a temporary measure and I couldn't leave it alone. In order to revive Yoo Sangah, I had to meet the constellation who was the king of reincarnators and the first reincarnation.

It was a little early but it wasn't too early. From Demon Realm's Spring to Torch That Swallowed the Myth. I had achieved the 'initial' and 'success' portion of A Single Story.

Thanks to the emergence of me and Kim Dokja's Company, the development of the overall scenarios accelerated and there would be the emergence of materials that should've appeared long after in the original novel.

There were many candidates to get the giant story that would fulfil the 'turn' section. For example, there was Ragnarok of Asgard and some giant stories from the Emperor nebula. Unlike the previous two sections, the 'turn' should be the climax of A Single Story. It was a scenario of a different scale based on the stories that had been told so far. Without such a stage, I couldn't reach the desired result.

Perhaps using the third giant story as a springboard, the island where the first reincarnator stayed might be a good stage. In any case, I didn't know when it would happen.

Three days had passed but I still had two more days… I wasn't sure how to spend this boring time. If I sacrificed some of the giant stories, I might be able to get rid of the aftermath, but it wasn't good to sacrifice my barely collected stories here.

…If only I could read Ways of Survival.

「Kim Dok ja.」

'Fourth Wall?'

「Wi ll y ou con tinue do ing it your own way?」

Somehow, the voice felt childish. I wanted an opportunity and quickly answered. 'I won't do it again'.

「Li ar.」

There was deep-rooted distrust in the words. I felt a bit sorry because this was the first time I saw the wall expressing its feelings.

'Believe me, I really won't do it'.

「Bah.」

'…What happened to Yoo Sangah-ssi? Is she doing well?'

No matter how intelligent and adaptable Yoo Sangah was, the existences in the library were far beyond most humans. One was an outer god, one was a creation of the constellations and the last one was a reincarnator. In addition, the owner of the library, the Fourth Wall was an unknown existence.

'Please don't be too hard on Yoo Sangah-ssi. She is a good person'.

「 That de pends on Yoo Sang ah. 」

For now, I was forced to believe in Yoo Sangah. She might not have the 'Ways of Survival' cheat like me but she was someone who survived this far. Thus, I was sure she would do well in the library.

'There is one thing I'd like to ask you'.

「 N o. 」

'Just listen to me'.

「 N o. 」

'…We used to be pretty friendly. Think about when we just arrived in the Demon Realm. At that time, we talked to each other a lot'.

「 It wa s on ly that ti me. 」

'You can talk a lot in the future'.

「 Kim Dok ja does not ca re a bout what I say. 」

I felt the hidden meaning and was lost for words. Come to think of it, the Fourth Wall always talked to me. There was the style it borrowed from Ways of Survival and even the Fourth Wall's peculiar way of talking. Still, it was true that I didn't respond properly to it.

「 Th at dokkae bi who can't talk is be tter than Kim Dok ja. 」

'Are you talking about Biyoo?'

The Fourth Wall didn't answer. It was a bit of a confusing situation for me.

'You…'

This guy also felt lonely. Did it feel joy, sorrow or pain? I never thought about it this way before and suddenly felt strange.

'…In the future, I will talk to you more often. I'm sorry'.

「Bah.」

'Calm down. I promise'.

「Really?」

'Really'.

The Fourth Wall thought of something and said.「But Kim Dokja isn't enough.」

'What?'

「Give me a friend.」

What did this mean? A friend, how to give the wall a friend…

I thought about it and something suddenly flashed through my mind.

…Don't tell me? As if to prove my feelings, the Fourth Wall opened its mouth.

「Kim Dokja should gather the last wall.」

'I have to gather more stories'.

Yoo Joonghyuk stared at the sky, obsessively thinking about it while munching on a lemon candy. He didn't like candy but there was no substitute for it right now. It would be nice if there was dumplings but… now wasn't the time to enjoy that type of taste.

'…No, the speed at which I gathered the stories is already fast enough. The important thing is to train the stories themselves'.

Maybe it was time to go to 'that island' now. The island that Kyrgios and his teacher had visited. Yoo Joonghyuk clenched his fists as he envisioned future plans.

[Your sponsor is dissatisfied with your recent progress.

He suddenly felt his sponsor's gaze. Recently, his sponsor had been expressing feelings more often. A sponsor who had been only nonexistent in the last three regressions.

Yoo Joonghyuk asked with a frown. "What is there to complain about?"

[Your sponsor wants you to take proactive actions.]

The words touched something deep in Yoo Joonghyuk's mind. Certainly, his life had changed a lot since the last round. Needless to say, it was since he met Kim Dokja.

'…I don't know who he is'.

He founded a nebula with a man whose identity was unknown.

'Kim Dokja isn't a prophet'.

Yoo Joonghyuk was immersed in his thoughts, as if solving the homework he had put off.

'Yet he knows information about the future'.

The more he thought about it, the stranger things were. Why wasn't this person in the last round? He had an idea originally but now he wasn't convinced. That calm and meticulous guy didn't even pass the first scenario in the last round? The doubts started to multiply and overflow.

[An unknown power is putting a stop to your imagination.]

There was some dizziness and Yoo Joonghyuk frowned.

'…Again'.

Yoo Joonghyuk didn't know why but his head hurt whenever he thought about Kim Dokja. In particular, whenever he wondered about Kim Dokja's identity.

"Yoo Joonghyuk, what are you doing?"

He looked back and saw Han Sooyoung with a lemon candy in her mouth.

Yoo Joonghyuk asked, "Kim Dokja still isn't awake?"

"Not yet."

"He is a lazy bastard."

"…It is due to the aftermath of the probability storm so I wouldn't call him lazy. It is strange that it hasn't happened until now."

The two people stood there leisurely and looked up at the sky of the industrial complex. A cool breeze blew past their collar. It was peaceful but not a peace that would last a long time.

One person collapsed and the life or death of the other person was unknown… however, this time was uncommon for the industrial complex.

Yoo Joonghyuk spotted Han Sooyoung staring at a distance place with half-hooded eyes. He suddenly wanted to ask something.

'Would this person know what I'm curious about?'

Just like Kim Dokja, she appeared as a variable in this round. Whenever Yoo Joonghyuk saw her carrying on an unknown conversation with Kim Dokja, he had a feeling that this woman and Kim Dokja—

At this moment, an eerie sensation swept down his back.

"Yoo Joonghyuk."

At almost the same time Han Sooyoung spoke, Yoo Joonghyuk pulled out the Black Heavenly Demon Sword. Han Sooyoung was unwrapping the bandages around her hand.

In the distant sky, something was flying here at a fast pace. It was the presence of an uninvited guest. The presence left a dark glow in the sky as it slowly sank to the ground.

Magic power flowed from Yoo Joonghyuk's tense right hand.

"Asmodeus. What is going on?"

The demon king Asmodeus laughed. [I came to meet the Demon King of Salvation. Where is he?]

"Why are you looking for him?"

[I have a lot to say as a Seeker of the End.]

"…Seeker of the End? Talk to me and get lost."

[Ah, really annoying…]

Asmodeus might've been an ally for a short time but Yoo Joonghyuk fundamentally didn't believe in him. Moreover, there was the grudge from the last round.

Nasty air currents flowed as Yoo Joonghyuk and Asmodeus' statuses collided with each other.

[Um? I didn't think you would be this strong…]

Asmodeus' eyes widened when Yoo Joonghyuk didn't budge a single bit.

Obvious malice lay below Asmodeus' playful expression.

[Regressor Yoo Joonghyuk.]

Asmodeus gave a demon-like smile as he came closer to Yoo Joonghyuk. The painted red lips of the demon king opened as if to commit a taboo.

[Have you ever heard of Three Ways to Survive in a Ruined World?]

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* Official novel cover (canonical)

Chapter 346: Ep. 65 - Good and Evil, II

Asmodeus continued speaking.

[Three Ways to Survive in a Ruined World. Among the incarnations, it is a story known as the Revelation… have you heard of it?]

At Asmodeus' words, the pale-faced Han Sooyoung stepped forward. "You! What the hell did you come here to do?"

Asmodeus just ignored Han Sooyoung and studied Yoo Joonghyuk's expression.

[An unknown power is putting a brake to incarnation Yoo Joonghyuk's imagination.]

Sparks once again appeared in Yoo Joonghyuk's vicinity. In fact, Asmodeus' words sounded like this to Yoo Joonghyuk.

[Have you heard of Three ■■ to ■■■■ in a Ruined ■■■?]

Yoo Joonghyuk got a headache as he asked, "…What did you say?"

Asmodeus sighed. [Hmmm, you aren't yet allowed…]

"What are you talking about?"

[Well, it isn't a big deal. Then… based on the situation, the Demon King of Salvation is still asleep.]

Asmodeus grinned and glanced at the Factory.

[Unfortunately, I will go back for today. Please tell this to the Demon King of Salvation. Thanks to what he has done, the balance of good and evil is shaken. Jackals will emerge to take advantage of that imbalance.]

"Wait, just wait!"

Yoo Joonghyuk pressed a hand to his temple and called out to Asmodeus, who had turned around.

He replied without turning around. [Regressor Yoo Joonghyuk. Do you want to know the truth of the world?]

"…The truth?"

[If you want to know, come to the Seekers of the End.]

With these words, Asmodeus' body disappeared. Han Sooyoung quickly approached the staggering Yoo Joonghyuk. "Yoo Joonghyuk. Are you okay?"

"…"

"Yoo Joonghyuk?"

Yoo Joonghyuk didn't answer. He seemed to be thinking about something and was drowning in great anguish. Yoo Joonghyuk stared at the air for a while before shaking off Han Sooyoung and staggering somewhere.

"Hey! Where are you going?"

Despite Han Sooyoung's shouts, Yoo Joonghyuk didn't answer. Han Sooyoung shouted once again, "Kim Dokja hasn't woken up yet!"

"It has nothing to do with him."

Yoo Joonghyuk triggered Red Phoenix Shunpo and disappeared. The only one left at the entrance of the Factory was Han Sooyoung. Han Sooyoung looked around and was lost in thought as she chewed on the candy bar.

'Is it time for the filtering to be lifted and information about Ways of Survival to begin?'

It happened while Kim Dokja wasn't present and Han Sooyoung couldn't hide her nervousness. She couldn't guess what type of disaster would occur if Yoo Joonghyuk learnt about Ways of Survival now. Moreover, how did the demon kings learn about the existence of Ways of Survival?

Han Sooyoung watched the sky to the south and spat the candy on the ground. Something had to be done before Kim Dokja woke up.

Yoo Sangah was able to fully enjoy the experience of being a 'newcomer' as she organized the books.

In the last two days, Yoo Sangah learnt a lot from her three seniors. From the identity of this library to the identities of her seniors.

「(Please organize it slowly. Once Kim Dokja starts thinking unnecessary things, it gets messy.)」

The theatre master, Simulation.

「(It will take a long time to clean up with only two hands. I wanted a successor with many hands to replace me.)」

The outer god, Devourer of Dreams.

「 (Do you want me to teach you Thousand Hands of Avalokiteśvara?) 」

The reincarnator, Nirvana Moebius.

All the seniors were slightly odd but they were generally kind to her. It would've been nice if they were part of Mino Soft's human resources team.

Shelves covered with countless books. They were all the books Kim Dokja had read or forgotten. Most of the books were one 'novel'.

『 Three Ways to Survive in a Ruined World. 』

Yoo Sangah liked books and quickly identified her situation and the processes of her new job. This was a place for Kim Dokja and what this story meant to Kim Dokja…

Once she realized, Yoo Sangah felt faint despair and sympathy at the same time. However, Yoo Sangah didn't show it. She knew that sometimes not expressing it was a way of taking care of the wounded. Instead, she thought about other things.

'If it developed like the original…'

The following Earth scenario could have several implications. Among them, the most likely one…

「 Work har d Yoo Sang ah. 」

Yoo Sangah raised her head at the voice heard from the air.

「 (I will work hard.) 」

She felt like she was living a rented life but there was a possibility for her to live again. Fortunately, the general manager of this place was a cute boss.

「 (Thank you for the job. I really like it here.) 」

「 Bah. 」

「(I'm serious.)」

「Yoo Sang ah li kes books?」

「(I like it very much.)」

「Wh at book?」

「(For example… Lord of the Rings…)」

「H oh.」

Luckily, the cute boss seemed quite interested in her. She decided to ask about something she was curious about.

「(Then can I ask one question?)」

「Wh at?」

「(What exactly is the Fourth Wall?)」

A giggle filled the entire library.

「I pro tect Kim Dok ja.」

「(Protect him?)」

「Kim Dok ja would die with out me.」

It was a voice filled with conviction.

「Th en Kim Dok ja did some thing stu pid.」

The entire library trembled faintly.

「It is hard er recent ly be cause of you.」

「(…Because of me?)」

「 My work is leaking out. 」

The sound of sparks pointed to a certain direction in the library. The Fourth Wall was indicating to a hole bigger than Yoo Sangah's fist.

「 Even though I blocked it, it is destroyed by Kim Dokja. 」

The cover of an old book was blocking the hole. It seemed to be a temporary action urgently carried out. Yoo Sangah carefully examined the cover of the book.

「 (The hold, isi t going to the outside?) 」

「 Yes. 」

Yoo Sangah pondered the hole for a while before making a playful expression.

「 (Fourth Wall. I have a good idea.) 」

I slept comfortably. It was as deep as when I had been forcibly confined. It felt like fluffy feathers were wrapped around my head. Or maybe someone came into my head and cleared up all the uncomfortable worries.

「 (Dokja-ssi, it is a big deal. Dokja-ssi.) 」

A mysterious voice rang in my head and I got out of bed in a startled manner. A hospital room with no one inside. My skin was tanned after being burnt by the sparks.

"Uh…"

I looked around but there was no one by the bed. None of the party members could be seen. Then who woke me up?

I decided to check the situation. I was still weak from the aftermath of the probability storm but I was capable of walking. Yet the feeling was strange. An unpleasant aura was flowing through the corridor of the ward. There was a foreboding feeling that something would break. A moment later, I realized there was a loud commotion outside the Factory.

I opened a window in the corridor and people's shouts entered my ears.

"Free Seoul!"

…What?

"We will no longer be ruled by the demon king!"

"Dictator of the Factory, stand down! Open all the stigmas and skills to the public!"

A crowd was gathered beyond the walls of the Factory. They were the incarnations from Seoul and the surrounding areas. I saw the composition of the forces that had come and immediately knew what type of people they were.

Most of them were people who failed in the scenario. They were also some key figures from the alliances.

"This is a legitimate struggle! Wake up the Demon King of Salvation and the evil company, Kim Dokja's Company, who preempts the scenarios and monopolizes the capital!"

Preempt the scenario and monopolize the capital…

They wouldn't say that if they knew how hard it was for us to get through the scenarios. Inside the walls were the confused party members. The first one I heard was Gong Pildu's voice. "Should I just shoot them?"

"Ahjussi, are you crazy? Most of them are novice incarnations!"

"Everyone! Don't do this! It is a misunderstanding!

Lee Jihye and Lee Hyunsung came forward to yell at the people but communication wasn't possible from the beginning.

"Shut up! Open the gates! Share the items!"

"There is no such thing as items!"

"Share the coins!"

"We aren't gangsters…"

An 'incitement' of this level wasn't something that ordinary humans could do. Every alliance on the Korean Peninsula was taken over by my party members and the Gyeongi Alliance, which was the largest stumbling block, was destroyed by Yoo Joonghyuk not long ago.

The fact that so many people gathered together meant it was likely that someone outside had intervened. Then where were Yoo Joonghyuk and Han Sooyoung? What caused this division in the Factory? It seemed there were many things I didn't know.

[Many constellations are interested in what is happening in the industrial complex.]

I had to stop this before it became bigger. I was calculating things in my head and about to move towards the party members when I heard a dokkaebi's voice.

[Revolution…! I am someone who advocates for democracy!]

An ominous feeling rushed through me.

[Since a probability of this scale has been gathered, it is possible to open up a scenario?]

[Sub Scenario - Seoul Revolution]

Category: Sub

Difficulty: ???

Clear Conditions: Seoul is currently under the leadership of Kim Dokja's Company. Incarnations have emerged to resist the dominance of the nebula. Many constellations want both groups to fight for control of Seoul.

Time Limit: None

Compensation: 300,000 coins

Failure: —

The moment I read the scenario, I had a nasty feeling. Kim Dokja's Company had accumulated two giant stories and was now well known in the Star Stream.

However, the nebula's representative, Yoo Joonghyuk was absent. Someone was deliberately trying to hit us.

"There is no failure condition! Should I try it?"

"300,000 coins! Let's make some money!"

Lee Jihye shouted with frustration. "Stupid… it isn't an amount large enough to be divided!"

The moment I thought it wouldn't work, someone came forward. It was Jung Heewon. Jung Heewon used the Speech Amplifier skill and her voice was filled with great vigour. "Don't hide your representatives!"

The people climbing the walls were aghast at Jung Heewon's words.

"There will only be senseless sacrifices if you wage war here. Wouldn't it be better to decide victory in a battle between representatives?"

Jung Heewon watched the people and continued. "If we lose, we will hand over the Factory as you wish!"

"Heewon-ssi! Why promise such a thing…?!"

Lee Hyunsung stared at her with confusion while Jung Heewon calmly explained. "These people, most of them haven't passed the 10th scenario yet. What will happen if a real war occurs here?"

Lee Hyunsung shut his mouth at Jung Heewon's words. Rather than talking, the party members stared at each other in silence. How much time passed? One by one, they started nodding.

"…Heewon-ssi is right."

Lee Hyunsung, Lee Jihye, Shin Yoosung and Lee Gilyoung. Gong Pildu looked unhappy but…

Everyone agreed this was the best way to minimize the sacrifice of the citizens.

The dokkaebi saw the progress from the air and laughed.

[…Good. Will this event be a 'Representative Exhibition'?]

At the same time, the contents of the sub scenario were changed.

[Sub scenario - Seoul Revolution is updated!]

[Through the representatives of both forces, the owner of Seoul will be determined!]

Jung Heewon yelled at the people beyond the walls. "The representatives, come up now. This side is ready."

It was a confident smile. Maybe Jung Heewon's determination stemmed from the faithful time she spent training.

The people who had been talking about revolution and the spring of Seoul suddenly fell silent when Jung Heewon came out so confidently. Then their shouts became louder.

"R-Representative! Where are you? Come out quickly!"

"Fight and win! Find our rights!"

Yet no one showed up. It was natural. Those who raised the crowd wanted to take advantage of the irrational incitement. However, the meaning disappeared if the story flowed like this.

The anxious incarnations cried out, "Who…!"

I was a bit thrilled when I saw the ranks of the crowd crumbling. It was great to see who the party members had grown in the three years without me.

Perhaps Jung Heewon aimed for this from the beginning. She learned to maintain her sense of justice while being pragmatic.

She was already one of the strongest in Seoul. She had no chance of losing in a one-on-one fight against an incarnation.

The dokkaebi in the air stroked his chin. [Kim Dokja's Company has two representatives missing. Who will come forward?]

The party members raised their hands at the same time. However, Jung Heewon was first. "I will do it."

"Heewon-ssi."

"Don't worry. You know that I'm strong."

Certainly, Jung Heewon was the strongest in our nebula apart from Yoo Joonghyuk. Lee Hyunsung, Lee Gilyoung, Shin Yoosung and Gong Pildu… none of them could surpass Jung Heewon when it came to individual combat power. In addition, Jung Heewon seemed to notice something. This was one of the reasons why Jung Heewon should be a representative.

「…I will go.」

The reason for this was the three incarnations approaching through the crowd. One of their faces was especially familiar.

…This guy. The man who passed over the walls opened his mouth. "I will be a representative."

Chapter 347: Ep. 65 - Good and Evil, III

The man with the imposing atmosphere was the one who confronted me last time. He was the one who ran away from me during the last 'confinement'.

The leader of the Gyeonggi Alliance, one of the 10 Evils Cho Jinchul. In this round, I thought that our party members had become too strong yet this guy came back.

Jung Heewon smiled and pulled out her sword. "You?"

Despite saying this, Jung Heewon didn't relax her guard at all. It was because she read the unusual energy flowing from Cho Jinchul's body. It was demonic energy.

Jung Heewon's expression hardened and filled with killing intent. While clearing Dark Castle, it was only in name but she was the one who cleared the 10th scenario by killing the 'demon king'. There was no way she couldn't know.

"You… were eaten by a demon king."

It was the aura of a demon king. The laughing Cho Jinchul already wasn't Cho Jinchul. He was a man swallowed up by demonic energy.

[The demon king 'Monarch of the Snake Hell' has revealed his existence.]

Monarch of the Snake Hell. One of the Demon Realm's 72 demon kings. He was the master of the 72nd Demon Realm, Andromalius. In addition, the other two incarnation bodies were emitting similar energy.

[The demon king 'Thinker of Lies and Secrets' has revealed his existence.]

[The demon king 'Performer of Musical Instruments' has revealed his existence.]

Three demon kings appeared through their own power. Even so, Jung Heewon remained calm after knowing her opponents were demon kings.

"Is it a one-on-one fight?"

[Of course, it will be one-on-one. Fearless incarnation.]

Her hair raised from the true voice but Jung Heewon laughed. "Yes, I wanted to try it one day. How great a demon king is."

There was deep anger contained in her voice. It might be Uriel's influence or it might be the accumulated anger towards me. In any case, Jung Heewon looked like she was doing well.

[The fight has begun!]

In fact, it was a confidence I could understand. The opponents might be demon kings but Jung Heewon didn't need to back down. In addition, there was the state of being possessed through proxy. If she stepped back here, the archangel's pride would be damaged.

A red light filled Jung Heewon's eyes as the Sword of Judgment moved through the air. The trajectory of the sword moved through the air like a net. There wasn't a chance to avoid it and Cho Jinchul's arm flew through the air.

[You dare…!]

The surprised Andromalius let out a roar but Jung Heewon's sword showed no hesitation or fear. Andromalius was baffled by the arrogant style. It was a swordsmanship that didn't look at anything and only focused on killing. The incarnations who only went through ordinary scenarios couldn't afford to go against her.

Blood poured out once again as there was a deep cut on Cho Jinchul's right thigh. The gap in skill was overwhelming. The crowd's mouths dropped open and the party members felt admiration. This was the real power of the Judge of Evil, Jung Heewon.

[The character 'Jung Heewon' is preparing to activate Judgment Time!]

For the finish, Jung Heewon gathered her strength. It was the combination of Judgment Time and Hell Flames Ignition. Jung Heewon was trying to press this 'Representative Exhibition' with overwhelming force.

However, at the same time, Andromalius increased his synchronization rate with Cho Jinchul and started the descent in earnest. Cho Jinchul's cut off arm soared up with demonic energy and the injury restored with magic power. This was the power of the 72nd demon king.

[Your tricks end here.]

A fist struck Jung Heewon's blade like a lightning bolt. The Sword of Judgment shook and Jung Heewon immediately took a few steps back. Cho Jinchul pursued Jung Heewon and continued to attack.

Andromalius prepared for damage to his probability and incarnation body as he increased the synchronization rate.

A threatening power emerged from Cho Jinchul's body. No matter how strong Jung Heewon was, she couldn't fight against a demon king by herself without Uriel. In the end, Jung Heewon was thrown through the air from the power struggle.

"Keuk, dammit…!"

I couldn't understand the situation. To be exact, it was strange that Andromalius made such a choice.

Not all demon kings were in the same class. By doing this, the scales of probability would move and Archangel Uriel would be able to intervene. Once she came, the demon kings would turn into ash in the blink of an eye. Nevertheless, the fact that they were earnestly dealing with Jung Heewon showed they had something they believed in.

[The activation of Judgment Time has been forcibly cancelled.]

The thing they believed in was quickly revealed.

"…Uriel?"

Uriel didn't respond and Judgment Time and Hell Flames Ignition weren't activated properly. Putting aside Hell Flames Ignition, it was strange that Judgment Time wasn't activated. Something was wrong with Uriel and the other constellations of the absolute good system.

…Don't tell me? At this moment, I understood how the story was flowing. I understood why the demon kings suddenly made such a move and why they visited my 'demon realm' at this time. Everything suddenly made sense.

Kyrgios floated in the air and was looking at me. I gazed back at him. I didn't move despite being able to intervene at any time due to him. Then Kyrgios spoke to me.

–You should do it.

I shook my head. It wasn't time yet. If possible, I didn't want to reveal my strength too early. It could backfire if I revealed my power just to win this. Kyrgios opened his mouth.

–This will happen frequently in the future unless you demonstrate your strength.

Maybe he was right. The current Kim Dokja's Company was rising and the demon kings had come to dampen the momentum of our nebula.

If we didn't show our strength now, our nebula would seem shallow to other constellations.

I sighed and looked up at the air where Bihyung was laughing.

He looked like he knew the scenario would turn out this way from the beginning. Maybe Bihyung had been calculating many things. It was why he only opened this scenario after I woke up. Really, he was a damn dokkaebi.

–Go ahead. Show me the status of a demon king.

I jumped out of the Factory onto the battlefield. There was a sound of surprise from the party members as I grabbed Jung Heewon's shoulder from behind.

"Heewon-ssi."

"…Dokja-ssi?"

"You don't have to fight here. I'm not stopping you because you are weak."

I went forward with Jung Heewon behind me.

[The constellation 'Demon King of Salvation' is opening his 'status'.]

The three demon kings were watching me. I used my true voice.

[All demon kings. Did you choose the wrong playground? I'm sure you have something to say to me

but say it and get out of here.]

Andromalius' face distorted at my true voice.

[Cheeky guy.]

[Do you know why we came?]

I nodded. The reason the demon kings came here was obvious. Since Earth's incarnations had exceeded the 60th scenario, it was time for the event to be held. Perhaps these guys had come to invite me.

The fact that Jung Heewon couldn't use Uriel's power was related to this. The demon kings giggled as if everything so far was just amusement.

[Be honoured that your elders have personally visited you.]

[Come with us. We have to prepare right now. We'll be leaving straight away.]

I smiled and nodded.

[You came here to pick me up and I should go. By the way…]

I looked back at Jung Heewon, who was wiping her bloody nose, and the party members supporting her. They hadn't sufficiently rested from the aftermath of Gigantomachia.

[I think it will be hard to just send you away.]

[What bullshit is that?]

[If you are a demon king, you should be worthy. Isn't that right?]

[The nebula 'Kim Dokja's Company' is requesting a representative change.]

[The demon king 'Demon King of Salvation' has become the new representative.

The demon kings realized my intentions and were astonished.

[You want to fight us now? You… do you know what happens when a demon king and demon king fight?]

[I know very well.]

I looked at each of the demon kings and answered.

[The demon king 'Demon King of Salvation' has applied for a demon king promotion.]

A demon king promotion. It was a fierce duel between demon kings who competed for rankings and honour.

[A promotion! Are you crazy?]

It might be true. Whether it was demon king or constellation, I was tired of being dragged around by these bastards.

[Do you agree or not? They're watching.]

[The demon king 'Immeasurable Austerity' is interested in the battle between the low-grade ones.]

[The demon king 'Duke of Everywhere' says this is a premature fight.]

[The demon king 'Monarch of Stars and Logic' is pointing out the spelling of the 'Duke of Everywhere'.]

[The demon king 'Devil of Lust and Wrath' is making an interested expression.]

Countless demon kings were watching the confrontation. I was the 73rd demon king, the lowest of the demon kings. It would be embarrassing if they refused my challenge.

The three demon kings would be formidable but I wasn't afraid at all. Rather, I was composed as I watched them.

「 Maybe Yoo Joonghyuk also felt like this. 」

Andromalius made a humiliated expression as he opened his mouth.

[…I accept the challenge.]

However, I shook my head.

[You are out. I'm not applying for you.]

[What?]

[Andromalius, you are the 72nd ranked.]

I pointed to another demon king behind him.

[I am applying for the 67th demon king, Performer of Musical Instruments Amdusias.]

If I was going to fight then it was better to kill the guy with the higher ranking. Andromalius' face turned red at my words and he rushed over. The fist that contained the formidable stories of the 72nd Demon Realm flew towards me.

[Giant Story 'Snake That Crouches for 1,000 years' has begun!]

Clearly, their low ranking didn't mean they had bad stories when they had lived for a long time.

Nevertheless, they didn't know. I have lived a much shorter history than them but it was also much fiercer.

[Giant Story 'Demon Realm's Spring' has started the story.]

[Giant Story 'Torch That Swallowed the Myth' is revealing its crouching teeth.]

The next moment, blue-white lightning filled the area. It was Electrification through Bookmark. The blue-white magic power was astounding. A faint smile was seen on Kyrgios' face.

[There isn't a big gap between the character and your level.]

[Your understanding of the character has greatly enhanced your skills!]

[The exclusive skill 'Electrification Lv. 23 (+13)' is activated.]

It was a real hassle to use Electrification without Miniaturization.

[Your current body configuration is different from that of the character.]

[Your status has overcome the penalty of the physical conditions.]

Andromalius' fist stopped in front of my nose. He stared at me with astonishment before his eyes shifted to his stomach. Half of his body was gone.

I pulled my sword out of his body and declared. [First, the 72nd place.]

Chapter 348: Ep. 65 - Good and Evil, IV

[The Monarch of the Snake Hell is wounded and has exited from the scenario.]

[You have won the demon king promotion!]

[Your Demon Realm ranking is adjusted!]

[You have become the 72nd Demon King!]

I passed by Cho Jinchul's ashes and looked around. They were two demon kings who hadn't yet come to their senses. Indeed, it was natural to be surprised. It was because the lowest ranked 72nd demon king was finished in one blow. Even so, this was reality.

[Several demon kings are amazed by your power.]

[The demon king 'Devil of Comfort and Savagery' is spitting at your status.]

[The demon king 'Darkness of No Value' is threatened by your status.]

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is mocking the reaction of the demon kings.]

Not all constellations received a giant story. Even if they had a giant story, their stakes in it were low and they couldn't take full advantage of it.

I was different. All my giant stories weren't inherited from someone else but were a history that I created with my party members.

[Giant Story 'Demon Realm's Spring' is continuing.]

The giant stories gathered in this way showed a completely different level of power.

[Giant Story 'Torch That Swallowed the Myth' is looking at the demon kings with greedy eyes.]

The confrontation with Poseidon still lingered in Unbroken Faith. I stared at the demon kings.

[The demon king 'Thinker of Lies and Secrets' is preparing to depart from the scenario.]

The 71st demon king, Dantalion. The demon who was known to be cunning noticed quickly.

[Where are you trying to run to?]

I used both Electrification and Way of the Wind and caught him. This time, I was helped by Bihyung.

[The bureau has rejected the scenario proposal of the Thinker of Lies and Secrets.]

[The game should be finished to the end, demon kings.]

Dantalion's eyes widened like he hadn't expected the dokkaebi to take my side. Was it the shock of Andromalius' defeat? I didn't feel any dignity from the appearance of the demon kings.

The demon kings outside the top 70 were like this. They became demon kings out of luck and barely clung to the bottom of the ladder while abusing the title of 'demon king'.

Blood rose and the head of a negligent incarnation body rolled to the ground.

[The 71st.]

[The Thinker of Lies and Secrets is wounded and has exited from the scenario.]

[You have won the demon king promotion!]

[Your Demon Realm ranking is adjusted!]

[You have become the 71st Demon King!]

I looked at the last remaining one, Performer of Musical Instruments Amdusias.

Amdusias asked, [Do you really have to do this?]

[Why, are you scared?]

[Do you see me in the same class as Andromalius and Dantalion?]

The atmosphere changed. Unlike the two demon kings I had previously defeated, Amdusias was prepared for a fight. The horn of a unicorn grew from the head of the incarnation.

[The demon king 'Performer of Musical Instruments' has summoned the star relic 'Star Trumpet'.]

From the 60s, the level of the demon kings went up a bit.

[The exclusive skill 'Reading Comprehension' is activated.]

The thickness of the story was different. However, there were no special feelings since I already met the 32nd ranked Asmodeus. Asmodeus might've gone up the ranks a lot by now. There were demon kings who had particularly steep growth and one of them was Asmodeus. On the other hand, the demon kings in the lower rankings rarely had a chance to rise.

[Your status has increased greatly and your skill 'Reading Comprehension' is strengthened!]

[Your skill allows you to understand the composition of the story!]

The story that I felt from Amdusias was very dark and worn out.

[The story 'Hell Performer' is yawning while looking at you.]

It was a boring and long story that no longer made me curious about the backstory. This was the story that formed the backbone of Amdusias, Performer of Musical Instruments.

Amdusias asked, [What are you seeing?]

I said it earlier but the stories I accumulated were more intense than theirs. In fact, these words were wrong. There were fierce moments in any story but the comparison of intensity was meaningless in the first place. In this damn Star Stream, the only thing that won was time.

[…I just want to be able to fight.]

After hundreds of years, some constellations were dulled by the stimulation of the scenario. Rather than look for and explore new stories, they entrusted themselves to the flow of the stories they had already acquired. Stop thinking about it.

[The story 'Hell Performer' is moving according to the will of demon king 'Amdusias.]

Those who were masters of the stories were eventually dominated by their stories.

[A person who hasn't lived for 100 years is mocking me?]

Amdusias knew that his anger wasn't entirely his own.

[The story 'Hell Performer' has begun.]

Finally, the concert of hell began. The sound waves filled with the power of the 67th Demon Realm moved through the air.

"Aaaack!"

The incarnations of Seoul shed blood and fell down. The performance of the Hell Orchestra was full of blood and death and there was nothing wrong with it. Nevertheless, I didn't back down. Amdusias was strong but it wasn't to the point where I couldn't beat him.

[Giant Story 'Demon Realm's Spring' is continuing.]

[Giant Story 'Torch That Swallowed the Myth' is continuing.]

My sides and shoulders were wounded by the powerful sound waves but I didn't care. The stories that I and the party members built up were protecting me.

｢Therefore, the man who swallowed God made his own flame.｣

The flames of the torch rose from Unbroken Faith.

[Giant Story 'Torch That Swallowed the Myth' is letting out a wild roar.]

[The great story 'Torch That Swallowed the Myth' is exercising control over other stories!]

The stories I had were gathered around the torch.

[The story 'King of a Kingless World' is agitated.]

[The story 'Person who Opposes the Miracle' is afraid of the giant story.]

[The story 'Giant's Liberator' is following the flames of the torch.]

White flames illuminated all of Seoul. Sparks of probability penetrated my body as the berserk story stretched out from my sword.

The flames of the torch raced through the darkness like turbulent waves and swept away Amdusias' incarnation. The power was so strong that my hand holding the sword trembled.

[Giant Story 'Torch That Swallowed the Myth' is disappointed by your 'status'.]

[Giant Story 'Torch That Swallowed the Myth' wants a fiercer sprint!]

[Giant Story 'Torch That Swallowed the Myth' has complaints about you.]

[Giant Story 'Demon Realm's Spring' is displeased with 'Torch That Swallowed the Myth'.]

The giant stories were inherently different from other stories. The strong stories chose their master and had enormous influence, eventually becoming the master itself. In particular, the Torch That Swallowed the Myth was particularly belligerent. If I showed even the slightest gap, this story wouldn't hesitate to eat me with its own flames.

[Giant Story 'Torch That Swallowed the Myth' is looking at you with greedy eyes.]

[Giant Story 'Torch That Swallowed the Myth' is ending the story.]

Before that happened, I had to tighten the reins on it. I had to hurry with my plan or I might end up the same as Amdusias.

Only ashes remained where the flames of the torch passed. The appearance of the demon king was nowhere to be found. This was the gap in overwhelming force.

[The Performer of Musical Instruments is wounded and has exited from the scenario.]

[You have won the demon king promotion!]

[Your Demon Realm ranking is adjusted!]

[You have become the 67th Demon King!]

[Your reputation is spread throughout the Demon Realm!]

[Several demon kings are amazed by your strength.]

I heard the voice of the dokkaebi.

[The winner of the Representative Exhibition is determined.]

[The sub scenario — Seoul Revolution has ended.]

[300,000 coins will be distributed to Kim Dokja's Company as compensation.]

The indirect messages poured out.

[Constellations of the absolute evil system have sponsored you 100,000 coins for your battle.

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' likes your struggle.]

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is proud of your growth.]

[The constellation 'Mass Production Maker' is nodding in a warm manner.]

[Several demon kings are offering you goodwill.]

Between the pouring messages, I could feel the eyes of the crowd from below the wall. The survivors who lived through Amdusias' attack were watching me. They didn't even know they had been used.

I opened my mouth towards them. [Everyone, it is nice to see you for the first time. I am the Demon King of Salvation.]

The wings of a demon king spread out behind me while horns rose from my head. The surprised people screamed and stepped back. I took one step closer to them.

[Open the walls.]

There was a loud sound as the Factory forcibly opened its walls. The barriers they had been trying to cross opened so easily that the people seemed perplexed.

"W-What…?"

[Didn't you want to come in? Please enter at any time.]

"Is he trying to kill us?"

"He'll kill us! I'm sure he'll kill us!"

Some horror-filled incarnations started pissing themselves at my true voice. I stared at them and spoke in a resolute voice. [I am a demon king but I have never once persecuted incarnations for unreasonable reasons.Kim Dokja's Company has never monopolized Seoul.]

In fact, the door of the Factory was always open. It was the citizens who first distanced themselves and gazed at us with fear.

[The Factory will accept you. I won't spare you support as you go up through the scenarios one by one. I will help you build your story as much as you can.]

The eyes of the people became cloudy at the words that came out of my mouth. Some made disbelieving expressions while others opposed it.

"How can we believe that?"

"T-That's right! You are already too strong. In addition, the constellations…!"

I understood their feelings. Some gaps are awe-inspiring while others created despair. The scene that the incarnations just witnessed was a great story that they couldn't catch up with in their lifetime.

[There is no guarantee that you will be left behind if you start late. The speed at which we go through the scenario is different. I was in the same situation as you a few years ago.]

The constellations of the sky were looking down at me. The beings had been far away even from the first scenario.

[I was an incarnation that lagged behind thousands of years compared to those constellations. Yet I came all this way.]

Those beings were now in reach if I stretched out my hands.

I looked at the people with my horns and wings. [Look at my appearance. Do I look special?]

The people were looking up at me with bemused eyes. It was as if they were looking for something inherently special in my appearance. Someone muttered, "…Can we become that?"

[You never know what will happen before any scenario ends. Don't give up until the end.]

I turned around and spoke final words.

[The front door is open. If you wish, please come in and seek help or advice.]

This might be a fake hope. Perhaps most of them wouldn't climb to the stars but they would be excited by the enchantment when they faced the starlight. Still, what the people needed right now was this fake hope.

Then someone muttered my modifier. "Demon King of Salvation…"

There was a bitter taste on my tongue.

[The demon king 'Devil of Lust and Wrath' likes your deception.]

[The constellation 'Saviour of Corruption' reveals hostility towards you.]

Demon King of Salvation. The Star Stream must be as bad at naming as I was. Many people wished to survive but I wasn't a philanthropist. I only liked the people I liked and saved the people I cared about.

"Dokja-ssi!"

In the distance, the party members were running towards me, including Jung Heewon. I waved lightly towards them.

Then I saw a glittering system message in the air.

[The master of the 73rd Demon Realm, representative of Kim Dokja's Company.]

The moment I was going to check the message, someone spoke from behind me.

[You don't need to read that. I came directly.]

It was a familiar true voice. I stared at him with wide open eyes.

[Asmodeus.]

[It's been a while, Kim Dokja.

[Did you come to give up your ranking?]

[I came here to share a deeper friendship. Aren't we colleague who share a giant story?]

The words weren't completely wrong. In fact, a minority share of the Demon Realm's Spring belonged to him.

[Are you already aware of why I'm here?]

Of course, I knew. Asmodeus had probably come here with the same purpose as the other demon kings.

[Do I have to attend?]

[It is a foolish question. This close to the apocalypse, you should know the answer.]

I was silent as I stared in Asmodeus' serene eyes.

Asmodeus said, [The 'Duet Between Good and Evil' will soon begin. Now it is time for you to choose a side.]

The gaze towards me was inquiring.

Was I 'good'? Or was I 'evil'?

It wasn't only Asmodeus. The stars of the night sky split around me in unison. One side was a bright light while the other side was a dazzling light.

I inwardly sighed. The Duet Between Good and Evil. The implication of this scenario being initiated was simple.

「There isn't much time until the destruction in this world.」

Once the balance between good and evil collapsed, the stars in the night sky would fall one by one. It was fatal destruction that even the big nebulae couldn't escape. If my memories were correct, perhaps the first victim of the destruction—

[The constellation 'Scribe of Heaven' is looking at you.]

It would be the nebula of archangels, Eden.

Chapter 349: Ep. 65 - Good and Evil, V

Duet Between Good and Evil wasn't a main scenario. The classification belonged to the hidden scenario but strictly speaking… the scenario was akin to an event.

I left Asmodeus for the moment and greeted my party members. There were too many things to blindly enter the scenario.

"Hyung! Are you okay?"

The party members had different expressions but the concern on their faces was the same. They probably had many questions.

I was reminded of the situation before I passed out and explained the whole story to the party members step by step. In return for saving my mother and Yoo Sangah, I was hit by the aftermath of the probability storm.

Jung Heewon listened calmly to the story and asked, "…Yoo Sangah-ssi's soul is inside you?"

"To put it simply, yes."

"If there was such a way, why…"

"I wasn't sure about the success."

Jung Heewon sighed and leaned down with her hands pressed against her knees. "Then Sangah-ssi really died…"

"Then is Sangah unni alive?"

Lee Jihye muttered while sitting down. She couldn't seem to believe it and asked again several times. Shin Yoosung and Lee Gilyoung had tears in their eyes. Lee Hyunsung was standing next to them like a bear.

"She is alive. And…" I stared straight at Lee Jihye and said, "I'll revive her again."

Yoo Sangah was obviously alive. However, it was hard to say she was living in her present condition.

Jung Heewon asked, "How? If it is similar to Biyoo…"

"I was thinking of reincarnation but not into a dokkaebi. In the first place, the existences that can become dokkaebis are fixed. The Flood of Disasters was a special case."

The 41st regression Shin Yoosung had been wandering around the Star Stream for thousands of years. However, that wasn't the case with Yoo Sangah.

"To save Yoo Sangah, I need to go to a certain 'star'. It is called the 'island' among the transcendents."

In the distance, Kyrgios pricked up his ears at the word 'island'. Maybe Kyrgios knew about the island. While I wasn't here, he had already gone to the island.

"The problem is that I can't go there right now."

Jung Heewon glanced at Asmodeus who was wandering around the back of the Factory. "Is it due to the invitation that the demon king brought?"

I nodded. My mind was complicated. I had to go to the island to save Yoo Sangah and also participate in the Duet Between Good and Evil. The more urgent thing right now…

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is looking at you.]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is asking for your help.]

My thoughts were complicated. I couldn't believe Uriel would say this. Was the situation in Eden that bad? However, if I attended Duet Between Good and Evil…

「(Dokja-ssi, I told you. A quest should always be preceded by a quest.)」

…Eh?

'Yoo Sangah-ssi?'

「(Yes.)」

'Did you wake me up before?'

「(That's right.)」

It was surprising. How did she talk to me across the Fourth Wall? Even Nirvana couldn't…

「(I'll give you a more detailed explanation later but now you should focus on the problem at hand. I'll cut to the chase. Dokja-ssi must attend the Duet Between Good and Evil.)」

'But…'

Yoo Sangah must be reading Ways of Survival in the Fourth Wall. Maybe she guessed my plans through Ways of Survival.

「(It doesn't matter if my reincarnation is late. You don't know it but this library is pretty comfortable.)」

'But…'

「(In addition, I think attending Duet Between Good and Evil will help when moving towards the next main scenario, right?)」

Yoo Sangah was right.

'Please endure it a bit, Yoo Sangah-ssi. I'll let you live again'.

Yoo Sangah was faintly smiling. I looked back at the party members and outlined the current situation. "The aftermath of the last scenario isn't over but something new has come up. I'm sorry. Even so, I must attend this scenario."

Lee Hyunsung heard my words and puffed up his chest. "Dokja-ssi, I don't care. I have already rested comfortably and want to move quickly."

"That is only Hyunsung ahjussi. I wanted to get some rest…"

"Are we all going?"

"I think we should leave Seolhwa-ssi and Gong Pildu behind. We need a minimum number of people to manage the industrial complex."

The next moment, light flashed in the air.

[The 'Duet Between Good and Evil' is calling you.]

"I guess it has started."

Along with the message, our bodies were surrounded by light. The forced transfer to the scenario began.

The Duet Between Good and Evil was literally a feast of good and evil. A banquet after one long scenario ended in order to identify 'good and evil'.

One might wonder about the meaning behind such an action but for some constellations, this 'discrimination' had a very important meaning. It was because the overall discrimination of good and evil would change the status of the absolute good and absolute evil system, leading to a difference in the next quarter.

[It has been a long time since there was a banquet of this size.]

"Haven't you seen it often?"

[I didn't always attend. This is a bit unusual.]

Asmodeus gazed at the exterior of the magnificent banquet hall and smiled. In fact, the banquet was unusual in not just size but also position. The moment we were summoned, there was a crowd of people walking across the bridge.

The constellations and incarnations passing through the bridge and the dokkaebis waiting to broadcast the scene. In addition, there were the constellations belonging to the independent media of the Star Stream.

Asmodeus said, [Then I will enter first. Don't be uncomfortable and take it easy. Above all, you are the most likely candidate to win a prize this season.]

…Candidate to win a prize?

Before I could say anything, Asmodeus flicked his fingers and his clothing behind a gorgeous black dress. He started to enter the hall by crossing the bridge with an elegant walk.

[Devil of Lust and Wrath!]

[The demon king 'Asmodeus' laughed!]

There was the should of shutters as the bridge flooded with light. Asmodeus smiled at the dokkaebis and glanced back at me with a charming expression.

Once again, I realized what a great existence Asmodeus was. Every one of Asmodeus' steps caused images of the battlefield where he fought to flow. I didn't know how many people he fought to be upgraded.

[The demon king 'Devil of Lust and Wrath' — is currently ranked 13th among demon kings.]

The guy who was 32nd rank not long ago was now at the top of the pyramid. It was a huge upgrade.

"We will enter."

I looked around at the party members but their expressions were strange.

"Ahjussi. Is it okay if we go in?"

"D-Dokja-ssi. I didn't know it would be a place like this…"

Jung Heewon, who visited Eden, took a deep breath to seek calmness but the situation of the other party members was serious.

Lee Jihye was nervously biting her nails while Lee Hyunsung's huge bear-like shoulders trembled. I could feel Shin Yoosung and Lee Gilyoung holding my hands tightly.

"It's fine. We received an invitation."

I was also nervous but I smiled to reassure my companions.

"Don't be intimidated. We've been fighting hard in the meantime. It doesn't matter what they think of us. It is more important that we build a history that doesn't shame us."

"Dokja-ssi is right. What are we doing? We should enter quickly."

The other members seemed to wake up due to Jung Heewon's strength. Lee Jihye struck her red cheeks.

Once the preparations were over, I walked over the opening bridge with my companions. The path was covered with jewels and minerals, including obsidian and diamonds. There was also a river of stories flowing under the bridge.

*

The famous constellations, including Asmodeus, had already passed over so the crowd didn't pay attention to us. To be exact, I wanted it to be like that.

[Ah, that person…!]

[Demon King of Salvation!]

Now my modifier was quite famous and some of the constellations recognized me. At the same time, the dokkaebis broadcasting glanced this side. The exclamation began like a small clap and soon spread throughout the bridge.

[The enemy of Olympus!]

[Kim Dokja's Company has come!]

Attention was concentrated on us in an instant. The huge amount of attention caused the walking party members to be embarrassed. Some of the constellations on the bridge even reached out towards us. Messages poured in from all over the place and placards swayed.

[Handsome Kim Dokja!]

[9158 FOREVER]

I hoped that the party members wouldn't look at them but Jung Heewon spoke to me.

"Dokja-ssi, are you an idol?"

"Heewon-ssi is the same as me."

–Judge of Evil! I've been watching your scenario!

–Heewon unni is so cool!

–I support the love of the Steel Sword!

Lee Hyunsung was startled and glanced over frightfully. "D-Dokja-ssi! They are talking about me."

–The 'Korean History Preservation Association' is supporting Lee Jihye, the successor of the Duke of Loyalty and Warfare.

Lee Jihye frowned. "These guys…"

–Shin Yoosung ☆ Lee Gilyoung are the best!

I felt a strong force from Shin Yoosung holding my hand.

"Ahjussi, I feel terrible."

"Why am I and Shin Yoosung…"

I knew that the reputation of our nebula had increased since Gigantomachia. In fact, the Mass Production Maker had said so. Still, I never imagined the reaction would be so huge.

[Demon King of Salvation, say a few words!]

[How do you feel about being nominated the most likely to win a prize this season?]

The microphones coming from all over the place caused me to panic. When I thought about it, this was the first time in my life that I had received such attention. At this time, there was someone who saved me from being embarrassed by the dokkaebis.

[■■, aren't you getting lost?]

The distinctive platinum hair spread through the air and emerald green eyes blazed with fury.

[R-Run away!]

[Crazy angel!]

The dokkaebis scattered and an archangel in a black silk dress reached me.

[Kim Dokja! You came!]

Uriel hugged me and rocked with me in her arms. I felt happy and embarrassed at the same time and removed Uriel.

"Uriel, it has been a while."

[Yes yes!]

I felt good when I saw Uriel's glittering eyes. I was glad to see her again. I was thankful but… Didn't she call me because Eden was in danger?

"…Excuse me? Don't you see your incarnation here?"

[H-Heewon! Hahaha! Of course, it is also a pleasure to meet Heewon! Let's enter!]

Uriel turned away from the crowd and guided us to the banquet hall. I entered the hall and felt overwhelmed with admiration. The demon kings and constellations were separated on two long tables.

On the left were the 72 demon kings─73 now─ while the right table contained the constellations of the absolute good system, including the archangels of Eden.

Our position meant everyone present was focused on me. It was as if they were asking me what table I was going to sit on.

[The demon king 'Monarch of Stars and Logic' is paying attention to your choice.]

[The demon king 'Black Mane Lion' is wondering about your choice.]

[The constellation 'Scribe of Heaven' is watching you.]

[The constellation 'Morning Star Goddess' is looking at you.]

Sadly, this time there seemed to be no other choice.

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* Official novel illustration (canonical)

Chapter 350: Ep. 65 - Good and Evil, VI

I sighed lightly as I thought about it. I had no idea what to choose but now I was a demon king. Thus, the table I would naturally sit at was…

[Now, come over here. I have prepared a seat for you in advance.]

Uriel started to take me and my companions somewhere. I felt embarrassed as I was dragged by Uriel. Uriel led me in a more natural manner to the table with the archangel. On the opposite table, the demon kings were staring at me.

"No, wait a minute. Uriel. I…"

I sat down next to Uriel and the other members sat behind me in turn. Raphael sat in front of me and stared at me in a dumbfounded manner.

[Aren't you a demon king?]

"Well, that…"

Either way, Uriel sitting on my left was happy.

[Okay, okay.]

I felt something strange and turned to the right, only to see an unexpected person.

"What? You're here as well?"

When did he come here? Yoo Joonghyuk sat there with a peculiar and terrifying killing intent. Next to him was Metatron, who was looking at me with an unknown expression. Based on the seating, Yoo Joonghyuk had been brought here by Metatron. Why did I have an ominous feeling?

Metatron waved to me before shaking his head at Uriel. [Uriel, I understand your heart but the Demon King of Salvation is a demon king.]

[How is he a demon king, Scribe?]

[He is a demon king from his modifier. Send him back.]

[I don't want to.]

The moment Metatron and Uriel were bickering, a dokkaebi appeared in the centre of the hall. The number and size of the horns showed he was an advanced dokkaebi.

[Then from now on…] The dokkaebi's gaze stopped on me. [Hmm. I gave you the notice earlier but someone isn't keeping to it. I would be grateful if the constellations and demon kings sat in their 'own' seat.]

I belatedly identified the modifier written in my spot.

[That seat is reserved for the Saviour of Corruption.]

…It was that jerk's seat. Michael wasn't in attendance. I hurriedly turned to the party members. "You just stay here. That would be safer."

"Then what about Dokja-ssi?"

"I am fine. Don't be too nervous and think of it as a year-end awards ceremony. Everyone has suffered so sometimes there should be a scenario like this."

I told the group members this but I still couldn't relax. According to the development of the original novel, the balance of good and evil would be disturbed by this Duet Between Good and Evil. I smiled at Uriel and crossed the hall alone, everyone's attention on me.

[The demon king 'Duke of Everywhere' thinks you are a lesser demon king.]

[The constellation 'Morning Star Goddess' is shaking her hand in a dumbfounded manner.]

[The demon king 'Devil of Principles' is doubting your dignity.]

I really felt I was sitting in another class alone at the entrance ceremony.

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' likes your stupidity.]

Abyssal Black Flame Dragon? This brat was here too? After a while, I barely found my designated seat.

[What a coincidence. We are paired up again.]

I was sitting next to Asmodeus. "Please don't say such bad things."

Then the banquet began. The first phase was simple refreshments along with the performance of special guests. It really did feel like a year-end awards ceremony. I looked down at the steak on the plate in front of me.

｢ Scream of the Finest Swordmaster on Phille Mountain. ｣

It was all the same taste. I put my fork down and watched the garish stage. The performances by the special guests… there were also incarnations.

[Today's stage is very special. I constantly tried to get in touch with them but they never responded to me once.]

Who was it?

[Introducing the God of Wine and Ecstasy! In addition, the Goddess of Love and Beauty!]

…What? Along with the colourful lighting, Dionysus in a suit and diamond gloves and Aphrodite in a black jumpsuit appeared on the stage. Then music started to play. I looked back and Orpheus' band was playing music.

[Whoa ~ The flashy lights are my own thing.]

Dionysus started singing. The song continued.

[You shall never break the excitement— you can't!]

I didn't know the song.

The constellations seemed excited by the unexpected event. In particular, they cheered at the exciting dances that Aphrodite and her incarnation showed. Meanwhile, some constellations were throwing forks at Dionysus.

Come to think of it, Dionysus had said something after Gigantomachia.

–…Thanks to you, Olympus will be suffering for a while.

I didn't know he meant it like this. Perhaps Dionysus and Aphrodite would receive a large amount of coins for this performance. It was shameful considering Olympus' great pride.

[Whoa! Don't break the excitement! Then excitement… thank you! Please continue to love Bacchus and Goddess Do in the future!]

Dionysus, who was baptized with food for a while, laughing and walked off with spaghetti on his head. Laughing like this… I couldn't tell if he was acting or not.

During the show, I observed the demon kings sitting around me. Of course, I was also being observed. In particular, the lower ranks of the demon kings were polarized.

[The demon king 'Monarch who is a Philosopher about Corpses' is wary of you.]

[The demon king 'Eyes that See the Forbidden' is checking you.]

It was natural since my rank was upgraded from 73rd to 67th in one day. They must be trembling because they didn't know when I would ask for a promotion battle.

[Now, we will proceed with the awards ceremony.]

I sat up straight. From now on, it was real.

[A good story is created through close cooperation between the constellations and incarnations. This season, there were people who showed great chemistry not only between constellation and incarnation, but incarnation and incarnation. Thus, I prepared a small award for them.]

The cheers of the constellations filled the hall. Was there something like this in the original?

[This season's 'Best Chemistry Award' nominees!]

At the same time, videos flashed. Some of the candidates were very familiar.

–We can't do it.

–In any case, we will die if this continues.

Two children appeared on the screen.

[The first candidates are incarnation 'Shin Yoosung' and incarnation' Lee Gilyoung'!]

The spotlight suddenly poured down and Shin Yoosung and Lee Gilyoung's wide eyes were visible. This was something I didn't expect. Come to think of it, I saw a placard talking about best chemistry when crossing the bridge.

The footage featured on the screen was when the two children met the chimera dragon in Dark Castle. There was the video of two children moving through the wave of monsters, plucking up their courage as they advanced towards the dragon. Somehow, I felt touched.

The candidate introductions continued.

[The second candidates are incarnation 'Jung Heewon' and incarnation' Lee Hyunsung'!]

More from our nebula?

–Heewon-ssi, excuse me.

The screen showed the moment when Lee Hyunsung learnt Steel Transformation. Lee Hyunsung voluntarily sacrificed himself to quench Jung Heewon's Hell Flames Ignition after she was affected by Nirvana.

On the other table, I could see Lee Hyunsung blushing and Jung Heewon touching her forehead. They both looked pretty good.

[Next are the third candidates!]

I was shocked to witness the scene.

…What was this?

–Kim Dokja, there is only one chance.

–It has always been 'once' for me.

Once this screen came out, Uriel and the archangels of Eden screamed. The two people on the screen were me and Yoo Joonghyuk. It was the moment we threw a spear together at Ares.

The dokkaebi continued, [The third candidates are constellation 'Demon King of Salvation' and incarnation 'Yoo Joonghyuk'!]

Yoo Joonghyuk's frown deepened even more. This jerk, I didn't like it either. Lee Jihye and Jung Heewon glanced at me before chuckling.

[Then let's announce the winner of the award!]

I inwardly prayed. 'Please not the third candidates. Please not the third'.

[The season's Best Chemistry Award goes to incarnation 'Shin Yoosung' and incarnation 'Lee Gilyoung'!]

The names were released with popping fireworks. Fortunately, the constellations gave the right judgment. The archangels sighed while I could see Lee Gilyoung and Shin Yoosung hesitantly walking to the stage.

"Eh, uh. I mean… thanks… for the award…"

The extremely nervous Shin Yoosung stared at me. Suddenly, Lee Gilyoung took the microphone. "I love Dokja hyung!"

"I love ahjussi!"

"Kim Dokja's Company is the best!"

The archangels clapped like the children were adorable. The children received the prize money and plaque and returned to their seats.

[Hum hum. We will continue with the awards.]

The Best Chemistry Award was special. In fact, most of the awards in the Duet Between Good and Evil were given to the giant stories. Therefore, the people who got a decent 'giant story' in this season were very nervous.

There was a prize money but all the plaques given here were star relics that enhanced their status.

How could the constellations not go crazy?

Asmodeus sat beside me and whispered. [Are you looking forward to it? What type of prize you will receive.]

"I haven't received it yet."

I was sure it was just a newcomer award. In the first place, the awards ceremony couldn't afford to give a demon king the biggest prize.

Asmodeus' expression was curious. [Do you think so?]

I shook my head and watched the following prizes. Putting aside the awards, I wasn't feeling comfortable.

In the first place, Duet Between Good and Evil wasn't just a ceremony. The Duet Between Good and Evil. The banquet of good and evil was to judge the good and evil of the scenario. In fact, this event was a contest of pride between the absolute good and absolute evil systems held at regular intervals.

The giant stories from all over the universe rose in the air.

[The winner of the New Evil Award is the giant story 'Descendant of Chiyou'!]

Descendant of Chiyou. It was a giant story from the Emperor side. Perhaps it was a story that the incarnation 'Feihu' participated in.

From now on, all the giant stories receiving awards would be divided by 'good' or 'evil'. In other words, the prizes given to 'good' and 'evil' were different. I was judged as an evil person and thanks to that, I would be given the prizes of a demon king.

[The winner of the New Good Award is the giant story 'Protector of the Sphinx'!]

Protector of the Sphinx. It was the giant story of Papyrus. It was probably Ranveer Khan. Ranveer Khan seemed to have received the support of the absolute good system because he was a good and generous man.

[Winners, please come forward!]

Feihu and Ranveer Khan received the awards as representatives and gave a brief statement.

Feihu, a master in one-on-one fighting.

Ranveer Khan, a master in fighting against an army. I thought they would've entered the giant stories by now but I was surprised they already collected such great stories. It was different from the original novel.

[Now, the next one is…]

The newcomer awards passed and the awards for excellence in each field were continued.

One was evil and the other was good. There was a dividing line as the awards were given.

Perhaps some of these prizes were strongly influenced by the constellations. This was the constellation of the Star Stream's way of balancing good and evil.

[I sincerely thank the constellations of the absolute evil system and the demon kings who gave me this award. The maternal sponsor behind me, the dokkaebi who operated the channel and…]

The long speech for the Excellence Award finished and I felt a bit strange. I thought I would've already received a prize at this point but all the awards for the newcomers had passed. Kim Dokja's Company didn't even qualify for a newcomer award? The stories were created…

[The winner of this season's Top Excellence Award, the giant story…]

The winner of the Top Excellence Award was Anna Croft's Zarathustra. She didn't attend and it was Selena Kim who received the award. Come to think of it, the grand prize in the original work went to Anna Croft.

All that remained was the grand prize. At this point, I started to be afraid of something.

「The Duet Between Good and Evil determines the balance of good and evil through the Grand Prize.」

In fact, the 'Grand Prize' was the most important thing about this banquet. It was because the 'Grand Prize' determined the power status of good and evil. The giant story of this season was either good or bad.

I looked around and the smiling and chatting demon kings and angels were tense.

[The Grand Prize of this season—]

The dokkaebi's mouth opened. I heard the syllables spoken by him and felt the reality of the world gradually disappearing. The balance of the world was staggering.

[Giant Story of the nebula 'Kim Dokja's Company', the Torch That Swallowed the Myth.]

Chapter 351: Ep. 66 - Beyond Good and Evil, I

I thought it was wrong at first. Then the gazes of the demon kings focused on me, Asmodeus clapped and the expressions of the party members were dazed. It started to feel more real for me.

Kim Dokja's Company won the grand prize. However, an ominous feeling preceded any joyful feelings.

The grand prize? Us? In this Duet Between Good and Evil?

The reason for my ominous feeling was soon revealed.

[The good or evil of this year's grand prize hasn't been determined yet.]

The message about good and evil not being determined yet caused a stir among some of the demon kings and constellations.

[What does it mean that good or evil hasn't been determined yet?]

The dokkaebi replied immediately. [The winners of the past 'Grand Prize' were decided by the consensus of the great dokkaebis, the absolute good constellations and the absolute evil constellations. This time, we couldn't come to a conclusion for the first time.]

[You couldn't come to a conclusion? The great dokkaebis?]

The demon kings and constellations looked confused. The constellations belonging to the absolute good or absolute evil would naturally vote for their faction but the great dokkaebis couldn't come to a consensus?

[No such thing has occurred since the Duet Between Good and Evil started. No, it is the first time since the Holy and Demon War ended!]

[You can't identify it? There can't be such a story. The balance of good and evil must tilt either way!]

The agitated constellations and demon kings cried out. It wasn't that they didn't understand.

Many giant story scenarios were determined by agreement or manipulation of the nebulae. Just as Gigantomachia was sold as a type of tourist product, other giant stories were also sold as preferred stocks, making the good or evil of the story already determined.

Yet out giant story was made by completely breaking down Gigantomachia. The giant story of Olympus' collapse was born out of nowhere. Since it was a story that wasn't scheduled in the beginning, it wasn't possible to decide the good or evil in advance.

The dokkaebi laughed like this situation was interesting. [Well, what can someone like me know about the opinions of the big bosses? In any case, we are here to determine if the story is good or evil. If you have any comments, please raise your hand.]

The intention of the dokkaebi became obvious.

…This son of a bitch.

In the first place, it didn't matter to them if Kim Dokja's Company won the grand prize. The important thing was the good or evil of the story we built, since it would change their status.

[This story is naturally 'evil'.]

The first one to open his mouth was the demon king 'Duke of Everywhere'. Duke of Everywhere. His true name was Furcas, master of the 50th Demon Realm.

[The Demon King of Salvation is a demon king. He is less devious but he is still a demon king of the Demon Realm. Thus, all his actions are evil.]

Indeed, it was pathetic logic for the Duke of Everywhere who couldn't even spell properly. Then someone in the opposing camp raised a hand.

[I disagree with that opinion.]

Guardian of Youths and Travel, Raphael. Raphael shook a finger and started talking.

[For example, if someone steals something and becomes a wicked person. Everyone in the world called him evil so he became evil. Then what if this evil man used the stolen money to save people? What if he saved a lot of people by giving bread to the poor and water to the thirsty?]

I nodded at Raphael's argument.

[Then is he still evil? Is he defined as evil?]

[Well, that…] The Duke of Everywhere was swayed by Raphael's logic.

At this time, the demon king sitting beside me raised a hand and helped the Duke of Everywhere. [Do you want to discuss the paradox of good and evil here?]

Asmodeus' red eyes were incensed. Come to think of it, Asmodeus owed Raphael a debt.

Raphael nodded. [I can do it if you want.]

Raphael lay on a bed of clouds and flicked his fingers towards the air. Then on the big screen of the stage, scenes of me and the party members performing in Gigantomachia started to flow.

Raphael stared at the screen and started talking. [In the end, all existences are made of stories and stories are made up of the sum of the events. However, it is hard to find evil in the events accumulated in this story.]

The paradox of good and evil. This paradox implied that the good and evil of all beings were defined by the stories built up by them.

Raphael opened his mouth and pointed at the split screens. The first screen was a scene where I visited the Underworld and liberated the giants.

[The Demon King of Salvation liberated the underdogs from the unjust story that suppressed them.]

The second screen was a scene where the party members resisted the transition of Gigantomachia from a tourist destination to hunting the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint.

[The members of Kim Dokja's Company responded to the unreasonable scenario composition of Gigantomachia.]

The final screen was a scene where the party members and I burned the torch and opposed Poseidon, a myth-grade constellation.

[They fought against a major object of force and overthrew the dominance of the giant nebula. Look. Is it possible to find any evil in the events that happened?]

Many of the constellations nodded at Raphael's story, which described the details of the scene. On the other hand, the expressions of the demon kings distorted. At least, apart from Asmodeus.

[How interesting. Then the angels are saying that the Demon King of Salvation might be a good demon king?]

[Are you admitting it?]

[Nope. Your words have a loophole. One, as you say, the stories are the sum of the events.]

Asmodeus grinned at me.

[As you know, a story is never a solitary existence. A story is related to other stories and affects it. It is the same for Torch That Swallowed the Myth.]

At the same time, another screen appeared and started to play. It was the scene of the first scenario. The screen zoomed in on the eggs of the pregnant grasshopper exploded in my hand.

[The Demon King of Salvation left the people on the subway to die. He could've saved everyone.]

Some angels looked at me with dubious eyes.

Asmodeus continued speaking. [There was another thing.]

The next scene that appeared was the eighth scenario. It was the scenario where the strongest incarnation in Seoul sacrificed himself so everyone could live. The screen showed my Eight Lives attribute.

Asmodeus kept speaking. [The Demon King of Salvation had extra lives and knew he was the strongest sacrifice. If he wanted, he could've ended the scenario before there were big sacrifices.]

The murmuring of the constellations intensified. The story continued.

[Sparing those he wants to live and ignoring those he doesn't want to live, the Demon King of Salvation is such an existence. He is a demon king who practices the discrimination that you dislike. Discrimination is the most serious sin in the Star Stream.] As if to declare victory, Asmodeus asked a final question. [Then I'll ask Eden. Do you still think the Demon King of Salvation is a 'good' demon king?]

The crowd fell silent. Some of the angels were watching me with suspicious eyes while many demon kings were smiling.

At this time, there was a constellation who rose. [■■, everyone has such a contradiction.]

It was Uriel.

[The important thing isn't the accumulation of sin but the direction of change through these events. The Demon King of Salvation is heading towards the direction of 'good'!]

[These days, angels are very generous with the definition of good and evil. There is a recent rumour that you have a personal crush on the demon king. Is this true?]

[What?]

[Hmm, I guess it's true. Last time you also wanted—]

Uriel jumped out. [This ■ck ■■ now…!]

Enormous sparks occurred around both tables. There was a flurry of curses between the archangels and demon kings and the opinions became turbulent.

I wasn't the only target. Someone attacked Jung Heewon's killing. Someone attacked Lee Hyunsung's cowardice in the first scenario. There was also Lee Jihye who killed her friend. Our lives, the history we accumulated, was being torn apart.

[Giant Story 'Torch That Swallowed the Myth' is revealing its teeth.]

The faces of the party members were gradually becoming pale. They were people who had already been hurt. The people who risked their lives and somehow survived to this point had become the amusement of the constellations.

[Wait! Is it necessary to do this?]

Uriel belatedly noticed something and shouted, but the constellations and demon kings were busy dissecting the wounds of Kim Dokja's Company. In the end, they started to bite at the past of Shin Yoosung and Lee Gilyoung. It was the moment I learnt about Lee Gilyoung's trauma and sponsor.

"Stop it."

At my words, the crowd momentarily turned towards me. I knew it would be dangerous if I spoke the wrong words here.

Now Kim Dokja's Company was like a sailboat placed between two currents. It was a small boat that could sink at any time. However, even a small boat could choose the direction it wanted to go. I was the captain of this boat.

"Isn't this enough? Don't you know that a conclusion can't be reached this way?"

I hadn't intervened because I had been waiting for the constellations and demon kings to realize it themselves.

"Do you think you can decide here what even the great dokkaebis couldn't judge?"

Kim Dokja's Company wasn't good or evil. In the first place, I didn't intend to play with the concept of good and evil set by others.

[Your words are right.]

Unexpectedly, it was the 5th ranked demon king, Black Mane Lion Marbas who spoke. He looked at me and continued. [Surely it is useless to speak here. Stop the useless arguments.]

[Marbas! But…]

[In the first place, I will ask you.] A chill went down my spine. [I will let you decide for yourself. Is this story good or evil? Isn't that why we created this place?]

With this, all the eyes of the demon kings and constellations focused on me. A cold sensation flowed down my spine. Then a system message popped up.

[You have a share in the giant story 'Torch That Swallowed the Myth'.]

[Please determine the good and evil of the story.]

If I chose good or evil here, I would be taking sides with one of the 'good' or 'evil' that they claimed. It would be hard if that happened. It might solve the current problem for Kim Dokja's Company but if we chose good or evil here, a terrible future might occur in later scenarios.

I worried about it for a long time before making a decision. It couldn't be helped, even if I received the criticism of the demon kings and constellations.

"The Torch That Swallowed the Myth is—"

"Good."

I stared at the protagonist who interrupted. The man in the black coat, who had been silent for a while, spoke nonsense. Yoo Joonghyuk kept talking. "This story, it is good."

I was so confused that I closed my mouth. I wondered if Yoo Joonghyuk had gone crazy or if he was trapped by something.

Beside Yoo Joonghyuk, Metatron was slightly smiling towards me. Goosebumps formed on my arm. Don't tell me, the reason why Metatron brought Yoo Joonghyuk…

[Those who have shares in the giant story can claim the right to 'good' or 'evil'.]

The subsequent messages caused the mouths of the constellations and demon kings to drop open.

[Incarnation 'Yoo Joonghyuk' has a 22.8% share in the giant story 'Torch That Swallowed the Myth'.]

[Due to incarnation Yoo Joonghyuk's declaration, the story is tilting in the direction of 'good'.]

It wasn't only me who could define this story as good or evil. It was because everyone in Kim Dokja's Company had a share in this story.

[Do you approve of the story as 'good'?]

Yoo Joonghyuk was looking at me. It was an expression that I couldn't read. He seemed to be asking me what I would do now.

–Crazy bastard! What are you thinking?

I spoke to him through Midday Tryst but Yoo Joonghyuk didn't answer. I watched him and activated a skill.

[The exclusive skill, 'Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint' has been activated!]

[This person is currently in an emotional state that you can't understand.]

…What?

[If there are no objections from another narrator, the corresponding story will be confirmed as 'good.]

[There are 30 seconds before it is confirmed.]

Dammit, I couldn't figure out what the hell was going on. The number counted down and I heard the demon kings screaming.

I stared at the surprised faces of the party. Jung Heewon, Lee Hyunsung, Shin Yoosung, Lee Gilyoung… They were people I wanted to bring to the end of this world.

I clenched my fists. Our story shouldn't be declared as good or evil. If that happened, I wouldn't be able to reach the correct ending of this world. Now that Yoo Joonghyuk declared it was 'good', there was only one way to reverse the ruling.

[The constellation 'Demon King of Salvation' is opening his 'status'.]

Black feathers pierced through my back and small horns rose from my head. The intense sparks caused all noises to subside. I stared at Yoo Joonghyuk and slowly opened my mouth.

[This story is evil.]

Chapter 352: Ep. 66 - Beyond Good and Evil, II

My declaration caused the system message in the air to blink.

[You are currently the best narrator of the story.]

[You have a 33.7% share in the giant story 'Torch That Swallowed the Myth'. Thanks to your declaration, the story is tilting in the direction of 'evil'.]

The confused party members rose from their seats. I raised a hand as if to reassure them. I spoke to Yoo Joonghyuk through Midday Tryst.

–Yoo Joonghyuk, if this continues, our story will be evil. Do you want that?

My share in Torch That Swallowed the Myth was 33.7%. Meanwhile, Yoo Joonghyuk's share was 22.8%. I was 10.9% ahead of him.

[The opinions of the two speakers are in conflict.]

[The narrators should decide good and evil through consensus.]

[If an agreement isn't decided within the time limit, the ruling will be based on the side with the higher number of shares.]

[The end of the ruling has been extended by 10 minutes.]

Yoo Joonghyuk didn't answer. I once again sent him a message.

–I don't know what you are thinking but good and evil shouldn't be decided here. Quickly withdraw the declaration. Then I'll withdraw mine too.

[The constellation 'Guardian of Youths and Travel' is looking at you.]

[The demon king 'Devil of Lust and Wrath' is pleased with your judgment.]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is confused by your judgment.]

I was sorry for Uriel but the story couldn't be determined as good or evil here.

[The demon king 'Ruler of the East Hell' is feeling more favourable towards you.]

The top of the demon kings. The master of the 2nd Demon Realm, the Ruler of the East Hell was watching me with a warm face. They seemed to be misunderstanding something. I wasn't taking the side of evil.

I impatiently cried out again.

–Hey! Can't you hear me?

Then Yoo Joonghyuk moved. Yoo Joonghyuk walked from the table and pulled out his sword.

[The incarnation 'Yoo Joonghyuk' refuses to agree with you.]

I reflexively avoided his sword. In an instant, the table was split apart and the stage became a mess. The demon kings screamed as I also pulled out a sword. Yoo Joonghyuk's Black Heavenly Demon Sword and my Unbroken Faith collided. My wrist throbbed.

"This is crazy…"

The surprised Uriel tried to run this way but a green barrier prevented the constellations from moving.

[At present, the constellations and demon kings attending the Duet Between Good and Evil can't be hostile to each other!]

[The assistance of other people regarded the shares decision is prohibited.]

It was the worst.

[Great Dokkaebi 'Baram' is looking forward to your choice.]

[Great Dokkaebi 'Halong' is looking forward to your choice.]

Even the great dokkaebis exposed their presence. The bureau was paying attention to the good/evil ruling of our story. Perhaps the scenario was now being relayed to the Star Stream through another channel.

I stared at the increasingly raging Yoo Joonghyuk. I was unable to read his face. I didn't know why Yoo Joonghyuk was suddenly doing this. However, I couldn't yield to this guy who knew nothing.

–Yoo Joonghyuk, you might not understand right now but listen to me.

I had to somehow convince this guy.

–If our story is fixed to either good or evil, a terrifying disaster will arise.

According to the original novel, the battle over the pride of absolute good and absolute evil would be huge this season. In the past few seasons, the Duet Between Good and Evil had tilted the balance towards good. In other words, the demon kings were sharpening their swords in this Duet Between Good and Evil.

「 If good wins here, the second 'Holy and Demon War' will start. 」

「 On the other hand, if evil wins, the position of Eden will decrease and its destruction will be accelerated. 」

I hadn't built up enough stories yet for the Holy and Demon War. However, I didn't want to let evil win.

–I'll explain the details later. Just listen to my words…

"Is this your prophecy?"

A shadow of deep disbelief was in Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes. Prophecy. When I first met Yoo Joonghyuk, I introduced myself as a prophet. I didn't know he still believed this but it might work out better. Before I could open my mouth, Yoo Joonghyuk asked me again. "Or is it information from the book called Ways of Survival?"

"What?"

My heart suddenly jumped.

…How? How did he know about Ways of Survival?

[The sponsor of incarnation 'Yoo Joonghyuk' isn't happy with this situation.]

[The constellation 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' doesn't want you to fight!]

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is confused by the unexpected situation.]

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' is watching your decision.]

Sparks flew around Yoo Joonghyuk's body. He frowned like he had a headache. As if rebelling against another will, Yoo Joonghyuk continued, "Will this scenario end safely if I follow your words?"

"Yoo Joonghyuk, you now…"

"Is this the way I will be used in the future?"

Kukukukung!

"Is this how to survive in this ruined world?"

Suddenly, there was no strength in my hands.

[The 'Fourth Wall' is shaking.]

My surroundings shook and a small vibration rose in the depths of my body. The tremors rapidly spread from the epicenter. I grabbed my wildly shaking right hand. I looked up and saw Yoo Joonghyuk staring at the party members.

–Do they know?

How much did Yoo Joonghyuk know?

–Answer me, Kim Dokja.

The energy flowing from the Black Heavenly Demon Sword became stronger. Yoo Joonghyuk had opened up the power of transcendence. It meant he really wouldn't back down from now on.

[The character 'Yoo Joonghyuk' is moving the giant story.]

[Giant Story 'Torch That Swallowed the Myth' is starting!]

I couldn't leave it like this.

[You are the best narrator of this story.]

[You are controlling the story.]

[Giant Story 'Torch That Swallowed the Myth' isn't satisfied with your 'status'.]

[Giant Story 'Torch That Swallowed the Myth' refuses your domination.]

…What? The story didn't listen to me despite my high shares. Our torch, which broke through Poseidon's barrier, wound around Yoo Joonghyuk's

Black Heavenly Demon Sword. The white flame wanting to swallow me was approaching.

[The exclusive skill 'Fourth Wall' is strongly activated!]

「(Dokja-ssi, wake up!)」

Along with Yoo Sangah's words, I released my status.

[Giant Story 'Demon Realm's Spring' is protecting you!]

[Giant Story 'Torch That Swallowed the Myth' is showing hostility towards you!]

The two stories we built together collided in the air. The Torch That Swallowed the Myth and Demon Realm's Spring were like ferocious beasts. The torn strings scattered through the air like blood.

"What are you doing now? Are you crazy?"

[The incarnation 'Jung Heewon' is jumping into the verdict of the giant story!]

"Master! What is happening all of a sudden? Why did ahjussi pick evil?"

[The incarnation 'Lee Jihye' is jumping into the verdict of the giant story!]

"Dokja-ssi! Yoo Joonghyuk-ssi! Both of you, stop!"

[The incarnation 'Lee Hyunsung' is jumping into the verdict of the giant story!]

"Don't bother hyung, you bastard!"

[The incarnation 'Lee Gilyoung' is jumping into the verdict of the giant story!]

"Ahjussi! Avoid it!"

[The incarnation 'Shin Yoosung' is jumping into the verdict of the giant story!]

It was a welcome help. The Torch That Swallowed the Myth was a story involving all of us. In other words, Yoo Joonghyuk and I weren't the only ones who could judge this story.

[The narrators who have entered the judgment, please distinguish between good and evil.]

[If you don't choose good or evil, you can't intervene in the confrontation.]

The party members were confused. They panicked at suddenly having to choose between good or evil. In the confusion, Lee Gilyoung was the first to open his mouth.

"I will side with Dokja hyung."

[Incarnation 'Lee Gilyoung' has a 3.3% share in the giant story 'Torch That Swallowed the Myth'.]

[Due to incarnation Lee Gilyoung's declaration, the story is tilting in the direction of 'evil'.]

I quickly called out to them. "You can't choose evil anymore! Choose good!"

"Huh?"

"Do as I say! Quickly!"

If Yoo Joonghyuk wouldn't withdraw his declaration then there was only one way remaining. It was to perfectly balance good and evil.

The current difference was 14.2%. If the remaining four people's shares were joined together…

"Slowly choose one by one! Yoosung first!"

"Yes!"

[Incarnation 'Shin Yoosung has a 3.3% share in the giant story 'Torch That Swallowed the Myth'.]

[Incarnation 'Jung Heewon' has a 6.7% share in the giant story 'Torch That Swallowed the Myth'.]

[Incarnation 'Lee Hyunsung' has a 7.3% share in the giant story 'Torch That Swallowed the Myth'.]

[Three narrators have chosen 'good'.]

"Stop!"

The last one to choose, Lee Jihye paused at my cry.

[The balance has tilted by 3.1% towards good.]

[If the consensus fails in the next five minutes, the Torch That Swallowed the Myth will be confirmed as good.]

The party members had a bigger share in the story than I expected. There was only Lee Jihye remaining.

"Ahjussi! I'm 5.8%!"

The difference between good and evil was 3.1%. Meanwhile, Lee Jihye had a 5.8% share. No matter what option Lee Jihye chose, it was a situation where good and evil couldn't be balanced.

My brain worked quickly.

…What if I could bring the shares of the other party members to my side?

[Narrators participating in the good or evil judgment can't 'gift shares.]

Damn, this convenient way didn't work. Yoo Joonghyuk's Black Heavenly Demon Sword was flying towards my neck.

"Stop it!"

Jung Heewon, who was able to intervene in the duel, stopped Yoo Joonghyuk's sword instead of me. Lee Hyunsung ran and hugged Yoo

Joonghyuk's body from behind while the children surrounded me like they were protecting me. Lee Jihye stood in the middle with a helpless expression.

"Why are the two of you fighting? Fighting now…!"

Yoo Joonghyuk's gaze alternated between the party members. It seemed like he wanted to say something. No, I knew what he wanted to say.

「 You are being deceived. 」

His trembling eyes were pouring rage towards me.

「 This guy, he deceived all of us. 」

I thought this day would come eventually. In fact, I thought about it dozens of times a day.

"Everybody, get out of the way."

Yoo Joonghyuk amplified his status, blew away Lee Hyunsung, knocked down Lee Jihye and ran this way. Jung Heewon and Yoo Joonghyuk's swords collided. However, Jung Heewon couldn't use Judgment Time and wasn't capable of dealing with Yoo Joonghyuk.

I placed the children behind me and stepped forward.

[The demon king 'Monarch of Stars and Logic' is rooting for you.]

[The demon king 'Devil of Principles' wants you to win.]

[The constellation 'Morning Star Goddess' wants good to win.]

[A large number of constellations and demon kings are watching Kim Dokja's Company.]

They were the messages of the existences watching me walk forward. Why were they so obsessed with good and evil?

[The exclusive skill 'Reading Comprehension' is activated.]

…I already knew the answer.

They were bound to do so.

[Giant Story 'Practitioner of Encouraging Good and Punishing Evil' is continuing.]

[Giant Story 'Guardian of White Evil' is continuing.]

[Giant Story 'More Evil Than Evil' is continuing.]

[Giant Story 'The Suitable Good' is continuing.]

…

Numerous strings were swarming like insects in the eyes of the constellations and demon kings.

It was the stories they had. The stories were controlling them. They were on longer constellations or demon kings.

They only existed to execute 'good' and 'evil' in this world. Most of them were merely breeding tools that the old stories used to propagate themselves. These stories were trying to devour our nebula.

[If the consensus fails in the next two minutes, the Torch That Swallowed the Myth will be confirmed as good.]

I couldn't allow that to happen. I quickly made a decision and shouted. "Jihye! Choose good!"

"Eh? But…"

"Quickly!"

Lee Jihye made a puzzled expression. It was strange that I took her to choose good when it was already the dominant one. Lee Jihye chose immediately.

[The balance has tilted by 8.9% towards good!]

[If the consensus fails in the next 40 seconds, the Torch That Swallowed the Myth will be confirmed as good.]

The difference was even larger. 8.9%… yes, this was for the best.

I took a deep breath and used all my strength to call out the modifier of a certain being.

[Abyssal Black Flame Dragon!]

I knew that he was watching. It meant the occurrences here were known to his incarnation. In this situation, there was only one person who would understand exactly what I wanted.

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is laughing madly.]

Yoo Joonghyuk's Black Heavenly Demon Sword filled with the power of transcendence flew to my neck. It was an inevitable blow.

Then a crack appeared in the ceiling of the banquet hall. Yoo Joonghyuk looked up at the ceiling but it was already too late. The running Yoo Joonghyuk was crushed by the fragments of the broken ceiling.

Some large pieces were avoided but there were too many stones pouring down. I saw a shadow in the dirty dust. The hair was sweaty like the person had rushed here. The bandages half released from the left arm was blowing in the wind.

In the dust, this person smiled as she trampled on Yoo Joonghyuk. "I knew you couldn't do this without me."

[The incarnation 'Han Sooyoung' is jumping into the verdict of the giant story!]

Chapter 353: Ep. 66 - Beyond Good and Evil, III

Under the rubble, Yoo Joonghyuk's hands were sticking out. Han Sooyoung stared down at Yoo Joonghyuk. "This jerk, always appearing and trampling on people… do you feel good doing so?"

[Incarnation 'Han Sooyoung' has an 8.9% share in the giant story 'Torch That Swallowed the Myth'.]

As expected, Han Sooyoung would have the correct amount of shares.

[Narrators participating in the good or evil judgment can't 'gift shares.] It meant that those who hadn't yet participated would be able to exchange their shares.

Han Sooyoung watched me and grumbled through Midday Tryst.

–I lost 0.1% of this story to Lee Seolhwa.

Perhaps Han Sooyoung had adjusted her shares ownership to Lee Seolhwa as soon as she learnt the information here. Then she came straight to this place. Han Sooyoung turned towards the surrounding constellations and declared with a growl, "I am evil. In addition, that fucking Kim Dokja standing over there is definitely evil."

Han Sooyoung made me evil regardless of everything else and continued looking at Yoo Joonghyuk and the party members.

"However, Kim Dokja's Company isn't good or evil."

This person shouting with her short hair flying looked amazing. At this time, Han Sooyoung could be seen as the main character, not Yoo Joonghyuk.

[The time limit has expired and the judgment of good and evil has been finished.]

[A total of 91.8% has participation in the judgment of good and evil.]

[The participation rate of good and evil is 45.9% : 45.9%.]

[Good and evil are in perfect equilibrium.]

The astonished demon kings and constellations were looking this way. I looked back at them and added, "We aren't defined by your definitions."

[Giant Story 'Torch That Swallowed the Myth' is a story that can't be distinguished between good and evil.]

The message drove in a wedge. I could see the dokkaebi in charge of hosting this event smiling. It seemed that he thought it would be like this or perhaps he wanted this ending.

The bureau must be excited right now. It was due to the huge amount of indirect messages entering my ears.

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is satisfied with your judgment.]

[The constellation 'Queen of the Darkest Spring' is proud of you.]

[The constellation 'Father of the Rich Night' is pleased with your mettle.]

[A number of constellations of the neutral system favour your nebula.]

[Constellations of the neutral system have sponsored you 281,000 coins.]

It was expected that the constellations of the neutral system would like this. Some choices would occur while rejecting other choices.

[Someone has recommended your story to the Star Stream.]

[You have acquired a new story!]

Of course, this didn't apply to all constellations.

[Your choice has caused resentment among some of the constellations of

[What…?]

[The good or evil of the story isn't determined?]

The atmosphere of the constellations and demon kings were rapidly changing.

[Constellations of the absolute good system oppose the ruling.]

[Constellations of the absolute evil system oppose the ruling.]

An unusual flow was detected around the two tables, as if a riot would occur.

[Such a thing can't happen! Bureau, judge it again!]

[What the hell is this?]

From the demon kings to the archangels. All the gazes of the attendees were fixed on the dokkaebi. The advanced dokkaebi felt the crisis and responded while sweating. [Sorry, it isn't possible. No one can reverse the outcome of a story that has already been judged. That's the rule.]

Fortunately, the bureau kept to its principles. However, keeping to the principles didn't always bring about a good result.

[…I was going to wait and see this season.]

Things were flowing differently from expectations. The mid and low ranked demon kings rose from their seats and released their status.

[If the targets can't decide good and evil, we have to make a decision in another way.]

Once the demon kings moved, the archangels stood up like they wouldn't lose.

[Many demon kings are showing hostility to the angels of the absolute good system!]

[Many archangels are showing vigilance towards the demon kings.]

[The balance of good and evil is shaking!]

The two camps confronted each other and it seemed they would rush forward at any moment.

I stayed closed to the party members and watched the situation. By my side, Jung Heewon pulled out the Sword of Judgment and spoke in a tense voice. "Dokja-ssi."

"It's okay."

I guarded the party members, who seemed relieved. The Great War of Saints and Demons might take place but such a huge event wouldn't occur here.

[The constellation 'Scribe of Heaven' is dissuading the archangels.]

[The demon king 'Ruler of the East Hell' is controlling the demon kings.]

Perhaps Scribe of Heaven Metatron and Ruler of the East Hell Agares knew this as well.

Good and evil must exist. If the scenario was triggered here, the two camps would be destroyed by a disaster. If I was right, the damn dokkaebis of the bureau would understand this the best.

[The great dokkaebi 'Baram' has revealed his presence on the stage.]

A great dokkaebi appeared like he had been waiting. Great Dokkaebi Baram. I was familiar with him in the original novel.

[Stop it. I'm sure you know that fighting here won't solve the problem.]

The hard voice caused the demon kings and constellations to revolt.

[The bureau can't intervene in this fight!]

[Do you mean to end it like this?]

Some of the constellations and demon kings gathered here were close to the myth-grade. Thus, it was natural for them to not listen to the great dokkaebi. The story might've been different if the dokkaebi king came directly. Complaints came from everywhere and Baram told them.

[There is no reversal of the ruling. In addition, we can't allow hostilities in this place.]

The resolute declaration caused the sparks flying in the air to block the absolute good and absolute evil members. The opposing constellations were about to rebel again when Baram continued. [Your complaint is that the status of good and evil can't be determined. If that's the case, how about one more giant story?]

[…What does this mean?]

[We will open up a previous scenario to determine the status of this season's good and evil.]

I couldn't conceal my confusion at the words of the great dokkaebi. This guy, what now…

[The Star Stream agrees with the decision of the great dokkaebis.]

[The Duet Between Good and Evil wants a new scenario to determine the status of good and evil.]

The probability of the Star Stream was moving. The rivers of the galaxy were flowing towards the desired story of many constellations. The scenario that this probability was moving towards could be found in the hands of the Star Stream.

The Ruler of the East Hell asked, [Do you mean to open the Great War of Saints and Demons now?]

[If you want.]

Baram's declaration caused an uproar among numerous constellations. Baram made an unknown smile as he looked at me.

[However, please set the stage of the scenario yourself.]

* * *

During the intermission, the constellations and demon kings spoke among themselves about where to set the stage for the Great War of Saints and Demons. Fortunately, the hostile gazes poured towards us seemed to relax thanks to the dokkaebi's intervention.

The party members were exhausted by the sudden situation and sat down. Han Sooyoung kicked at Yoo Joonghyuk's hand that was sticking out from the pile of stones. "What is this? Why hasn't he come out yet?"

Yoo Joonghyuk showed no reaction. I observed the hand of the buried man but I was afraid to grab hold of this hand. The words spoken by him were still ringing in my ears.

–Or is it information from the book called Ways of Survival?

Where did he hear this story? How far had the filtering been lifted and how much did he know about Ways of Survival?

Han Sooyoung and I cooperated to bring him out. Yoo Joonghyuk was unconscious. It was strange. He couldn't pass out just because he was hit by a pile of stones.

"…Why is this jerk in this state?"

I looked closer and saw that Yoo Joonghyuk's body wasn't normal. I didn't know where he went but his body was covered in large and small wounds. There were traces of him killing and cutting something. In the past two days, Yoo Joonghyuk seemed to have wandered through a scenario I didn't know about. Under these circumstances, he couldn't overcome his anger towards me and suffered severe injuries.

Han Sooyoung activated Midday Tryst and immediately sent me a message.

–Yoo Joonghyuk has noticed the existence of Ways of Survival.

–I know. Yoo Joonghyuk told me before you came.

I gave a brief overview of Yoo Joonghyuk's words. Han Sooyoung frowned deeply when she heard the story.

–…This jerk, where did he hear about it?

–I don't know. Where have you been?

–I killed the remaining prophets. I wondered if the information leaked from them.

–Did you figure it out?

–No.

It was as I expected. The prophets would become characters once they ran out of information.

–The information didn't leak from the prophets. In my opinion…

I looked at Metatron who was discussing something with the archangels in the distance. Perhaps Yoo Joonghyuk became aware of Ways of Survival through Metatron.

Han Sooyoung said,

–Asmodeus also knew about the existence of Ways of Survival. Perhaps most of the top constellations know.

The top constellations… It was also time for the Seekers of the End to become active. Finally, I could start to see the end of this long-running scenario.

I looked down at the fallen Yoo Joonghyuk. Han Sooyoung stared at me.

–Kim Dokja, think about what's important right now.

I nodded. I looked up and Great Dokkaebi Baram was staring at me.

–We also have to participate in the Great War of Saints and Demons.

–Are you crazy? It isn't a scenario we can enter with our level right now.

Han Sooyoung was right. Originally, the Great War of Saints and Demons was a main scenario in the 80s. I hadn't intended to do this either. It was better to avoid the dangerous scenarios if possible. However, I couldn't do that with the Great War of Saints and Demons. It didn't matter if it didn't wake up but once the scenario occurred, it absolutely couldn't be avoided.

–It doesn't matter if it is a higher-ranked scenario. The problem is the stage of the war.

–What…

Baram clapped in the distance. The constellations sat in place and Baram opened his mouth.

[We will end the recess. Constellations and demon kings, please choose the stage of the scenario.]

As if waiting, the constellations and demon kings stood up and shouted.

[The stage of the Great War of Saints and Demons will be the 14th Demon Realm—]

[Our Guardian Tree is a good giant story stage.]

[What nonsense is that? The stage is…!]

They all tried to make a place favourable to them as the stage. There was also a place I wanted as the stage but no one would support me if I spoke. I thought to myself. How to do…

「(Dokja-ssi, do you want the island as the stage?)」

Then I heard a message from Yoo Sangah in my head.

「(Perhaps I can help?)」

'…Huh?'

「(I found something interesting inside the wall.)」

'Interesting?'

There was no answer from Yoo Sangah. Instead, I heard a rustling sound in my head. After a while, an uneasy atmosphere occurred in the loud hall.

Several constellations were whispering together.

[The information that just came in…]

[What? Is that true?]

I noticed their whispers.

…Were they constellations with the power of 'revelation'? The atmosphere was becoming graver. The whispers spread like waves. After five minutes, even Metatron was making a serious expression. The voices of the arguing constellations and demon kings died down one by one. After a while, they started to glance at each other. It was the demon kings who acted first in the fierce battle of wits.

[I'm sorry, there is a bit of work to do and I have to go.]

[Me too! It is the same for me.]

Several demon kings suddenly disappeared from their seats. I watched their faces closely. They were those associated with the Seekers of the End.

[I'm sorry but I have to leave for a while.]

Once the Morning Star Goddess of the Guardian Tree nebula spoke these words, the situation became a one-sided wave.

[I have a little work too—]

More and more people left and Metatron sighed lightly before glancing at Baram.

[I think you'll have to decide on your own.]

Great Dokkaebi Baram's eyes widened as he looked at the air.

[…Interesting. A revelation at this timing?]

Several constellations noticeably flinched at the word 'revelation'. Baram laughed. […Good. Even if everyone doesn't speak, the stage has already been decided—]

I listened to the words of the great dokkaebi and was in a daze. What the hell just happened? Then pain suddenly shot through my head.

[The probability of the Star Stream is doubting you!]

I perceived a terrible gaze starting at me. It was gazing at me as if it found something suspicious. The gaze lasted for a moment before disappearing.

[The Star Stream has turned its gaze from you.]

I wiped my sweat and cautiously called out to Yoo Sangah.

'Yoo Sangah-ssi? What did you do?'

Yoo Sangah was silent like she was looking for words to explain. Then she said.

「(Dokja-ssi, do you know how constellations read the future?)」

'…I know'.

There were two main ways in which the constellations could read the future. One way was to gather data to measure the future, like Hermes' system. The other way was to receive a revelation like the Moerae, Eden and some of the demon kings. It was a force called 'divine revelation'.

Yoo Sangah searched for words for a moment before replying with a light laugh.

「(Well, I think I became a god.)」

Chapter 354: Ep. 66 - Beyond Good and Evil, IV

At this moment, Bihyung was watching the screen of Duet Between Good and Evil at the bureau.

[The stage of the 2nd Great War of Saints and Demons will be the 'Reincarnation Island' located in the Dark Fault.]

The moment the great dokkaebi's declaration was heard, all the dokkaebis of the bureau were in an uproar.

"No, why the island all of a sudden?"

"Why are the great dokkaebis thinking?"

Even the great dokkaebis couldn't set the stage for the 80th main scenario. If the will of the Star Stream didn't move…

[The Star Stream is willing to open the 80th main scenario.]

[A new main scenario has been created.]

Bihyung was surprised by the system message. "Did the Star Stream really move?"

The series of shocking scenario changes made Bihyung stunned.

"Bihyung! A revelation was just received!"

"…A revelation?"

After a while, a new panel was prepared. The screen hadn't surfaced yet but Bihyung knew what it was.

"…The plate of revelation."

An unknown slab that only the constellations and demon kings who had acquired the power of 'revelation' could see. The material was unknown and even the space and coordinates weren't clearly known. The bureau could only observe the strange object.

Each nebula had a different name for this 'plate'. Divine revelation, a single word, the old devil's whisper…

It was an unidentified object that spoiled the information of the future, forcing the bureau to pay attention to it.

The method that the constellations of the Star Stream used to read the future was simple. Sometimes there was a hole in the plate of revelation and a series of story fragments would be released from the hole. The fragments that spilled out had information about the future. The constellation and demon kings recognized it, combined words and used this to predict the future or read their fortunes.

The stigma called 'Revelation' was made. It was actually just reconstructing these words.

Bihyung asked, "Is there another turn in the plate of revelation?"

"Yes, it has been a problem since it started shaking a few years ago."

The original version of the revelation released future information but it didn't have a significant impact on the bureau's scenario probability. The future reconstructed through the revelations were uncertain and unclear.

However, there had been a 'crack' in this plate since a few years ago. Through that crack, whole information of the future came through.

"A strange hole occurred a few days ago…"

The hole that occurred a few days ago caused a problem in the probability that couldn't be overlooked even by the Star Stream. Information that shouldn't have been passed on crossed through that broken hole without damage.

Bihyung still had a headache when he thought about the work at that time. Strange strings had emerged through the hole for a while.

〖 Three Ways to Survive in a Ruined World. 〗

The name seemed like the title of a book and the constellations of the Star Stream fell into chaos.

–What is Three Ways to Survive in a Ruined World.txt

–Does 'ruin' mean the ■■ of every scenario?

The constellations who neglected the scenarios and remained relaxed started to act like their feet were on fire after this revelation was released. The rumours about the apocalypse spread and there were rumours about the end of the Star Stream.

"The screen is ready!"

Bihyung watched the black-white screen nervously. A few words that emerged through the hole caused the entire Star Stream to shake. What type of revelation would occur this time?

After a while, the screen of the revelation appeared. Then there was a very small hole in the centre of the plate.

"There is no change… eh?"

The next moment, the dokkaebis were astonished by the whitish object that appeared inside the hole. It was someone's mouth.

–Ah, ah… so, um… microphone test?

The dokkaebi cried out, "What is this…?"

The bureau was in chaos as the mouth kept on talking.

–Can you hear me? I'm going to give you a revelation now. I'll only show you for a second so look and remember!

Along with the clear and cheerful voice, there was the sound of pages turning. After a while, fragments of a story passed through the hole.

「How to survive in a ruined world, the third way.」

The revelation appeared clearly. It was truly like a divine revelation.

「That method is on Reincarnation Island.」

The story fragments scattered in the air and the voice said.

–Have you seen it? Then goodbye!

The hole closed and the voice disappeared.

Bihyung muttered, "Oh my god."

None of the shocked dokkaebis of the bureau could open their mouths. Bells were ringing from all over. The unstoppable inquiries of the constellations were pouring in.

The Duet Between Good and Evil was still playing on the panel on the other side.

[I will say it once again.]

The voice of Great Dokkaebi Baram rang out.

[The stage of the 2nd Great War of Saints and Demons will be the 'Reincarnation Island' located in the Dark Fault.]

After the Duet Between Good and Evil, our group immediately returned to Earth. All the way back to the industrial complex, the party members were excited. In particular, Jung Heewon and Lee Jihye were checking the performance of the plaques we received.

[Grand Prize of Duet Between Good and Evil].

In the Star Stream, the 'status' generally rose only through the accumulation of stories. However, there were extremely rare star relics that raised the status without needing the accumulation of stories. This was the case with the plaques awarded at the Duet Between Good and Evil.

"My sword seems lighter… is this enough to be able to swing Hyunsung ahjussi lightly?" Lee Jihye's

murmur caused Lee Hyunsung to tremble.

Certainly, the plaque was more effective than getting two quasi-myth-grade stories. Given that all the quasi-myth-grade stories I acquired were those I gained after suffering and dying, it was a tremendous boost.

[5,000,000 coins Exchange Ticket]

In addition, they received five million coins as prize money.

"Ha, Dokja-ssi… we're rich now…"

"I won't have to worry about coins for a while."

"Kids, how much did you get?"

Jung Heewon was busy asking questions to the children who received the Best Chemistry Award.

"Shin Yoosung, honestly, I was a bit more active. Give me another 100,000 coins."

"What nonsense is this? It will naturally be split in half. It is the same with the story shares."

Lee Hyunsung stopped the children. The party members seemed to be in good spirits for their own reasons, but on the other hand, they were also glancing at me.

「In fact, there is a question that everyone hasn't asked.」

Why did Yoo Joonghyuk and I fight? The party members had seen the scene with their own eyes but no one asked me about it. Maybe they were instinctively avoiding the topic. Perhaps it was their own consideration as they waited for me to speak first.

I was still listening to Yoo Sangah in my head while I carried the unconscious Yoo Joonghyuk on my back.

'…You mean, you leaked the contents of Ways of Survival through the hole in the Fourth Wall?'

「(Yes.)」

'The constellations accepted it as a revelation?'

「(That's right.)」

I didn't understand at first. The information sent out of the Fourth Wall became a 'revelation' to the constellations? In the first place, the role of the 'revelation' in the original novel… no, wait.

'Don't tell me?'

There were many things in my head.

Yoo Sangah asked, 「(Dokja-ssi, have you noticed the Fourth Wall might be the original words?)」

"Yes. I don't know the exact sense but…'

「(Originally, the Fourth Wall is a stage term. A wall separating the play from the wall. The characters in the play would never be able to recognize the Fourth Wall. It is because they don't exist outside the stage.)」

Outside the stage. It was the 'reality' I lived in.

Goosebumps formed on my arms. Indeed, if the name 'Fourth Wall' had its origins in the same meaning as Yoo Sangah's description, it was natural there would be a Ways of Survival inside this wall. It was because the contents of Ways of Survival were created in reality.

In other words, the revelation was a 'spoiler' that flowed from the novel to reality. One couldn't find the source so it became a divine revelation in the eyes of the characters.

Yoo Sangah continued speaking,

「(I always thought it was strange. The filtered information about Ways of Survival was suddenly released… however, that time coincided with when I entered the Fourth Wall.)」

'Coincides?'

「(Yes, the book blocking the hole I entered through was Ways of Survival. The title could be seen very well…)」

Now I understood everything. The reason why the constellations and demon kings suddenly knew about Ways of Survival. It was why the development that wasn't in the original novel suddenly unfolded. The information they knew had all leaked through the hole in the Fourth Wall.

'It is a bit complicated but this is a good thing'.

「(Right?)」

Yoo Sangah replied with a laugh. She was probably thinking the same thing as me.

「(By the way, I can't use it very often. I noticed a lot of looks… oh, I'm sorry. I have to go for a minute because the seniors are calling.)」

Then Yoo Sangah's voice disappeared from my head. She was the youngest member of the library but she had a lot of sense.

In any case, thanks to Yoo Sangah's performance, we got a new card to use. The Fourth Wall allowed me to manipulate the revelations that the constellations received. Until it was revealed to be a false revelation, I could use the information to incite the constellations.

Han Sooyoung walked beside me and opened her mouth. "You haven't spoken in a while?"

"I was just thinking to myself for a while."

"You must have a lot of thoughts."

Han Sooyoung bit her lips and used Midday Tryst while talking.

–What are you going to do now?

–What else? I have to prepare for the next scenario. The Great War of Saints and Demons is the 80th scenario and it will start in a month.

–Apart from that.

Han Sooyoung had a complicated look in her eyes. She was watching Yoo Joonghyuk being carried on my back.

–Do you know what happens when Yoo Joonghyuk will wake up?

Yoo Joonghyuk was aware of the identity of Ways of Survival. I didn't know what he knew but I couldn't keep hiding information from him. He might be shocked and receive a terrible wound but… nevertheless…

Han Sooyoung told me.

–For reference. I am against it.

–What?

–The thing you're about to say.

Han Sooyoung acted like she knew my thoughts. She sighed lightly and looked at the ground.

–With your personality, it is strange that you have been hiding it so far.

Han Sooyoung seemed to misunderstand me. If I could've hidden it better, I would've hidden as much as I could. If possible, until the end of the story.

Han Sooyoung shook her head.

–You can hide it as much as possible. Just pretend you don't know. Pretend to be a prophet, as you have done so far.

–Do you think they will believe it? I have to talk now. It isn't just Yoo Joonghyuk but the other party members as well.

Han Sooyoung's eyes grew bigger at my words.

–What nonsense is this? Why are you going to tell them?

–They deserve to know.

–I tried it before. However, the characters can't know anything about Ways of Survival. They think it is just a joke.

–It might be different now. The filtering is released.

Han Sooyoung opened her mouth before closing it again. Instead of pressing me, she searched the faces of the people who didn't know anything. A faint contempt towards me could be seen in Han Sooyoung's eyes.

–Is it for you or is it for them?

–…

–You have already deceived these people. Now you are going to ask for forgiveness?

–I don't mean to be forgiven.

Like Han Sooyoung, I also studied their faces.

The strong but delicate Jung Heewon. The sincere and unsophisticated Lee Hyunsung. The tough but sweet Lee Jihye. The adult but pure Shin Yoosung.

I looked at their faces and recalled the 'descriptions' I knew. Some of them weren't 'described' and others had different faces from the 'descriptions'. They were faces I knew but didn't know.

Shin Yoosung suddenly looked back and waved towards me. I spoke while waving back at the child.

–…I want to be real companions.

Han Sooyoung was silent for a long time before quietly turning around and disappearing into the Factory. In the distance, a message from her came back like an echo.

–Didn't I say it clearly? I oppose it.

Not long after, we arrived at the Factory and each of us took a rest to recover. That evenng, I summoned all the members of Kim Dokja's Company apart from the unconscious Yoo Joonghyuk.

I had Biyoo block the channel and placed a thick barrier to prevent other constellations from listening.

After some preparations, I looked back at the party members. "I have something to say to you."

I opened my mouth but couldn't speak easily. Perhaps she thought I was playing a joke but Lee Jihye trembled. "Ahjussi, what is wrong with you all of a sudden? You are scary."

I tried to smile at Lee Jihye.

I had been troubled for a long time. I had been certain that this moment would come.

Lee Hyunsung and Shin Yoosung were looking at me with worry. I saw the people who were worried about my first, even in this situation, and bit my lips. "Some of you."

The eyes of the group shook. I saw Han Sooyoung turn away. Then I spoke like I was pulling the trigger. "You are characters of a story."

Chapter 355: Ep. 66 - Beyond Good and Evil, V

The expressions of the party members changed at my words. Jung Heewon's eyes were wide while Lee Jihye looked confused. Lee Hyunsung had big eyes. Finally, Shin Yoosung…

「Kim Dok ja has the wrong id ea.」

The Fourth Wall was heard in my head.

「It isn't too la te now.」

I didn't know if it was the will of the Fourth Wall or the weak part of my mind. The Fourth Wall reflected my feelings to some extent so both might be true. Either way, this time I made a decision.

"I know it is hard to understand my words." I had to tell this story to the group of people. "I'll slowly explain it from the beginning."

I talked for a long time. One day, the novel I was reading became reality. In that story, I met them. I didn't tell them the whole story but at the same time, I didn't lie.

*

I knew about the group members before I met them. I didn't speak properly about the fact that I knew the future. I monopolized information alone and deceived people. I spoke about all of it. It was as if I was bringing out the old darkness.

A little further away from the party, Han Sooyoung was staring at me with a frown. I understood her feelings. It was the same with Han Sooyoung of the 1863rd round.

However, I couldn't live like Han Sooyoung. This story should be done properly. To move forward properly, some stories must be communicated. Someday… just as Yoo Joonghyuk.

「I am a regressor.」

Maybe Yoo Joonghyuk also felt like me. He knew the future, experienced the same story again and again and met the party members in countless rounds. Then… he sent them away. I could understand Yoo Joonghyuk's feelings when he poured out the story without any tricks.

"…Thus, I brought you here."

My story was over. Yet no one opened their mouths after the story was over. It wasn't that they didn't understand my story. It was a long story that even a young child could comprehend. Nevertheless, the party members didn't speak.

I bowed and continued. "I want to sincerely apologize to all of you. I'm really sorry to only be telling you this now."

I wanted to know. What was the group thinking? What were they feeling? Even so, I didn't use Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint. In this situation, it really would be a deception if I read them using this skill.

I wanted to use my own strength without relying on any skills. I wanted to believe that whatever they thought and felt inside, the actions they chose was really their decision.

I slowly looked up and met Lee Jihye's eyes. Lee Jihye's eyes were red. The moment I saw these eyes, I suddenly realized something. I already knew these eyes.

「"Then Master knew all of the future…"」

They were exactly the same as when Lee Jihye heard Yoo Joonghyuk's story. Lee Jihye slowly opened her mouth. "Then until now, you knew all about the future…"

As if the original character was reading the given script, Lee Jihye spoke. I also responded to her like there was a script.

「"That's right."」

"Yes."

Lee Jihye gritted her teeth and told me, "Then now… why are you telling us this?"

The wounded Sword Demon was furious. I read the original novel and could predict what she would say.

「"What the hell are we to you?"」

Lee Jihye's shoulders trembled slightly as she bowed her head. The situation that followed continued to flow in my mind. Lee Jihye would pull out her sword and might attack me because she couldn't suppress her anger.

There were many such occasions in the original novel. However, Lee Jihye chose a way that I didn't expect at all. "Let's say that you knew the future."

"…"

"It was all planned and ahjussi used us for your purpose. Let's say we are characters of that damn Ways of Survival and everything is set!" Lee Jihye was crying, watching me while biting her pallid lips. "Then… why did you throw your life away for us so many times?"

I saw the tears falling down her cheeks and tried to open my mouth several times. It was an unexpected question. It was because it was unexpected that I couldn't answer…

"Answer me! If we are really characters in a fictional novel, why did you die for us over and over?"

It was a question that I couldn't answer with the Ways of Survival that I read.

[The 'Fourth Wall' is shaking violently.]

Lee Jihye wiped her eyes and hit my shoulder as she walked past me. Jung Heewon hurriedly chased after her.

"…Dokja-ssi, we'll talk later."

Shin Yoosung hesitated as she stared at me helplessly before following after Jung Heewon. Lee Hyunsung had blank eyes as he walked out of the room with a bowed head.

The only ones remaining were Han Sooyoung, Lee Seolhwa and Lee Gilyoung. Lee Gilyoung was staring at me with complicated eyes while Lee Seolhwa bowed her head like she was shocked. Han Sooyoung patted Lee Seolhwa's back and snapped at me. "Kim Dokja, leave for a while."

A hospital room. I gazed at my mother's sleeping face. I visited the hospital room in the interlude because the party members didn't return after a long time.

Since the last major surgery, my mother slept like this all day. She had shaded eyes and haggard cheeks. I peered at my mother's face and was reminded of a time when I visited her in prison. What did my mother think when her son visited her and only talked about a novel?

"Your expression is dark."

"…You are awake?"

"I woke up from the moment you entered."

It was a voice that didn't contain any energy. I dragged a matted blanket up and covered my mother's neck. My mother smiled faintly. "It is good to almost die. My son is taking care of me."

"Get better quickly."

"Talk to me. Anything is fine."

I struggled for a moment before opening my mouth. "In the 154th round of Ways of Survival, Yoo Joonghyuk brought up the story of his regression with the party members…"

"Did you talk to the group about Ways of Survival?"

"How do you know?"

My mother stretched out her bony hand and grabbed mine. "You thought they would blame you. You thought they would feel deceived and ask why you hid the information."

"It didn't happen like that."

"You don't know how to seek forgiveness."

I silently nodded.

–Answer me! If we are really characters in a fictional novel, why did you die for us over and over?"

Lee Jihye's voice was revolving in my ears.

My mother said, "It isn't up to you to decide if it is a matter to forgive."

"Then…"

"Maybe the person behind you can tell you."

I turned my head and saw Jung Heewon standing at the door of the hospital room. I excused myself and left the hospital room.

Jung Heewon scratched her cheeks and suggested, "Shall we take a walk?"

We walked down the corridor of the hospital wing. It was a simple corridor where no decorations could be found. It seemed to be Yoo Joonghyuk's taste… this guy had been tinkering with the Factory in the last three years. In fact, the end of this corridor contained the hospital room where Yoo Joonghyuk was lying.

Jung Heewon looked out the window and opened her mouth first. "Thank you… for telling me."

I didn't know how much Jung Heewon had been troubled before saying this. It was worse because I couldn't see her face. The party members could be seen outside the window. Lee Gilyoung and Shin Yoosung were bickering while Lee Hyunsung and Lee Seolhwa comforted Lee Jihye.

"Everyone will be fine. Jihye will take a bit of time but…"

"Heewon-ssi…"

Before I could finish my words, Jung Heewon turned to look at me. Her face was smiling as usual. I closed my mouth and Jung Heewon asked, "Are you surprised because I'm fine?"

"That's not it"

"No, it isn't."

Jung Heewon had long known that I had 'future information'. Perhaps among the characters, she was the person who knew the most about me.

Jung Heewon spoke as she started stretching. "It isn't a big deal. This is a world where monsters and dokkaebis exist… it is something special that turned the novel into a reality."

"…"

"I understand the past now. The reason why Dokja-ssi said I didn't appear in the future. Does that mean I wasn't in the novel that Dokja-ssi read?"

"…Yes."

Biyoo floated like a cloud and moved above Shin Yoosung's head.

Jung Heewon told me, "Then I was able to safely come here thanks to Dokja-ssi."

"That, Heewon-ssi—"

"Thank you for finding me. I'm not being sarcastic. I mean it sincerely."

I knew. I was already familiar with the tone Jung Heewon used to tease me. Even so, I didn't know what to say.

"Don't be gloomy and depressed by yourself and look forward to the future. If you like, give me a promotion faster. Now, this is a handshake to cheer up."

Jung Heewon grabbed my hand with a strong force. Something warm suddenly rose inside me.

I firmly bit my lips.

「Jung Heewon, she isn't okay.」

I could feel the pulse from Jung Heewon's hand. She would also be sad. She would be in pain and it would be hard for her. Even so…

Jung Heewon held my hand tightly for a while before letting go with a smile. Then she asked, "By the way Dokja-ssi… I have a question."

"Yes, ask."

"If this world is a novel, it means there is a protagonist."

As expected, Jung Heewon was sharp. I told the group about Ways of Survival but I didn't say who the protagonist was. However, Jung Heewon was already aware of the identity of the protagonist.

Jung Heewon was staring at the end of the corridor. "Is that why you were fighting?"

"I haven't exactly spoken to him but… it seems so."

"Since you started it, you need to see the end properly. Do you know?"

I nodded.

"That person won't be easy."

I knew. Still, it couldn't be avoided.

* * *

For the next two days, I was in Yoo Joonghyuk's hospital room. I hardly met with other people. I was worried but decided to remain calm. I believed that the people needed time to think. It wouldn't be too late to talk once the party members were ready.

Yoo Joonghyuk still didn't wake up.

"The wounds of his flesh have almost recovered. I thin kit is a problem of the mind."

"A problem of the mind?"

"It seems he is refusing to wake up… perhaps he experienced a severe shock."

Those were Aileen's words. She exchanged the story pack and left, leaving only Yoo Joonghyuk and I in the room.

The floating dust settled on his nose. I opened my mouth while watching Yoo Joonghyuk. "You grabbed me first and dropped me down the bridge."

I knew he couldn't hear me but I still wanted to talk.

「"Get your hand off me and get lost, you damn jerk."

"I believe you. You are definitely a prophet."」

The first time I encountered him on the bridge. Suddenly, a laugh emerged.

"Honestly, you aren't in a position to blame me for anything. You are a regressor… how many people died because of you?"

Once I started speaking, the memories poured out like a waterfall. It was like Pandora's Box. It felt as if a lot of time had passed. I had spent a lot of time with this person.

"I thought I understood you better than anyone but I don't know these days. Why did you do that in during the Flood of Disasters?"

「"…That person is my companion."」

"Why did you call me a companion? You wouldn't say that normally… Stabbing me in Dark Castle… even though I told you to kill me at the time."

「"Kim Dokja! No! Kim Dokja!"」

Every single memory caused numerous emotions to rise. The scenarios, which were really serious at the time, became stories once they were over. We were left with the stories.

"Still, I am grateful for the revolutionary game. I lived at that time because of you. Still, it is weird. Why did you sell my name when hitting the wrong industrial complex? Well… maybe you were trying to fuck with me."

I poured out the things I was thinking about and gradually became sleepy. I hadn't slept properly…

The complaints continued even as my consciousness dimmed. The times I fought with him passed like I was reading Ways of Survival.

The Disaster of Questions. The strongest sacrifice. Peace Land. The tomb of the scenario. The Demon King Selection and Gigantomachia. It was hard to find a battlefield where I didn't fight with him. I thought back on those times.

'Perhaps it will be okay'.

I could convince him somehow if it was the Yoo Joonghyuk I knew. We had never talked about it properly. What if I took the time to explain it step by step? It was Yoo Joonghyuk, not someone else…

I could see Yoo Joonghyuk's back in the distance. I forgot it was a dream and approached him.

'Yoo Joonghyuk'.

At this moment, there was a stinging pain from my head and words appeared. It was a scene from Ways of Survival. The scene where Yoo Joonghyuk was betrayed by Anna Croft and lived miserably.

They were the last words Yoo Joonghyuk left.

「"I will absolutely never forgive you."」

Yoo Joonghyuk turned around and spoke to me. Killing energy was emitted from the Black Heavenly Demon Sword.

「 "Kim Dokja." 」

I felt a coolness from my neck and woke up. I gasped while sweating before realizing it was a dream. The dim moonlight was coming in through the window. It was a bare hospital room.

I slowly rubbed my eyes. Then I realized something was wrong.

"…Yoo Joonghyuk?"

The bed was empty. Yoo Joonghyuk couldn't be seen anywhere in the room. The selected Ringer's solution was floating in the air. I hurriedly got up but I couldn't feel Yoo Joonghyuk anywhere.

On the bed, the pocket watch with the familiar design remained. The remaining time until the Great War of Saints and Demons was 26 days.

On this day, Yoo Joonghyuk left Kim Dokja's Company.

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* Promotional illustration (non-canonical)

Chapter 356: Ep. 67 - Forgotten People of the Scenario, I

It had been a week since Yoo Joonghyuk disappeared. In the meantime, the atmosphere of Kim Dokja's Company changed a bit.

The people were visible reticent. Rather than express it or talk about it, they silently trained. Jung Heewon was one of them. They trained their skills and their bodies… they pretended to do this while watching a certain person. "Ah, I can't stand it anymore! How long will this atmosphere last?"

Lee Hyunsung, who was using Great Mountain Push against the ground, was shocked by Jung Heewon's exclamation while Shin Yoosung's shoulders shook as she used Advanced Diverse Communication. The most surprised one was Lee Jihye who was training in Kendo.

Jung Heewon pressed her. "Jihye, you! Are you not going to talk to Dokja-ssi anymore?"

"…I don't know."

"Are you still angry? No matter what, you should have a conversation."

Lee Jihye shouted, "I'm not angry! If I think about it, it isn't a big deal… it is similar to the prophets. I know ahjussi is a good person. I just don't like the word 'character'!"

It had been a week since Kim Dokja dropped the bomb. The party members thought about Kim Dokja's words in their own way.

In summary, this was the feeling.

On the first day, all party members felt shock.

On the second day, they thought it was similar to what already happened (Jung Heewon said, "Thinking about it, this is the same thing as the constellations.")

On the third day, some people were amazed by the novel (Lee Seolhwa said, "How much importance did I have?").

On the fourth day, they thought Kim Dokja was like a god of this world if he read the novel (Lee Gilyoung said, "I knew that hyung was a god.")

On the fifth day, there were people claiming that Kim Dokja should be the one comforted, not the party members (Shin Yoosung said, "Perhaps he is the one having the hardest time right now.")

Lee Hyunsung heard the story and said, "Certainly, we don't know how Dokja-ssi is feeling now. A few days ago, Joonghyuk-ssi disappeared…"

The party members nodded in agreement with Lee Hyunsung. Eventually, their gazes once again concentrated on Lee Jihye.

"Jihye."

Lee Jihye was red-faced as she yelled. "Ah, I mean! How can I say anything when ahjussi is walking around like a dead man?"

"Still…"

"Then why didn't Dokja ahjussi say anything? He just deceived us the whole time…"

"Jihye." Jung Heewon called out and Lee Jihye bowed her head. Jung Heewon kept speaking. "We can't ignore Dokja-ssi's choice just because we don't understand it. I don't know the reason but it must've been necessary for Dokja-ssi. Dokja-ssi would've thought about it in his own way."

"Unni, do you think we are just characters?"

"I also don't know. However, so what if we are characters living in a scenario? It isn't Dokja-ssi's fault that such a novel exists."

It made sense. Kim Dokja didn't create this world. He was just a reader who accidentally read the novel. Characters in a novel… that's how it was. From the moment this damn scenario started, they were puppets of the constellations. It didn't feel very real to hear such a story now.

Lee Jihye bit her lips for a long time before opening her mouth. "I understand. I'll go and speak to him. Instead, Yoosung and Hyunsung ahjussi should go with me."

Shin Yoosung and Lee Hyunsung glanced at each other after hearing Lee Jihye's words.

"Uh, um. I visited him after dinner yesterday…"

"I talked to him three days ago."

Lee Jihye's face was pale as she looked around the party members. "What? I am the only one who hasn't gone?"

I had mixed feelings about the party members who came to me one by one.

Lee Seolhwa appeared in the middle of the night and inserted a story pack into my perfectly fine arm. Then when I opened my eyes in the morning, there was a huge monster and insect king in front of me.

I was the one who did something wrong so I couldn't figure out how to react when the party took care of me this way.

–If we are characters, Dokja-ssi threw yourself several times in front of these characters. I remember it and I'm sure the others do as well.

Those were Jung Heewon's words.

–Ahjussi, I'm young and I'm not sure why you said that. Still, I know it is very hard for you right now.

Shin Yoosung and Lee Gilyoung had told me.

–Dokja-ssi, my manual doesn't tell me how to deal with this situation. So don't be too troubled and

come back as usual.

Lee Hyunsung was Lee Hyunsung as always.

–I'm not good at comforting people. If I'm really in that novel, shouldn't you already know?

In addition, Lee Jihye…

The comfort accumulated like spring raindrops. It was quiet enough not to notice it was comforting.

Snow was piling up underneath the walls. It marked the winter season. I looked down at the citizens who were in the process of removing the snow. In a world turned upside down and where monsters were rampant, we still had to clear the snow. The snow that wasn't cleared in time would become solid ice and would be a nuisance.

"Are the preparations good?"

I turned around and saw Kyrgios floating in the air. Kyrgios had regained his momentum and had been in charge of training the group's martial arts.

"I'm working hard."

The 80th scenario 'Great War of Saints and Demons' would soon begin. Currently, the maximum scenario we could advance to through the Context of the Constellations was the 65th scenario.

In order words, we had to build enough stories to break through the 65th scenario and reached the second Context of the Constellations. After that, Kim Dokja's Company would also qualify for the 80th scenario.

"The stories are steadily accumulated and we are smoothly clearing the scenario. In any case, the scenarios in the 60s have a similar difficulty apart from Gigantomachia."

From Demon Realm's Spring to Torch That Swallowed the Myth. We secured a different probability than before and cleared the scenarios vertically. In the scenarios in the 60s, there was no nebula that could deal with us.

In addition, the promised advertisement with the Mass Production Maker began and the share prices of Kim Dokja's Company soared. At the same time, the advertisement of the Mass Production Maker appeared on the panel in mid-air.

–The scenario, it has numerous paths.

Along with my voice that was speaking, several cars on the screen were racing towards the portal.

There was only one car that didn't choose the portal. It was the X-grade Ferrarigini that Han Sooyoung was driving.

–Everyone has their own way.

The X-grade Ferrarigini passed the scattered cars and ran through the darkness. The screen zoomed in on Han Sooyoung's face as she lip-synched to my words.

–However, the real power is to run on a road without a road.

The logo of the Mass Production Maker appeared on the black screen.

I felt a bitter taste in my mouth. This old man's inspiration wasn't normal. He used the words he told me in the advertisement. I couldn't believe this advertisement would work on the constellations…

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' likes this advertisement.]

[The constellation 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' wants the X-grade Ferrarigini.]

[Your ad has stimulated the desire to to buy in some constellations.]

…There it was.

Kyrgios clicked his tongue while watching the advertisement with me. The transcendent from Murim seemed unable to accept modern civilization.

"I can't understand. Why ride that machine? I can run a lot faster than it with my martial arts."

"That's true."

"The disciple of Breaking the Sky hasn't returned yet?"

I shut up at the sudden question. He could only be talking about one disciple of the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint.

"I'm not worried because he is someone who will find his own way."

I was worried. I didn't know what that sunfish was doing again. My depression returned as I thought about the regressor. I couldn't completely cover my anxiety despite reminding myself that not many things could touch the present Yoo Joonghyuk.

However, I was forced to believe in him right now. It was like the days when I only knew him in print.

"He will appear somewhere in the next scenario area. He is such a person."

"Reincarnation Island won't be easy."

"I know."

I nodded. Kyrgios was a transcendent and had already visited the Reincarnation Island. Kyrgios' gaze turned to below the walls. I was able to see Jang Hayoung, standing alone a bit further away from the party members.

"Take Hayoung with you on this journey. This guy has made progress in Breaking the Sky. He won't be a burden."

"I was going to take him anyway."

Jang Hayoung was an indispensable figure for this scenario. The place where he got the name 'King of Transcendents' was the Reincarnation Island. I waved lightly and Jang Hayoung, who was looking over here, quickly turned his head away.

I gazed at the distant sky again. I could feel the vibrations of the watch needle ticking around my wrist. There were 21 days until the Great War of Saints and Demons.

I quietly turned on the smartphone and opened the file of Ways of Survival. It was because of this novel that I hurt the group members but it was also because of the novel that I could see them.

In the midst of these contradictory feelings, I opened the section on the Constellation and Demon Way.

The first sentence of the Great War of Saints and Demons began as followed:

「Finally, the season of destruction was slowly coming to this world.」

The nebula Eden.

At the entrance of the martial arts hall, which normally wouldn't be popular, crowds of angels were gathered together.

[Ah, that incarnation is…]

[…That is a human body?]

The angels were peeping at a man with a bare upper body swinging a sword through the air. At first glance, he seemed to just be holding the sword but he was actually cutting the air with the sword. Any angel with good eyes could tell that the blade was pointing down at a very fine speed.

It was Yoo Joonghyuk's repeated training when he wanted to forget time. It was to lengthen the time of the moment and to feel the eternity that was coming at that time.

The surrounding air was roughly shaken by his movements. It was restrained like a crouching dragon. The fact that it was understated meant that there was something that hadn't erupted.

[It's great. Even narrative-grade constellations can't easily rush at you now.]

Yoo Joonghyuk turned his head and saw a pale-faced archangel. The person who recorded everything in Eden. Metatron laughed as Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes asked why he came.

[

I came to give a bit of advice. If you are going to remove your top every time you train, you should move to another place.]

"The probability density of Eden in this place is the most appropriate for training."

[It is thanks to you that the little angels' morals are…]

"Metatron, why did you show me that revelation?"

Metatron knew the other person wasn't listening at all and changed his words.

[I told you it was a bargain. You will side with 'good' at the Duet Between Good and Evil. It was nothing more than that.]

"Are you trying to split apart Kim Dokja's Company?"

[Why would Eden do such a thing?]

"I know that you are paying special attention to Kim Dokja. I guess that you are trying to keep his power in check."

[Is that why you're holding a protest here, to the point of taking off your top?]

"Your words don't make sense."

Metatron shook his head as if he couldn't tell which side made sense. Yoo Joonghyuk kept swinging his sword through the air. It was like he was slowly cutting a virtual adversary.

[If you are going to continue with the illegal demonstration, please leave Kim Dokja's Company officially and join Eden. Then you will be allowed to take off your top—]

"Give me the next chapter of the revelation. Is that all the information you had?"

[Haven't you thought that I might be giving you false information?]

"It is better than the demon kings who lie."

[Is that why you came to us instead of Asmodeus?]

"If the demon kings know the information then you will definitely know it as well."

[Hah…]

Metatron still hadn't forgotten the day Yoo Joonghyuk invaded Eden alone. He broke through the entrance guarded by the Powers Angels and Virtues Angels.

Even the demon kings didn't dare do such a thing. In fact, if Metatron hadn't stopped it then Yoo Joonghyuk would've died in Michael's hands on that day.

Yoo Joonghyuk said, "Give me the revelation. Isn't it enough that I've played your game until now?"

Metatron's mouth twisted unpleasantly. A cold light flashed in Metatron's eyes as he gazed at Yoo Joonghyuk.

[Incarnation Yoo Joonghyuk. The information I gave you isn't technically a revelation. It was information received from a special existence.]

"Special existence?"

[Do you really want to know?]

Metatron stared at Yoo Joonghyuk for a moment before slowly looking up. Yoo Joonghyuk also raised his head.

For a moment, the sky of Eden distorted. Some of the angels around the training hall sat down with a small scream. Yoo Joonghyuk instinctively grabbed the Black Heavenly Demon Sword.

…A demon king? No.

It was more chaos than demonic.

[Your sponsor feels uncomfortable with this heterogeneous being.]

Yoo Joonghyuk blinked and his surroundings changed. It was the centre of the Star Stream. An intangible darkness filled this space.

There was a big existence that was too much even for the transcendent Yoo Joonghyuk.

Yoo Joonghyuk asked, "Who are you?"

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter' is looking at the incarnation 'Yoo Joonghyuk'.]

The darkness spoke.

[It has been a long time, puppet of the Oldest Dream.]

Chapter 357: Ep. 67 - Forgotten People of the Scenario, II

The winter time flowed quickly.

Kim Dokja's Company rapidly cleared up to the 65th scenario and reached the second Context of the Constellations a week ago. We finally succeeded in meeting the minimum challenge condition for the 80th scenario.

[The advertisement payment has arrived from the Mass Production Maker.]

[You have received 2,500,000 coins.]

The nebula's funds accumulated quickly. 2.5 million coins. It seemed that sales of the X-grade Ferrarigini were booming. Now we had been paid a portion of the sales revenue and we would continue to receive more income in the future.

"It's time."

Finally, the day of the scenario arrived. I looked around at the prepared party members. Lee Hyunsung, Jung Heewon, Lee Jihye, Shin Yoosung and Lee Gilyoung. In addition, there was Jang Hayoung…

"Dokja-ssi, is it really okay to leave this way?"

Lee Hyunsung spoke in a somewhat uneasy manner. It was understandable. A week ago, my order was to rest and do nothing until the 80th scenario opened.

"This relaxed discipline doesn't make sense…"

Discipline. It was the words of a true soldier who lost his cartridge and safety pin.

"No matter what we do, it is impossible to catch up with the top ranking constellations. The important thing isn't what we do here but what we do in that place… by the way, I feel like a person is missing."

"Sooyoung-ssi went first. She doesn't listen to orders."

The company didn't have any employees who were good at listening. Well, Han Sooyoung would surely survive.

I turned my head and saw my mother and the other wanderers watching us from the front door of the industrial complex.

"Then, we will be going."

"Take care."

I entrusted the security of Seoul to my mother and the wanderer forces. They were people who didn't feel greedy for the latter scenarios. Rather than clearing the scenario, they were determined to live in their own way. Lee Seolhwa and Gong Pildu decided to stay in Seoul to supervise and manage the incarnations.

"I will leave Seoul to you."

Lee Seolhwa nodded. On the other side of the square, Gong Pildu was surrounded by incarnations targeting the early stage scenarios and was explaining something in a brusque manner.

"The important thing is to seize the best position. You have to occupy the good land before anyone else! Understood?"

…It should be okay.

–I will join later with the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint. Go ahead.

I nodded to Kyrgios in the distance and sent a signal into the air. Soon, there was a low-grade dokkaebi responsible for the scenario transfer.

[Kim Dokja's Company. Are the preparations finished?]

"Start transferring us."

The low-grade dokkaebis recited something and we were sucked into the portal that appeared at our feet. It was a pretty advanced portal which meant I didn't feel dizzy when the space changed. How much time passed?

[You have entered the waiting room for the 80th scenario.]

Rather than the peaceful scenery of Gwanghwamun, a pale marble waiting room appeared. The waiting room was seething with constellations and incarnations who had arrived in advance.

[When will the scenario start?]

[Open it quickly! There is no time!]

There were familiar faces among the constellations. One of them was the Brash Swamp Predator. I thought he was dead because he hadn't been seen since the start of the Demon King Selection but he was still alive.

Jung Heewon muttered from behind me. "There seem to be many great constellations."

"Ahjussi, there is Ranveer Khan and Feihu over there!"

"I can see Papyrus and Tamna."

The members of Kim Dokja's Company stuck to my back like penguins enduring the cold. They seemed like rural people who just came to Seoul.

Lee Jihye licked his lips and asked, "Ahjussi, what should we do?"

"Smile while you can smile."

In the distance, a few constellations from Olympus waved to this side. Dionysus and Aphrodite. They probably didn't come to perform again this time. After that, several constellations from Vedas were soon, including the Supreme God of Light Surya. Maybe Anna Croft and Yoo Joonghyuk would also be mixed in among them.

[The demon king 'Duke of Everywhere' is staring at you.]

[The demon king 'Eyes that See the Forbidden' is checking you.]

As expected, these guys were here as well.

[The constellation 'Guardian of Youths and Travel' yawns as if bored.]

[The constellation 'Saviour of Corruption' is revealing a ferocious spirit towards you.]

The archangels of Eden as well. The scale of the 80th scenario was truly different. We had to now compete with these terrible narrative-grade constellations.

In the centre of the square, a dokkaebi emerged. It was Bihyung.

[Everyone is gathered. I am Dokkaebi Bihyung and I'm in charge of this scenario.]

Generall, this scenario was hosted by a great dokkaebi. It seemed that Bihyung's status in the bureau had increased considerably.

[Originally, the stage of the Great War of Saints and Demons was scheduled for another place. Then Reincarnation Island was selected as a scenario area for special reasons. Well, don't we all have to do what our bosses want?]

Several of the constellations burst out laughing. This was the humour of the Star Stream or the bureau. That Bihyung jerk, he was in a form that wasn't scary.

[Some constellations might be unfamiliar with this stage. It is a very old place and it is rarely used anymore. It has been lost in the flow of the time…]

Along with Bihyung's words, images started to flow on the screens in the sky. The stage of the upcoming scenario was Reincarnation Island.

[We came here to participate in the Great War of Saints and Demons. I don't care about the stage!]

[Don't expect much. This is a world with a bunch of sword masters and 9th circle magicians.]

The constellations spoke sarcastically like they had already experienced the scenario.

Then Bihyung said, [Sword master… this time, you can leave those worries behind. It is because this world view is special.]

Bihyung's words caused a fuss among the constellations but he continued speaking.

[In the days when the island opened, there were no concepts like sword master, 9th circle magician or even magic circles. This is an old island.]

Many constellations listened to Bihyung's words. Those paying special attention were members of the Gourmet Association. Perhaps they knew some information about this island.

[Well, you'll know once you personally experience it. I'll start with the explanation necessary for the scenario. Before entering the main island that is the stage for the Great War of Saints and Demons, you will experience the tutorial area first.]

Soon a map of the island appeared. There was a large island floating in the middle of the universe, with numerous small islands surrounding it.

Bihyung pointed to the outermost islands. [You will start at the island's edge, the small islands. Through this tutorial, you will learn how to adapt to the island. Then you will be given a scenario where you will advance to the main island, the main stage of the Great War of Saints and Demons.]

Based on the explanation, it was an existing rule of Reincarnation Island. It was a welcome thing for me. Of course, it wasn't the same for other constellations.

[Tutorial? We are constellations. Are you joking right now?]

[No, of course, you don't necessarily have to perform the tutorial. There are many ways to go straight to the main island. Therefore, don't be too angry.]

Dokkaebis usually speaking like this meant that if they didn't proceed with the tutorial, the scenario would be like hell. In fact, if they knew what would happen on these islands, perhaps half the constellations here would withdraw their application.

Bihyung noticed my gaze and winked at me. [Originally, scenarios should start without any explanation and mine has been going on for too long. Please pick a small island to start at. If you want to start on the same island, you can choose the same island.]

Bihyung concluded his explanation and the constellations started to pick their place of departure.

My party members picked the same island. There was no need to split apart when we could go together.

Some constellations noticed and choose the island that I chose. They were going to come out like this from the beginning.

I looked around at the party members. "Do you remember what I said yesterday?"

Jung Heewon replied. "Once the scenario starts, we have to run to the middle of the island."

"Yes. Don't think about fighting with other people and run straight to the middle of the island."

This scenario was completely different from all the other scenarios we experienced. It might be the tutorial but there was a chance the party members might not survive. I knew from reading Ways of Survival so none of the party members questioned my suggestion. I somehow felt bitter.

The constellations were ready and Bihyung's words were heard. [Let's start the scenario transfer!]

I held Unbroken Faith in my hands. Every minute in this scenario was important, including the time it took to draw the sword.

"Everyone, let's meet in the village."

At the same time, my party members and I turned into a group of lights.

[A new main scenario has arrived!]

[Main Scenario #80 - Reincarnation Island has begun.]

The message was heard and the darkness became brightly lit. The smell of grass entered my nose. I was thrown into the forest area of the island. I didn't see any of the party members around. They had probably been transferred to other places on the island.

[You are currently in the expedition area of Island 531. Find a village with guides.]

[Hidden scenario - Survival Game has begun!]

At almost the same time, the messages of the dokkaebis poured from the sky.

[It won't be fun like this, right? The taste of survival is a good start. Constellations, please feel like you have returned to the past through a fierce competition for survival!]

[Hidden Scenario - Survival Game]

Category: Hidden

Difficulty level: SSS

Clear Conditions: Enter the island's village or kill your competitors who entered together with you.

Time Limit: 24 hours.

Compensation: 50,000 coins, clear the tutorial area.

Failure: Death

I thought it would be like this. The dokkaebis who chose this island as the stage couldn't afford to let go.

At almost the same time, I felt an ominous presence around me. It was to late to hide my figure.

[The demon king 'Magic Peacock of Geometry' is showing hostility towards you.]

There was a presence in the bushes. It was one of the demon kings who followed me. The demon king of the 65th Demon Realm, Andrealphus.

[Demon King of Salvation. You defeated Demon King Amdusias?]

Dark blue demonic energy was burning from the hands of the colourful feathered person. Andrealphus was a demon king known for having learnt all types of magic.

[Don't be arrogant like a stud horse.]

The peacock-like person spat words out of his beak and ran towards me while chanting a spell. Perhaps he set me as the first hunting game.

I also ran towards him.

Andrealphus muttered, [Your footwork is terrible and your skills are absurd. It is the level of a normal human. You managed to beat Amdusias with only this?]

I ignored him and ran hard. It was much slower than usual because I wasn't using Way of the Wind.

Andrealphus mockingly declared,

[Die.]

The magic he cast was the 9th circle Hellfire. It was literally borrowing the flames of hell and I wouldn't be able to endure a direct hit.

However, something strange happened the moment he cast a spell. The hellfire, which should've burnt the whole forest, only made small sparks before turning off.

[This island's probability doesn't allow the spell 'Hellfire'.]

The confused Andrealphus stared at me. I was now right before his nose.

"This island has no sword masters or 9th circle magicians."

The astonished eyes of Andrealphus grew bigger.

"Then is Hellfire possible?"

It was unbelievable but this was the law of the island. It was the place where the most powerful probability of the Star Stream dominated.

[There is the powerful effect of probability on this island!]

[The Attributes Window isn't available on this island and the overall stats will be reset.]

The system wasn't available on this island.

[The usage of most 'skills' created after the first generation is limited on this island.]

[On this island, the proficiency of stigmas and stories are reset.]

All the fighting skills obtained were useless. Andrealphus, who was belatedly trying to cast a defense skill, got a stiff face.

I ignorantly swung my sword without any skills. The blow, which contained no skill, pieced the heart of demon king Andrealphus.

Unbroken Faith was a few times heavier than normal. My hand holding the sword trembled. The benefits of my overall stats had disappeared.

In the forest, the hot sun was burning my skin. I pulled my sword out of the demon king's dead incarnation body while sweating. It was hard to even hold the sword thanks to my poor muscles.

"This is why I don't like the old stories."

This world had no sword masters, no SSS-grade hunters, no systems and no Attributes Window.

[The old stories are responding to your gaze.]

Reincarnation Island. This was the tomb of the 'first generation stories' that died out in the Star Stream.

Chapter 358: Ep. 67 - Forgotten People of the Scenario, III

Lee Hyunsung had a thought. This must be how his grandfather who fought in the Vietnam War felt.

It was a lush, leafy forest. Lee Hyunsung hid between trees that boasted an unusual size and remembered his survival training.

'Go to the nearby reed forest while crawling low'.

Lee Hyunsung moved through the forest by alternating between low crawls and high crawls. He wanted to run to the fields straight away but there were a few groups of constellations moving.

Lee Hyunsung saw someone moving and quickly hid himself at the base of a tree, holding his breath.

[The Demon King of Salvation definitely chose this island.]

[How are we going to distribute it if we hunt him?]

[The one who cuts off his head will get half.]

There were the murmurs of the constellations. They were all targeting Kim Dokja. He wanted to run out and get their heads straight away.

–Unconditionally run towards the centre of the island.

Kim Dokja had told them. Only then could they survive this bloody survival game. This was the message of a man who knew the future of this world.

He felt he should've asked Kim Dokja more details about Ways of Survival. The more information in the manual, the better. What would happen to his future self and the life he was living…

'It isn't the time to think useless things'.

Lee Hyunsung slapped both of his cheeks. There must've been a reason Kim Dokja didn't tell him those things. Now was the time to focus on the situation.

Rustle. There was another noise from nearby. No voices could be heard. Someone was coming this way. There were cautious movements. It was a person who had the basics of using cover. The sound was getting closer.

Rustle. If they kept coming in this direction, they would encounter Lee Hyunsung sooner or later.

Lee Hyunsung nervously pulled out a dagger. Kim Dokja told them to avoid combat as much as possible but that couldn't always happen.

'I should do it well if I can't avoid it'.

In the past few years, Lee Hyunsung became much stronger than before through training. Now he wasn't the 'soldier who turned away from injustice' in the first scenario.

Finally, the other person was right in front of him. Yet something felt strange. The pattern of a special uniform could be seen through the long reeds.

Lee Hyunsung muttered reflexively, "Heewon-ssi?"

"Uwah!"

The Sword of Judgment popped through the bushes. Lee Hyunsung reflexively bent his waist and avoided the sword. After a while, Jung Heewon's head protruded from the bush. "Hyunsung-ssi? I'm sorry."

"It's fine. Are you okay?"

However, he wasn't able to be glad about meeting his colleague due to the desperate situation. He sighed and saw the two children glued firmly to Jung Heewon's waist.

They were Shin Yoosung and Lee Gilyoung. Lee Hyunsung watched the sickly pale faces of the two children and asked, "What is the status of the children?"

"I don't know exactly. I just met them. They must've seen something shocking."

A shocking sight. Certainly, this island was a strange place. The Heracles Shield on Lee Hyunsung's back was very heavy. It was an item that he normally would've have felt the weight…

Lee Hyunsung carried Shin Yoosung and said, "I think we should go to the centre of the island and meet Dokja-ssi."

"Where is the centre of the island?"

"The direction of the smoke…"

He looked up and saw smoke rising through the big trees. It wasn't too far away. Lee Hyunsung started to move with Jung Heewon. Maybe it was due to the presence of a strong colleague but the heartbeat seemed to be moving at a different tempo.

How long had it been? They soon arrived at the edge of the forest. A large field unfolded in front of their eyes. It wasn't far away from the location where the smoke was ignited. The problem was that there were a bunch of people blocking the field.

Jung Heewon frowned and opened her mouth. "Do you think they are chasing us?"

The constellations armed with weapons and star relics were searching around the field. Among them were people Lee Hyunsung had seen earlier.

"Don't fight and run. It is better to avoid them but…"

Once they entered the field, they would surely become visible. There was a way around the forest but they couldn't guarantee how long it would take.

Then Shin Yoosung opened her mouth from Lee Hyunsung's back. "Ahjussi. Excuse me…"

Shin Yoosung's finger pointed to the forest on the opposite side of the field. Something was running.

There were rough and wild cries. Lee Hyunsung was familiar with the monster species that emerged from the forest. They were monsters that regularly appeared in fantasy manhwa and novels.

Jung Heewon asked, "Aren't they orcs? They are too weak to appear in the 80th scenario…"

Orcs. They were representative monsters that emerged in numerous fantasy genres.

"I've never fought an orc up to now."

It was strange when thinking about it. Orcs were famous monsters that everyone knew about. Yet they made it to the 80th scenario without meeting any orcs.

In the field, the constellations exclaimed,

[Ignoring us to this degree!]

[Releasing this crap?]

They also thought it was absurd. As if there was no need to use a weapon, a single constellation stretched out his fist towards the rushing orcs with an annoyed expression.

They were usually monsters that would be killed in one blow. Yet at this moment, something strange happened. An orc swung its axe and the fist of the constellation was broken.

The moment the bewildered constellation was about to shout something, another stone axe came flying from somewhere. The head of the constellation literally burst apart. The incarnation body of the constellation fell down stupidly. The orcs roared and laughed, turning the field into a terrible place of slaughter.

[Kuaaack!]

The fearsome constellations who could break mountains and split apart the sea. These constellations were dying, their bodies torn apart by only two orcs.

Jung Heewon and Lee Hyunsung fell down as well. It was reality without a sense of realism. It was that easy to die? A constellation? To an orc?

"Run away!"

The orcs tore apart 10 constellations in an instant and were approached this forest area.

Please don't let me meet orcs. I repeated this prayer in my head as I moved through the lush forest.

My breathing was intermittent in this heat and my steps were heavy. I hadn't walked for very long but I was feeling exhausted as sweat flowed all over my body.

I didn't know the absence of my stats would be this great. It was unavoidable with only one point in physique. To make matters worse, it felt like my shoulders were being forced closer together. This was the reality of the island.

Reincarnation Island. It was the place where the oldest stories of the Star Stream were gathered. Here, all the buffs accumulated from outside data were released.

In other words, it was a place where only the innate abilities of the body were available. This was why I could easily defeat the 65th ranked demon king. Many constellations neglected physical training. Then once they entered this island, they made a mistake of misinterpreting their combat power. It was the same for Andrealphus…

[You have killed one competitor to date.]

[You will receive additional rewards when entering the safe zone.]

I tried not to miss the occasional message as I moved through the shade created by the lush trees.

In order to prevent dehydration, I plunged my face into a rare stream and drank the water. It was clear and cold enough that my soul felt purified.

"The first generation water is so clean."

In fact, I wasn't adverse to the old stories.

As a reader, I liked the old stories. A story of heroes filled with dreams and adventures. Fighting dragons in forgotten mountain ranges or looking for a legendary sword with beautiful elves and brave dwarves.

The problem was that I now entered the 'old story'. A world without the power of the Attributes Window and no convenient functions.

The danger here wasn't only the monsters. Since I couldn't receive the effects of the skills, my immune system would decrease and I had to be wary of the cold and diseases. In the original novel, some constellations died after being affected by infectious diseases.

In fact, the following sentence had appeared in Ways of Survival:

「The constellations, who were accustomed to the Attributes Window and the convenience of the system, died powerlessly. They were able to raise a proper resistance to the world that couldn't be read with their sensibilities.」

The constellations, who reigned in the Star Stream, died because they couldn't overcome diseases or orcs. Some constellations couldn't endure the disgrace and took their own lives.

It was funny.

[The participants of Island 861 are wiped out.]

[The participants of Island 1896 are wiped out.]

…It had started. By now, the entire island would be engulfed in a terrible tragedy. The constellations died to lesser monsters that they had been ignoring in the meantime…

[Many constellations are greatly shocked by the difficulty of Reincarnation Island.]

[Many constellations are sending a protest message to the bureau!]

It was useless to protest. The island was originally like this. Demon kings or archangels… anyone could die in this place if they were a bit careless.

I reflexively held my breath as I heard a sound coming from a nearby bush. I only knew one monster on the island that made a cry like this. It was a small monster half my height with green skin.

A goblin. I sighed with relief. It was worth an attempt if it was a goblin, not an orc.

There was a deafening roar. I reflexively swung my sword in the direction of the cry. My body was dragged in the direction of the swing due to my poor strength. Fortunately, the first one who jumped out was hit by the blindly swung sword and rolled on the ground.

The problem was after this.

「One law of the first generation. Goblins will never move alone.」

Two goblins jumped out after the injured goblin and rapidly narrowed the distance, swinging their clubs. The club swung by one of them caused a long scratch on the outside of my left thigh. Damn… in this place, the goblins were scarier than the demon kings.

[The exclusive skill 'Fourth Wall' is activated!]

If it hadn't been for the Fourth Wall, I might've died to the goblins like other constellations. Then an ominous voice was heard.

[The administrator of the island is concerned about the fairness of the skill you are using.]

[The administrator of the island declares this skill isn't available here.]

[The probability of the Star Stream agrees with the administrator's complaint.]

[The Fourth Wall is revealing discomfort.]

「Kim Dokja, sorry.」

'Huh?'

「I have no strength on this island.」

I felt the barrier covering my spirit fading. It felt like a sensation sleeping inside me was activated. At this moment, I realized what was happening.

[The thickness of the Fourth Wall has become thinner.]

[Your mental strength, reinforced by the Fourth Wall, has returned to its original state.]

[The physical pain relieved by the Fourth Wall has returned to normal.

Dammit.

Chapter 359: Ep. 67 - Forgotten People of the Scenario, IV

I swallowed my curses. If the Fourth Wall became thinner…

There was a strange pain during the battle that I had forgotten. The cuts on my shin and arms were sore. My sweaty shirt was more uncomfortable and the heat of the forest made me dizzy. I would've exercised more if I knew this would happen.

A spiked club flew towards my head. I rolled my body and avoided a goblin's attack. My joints creaked as I moved hastily. The goblin followed my avoidance path with the club like they were catching a mole. The fuzz on the back of my hand rose as blood stained the thorny club. It was obviously a smell I've encountered many times but it was strange.

[The Fourth Wall has become very thin.]

[The 'Fourth Wall' is shaking dangerously.]

I jumped up from my position and corrected my sword posture. The two goblins lost their companion and were surrounding me with red eyes. At any time, they would rush forward and kill me. The moment I read this desire, the fear of death came to me.

Beyond the thinning Fourth Wall, the emotions I had ignored were gushing out. The story I looked at was actually something like this.

I controlled my trembling breaths. I had to fight. I could fight. All my companions fought through this fear. I was the only one who cowardly avoided the pain using the wall.

「 Kim Dokja held Unbroken Faith with trembling hands. 」

Let's think. How could I hurt the goblins with my current body? Skills couldn't be used but stigmas were still available. The level was reset but it was possible to use stigmas. The problem was how to apply the stigma. I saw the approaching goblin and cast Song of the Sword.

[This isn't your stigma.]

[The effect of the stigma is fixed to the minimum.]

「 The second day. Sunny. I went out early and checked the weapons. 」

Unbroken Faith emitted a faint sheen and returned to its original state. It would've been nice if a fire arrow emerged, shit. It was comforting to feel that my sword was a bit lighter.

Kieeek?

The goblin laughed at my resistance and swung its thorny club. The club hit the sword and my wrist seemed to break.

The goblins looked sloppy but they were more powerful than humans. They were monsters optimized for survival on this island.

Then the second club flew towards my waist. It was too late to block it with my sword. I swung my feet and kicked the club. There was the sensation of thorns piercing the soles of my feet. I but my lips from the terrible pain. The angry goblins cried out at the smell of blood. If the stigma couldn't be used then I had to try the second method.

[Giant Story 'Demon Realm's Spring' is responding to your will.]

On this island, skills were sealed and the proficiency of the stigmas was reset. This didn't mean there was no power available.

[Giant Story 'Torch That Swallowed the Myth' is responding to your will.]

Something existed even in the first generation without magic circles. It was stories.

[Currently, you can't exercise control over these stories with your power.]

[Your stories are rejecting your domination.]

The problem was that my strength was drastically reduced and the stories didn't listen to me.

[Giant Story 'Demon Realm's Spring' is looking at you with regret.]

[Giant Story 'Torch That Swallowed the Myth' covets your weakened body.]

Blood rose inside me because of the heat. The goblins momentarily shrank back from the power of the stories felt from me but they soon recovered their momentum and rushed forward.

The stigma was blocked and the stories didn't listen to me. I gritted my teeth as I watched the incoming goblins. In the end, there was only the last method. I hadn't wanted to use this if possible.

It happened the moment I firmed up my heart and raised my magic power. A dagger flew through the bush and pierced the goblin's head. The goblin collapsed in front of me. The blade headed towards the other goblin's neck with fantastic swordplay.

I watched the girl's ponytail flying and sighed with relief.

"Ahjussi, are you okay?"

The mud-covered Lee Jihye turned her head and stared at me.

In fact, the use of Song of the Sword wasn't just to confront the goblins. Like the system message stated, Song of the Sword wasn't my stigma. If I used this stigma, the master of it would surely become aware of my existence.

"…Phew, I'm glad it is ahjussi."

Lee Jihye washed her face in the stream. Lee Jihye had also experienced a considerable degree of hardship.

"What the hell is this place? Skills and stigmas are all useless. I would've died if I hadn't received training from Grandfather Kyrgios.

"Are you injured?"

"No. I hid well. By the way, what's wrong with you?"

"It just happened."

I was placing the Cut Medicine received from Lee Seolhwa on my wounds. I couldn't believe I was injured this much fighting the goblins. I couldn't guess how hard it would be in the future.

Lee Jihye watched me and grabbed the Cut Medicine like she was frustrated. "Give it to me. You can't apply it to your back."

Lee Jihye placed the Cut Medicine on my wounds.

"Be gentle. I might die if you press hard against it."

"Don't be a crybaby. By the way, were you this small?"

"My muscle mass was just reduced a bit."

"Your shoulders look similar to mine?"

My pride was hurt so I took back the Cut Medicine. No, I tried to take it back but failed. It was because Lee Jihye was more powerful than me.

Lee Jihye spoke in warning, "If you move, your shoulder will break."

It had been a long time since I felt so helpless.

"Now, it's all done."

The effect of Lee Seolhwa's Cut Medicine was quite good despite the probability of the first generation. It wasn't dramatic but the wounds covered by the Cut Medicine were healing quickly. There were magic and martial arts even in the first generation.

Lee Jihye and I continued to walk through the forest after taking care of my wounds. Fortunately, night was coming. Lee Jihye measured the smoke rising from the centre of the island.

"It seems we will have to camp here today?"

I nodded. We can move all night but night time skills weren't available and we could meet enemies that were much worse than the goblins.

[The night of the island has come.]

[At night, some of the system's functions are restored.]

[The Dokkaebi Bag feature is now available.]

I immediately opened the Dokkaebi Bag and bought a few necessary items. There was portable accommodation for two people and safety devices for securing the perimeter. There ware also recovery items, just in case.

Lee Jihye received the items from me and blinked. "What? You could buy something like this in the first generation?"

"In the end, the coin usage scenarios remain the same."

Whether it was the first generation, second generation or third generation, the essence of the scenario was money. Thus, it was obvious that the use of the Dokkaebi Bag would be granted.

Lee Jihye was setting up the tent and looked at me like I was pathetic. "Ahjussi, I heard you've been to the army. Why don't you know how to set up a tent?"

"It has been a long time since I was discharged. Why are you so good at it?"

"I was in the scouts when I was an elementary school student."

Come to think of it, there was that setting for Lee Jihye. Lee Jihye watched me struggle from the strength reduction penalty and set up my tent for me.

Night in the forest was cold. We gathered the surrounding twigs and lit a fire. In front of the blazing bonfire, Lee Jihye and I were immersed in our own thoughts. I wasn't using Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint but I could see that Lee Jihye wanted to say something. I patiently waited.

Lee Jihye threw a dried branch onto the burning flames and finally raised her courage. "Ahjussi, can I ask you something?"

"Ask."

"When did that novel start?"

I thought this question would come out. I decided to answer honestly. "More than 10 years ago."

My memories were a bit dim but I hadn't forgotten what happened in the days when I first clicked on Ways of Survival.

"How do I appear in the novel?"

The question was normal. I would also be curious if I was in Lee Jihye's shoes. I took my time to recall the description of Lee Jihye.

Admiral Lee Jihye. The girl who pulled out her sword to protect her companions. Her pride was strong but she was more affectionate than anyone else. Her heart was always revealed on her face.

I tried not to touch on Lee Jihye's wounds as much as possible as I carefully chose the details to tell her. Lee Jihye had a suspicious look on her face as she opened her mouth. "It's so good that I feel bad. There was that much detail?"

"The novel is a bit long."

"Even so… Oh, how do you remember all the details?"

"I read it a lot."

"Still, to remember it so meticulously… I feel bad."

This was my only answer. "I was a middle school student at the time and my only hobby was reading the novel."

"Ahjussi was a middle school student? Ahaha, then you were younger than me when you first read it? That's ridiculous."

"Everyone was 15 years old once."

[The constellation 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is raising his head.]

Lee Jihye laughed like she heard something interesting. "That's right. I was also 15 once."

Lee Jihye looked down at her sheath with nostalgic eyes. A small keyring was hanging from the sheath. I read Ways of Survival so I naturally knew the identity of the keyring.

"Are you okay?"

"…Do you know about this keyring?"

"A little bit."

"There is nothing private."

The keyring Lee Jihye always carried with her was given by her friend who died in the first scenario.

The sentences of Ways of Survival passed through my mind.

「"Jihye. Kill me. It's okay."」

Lee Jihye was the wounded Sword Demon. Even if her characterization changed one day, this face wouldn't change. Lee Jihye was a person who never forgot the sins she committed.

"Do you know what happens to me at the end of the novel?"

Lee Jihye's words caused a story I had long forgotten to appear in my mind. I knew the ending of Ways of Survival.

Jingle.

Then a bill ringing entered my ears. It was a sound from the safety device I placed beforehand. The sound of the bell soon continued in a horror-like rhythm, as if to rip off my ears.

Jingle. Jingle. Jingle. Jingle.

Jingle. Jingle. Jingle. Jingle.

"Ahjussi."

Something was coming this way. It wasn't a goblin or orc based on the interval of the ringing. It was a much stronger monster. I gauged the direction of the rising smoke and said, "You will live to the end and be happy. It was the same in the novel."

It was a lie. However, the novel was a lie in the first place. I lived so far to make my lies a reality.

"Run towards the village. I will buy time."

"I don't want to! Ahjussi, you run away! Aren't you weaker than me?"

"You can't deal with this monster. It isn't possible even if we join forces."

Lee Jihye was only able to deal with goblins with her current abilities. I spoke calmly, "Go to the village quickly and get help. That way, both you and I can survive. You can move faster than me."

"But…"

"Hurry! I have some way to avoid it!"

"Really?"

"Of course. Don't you know who I am?"

Lee Jihye nodded as if relieved. "Hold on for a while! I will bring back help!"

A few seconds after Lee Jihye disappeared, a giant green monster appeared in the forest. It was a monster over three metres with a terrifying atmosphere.

Damn, it was a troll, not an orc. I was lying when I said there was a way to avoid it. The entire party couldn't cope with this troll. It would be good if they weren't wiped out.

Grrr…

The troll found me and revealed horrible teeth as it laughed. The troll's iron club was covered with fragments of the constellations, as if it had already broken the heads of numerous constellations.

I smiled bitterly and gripped the sword. I would probably die from just one hit of that club. At least, if there was no one to help me.

Grrrrrrr!

In the first place, this island was impossible to attack in a normal way. As always, there were hidden pieces in impossible scenarios. It was time for them to show up, according to the original novel.

The moment the troll's growl soared into the sound, a piercing sound was heard. A familiar blade was piercing the belly of the troll. It was Lee Jihye.

"I knew this would happen. You are a liar."

「The admiral doesn't abandon her colleagues, even if it means dying.」

This operation was possible from the beginning because I believed in Lee Jihye. The angry troll drew out the sword and made a strange noise. The wound was restored in an instant. It threw the sword and Lee Jihye laughed from beside me.

"Let's die together, ahjussi."

I saw the troll running towards us and laughed too. Lee Jihye wouldn't die. The history of her life would eventually save her. The moment the troll's club fell, a sound was heard from the forest.

…It came. A silver sword split apart the darkness. I watched carefully. The pure sword that wasn't an ether blade cut the fearsome troll's neck like a toy.

「The favourite themes of the first generation forgotten people are love, friendship and romance.」

First generation. One of the oldest stories in the Star Stream. The master of that story was talking. "Sacrificing your lives for your colleagues? This is the first time in 381 years."

I looked closer and it wasn't only one person.

"There was no need to speak. They are such friends."

"Really, there are still good stories out there."

The laughing voices spread out. Something was strange. This wasn't in the original novel. Then I saw the faces of those walking out of the darkness.

"It's been a long time. Has it only been three years in outside world time?"

Surprisingly, it was someone I already knew.

Chapter 360: Ep. 67 - Forgotten People of the Scenario, V

A handsome beard and thick eyebrows. The thick lips that showed a unique, upright personality. The man who appeared from the darkness was exactly the same as when I met him three years ago.

"Goryeo's First Sword?"

"I didn't know we would meet in such a place, Kim Dokja."

A constellation of the Korean Peninsula, Cheok Jungyeong was on Reincarnation Island.

I was indebted to Cheok Jungyeong from Dark Castle to the Demon King Selection. I swallowed down my pleasure. Cheok Jungyeong was a good constellation but his purpose here was unclear. It was time to look at the other person's purpose. It would be difficult if his purpose conflicted with me.

"I was worried because you haven't been sending any indirect messages."

"I have been refraining from broadcasting on the stream for a while."

On closer examination, Cheok Jungyeong's entire body seemed much more refined than before. Something flashed in my mind. "Did you come to the island before the start of the scenario?"

"It's been 15 years already."

15 years? At this moment, a sentence of Ways of Survival rose.

「Reincarnation Island is located in the Dark Fault.」

It might be three years in Earth hour but time within the Dark Fault was a few times faster. In fact, Kyrgios and the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint had also been here. At present, the time density of this island was around five times that of Earth.

"The reason you are here…"

Cheok Jungyeong shook his head. "It might be an outer god but I still wasn't able to withstand it."

There was a scene playing in my head. It was three years ago, the day when the 73rd Demon Realm was destroyed. Cheok Jungyeong lost his incarnation body while dealing with the disaster.

The prideful Cheok Jungyeong was greatly shocked that there was such an existence in the world. Thus, it was even more amazing. The other constellations had their egos crumble at the mere sight of the disaster while Cheok Jungyeong was still trying to tear down the disaster.

Perhaps this was the theme of the constellation called Goryeo's First Sword.

"I felt that I had to train again from the very basics. This island is the perfect place for such training."

Cheok Jungyeong spoke while looking at the people moving through the bushes in front. They had good mobility even in this hot and sticky forest. They were probably the forgotten people of this island.

One of them noticed my gaze and walked over. "You managed to survive. Usually, the constellations from the outside die in less than an hour. Ah, apart from that monster 'Cheok' over there."

"Thank you for your help. I am Kim Dokja."

I deliberately didn't say my modifier. Among the first generation forgotten people, there were many people who considered the modifier to be pretentious.

The man laughed as if he liked my answer. "I have long forgotten my name. That is what everyone does when they're here."

The man spoke and moved ahead. The forgotten. They were those who forgot their names after numerous reincarnations. However, they didn't really forget their names. It was just that reminiscing on the past became too painful.

An old scent was felt from the bodies of the forgotten who were opening the path. A very strong, curved and hardened story.

Lee Jihye whispered, "How are they so strong?"

It was natural to be curious. The forgotten people themselves didn't feel particularly great. Yet they used a single strike to kill the troll we struggled with.

"The quantity and quality of their stories seem better than us…"

"No matter how good the stories, it is useless if they can't take advantage of it properly."

Lee Jihye stared at me with questioning eyes. The moment I tried to speak, I was interrupted by Cheok Jungyeong.

"He's right. Even if there are 10 swords, humans could only hold two swords properly."

Goryeo's First Sword. His body was a sword, his heart was a sword, his story was a sword.

Lee Jihye looked down at her hands like she gained profound enlightenment. In the meantime,

Cheok Jungyeong stared at me with a deep gaze. "You have collected many great stories. You won't fall behind the top rated constellations right now."

"You're overpraising me."

"By the way… you've accumulated too much in a short period of time. Do you know what state you are in right now?"

I closed my mouth. In these eyes, I was currently in a very precarious state.

[Giant Story 'Torch That Swallowed the Myth' is aiming for your incarnation body.]

[The story 'Person who Opposes the Miracle' is doubting your qualifications!]

[The story 'One Who Killed an Outer God' is dissatisfied with you.]

It was the same in practice. I raised the giant stories wrong and almost had my life snatched away by the stories. If that happened, I would become the same as the constellations I met at the Duet Between Good and Evil.

"Don't forget. After an existence creates a story, the story creates an existence."

I already knew. I came to this island knowing it.

"I will keep that in mind."

Not long afterwards, we arrived at the village.

[You have arrived in the first safe zone!]

[You have met the conditions to clear the main scenario of the 133rd Small Island!]

[You have met the conditions to clear the hidden scenario!]

[You have received additional compensation for killing a competitor.]

[Additional compensation is being prepared.]

The village was peaceful. After passing through the main entrance, there was a lifestyle that revolved around a huge hearth in the centre. It was different from city life.

A stay at home woman in scruffy clothes was feeing a cow while a bearded man was doing laundry. There were also children who seemed younger than Gilyoung and Yoosung. It was an incredibly rural village where the first generation forgotten people lived.

「(…It is really amazing here.)」

'Yoo Sangah-ssi?'

「(Ah, sorry. Did I surprise you?)」

'It's fine. Is it okay to talk now?'

「(Yes, it is break time. The wall is also busy.)」

For some reason, Yoo Sangah's voice felt closer than usual. The Fourth Wall had become thinner, making her activities more convenient.

「(This village is like a mural that many artisans painted over the years…)」

I was inwardly amazed as I heard Yoo Sangah trying to find the right words. It was apparently ordinary but as Yoo Sangah put it, the reality of this village was never ordinary.

I might be a visitor but I could tell by the sight of the residents living their lives as usual. They looked bored, as if they had seen this hundred of thousands of times.

[Shit, I almost died.]

[This crazy island… are they really orcs?]

I looked up at the true voices and saw a group of constellations appearing at the opposite entrance of the village.

I quickly looked at the faces of the group. Unfortunately, the faces of my party members couldn't be seen. Instead, I saw an unpleasant guy.

[Demon king 'Eyes that See the Forbidden' is looking at you.]

The demon king with fiery eyes in the shape of a black panther. He was one of those I saw when I visited the 1863rd round.

The master of the 61st Demon Realm. Eyes that See the Forbidden, Flauros. He was the one who died from Yoo Joonghyuk's fist in the 1863rd round.

The demon king followed me to this island. Flauros stared this way with strange eyes before turning his attention elsewhere. It was obvious even without reading his face. He probably judged that this wasn't a favourable place to fight.

Cheok Jungyeong standing next to me would've surely noticed it. I glanced at Cheok Jungyeong beside me. "What did you have to say?"

"It's nothing."

…They were really strong and reliably shoulders. I was envious.

[Is this the end of the scenario? Hey, NPCs. Guide me!]

The constellations entered and the village became a bit crowded. One of the residents frowned at the turmoil occurring everywhere and responded. "This is the end of the small island."

[There is no sincerity in your words. Well, the scenarios are all created by the dokkaebis.]

Now that there were no monsters, the constellations were regaining their spirit.

[The story 'Weak Against the Strong and Strong Against the Weak' has started.]

The voices of the stories were flowing from the eyes of the constellations. As expected, Cheok Jungyeong was correct.

There were no exceptions, whether they were constellations or incarnations. If we didn't live the stories properly, the stories would live instead of us.

[Are there no additional rewards here?]

[Should we search through the houses? There might be some hidden pieces.]

The residents felt tired and replied in a voice that found the situation troublesome.

"There are no such things. The small island scenario is over. Those who want to go to the next scenario should enter the hearth in the centre of the village. It is the portal."

Some of the constellations frowned at the cold tone and Demon King Flauros stepped forward.

[The NPCs are really noisy. It is up to us when we want to leave here.]

Perhaps he was looking for an opponent to go against as he suddenly raised his status.

[I have found a village like this. It isn't bad to rest for a while. Bring out some drinks and food! This body is very hungry.]

The violent words caused the other constellations to laugh. Lee Jihye frowned and came forward. "That—"

"Just wait."

Perhaps there was no room for us to intervene in this fight.

In fact, the villagers weren't fazed at all by the threat of the demon king. The man washing his laundry yawned with boredom. "NPC, always NPC… These days, the kids think of life as a game."

An old man carrying a Korean A-frame said. "It is a strange fate today… I have no enthusiasm and passion."

The woman feeding the cows also added some words. "Spit. This is why I was against opening our island. No matter how urgent the need for coins, do I have to watch these snobs entering? It is better to raise a few cows."

The flowing words were heard clearly. The situation headed in a strange direction and the constellations started to notice.

Flauros let out a roar. [Why are these group of bugs…?]

The little boy sucking candy in front of them said, "You are the bugs who haven't lived for a thousand years."

Flauros' mouth dropped open. He was the one who reigned over the 64th Demon Realm and it was natural for him to react like this. It must be the first insult he had ever received. A wicked expression flashed across Flauros' face.

[The scenario didn't tell me not to kill NPCs.]

The demon king let out a powerful status. The moment he roared and revealed his fangs, all the residents of the village gazed at Flauros in unison.

The man doing the laundry. The woman placing food and water in the trough. The old man carrying the A-frame.

It looked like the whole world froze. The constellations sensed the strange air and faltered. The same was true for Flauros. He was a fairly keen demon king and must've noticed something weird. Perhaps he was thinking this way.

「 What the hell are these guys? 」

However, he couldn't back down here. His ego as a demon king wouldn't tolerate being suppressed by the inhabitants of a small village. In the end, Flauros chose the one who looked the weakest.

[Die!]

Flauros' claws aimed towards the little boy eating the candy. However, this was a completely wrong choice.

「 He clenched his fists. Then the fist was there. 」

Something exploded. The fragments of an incarnation body scattered through the air like fireworks. Flauros' incarnation body lost his head and slowly sank to the ground.

[Eyes that See the Forbidden has been eliminated from the scenario.]

The constellations witnessed the death of the demon king in front of them and withdrew with a shudder.

[W-What? This…]

The residents showed little response to the astonishment of the constellations. It was a serene atmosphere like no one was holding a funeral for the bug. The man started the laundry again and the woman gave water to a cow. The old man shook his head and cutting at a tree.

The kid sucking the candy declared, "Get out of the way. I don't want to see you anymore."

The pale incarnations and constellations fled through the portal. In any case, the small island scenario had ended. There was no reason to hesitate anymore. After disappearing through the portal, there were less than 10 constellations remaining.

[The huge story 'Torch That Swallowed the Myth' wants you to go to the next scenario!]

From the moment I faced this child, my giant stories reacted violently. Maybe they noticed something. I smiled bitterly and approached the child who killed the demon king.

[Giant Story 'Torch That Swallowed the Myth' is threatening you!]

I didn't know that Flauros would be so helpful. I was relieved to find what I had been looking for.

[Giant Story 'Torch That Swallowed the Myth' declares that it will destroy your incarnation body if you keep approaching him!]

I ignored its words and continued forward. The swirling giant story was emitting threatening air currents. I was annoyed by the childish story who thought it was a provocation against him.

"What? Do you want to be like that guy?"

"One Invincible Fist, Yoo Hoseong. "You taught the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint and Kyrgios."

The expression of the child changed. The inhabitants of this place were all 'reincarnators'. Their age couldn't be read from their appearance. The child in front of me was a reincarnator who had lived for at least 10,000 years. The child narrowed his eyes and asked me. "Who are you? What is your relationship with those children?"

[Giant Story 'Torch That Swallowed the Myth' is revealing its teeth to the presence in front of you.]

There was another reason I came to Reincarnation Island. Based on the future battles with myth-grade constellations, I had to obtain something from this place.

I swallowed the rising blood and spoke in a congested voice. "One Invincible Fist, please teach me 'Story Control'."

Chapter 361: Ep. 68 - Inaudible Words, I

Jang Hayoung moved through the forest of the small island and was reminded of Kim Dokja's words.

–You are the hidden card of this scenario.

Before the scenario started, Kim Dokja had called Jang Hayoung separately. Jang Hayoung suddenly heard those words and was embarrassed.

'…He hasn't been interested in me so far'.

Jang Hayoung was sad. No matter how much time he spent with the other party members, Kim Dokja neglected Jang Hayoung. Three years after the end of the Revolutionary Game or the Demon King Selection. Jang Hayoung had long felt alienated. It felt like she had been excluded from all the main scenarios.

–Why didn't you ask me to join Kim Dokja's Company?

This was the most disturbing thing. She wanted to ask. Why didn't Kim Dokja invite her to join the nebula? Perhaps she was forgotten…

[The Unidentified Wall says, "Don't trust Kim Dokja too much."]

"Shut up."

[The Unidentified Wall says, "He is just using you.]

Maybe this really was the case. Kim Dokja was the most practical person Jang Hayoung knew. Nevertheless, Jang Hayoung replied, "Kim Dokja isn't such a person. Why do you hate Kim Dokja?"

[The Unidentified Wall asks, "Do you want to be friends with him?"]

"It would be good if we were friendly… We haven't talked much lately."

[The 'Unidentified Wall' asks, "Why? Do you like him?"]

"I like who I like." Jang Hayoung replied bluntly and bit her lips. "My favourite is the Demon King of Salvation."

[The Unidentified Wall is looking at you. "That's him."]

"It is different! In any case, I just want to get along with him."

[The Unidentified Wall is sighing. "Even if he kills you one day?"]

"Why are you saying such ominous things?"

The Unidentified Wall had never liked Kim Dokja. It was from the first time it met Kim Dokja all the way to the present.

"Don't get in my way. Last time, I didn't get a giant story because of you."

The giant story that told of the victory in Gigantomachia, Torch That Swallowed the Myth. Jang Hayoung had watched through the screen and was overwhelmed, moved and finally sad.

She thought she should've been there. She should've hurled herself into that blazing flame. She should've been part of the giant story. Yet she couldn't.

[The Unidentified Wall says, "Trusting people will only make you disappointed. You have suffered enough in your last life."]

She had no confidence. Would the torch have gone out if she jumped in? What if the giant story was ruined with her involvement? What if Kim Dokja didn't want her involvement?

Jang Hayoung was different from the other party members. She was a resident of the Demon Realm and came to Earth. She wasn't a companion who fought with Kim Dokja since the first scenario. Thus, she couldn't say that she wanted to go together with him.

There was an insurmountable wall between them. It was a wall that couldn't be reached no matter how she tried. Jang Hayoung didn't have a history to share with them.

"This way! Just a bit more!"

"Heewon-ssi, please give me Gilyoung. I'll take him."

"It's okay! I still have enough stamina left."

Voices were heard in the distant bushes. Jang Hayoung reflexively hid herself behind a tree. A wounded man and woman were running while carrying a child on each of their backs. They were people Jang Hayoung knew.

Jung Heewon and Lee Hyunsung. The two of them were being chased by monsters. They were followed by half a dozen orcs and two trolls.

Based on the direction, they seemed to be moving across the field o the source of the smoke. It was the wrong choice. The direction they were heading in had more fearsome monsters than orcs and trolls. If this continued, they would be wiped out.

Jang Hayoung reflexively clenched her fists and got up. To be exact, she tried to get up.

[The Unidentified Wall says, "Don't save them."]

"What? What nonsense is this?"

[The Unidentified Wall says, "If they die here, you can be Kim Dokja's only friend.]

At almost the same time, the running Jung Heewon tripped over a stone and fell. Jung Heewon and Lee Gilyoung fell onto the ground. The orc close behind them raised a glaive. It was too late to evade.

Jung Heewon shouted, "Gilyoung! Run!"

Jang Hayoung looked at the falling glaive and thought. Maybe the Unidentified Wall was right. If these people died here…

–Thank you.

The conversation she had with Kim Dokja before coming here flashed in her mind.

–For what?

–The words you said at that time.

Kim Dokja muttered with his usual distant face.

–You said it. Even if the other side of the wall can't hear it… still, leave something on the wall.

Jang Hayoung had wondered. Did she say that? When?

…Was she drunk?

Kim Dokja continued.

–Thus, I'm doing it. As you said, one day somebody might look at the traces on the wall.

Jang Hayoung could see Jung Heewon closing her eyes as the glaive fell. Lee Hyunsung was shouting something while Jung Heewon covered Lee Gilyoung.

By the time she came to her senses, Jang Hayoung was already running.

[Your new attribute is preparing to bloom.]

Her fist stretched out. The orc's glaive broke like straw before her transcendent fist. Jung Heewon stared up at her with wide eyes.

Jang Hayoung looked down at this person and thought. 'Fool…'

Kim Dokja wouldn't recognize their feelings. The Demon King of Salvation was a demon king, not a god. He would have no interest in what they did. However, just because it couldn't be communicated didn't mean their hearts weren't there.

Jang Hayoung stood as if guarding the party members and said, "Leave it to me from now on."

It wasn't too late to make history from now on.

She still had a lot of time.

I breathed out and opened my eyes.

[Exclusive skill, Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint stage 3 has been turned off.]

[Exiting the third person viewpoint.]

Fortunately, Jang Hayoung met with some of our companions. I was nervous that she would be delayed but luckily, it went according to plan. They met with Jang Hayoung and now they would be safe.

I raised my stiff body and reconfirmed the message in front of me.

[You have earned the right to use the skill Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint as a reward for clearing the hidden scenario.]

It wasn't possible to use skills on Reincarnation Island. The story was different after completing the hidden scenario, Survival Game.

[The exclusive skill 'Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint' is fixed at the lowest level.]

[A system error has occurred. There is no level concept for this skill.]

[This skill isn't affected by the first generation probability.]

At first, I thought it would be better to get the license for Bookmark. Then I thought about it and Bookmark was a skill that borrowed other people's skills.

In other words, if I got a license for Bookmark but no additional license for the other person's skill, Bookmark would be useless.

It was an island with too many constraints but it couldn't be helped. The thing I needed to go on this island was more important than skills.

I heard Lee Jihye's voice in the distance. "Great Great Master!"

It was already the second day. Lee Jihye was chasing One Invincible Fist Yoo Hoseong around. "Great Great Master! Please tell me that story!"

It was the same with Yoo Hoseong gave a cow food.

"Just one phrase! I can really learn well."

Lee Jihye annoyed Yoo Hoseong even when doing his laundry or cutting firewood.

"How did you do that yesterday? You stretched out your fist and his head exploded!"

Of course, Yoo Hoseong didn't say anything. I thought it wouldn't be easy to learn Story Control. it took a long time for Kyrgios and the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint to learn this technique.

Story Control. It was the name of a pure technique, not a skill or stigma. There were many explanations for it in Ways of Survival but I didn't know it precisely because there were many voices. Thus, I was actually a bit worried.

[Giant Story 'Torch That Swallowed the Myth' is growling.]

…I had to do something about this brat soon.

It was this evening that Yoo Hoseong first became irritated. "Stop chasing me. In addition, why I am your Great Great Master?"

"Well… you are the master of my master's teacher!"

I smiled as I heard Lee Jihye's words. It was true. Lee Jihye's master was Yoo Joonghyuk, Yoo Joonghyuk's master was the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint and the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint's master was One Invincible Fist Yoo Hoseong.

Yoo Hoseong stared at Lee Jihye and sighed. "It isn't something you can learn. Those like you who are accustomed to the system won't see any effect, even if you train for 100 days."

"You taught Great Master!"

"They were transcendents without any sponsors. They are different from you."

It was a sober refusal.

"You never know! I'll do exactly as you tell me!"

"Your position is wrong from the beginning. This isn't something you can learn just be doing as I say. Have you felt nothing while following me for two days?"

Yoo Joonghyuk's great master (they even had the same surname) gave an unlucky smile. In fact, I knew. Yoo Hoseong was testing us the whole time.

"Haven't you heard anything here?"

Lee Jihye and I looked at the surrounding scenery at the same time. The man cleaning up the pig's poop stared at me, like he was asking what I was looking at.

[The story 'Master of Cleaning Defecation' is determined to live happily today.]

The woman harvesting the crops was drinking rice wine while humming a song.

[The story 'Master of Labour' is humming while helping its master's work.]

The old man carrying the axe sighed and sat down on the ground.

[The story 'Millennium Woodcutter' is saying that young people these days don't know how to respect adults.]

There were no great stories. They were stories made by cleaning up animal poop, singing while working or cutting wood. These stories were different from other stories that I knew. There was a strange harmony in the stories.

They felt different from the stories seeking power or the stories that tried to dominate their master. An ensemble of one story and one being created over many years.

Yoo Hoseong said, "It takes 10 years, 100 years, 1000 years to obtain only one sentence. Those are real stories."

Real stories. It was an interesting expression.

"Don't you have stories? Train well in that method. It is useless to learn other stories now."

"But… I can't become as strong as you."

"That depends on what you do. The important thing is to look at the story correctly."

"Look at it correctly?"

"A story that is too big makes it impossible to know the direction of the story."

I had heard such cryptic words before. Was it from Lycaon when learning Way of the Wind? I had this thought and suddenly started to worry. Could I learn Story Control when I couldn't even learn Way of the Wind? I was troubled when hearing people talk about talent.

Yoo Hoseong sighed and opened his mouth again. "Phew, these damn kids. I'll tell you just once."

At these words, Lee Jihye sat in front of him like a demure student. I also approached and listened to his story. "What do you think is a story?"

Lee Jihye rolled her eyes and answered, "Um… a tale?"

"Pitiful."

"Don't just scold me. Let me know!"

"I have to explain from the basics." Yoo Hoseong clicked his tongue and raised his left hand. "What do you call this?"

"…Left hand?"

Yoo Hoseong raised his opposite hand. Then what about this?"

"Right hand."

"Then what about when they are joined together?"

Lee Jihye pondered for a moment before answering. "Two hands?"

Then the story replied on behalf of Yoo Hoseong.

[The story 'Ambidextrous Boxer' is having fun.]

"Yes, this leads to the words 'two hands'. Many people call it a 'relationship'. They perceive it as a similar form."

Lee Jihye had a blank expression. It was an expression that showed she didn't understand. Yoo Hoseong spoke like he knew. "If so, what would you call this?"

Yoo Hoseong grabbed the twig on the ground with his left hand and asked, "One is the left hand and one is a twig. What would you call them if they are tied together?"

"Um… a left hand holding a twig? Or left hand and twig?"

I felt a cool sensation.

"It isn't easy. Do you know why?"

Lee Jihye shook her head. Yoo Hoseong said, "There is no correct relationship between the two. Whether it is left hand and twig or left hand holding a twig, it isn't something that falls naturally. It is awkward."

Yoo Hoseong held the twig like a dart and threw it at a tree far away. The twig flew quickly and stuck into a tree. It looked natural, like it was originally part of the tree.

"It is the story that narrows that awkward distance. It connects the most distant things in the world. If you want to control the story, you have to make sure to understand the story."

It was a seemingly confusing explanation. Lee Jihye stared at the twig on the tree blankly. I carefully picked up a stone that was rolling on the ground. The power to connect the most distant things in the world… it was difficult.

Yoo Hoseong saw my actions and clicked his tongue. "Stupid guy. I just gave an example. A relationship can't be made and a story generated by holding something! It takes a long time to narrow the distance between the materials and yourself…!"

The next moment, something strange happened.

[The full probability of the first generation is responding to your actions.]

[The story material has an affinity for you.]

The stone in the hand looked up at me in a pleasant manner.

[The story 'The Pebble and I' has begun.]

Yoo Hoseong stared at me with a dumbfounded expression and his lips trembled. "You, what the hell are you?"

Chapter 362: Ep. 68 - Inaudible Words, II

The stone in my hand trembled like it was alive.

[You have acquired a new story!]

[The story 'The Pebble and I' wants to continue.]

It was a first for me. I just touched the stone and a story occurred? There were all sorts of complicated hypotheses in my head but I didn't have an answer.

[The probability of the first generation is around you.]

[Currently, the Fourth Wall is in a very thin state.]

The only doubts were these two system messages. Yoo Hoseong stared at me with suspicious eyes. "I see, you are a reincarnator. Is that right?"

It seemed he had the wrong hypothesis about me.

"Were you stoned to death in your previous life? That's why the stone is…"

"No."

"Oh, you're a stone head. That's why the stone—"

I picked up a branch thrown by Yoo Hoseong.

[The material of the story is sensitive to you.]

[The story 'Kim Dokja Likes a Branch' has begun!]

I glanced towards the dazed Yoo Hoseong who had a gaping mouth. "I'm afraid that my head isn't that bad."

By my side, Lee Jihye glared at me. Yoo Hoseong shouted with wide eyes.

"H-Hold this!"

I accepted the flower that Yoo Hoseong gave me.

[The story material has an affinity for you.]

[The story 'Kim Dokja with a Flower' has begun.]

Yoo Hoseong continued to give me things and I accepted all of them.

[The story material has an affinity for you.]

[The story material has an affinity for you.]

My surroundings were filled with singing stones and flowers. After much agonizing, Yoo Hoseong made a decision.

"…Grab me."

"Where do you mean?"

"Here, grab me here."

Yoo Hoseong's eyes were blazing. I understood his anger. The 'real stories' that took 10, 100 or even 1000 years to build up were easily obtained by me… he was bound to feel like this.

"If you wish… please excuse me."

I sighed and placed a hand on Yoo Hoseong's shoulder.

…Why was this small shoulder so hard?

Yoo Hoseong said, "There is no change. Is it limited to inanimate objects? Hrmm…"

[The character 'Yoo Hoseong' shows a small liking towards you.]

The shocked Yoo Hoseong withdrew from my hand. "W-What is this?"

The next second, I heard a message in my ears.

[The story 'Person Who is Loved by All' has been acquired!]

It was the other residents of the village who showed interest in me while Yoo Hoseong was in shock.

"It has been a long time since I've seen this crazy talent."

"Huh, this is a rare friend… did you come from the outside?"

"Are you interested in the cattle feed?"

I accepted the cattle feed that the woman gave me in a dazed mood.

Human Kim Dokja. This was the first time I received such attention in my almost 30 years of living. I… was talented?

「(Dokja-ssi is definitely talented. You've been reading this novel for over ten years.)」

Perhaps her librarian's work had been busy lately because Yoo Sangah sounded tired.

'Is it related to reading the novel?'

「(I can't think of anything else but that.)」

'This has never happened in the meantime…;

Come to think of it, that wasn't true. There were some characters who had good feelings towards me as soon as they saw me.

「(Maybe it is because the wall is thinner?)」

I heard Yoo Sangah's words and thought it was possible. I didn't know the exact reason but it was possible the failure of the Fourth Wall had closed the distance between the world and me. Then how far did this power apply?

Looking back, Lee Jihye seemed to have her own sense of pride as she muttered to herself while holding a branch in her hand. I poked her with my finger.

"Eek!" The startled Lee Jihye screamed. "Ahjussi, are you crazy? The finger that touched poop…!"

It didn't work. Now, let's see…

I poked the shoulder of Cheok Jungyeong sitting next to me.

"Is this a challenge?"

"That's not it."

…This didn't work either. Then what were the principles behind it? No matter how I thought about it, I couldn't figure out how my talent worked.

"It is really fucking talent. I can't explain it any other way."

The one who spoke with Yoo Hoseong, who had been preoccupied with his thoughts for a long time.

Ferocious anger was seething on his face.

Yoo Hoseong approached me with a child's stride. "You might not know but I hate strange fates the most. In particular, I hate those like you who don't try hard and easily obtain something.

One Invincible Fist Yoo Hoseong was such a person. He liked people with a persistent spirit and cared for those who strove to overcome their insurmountable talent. In Yoo Hoseong's eyes, a man like me was a criminal who would destroy the first generation with talent.

"For the first time today, I am going to break my belief."

Huh?

"I will teach you Story Control."

I didn't know why Yoo Hoseong changed his mind. The only certainty was that he discovered some possibilities from me. As if to leave a lifelong disciple, Yoo Hoseong troubled me day and night.

"Phenomena and truth aren't the same. Using a story properly means understanding its language."

"Solid ground is needed to leap into abstraction. That is the details of the stories you have built up."

…Etc. There were so many ghostly words that I thought it would be better to read Ways of Survival again.

I ate a tangerine that the villagers gave me and thought hard about it.

"Stupid guy. It is a face that doesn't understand anything."

"I'm sorry."

"Don't try to understand it if you don't know. Not everyone will learn control in the same way."

"What are you saying?"

It was like I was struck.

"It is your problem from the beginning. You lack respect for the elderly."

"…"

"You must learn how to listen first."

"I don't think I can listen better than this."

"I'm telling you to listen to the words of your story!"

…Words of the story? Was this mentioned in Ways of Survival?

"You already have the talent to communicate with stories. It is the talent to listen to their emotions and words."

It was true. I didn't know when but I was able to read the stories, just like they were people.

"However, I want to control the stories, not chat."

"The stories aren't controllable."

The one saying this was the person who taught the method to control stories.

"Can you control your thoughts?"

"Of course I can…"

"Then don't think of anything for five minutes."

I nodded as if it was easy. Don't think, don't think…

Damn, I was thinking 'don't think'. I tried hard to escape my thoughts but it wasn't easy.

In five minutes, many things passed through my head. For example, the probability of Yoo Joonghyuk becoming a girl and killing the demon kings or Han Sooyoung suffering from an unknown delirium declaring, "I'm sorry for plagiarizing Kim Dokja at the time"…

I raised both hands and surrendered. "…I can't do it."

"You're a fool."

[The story 'Demon King of Salvation' is laughing at you.]

"This is what you have to do from today. Listen to the words of the story."

"But…"

"Don't be afraid. No matter how big the story, they are stories that you gained."

Turning away, Yoo Hoseong looked like a teacher for the first time.

"A story can dominate us but sometimes it tells us the way."

From that day on, I started practicing Story Control. To be precise, it was practice to hear the voices of the story more accurately.

[Giant Story 'Torch That Swallowed the Myth' is annoyed by your interest.]

The stories were unfamiliar to me but after a day or two, they started to gradually open up. I listened to the voices of the stories that had refrained from expressing their emotions so far.

[The story 'King of a Kingless World' says it was very happy at the time.]

The stories told their tales and I heard them. The stories became the memories we accumulated.

The feeling of pleasure as the Four Yin Demonic Beheading Sword broke the Absolute Throne. Yes, I really enjoyed it. It was because this was my first story.

[The story 'Person who Opposes the Miracle' says the returnee was really troublesome.

That's right, the Myung Ilsang bastard was really tricky. I fought with Yoo Joonghyuk and Han Sooyoung and still almost died.

[The story 'One Who Hunted the King of Disasters' misses the taste of the snake wine.]

[The story 'One Who Killed an Outer God' is asking you to remember.]

Every time I heard these words, I was immersed in my memories. On the other hand, it was hard to suppress the urgency if I delayed here for too long.

Han Sooyoung, Yoo Joonghyuk, Anna Croft…

Those who pursued a different ending from me might already be knocking at the door of the next scenario.

[The story 'Demon King of Salvation' says you shouldn't run away anymore.]

I focused on the story again. From a certain point, the voices of the stories grew and I found it hard to distinguish between reality and the illusion. My sense of space was fading. I couldn't tell if I was in the story or if I was listening to the story in reality.

[The story 'Revolutionary of the Silver Screen' is hungry for a new revolution.]

Yes, I'm sorry. I neglected you for too long.

[The story 'Gourmet Association's Heretic' is complaining of hunger!]

[The story 'Miracle Gambler' wants another big bet.]

In between, dream-like screens passed by.

–Dokja-ssi. We almost died. Do you know?

–Ahjussi!

The voices of the party members were faintly heard from somewhere.

–…Oh, how cheap. You are training alone?

–We will learn quickly! Who can we learn from?

I had a thought while listening to those voices. If this was really a dream, it was a sweet dream.

–…Why am I not getting a story? Dokja hyung got a story from doing this.

–Get your hands off him, Lee Gilyoung.

–You stay away, Shin Yoosung.

In my dream, I heard the children muttering things like 'ahjussi and I' or 'Dokja hyung and Lee Gilyoung'. I didn't know how they would use such stories even if they did obtain them but…

[Giant Story 'Demon Realm's Spring' is looking at your story together.]

Why? I listened to the voices of the children and felt warm. In my dim vision, countless stories were watching the scene with me.

[The story 'Person Who is Loved by an Archangel' likes your stories.]

[The story 'King of a Kingless World' is watching the children.]

[The story 'Giant's Liberator' is looking at the party members with fond eyes.]

All the stories resembled me and I resembled all the stories. If so, that guy alone on the other side was surely part of us.

[Giant Story 'Torch That Swallowed the Myth' is turning away from you.]

I spoke to it. 'Stop being grumpy and come here'.

There was no answer. The one who threatened other stories with its size was turning its back to us. Its head was drooping like a child reading something.

Maybe I already knew. This was a small child immersed in its own story. Still, such stories couldn't exist alone.

I spoke carefully to its back. 'It looks interesting'.

The Torch That Swallowed the Myth looked up at me and raised its body.

「You…!」

The story will a very large body glared at me. Strangely, I wasn't afraid of it. This guy was a story. All stories had to flow somewhere.

'Where do you want to go?'

It couldn't easily answer my question and shut its mouth. It probably couldn't answer. I knew its heart.

'Come with me'.

「…To where?」

I slowly opened my mouth and spoke. I wanted all my stories to reach ■■.

The story asked, 「What is at the end of the whole story?」

'I don't know. Still, at least we won't be alone'.

[The story 'Hell of Eternity' is looking at you.]

After a while, I felt the stories wrapping around my fingertips. My body floating in the waves of the story gradually became heavy and I slowly opened my eyes.

I couldn't tell how much time had passed.

My legs were numb. I looked down and saw Lee Gilyoung and Shin Yoosung leaning against them while sleeping. They weren't stories. They were children with real bodies. I lightly stroked the hair of the children.

[Giant Story 'Torch That Swallowed the Myth' is listening to your story.]

Finally, I was ready to leave for the next scenario.

* * *

At this time, the only survivor of the 331st island was moving towards the next scenario.

[You have slaughtered all participants on the island.]

[You are the only survivor of the 331st Island.]

[You are qualified to enter the following scenario.]

A black coat was flapping and the Black Heavenly Demon Sword shone. Looking at the portal to the next scenario, Yoo Joonghyuk was reminded of the insidious presence he met just before coming here. The outer god in the third round whose identity was unknown.

–I can't tell you the full contents of the revelation. It is too much of a breach of probability, even for me. However, I can give this much. This way, it will be a fair fight.

He turned on the smartphone and a text file appeared.

『 Han Sooyoung - Record of the 1863rd Round (First) 』

Yoo Joonghyuk moved towards the portal while opening the first chapter of the story he didn't know.

Chapter 363: Ep. 68 - Inaudible Words, III

It had been a week since my arrival in the village.

After all the 'Stories' settled down in their places, I began preparing for the next scenario right away.

「The Isle of Reincarnators is formed around three islands – the 'Small Island' where the Probability of the 1st generation of Stories is applicable. The 'Middle Island', where the Probability of the 2nd generation of Stories is applicable. Finally, the 'Main Island', where the Probability of the 3rd generation of Stories is applicable…」

Unlike how it was in the 'Small Island', I'd be directly clashing against the Constellations from the 'Middle Island' onwards. Meaning, the beings that managed to survive while breaking past the rather realistic Probability of the 1st generation were waiting for me there.

[Giant Story, 'Torch that Swallowed the Myth', urges you to get a move on.]

As usual, one of the guys remained temperamental, but, well, I figured that I had gained enough control over them by now, anyway. Yoo Hoseong said this before – Stories would try to control their user, but at the same time, they would also show the person the way forward, too.

[Giant Story, 'Demon Realm's Spring', is waiting for your decision.]

These guys would have to continue existing within me from now on. We'd get to tell new stories and they would shine, as new and different Stories, as well.

"Heewon-ssi, good to see you that you're unhurt."

"Can't you change your repertoire of greetings already? I almost died for real this time, you know?"

I was told that my companions arrived around a week after I began my 'Story Control' training. Apparently, they got lost at the outskirts of the island and that delayed their arrival somewhat.

I looked around and asked her. "Where is everyone?"

"They are in training right now."

We walked for a bit and soon, the sight of the kids, Lee Hyunsung, and Jang Hayoung sitting cross-legged on the ground caught my eyes. It seemed that their training wasn't easy, judging from their current facial expressions.

But, that was rather obvious.

Even at the shortest estimation, the 'Story Control' training would at least need around two months. The Yoo Joonghyuk from the original story needed to waste over 3 weeks, even with his incredible talent, so…

I quietly observed the Stories of my companions.

[Story, 'Kim Dokja's Company's Code of Conduct', is writhing around in pain.]

[Story, 'One who Hears the Monster's Voice', is moaning in pain.]

[Story, 'One who Craves for the Trust of his Companions', is in great pain.]

Like how I earned my Stories, they too had earned theirs. Going through the same scenarios didn't mean that we'd automatically earn the exact same Stories.

Their Stories would be different from each other's because they all possessed different levels of sensibilities.

"The flow of time here is slower compared to other islands, so it'll be fine to take it easy with your training. You shouldn't try to rush it. You will be able to fight properly in the Great War of Saints and Demons only after you've completed your training."

"I understand."

[Story, 'Demon King's Fanatical Believer', is singing a song.]

「Oh, oh~, Dokja hyung said it back then. I am the god of the world. Follow me, and you'll learn the truth of the world~.」

"…And when Gilyoung wakes up, please tell him this. Something really bad will happen if he continues to acquire twisted Stories." (Lee Gilyoung → Lee Gilyoung)

Jung Heewon broke into a fit of giggles, and I reprimanded her with a slightly more serious tone of voice. "This isn't a joke, you know."

"I'm not joking, either. Dokja-ssi, you really need to consciously recognise your position. I'm talking about recognising just what kind of a person you are to these kids."

"…"

"Do you think they would've made it this far without you, Dokja-ssi?"

I wordlessly stared at Shin Yoosung and Lee Gilyoung as they pinched the backs of each other's hands even during the training itself. These two kids trusted me and were willing to come this far while sharing our imperfect story together.

[A brand new Story that had not existed before has begun sprouting within you.]

"…It's the same story for me."

The last person I looked at was Jang Hayoung. Trickles of cold perspiration soaked her forehead as she maintained the intense battle against her Stories.

「I don't want to hear it. Honestly, I don't want to.」

「But, you must hear it. No matter what, you must.」

My ears overheard the Story's voice coming out of her. With that, I could guess which Story Jang Hayoung was watching right now. Most likely, she'd get to awaken a new attribute on this island. And then, she'd use that as a foundation to become the 'King of the Transcendents'.

"Dokja-ssi."

"Yes?"

"Are you aware that you've been behaving indifferently only towards Hayoung-ssi?"

"That wasn't my original intention. Things somehow worked out that way…"

"That story you told us, shouldn't you tell that to Hayoung-ssi, as well?"

The story I told my companions… It was quite clear what Jung Heewon referred to in this case.

「This world is constructed with a novel as the basis, and I'm the sole reader who read that novel.」

Currently, I've told that story to only a small number of my companions. Most other people, including Kyrgios and the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint, didn't know this truth. Jang Hayoung was no exception.

I lowered my waist and observed her face a little closer.

「Deep double eyelids, and gently curling golden hair. Even without [Moisture Retention], pale-smooth and soft skin. Slightly plump cheeks, and charming dimples that appear when she smiles. Due to an oddly androgynous atmosphere, her gender is hard to identify with her face alone.」

The descriptions from within the text of Ways of Survival, and the comments I had left behind in the past, were all coming back to me now. Her appearance that exactly matched my imagination became an indescribable guilt weighing me down.

"I'm not sure how much I can be honest with her."

"Pardon?"

I couldn't tell Jang Hayoung the truth. I mean, how could I?

Tell her that I created you? That you were born because of my comments…?

"I've been thinking about this quite often lately. Maybe, it wasn't that the novel I've been reading became reality, but that novel was simply a recording of this world…"

"…What are you suddenly talking about?"

Maybe, that was what I've been wishing for.

「Just like what the much-younger Kim Dokja had been thinking, a long time ago.」

Jung Heewon looked back at me with a puzzled expression, and I replied with a weak grin.

"I like being with you, Heewon-ssi."

"Uhm, yes, me too."

"It's the same story with our other companions, as well. For now, that's as far as my thoughts have gone. I apologise for being selfish like this."

She was lost in a train of thought for a little while but nodded her head soon enough.

"Well… It's fine. Dokja-ssi, you are doing what you want to do, anyway. I understand."

"Thank you. Ah, by the way. When our companions wake up, please give them this."

"And this is…?"

"It's the information on the upcoming scenario."

The memo pad I handed over to Jung Heewon contained information on the 'Middle Island', our next scenario.

"Hang on, Dokja-ssi, again you…!"

Jung Heewon and her quick wits seemed to have realized why I was handing this thing over to her.

"I knew that you'd show up around today or so."

I sought out Yoo Hoseong first before leaving the 'Small Island'. Whatever the case might have been, he taught me the Story Control, so I wanted to express my gratitude – well, that was a lie. I had an ulterior motive for being here.

"May I ask, why did you accept our group?"

Yoo Hoseong frowned deeply after hearing my sudden question.

"…It's just the whims of an old geezer."

It was a rather bizarre sight to see a kid who looked to be ten years old or so refer to himself as a 'geezer', but it wasn't an improbable spectacle, either.

Because the Invincible Fist Yoo Hoseong was an existence that had lived far longer than your regular Demon Kings or Archangels, after all.

<The 0th Murim>, known only through legends being passed down. The greatest expert under the heavens in that Murim was none other than Yoo Hoseong.

"If you're done asking your questions, get out of my sight this instant. I do not wish to look at your ugly mug any longer."

He was putting up the exact same act of driving away one's guests, just like in the beginning.

"Don't you want to come with us?"

"What rubbish are you spewing now?"

"I'm aware that, once the scenario on the 'Small Island' concludes, you are allowed to advance to the next one. The upcoming 'Great War of Saints and Demons' is a scenario like that, after all."

Yoo Hoseong's brows greatly quivered, just then.

Even back in the original story, there was a turn where the 'Great War of Saints and Demons' took place in the Isle of Reincarnators.

「The meeting of the 'New' and the 'Old'; a fusion scenario with the 1st generation!」

Most likely, the Bureau should be busy with advertising this scenario using such slogans on the outside. Which was by design, actually. It was a scheme to use the 1st generation of Stories, only spoken through rumours and hearsay, as the focal point of the advertisement itself.

The thing was, though, the Bureau's scheme to make lots of moolah could also serve as an opportunity for the Forgotten who were left behind and abandoned by the passing of the eras.

"It's possible that you might be able to leave this island by using this chance."

The Isle of Reincarnators was like the living museum of the <Star Stream>. The Reincarnators of this place could live forever in perpetuity on this island, but at the same time, must suffer the curse of never being able to step outside, all because of the contract these people signed with the 'Master of the Island'.

"How long are you planning to remain as a relic of the bygone era like some kind of a stuffed animal?"

Yoo Hoseong slowly closed his eyes. It looked as if he was trying to calm his rising anger.

"What do you… expect from us after leaving here? The Forgotten being strong is only applicable within this island. The 1st generation no longer matters. Nobody wants to see such a tale."

For sure, he was right about that. The majority of the Reincarnators wouldn't be able to properly display their prowess after leaving the island where the 'Probability of the 1st generation' was still active.

The 1st generation of the Forgotten wouldn't be able to adapt to the outside world ruled by the System, rife with powerful ki and magic. However, not everyone would be like that.

"The Transcendents who studied under you are playing active roles in the outside world even now. Meaning, there are definitely some who yearn to see the Stories you have created."

"I'm sure there are. However, I'm also sure that such a thing can't become the trend."

"Does it have to be, though?"

"What's that?"

"I'm asking you whether it needs to become the trending topic in order to become a good Story or not. Since when did you start caring about such a thing, anyway?"

Yoo Hoseong's eyes shot open and the proverbial flames were flickering within them.

"Are you suggesting that, after all this time, I should become a plaything of the Constellations once more?"

If I take one more step here, make that one last push, then I'd definitely get my head blown away just like other Demon Kings. So, I couldn't take that step. What I did take, though, was just half a step, instead.

"You've been listening to the story of the Stories for a long time."

I had to shake this guy up exactly to the length of my half-step, so that he'd willingly take the other half by himself.

"Don't you think it's about time that you start personally telling your own story?"

Yoo Hoseong's eyes opened even wider, clear ripples visibly spreading out within his irises. I formed a wordless smile and turned around to leave.

[Story, 'Pebble and I', is cackling to itself.]

Well, I've cast my stone now, and the rest wasn't up to me anymore. Because the one to make this seriously scary Transcendent move his butt would be someone else, actually.

* * *

"Are you really leaving without saying goodbye?"

"Everyone is focused right now and I don't want to disturb them. Besides, we should meet up again pretty soon, anyway. Also, there's something that I must do after going there first."

I chose not to say any special goodbyes to my companions, but did say my farewell to Jung Heewon. She carried a rather rueful expression, but it seemed that she had accepted my decision as was.

"Please, you must survive."

"Let's meet again."

We lightly bumped fists.

Just before my departure, the villagers came to see me off.

"Would you like some bread on your journey? It's been freshly baked this morning."

"I thought you liked stones, so I brought some of my collections."

Several villagers I had grown friendlier with during my stay gifted me with some food. As the villagers grew further away in my view, I spotted Yoo Hoseong among them.

He too wished for some kind of a change to take place. And that was why he probably decided to teach me and my companions – while praying that the skill he taught would change the island, flip the Great War of Saints and Demons on its head, and eventually, transform the <Star Stream> itself, too.

[Story, 'Reincarnator of Ten Thousand Years', is singing a song of farewell.]

[Story, 'World's Most Ancient Farmer', is wishing you godspeed.]

Some would leave, while some would remain behind. The moments of the most distant things meeting and then parting again, would be remembered by the Stories.

That was how this world continued to exist.

As I turned around, I heard Yoo Hoseong's voice projection enter my ear.

– It's possible that the 'Master of the Island' might become interested in you. It'll be better for you to be more cautious.

I returned a light smile as my reply. There was this message that kept repeating itself in front of my eyes since a while ago.

['Master of the Island' is paying close attention to you.]

I approached the village's giant brazier to find that Cheok Jungyeong was waiting for me. "Let us travel together."

"Sounds good."

We'd get separated during our transfer to the Middle Island anyway, but still, I felt somewhat more confident now that we were making our entrance together.

"By the way, about the next scenario…"

The scenario of the 'Middle Island' was a preparatory one for the main island's Great War of Saints and Demons. Cheok Jungyeong nodded his head, seemingly having misunderstood what I said somehow.

"Now that I recall, you are a Demon King, are you not? Alright. If I'm destined to fight you, then I swear to give it my all."

"N-no, hang on a sec. That's not what I…"

"This great one shan't be tethered to the unnecessary personal emotions of fate during our true battle, so you can rest easy."

No, hang on. I'd much rather prefer that you be tethered to your unnecessary emotions, though.

Somehow, I now had to pray fervently that I don't become Cheok Jungyeong's target during the upcoming scenario.

[Tutorial Scenario has concluded!]

[Transfer to the 'Middle Island' has begun!]

[Main Scenario has been updated!]

Accompanied by the 'update' message, the surrounding view began changing bit by bit.

[You have arrived on 'Middle Island No.3'.]

Thankfully, I couldn't see Cheok Jungyeong next to me.

The moment my transfer was complete, the acrid odour of blood stung my nose. I was greeted by the grisly sight of dead corpses belonging to Constellations and Incarnations strewn about on a vast plain.

This sight was more than enough to dampen one's spirit, but I was relieved to see it, actually. It was far more advantageous to start this scenario later than the others, as that would lower the odds of running into powerful Constellations that had entered here beforehand.

['Probability of the 2nd generation' is active within the relevant area.]

[A portion of your skills have been unlocked.]

[A portion of your overall Stats have been restored.]

Along with the crackling noise, I felt my shoulders grow just a bit wider, while my height grew, too. I had been feeling really constricted for some time, but now, it felt like I could breathe a bit easier.

[A new Hidden Scenario has arrived!]

I quickly opened the scenario's info window.

< Hidden Scenario – Snatching Modifiers >

Type: Main

Difficulty: ???

Clear Conditions: Take away the 'Modifier Necklace' from the enemy designated as your target. (In case the participant does not possess any

Modifiers, it will be replaced by his or her true name.)

Time limit: -

Reward: Randomly obtain one of the target's Stories, acquisition of a ticket for entry into the 'Main Island'.

Failure: ???

This scenario was the final hurdle before advancing to the 'Main Island'.

The content of this scenario was simple in nature. I needed to take away the mark of the Modifier from someone who was designated as my target. A small necklace shimmering in silver already found itself dangling around my neck by then.

[Demon King of Salvation]

It was the necklace with my Modifier written on.

[Number of survivors on 'Middle Island No.3' is 262.]

262, huh. That was a far higher number than I expected.

However, it wasn't enough to change my plan. Because the really powerful Constellations should have advanced to the 'Main Island' by now.

No, the really important bit was just who got tagged as my target, but the powerful ones had already disappeared from here, so it must be…

[Your 'primary target' has been decided.]

[Modifier of your 'primary target' is…]

Right after that, I discovered a group of Constellations busy running towards this location from a distance – a group that was urgently running away as if they were being chased down by something.

Along with the noise of the ground exploding, a part of the group became bloody sacks of meat and flew away like a splitting ocean wave. And I could see the one giving chase to the escaping Constellations through the rising murky dust cloud.

…God damn it.

Why was that bastard still here?

Chapter 364: Ep. 68 - Inaudible Words, IV

Bloody hell, I definitely didn't want to run into that guy here.

I quickly hid behind the mountain of corpses while witnessing the waves of magical energy blowing around like violent storm winds. Not too long afterwards, I heard the voices of those hurriedly running away.

[That crazy monster…!]

[Uwaaaahk!]

The Constellations were crushed mercilessly and were killed off, leaving behind only their death throes. Stories flooded out among the bits of body parts flying about, and the blood shed by the Incarnations dyed the land crimson red.

[Run! Hurry!!]

Right behind them, the slaughterer responsible for this bloody spectacle finally arrived on the scene.

I saw the purple-coloured aura bright enough to be visible even from behind the tall mountain of corpses. All I could do was to silently watch the proceedings, unable to even breathe properly.

[Giant Story, 'Torch That Swallowed the Myth', is growling.]

[Giant Story, 'Demon Realm's Spring', is shrinking back.]

Here came the possessor of the incredible Status that could even negatively affect my Stories.

[Story, 'Flame that Annihilates Evil', has begun its storytelling!]

The 'Flame that Annihilates Evil' – one of the Stories that would display the greatest effect when dealing with evil-leaning Constellations. I knew the owner of this Story really well.

「Flowing locks of platinum-blonde hair, violet-coloured eyes. The radiant wings of an Archangel spreading behind his back.」

He was the sole Archangel among <Eden> that displayed its hostility towards me.

[Constellation, 'Saviour of the Corrupted', has begun its Judgement for Salvation.]

…The 'Saviour of the Corrupted', Archangel Michael, a being who possessed the same Modifier words, just like me.

Ku-gugugugu!!

The [Sword of Saviour] held in Archangel Michael's hands split the world in half. The purple-coloured fog on the blade spread out, and this fog ignited into flames that soon started burning the atmosphere itself. The flames crossed the air in the blink and reached the Constellations trying to escape.

[Aaaahhk!!]

Five or six Constellations running away screamed at the top of their lungs and crumbled to the ground. Stories became ash within the purple-coloured flames and scattered away.

The only things remaining on the spots once occupied by the dead Constellations were 'Modifier Necklaces' gleaming in a silvery hue. Michael flew in the air and landed beside them to confirm the dropped loot.

[It's still not here.]

He seemed to be searching for something. A bizarre light shot out from his eyes as he began observing his surroundings.

[Feels like there's one more rat hidden somewhere nearby…]

Could I win if I was to fight Michael here?

I grew quite a bit stronger after learning Story Control, but still, I wasn't confident of winning against that guy for the time being. Not only was he the strongest battle angel in <Eden>, he was also infinitely closer to becoming a Myth-grade Constellation, too.

If he decided to go all out, then he'd not be in a disadvantageous position against even Poseidon who fought in 'Gigantomachia'. Even if I knew all the info on the guy through 'Ways of Survival', well…

Gu-ohhhhh!

Silvery light oozed out from Michael's two eyes. That was [Eye of the Archangel.]

One of the exclusive skills possessed by Archangels that detected the presence of 'evil'. It seemed that he could use that skill now after the Probability of the 2nd generation had been unlocked.

His eyes, burning like the ghostly flames of Dokkaebi, began scanning his surroundings. The range of his vision slowly shifted and was heading in my direction.

My heart began beating faster bit by bit.

Should I make a run for it?

It was at that moment that the pebble the villagers gave me writhed within my inner pocket.

[Story, 'Pebble and I', has begun its storytelling.]

And something quite unexpected happened next.

[Due to the effect of the Story, your detectable presence has become similar to that of a 'pebble'.]

[The demonic energy emitted by you has become assimilated to the surrounding nature.]

Michael scanned the mountain of corpses I was hiding behind without much of a reaction, before eventually withdrawing his vision while muttering to himself.

[Was I mistaken?]

He then complained with an unhappy-sounding voice as he rose up in the air.

[All because the Scribe issued a time-wasting order…]

His wings spread out widely and his figure disappeared into the distance in an instant. Only after his presence was completely gone did I stand up from my hiding spot, while wiping the cold sweat off my forehead.

[Story, 'Pebble and I', is pestering you for praise.]

"You did well. Thanks."

[Story, 'Pebble and I', is giggling happily to itself.]

I had no idea that this Story could help me out in this manner. A Story that could turn my presence into that of a 'pebble'…

I did feel a bit mixed about it, but still, it might come in handy later on. I then quickly took a look around the devastated surroundings.

[Number of survivors on 'Middle Island No.3' is 224.]

In that brief amount of time, 38 people got slaughtered. Most of them were Incarnations or Constellations only on the level of Historical-grade, but there were some Narrative-grade mixed in among the victims, as well.

The sight reminded me of what it'd look like right after a natural disaster swept by.

This was the true power of the Archangels. The high-ranking Demon Kings should also possess a similar level of power, too.

「(Now that was a close shave. If things went wrong, I was planning to use 'revelation', even.)」

'You were watching?'

「(Yes. I was on a break.)」

I recovered a bit of my energy after hearing Yoo Sangah's clear voice.

Right, even if the enemies that I had to fight against were extremely powerful, I too held several hidden cards up my sleeve.

「(…By the way, don't the conditions of the corpses seem a little odd?)」

I nodded my head and looked down at the sagging corpses. To be more specific, I wasn't looking at the remains, but their 'Modifier Necklaces', which seemed a bit off. Most of those had either disappeared, or a portion of the Modifiers were damaged.

Yoo Sangah asked a question.

「(Even if we say that necklaces have disappeared after they were hunted down as targets, but… Why would only portions of Modifiers disappear like that?)」

[The Ancient □□□]

[The Aged □□□]

[□□ and □□□'s □□]

Several Modifiers were missing words here and there. It was as if someone deliberately stole only certain letters and nothing else.

'Some people are exploiting the loophole'.

「(Loophole?)」

'Do you remember the condition to clear this scenario?'

「(Wasn't it, snatch away the 'Modifier Necklace' from an opponent designated as your target?)」

'Correct. But in reality, there's no reason to hunt down your target. What's important here is to get your hands on the necklace itself'.

Yoo Sangah replied in a surprised voice.

「(Ah, could it be…)」

Just as I nodded my head, a new message entered my ears.

[It is possible to collect 'Modifier syllables' in the corresponding area.]

[You can craft a new necklace with the collected syllables.]

'There are those who steal Modifiers from other Constellations and create the 'Modifier Necklace' that their targets are wearing'.

Basically, a 'Modifier' was a combination of words.

For instance, my Modifier, 'Demon King of Salvation', was made up of the following syllables – [De], [Mon], [King], [Of], [Sal], [Va], and [Tion].

Meaning, as long as you collected those syllables, you didn't have to snatch my necklace away but would still be able to construct the same thing as mine.

「(…Why is the Bureau permitting this kind of shortcut?)」

'The condition of snatching away the designated target's necklace can potentially slow down the progress of the scenario. Also, there's a possibility that your target has already escaped from this scenario too, which will further complicate the situation'.

Constellations hated slow progress, and they really loved the fast-paced action and the continuous rush of that refreshing feeling.

「(Which means, all these people were sacrificed for just a single word…)」

I nodded my head again.

Most likely, powerful Constellations slaughtered the lower-classed ones and combined the necessary Modifiers belonging to their targets. Well, that would be a lot quicker than searching for a target that constantly ran away from you, after all.

Rather than praying for the dead's safe journey to the afterlife, I began rummaging through the discarded necklaces that now resembled corn on the cob missing many of its kernels.

Yoo Sangah didn't say anything.

[You have acquired the Modifier syllable, 'Of'.]

There were almost no useful words remaining. The majority of them were common adpositions. Without a doubt, all the necessary words had already been collected by other Constellation as the pieces for their puzzle combinations.

I did rummage through the pile of corpses that Michael left behind and found a few useful items, though. As expected, it seemed that a Constellation like Michael wouldn't hesitate to throw away items that weren't 'Star Relics'.

Indeed, his wealth was on another scale. But, besides all that…

"…Why don't you come out already? Michael is far away by now, you know."

My voice quietly resounded out in this empty, devastated location. No presence of a person could be felt, but I still spoke up one more time.

"You should come out while I'm still being civil, okay?"

There was one other person hiding within the corpses. This person managed to perfectly hide their presence, but I was pretty sure of them being there. Why? Because I clearly witnessed them going into hiding just as the bloody slaughter commenced.

Accompanied by 'Busuhsuh' noise, a corner of the corpse pile collapsed and fell, as a certain someone stood up. An Incarnation that somehow managed to avoid the detection of [Eye of the Archangel] revealed themself.

"…Demon King of Salvation."

A blonde-haired woman full of wounds was glaring straight at me. Blood continued to flow out from both her torn arm and the grievous wound on her stomach. Even at a casual glance, they seemed to be pretty serious injuries.

I spoke while looking back at her. "Looks like things are not going as well as you hoped, Anna Croft."

I recalled the moments when Anna Croft first made her appearance within 'Ways of Survival'.

The prophet of Asgard and capable of freely using [Precognition] and [Retrocognition], she was the one character that possessed the skills to counter the Regressor, Yoo Joonghyuk.

Because of that, she became his chief rival in the latter half of 'Ways of Survival'.

…During the original storyline, that was.

A woman willing to bear any cost for the sake of her great cause. One of the most powerful Incarnations, and a character who'd become the master of 'Zarathustra' in the distant future, something that even Constellations feared – such a person was sagging powerlessly right in front of my eyes.

I crushed one of the [Great Return Pills] I bought earlier and shoved it inside her mouth. She opened her eyes around 30 minutes after that.

As soon as she did, she spotted me and while breaking out in a near-convulsion, stood up from the ground in great haste.

"Sit down. Your physical condition is still dangerous."

She confirmed that her wrists and ankles weren't bound, and quickly stepped back, still being wary of me. "Why did you save me?"

"I've got a few things to ask you."

"And what makes you think I'll answer your questions?"

She growled like a wild beast. This was a slightly different appearance from the 'Prophet' that I remembered.

"Why are you participating in the 'Great War of Saints and Demons'?"

"So I can earn a Giant Story, obviously. Could there be any other reason?"

"But, shouldn't you be getting ready to tackle a different 'Giant Story Scenario' by now? Am I wrong?"

Anna Croft bit her lips after hearing my question.

In the original storyline, she shouldn't be taking part in the 'Great War of Saints and Demons'. Because she was supposed to participate in another

Giant Story Scenario called 'Ragnarök', instead.

"That is…"

The light in her eyes shook visibly. And that was the same thing as me hearing her answer.

"You've been discarded by the Nebula."

"This problem doesn't concern you."

She began gritting her teeth now. I could easily understand the rage contained within those words, though.

Anna Croft and I clashed against each other a couple of times so far, and that changed the 'future' of the original storyline she was supposed to live out.

Back during the 'Gourmet Association', or back during 'Gigantomachia', she didn't get to achieve any notable feats.

As her repeated failures accumulated, the Nebula <Asgard> simply chucked her into the midst of the 'Great War of Saints and Demons', all by herself, after she was deemed no longer useful.

…Was this because of me?

The future that I changed didn't just transform the fate of Yoo Joonghyuk and my companions.

I spoke to Anna Croft as she glared at me with eyes filled with contempt.
"What if you get to earn a Myth-grade Story in this place?"

"…What did you say?"

"Wouldn't Asgard have to reassess you in that case, then?"

The Myth-grade Story – her irises quaked visibly after hearing that term.

"What are you trying to say here?"

"I can help you."

"I'm asking you what your motives are."

"I don't have any ulterior motives. I only wish for you and 'Zarathustra' to grow without any issues. That is all."

[Character 'Anna Croft' has activated 'Lie Detection Lv.8'.]

[Character 'Anna Croft' has confirmed the applicable remark to be true.]

Her expression was dyed in pure astonishment, but it recovered quickly enough. The light in her eyes reverted back to the one belonging to the calm, level-headed Prophet from my memories.

"…And what do you want in return?"

As expected, prophets were quick on the uptake and that made my life easier.

"Lend me your ability for a bit."

Most likely, Anna Croft had no idea that the first being I met on this 'Middle Island' happened to be her, and just how glad I felt about this lucky encounter.

Somewhere in the mountainous region of the island. Asmodeus rubbed his chin while looking at the 'Modifier Necklace' he 'earned' as he stood on top of a tall, ancient tree.

[The Hunter of □dges.]

Now originally, Asmodeus was supposed to target the Modifier [The Hunter of Grudges.]

Unfortunately, other competitors hunted down his target already, and thanks to that, he was left with a tattered necklace that said [The Hun□ of □□], instead.

"So, I've already acquired [Dges] and [Ter]… that means all I need to find is [Gru]…"

The problem was, there weren't that many Constellations remaining on this island that still possessed the Modifier containing [Gru].

'The side effect of participating later because I was taking care of my dependents is fairly large, isn't it'.

Asmodeus stayed on top of the tree and scanned every corner of the island to search for the remaining Constellations. It was at that point that the Demon King heard the explosions ringing out from the forest up north. Judging from their scale, he could guess who was behind them. Yet another round of 'clean-up' had commenced, it seemed.

It'd prove to be entertaining if Asmodeus decided to stick his nose in there, but…

But then, a familiar voice entered his ears.

"…According to [Precognition], he is somewhere nearby."

"Oh, really?"

Asmodeus's expression brightened up the instant he heard those voices.

He lightly jumped off from the treetop and arrived before the owner of the voice with a gob-smacking turn of speed.

There they were, a man wearing a white coat and a platinum-blonde woman. Asmodeus smiled brightly.

['Demon King of Salvation', looks like we were fated to cross paths in this manner.]

The Demon King of Salvation'. The object of his grudge was now standing right in front of his eyes. However, the man didn't seem to be flustered at all.

"I didn't come here to fight, Asmodeus."

[That's not something for you to decide. Because…]

"You need the syllable [Gru], right?"

[…!!]

"Killing me and taking away [Gru] is an option, sure. However, I have a more interesting offer. Do you want to hear it?"

Asmodeus formed a dazed expression for a bit, before making his reply.

[It's already quite amusing that you are making me an offer, yet it's also supposed to be interesting, too? Now I want to hear about it more than ever.]

Asmodeus's voice was thickly dyed in excitement and madness already. He even sported an expression that said he was seriously weighing the pros and cons of devouring the tasty prey right in front of his eyes, or an even more delicious potential prey later on.

He then continued on.

[However, if I don't find your offer interesting, then you will…]

"I'm not the only one with the syllable [Gru] on this island."

Another owner of [Gru]?

Asmodeus's expression shifted once more.

[Could it be…?]

"If we're participating in the 'Great War of Saints and Demons', we should start acting more seriously now, don't you agree?"

The reflection of Kim Dokja in the eyes of Asmodeus was grinning like a true Demon King at that moment.

"Are you interested in Archangel hunting?"

Chapter 365: Ep. 69 - Archangel Hunting, I

'It's no fun when no one is fighting back'.

Michael stared at the corpses strewn about the field while smoking a rolled tobacco. Ash-grey smoke mushroomed up in the air. This cigarette was manufactured by the second generation of craftsmen. The reason why Michael enjoyed hunting demons or going on a 'business' trip was because he got to smoke the cigarettes he liked so much, to his heart's content.

In <Eden>, smoking was an 'evil', a sin.

Michael smoked through several cigarettes in a row and as he fell into a chain of thought, stubbed it out by rubbing it against the exposed flesh of a dead corpse.

'Have I taken too long?'

「What do you mean, too long? It's only just begun.」

Michael heard the voice reverberating within his head and frowned deeply.

'Shut up'.

「Hurry, wake me up. Unshackle me already.」

Michael pulled out a new cigarette.

He had been hearing this particular Story's voice for a long time. And whenever he did, Michael simply had to burn through more cigarettes, one after the other.

'Now isn't the time'.

Michael took another long drag of the rising smoke.

[Nebula <Eden> has issued a new revelation.]

[Archangel hunting, is it? It does sound rather interesting.]

Asmodeus grinned brightly to reveal two rows of pearly-white teeth after hearing my offer.

[It's not just any other Archangel, but the 'Saviour of the Corrupted', too… Are you being serious about this?]

"Of course."

[However, aren't you in a friendly relationship with <Eden>? If you do something like this, won't you end up as their enemy?]

"Doesn't matter. I'm a Demon King, after all."

Even if I didn't mean it, I still had to say it out loud. Because… I'm trying to convince none other than Asmodeus here. And the Demon King himself seemed to be seriously agonising over my suggestion at the moment.

"Do give it careful consideration. You need the syllable [Gru], right? On top of that, you'll be able to earn a Story concerning an Archangel, too. 「The One who Hunted Down a Great Archangel」… Doesn't the thought alone excite you?"

Unfortunately, Asmodeus wasn't to be swayed that easily. No, rather than that, he was shooting me a probing gaze as if to ascertain what my true intentions were.

I decided to throw an even bigger bait at this juncture. "Well, that's disappointing. As a member of the 'Gourmet Association', I figured that you'd be different from other Constellations."

Asmodeus's long, slender brows quivered noticeably after hearing my words.

[Your understanding of the Demon King, 'Asmodeus', has increased by a great deal.]

[Your understanding of the applicable individual is quite high.]

[2nd Stage of 'Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint' has activated!]

Now that's the first time I heard such a message.

Finally, the skill level of the [Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint] had risen up high enough to let me take a peek at the inside of selected Constellations. And right afterwards, I could hear Asmodeus's inner thoughts.

「He's utterly, hatefully arrogant, this 'Demon King of Salvation'.」

His inside was like a thick, sticky swamp. Listening to the private thoughts of a being looking back at me with a pair of quietly withdrawn eyes was making me feel rather uncomfortable.

His thoughts continued on.

「A trap that I want to fall into this badly, is it…」

As expected, it wasn't for nothing that Asmodeus had climbed up to the position of the 'Candidate for the future Great Demon King'. He had already figured out that my offer was a trap.

「It's likely that the target of the 'Demon King of Salvation' is the 'Saviour of the Corrupted'.」

「And he wants to use me and other Constellations to hunt down Michael and steal the 'Modifier Necklace' afterwards.」

「It's commendable that he's using his brain so much, but well, it's a bit irritating to pretend that I fell for his schemes, isn't it.」

Asmodeus's expression gradually changed into an icy one. Unsurprisingly, it seemed that this much convincing wasn't going to be enough.

「Michael is a difficult angel to fight against, even when he's being restrained by the Probability of the 2nd generation…」

Asmodeus's conflicting thoughts were gradually finding their heading now. A faint killing intent seemed to ooze out from his long nails.

I could sense Anna Croft next to me tense up and get into her battle mode. Maybe, she used the [Precognition] and saw something that was about to happen.

However, I wasn't worried in the slightest. Because it was about time that a situation even her [Precognition] couldn't have predicted began, that was why.

Like clockwork, Asmodeus's expression became rather weird.

「…Mm?」

The demon's briefly-hardened expression shifted into one filled with complicated emotions. His eyes danced around as if he was reading something in the empty air.

And so, how much time passed by like this? Countless emotions flitted in and out of Asmodeus's eyes before they finally landed back on me.

[Fufufu. Well, this is… It's so hard to figure out the will of the <Star Stream> sometimes, you know.]

"…What do you mean by that?"

[I was just talking to myself. Very well. I accept your offer. Let's try out this Archangel hunting thing, then.]

Asmodeus's announcement caused Anna Croft's eyes to go completely round in shock. She then formed a puzzled expression next.

Completely disregarding her, the Demon King smacked his lips and concentrated on sending a message to someone somewhere. He was probably busy communicating with other 'Seekers of the End' right about now. And at the same time, a message from a certain someone entered my head.

「(Did I do well?)」

'You did. Thank you, Sangah-ssi'.

The reason why Asmodeus changed his mind? He probably read a certain 'revelation' just now. More specifically, the fake 'revelation' Yoo Sangah and I had cooked up and spread around, that was.

It said, 「The corrupted Archangel will die by the sword of a 'Swordmaster' on the island of the aged Forgotten People.」

"…Another revelation was made??"

The Bureau was also turned upside down by the news of a new revelation. The first place to be affected by this was the sales department.

"Sir, we have a sudden spike in the sale of the Swordmaster-related skills!"

"Replenish their stock immediately! Call the related subcontractors and tell them to speed up the output of the mass production-type Stigma!"

"B-but, even then, our stock is running low, sir!!"

"Damn it… Where did all the Story manufacturers disappear to?! Ah?? Who was it again? Right, if we request the 'Mass Production Maker', then…"

In the meantime, Bihyung was quietly observing the developing situation from within this crucible of confusion and chaos. The Great Dokkaebi 'Baram' addressed him from the side.

[Bihyung, you should start a new scenario.]

"…I've already done so, sir."

A new message was floating up on the scenario observation screen that flickered into life just then.

[Sub-scenario, 'Archangel hunting', has commenced!]

Soon, the sight of the Constellations hiding within the forest and the plains rushing somewhere en masse showed up on screen. They had all purchased Swordmaster-related Stories from the [Dokkaebi Bag] just now.

"Will it be fine to open a scenario like this one, sir? Surely, <Eden> would strongly oppose this."

[We have already obtained the Scribe's consent. He said that it doesn't really matter. We've already compensated them, so there's no need to hold back.]

"To think, he'd allow one of his angels to be used as the subject of a scenario… That doesn't sound like what the leader of the Absolute Good would do."

[That's how the 'Absolute Good' operates. For the sake of the Greater Good, they would trample on smaller Good every now and then.]

"I'm aware of that, sir. But lately, it's becoming harder for me to understand them."

[Regarding?]

"Just what are <Eden> and the Demon Realm thinking? Them agreeing to go ahead with the 'Great War of Saints and Demons' scenario, and… Wouldn't they all perish together if they do this?"

Baram stared at Bihyung with unreadable eyes before forming a smirk.

[There is a saying about how short life is, but 'art' would go on forever.]

"That's a saying from Earth, isn't it, sir?"

[Correct. Those are words that exalt the story's eternal nature. But, you should be aware of this – such a notion is false. Even the greatest Story will die sooner or later. It's just that, compared to the length of a Story's lifespan, a human's life is simply far too short, that is all.]

Baram's voice seemed to contain the regrets of an innumerable length of time. Indeed, those words belonged to a Dokkaebi that had continuously told the tales of Constellations for a truly long time.

[Did you know? Once upon a time, stories with no distinction between good and evil didn't exist within <Star Stream>.]

"Yes, I know."

[But, what about now?]

Screams from the Constellations killed by Michael's blade could be heard coming from the screen. And there were other Constellations silently peeping at this battle.

These Constellations were sponsoring someone else, they were busy swearing at others, or were fully enjoying the show. Coins exchanged hands, and cries of pleasure and despair continued to resound out.

And within this spectacle, not one person seemed to care about either good or evil.

"Ah…"

As he spat out that short gasp, Bihyung finally understood the Great Dokkaebi's wisdom. Baram addressed his junior once more.

[This is a war to stop them from disappearing.]

* * *

For the next two days, Anna Croft and I prepared for the hunt. Asmodeus didn't act with us, though.

[Let us meet again on the hunting ground at midday, two days from now.]

He left those words behind and disappeared on us. I was pretty sure that the Demon King was getting ready to hunt down an angel in his own way.

There were around 30 minutes left until midday. The promised location for our Archangel hunting was the 'Fertile Forest' located on the north of the island.

Just before we reached our destination, Anna Croft threw me a question. "Do you really think we can pull this off?"

"You're going to help me out, aren't you?"

"Even if it's me, I can't predict the [Future] all the time. You already know this better than anyone."

"It's fine to read the nearest future for the time being."

What I needed to avoid were the unseen variables that might happen in the near future. And Anna Croft's [Precognition] was the most suitable skill for avoiding such things.

"…What will you do if I decide to betray you? If my target is you, then…"

"I know that's not the case."

From the get-go, I couldn't have been her target. Why? Because she was inserted into the scenario way before me.

She narrowed her eyes to a slit and asked me again. "…By the way, since when did you stop using polite speech to address me?"

"Oh, now that I think about it, you're right… Should I address you with polite speech again, Ma'am?"

"You're being a jerk right now, so please, just stop."

"Ah, right. How many times can you use [Precognition] today, young miss?"

Anna Croft glared at me with a dumbfounded expression, before making her reply. "Three times."

"Don't use them unnecessarily, and activate them only after I give you the signal."

"Why should I listen to…"

"You should listen, so we can finish this shitty scenario for good."

From afar, we could hear the screams of the Constellations and Incarnations. The hunting had begun already. Along with the horrifying explosions, the oppressive voice of the aloof, proud Archangel rocked the entire forest.

[You dare to use me as the subject matter for a scenario??]

Anna Croft and I hid in the nearby bushes and observed the battleground.

We couldn't spot Asmodeus anywhere yet. Instead of him, though, almost all the participants still remaining on 'Middle Island No.3' had gathered here in the 'Fertile Forest'.

Most of them just so happened to be 'Evil' or 'Neutral'-type Constellations. There were many Historical-grade Constellations, and I even spotted a lower-ranked Demon King, too.

It was 'Darkness of no Value' Belial, from the 68th Demon Realm. He must've shown up here after heeding Asmodeus's call. Not just him, but other Constellations were each carrying a longsword of the 2nd generation at the moment.

[Attack him!!]

Michael watched the Constellations rushing towards him with Belial in the lead and fumed in pure rage.

[A measly little lower-ranked Demon King dares to… You all must've gone mad as a group!]

The Archangel used a stupendously powerful wind pressure to blow Belial away, and activated his Status to generate a barrier of winds. However, there were some who managed to break past the barrier to still take shots at him.

[Constellation, 'Hard-work Specialist', has activated the skill, 'Mass-produced Physical Sword Aura'!]

The exact same skill was activated simultaneously from the longswords held by the participants. Waves of yellow, or even blue, coloured sword auras physically manifesting themselves sliced past Michael's Status and advanced forward. The Archangel formed a mocking grin.

[…Ether Blade? What a crazy bunch of fools.]

The revelation I leaked to the world through Yoo Sangah was fake. Without a doubt, no 'Swordmaster' out there would be capable of killing Archangel Michael. However, just because it was a 'fake' revelation, that didn't mean it was complete rubbish with no odds of coming true, either.

Ch-ch-ch-ch-cheut!!

[Probability of the 2nd generation has granted a powerful buff effect on the applicable skills!]

The [Physical Sword Aura] was currently being ridiculed as an exclusive skill of the Transcendents. However, there was a period of time in the past when the 2nd generation viewed it as the greatest skill ever.

[It's working! Keep cutting him down!!]

Chi-eeek!

Michael's wind barrier began melting away gradually from the continual baptism of the sword auras. He got flustered and tried to activate a new Story, but then, a jet-black light of Ether suddenly sliced down from the air.

Sliiiice!!

Like magic, space separated, as if it had been sliced away in its entirety. Only the lengthy claw mark left behind by a Demon King was visible from the gaps of the crumbling barrier.

[I always wondered whether an Archangel without wings can fly or not.]

Michael's torn wing moved with great difficulty in the air. Through the falling feathers, Asmodeus's smiling mug revealed itself to the world.

[And I finally got my answer today. The wing's existence is not related to the Archangel's ability to fly.]

[…Asmodeus!!]

Taken over by his rage, Michael poured out his magical energy towards the Demon. Unfortunately, he couldn't aim at his target properly after his balance was affected due to the damage to his Incarnation body. He began wasting his energy, instead.

On the other hand, Asmodeus used other Constellations to diligently pile on further injuries to Michael.

As expected of Asmodeus; I couldn't help but marvel at this battle.

"We should get going. That Demon King might end up snatching away our Myth-grade Story at this rate."

"No, it's not the time yet, ma'am."

My relaxed voice caused a flustered expression to form on Anna Croft's face. As long as she didn't use up her [Precognition] allowance for today, she'd never have guessed what was about to transpire soon.

[Story, 'Evil that Destroys Evil', has begun its storytelling.]

Pitch-black aura suddenly began gathering around Michael's figure and enveloped him like some kind of a bud. It was hard to believe that such corrupted energy actually belonged to an Archangel.

「And the 'Good' has chosen to walk the path of 'Evil' in order to destroy other 'Evil'.」

Constellations realized that something ominous was about to happen and they continued to pour out their barrage of powerful attacks, but too bad, they failed to scratch that black bud even once.

Instead, it seemed to suck in nutrients by absorbing the power of the surroundings, and slowly began blooming itself.

[Archangel Michael has become corrupted!]

While witnessing this overwhelming spectacle, I recalled a certain part of 'Ways of Survival' in my head.

「Not every Constellation of this world was divided into 'Constellations' and 'Demon Kings'. There is just one creature, an existence that could use the powers of a Constellation as well as a Demon King at the same time.」

The sole being within the lengthy history of <Eden> who ate the [Star Relic Fruit]…

「No demon shall survive upon witnessing his true appearance.」

Ku-gugugugu!!

"…Oh, my god," whispered Anna Croft.

Something was waking up from within the pitch-black darkness.

First, a black pair of wings. And then, the horns signifying a Demon King.

[Demon King, 'King of Corrupted Angels', is scanning the battlefield.]

The so-called 'King of Corrupted Angels' – that was Archangel Michael's Modifier after he transformed into a Demon King.

Kuwaaaaaah-!!

With a simple flick of its hand, all Constellations leaning towards 'Evil' were swept away clean. Even if they were seemingly on the same 'Evil' side now, the difference in their classes was simply on another realm altogether. This was the true power of Michael, an Archangel on the level of a Myth-grade.

Even Asmodeus was forming a hardened expression now.

[This… wasn't in the revelation.]

Soon after, Michael's Status rained down, and several Demon Kings were flung away helplessly. The body of Asmodeus's Incarnation must've received a tremendous amount of damage, because he too, began faltering about.

That was when I stood up from my spot.

"It's time."

"You want to join the battle now?!"

"Yes."

"…Didn't you see what happened just now? Even if your target is that Archangel, this is…"

"What made you think that my target is the 'Archangel'?"

After hearing my question, Anna Croft could only blink her eyes in sheer dumbfoundedness. Her [Eye of the Great Demon] began burning up in a reddish hue.

"C-can it be…??"

We could see Asmodeus's body being flung away like a puppet with its strings cut in the distance.

From the get-go, I wasn't planning to face off against the Corrupted Archangel. And besides, he wasn't the only one possessing a Myth-grade Story.

[Your targetted Modifier is 'Devil of Lust and Wrath'.]

I unsheathed my sword as the message popped up in the air and spoke to her.

"Well, let's go and get ourselves a Myth-grade Story, shall we?"

Chapter 366: Ep. 69 - Archangel Hunting, II

Anna Croft and I moved towards the battlefield right away.

Completely lost to madness now, Michael was ripping apart every single Constellation and Incarnation near him to bloody shreds.

The 'Evil' born only to destroy 'Evil'.

After transforming into a Corrupted Angel, just Michael's combat prowess alone would not lose out to that of Poseidon or Hades.

[Quite a few Constellations are paying more attention to the situation unfolding on the 'Middle Island No.3'.]

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is looking at you with worried eyes.]

Those Constellations who had either already made their way into the 'Main Island', or hadn't participated in the 'Great War of Saints and Demons', began shifting their gazes in this direction now.

After we reached the edge of Michael's firing range, Anna Croft spoke to me. "Getting any closer than this will be dangerous. My [Covert Operations] skill can only…"

I reached out and grasped her wrist.

[Story, 'Pebble and I', has begun its storytelling!]

[Story, 'Pebble and I', is puzzled by the existence of 'Anna Croft'.]

"Take care of this woman, as well."

[Story, 'Pebble and I', is looking at you with a slightly dissatisfied expression.]

[Story, 'Pebble and I', has assimilated 'Anna Croft' into its effect.]

With that, we bravely ran through the battlefield. Michael and the other Constellations didn't sense our presence at all. Most likely, we looked like a pair of pebbles rolling around on the ground or some such.

Anna Croft asked me with a shocked voice. "What is up with this Story??"

"It's a Story for turning into a pebble."

Since we didn't have time, I replied to her like that.

Corpses of Constellations littered the pathways of the battlefield. Every now and then, we spotted still-breathing ones, too. Such as the Demon King from the 68th Demon Realm, 'Darkness of no Value', Belial.

After suffering from Michael's attacks, he was barely holding on as Stories continued to leak out from his body. Wait, now that I thought about it, this dude was also aiming for me, wasn't he?

Stab!

I oh-so-calmly sunk my Unbroken Faith in his body next.

[You have eliminated the 68th Demon Realm's Demon King!]

[Applicable Demon King is of a lower ranking than you are, and there is no change to the ranking.]

[You have acquired the [Modifier Necklace], 'Darkness of no Value'.]

[You have murdered a fifth Demon King Incarnation Body.]

[Possibility of a new Attribute is opening up to you!]

"But, aren't you a Demon King yourself?! Can you actually kill them like that??"

"Well, I'll just give up being a Demon King, then."

Anna Croft heard my perfectly-composed glib reply and formed a dumbfounded expression.

Ku-gugugugu!!

We heard the noises of Michael's Status flooding out right behind us. If the Probability of the 2nd generation was slightly weaker, the entire forest would've been blown away by that power already.

"We don't have much time left, so let's hurry. Asmodeus should be in a state similar to this guy."

The forest's path near our position was decorated by the fallen fragments of a Demon King's Stories. These traces belonged to a much-higher ranked Demon King, one that couldn't be compared to Belial. You didn't have to be a genius to figure out who they belonged to.

We brushed past the bushes for a bit until finally discovering a figure of a person leaning against the foot of a tall, ancient tree.

[…So, you did show up.]

As if he knew that I'd show up, Asmodeus was waiting for me with a smile on his face.

An arm and a leg of his Incarnation Body were cut off and missing; his chest area had been crushed as well, and he was truly hanging precariously on his last breaths.

[To think that Michael possessed the authority of 'Corrupted'… you knew that from the beginning, didn't you?]

Asmodeus formed an expression of someone who had realized everything now.

[And you're going to take away my necklace.]

"Correct."

Asmodeus's overturned [Modifier Necklace] gleamed brightly. If I took a hold of all the words on that necklace, the Demon King should be kicked out of the ongoing 'Great War of Saints and Demons'.

[In that case, you should hurry up.]

Asmodeus's Incarnation Body belonged to a girl of around sixteen years of age. Even if this body died, Asmodeus's real self wouldn't die.

However, that body would die for real. And it… she, was the daughter of Manager Han Myungoh.

"I won't kill you. Instead, let's make a trade."

[Trade? You want to trade after coming this far?]

"Kindly hand over a Myth-grade Story to me. Then, I won't eliminate you from this scenario."

Asmodeus broke out into a loud peal of laughter before vomiting out a mouthful of blood.

[Now that is a rather amusing notion. Are you threatening me right now?]

"I am."

For a brief moment there, palpable tension flowed between the Demon King and I. Asmodeus glared at me, but the light in his eyes seemed to contain a faint trace of resignation.

[You have become a true 'Demon King' now, haven't you. No one in the 72 seats would be able to deny that you're a true Demon King.]

"Thanks for the compliment."

[However, there is a problem with your offer. Your target is me, so with what method will you not kick me out?]

"If you don't lose all of your words, you don't get eliminated from the scenario. I'll leave you with one word remaining."

The word I was planning to leave behind was 'Of', which was something I already had as a spare. Asmodeus spoke back.

[I'm so thankful that I might cry now.]

I extended my hand towards his [Modifier Necklace]. Syllables began flowing out one by one from the item next.

[Modifier syllable, 'Lu' has been acquired.]

[Modifier syllable, 'St' has been acquired.]

[Modifier syllable, 'And' has been acquired.]

[Modifier syllable, 'Wra' has been acquired.]

…

When around half of the syllables came my way, Asmodeus spoke up while glancing at my own Modifier. No, more specifically, he must've been looking at the 'Tion' of my Modifier.

[Now that I take a look from up close, your Modifier truly is a tempting one.]

I quickly hid the [Modifier Necklace] under my clothes and replied.

"Don't try to kill Michael, and just try to steal one word from him. If it's you, it should be more than doable, right?"

[Just one word, is it… Are you perchance speaking of this one?]

It was at that moment that a certain necklace held in his still-fine hand caught my eyes.

[Hunter of Grudges]

His 'targeted necklace' with all of the words completed began emitting a bright glow.

[Demon King, 'Devil of Lust and Wrath', has attained the scenario clear condition!]

[Transmission to the next scenario has begun.]

I reflexively took a look at my own Modifier necklace. It still said [Demon King of Salvation]. Meaning, that 'Gru' didn't come from mine.

[I knew that this was a trap the moment Michael became corrupted.]

…No way, during such a short window?

The transmission to the next scenario began and Asmodeus's Incarnation Body slowly dispersed before my eyes.

[Did you really think that I wouldn't have made contingency plans for a situation like this one?]

From the onset, Asmodeus fought Michael for the express purpose of acquiring the syllable [Gru], nothing more. I belatedly reached out towards the Demon King, but things were already beyond my ability to interfere now.

[I pray you good fortune, 'Demon King of Salvation'. Because… you too also need to collect just one more 'word' from now on.]

Accompanied by a brilliant flash of light, Asmodeus's body disappeared from the spot. And the only things I had with me were those Modifier words that he left behind.

[De□ of Lust and Wrath]

God damn it, why did it have to be [Vil]…?

I underestimated Asmodeus, didn't I? I turned my head around to find Anna Croft glaring daggers at me.

"What about the promise with m…"

"Shh."

I reflexively placed my finger on my lips. Something felt off. Up until only a few seconds ago, the whole forest was awash with the chaotic screaming, but it was just too damn quiet now.

…As if all lifeforms had been killed off within the area.

Just as all the leaves and blades of grass in our surroundings stood up, so did the hair on my skin. I almost instinctively shouted out.

"Activate [Precognition], now!"

Her [Eye of the Great Demon] glowed in a bright crimson colour. Then, Anna Croft grabbed me and broke into a desperate sprint. After dashing over a hundred metres in an instant, she took a quick look behind her. I, too, was staring at the same spectacle as her.

Kuwah-aaaaah!!

The spot we were in only a moment ago was now being enveloped in a gigantic explosion. A purple-coloured half-dome reminiscent of a barrier collapsed in on itself in the blink of an eye and destroyed everything trapped within.

That was the [Judgement Field], the ability to destroy everything that could only be earned through 'Corruption'.

Anna Croft spoke in a despairing voice. "There's too much noise and I can't see the future!"

"No need to see everything. You just need to read Michael's attack patterns."

"You still wish to fight him? If we use that 'let's become pebbles' Story or some such, we can surely escape from…"

"Didn't you see that guy attacking even the stones on the ground just now?"

The Archangel hell-bent on killing me was walking out of the crater where purple-coloured smoke was rising up. Michael's Story, now triggered by the [Fruit of Good and Evil], was controlling his entire being. The Corrupted Archangel had already lost half of his reasoning.

[Demon King… of… Sal… vation…]

His powerful voice roused up all the goosebumps on my skin just by hearing it from afar.

"…Yup, he's definitely not sane at the moment."

"Damn it, this is all your fault!!"

"Let's go with Plan B."

"Plan B? You haven't even told me about that yet!"

"I'm trying to come up with it n…"

I couldn't finish my sentence. Raging storm winds crashing in blew Anna Croft away to a distance, that's why. Right after that, I saw Michael's large, hulking frame rush towards me in a frightening turn of speed.

['Demon King Transformation' has been activated!]

Along with cracking noises, my body began changing; a pair of jet-black wings and the horns of a Demon King rose up from my back and my head. Thanks to the Probability of the 2nd generation, my own Status had been strengthened further, as well. Of course, it'd still be a dog's death trying to fight him with only this much Status, though.

[Attribute, 'Scenario Interpreter', has been activated.]

However, it wasn't me who would be facing off against this guy.

[Giant Story, 'Demon Realm's Spring', has begun its storytelling!]

[Giant Story, 'Torch that Swallowed the Myth', has begun its storytelling!]

Indeed, it would be the 'Stories' that I had earned so far.

KWA-BOOM!!!

The 「Demon Realm's Spring」 loaded up on my left hand collided with Michael's own left fist. Almost at the same time, the holy flames of the Torch burning on Unbroken Faith aimed for the Corrupted Archangel's body.

[Giant Story, 'Torch that Swallowed the Myth', is crying out in enjoyment!]

Michael was instantly shocked by what happened and quickly retreated while contorting his body.

The power of the 'Giant Stories' was truly amazing. To think, they were able to face off against that frightening monster, even if he had been restricted currently by the shackles of the Probability of the 2nd generation. Indeed, it was not a waste of time to train under Yoo Hoseong earlier.

[Story, 'Evil that Destroys Evil', has begun its storytelling!]

[Giant Story, 'Eden's Demon', has begun its storytelling!]

Unfortunately, I wasn't the only one who possessed a powerful Story.

Kugugugugu-!!

The incredible pressure emitted with Michael as its centre caused all my Stories to gasp out in pain. My Status was not quite enough to fight face to face with this Archangel, as it turned out.

[Giant Story, 'Torch that Swallowed the Myth', is roaring out in vexation.]

Sorry about that. If only I was a little stronger, you wouldn't have to hold yourself back like this. Soon afterwards, a fearsome strike flew in and I received an incredible, stomach-churning impact.

[Giant Story, 'Torch that Swallowed the Myth', is protecting you.]

[Giant Story, 'Demon Realm's Spring', is protecting you.]

[Story, 'King of a Kingless World', is protecting you.]

[Story, 'One who Opposes the Miracle', is protecting you.]

…

My Stories were dealing with the Archangel's attacks in my stead. For a brief moment there, several thoughts brushed past my brain.

What if I used [Hell of Eternity]?

What if I activated [Electrification] and [Way of the Wind] simultaneously?

Awaken [Bookmarks] and call upon other characters?

No matter what I thought of, I just couldn't see a clear way out of this. So, did that mean I only have that method left? But, I so wanted to avoid ending up in that pathetic state again.

Michael took large strides to come closer as I vomited out a bucketful of blood and backed away. He must've decided to end this right now, as purple-coloured aura was oozing out from one of his hands.

Soon, a purple-coloured half-dome was generated within my surroundings. There it was, the Stigma that couldn't be cancelled once activated – the judge that punishes all 'Evil', [Judgement Field], was spreading out around me.

It looked as if my punishment would be in the form of compression to death.

"…Michael."

However, did he know this small fact? That I'd been waiting for him to activate that Stigma of his?

"No, hang on… Corrupted Angel 'Lucifer'."

[Demon King, 'King of Corrupted Angels', hates that name!]

Originally, Lucifer was one of the main players that was supposed to lead the 'Great War of Saints and Demons' to its conclusion.

「No 'Evil' in this world can defeat the 'King of Corrupted Angels'.」

This 'Evil' grew even stronger when confronting other 'Evil'. And eventually, this monster would swallow up all 'Evil' out there. Heck, even a high-ranking Demon King within the top 10 positions wouldn't be able to kill this guy. Because he'd become the strongest existence in this world while fighting against 'Evil'.

「However, what would happen if his opponent was not 'Evil'?」

All incredible power had a corresponding price to pay; while looking at the [Judgement Field] that was only around ten or so metres away from me, I reached into my inner pocket.

What I pulled out was a single apple – the [Star Relic Fruit] that I received from the 'Scribe of Heaven' just before 'Gigantomachia' went underway.

"Hey, don't you miss the taste of this thing?"

Michael's eyes began to quake rather noticeably now. He should be able to recognise this apple, because he too, had consumed this fruit once before.

"When an angel eats a [Fruit of Good and Evil], it'd go through [Demon King Transformation]. But, if a Demon King eats this fruit, what will happen?"

I could see the flustered Michael hurriedly extend his hand out.

Sorry, but it's too late now.

Just before the [Judgement Field] crushed my body…

…With a crunch, I took a bite out of the [Fruit of Good and Evil].

Chapter 367: Ep. 69 - Archangel Hunting, III

This was a part of an ancient memory.

– Scribe, for how long am I supposed to repeat this war? A war that doesn't have any victors…

The times when he threw that question out, or how many times he asked it – he couldn't recall them.

– Michael, there's no need to ponder too deeply about this.

The Metatron of his memories would always return the exact same smile. For several hundreds of years, or maybe even for thousands of years.

Metatron continued to carry that grin from the far side of time that Michael couldn't even remember anymore.

– Please, focus on hating the 'Evil' in front of your eyes, instead. That is your 'scenario'.

'…My scenario.

Just how long have I been hunting down the demons?'

Michael, for a long time now, could no longer remember his birth.

[The power of 'Fruit of Good and Evil' is going berserk.]

His memories were always incorrect, incomplete. All he could remember were the final words of the Demon Kings dying at his hands.

– How lamentable, oh, the pitiful disciple of <Eden>. Do you really need to go this far?

That was from the master of the 21st Demon Realm.

– Uwahahahaha!! You are now the same as us! Finally, Metatron has gone mad!!

And that was from the master of the 9th Demon Realm.

– Which 'number' Michael are you?

And finally, from the lips of the master of the 4th Demon Realm.

Past the faces of the Demon Kings with names he'd forgotten, he could see the dead Archangels, his companions, that fought alongside him.

– Michael, you must regain yourself. Please… This, this is wrong.

An Angel and a Demon, that's what he was.

Faces breaking down like debris scattered away in tens of thousands of puzzle pieces, before gathering back together to create one giant form.

'Good' and 'Evil', in conflict against each other for eternity itself. And Metatron's face, the one who had managed to endure all those years, continued to carry the exact same smile for thousands of years.

– You need to be careful about one thing. When using this power, you must never…

[The power of 'Fruit of Good and Evil' is going berserk!]

All of his memories were swept away in one go; Michael was enveloped in horrifying pain akin to his head being ripped to tiny shreds.

Aaaaaaaaah-!!!!

All 'Good' in the world cried out in sorrow. From the blades of grass to trees; from small insects to every type of 'Good' living in Creation fell into a state of sorrow and cried out in grief.

[You have directed a fatal attack at an opponent on the side of Absolute Good!]

[Story, 'Evil that Destroys Evil', is roaring out in bitter sadness!]

[You have broken the taboo!]

[You have been handed a terrible penalty!]

A grey-coloured angel covered in blood was smiling at Michael.

* * *

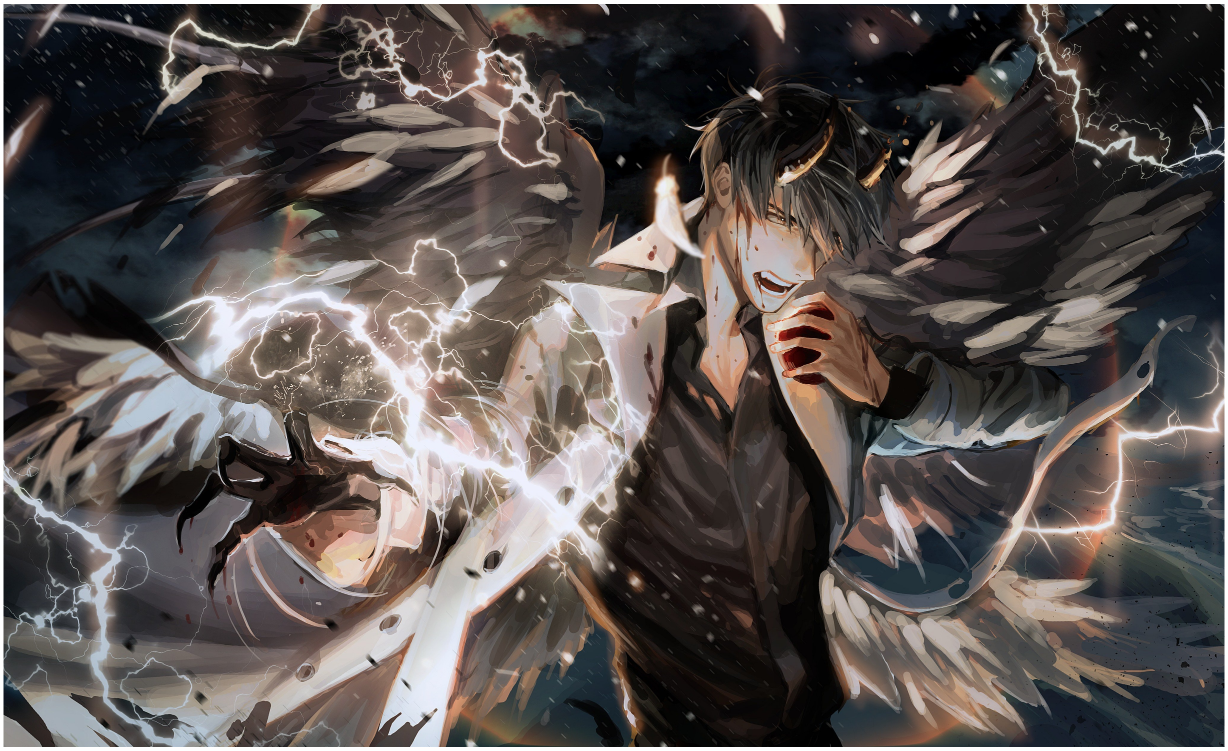
The moment I bit into the [Fruit of Good and Evil], the view of the world changed.

[You have consumed a forbidden 'Star Relic Fruit'.]

[You are currently a 'Demon King'.]

[The power of 'Fruit of Good and Evil' has whispered the secret of the 'Absolute Good' to you.]

As the ginormous storm of magical energy raged around me, my ears were inundated by the continuous stream of messages.



[*](#)

[You have experienced all facets of 'Good and Evil'!]

[You have achieved an impossible feat!]

[You have acquired the Possibility of a brand new Story!]

[<Star Stream> is stunned by your accomplishment.]

[<Star Stream> is pondering what your second Modifier should be.]

I felt the sensations of being a Constellation, the one I couldn't feel for a long time after becoming a Demon King, once more.

['Demon King Transformation' has been cancelled.]

[<Star Stream> has completely restored your constellation.]

I saw a beautifully sparkling star high up within the pitch-black sky above. That was my star.

['Angel Transformation' is activating.]

My body began to glow brightly after receiving the starlight. The feathered wings dyed in black morphed into pure white ones, and the demon's horns growing on top of my head withered away. Warm, pure energy filled up the entirety of my Incarnation Body.

Unfortunately, I wasn't permitted enough time to relaxedly enjoy the 'Status of an Angel'. The [Judgement Field] had shrunk down around me and had begun crushing my body.

Kwa-dudududuk!!

My new wings were crushed and folded as I felt this horrifying pain. My arms and legs, that couldn't endure against the pressure of the compacting space, got crushed helplessly.

[Giant Story, 'Torch That Swallowed the Myth', is protecting you.]

[Giant Story, 'Demon Realm's Spring', is protecting you.]

I was able to barely hold on against that enormous pressure, powerful enough to almost crush me in an instant, with the aid of my Giant Stories.

['The Fourth Wall' is protecting your mental state!]

[Probability of 2nd generation is weakening the ability of 'the Fourth Wall'!]

It felt like several bolts of lightning were going off in my head. I thought that I'd blackout at any given moment, and my vision darkened before reverting back a few times, too.

However, I endured. I simply had to. So that I could grasp that one and only chance soon to be coming my way.

「As the price for being strong against 'Evil', the 'King of Corrupted Angels' possesses one weakness.」

The power of the [Judgement Field] crushing and wringing my body was gradually weakening. The only weakness of this frightening monster capable of destroying all 'Absolute Evil', was…

「The 'King of Corrupted Angels' cannot attack an opponent leaning towards the 'Good' spectrum.」

If he broke this rule and attacked 'Good', then…

Craaaaack!!

The absolute Stigma [Judgement Field], capable of crushing a Demon King to death, began splintering into pieces. Like a moth escaping from its cocoon, I destroyed this barrier and spread out my wings.

Michael squatted down on the ground and grasped his head with both of his hands while screaming at the top of his lungs.

[Demon King, 'King of Corrupted Angels', is writhing in great pain!]

This was my only chance.

"Anna Croft!!"

As soon as my words resounded out in this forest, a blonde woman ran towards the rear of Michael. Her eye was now dyed in that crimson hue. She had seen something through [Precognition] and was now in full sprint while unleashing all of her Status.

Meanwhile, I gathered my remaining strength into my two legs and dashed forward as if I was falling over. Now, normally, killing Michael with only this much combined firepower was impossible, even if he had been rendered defenseless like right now.

However, the story would be different while we were on this island.

[Character, 'Anna Croft', has activated 'Physical Sword Aura Lv.9'!]

As if we had a prior agreement, she unleashed several strands of powerful energy from the tip of her shortsword like clockwork. I unsheathed Unbroken Faith with my tattered right arm.

[Fragment of a Story, 'Right Arm of a Pitiful Sword Master', has activated!]

I had no clue that a Story acquired through the special attribute of [Lamarck's Giraffe] once upon a time would come in handy like this.

[Probability of 2nd generation has reinforced your aptitude!]

The explosive magical energy of [Purest Sword Force] extended by over ten-plus metres from the tip of Unbroken Faith.

I managed to barely hold the sword level as it sunk about half-way into the left side of Michael's neck. Almost at the same time, Anna Croft's shortsword sliced into the right of his neck.

A fountain of blood shot up into the air and Michael's severed head flew up.

[You have killed the 176th Incarnation Body of 'King of the Corrupted Angels'.]

[You have acquired a Myth-grade Story.]

[<Star Stream> is stunned by your accomplishment!]

[You have brought the 'Fake Revelation' to reality.]

[You have achieved an unbelievable accomplishment!]

[You have acquired an ungradable Story.]

[You have acquired the Story, 'Architect of Revelation'!]

As the stream of messages cascaded down, my barely-maintained consciousness finally let go and scattered away.

When I reopened my eyes, I found myself all alone within a white space. A single sentence was floating up in the empty air.

｢The being who consumed the 'Fruit of Good and Evil' will face the truth he had been avoiding.｣

'…Where am I?'

Before I had a chance to ask that, images suddenly popped up on the left-hand sidewall. Those were scenes from 'Ways of Survival'.

It depicted Yoo Joonghyuk and his companions clearing out various scenarios. That was the world of 'Ways of Survival' where I didn't exist. The companions who didn't buckle under all sorts of hardships and continued to defeat their enemies… existed there.

['Fruit of Good and Evil' speaks to you. 'That story was your life, wasn't it?']

I nodded my head. Indeed, that story was my life. I grew up while reading those events.

['Fruit of Good and Evil' speaks to you. 'However, this is also definitely your life, too'.]

The right-hand sidewall rippled and a new screen appeared there. It now showed a boy, around 15 years old. He was looking at a computer monitor while inputting something with the keyboard.

– What will happen to Joonghyuk next? Is he going to die again?

This was back when Yoo Joonghyuk was going through his 164th turn. I was in the 3rd year of middle school, and in love with Lee Jihye back then. And I was busy typing a comment.

– Argh… Really… I'd like to stop chomping on the sweet potatoes now, please.

And then, when Yoo Joonghyuk was going through his 488th turn. I was in the 2nd year of high school, around the same age as Kim Namwoon; again, I was typing a comment within the screen.

…

…

…

As Yoo Joonghyuk went through more and more regressions, I too, grew older and older. While reading about his deaths, my beard began sprouting. I graduated from high school while spectating on his sacrifices.

And again, as I read his story…

– Wouldn't it be fine for him to just die during this turn, instead?

…Wait, did I ever write a comment like that before?

– The story is going down the drain, so maybe it's time to go back? see ya

Now, it was Yoo Joonghyuk's 662th turn.

I was a university student by then, still typing away on a keyboard.

– Joonghyuk is going to die again, yes?

The words I committed to record were in full display here. All those words that I spat out under the excuse of being hurt by life and exhausted by living itself, they were coming back inside my brain.

– Please, can you skip the earlier scenarios? It's getting repetitive.

…I couldn't say anything, not anymore.

['Fruit of Good and Evil' speaks to you. 'That is the total worth of the story you told as if it was your entire life'.]

The tips of my fingers began trembling.

On the left wall, Yoo Joonghyuk and his battles; and on the right wall, there was me, staring at Yoo Joonghyuk. And right in the middle wall, the scenes of me glaring at the stars in the sky played out.

「"Enjoy the show while you can. The fee for your entertainment shall become your lives in the end."」

['Fruit of Good and Evil' speaks to you. 'Do you really have the qualification to tell ■■?']

My own words continued to float up above the screen.

「"Yoo Joonghyuk, I know the 'future you don't know'."」

「"Hey, Joonghyuk, we can save this world. You know this, right?"」

「"I'll finish your story in your stead."」

My voice, sounding so brazen and with not a speck of hesitation in it.

['Fruit of Good and Evil' speaks to you. 'You, who have deceived the entire world by relying on the story only you know, and lived until now… Do you possess the right to be saved?]

From some place deep in my chest, I thought I heard something break. The whole world seemed to be shaking in my eyes.

['The Fourth Wall' is glaring at the 'Fruit of Good and Evil'!]

['Fruit of Good and Evil' is startled and is shrinking back.]

Tch-chuchuchuchut!!

A storm of Probability swept up my surroundings. As I stumbled and faltered about, someone's voice cried out to me.

「(…Dokja-ssi! You need to move, now! Michael is still…!)」

After I opened my eyes again, I found myself leaning against a cavern wall.

"…I was going to abandon you if you didn't wake up in the next minute or so."

A blonde woman was looking down at me. Bandages were tightly wrapped around my belly and chest areas, and there were some crushed herbs applied to my thigh that had suffered a penetration wound.

Warm liquid then flowed into my mouth. It tasted bitter, acrid.

I quickly regained my wits and after discovering the identity of the liquid, nearly got scared out of them again. Because… Anna Croft had cut her palm open to feed me her own blood.

*

"What the hell are you…?!"

She used her other hand to calm me down and explained herself without a hint of fluster.

"I possess the attribute [Elixir Maker]. My blood possesses the same medicinal effects as all the elixirs I've consumed so far."

"…But, drinking a lot of this blood will place me under your control."

"That happens only when your Status is lower than mine."

She stemmed the blood flow from her palm and turned her head away.

It was nighttime already. I couldn't sense any presence or movements. I sucked in several slow but deep breaths and asked her.

"What happened to Michael?"

"…He's dead. No, I'm not sure whether to call him dead or not…"

"By any chance, did his Incarnation Body get enshrouded in a blackish fog?"

"…How did you know that?"

I wish I could explain to her, but this crippling pain assaulting my head prevented me from easily recalling the contents of 'Ways of Survival'. I was pretty sure that Michael wasn't dead. To be more specific, he did die, but would revive again.

There were 'two moons' up in the sky outside the cavern, the symbol of Stories from the 2nd generation. I must've drank a fair amount of her blood, because under the pale blue light, Anna Croft's complexion was just as pale and wane.

"Why didn't you abandon me and leave?"

"I thought that, by saving you, I'd earn a Story like [Prophet who Pays her Debt] or some such."

She probably knew very well that such a Story wouldn't get created so easily. Suddenly, I was overcome with this sense of rejection to this whole idea in my head. The Anna Croft I knew was not like this. The woman I knew was definitely a cold-blooded type of a person who, for the sake of her cause, would not hesitate to sacrifice even her most precious companion.

That was supposed to be the case, but…

"You should be able to move again in a few hours."

However, was the information I know of her, everything there was to know about Anna Croft?

「Anna Croft is an Incarnation of 'Absolute Good'.」

…I couldn't be sure why I was thinking up such things. Maybe, it was possible that I began thinking about lots more things after consuming the [Fruit of Good and Evil].

I spoke as if I was sighing. "We should part ways around here. You must've collected all the words necessary for your Modifier target, after all."

"It doesn't matter to me, but will you be fine?"

"Not sure who should be worried about who here. Even if you don't look after me, let me assure you, I won't die. These injuries weren't severe enough to kill me."

"No, if you were left alone, you would have been dead."

Not 'could have died', but 'dead', straight up. And I knew the precise moments when Anna Croft would say something like that.

"But, you shouldn't have been able to see my future?"

"…Until recently, yes, I couldn't."

[Exclusive skill, 'Lie Detection Lv.7', has activated!]

[You have confirmed that the applicable assertion is the truth.]

"Starting from yesterday onwards, I could see little bits of your future. Some 'things' past an indistinct, faint wall…"

…She could see my future?

"What did you see?"

"…It'll be better if you don't know."

"Just say it."

Anna Croft's [Eye of the Great Demon] again emitted a crimson light. She then spat out a soft sigh before slowly opening her lips.

"Twelve hours from now, you will die at the hands of the 'Supreme King', Yoo Joonghyuk."

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* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)
* Official novel illustration (canonical)

Chapter 368: Ep. 69 - Archangel Hunting, IV

[You are a '1st turn' Regressor.]

The first time he chose to go back, he thought that he was given a great opportunity – an opportunity to survive the scenarios by possessing more information than everyone else.

[You are a '2nd turn' Regressor.]

When he chose to go back for the second time, he began thinking that this life wouldn't be as easy as he thought.

And, after witnessing his companions die over and over again…

After losing the person he loved so much…

…He finally realized that he was destined to experience the same pain many more times in the future. As the price for possessing more information than anyone else, he had to lose his precious companions many more times.

[You are a '3rd turn' Regressor.]

During his third try, he thought that maybe this was a curse.

「Just how many more lives like this one am I supposed to go through?」

He realized that, if he were to get to the end of all the scenarios, he needed to kill off his emotions, that he must not live his life. And so, he decided to become not 'Yoo Joonghyuk', but the 'Regressor', instead.

The fourth time, fifth… The timelines that he might've had experienced, but a certain someone's unexpected words stopped him from regressing again.

– Being able to regress at any time is the same as having no meaning in 'dying' anymore. However, there being no meaning in dying is the same thing as the value of living disappearing, too.

– Yoo Joonghyuk, you need to wake up. What I'm saying here is that, don't mistakenly believe that things will get better by repeating them over and over again.

That was why Yoo Joonghyuk chose not to regress. He gave up on several new 'lives' where he could've started off from a higher vantage point while possessing more useful information than before.

[You have entered the 'Middle Island No.3'.]

Along with the blinding rays of light, he finally arrived on the 'Middle Island No.3'. Participants who had arrived alongside him looked around and murmured to themselves.

[What is this place?]

[Weren't we supposed to head straight to the 'Main Island'?]

Yoo Joonghyuk simply unsheathed his sword.

[Hidden scenario – 'Snatching Modifiers' has begun!]

And then, the slaughter began in earnest. The rampaging storm of crimson-coloured sword light sliced the heads of the Constellations off. There was not one shred of hesitation in Yoo Joonghyuk's blade. He carved out the hearts of the Incarnations and smashed apart the backs of the escaping Constellations' heads.

[You have acquired a syllable from the Modifier of Constellation, 'Crow of the Gloomy Sea at Night'.]

[You have acquired a syllable from the Modifier of Constellation, 'Beachfront Tactician'.]

There were a few supposedly-tough enemies here – enemies that would've been difficult to fight against were he in the original 3rd turn of regression. However, Yoo Joonghyuk was able to defeat them rather easily.

「The weakness of 'Birch Tree's Scorpion' is located below its tail.」

「You must attack the 'Sovereign of the Crescent Moon' repeatedly until the starlight on his head fades away.」

The Yoo Joonghyuk of the original storyline wouldn't have known that information. Indeed, he'd only get his hands on them after going through the 4th, 5th, 100th, even 1000th regressions.

[You have acquired a syllable from the Modifier of Constellation, 'Birch Tree's Scorpion'.]

[You have acquired a syllable from the Modifier of Constellation, 'Sovereign of the Crescent Moon'.]

The Yoo Joonghyuk of the 3rd turn knew all those information of the future he hadn't yet lived already.

『Han Sooyoung – Records of the 1863rd turn (First)』

『Han Sooyoung – Records of the 1863rd turn (Last)』

It was all thanks to the records from the 1863rd turn in the distant future that he might have gotten to experience if he lived as the story originally intended for him.

"Fuuu…"

Less than a hour later, Yoo Joonghyuk's surrounding vicinity had become deathly still.

Staaab!

He ended the life of the last remaining Constellation and continued to move on. It wasn't just to quickly end this scenario, though.

After walking for a bit, he came across a battlefield soaked in blood.

'Fertile Forest'

He was greeted by the countless corpses of the Incarnation bodies. This spectacle of slaughter seemed to be the handiwork of a certain someone. While gathering the necessary Modifier syllables, Yoo Joonghyuk chased after the direction of the slaughterer.

It didn't take him too long to discover a giant cocoon seemingly painted entirely in a black hue. He knew right away what this thing was.

"…A monster created by <Eden>, is it."

It was none other than Michael's cocoon. It only appeared after the Archangel was killed off by someone while he was in the middle of 'Demon King Transformation'. Fairly soon, he'd gain a new life and emerge from this shell.

…Just like how, after death, Yoo Joonghyuk would get to start his next turn. If there was one difference, then it'd be with Michael losing a portion of his memories whenever he came back to life.

The so-called 'Evil' created to eliminate 'Evil'. The existence of Michael was the reason why Yoo Joonghyuk could never be friendly with <Eden>.

As the drizzling rain pelted down, Yoo Joonghyuk searched the vicinity of the cocoon. Michael ended up in this state because someone managed to defeat him.

Not too long afterwards, Yoo Joonghyuk discovered the fragments of Stories belonging to a rather powerful Demon King. Someone did fight Michael here and was gravely injured, it seemed.

The traces of these Stories glowed in brilliant white rays even within the faint, blurry fog of rainwater. They belonged to a being Yoo Joonghyuk was quite familiar with.

Shudder.

That was around when Michael's cocoon began to quake noticeably. It emitted this gloomy, damp aura as its top began opening up.

Yoo Joonghyuk frowned deeply.

'Already?'

Dark emotions quickly permeated within the purple-coloured fog. Michael's nude figure, reformed into a brand-new Incarnation Body, slowly revealed itself inside the cocoon.

Yoo Joonghyuk got ready to escape from here.

[Demon King of… Sal… va… tion!]

Indeed, he'd have left this place were it not for those words. Yoo Joonghyuk hesitated for a little bit, before approaching the half-open cocoon. Michael, still not fully alive yet, lay in a defenseless sleep inside the shell.

Flash!

Michael's eyelids moved and shot wide open, and just as they did, so did Yoo Joonghyuk's blade.

"You sleeping for a little while longer will be better for everyone."

Staaab!

His version of [Breaking the Sky Energy] penetrated straight into Michael's heart. The still-weak Incarnation Body that hadn't activated either the [Demon King Transformation] or [Angel Transformation] began to crumble away from the Probability of 2nd generation.

Guuwaaaaah-!!

[You have killed the 177th Incarnation Body of 'King of the Corrupted Angels'.]

Michael's cocoon rapidly shrunk down in size and reverted back to its original status. He'd be reborn in the 178th Incarnation Body, then.

[Nebula, <Eden>, is displaying animosity towards your actions!]

[Constellation, 'Scribe of Heaven', is glaring at you.]

Yoo Joonghyuk faced off against the gaze falling from the sky and spoke. "… I've told you this before, haven't I? I shall be the one to kill Kim Dokja. Stop your unnecessary actions."

The sky didn't say anything else in return. Yoo Joonghyuk sheathed his sword and his steps hurried after the trail of fragments scattered around the forest.

After he disappeared into the forest's path, a small shadow revealed itself next to Michael's cocoon. Bob-cut hair gently shook around below the black raincoat's hoodie.

The master of the shadow grinned brightly after discovering all the items discarded in the vicinity.

"Yup, a bus of the main character is the best one out there."

Han Sooyoung hurriedly shoved the items inside her pocket while giggling happily to herself.

"In any case, that Regressor guy just doesn't understand the value of items…"

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', is wordlessly staring at the fragments of the Stories scattered on the ground.]

"What are you looking at?"

Han Sooyoung picked up the fragments the Black Flame Dragon was pointing at. And then, her expression hardened in an instant.

[You have acquired the fragment of Story, 'King of a Kingless World'.]

"Isn't this…?"

<Star Stream> was blessed with countless types of Stories, but she knew of only one person that possessed a Story with such a name. She abandoned the items she'd been picking up and quickly ran in the direction where Yoo Joonghyuk had disappeared to.

* * *

I'd die at Yoo Joonghyuk's hands.

「(Dokja-ssi.)」

Three hours from now, Yoo Joonghyuk would kill me.

「(Dokja-ssi!)」

I quickly raised my head and made my reply.

'Yes, Yoo Sangah-ssi'.

「(How long will you stay dazed like this? It's not like you, Dokja-ssi.)」

'I'm not dazed. I'm actually thinking about some things'.

「(Such as?)」

'On how to convince him'.

Honestly, I didn't feel confident about doing that. The Yoo Joonghyuk showing up here to kill me wasn't the same Yoo Joonghyuk from the 'Ways of Survival' that I read for over ten-plus years of my life.

The one coming to see me now was the Yoo Joonghyuk who realized that he was just a 'character of a story', just like Yoo Joonghyuk from the 1863rd turn.

「(Is it because of your guilt…?)」

Sometimes, it felt as if Yoo Sangah could openly read my mind.

…And right now, she might have really done that, too.

'No, it isn't. It's something that I must do'.

[The power of 'Fruit of Good and Evil' is worsening your guilty conscience.]

It was possible that this feeling had been forcibly triggered by the [Fruit of Good and Evil]. Meaning, it might not be mine at all. However, I still believed that this was the path I must take.

Anna Croft, supporting me during our journey, addressed me. "We should arrive at the centre of the island soon."

I nodded my head as a reply.

The 'centre' of the island, the location of the portal to transfer you to the next scenario, plus where I'd meet Yoo Joonghyuk in three hours' time.

"I don't wish to interfere with the future you have chosen yourself, but… The outcome of my [Precognition] doesn't change all that easily."

"…Are you trying to jinx me?"

"I'm just trying to be honest with you. If you don't wish to die, it'll be better for you to locate the syllable 'Vil' soon and get to the next scenario."

"I'm deliberately choosing not to go. There is a story that I must tell that guy."

The story that I'd been delaying all along, something that I definitely had to discuss with him.

"A story, is it… Does the 'Supreme King' really know how to listen to stories?"

"If he doesn't, then I better make him."

Anna Croft remained silent for a little while. She must've been thinking of something, as her eyes were looking up at the blackish-blue night sky above. Several Constellations were looking down at us from up there.

"I'm sure that you know this already, but well, you can't convince every single person."

She was a prophet. She probably experienced a similar situation as mine many times before. After all, she reached this place by lying to Selena Kim and deceiving Iris, didn't she?

"I think that we should say such things only after we try everything in our power first."

"A person must bear the burden as weighty as the future she sees, you know."

The centre of the island could be seen in the distance now. And the giant portal leading to the next scenario was there. Anna Croft withdrew her supporting hands from me and spoke. "Well then, this is as far as we go."

She had gathered all the Modifier syllables, and was qualified to step through that doorway now. Soon, she would continue to stride forward towards the destination she sought after.

Just as I turned around away from her, she called out to me. "Kim Dokja."

Not as the Constellation 'Demon King of Salvation', but as 'Kim Dokja'. She was calling out to 'me'.

"My aim is to change the master of this <Star Stream>."

Right away, I was beset with this uncomfortable feeling. Because… I could tell what she was planning to say next.

"What is your goal, then?"

…I knew it.

"Do I really need to answer you?"

"I feel that only after hearing your answer, will I get to finally decide whether to let you live or not."

She had placed me on a scale, basically – whether I'd be a help in her pursuit towards her goal or become a hindrance, instead. If she thought that I'd become the latter, then she'd not hesitate to make me disqualified here.

I quietly stared deeply into her eyes.

Would it be fine to tell her? Tell her what I truly want in this world?

Since she was a prophet, would she be able to understand me?

"I…"

Unfortunately, even before I could fully open my mouth, someone else's voice interrupted me.

"His goal is to see the end of a certain insignificant story."

Icy-cold rage thickly permeated that voice.

And I knew that voice better than anyone.

Chapter 369: Ep. 70 - A Story that Can't Be Shared, I

Anna Croft's expression hardened instantly and she sneakily pulled out her shortsword behind her back. "…'Supreme King'."

Completely disregarding her, Yoo Joonghyuk spoke while taking large strides to approach us. "You two seem to be getting along nicely. Do you feel a sense of camaraderie from the fact that you both know about the future?"

"…But, you also know the information about the future, don't you?"

"What I've experienced isn't the future."

Kugugugugu-!!

"It's simply the 'things that had happened'. It's the past."

Things that had happened, he said.

Yoo Joonghyuk had to live through the story that I read while welcoming thousands of deaths in the process. As if to respond to all those years he had spent, the [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] held in his hand began to cry out viciously.

Anna Croft snuck a glance in my direction.

I replied to her. "You should go. This guy came to see me, not you."

"I pray that I'll get to hear your end goal through your own words next time we meet."

Leaving behind those words, she vanished through the portal without a trace. For sure, she had no reason to stay behind. She had paid her debt more than enough by assisting me this far, after all.

Yoo Joonghyuk didn't try to stop her from leaving. If it was any other times, he'd doggedly pursue her and cut her head off, but not today.

"Yoo Joonghyuk," I called out to him.

But, he didn't look at me. No, he simply stared at the empty, open mouth of the portal.

So, I called out to him one more time. "Please, at least listen to what I have to say. You used to call me your companion, once upon a time, didn't you?"

He shifted his gaze towards me and slowly unsheathed his sword.

"That was in the past."

The icy-cold rage permeating within his voice wasn't something that I could readily unpack.

[Unique skill, the 'Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint' has been activated!]

And so, I took yet another step into the curse of omniscience.

[Your degree of understanding on the applicable individual is lacking!]

Unfortunately, Yoo Joonghyuk's inner thoughts didn't permit my spying attempt, as if to assert that the person in front of my eyes was no longer the same guy that I knew all this time.

"I can already guess what you want to talk to me about. It's probably about that book of yours."

"…"

"Through that book, you peeked into my life, and used me as your entertainment. Is there anything else I should know?"

I couldn't mouth any excuses. Because those were all truths. What I did was no different from what other Constellations had been doing.

"I…"

I knew that. I definitely did. But…

But, was the sense of betrayal everything he felt?

[Your degree of understanding on the applicable individual is increasing gradually bit by bit.]

Yoo Joonghyuk was waiting for me, as if he was the judge searching for that yet-undiscovered opportunity to frame me even further.

Too bad, I had no idea what to say here.

His emotions flooded into my head and filled it up to full in no time through the 'Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint'. All the texts that I knew were steadily being overwritten by the words completely foreign to me.

The words that I should be saying, words that I wanted to say, they were all being buried under the blackened waves of emotions crashing in.

And then, his sword moved.

Even at that moment, it still didn't feel real to me. Indeed, it felt far too surreal that he'd forget about all those times we survived together and try to kill me right here.

['Fruit of Good and Evil' is influencing your emotions!]

['The Fourth Wall' is shaking around violently!]

The moment I saw the blade flying in right in front of my nose, a guilty conscience, as well as a sense of unfairness, welled up in my heart.

['Fruit of Good and Evil' is dragging out your dark emotions to the fore!]

I did my best in my own way. After these scenarios got underway, I really tried my best. In my own way, I did my best to put what I read to practice.

I never once thought about hurting Yoo Joonghyuk or any of my companions. All I ever thought about was these scenarios – what should I do to minimise the harm? What should I do so that we could safely reach the true end of everything?

That was all I did. Nothing more. Yet…

Just what made things to go so wrong like this?

Claaaang!!

Along with the explosive grinding noise, blue sparks danced in the air.

"Why are you standing around dazed like that, you dumbass?!"

Han Sooyoung was standing next to me now.

It was no coincidence that Han Sooyoung arrived on the 'Middle Island No.3'.

While progressing through the 'Small Island's' scenario, she had a certain dream. And it was about a man wearing a white coat dying at the hands of another man wearing a black coat.

It was the same rubbish dream she had already a while ago, so she even muttered to herself, 'It's that stupid dream again,' while dreaming it. Because a dream would remain just that, a dream, and would never come to reality.

…Just like a novel could never become reality, that was.

– Looks like the me of the 3rd turn is a bit of a moron, isn't she. I showed her the same image several times already, yet she doesn't seem to get it…

'What the heck was that?!'

Han Sooyoung in the dream nearly jumped up in fright and shifted her gaze towards the voice. A woman wearing a black coat was standing there. This mysterious person possessed a similar physique to her. And as if someone deliberately erased her face, there were no distinguishing features at all.

That blank face continued to speak.

– Looks like this regression will end up as a failure if this keeps up, huh…

@1L9I2Aa8UCL0IGJ

*

Han Sooyoung felt this instinctive fear and took a couple of steps back. Unfortunately, she was still inside her own dream, and no person alive could run away from their dreams.

– You see, me, I like throwing a wrench in someone else's schemes.

The moment this woman of the dream extended her hand, strange, unexplainable information flooded into Han Sooyoung's head.

[Ability of 'Predictive Plagiarism' is being awoken inside you!]

And that was how Han Sooyoung woke up from her sleep. Unknown information swam inside her head, and her consciousness moved on its own volition to sort through her new-found knowledge base.

A short while later, this one sentence formed in her head.

– Yoo Joonghyuk will head towards the 'Middle Island No.3'.

She had no clue why such a sentence popped up in her mind. Even then, she decided to heed it. She didn't know what that unidentifiable dream was all about, or who that faceless woman within it was, but regardless, the thought of 'I must do so' rang clearly in her head.

And that was how she reached this very location, this very moment.

"Get out of my way. I have no business with you."

Yoo Joonghyuk was glaring at her with a pair of frightening eyes. Meanwhile, Kim Dokja was staring at her with a dazed expression on his face.

Han Sooyoung slowly sucked in her breath. She still didn't know what the dream was trying to show her. However, at least right in this moment, she knew what her role was.

Han Sooyoung chuckled in her usual slimy manner and spoke up.

"I knew that you'd cause a problem sooner or later. There's no way the 'Yoo Joonghyuk' I know would change like that."

"If you don't move out the way, then I…"

"What, you want to kill me, too? And what would you gain by doing that? Is this the compensation for all those times you've been deceived?"

Yoo Joonghyuk didn't reply. Instead, his sword skill seemed to be forgotten for a moment there. His blade sliced down from the air and Han Sooyoung defended against the attack with a smirk.

"…You and Kim Dokja are exactly the same when it comes to not listening to other people, you know."

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', is roaring out in rage!]

The power of [Black Flames] permeating within her entire figure clashed against his sword swing.

The weight behind Yoo Joonghyuk's sword strike after being boosted by the 2nd generation's power was quite heavy. She bit her lip hard enough to draw blood as she unleashed all of her strength.

He was indeed strong. However, it wasn't as if she was fooling around doing nothing up until now.

[Story, 'Disciple of the Legendary Swordmaster', is shining brightly!]

That was the Story she barely managed to earn by scraping and clawing her way through the scenario before coming here. The strength of a Swordmaster swirled around her figure and explosively rose up within her.

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!!

In other places, it may not work, but if it was this place, then…

"When a person is saying something to you…"

The strengthened [Black Flame] rushed towards Yoo Joonghyuk through the gaps of the dancing dark-blue sparks.

"…You! Should! Listen!"

The barrage of the strengthened flames rained down in sync with her words. Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes shook around, hard, at the unexpectedly robust resistance put up by her. She didn't miss that opening and loudly yelled out.

"All Kim Dokja did was read a novel! A stupidly long and boring novel!"

Seeing Yoo Joonghyuk get pushed back bit by bit, she thought that she could pull this off. This was not a tough dilemma to solve. This misunderstanding only came about because of people's words. That was why she believed that more words could resolve it once and for all.

"So, just talk to him, will ya! Speak to each other without holding back! Just like how everyone else does!"

The flames of [Black Flame] remained persistent and stuck on to Yoo Joonghyuk's blade. He coldly spoke as he shook off the darkish flames. "You don't know anything."

"No, I know already," growled Han Sooyoung, after hearing his words that cold-heartedly excluded her. "What are you so pissed off about? About Kim Dokja approaching you while knowing everything about you? But, aren't you the same? Just like him, you acquired info for yourself and have deceived everyone else until now, haven't you?"

Perhaps those words became the seed, because rage began filling up Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes next. Their swords clashed in the air once more.

"Of course, I know that you were being sincere. I know that you did those things to save people, to reach an even better world… But what about Kim Dokja, then?"

"…"

"Tell me, just which idiot would throw his life away because a character from a story is about to die??"

She saw Yoo Joonghyuk's blade freeze up for a moment there and continued to pour out her words.

"Did you forget what Kim Dokja has done until now? Just because he read that boring-ass novel a bit, you wish to pretend everything we experienced during your 3rd regression didn't happen?"

Yoo Joonghyuk's Status was shrinking back now. Han Sooyoung could feel it – that she was almost there. Just one more push, and this unnecessary fight would come to an end.

"Calm down and think rationally about this."

Unfortunately, Han Sooyoung took a wrong step at the final hurdle.

"You are not that kind of a character."

"…A character, is it?"

Yoo Joonghyuk's expression was changing back. He wasn't asking a question just now. She belatedly realized her mistake, but it was far too late to take back what she said by then.

"You're the same as him."

Enormous waves of magical energy spread out from the contact point of the two locked blades. Han Sooyoung's sword issued a cry of pain. The force behind [Black Flames] was now being pushed back one-sidedly.

[Story, 'Torch That Swallowed the Myth', is roaring out!]

The [Giant Story] Yoo Joonghyuk had acquired was now going on a rampage.

"I saw what you did during the 1863rd regression."

"1863rd regression? What the hell are you…??"

It was at that moment a certain something popped up in Han Sooyoung's mind.

– In the 1863rd world-line of 'Ways of Survival'… Ah, right. You were there, too. I couldn't tell which one of you was the real body, though.

For sure, Kim Dokja said something like that in the past.

'Can it be?'

Information in her head began consolidating; apparently, she existed within the 1863rd turn. And in that place, she was living in a different regression. In that case, the person she saw in her dream was…

Just as Han Sooyoung reached her answer, a momentary opening was created. Yoo Joonghyuk's blade didn't miss that chance.

Why couldn't I move?

How come I didn't fight alongside Han Sooyoung?

While watching her speak for my stead, why couldn't I voice my own thoughts with her?

"You… suck at telling your own story, that's why."

I pulled the fallen Han Sooyoung in as she looked up at me. Blood flowed out like a river from her waist. It was so vividly red that it all came across as far too unreal to my eyes.

She was bleeding, yet she was still talking to me. "Kim Dokja. I know the end you've been wishing for."

She formed a smile as playful as ever. As if to wipe the blood on my cheek, she rubbed my face while murmuring back to me. "What a pitiful guy you are…"

I frantically tried to stem her bleeding while pulling out my recovery items. Her internal injuries were too severe. She had been wounded far too mercilessly.

Her innards were completely destroyed by the 2nd generation's sword force.

I could save her. If only I had a little more time, if I could just find a proper healer and get her healed, then…

…But, would I be allowed to do that?

Her hand touching my cheek fell away lifelessly.

I called out Han Sooyoung's name. Over and over again. However, she didn't wake up. What I heard was Yoo Joonghyuk's voice, instead.

"Stand up, Kim Dokja."

I couldn't sense any guilt, no shaken emotions within that voice.

It was at that moment something inside me snapped.

I slowly stood up from my spot.

[Yoo Joonghyuk.]

Stories were boiling over inside my head.

– There are some Stories that are simply too big and are difficult to read properly. If your mind isn't centred right, you will end up getting swept away by the Story, instead.

Yoo Hoseong told me that. I was aware of the dangers as well. The greater the Story, the larger the burden I had to carry.

That was why I sought to make companions. And we worked together to create history, to create our own Stories. All for the sake of reaching a different conclusion than that of Yoo Joonghyuk's from the original storyline. That wish was what brought us this far.

And the end result of that wish was this.

Did I need to keep reading this story, then?

[Giant Story, 'Demon Realm's Spring', has begun its storytelling.]

I've imagined the final goal where every one of us would be there together. I truly believed that such a story was definitely achievable.

[Giant Story, 'Torch That Swallowed the Myth', has begun its storytelling.]

However, if that was impossible, then…

If all the histories that I've created so far were completely useless, then…

['Demon King Transformation' has been activated.]

…Then, the end I've been dreaming about no longer held any meaning.

[I shall kill you, Yoo Joonghyuk.]

* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)

Chapter 370: Ep. 70 - A Story that Can't Be Shared, II

「"I shall kill you, Yoo Joonghyuk."」

Everyone within the Library was looking at that text.

「(…Looks like all of us might end up perishing at this rate.)」

['The Fourth Wall' is vibrating intensely!]

The entirety of the Library was shaking around. The books that had been neatly arranged tumbled down and created a mess. However, no Librarian tried to clean it up.

「(How frustrating. Why aren't they communicating with each other? As I thought, these two lack enough desire to become one being.)」

「(Our Sooyoung didn't do anything wrong, yet…)」

The 'Squid' used one of its tentacles to lightly poke the round eye.

Meanwhile, the text continued on; every time Yoo Joonghyuk's and Kim Dokja's blades clashed against each other, Nirvana's teeth issued clattering noises.

「(Oii, newbie. What do you think?)」

When Yoo Sangah heard that, she stopped catching the books flying over her head and looked back at the Librarians. Her hand was full of Kim Dokja's memories – the book she'd been reading up until just now.

「(Mm. I have two opinions about it.)」

「(You have two of them??)」

「(One. Sooyoung-ssi isn't dead. I know her very well and she's not someone to risk her life for a problem like this one.)」

The Squid's tearful eyes opened much wider from her reply.

「(What? But, you also read it, didn't you?)」

「(Looks like you still don't know how it works. The heroine loses her consciousness, her hand falling away. And the male hero awakens! You see, in all the movies I've seen so far…)」

Not minding what the Squid or the Simulation were saying, Yoo Sangah composedly carried on.

「(Two. They are currently talking to each other.)」

Yoo Sangah spoke as she stared at the texts that continued to pile up.

「(Even though no one in this world would call that a 'conversation', but still.)」

Fragments of Stories poured out from the cracked arm. They were stories that we had created together.

[Story, 'Demon Realm's Spring', is pouring out its story!]

[Story, 'Torch That Swallowed the Myth', is growling threateningly!]

Like a dragon and tiger getting into a tussle, Stories collided with other Stories. Yoo Joonghyuk, possessing the exact same 'Giant Stories' as I, used the exact same power to fight me.

[Your share on the applicable Story is higher than your opponent's!]

Even though my share on the Stories was supposedly higher, the shares held by Yoo Joonghyuk didn't listen to my commands. Maybe that was due to all those years Yoo Joonghyuk had gone through already. He had been telling his story far more fiercely than anyone else in <Star Stream>, after all.

Ch-chuchuchuchut!!

The Probability of the 2nd generation was suppressing us. However, some things still managed to escape its suppression.

[Story, 'One who Opposes the Miracle', is thunderously roaring out!]

[Story, 'One who Opposes the Miracle', is bellowing out in anger!]

The exact same Stories created by experiencing the same history collided against each other.

['Master of the Island' is paying close attention to you.]

[Many Constellations are watching your battle.]

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is…]

The voices of the Constellations were getting fainter and fainter now.

[Unique skill, 'The Fourth Wall' is activating!]

We both swung our swords, fully prepared to kill each other in the process. The blade that I desperately swung brushed past Yoo Joonghyuk's waist, and his own blade attacking right back, stabbed into my shoulder.

His combat intuition was higher, but my 'Status' was much higher than his.

[Giant Story, 'Demon Realm's Spring', is protecting you!]

The Transcendent's sharp aura pierced past the thick layer of 'Status' and flew straight in. From that sword energy, I was able to read his true intention. I saw how desperately he was standing his ground right now.

He didn't bother to ask, and I didn't bother to reply. No, we just swung our swords again and again. And instead of our mouths, our Stories told the tales for us.

[Story, 'Paradise of Despair', is pouncing like a wild beast!]

The memories from the 'Paradise'…

[Story, 'the One who hunted the King of Calamity', is roaring out!]

Traces from the [Peace Land]…

[Story, 'Liberator of the Industrial Complex', is in mourning.]

The moments from the revolution…

「None of those existed within the pages of the 'Ways of Survival'.」

The times we've lived through didn't match up with any of the pages I read in the past.

['Angel Transformation' is activating!]

Wings broke past my shoulder blades. My Status instantly increased and permeated into Unbroken Faith.

Issuing a loud, explosive noise, Yoo Joonghyuk's body flew up in the air after being unable to withstand the impact force.

"Come at me with everything you've got, Yoo Joonghyuk. Because I'll do the same, too."

The light in his eyes changed. The outline of his Status rising up around him began distorting visibly. It was powerful enough to twist the space itself. The true power of the high-level Transcendent was being unleashed for real now.

Yoo Joonghyuk's figure, wrapped in the brilliant golden light, disappeared from my view.

[2nd Stage of the 'Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint' is still in activation.]

His blade moved so fast that my eyes couldn't even follow it.

Claaaang!!

One sword, against another. The louder the grinding metallic noises became, the heavier my wrist got. Stories poured out from my thigh, and Stories flowed out from Yoo Joonghyuk's shoulders.

And naturally, his voice could also be heard.

['The Fourth Wall' is activating strongly as if to fight back!]

Yoo Joonghyuk had begun telling his story now.

「You…」

I tried to guess which words would follow that. Without a doubt, he'd blame me. Just as Han Sooyoung had said, you were that kind of a person, after all.

「Why did you choose to remain in that particular turn?」

Memories of the 1863rd regression brushed past my head.

「"I won't return to the 3rd turn. I'll remain here and see this thing to its end with the people of this place."」

The decision I made was coming back to me in full. The Unbroken Faith was now issuing cracking, breaking noises.

Back then, that was the best choice available. I thought that, after witnessing the end of the 1863rd turn, I would be able to return to the 3rd turn safely. That was why I tried to find the story where everyone could be happy.

However, what if Yoo Joonghyuk of the 1863rd turn didn't help me out back then?

What if Han Sooyoung of the 1863rd turn carried murderous intentions towards me?

Would I have been able to return to this world unscathed?

Even though I thought that I knew the scenarios better than anyone, could it be that I just got lucky and managed to survive until now?

「Your companions are here.」

Yoo Joonghyuk's first sword slash sliced apart my shoulder. And…

「Your own world-line was here.」

His second strike split open my elbow.

「You told people to live their lives in this world.」

The third strike punctured a hole in my wing. It hurt like hell. But what hurt even more than that, though, was the rage and disappointment contained within Yoo Joonghyuk's voice.

「Incarnation 'Yoo Joonghyuk' is refusing to regress.」

Yoo Joonghyuk who gave up on the path of regression and decided to live out his 3rd turn because of me was now looking back. The being who loved this world more than anyone, and wanted to protect it because of that, was staring straight back at me.

「But then, you…」

Certain types of rage and some types of betrayal couldn't be described in mere words. No matter how omniscient one was as a reader, one would never be able to read them.

Yoo Hoseong said as thus:

– A Story may not look all that amazing at first glance, but it'll present a maze-like abyss to all those who dare to peek deeper into their inner core. It's the same story, regardless of how small a Story is.

What I was seeing shouldn't be Yoo Joonghyuk's everything. I'd never get to fully understand the reason why he was so furious like this. Because everything could be his reason, or conversely, nothing could be his reason, too.

But, one thing was for certain, and that would be Yoo Joonghyuk had decided not to be under the thumb of anyone anymore.

Not controlled by me, and not controlled by himself. And, maybe not even by those damn Constellations who should be watching right us now.

「Answer me, Kim Dokja.」

While receiving the outpouring of the sword strikes, I began faltering. Most likely, Yoo Joonghyuk was aware of the truth – that I was still reading him even right now.

But, even though he knew that I was reading him, he continued to think non-stop.

「Answer me.」

Just like how I observed him past this 'wall', he too was ceaselessly writing something just beyond it, hoping that someone would get to read it sooner or later.

Unfortunately, I couldn't reply. Because if I do, then…

['The Fourth Wall' is getting thicker.]

…Then, you'd end up becoming a mere character of the story.

['The Fourth Wall' is getting even thicker.]

Because… you definitely couldn't become a mere character.

Ku-gugugugu!!

Yoo Joonghyuk glared at me with his trademark blazing eyes. Here he was, existing in this place and time, destroying me in order to prove that he wasn't just a mere character of a story.

「Is that so.」

His words floated up above the 'wall'.

「So, that is your choice.」

['The Fourth Wall' is getting even thicker.]

「Even during this regression, I didn't have any companions, then.」

If I were to say something, anything, as a reply, it was possible that he'd have forgiven me. Maybe, a miracle might happen and he'd accept me, even.

However, even if that happened, Han Sooyoung wouldn't return, and the hurt we inflicted on each other would not be erased, either. We would never become companions ever again.

Whether it was Yoo Joonghyuk or me, we both knew that truth all too painfully well.

['The Fourth Wall' is getting even thicker.]

And that was why we held our swords as we dashed towards each other.

['The Fourth Wall' is getting even thicker.]

The full-on attack collided with another full-on attack and issued a loud explosive noise. Thick, choking dust was kicked up in the air; neither of us could withstand the impact force and crumbled to the ground.

The first one to stand back up was me.

I staggered towards Yoo Joonghyuk lying on his back, his entire body now looking like a torn rag, and pointed my blade at him. He didn't offer any resistance, but instead, looked up at me to speak.

"…I've persisted with this regression for far too long. So, end this."

Yoo Joonghyuk murdered Han Sooyoung. He had already crossed the line that shouldn't have been crossed.

The sword aura of the Unbroken Faith trembled noticeably. And the moment I raised my sword up high, I recalled what Han Sooyoung of the 1863rd turn told me.

– If my novel was a rip-off of 'Ways of Survival', then whose rip-off are you?

The answer to that question was right in front of my eyes now.

「Kim Dokja had learned how to live from this man.」

This man was my father; my brother; and my oldest friend.

['The Fourth Wall' has increased its thickness.]

For a long time, I had been looking at him through this thick, thick wall. I was saved by him many times, and while looking at his story, I managed to survive.

The Unbroken Faith slowly clattered back on the ground. I couldn't kill this guy. Nor could I beg for his forgiveness, either.

I had never learned to be that cowardly. No, I was taught to pay the price for the things I've done.

Yoo Joonghyuk was still looking up at me. And I too, stared back at him.

「I'm right here, in this place.」

I know.

「Even then, you only chose to read and nothing else.」

…Because that is our way of living. You acted, and I read you doing it.

「If you're unwilling, then I shall do it myself.」

Yoo Joonghyuk slowly got back up and grasped his blade tightly.

I thought I could hear the sound of a story coming to an end. The 'Mass Production Maker' once told me this – that a certain Story would end without ever getting closer to the ■■. However, if this place was the endpoint for all the stories, and if I was destined to die right here, then wouldn't it be fine to at least say one thing?

"…Hey, Yoo Joonghyuk."

He stopped his actions when I spoke up.

"You probably know this already, but I'm not a prophet. No, I am as far removed from such a being as you can get."

Ever since we got into a tussle back on the Dongho Bridge, I had never introduced myself properly once. To Yoo Joonghyuk, I was the prophet, a man with a mysterious background.

"I'm not the 'Demon King of Salvation'."

[Story, 'Demon King of Salvation', has stopped its storytelling.]

"I'm also not the 'King of a Kingless World'."

[Story, 'King of a Kingless World', has stopped its storytelling.]

One by one, my Stories stopped their stories. Excluding my own, everything else became dead still.

"My name is Kim Dokja."

The wings on my back disappeared, and the ballooned-up muscles shrunk back, too.

"Twenty-eight… No, wait. I was twenty-eight, and I was an employee of a game company. My hobby was reading web novels…"

As if I was talking to someone I met for the first time, I continued to tell my own story.

"It's pathetic, right? Well, this is who I am… Yoo Joonghyuk, who are you?"

To me, Yoo Joonghyuk was someone I 'knew' since from a long time ago. To be more specific, he was someone I read about all by myself.

That was why I had never heard about his story in his own words.

He finally opened his mouth.

"I am Yoo Joonghyuk."

His blade slowly moved and cut me down.

"Yoo Joonghyuk, a former Regressor."

Chapter 371: Ep. 70 - A Story that Can't Be Shared, III

As soon as she opened her eyes, Han Sooyoung spat out a mouthful of blood.

Only after the black-coloured blood filled up the ground in a rather large quantity did she finally regain her wits. The first thing she saw was the dense forest. It wasn't the location where she'd been fighting against Yoo Joonghyuk just now.

"I really almost died back there. Yoo Joonghyuk, you son of a bitch…"

If she hadn't transferred her memories to a dummy Avatar on standby at the very last moment, she'd have died for real.

[You have exhausted today's allotment for the authorisation of 'Memory Transfer'.]

[From now on, the applicable Avatar will act as your true body.]

She'd been expecting something like this to happen.

[Story, 'Predictive Plagiarism', is hesitantly carrying on with its storytelling.]

Han Sooyoung got to clearly witness several 'scenes' through this Story called 「Predictive Plagiarism」, the one she earned after experiencing that mysterious dream.

Such as, the various futures that would change according to the choices she'd make – Kim Dokja's death, or maybe, even Yoo Joonghyuk's death. And then, the sole future where both of those terrible choices could be avoided altogether.

[Due to the penalty of 'Memory Transfer', your physical abilities will be weakened significantly.]

"I swear, if either one of them is dead, then I…!"

Han Sooyoung complained unhappily to herself and tried to sense the waves of magical energy from the surroundings. She still needed to locate the direction where those two were.

Not too long afterwards, her senses picked up on two rather enormous Statuses. She quickly ran in that direction.

Out of all the futures she read, this was the 'only one that worked out fine'. Kim Dokja didn't die, and for the first time ever, those two idiots would get to share a proper conversation.

That's what Han Sooyoung's [Predictive Plagiarism] had predicted, and that was why she didn't try to dodge Yoo Joonghyuk's sword at the last second. So, Kim Dokja should definitely be alive.

It was around here that she heard the sound of a sword clashing against something else.

'…Are they still fighting?

These idiots, I even died so that you two could talk to each other, but this…'

She figured that she really needed to give these two men a harsh earful when she arrived there. But, when she pushed past the bushes and stepped forward, the ensuing spectacle freaked her out in a rather grand manner.

Kwa-aaang!! Bang!!!

Yoo Joonghyuk was mercilessly slamming his sword down on Kim Dokja, currently sprawled out on the ground.

"Hey!! You crazy son of a bitch!!"

'…I guess it didn't work?'

Yoo Joonghyuk observed Kim Dokja lying on the ground. On the chest of the unconscious man, the shallow wound left behind by his [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] was clearly visible.

'But, I thought I saw it just now'.

Yoo Joonghyuk grasped his sword tightly and focused his mind. And almost right away, he sensed the dark aura oozing out from Kim Dokja's body.

That was the 'wall', the identity of the strange 'foreignness' he felt whenever he was looking at Kim Dokja.

'I can see it'.

He could see a jet-black wall, composed of countless texts. He raised his sword high up and powerfully smashed down on that wall again.

Now that a Transcendent began pounding on it with serious intent, the wall started shaking around in an unstable manner.

['The Fourth Wall' is glaring at you.]

Not caring whether it was glaring or not, Yoo Joonghyuk continued to pound on that wall.

'Beyond this wall, there might be…'

If it didn't want to open up, then until it did; if it couldn't be broken, then until he broke it down. Again, and again.

But then…

"Hey, you crazy bastard!! Have you lost your mind?!"

Accompanied by a shrill voice, he felt a rather powerful impact in the back of his head. Blood trickled down and blocked his vision. Through all that red, he saw Han Sooyoung kneeling down next to Kim Dokja.

"Hey, Kim Dokja!! Get a hold of yourself! Wake u… What the heck? He isn't dead?"

Yoo Joonghyuk scowled unhappily as he staggered on his feet.

"Han Sooyoung. Do you really wish to die today?"

"You already killed me once today, you bastard."

"I knew you wouldn't die from the beginning."

"Stop lying. My acting was beyond perfect, you know."

She growled angrily and pointed at her Incarnation Body (which was her real body only until a few minutes ago) still lying on some forgotten corner over yonder.

The Incarnation Body, currently crumbling away, showed the definite signs of bleeding out. An [Avatar] wouldn't have bled anything in the first place.

Yoo Joonghyuk spoke nonchalantly. "An [Avatar] would bleed like the real body if it was imbued with a certain amount of memories."

"Oh my? And how did you even find that out?"

"From the record you wrote yourself. Specifically, you from the 1863rd turn, that is."

"Me of that turn wrote all sorts of crap, didn't I? God damn it."

There were plenty of things she wanted to ask, but she chose not to. Instead, she poked Kim Dokja's cheek and spoke up. "Still, this guy looks like he got completely fooled, doesn't he."

"Looks that way."

"How did it go?"

"He went crazy and attacked me."

Han Sooyoung smirked and lightly pinched Kim Dokja's cheek as if she was proud of him. "By the way, what's the matter with his chest?"

"He's paying for making me eat dirt."

"…Dirt??"

"There is something like that."

She shifted her gaze back to Kim Dokja and his cheek that sagged without any energy. In all honesty, he was only just barely alive, and not one part of his body could be described as 'okay'. Indeed, the surrounding forest had been completely levelled by the battle just now, so it'd be far stranger if his body was left largely unscathed.

Han Sooyoung understood that this scene of utter destruction was the direct evidence of the conversation that took place between Kim Dokja and Yoo Joonghyuk.

"So? Did you hear the answer you wanted?"

Yoo Joonghyuk paused for a moment before making his reply. "A little."

She could clearly read the depths of emotions contained in that simple reply of "A little". But they belonged to Kim Dokja and Yoo Joonghyuk, and no one else. That left her feeling just a bit rueful, a bit lonesome.

"Anyways. You are coming back to <Kim Dokja's Company> now, right?"

Yoo Joonghyuk mulled over for a while, but then, turned around to leave as if he had said everything there was to say.

She frowned deeply. "Hey, you! At least try to answer properly, will you? I even helped you out, didn't I??"

"The 'Great War of Saints and Demons' is just around the corner."

Yoo Joonghyuk continued to walk further away. One step, two steps…

Just as Han Sooyoung was getting ready to shout out something else…

Tsu-chuchuchut!!

Sparks buzzed around Kim Dokja's body and a 'voice' suddenly came out from him.

「(Yoo Joonghyuk-ssi, that stupid scenario isn't the most important thing, you know.)」

Startled by this development, Yoo Joonghyuk quickly unsheathed his blade. The imaginary wall enveloping Kim Dokja was actually moving. Past that wall, someone was speaking to him.

「(Do you believe that it's the end when you leave after talking one-sidedly like this?)」

No, to be more specific, it wasn't the wall, but rather…

「(You should experience it as well, what the 'feelings of being a reader' are all about. To understand what it really is.)」

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!!

The wall that didn't want to break no matter how many times he hit it suddenly developed a small hole on the side, and a hand popped out from this mysterious hole. That hand proceeded to lightly grasp Yoo Joonghyuk's head and then, slammed it right against the wall.

* * *

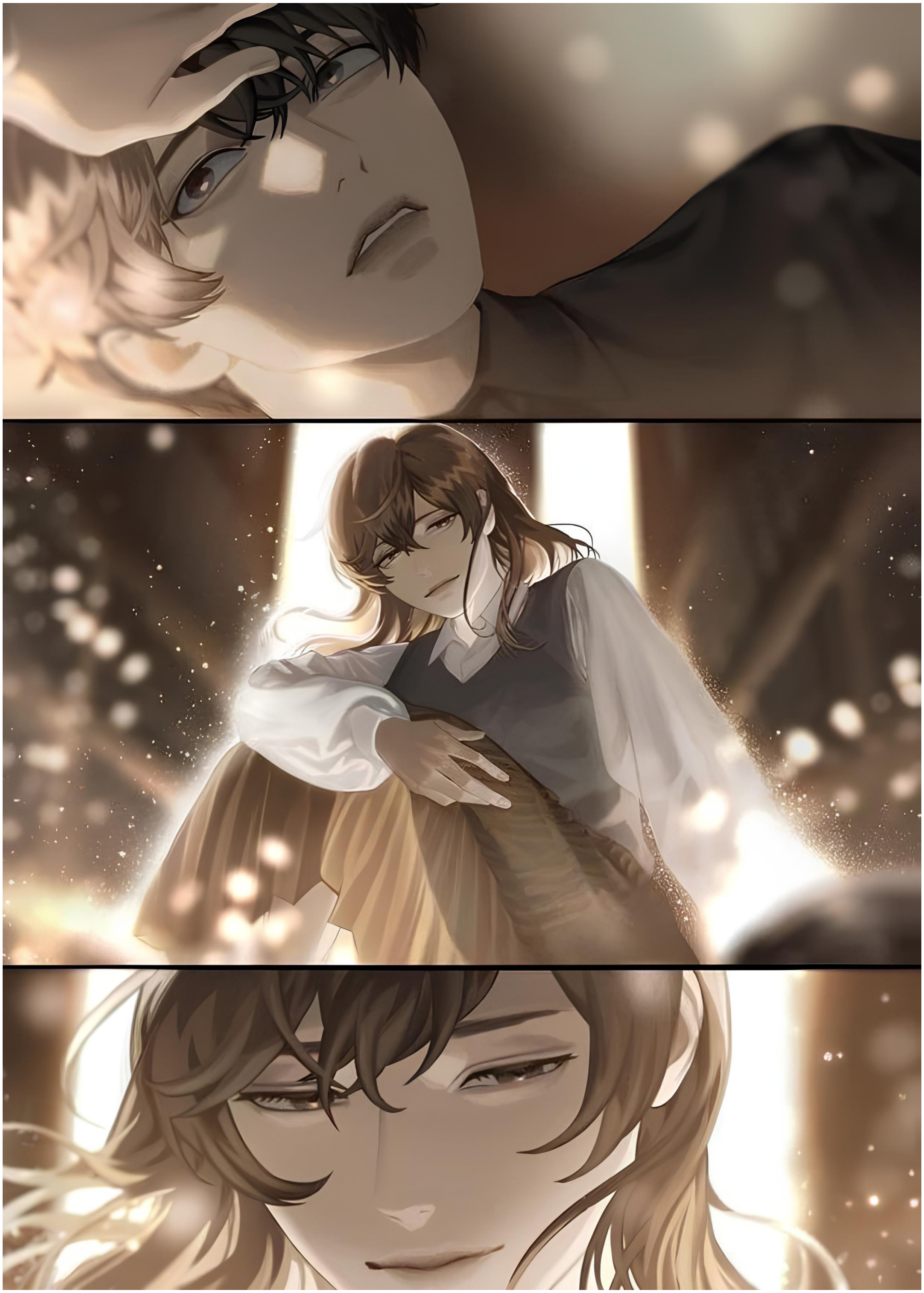
I was lying in pitch-black darkness by the time I regained my consciousness.

What happened?

Did I die?

…By Yoo Joonghyuk?

As the thoughts continued to swirl in my head, I slowly stood back up. I looked around but couldn't see anything. It was then, a bright light from a lantern lit up in front of my eyes.



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「(Dokja-ssi, so this was where you've been all this time.)」

'Is that you, Yoo Sangah-ssi?'

「(Are you alright?)」

'Where am I…?'

「(You're inside the Library.)」

Only then did I figure out what had happened. Most likely, I got sucked inside [The Fourth Wall] as I blacked out again.

'…By the way, is it always this dark inside?'

「(No, it's just that the Library is in a state of chaos at the moment. The aftershocks of the battle this time killed off all the lanterns inside, and all the bookshelves have fallen down. Everyone is doing their best trying to restore everything right now.)」

'My apologies. I have created a lot of trouble for you'.

Yoo Sangah grinned softly and shook her head.

「(No, not at all.)」

'Is there anything I can do to help…?'

「(Oh, no. It's fine. You should lay here and rest. I'll sit here and take a short break, as well.)」

Yoo Sangah let out a grunt and lightly settled down next to me. Her face, as illuminated by the dim light of the lantern was the exact same one from my memories.

「(You really did well.)」

'…In regards to?'

「(When you said those things.)」

I didn't need a lot of time to figure out what she meant by those words. No doubt, she would've borne witness to the spectacle of the outside from behind [The Fourth Wall].

「(A proper relationship starts from the act of introducing oneself first, doesn't it? It's possible that you two might become real friends this time.)」

'…That would be great if such a thing was possible, but…'

I wasn't expecting much, though. Honestly, I thought that it'd be a huge relief with Yoo Joonghyuk's anger being soothed, somehow. No matter what I said, it'd be quite impossible to soften the sense of betrayal he must've felt.

Books discarded on the floor seemed to be rolling around everywhere. Without thinking too much about it, I picked one up.

『Kim Dokja, Records from 15 years old, Volume #25』

I sneakily closed the book and chucked the damn thing deep into the darkness.

「(Uhm, excuse me, Dokja-ssi?)」

'Yes?'

「(Actually, well, I read that book. Just a little bit.)」

'…How much did you read?'

「(…Almost the whole book, if I'm honest. I find these more interesting than the 'Ways of Survival', you see… I'm sorry.)」

My face reddened from heat, but there was naught that could be done when she had already read it.

'It's fine. I do feel a bit ashamed, but still'.

I did think that, with Yoo Sangah being a part of the 'Library', such memories would possibly end up being exposed, anyway. She carefully picked up the books rolling around on the floor, one by one, and dusted them before gathering them all together.

They were all my memories.

Her expression, as dyed by the darkness, was hard to see, but I could nevertheless sense how troubled she was feeling right now. Perhaps to console her, I picked up one of the books she had been gathering.

'…Been a while, this thing'.

All these gathered books were my stories.

Kim Dokja, 15 years old. 18 years old. 23. 28…

I slowly flipped through the pages.

Kim Dokja, who didn't have a father.

Kim Dokja, who didn't have any friends.

Kim Dokja, who lost his mother.

It was a life that always lacked something, or something kept disappearing from it.

「A lone existence is a being that doesn't exist. Kim Dokja was always alone. And that was why he was the only child (dokja/獨子), and the 'Kim Dokja' didn't exist.」

What sorrowfully reasonable words those were.

「However, there was a sole moment where that Kim Dokja did exist; that was when the dokja (only child/獨子) became the dokja (reader/讀者).」

A life story being told like a lengthy report on a single book, that was basically my life in a nutshell. I spent my teenage years along with the 'Ways of Survival', and hid behind the wall this story created for me to dodge the pointed fingers of other people.

｢At last. He'd come to life only when reading the 'Way of Survival'.｣

I sensed Yoo Sangah's gaze, staring at me from my side. I wasn't sure why, but it also felt like it wasn't her alone; maybe, other Librarians were also watching me from somewhere within the darkness.

It was right then, an unexpected text caught my eyes within the opened page.

｢I met a strange person today during the interview. That person's name is Yoo Sangah.｣

The moment I read that, I unknowingly closed the book shut.

…Could it be that, Yoo Sangah-ssi also read this part?

｢(Haven't you ever wondered about this before, Dokja-ssi?)｣

'Excuse me? About what…?'

｢(What if 'scenarios' didn't start? What would have happened to us?)｣

I hadn't thought about that.

What if, the 'Ways of Survival' didn't become reality back then?

What if, the novel 'Ways of Survival' came to its natural conclusion and time continued to tick by, what would've happened to me?

…Would I still be alive?

Could I have been able to carry on?

｢(Would we be still working for the same company as before?)｣

'Well, my contract hadn't been extended, so… I guess I might have been searching for a job in other companies'.

Right, I wouldn't have died that easily. I would've thought about dying every now and then, and also, there could've been many a day when I fell asleep while re-reading the 'Ways of Survival', but… Yeah, I wouldn't have died. Not that easily.

I'd have continued to live on, somehow.

'In that world, I wouldn't have become a friend with you, Yoo Sangah-ssi. My workplace would've changed, and we wouldn't have a reason to get in contact with each other, after all'.

｢(Even still, wouldn't we have tried to call each other some times?)｣

'Well…'

@1L9I2Aa8UCL0IGJ
@1L9I2Aa8UCL0IGJ

*

「(I think we would have. I'm sure that, even after you left the company, I'd keep on remembering you. You are a strange person, after all.)」

'…Are you trying to get back at me?'

Yoo Sangah formed a refreshing grin and carried on.

「(I'd probably have gotten curious about your welfare. Is he doing okay? He's not sick, is he? Did he find a new job? What about marriage…)」

'I don't think I'd have gotten married. I couldn't even take care of myself properly back then'.

「(Well, it's true that one doesn't have to get married. I also found it easier to live alone.)」

'Even you, Sangah-ssi?'

「(Yes. See, I told you. We'd have been good friends, I think.)」

'…You really think so?'

「(Yes, of course. We'd study Spanish together, enter a rider's club and ride bicycles together, too…)」

'Or, to get ready for our old age, we start recommending savings plan or retirement funds'.

「(After we grow old and can't move anymore, we'd help each other to get to hospitals.)」

'I guess we could have lived pretty close by, in that case'.

「(Of course. Maybe, we might have lived right next to each other.)」

We continued to chat away. We talked about things that could no longer be. Things that could never become a reality.

Just like how the 'Ways of Survival' was to me once upon a time.

Yoo Sangah continued on.

「(Along with Heewon-ssi, Hyunsung-ssi, and Jihye, too… It'd be wonderful if other kids also lived nearby… Even Sooyoung-ssi, too.)」

Even if such a world did really exist, it was not possible that all of them could be together. Because… they were characters from a novel. They were…

'…Yes, it'd be really wonderful if that was true'.

「(Ah, Joonghyuk-ssi, as well. Although his personality is terrible, he's a great cook, so I think it'll be nice to become his friend.)」

Without a warning, something welled up from deep inside my heart.

「(Heewon-ssi and Hyunsung-ssi would be… Fufufu, in any case. And so we… We'd all be growing older, little by little. In a world without scenarios, no Constellations, and no Dokkaebis. Where we'd meet up to share our stories, and while sharing nice foods…)」

I recalled the countless world-lines that I witnessed together with the 'Secretive Plotter'. Among all those possible worlds, maybe, just maybe, one of them could…

「(It'd been nice if such a world existed somewhere. Don't you agree?)」

'There might be one just like that, somewhere'.

「(Dokja-ssi.)」

'Yes?'

「(I really enjoyed being with you, Dokja-ssi.)」

'…'

「(I think it's time for me to go now.)」

'Yoo Sangah-ssi'.

Actually, I had realized it a little while ago – why she suddenly began talking to me about such things.

['Master of the Island' is calling out to Incarnation 'Yoo Sangah'.]

By seizing the opening created by the weakening of [The Fourth Wall], the master of these islands was calling out to Yoo Sangah.

…The King of the Reincarnators.

Finally, the moment we've been waiting for had come. Indeed, one of the reasons why we decided to come to the Isle of Reincarnators was here.

「(This Library, it's a warm and cosy and nice place to be, but… But, I can't remain here forever, you know.)」

'But, hang on for a second, Sangah-ssi. You don't have to be in such a hurry to…!'

Yoo Sangah shook her head. Just like me, she too had read the 'Ways of Survival' by now. What I wanted to say, she already knew them all.

「(There is almost nothing that I can do in here. As long as I'm here, I'll always remain as a simple 'reader'.)」

I looked up at her with a resolute expression, my lips firmly shut.

I wanted to stop her. I wanted to ask if it'd be fine for us to talk for a bit longer.

Unfortunately, I couldn't.

「(Dokja-ssi, you told me this once before that you have only one turn, and that the world we need to live in is this one. That's why… I'll say it like this.)」

White light enveloped Yoo Sangah as she placed her hand on my head, a smile forming on her lips.

「(Let's meet again in the next life.)」

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* Official novel illustration (canonical)
* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)

Chapter 372: Ep. 70 - A Story that Can't Be Shared, IV

As I slowly regained my consciousness, I decided to activate [Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint].

「Sooo, the method to clear the 'Middle Island No.4' is…」

After managing to master the 'Story Control', Jung Heewon had finally entered the Middle Island's scenario and began massacring other participants.

「…I dunno. Well, if they come at me, I'll just kill them all.」

「Our general is also a Narrative-grade, you know? Don't you look down on us!」

Jung Heewon activated [Hour of Judgement], while Lee Jihye activated [Demon Slaying] as they ran amok in their battlefield; around the same time, the kids began clearing the Middle Island's scenario in their own clever way.

「I've tamed the 'Invisible Wisp'. Let's steal that person's Modifier using this guy.」

「But, we can just send insects over there, though?」

What a crafty method of clearing the scenario. So much so that I didn't need to help them out at all.

「Keuh-euhk, keuheuk, groan…」

Lee Hyunsung found himself alone on a different Middle Island and was being severely beaten up by other Constellations and Incarnations. He was in a foetal position while glaring at his enemies with sorrowful eyes, but then, he suddenly roared out like a huge bear.

「The one thing sadder then ending up all alone, is to get beaten up all by yourself!」

Powerful rays of light exploded out from Lee Hyunsung's body, causing the participants around him to explode en masse.

I was familiar with that technique. That was one of the special techniques possessed by the 'Master of Steel', [Impact Release], that released all the accumulated damage at once.

As expected, the folks from the original storyline were truly cheat characters. In any case, I got to clearly see that Lee Hyunsung had become stronger as well.

「[Character 'Jang Hayoung' has activated 'Breaking the Sky Force Punch'!]」

As for Jang Hayoung, she was clearing the scenario while displaying overwhelming strength. To me, she seemed to be on the path to truly becoming the master of the 'wall' she possessed. Well, she was a talented person from the get-go, and was also capable of absorbing the techniques of others rather quickly, as well.

「['Unidentifiable Wall' is evolving!]」

Her 'wall' had become far more stabilised compared to before. She could chat to other Transcendents through her 'wall', and got to learn and understand their abilities. In a way, one could say there were some similarities between her method and me reading the book.

「['Unidentifiable Wall' has sensed your presence.]」

My view was instantly filled with white noise.

['Unidentifiable Wall' is staring at 'The Fourth Wall'.]

['The Fourth Wall' is staring at 'Unidentifiable Wall'.]

The moment these two walls stared at each other, my view suddenly grew fuzzy, blurry.

[…The end of the world-line is approaching.]

As my view crumbled away, I could hear an unknown voice.

[Kim Dokja, they shall come to find you.]

Vrrr…

The moment I regained my consciousness, I felt my smartphone vibrate. I switched the screen on without thinking too much about it, only to spot today's date.

February 15th…

As we weren't on Earth, the local weather report didn't appear. All I could confirm was the date. Even then, I couldn't say it was an accurate one, either. The space-time indicator had long lost its meaning after I moved around different dimensions willy-nilly, after all.

Everyone within <Star Stream> lived in a different time from the others. That was the case, but now…

15th of February, is it?

I fell into a bit of thought regarding this date, before giving up and placed the phone down. My head was in a disorganised mess, and almost every part of my Incarnation Body was aching painfully, too.

I blinked several times while looking down at my upper torso to find bandages tightly wrapped around my chest area.

…Where am I now?

The surroundings slowly filled my view. Firstly, the clean, white bedsheets, followed by the elegant Oriental décor of the room I was in.

A certain someone leaning against the window and looking outside threw a question at me. "You awake now?"

"You…?!"

Her eyes arched in a mischievous manner. "Ahh, so this is how it feels like coming back to life after dying."

"But, didn't you die…"

"I did?"

Seeing Han Sooyoung snicker like that, the inside of my head grew even more complicated. I immediately recalled the sight just before blacking out; the events of her dying at Yoo Joonghyuk's sword, me fighting against him, and then, passing out from his attack, and finally, sharing a conversation with Yoo Sangah inside the Library…

Han Sooyoung approached the bed before I noticed it and pinched my cheek. "In any case, Kim Dokja. You can be really adorable sometimes."

Only then did I realize that she played me for a sucker. I took a closer look and found a small IV needle stuck in her arm, too.

"…Where are we?"

"The waiting room of the Main Island. The place where that 'guy' and his castle is."

It was then, I abruptly remembered something else.

['Master of the Island' is calling out to Incarnation 'Yoo Sangah'.]

Back then when that guy was taking Yoo Sangah away, there was another message popping up in front of my eyes, as well.

['Master of the Island' is inviting you.]

The King of Reincarnators. The third protagonist of the book 'Three Ways to Survive in a Ruined World' had summoned us to their territory.

"But, I'm pretty sure that I failed to clear the scenario? Don't I need to clear the Middle Island's scenario in order to get here, so how…"

"Nope, you did clear it."

I quickly confirmed the message logs.

[You have cleared Hidden Scenario – 'Snatching Modifiers'!]

[Reward handout is currently on standby.]

It's true.

"But, how? I hadn't collected the syllable 'Vil', so how…"

Han Sooyoung wordlessly pointed at the necklace hanging around my neck.

[Devil of Lust and Wrath]

The completed necklace of Modifier was emitting a soft glow. Something like this couldn't happen, though. One of the syllables should've been missing on my necklace.

Han Sooyoung spoke. "Yoo Joonghyuk gave it to you before leaving, saying that it's a leftover."

…Yoo Joonghyuk did?

But, why?

My thoughts were getting messy again. The things he said at the final moments rang vividly in my head.

– Yoo Joonghyuk, a former Regressor.

Not the Regressor Yoo Joonghyuk, but a former Regressor.

What was he thinking about when he told me that?

"Where is he now?"

"The next scenario."

The sense of emptiness and relief brushed past me simultaneously when I heard her. He again went ahead before everyone in order to clear the scenario.

"…Who was his target, anyway?"

"You just woke up, but you're already so full of questions. How annoying."

I sat on the bed, eyes blinking like an idiot. She pointed to my chest again. Upon taking a closer look, there were two [Modifier Necklaces] hanging around my neck. One of them was Asmodeus's Modifier, [Devil of Lust and Wrath], while the other one was…

[□□ of □□]

The places where my Modifier should've been were replaced by empty holes, instead.

"No way?"

"Yes, way."

Well, at least he did leave behind 'Of'. That son of a bitch.

"It's my turn to ask questions now. Is Yoo Sangah still inside you?"

"…King of Reincarnators already took her."

"…Did she say anything else before going?"

I unsteadily rose up from the bed and walked over to the window. While standing next to Han Sooyoung, I stared at the unfolding cityscape.

Reincarnators were busy roaming the streets that possessed the unmistakable ancient Chinese vibe. Beings from other worlds were here; beings that had chosen to live a new life in this place, along with different names and different faces.

"She said, let's meet again in the next life."

To me, it'd still be this life but to Yoo Sangah, it'd indeed be the next life. She'd earn a new body, a new life, through the power of the 'King of Reincarnators'.

She'd get to live a new life in this world, in other words.

Han Sooyoung and I stared at the streets below without saying anything. It was as if we were searching for Yoo Sangah hiding somewhere within these nameless streets.

Han Sooyoung abruptly opened her lips to speak. "It's snowing."

She was right; bits of snowflakes were descending from the sky.

Originally, this particular world didn't have any snow. Yet, it was doing precisely that.

Snow fell like starlight. And beyond the tall skies where snowflakes continued to fall, Constellations were watching my tale. No indirect messages reached me, but I could still feel that they were looking at me. Probability they had gathered bit by bit until now was scattering gently in the skies.

I turned my head to the side to find Han Sooyoung studying me. She grasped my [Modifier Necklace] and grinned. "I guess you're no longer the [Demon King] of [Salvation]. Shouldn't you get yourself a brand-new Modifier now?"

I began recalling the days I spent as 'Demon King of Salvation' while listening to her talk.

It hadn't been that long, but those days were the most brilliant moments in my life.

As my vision grew wetter and blurrier, I could see Han Sooyoung giggling away.

"Should I make one up for you, then? Mm… What will sound nice on you, I wonder. How about 'I Pass Out Too Often-Man'? Or, 'Miraculous Piehole'… Eh? H-hey, you are… crying?"

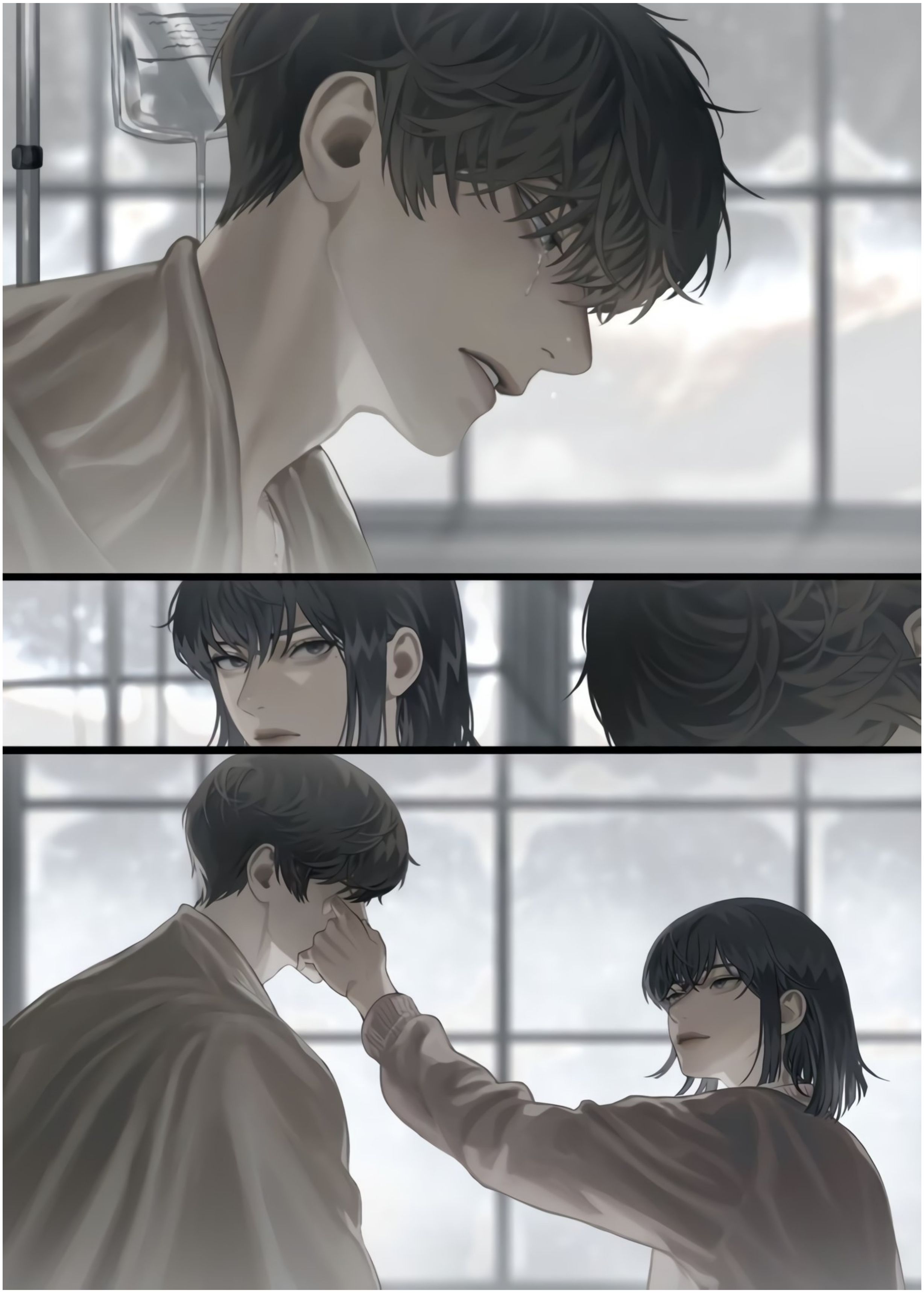
My face was reflected in her irises, her eyes widening in surprise.

Actually, I wanted to ask her, an author.

As she was a writer, maybe she'd be able to tell me straight.

Tell me that I did good until now – whether I made the wrong choices or not, whether I would get to see the desired conclusion when I reach the end of this story or not.

"Hey, why are you crying like that? I get it, okay? I get it, so stop. There, there."



*

She must've thought up something, as she began rummaging through her pockets next. Soon afterwards, something sweet and slightly sour entered my mouth.

"Why are you crying on a nice day like today? I mean, it's even snowing, too… I promise to think up a nice Modifier later on, okay?" Said Han Sooyoung, before avoiding my gaze to stare into the far-off distance.

Today was the 15th of February.

That's what the smartphone said. However, the time of this place and that of Earth weren't the same, therefore this indicator was simply an 'error'. It was a coincidental date, with no meaning behind it.

Even then, what if there was some kind of a miracle and this date was indeed true?

Then, today would be my birthday.

Han Sooyoung rubbed her eyes as she spoke. "I want to see the others already."

I summoned up every ounce of my strength to make my reply. "…Yeah, me too."

As if those words became the signal…

[Revised text has completed its update.]

A gift sent by someone arrived at my doorstep.

– Three Ways to Survive in a Ruined World (Final Revision).txt

---

Inside the scattering, falling snow, Yoo Joonghyuk was staring at the 'Castle of Reincarnators'.

Most likely, Kim Dokja had regained his consciousness by now. And Yoo Sangah would be in the middle of reincarnation, having met the 'Master of the Island' already.

'…That woman'.

A deep frown crept up on Yoo Joonghyuk's face.

He'd never be able to forget the moment when his head rammed into that mysterious wall a few days ago. He got to forcibly observe that wall's insides amidst the horrifying storm of Probability sparks. And that was where he bore witness to fragments of a tale he didn't know before.

Some of them were as per his expectations, while some of them were definitely news to him. Some of them even took him completely by surprise, too.

It all happened for an instant, but he found the information he'd been searching for from that wall, as well as the answers he wanted to find. And now, he realized that it was time to put to practice the answers he found.

"Secretive Plotter."

He raised his head to greet the gaze of a certain scheming Constellation.

[Constellation, 'Secretive Plotter', is looking at you.]

The 'Secretive Plotter', the Constellation that made its first appearance in this regression. And, an unidentified existence whose information or evidence couldn't be found in any of the 1863 worlds.

[Constellation, 'Secretive Plotter', is looking at you.]

"Haven't I played along with your schemes long enough now? I'm sure that I have the right to ask you a single question or two."

The 'Secretive Plotter' didn't reply for a brief moment. But then, a portion of the skies suddenly became dyed in darkness, and a ray of black light fell towards Yoo Joonghyuk.

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

As the sparks from Probability crackled all around him, the space-time within the near vicinity began distorting noticeably.

He was currently in the world ruled by the 'Master of the Island'; no top-ranked Constellation would be able to exert that much Probability in this place. Yet, the 'Secretive Plotter' was an existence who could do exactly that.

A pitch-black shadow rose up within the darkness.

[What are you curious about, oh, the puppet of the Oldest Dream?]

"Why did you show me that book?"

The shadow of the 'Secretive Plotter' wavered about as if to mock him.

Yoo Joonghyuk continued with his questioning. "Did you want me to fall into despair? You wanted me to kill Kim Dokja after reading that book?"

[Maybe. Maybe not.]

"Why did you plot something like that?"

[You think you can understand it after hearing the answer?]

Its arrogant voice was filled with the confidence of knowing that a lowly being like him would never understand, even after hearing the truth.

Yoo Joonghyuk asked another question. "Why did you send Kim Dokja to the 1863rd turn? Why did you order him to kill 'me' there?"

[Let's just say that such a scenario would've been fun to observe.]

The shadow wavered around as if it was cackling.

Yoo Joonghyuk remained calm and spoke his piece. "All of your schemes were to destroy Kim Dokja."

[Why do you think that? Do you have any reasons to believe that's the case?]

"Maybe I do. Maybe I do have a pretty good reason."

This Constellation, holding a mysterious animosity towards Kim Dokja, and at the same time, didn't exist in the 'original work', just like him.

Yoo Joonghyuk had been chasing after this Constellation for a long time. And he had finally reached the answer to his pursuit in this very moment.

"Secretive Plotter. Are you the 'Kim Dokja' from the future?"

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* Official novel illustration (canonical)

싱숑 장편소설

전지적 독자 시점

Omniscient
Reader's
Viewpoint

PART 4 01

비채

*

Chapter 373: Ep. 71 - 50 years later, I

Four days passed by since we arrived on the 'Isle of Reincarnators'.

I confirmed through [Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint] that other companions had completed their Middle Island scenarios and were ready to tackle the next one.

Currently, I was staring at the screen of my phone.

– Three Ways to Survive in a Ruined World (Final Revision).txt

It was possible that the 'epilogue' I so wished to read was waiting for me at the end of this text file. Was that all? If luck was on my side, I might even discover some information on the current 3rd regression turn, too.

The guideline that told me how to act and how to clear upcoming scenarios in order to reach the perfect ending might be there.

However…

「What if the end of the story is tragedy?」

If, by any chance, the 'Final Revision' bit implied that 'it'll no longer change'?

「Are you really capable of changing it?」

What if the action of me reading this thing only sets the ending in stone instead?

"Kim Dokja."

I raised my head to spot Han Sooyoung, bandages wrapped around her left hand, staring back at me. She was the only other existence remaining in this world who read the 'Ways of Survival' besides me.

If she was in my shoes, how would she react?

If she was me, would she have opened this file?

"What are you looking at?"

"No, it's nothing."

I switched the phone's screen off.

There might come a day when I get curious about the contents of this story. However, now wasn't it.

The 'epilogue' I wished to know probably wasn't in this file.

After finishing maintenance on her equipment, Han Sooyoung lightly jumped off from the bed and spoke to me. "Let's get going. The longer we dilly-dally, the further ahead that bastard Yoo Joonghyuk will get."

"We have someone to meet first before leaving, though."

"Who?"

"Looks like he's here already."

We heard knocking sounds as the door creaked open behind us.

The first thing we saw was the thick, brown-coloured Buddhist rosary hung around the person's neck. Next up was the grey Buddhist monk robe, and the firm, tough muscles peeking out from underneath it. He was a Warrior Monk, who had gone through the repeated rigorous training for a very long time.

"I've come to fetch you, Benefactor."

I nodded my head and replied back. "Guide me to your King, please."

{Three Ways to Survive in a Ruined World}

According to the analysis of the best expert alive on the novel 'Ways of Survival' – me – the 'three ways' in its title referred to the three main characters of the novel itself.

The first was the Regressor Yoo Joonghyuk.

The second was the Returnee Jang Hayoung.

And finally, the third was…

– There was another main character???

Han Sooyoung asked back hurriedly through [Midday Tryst], sounding a bit flustered after listening to my tale. I remembered then that she wouldn't have such information on her, since she only read up to 100 chapters or so…

– But, then again, it'll be a huge ask to keep milking one main character for over three thousand chapters, won't it?

…She still remained needlessly sharp, though.

– Besides all that, three protagonists, eh? As expected of this novel, treading on the sure-fire shortcut to the failed novel-dom like that.

I couldn't think up of a retort. Because that failed novel had messed up our reality in a big way, hadn't it?

– So, the master of this castle is the 'Third MC', am I right?

– Yeah.

– How important is he in 'Ways of Survival'? As much as Yoo Joonghyuk?

– No, not really. Regardless of what, the main will always be Yoo Joonghyuk.

For sure, the majority of the story spanning over 3000 chapters unfolded with Yoo Joonghyuk as its focal point. The other two were called main characters only according to the narrative description provided during the story itself.

– However, the other two are just as monstrous as Yoo Joonghyuk, alright. Especially in the current point of time, the 'third protagonist' is a far stronger existence than Yoo Joonghyuk is.

– …Even more powerful than that dude?

I nodded my head while scanning the empty meditation chamber around us.

This was where the Reincarnators would perform penance and cleanse themselves – a chamber designed to soothe one's mind, fatigued and frayed by experiencing many cycles of Samsara.

I could hear the recitation of Buddhist scriptures coming from here and there, but couldn't see the King anywhere.

"Where is the 'King of Reincarnators'?"

"The King is already with us."

"But, all I see are the baldy monks, though?"

Han Sooyoung's words were countered with an emotionless reply from the Warrior Monk. "He is everywhere, yet at the same time, nowhere."

"I'm sure you didn't bring us here to crack jokes."

"He does not speak to those who lack the qualifications to see him."

"How amusing. Is that your way of bringing up the next topic of conversation?" replied Han Sooyoung, as the corner of her lips curled upwards.

I silently observed the expression of this mysterious Warrior Monk for a while, before opening my lips to speak. "If your King is everywhere, then that means anyone can become the 'king', doesn't it?"

Geeee-iiiing!!

The Unbroken Faith held in my hand cried out sharply, and at the same time, the illusory sword light shot out towards the Adam's apple of the Warrior Monk.

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

As if an invisible wall was blocking it, the blade's tip pouring out powerful magical energy came to a dead stop right in front of the Warrior Monk's nose. He grinned and spoke.

[You've settled on a rather provocative solution. You're correct. Anyone can become a Buddha once they become enlightened.]

His true voice reverberated throughout the space itself.

I withdrew my sword and observed the Warrior Monk once more. An ethereal, subtle aura was oozing out from his entire body. His irises were now dyed in pure white, and within them, the shadow of a mandala spun anti-clockwise.

Most likely, this Warrior Monk was one of the countless Incarnations the 'King of Reincarnators' operated.

[However, you won't be able to continue on with the scenarios in that fashion forever, oh, the apostle of ■■ who carries the weight of salvation.]

"Please, don't speak as if you're aware of all my methods."

I no longer thought of 'Ways of Survival' as a mere novel, and I definitely didn't see my companions as simple 'characters' of it, as well. That didn't mean that I would never utilise the information already in my possession, though.

"It's a pleasure to make your acquaintance, the 'Mandala's Guardian'."

Even though [The Fourth Wall] was active, I was still subjected to a considerable oppressive force. The 'friendly' Status in front of my eyes wavered around gently. The true appearance of the formidable being slowly materialised behind the Warrior Monk to our observing eyes.

There he was, the ruler of the most ancient stratum of darkness in existence.

Even if it were Metatron of <Eden> or the highest-ranked Demon Kings of the Demon Realm, none of them could contend against this being within this island.

['The Fourth Wall' is quivering its non-existent eyebrows.]

['Wall that Decides Samsara' is showing an interest in you.]

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

Jang Hayoung's [Unidentifiable Wall], Metatron's [Wall Dividing Good and Evil], and finally, the third wall – the 'Mandala's Guardian' was the owner of the [Wall that Decides Samsara].

[I see that it's the 'fragment of the Final Wall'. I'm guessing that Nirvana is trapped inside it?]

"You're correct."

[He was a child who could've become a good Bodhisattva. Unfortunately, he met you and had to leave my path of Buddhism.]

"Well, I believe that the person in question feels satisfied."

It was around there that Han Sooyoung butted in to our conversation.

"Hold up… By any chance, are you the Buddha? THE Buddha?"

[There are many different types of Buddhas in this world, and I'm merely one of them.]

Han Sooyoung now carried a dumbfounded expression on her face.

But then again, her reaction was wholly understandable, considering that a Constellation claiming to be the Buddha had made his entrance. This Buddha-nim carried a gentle smile as he spoke to me.

[I've watched your stories for a very long time, dear Bodhisattvas.]

"But, I don't remember receiving your sponsorships before?"

[There are those Constellations who would reveal their gazes and flaunt their authority, and there are also those whose existence is a mystery. The true Buddhist offerings aren't in the forms of sponsorships, but through simple but meditative contemplations.]

"You sure can dress up the fact that you've been watching the show for free. Alright, then. What is that you want from me?"

[What I want? Do you believe that this self wishes something from you, dear Bodhisattva?]

I shifted my gaze over to the giant bell located in the middle of the meditation chamber. A small soul wrapped in a blinding light was inside the bell made out of transparent material.

I already knew whose soul that was.

"You've decided to reincarnate Yoo Sangah-ssi. Even though I didn't request it of you."

[…]

"You have invited us here and allowed us to recover. Again, even though I didn't request for your aid."

[Those are simply a part of one's path to attain Buddhahood.]

"There is this lesson I've learnt while dealing with Constellations until now. And that would be, there is no Constellation in this world who doesn't expect anything in return when helping you out."

[Dear Bodhisattva, you have arrived at a rather hasty conclusion. Only the one placing faith in the exceptions of everything can discern the end of the scenario.]

I wordlessly glared at the Warrior Monk, before pointing at the bell in the centre of the meditation chamber. I addressed the monk. "Don't confine the Incarnation Yoo Sangah to this island, please. She is far more valuable than you can imagine."

[All beings reincarnating on this island will become a part of the island.]

I shook my head. "Like what you said just now, there are exceptions to everything, aren't there? She'll be able to pick up after where Nirvana left off. Make Incarnation Yoo Sangah your new [Arahat]."

The 'Arahat', or the Seekers of Truth, were not shackled to the 'Isle of Reincarnators', and were free to roam the worlds of scenarios and continue to experience the cycles of reincarnation.

"I'm willing to make the deal with you when you do that."

[Making a deal, is it. Do you believe that you know what this self wishes for?]

"Isn't it to stop the 'Great War of Saints and Demons'?"

[A futile attempt, that is. This self does not hold any interest in the contradictory Stories such as 'Good' and 'Evil'.]

"Even when those contradictory Stories are about to make an unholy mess out of your island?"

As if he found this topic rather amusing, the eyes of the Warrior Monk arced rather elegantly.

The 'Mandala's Guardian' was neither on the side of 'Good' nor 'Evil'. If I were to describe it in words, then he was an existence far closer to 'nothingness'. So, there was just no way that such a being would welcome the authorities of 'Good' and 'Evil' growing larger within his territory.

"I'll try to stop the 'Great War of Saints and Demons'."

[Do you believe such a thing is achievable with your power?]

My Stories replied in place of me.

[Giant Story, 'Demon Realm's Spring', is bellowing out!]

[Giant Story, 'Torch that Swallowed the Myth', is growling menacingly!]

The air in the surroundings began trembling unstably as the two Giant Stories revved their engines.

If my guess was correct, then the 'Mandala's Guardian' wouldn't be able to reject my offer. Because he couldn't take part in the upcoming 'Great War of Saints and Demons', that's why.

As a being who was neither 'Good' nor 'Evil', he had no pretext to enter the war.

[…Is the Incarnation named 'Yoo Sangah' becoming this self's 'Arahat' your only wish, dear Bodhisattva?]

"One other thing."

[You are a greedy Bodhisattva, it seems.]

"Allow my Nebula to start the Great War from the area we prefer. As the master of the island, I believe that you can interfere with the proceedings at least that much."

At that moment, I sensed the quickening of the faint magical energy from throughout the entire temple. It was a riot of Status, as if to make its existence known to me. It was a Status possessing a certain aura that wasn't at all threatening or murderous, but nevertheless, something that I couldn't even hope to come close to yet.

['The Fourth Wall' is strongly activating!]

['Wall that Decides Samsara' is smacking its lips.]

A short while later, the 'Mandala's Guardian' nodded his head.

[I agree to your conditions, dear Bodhisattva. Unfortunately, it's not possible for the whole of your Nebula to start from your preferred area on the Main Island.]

"In that case, I ask of you to send Incarnations Lee Gilyoung and Shin Yoosung at the least."

[H-mm… Where do you wish to send them?]

"The Next City."

[The Next City, is it… Oh my, dear Bodhisattva, could it be…]

If it was the 'Mandala's Guardian', he should have cottoned onto what I was planning here by now.

The Main Island of the 'Isle of Reincarnators' was where the Stories from the 3rd generation had been stuck frozen in time. As these Stories boasted a far wider spectrum of variety compared to 1st and 2nd generations, your starting point played a factor in you acquiring unexpected Stories.

Even if others couldn't, I had to ensure that those two kids would start from the 'Next City'.

[…In return, the rest of your companions will start in locations that this self has selected.]

"Understood."

Han Sooyoung standing next to me, silently observing the unfolding situation until then, sent me a probing glance after hearing my reply.

– Hey, you. What will you do if this baldy monk sends us to a weird place?

The Warrior Monk saw us get into a bit of argument and a strange smile suddenly crept up on his lips. [Dear Bodhisattva, this self truly enjoys watching your story, but… Unfortunately, the Stories you have accumulated so far is simply too inadequate to contend with other Nebulas participating in the Great War of Saints and Demons.]

Maybe she felt a bit triggered by the word 'inadequate', Han Sooyoung began to retort in a snarky manner. "…Looks like you haven't heard the news that we smashed apart <Olympus> not too long ago."

[The Stories dear Bodhisattvas have accumulated are indeed peerless, but they haven't experienced the trials and tribulations of time itself.]

In the next moment, both Han Sooyoung's body and mine were suddenly wrapped up in bright light.

[Constellation, 'Mandala's Guardian' has agreed with your transfer to the next scenario.]

[Transfer to the next scenario has begun!]

…So suddenly?

I was taken by surprise a little, but quickly regained my bearings.

Finally, I was heading towards the location of the third Giant Story that'd complete the 'Twist'.

Most likely, my other companions were in the middle of transferring, just like me. I shifted my head to find Han Sooyoung looking up at me.

"Kim Dokja."

I reflexively extended my hand towards her and replied. "Do your best. I'll try to find you as soon as possible."

"…Yeah, right."

The moment Han Sooyoung's fist bumped into mine, she was completely enveloped in bright light. As I watched her figure disappear, I became aware once more that she had become my companion for real.

Like back when Yoo Joonghyuk said it, Han Sooyoung had become an indispensable existence for me to reach my desired conclusion.

On my way to this place, I ended up owing her a lot. So, it was time that I pay my debt.

「However, Kim Dokja of then had no idea.」

It was also in that very moment that the screen of my phone began glowing brightly, as well. Words from a page I didn't recognise began rising up line after line in front of my eyes as if to foreshadow an ominous future.

「He didn't know that, by the time Kim Dokja got to meet her again…」

No, hang on a minute here.

「50 years had passed by already.」

…What the hell?!

---

[*] Official novel cover (canonical)

MUNPIA

전지적 독자시점

OMNISCIENT READER

싱숑 장편소설

*

Chapter 374: Ep. 71 - 50 years later, II

50 years? What the hell was that all about?

As my vision grew blurrier, I caught the smile floating up on the Warrior Monk's lips.

– Oh, dear Bodhisattva. Please, try to endure time itself.

[Transfer to the Main Island has begun!]

['Wall that Decides Samsara' is investigating information of your Stories!]

[Investigation has concluded!]

[The scenario location for you and your companions has been decided.]

This was the very last message I heard before losing my consciousness.

[Sub-scenario, 'Genre Selection', has begun!]

* * *

Ricardo stared into the pitch-black liquid filling up his transparent cup and recalled the memories of the distant past.

「"Even if you train for 50 years, it'll be difficult for you to become a royal court mage."」

That was back when he first started learning magic.

「"You don't seem to possess the suitable constitution to become a scholar."」

That was when the number one scholar in the Kaizenix Archipelago came to tutor him.

「"Your hands are not suited to holding a sword."」

And that was back when he grabbed a sword for the first time in the royal swordsmanship training grounds.

「"Some lives are like that. What's important is to never fall into despair and continue to strive forward, son."」

Ricardo's father, Verchen Von Kaizenix, said those words.

That couldn't console him, though. A man who had no talent nor desire to do anything wouldn't be consoled after hearing those words, anyway.

Even with no talent, he should strive forward regardless? What would he become if he continued to live on like that, anyway?

Ricardo drunk himself into a stupor every single day. He hung around with the archipelago's worst hooligans and did drugs. He even became addicted to gambling and squandered away the fortunes of his family, too.

He even fell in love. Once upon a time.

She was older, and the most beautiful woman in the entire archipelago. Unfortunately, even that had to end after she married his oldest brother.

Ricardo stared at that black liquid and muttered to himself.

"I'll just kill myself."

That resolution was the first time he swallowed the brave pill in his life.

He lightly grasped the cup, and as if drinking wine, he emptied its contents in one go. Its effect manifested itself not too long afterwards. His complexion became dark and lifeless, and his arms faltered to the side with no energy.

And exactly four hours later.

Someone else opened his eyes in Ricardo's body.

* * *

Besides 'Ways of Survival', I had read quite a few other stories. When I was young, I read those great works of literature my mother recommended, and after I grew up a bit, I began selecting books on my own volition to read.

As an aside, the very first web-novel I read began with its protagonist harping on about his misfortune while dying before waking back up again.

Just like now.

"Blergh…!"

"Your highness! Prince Ricardo! Are you alright, my lord?"

Someone was patting me on the back, and I vomited out the contents of my stomach for a long time.

I wiped my mouth and raised my head only to discover a mirror. The handsome face reflected in it was pale and charmingly attractive.

…It was definitely my face, but something felt unfamiliar about it.

Who was I?

…Ricardo…?

「"You probably know this already, but I'm not a prophet. No, I am as far removed from such a being as you can get."」

I am…

「"I'm not the 'Demon King of Salvation'. I'm also not the 'King of a Kingless World'."」

I am…?

「"Twenty-eight… No, wait. I was twenty-eight, and I was an employee of a game company. My hobby was reading web-novels…"」

[Your Stories are resisting against the Giant Story that sets this world's view!]

[Exclusive skill, 'The Fourth Wall', is strongly activating!]

I slowly closed my eyes before opening them again, and was immediately overcome with the sensation of the world separating itself from me.

['The Fourth Wall' has impeded your character immersion.]

[Due to the effect of 'The Fourth Wall', your ego has been fully retained.]

[Probability of the Island is suspicious of your preferential treatment.]

I was greeted by the feelings of an unfamiliar body. This one didn't belong to me.

「I am Kim Dokja.」

My consciousness returned to me in full, and the chain of memories was organised in an instant. I was participating in the 'Great War of Saints and Demons' scenario, and had just entered the Main Island.

It was awash with the various spectrum of 3rd generation Stories. Different Stories created different genres of worldviews, and the one right in front of my eyes was…

"…Body possession."

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

[A term not aligned with the worldview has been spoken!]

[Penalty will be imposed!]

By the time I woke up again, two hours would have passed by.

"Your highness, are you feeling alright?"

Someone was calling out to me from beyond my hazy view.

"…Please, may I have some water?"

[You have used language not in line with the worldview!]

[Penalty will…]

"…Hand me some water."

"Here it is."

After drinking large gulps of cold water, I felt my reasoning return bit by bit. My head was in a mess as the memories of someone else rushed in. I was now occupying the body of a man who had already lived for over 30 years.

「In certain areas on the 'Main Island', words that don't align with the applicable worldview will be prohibited from being spoken.」

I could just about remember some stuff from the 'Ways of Survival'. Although this particular turn barely got a passing mention, the novel definitely did feature a scenario such as this one.

The so-called 'Possession scenario'.

I'd be advancing the scenario 'Great War of Saints and Demons' from this person's perspective from here onwards.

[It is impossible to summon a Dokkaebi when in the applicable area.]

[You are unable to receive indirect messages from the Constellations when in the applicable area.]

…Not only that, strange restrictions were in place, too. This was a different development from the 'Great War of Saints and Demons' that I knew of.

"…Looks like I'll have to collect information first."

[You have performed actions befitting the personality of the host body.]

[Your understanding of the applicable host body is increasing.]

Straight away, I began rummaging through the memories from the 'Ways of Survival'.

「The Kaizenix Archipelago, the isle of heroes that led the Age of Saints and Demons.」

I couldn't really recall any particularly useful information. Why did it have to be an area that didn't get much of a mention in the 'Ways of Survival'?

But, it didn't feel like a completely foreign place to me, though…

Was that because of the memories of the person I had possessed overflowing into me?

[Exclusive skill, 'Character List', has been activated!]

Now originally, I couldn't see my Attribute Window. However, if it was the one belonging to the host body that I took over, then…

<Character Summary>

Name: Ricardo Von Kaizenix (Kim Dokja)

Age: 31

Sponsor: None (Currently, '1' Constellation has shown interest.)

Exclusive Attributes: A Gifted Hoodlum

Exclusive Skills: [Royalty's Outer Appearance Lv.3], [Soliloquy Lv.6], [Roleplay Lv.5]

Stigma: None

Overall Stats: [Physique Lv. 10], [Strength Lv.10], [Agility Lv.10], [Magic Power Lv.10]

Overall Evaluation: The person you have taken over is the 4th Prince of the Kaizenix Archipelago. Unfortunately, he lacks talent in all types of combat abilities, including swordsmanship, magic, etc.

* Currently afflicted by Abnormal Status Condition: 'Possessed'.

…Why was I stuck inside such a guy's body?

The scenario's message definitely told me that I'd occupy a 'host related to me'. However, what did this wastrel prince have in common with me? Not only that, this dude's natural muscular stat was 10. The only thing similar between us would be our age, but even then…

"Your highness, are you immersing yourself in roleplay once more?"

"Roleplay?"

"Last time, you were imitating our First Ancestor… You're now wearing an outfit that I haven't seen before, your highness. You're dressed like the people from Earth's chronicles, sir."

I took a look at the mirror without thinking too much about it and spotted the familiar outfit. Bizarrely enough, all my equipment had been transferred along with my possession of the host body.

I replied in a dead-pan manner. "It's an outfit of a certain Demon King."

"…A Demon King, your highness?"

I reached into the coat's inner pocket, and fortunately enough, I could feel the equipment I possessed still in there. I took out my smartphone first. In order to acquire more info on this place, I needed to check the contents of the 'Ways of Survival'…

Tsu-chuchuchut!

[The applicable item does not line up with the worldview and therefore cannot be used.]

…Screw this damn penalty.

The butler alongside me must've interpreted my actions in his own way, since he spoke as thus. "Indeed, your highness, it'll be better to enjoy yourself for one last time. Soon, 'his' majesty will call for you. Well, then."

Leaving behind those words, the butler went away from my side. And I was left all alone in this small room.

「Kim Dok ja is lone ly.」

Right, it's a relief that at least you're here with me. I wonder what had happened to my other companions…

According to the last message I heard, it was highly probable that they all ended up in the same area as me. For the time being, I switched the scenario window on. The backlogged messages rose up non-stop in my view.

[You have entered Main Island's 'Kaizenix Archipelago'.]

['Kaizenix Archipelago' is currently cut off from the 'Great War of Saints and Demons' conflict region's space-time.]

[You can advance to the 'Great War of Saints and Demons' after solving the applicable area's sub-scenario.]

I'd probably have to raise an army here and participate in the 'Great War of Saints and Demons'. Meaning, this place would serve as a foundation to enter that war.

[You can't view the information on the scenario yet.]

[The plot of the applicable scenario will change according to the route you have chosen.]

The route I've chosen?

No, hang on a minute. At least I need to know what the conditions for failure is, so I can…

[You won't fail the applicable scenario as long as you do not die.]

Now, this kind of situation would be my first.

In any case, I wouldn't fail this scenario as long as I stay alive, was that it? I sat down on the bed and calmly organised my thoughts.

My name in the current worldview was Ricardo Von Kaizenix.

As this scenario was built upon the basis of 'possession', I had to perfectly carry on acting like the prince I took over.

My current priority should be to search for the other members of <Kim Dokja's Company>. It was highly possible that they were possessing other people like me, so only after I find them would I be…

"Your highness, are you in? It's Knight Bilston."

Just as I began thinking, someone knocked on the door.

The Knight Bilston Framer – if Ricardo's memories were correct, then that guy was supposed to be my escort knight.

"His majesty is calling for you, your highness."

The moment he pushed open the door to enter the room, I was immediately taken over by this unexplainable feeling. The person standing before me was a knight boasting white moustache in his early 40s. Without a doubt, I should've been unfamiliar with his appearance. But then…

[Your Stories are reacting towards the applicable individual!]

[Exclusive attribute, 'Scenario Interpreter', is displaying its effect!]

The knight's face was changing bit by bit.

「"…Ja-ssi"」

A voice that I really missed entered my head, even though it hadn't been that long since last I heard it.

「"Back when I was still in the military, there was an incident where I lost a spent cartridge."」

The Story accumulated within the man was talking to me right now. Words that lost the majority of their strength were desperately pleading with me regarding something.

「"I told myself to never lose one ever again."」

I knew the owner of that particular Story well.

"…Hyunsung-ssi?"

When I spoke up, Lee Hyunsung stared back at me.

[Applicable individual does not understand your words.]

"It is you, isn't it? Hyunsung-ssi?"

[Applicable individual does not understand your words.]

[Applicable worldview has recommended that you perfectly act according to the role you were given.]

Lee Hyunsung staring at me with vacant eyes soon formed an awkward grin and replied back. "Hyunsung? Haha, are you still in the middle of your roleplay, your highness? May I be permitted to inquire as to who you were imitating just now?"

It seemed that Lee Hyunsung couldn't recognise me at all – along with an expression of someone who didn't remember me on his face.

I called out his name. "Lord Bilston."

"Yes, your highness."

"Do you not recognise this outfit?"

"Mm… Is that the outfit of the Demon Hunters? Or, maybe, a member of Revolutionaries…"

Although my current face was different, my current attire was the white coat that I've been wearing all along. If this man was really Lee Hyunsung, there was just no way that he'd not recognise it.

But the fact that he still failed to do so could only mean…

[Exclusive skill, 'Character List', has activated!]

<Character Summary>

Name: Bilston Framer (???)

Age: 43

Sponsor: None

Exclusive Attributes: Loyalty, An Honourable Knight

Exclusive Skills: [Rapid Reaction Force Lv.8], [Kingdom's Royal Swordsmanship Lv.8]

Stigma: None

Overall Stats: [Physique Lv.80], [Strength Lv. 80], [Agility Lv. 80], [Magic Power Lv. 80]

Overall Evaluation: Once upon a time, there used to be two souls living within this body. He was a knight of the kingdom, and at the same time, a shield of someone else. The shield waited for his master to appear. He waited, and then waited some more. Finally, the master of the shield has appeared after a long wait, but the shield can no longer perform its role anymore.

While reading the explanation in the Attribute Window over and over again, I recalled the Invincible Fist Yoo Hoseong's warning.

– When you get to the Main Island, be careful of the 'Giant Story'.

– If it's a Giant Story, I think I can control it now.

– I didn't mean it that way. You will end up fighting against a Giant Story itself when you get there.

Only then did I understand the meaning behind those words.

I raised my head to sense the movement of a gigantic Probability encasing the entirety of the archipelago. Something was staring at me. Something that was neither a Constellation nor a Demon King.

[Giant Story, 'Kaizenix Archipelago', is avariciously staring at you.]

I clenched my fists and bit down on my lip.

The still-oblivious Lee Hyunsung continued to mutter to himself in the meantime. "Hmm, if it's not the Revolutionaries, then maybe, another kingdom's…"

The Lee Hyunsung that I knew had been swallowed up by this world and disappeared already.

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* 4th original webnovel cover (canonical)

Chapter 375: Ep. 71 - 50 years later, III

While on our way to the audience chamber, I continued to engage Bilston in conversation. "Bilston-nim. By any chance, have you lost anything recently? Maybe often, as well? For instance, an empty cartridge…"

"Pardon?"

[A term not fitting the worldview has been used and therefore…]

"I mean, such as misplacing a portable magical explosive…"

"Your highness, do I look like such a pathetic fool capable of doing that?"

I just couldn't think of what to say here.

When looking at that stiff walking posture or the firm pectoral muscles, or even that slightly dopey expression on his face, this guy was definitely Lee Hyunsung, but… But, according to 'Character List', he was not him, but the character of this world's setting, 'Bilston Framer'.

I re-read the 'Overall Evaluation' portion at the bottom of the Character List.

– Once upon a time, there used to be two souls living within this body. He was a knight of the kingdom, and at the same time, a shield of someone else.

The 'knight of the kingdom' bit must be referring to 'Bilston Framer', while the 'shield' bit must be referring to Lee Hyunsung.

– The shield waited for his master to appear. He waited, and then, waited some more. Finally, the master of the shield has appeared after a long wait, but the shield can no longer perform its role anymore.

The most important portion was this part. I kind of realized that Lee Hyunsung had been waiting for other companions to arrive.

The issue here was with the number – just how much time was this 'long wait' thing implying here?

"Your highness?"

I couldn't help but feel complicated when looking at the man staring back at me with those dopey eyes.

There were only two things I could be sure of at the current juncture.

One, Lee Hyunsung had been entered into this scenario far earlier than me.

Two, he had been swallowed up by this world's Giant Story and his ego had disappeared.

[Giant Story, 'Kaizenix Archipelago', is smacking its lips in your direction.]

['The Fourth Wall' is glaring at 'Kaizenix Archipelago'.]

In that case, could the others who didn't possess [The Fourth Wall] have ended up in the same state as Lee Hyunsung?

"Your highness, did something happen?"

I wordlessly stared into Bilston's large eyes.

This guy was definitely Lee Hyunsung. But, could he really be called 'Lee Hyunsung' right now?

"I'm sorry, Bilston-nim."

"I beg your pardon? Why so suddenly…"

"I must've put you through a lot of hardship. I know that it was difficult for you to protect me until now."

I wasn't addressing Bilston Framer right now.

"I always used the excuse of being too busy and didn't take good care of you. Even though you have saved my life several times already."

Lee Hyunsung helped me out many times during our journey towards this scenario. I had enough chances to share a deep, meaningful and personal conversation with him, but as it was the usual case, his spot in the queue continued to get pushed back under the pretext of me preparing for the next scenario.

I believed that we understood each other without the need to say something. I believed that the Stories we earned together could ably sub for us in that regard.

And the end result of that was this.

Bilston must've thought of something after he heard me because he wiped his nostrils while shifting his gaze to the outside view.

"Your highness, you really do possess a warm, gentle heart."

[Character, 'Bilston Framer', has been moved deeply by you.]

…I wasn't trying to impress him but someone else, though.

Without saying anything else, we continued down the long hallway.

Portraits of the previous kings lined up the walls of the hallway in sequence. The one that caught my eyes the most among them was a depiction of a lone man holding up a broken sword in the middle of a storm.

– The First Ancestor, the Storm King Ulysses Kaizenix the First.

I stopped walking for a moment and studied that painting.

"It has been my honour to serve you throughout my life, your highness."

I turned my head around, and Bilston began telling his tale as thick teardrops formed around his eyes. He locked his gaze at the distant parapets of the castle and continued on.

"Can you still remember it? I almost lost you when you were around seven years old, your highness."

"…Mm?"

"Just by recalling the sight of you precariously dangling on the castle's parapet still causes my heart to tumble to the pits of my stomach, your highness. Was that all? When you were thirteen years old, you went to the lavatory and then…"

Hey, hang on a minute, this dude… He's way too similar to Lee Hyunsung, wasn't he?

"But then, you're still worried about this lowly one even until the last moment…"

"Last moment??"

Bilston stared back at me with sorrowful eyes, before quickly avoiding meeting my gaze.

"…We've arrived. Let us go inside."

The doors to the audience chamber were before us already; they opened up to reveal the royal guards lining up on either side of the red carpet. And the captain of the guards, decked out in the silver crest, stood proudly in the middle.

"Bilston-nim, why are you so late?"

"I was sharing a final goodbye with his highness the prince."

There were several spots in their conversation that I wanted to butt in, but thanks to the overall atmosphere, I couldn't squeak a word out.

Bilston, who had been in a tearful mood only a minute ago was now carrying a grave, serious expression. The gazes of two people growling at each other collided in mid-air.

The captain continued on. "A final goodbye, is it. A traitor found guilty of high treason dares to enjoy unnecessary luxury."

"You better watch what you say."

The two of them got into a battle stance simultaneously. Bilston pulled out a bastard sword, while the captain… Eh?

…Why was this person carrying that sword?

Indeed, the weapon held in the captain's hands was something that I was intimately familiar with. I personally collected the materials and had it crafted for the sake of a certain someone, after all.

[Sword of Judgement]

"Bilston-nim, do you wish to become another dewdrop of the execution ground alongside your prince?"

The captain's red eyes wavered threateningly from beyond 'his' helm.

「"Oh, my king… If you will it, then so be it…"」

「"Dokja-ssi, you're trying to do it by yourself again… I told you not to do that, didn't I?"」

I knew who this person was.

"Stop, both of you!!"

Bilston heard my urgent cry and stopped gathering momentum, and stepped back. Meanwhile, the captain of the guard, glaring at me with hostile eyes, removed 'his' helm.

And 'his' face matched exactly that of Jung Heewon's.

[Exclusive skill, 'Character List', is activating!]

<Character Summary>

Name: Erich Striker (???)

Age: 37

Sponsor: None

Exclusive Attributes: Loyal Servant, Swordmaster

Exclusive Skills: [Demon Slaying Lv.10], [Kingdom's Royal Swordsmanship Lv.10]…

Stigma: None

Overall Stats: [Physique Lv.75], [Strength Lv.80], [Agility Lv.90], [Magic Power Lv.70]

Overall Evaluation: Once upon a time, there used to be two souls living within this body. 'He' was the Guard Captain of the kingdom, and at the same time, a sword of someone else. The sword waited for that someone to appear with the shield. 'He' waited, and then, waited some more. Finally, the sword met the one he'd been waiting for after all this time, but 'he' can no longer remember him.

Bloody hell, even Jung Heewon was in that state, too?

The captain staring at me with quiet, still eyes eventually spoke up. "It seems that the prince is aware of the situation he is in. Guards, place the criminal under arrest."

…Under arrest?

I was caught by the guards without a chance to resist. But then again, I couldn't fight back even if I wanted to, what with this body's average Stats being only 10.

I could see the guillotine beyond the lines of the guards. Only then did I realize why I was brought to this place in the first place.

It was quite likely that this scenario would begin with my execution.

Among all the novels I read in the past, there was this genre referred to as the so-called 'hooligan tales'.

The story usually went along the lines of the hooligan protagonist being born as the last-born child of a royal family or nobility, and he'd become a better person by going through all sorts of trials and tribulations.

Now normally, most of those stories began in a similar way.

「The Kaizenix Royal Family was ruined.」

Such as, the family being ruined even before the start, and…

「The ruler of the Archipelago died after being stabbed by the dagger of his most trusted adviser.」

…And, he'd fall into moments of mortal danger after his parents and best friends were killed off.

「The Second Prince, renowned for his mastery of the sword, and the Third Prince, renowned for his magical prowess, lost their lives at the hands of the usurpers.」

…What the hell. What was I supposed to do when such important memories came back to me only just now?

"I shall guide the criminal personally."

All thanks to that, I ended up delivering myself to my own execution ground like an idiot. Many different thoughts floated up in my head; I was wondering why this wastrel killed himself, but huh, maybe he didn't want to be executed?

Bilston, now being forcibly held back by the guards, could only call out to me in desperation. "Your highness! Prince Ricardo!!"

The captain grabbed a hold of my hair and dragged me towards the gallows. If Jung Heewon's consciousness was still here, this would've turned into a rather amusing spectacle, but alas.

I spotted a lunette designed to perfectly accommodate my neck. In a short while, I'd be forced up on the gallows and have my head cut off. And when that happened, I'd fail this scenario.

[Unique Skill, 'the Fourth Wall', is strongly activating!]

I looked up at the face of the Guard Captain and asked 'him'. "Are you really going to do this?"

The captain smirked back. "Oh, so you feel scared now that you've come this far?"

"That's not it."

"Then what?"

"Didn't you promise to become my sword?"

A faint sense of fluster floated up on the Captain's face.

"What rubbish are you spewing now?"

"Have you forgotten your pledge already? Was that all a lie, your promise of seeing the end of the scenario alongside me?"

[Character, 'Erich Striker', is feeling a small amount of confusion towards you.]

"Looks like you've begun rambling nonsense now that you're about to die."

Just like it was with Lee Hyunsung, Jung Heewon's ego didn't want to return that quickly.

The coldness of the wooden lunette surrounded my neck. It was at this point in time that someone loudly shouted out.

"Her majesty is making her entrance!"

I heard the sounds of curtains being pulled back. Someone was walking towards the audience chamber enveloped in still silence. The footsteps sounded dignified, light, but at the same time, weighty. Accompanying those footsteps, Ricardo's memories flowed into my head like a song.

「The enemy of my father and my brothers.」

「The Dark Magician of the Kaizenix Archipelago.」

「The regicide.」

「And…」

My heart began powerfully pounding away.

「The woman that I used to love.」

"Convict, raise your head."

I slowly raised my head and saw a short-statured 'king', decked out in a black medieval-style cloak embroidered in silver, with neat and tidy tights underneath.

"Do you have any final words?"

I dazedly stared at this 'king' and murmured something inside my mouth.

[Exclusive Skill, 'Character List', is activating!]

[Due to an unknown reason, only a portion of the applicable individual's information can be viewed.]

<Character Summary>

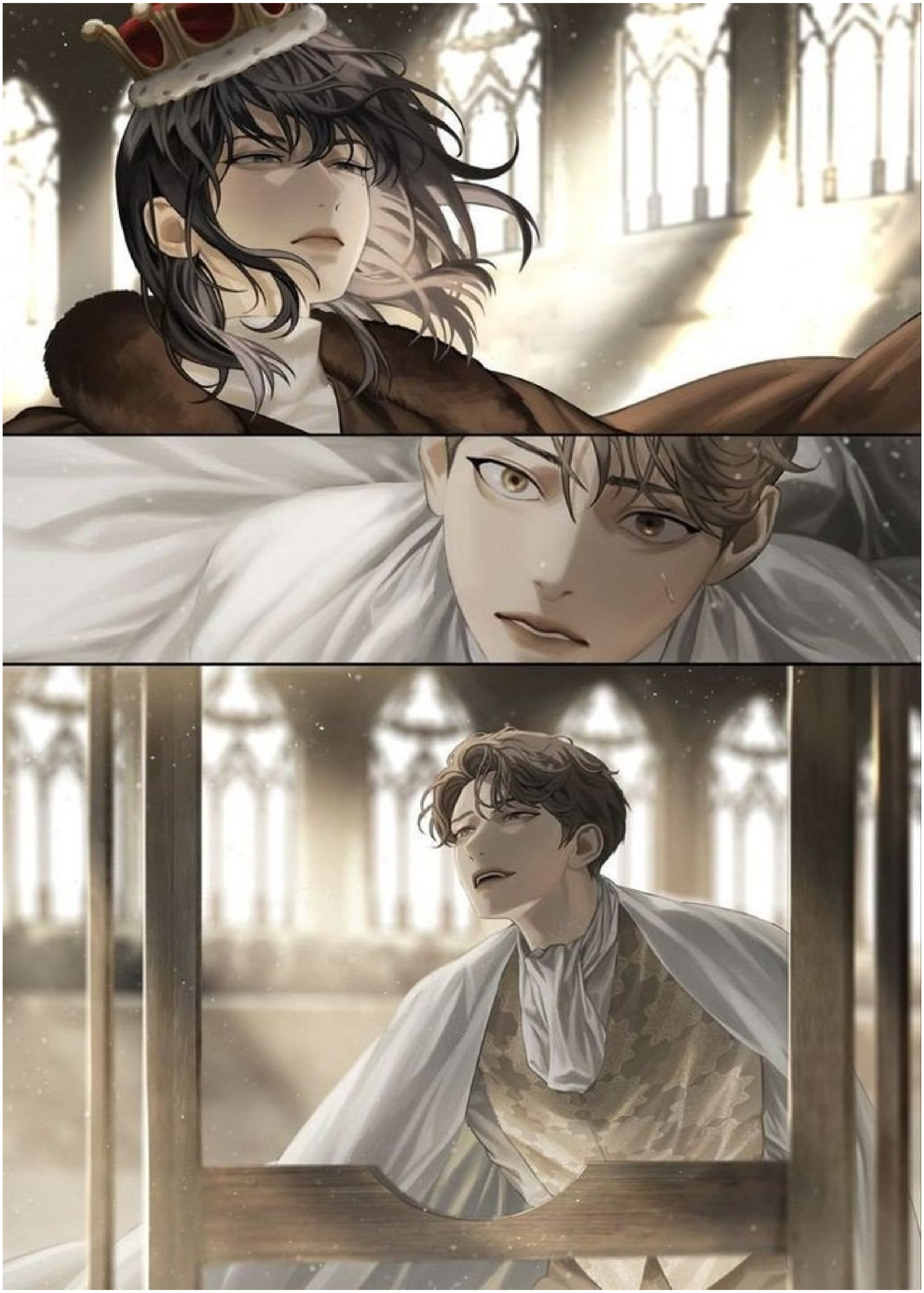
Name: ???

Age: 50

Overall Evaluation: The applicable individual's? overall? rating? is still being pre?pared.

The info on the 'King' didn't show up properly. However, her face looked to be in her early 20s no matter how hard I looked.

I stared at the face of this king, the one that couldn't be the age as declared by the Character Summary, for a long time.



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Both Lee Hyunsung and Jung Heewon were characters from the pages of the 'Ways of Survival'. However, what would it be like for someone who wasn't a character, to begin with?

Just like me, who wasn't the character of the novel?

I was holding onto a certain expectation, a hope.

"I asked you if you have any last words."

If it was her, wouldn't she be able to remember me?

「He didn't know that, by the time Kim Dokja got to meet her again, 50 years would have passed by already.」

Those were the words from the final revision of the novel that I saw just before I was thrust into the scenario.

So, this was what they meant, huh.

"I have."

"Then, I permit the convict to speak."

"I…" I forced a smile and spoke up. "…I'm sorry that I came so late, Sooyoung-ah."

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

Powerful sparks wrapped around me from my declaration that didn't align with the worldview's Probability. I had to say those words out loud, though.

It was unknown how Han Sooyoung took my words, but she simply continued to look down on me without any movement whatsoever. But then, she slowly lowered her head and matched my eye level.

Her emotionless eyes; the beauty spot just below one of them; and her lips that always mocked me for fun, now arching up in a smooth line.

"Proceed with the execution."

The guillotine's blade chopped down. But, I didn't try to dodge it.

I had my reasons, of course.

「Scenarios of the Main Island are all based off on the '3rd generation of Stories'.」

If my thoughts were correct, then 'Ricardo Kaizenix' would not be killed off in this manner.

Ka-booooom!!

One of the castle's walls exploded, and at the same time, the guillotine falling down was destroyed. I could see the broken blade of the guillotine through the grey dust cloud rising up.

"It's the Revolutionaries!"

"Protect her majesty, now!"

Amidst the chaos, I could hear the loud shouts of the royal guards. Soon, the audience chamber became the scene of pure pandemonium filled with pained moans and screams.

"Damn it, it's the First Prince!"

"Stop him! You must stop him at all cost!"

It was the First Prince of the Kaizenix Archipelago – Ricardo's blood brother, as well as a genius in swordsmanship and magic as well as academia.

"I've come to save my dongsaeng."

I was greeted by this overflowing sense of happiness. When the arrestingly-beautiful sword light danced and sparkled within the audience chamber, the royal guards rushing in all collapsed one after another like puppets with strings cut.

There was someone who'd never change even if the worldview or scenarios around him did. Indeed, there would ever be only one such person even if you searched through this entire world-line.

But, I closed my lips just as they opened up half-way. I wasn't sure why, though.

[Giant Story, 'Kaizenix Archipelago', is enjoying the bloody, gory battle.]

My companions so far had forgotten about me. I was sure it'd be the same story for that dude, too. In a way, it might be the best thing for him, I thought.

[Story, 'Life and Death Companions', has begun its storytelling.]

It was then – the First Prince suddenly glared at me.

And then, a message popped up in my head.

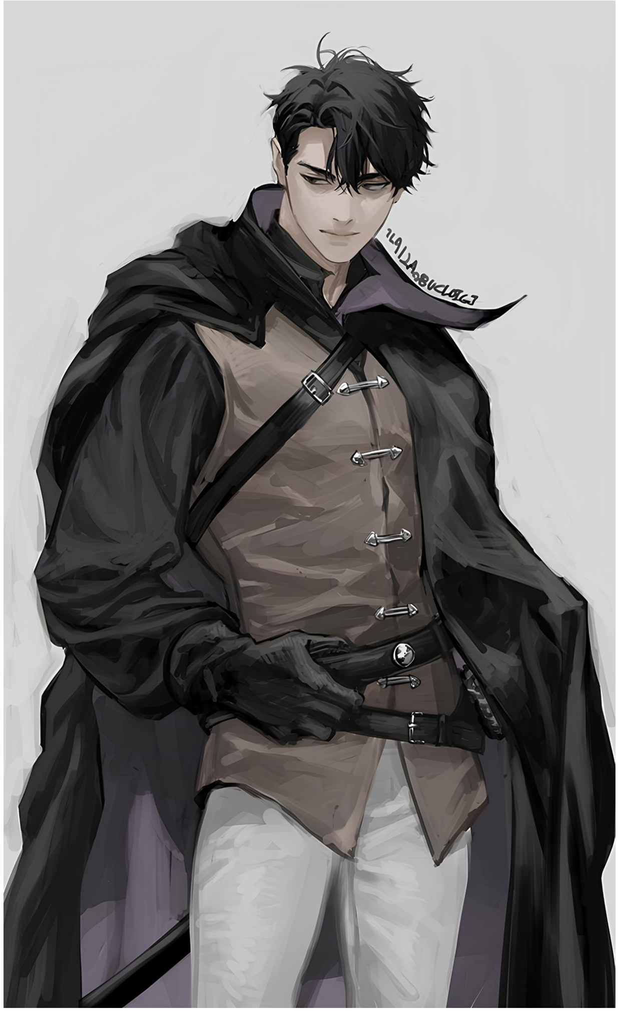
– You fool. You must be Kim Dokja.

@1L9l2Aa8UCL0l

* Official novel illustration (canonical)

375 - You fool. You must be Kim Dokja (2)

* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical), other illustrations that could work here specifically (non-canonical):



Chapter 376: Ep. 71 - 50 years later, IV

– Capture them! Apprehend the eldest Prince first!

– They are taking the Fourth Prince away!

Angry Reincarnators inside the screen were pouring out a barrage of arrows and sword lights. And there were two men running within the thick, choking smoke – Yoo Joonghyuk and Kim Dokja.

[Baat, baaaht!]

With a very restless expression on her face, Biyoo jumped up and down in the air like a ball of mochi.

Arrows flew past Kim Dokja's head with barely any room to spare; some of them even accurately fell towards his back, but the First Prince quickly swung his sword to deflect them all.

– Retreat!

With that order, the revolutionaries receded away. And there were Constellations watching this spectacle from afar.

[Constellation, 'Father of the Rich Night', is gazing at 'Kaizenix Archipelago'.]

[Constellation, 'Queen of the Darkest Spring', is looking at the Underworld's successor.]

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', is roaring out in frustration!]

Unfortunately, their messages couldn't reach the Incarnations within the channel.

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is pleading for at least one message to get through!]

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is requesting for the permission to send indirect messages…]

[Baat, baaaht.]

With a sad look, Biyoo shook her head.

Dokkaebis might possess the authority to change broadcast set-up of their channels, but the situation this time with the 'Isle of Reincarnators' was a rather unique one.

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is glaring at the 'Mandala's Guardian'.]

The one who offered up the stage for the scenario of the 'Great War of Saints and Demons' was the master of the 'Isle of Reincarnators', 'Mandala's Guardian'. He was not allowed to participate in this scenario personally, but at the same time, was given the same level of authority to interfere as the high-ranking Dokkaebis during this war.

[Oh, young angel, that is regrettably impossible to do so. Unless, you decide to convert to the path of Buddhism through this opportunity.]

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is throwing a temper tantrum.]

[You should be mindful of your temper. Those with much anger in them will get consumed by it later.]

[A great number of Constellations are expressing their indignation!]

Not caring whether they were furious or not, the 'Mandala's Guardian' continued to stare with quiet, distant eyes at Kim Dokja inside the screen – as if he was searching for a certain profound epiphany from that man's face.

[Channels nearby are momentarily being frozen!]

Tsu-chuchuchut…

It was around then that someone revealed himself in the air accompanied by a sudden storm of sparks. The 'Mandala's Guardian' shifted his disinterested eyes in that direction.

[This one doesn't recall giving entry permission to a Dokkaebi from the Bureau.]

[I simply had to come with the situation being what it is, oh, 'King of Reincarnators'.]

The one that appeared was the historical-grade Dokkaebi, Bihyung. He courteously performed the Buddhist-style greeting and began his questioning right away.

[I'm aware that you possess ten different names. Sakya, Sakyamuni, Siddhartha, Tathagata, Sugata, Buddha… Which one among them are you, exactly?]

The expression on the Guardian's face shifted ever so slightly after hearing Bihyung's question. The fact was, he would transform into a different existence according to the name he currently possessed.

[This one is currently Sakyamuni.]

[Sakyamuni, please cancel the abnormal scenario currently imposed on the Nebula <Kim Dokja's Company>.]

[That is contrary to our prior agreement. Have you not handed over all control of the preparatory scenarios to me?]

[I believe you were strongly requested to remain neutral in the upcoming 'Great War of Saints and Demons'.]

Bihyung's sharp gaze landed firmly on Sakyamuni. The Warrior Monk's eyes quietly held that gaze, and the mandala within them reversed their spinning direction.

[Well. This one isn't the first person to stop being neutral, it seems.]

[Can you clarify that, please?]

[I heard recently that there is an historical-grade Dokkaebi greatly favouring Incarnations from a certain Nebula.]

Right after Sakyamuni finished replying in a subtle but accusatory tone of voice, Biyoo popped up in mid-air and plopped her soft tummy on top of Bihyung's head.

[Are you here because of the Bureau, or by your own volition?]

Bihyung lightly bit his lip, but didn't provide an answer. Instead, he looked at Kim Dokja in the screen, currently breaking past the clouds of explosions and running away.

[The trial you have put them in is far too excessive. It might be only a blink to the Constellations, but that length of time is as much as one's lifespan from a human's perspective.]

[This one was also a human once upon a time. And this scenario is a necessity. Especially if they are to reach the ■■.]

[…Sakyamuni.]

[Oh Dokkaebi, the celebration of the end will soon commence.]

The mandala within Sakyamuni's eyes continued to spin. And the faint figures of Kim Dokja and Yoo Joonghyuk could be seen above the spinning Mandalas.

[Which ■■ will you vote for?]

With the aid of Yoo Joonghyuk, I was able to safely escape from the audience chamber. The pursuit attempt by the guards proved to be annoyingly persistent, but thanks to the sacrifices of a few revolutionaries, we made it to the safe house in the end.

Yoo Joonghyuk chucked the unconscious Bilston – the host body of Lee Hyunsung – on the floor and opened his lips to speak. "Why did you show up this late?"

"It wasn't because I wanted to, okay."

[The worldview is growing suspicious of your conversation.]

['Midday Tryst' has been activated!]

Yoo Joonghyuk shot me his trademark murderous glare for a little while, and then continued on with his story.

– I arrived in this place around two years ago.

I calmly listened to his experiences.

He suddenly became the First Prince of the Kaizenix Archipelago, and just as suddenly, throne usurpation broke out.

Yoo Joonghyuk was thrown into the middle of that armed revolt and began his bid for survival. He escaped from the royal castle and created the group of freedom fighters. And then, he searched around for the rest of the companions.

– By the time I arrived here, Lee Hyunsung, Jung Heewon, and even Han Sooyoung were already in that state.

– Are the three of them the only ones here? Where are the others?

– Haven't found anyone besides them. It's likely that only they were summoned to this world.

Yoo Joonghyuk possessed the [Sage's Eye]. In some regard, that skill allowed him to spy on far more complete information than my own [Character List]. He had been relying on this skill to search for the other companions. He probably discovered me through it, too – since the [Sage's Eye] didn't work on me.

I observed the still-unconscious Lee Hyunsung.

Yoo Joonghyuk said he got here two years ago. In that case, just how long was Lee Hyunsung trapped in this worldview for?

– They have all been swallowed up by the Giant Story, haven't they?

– Probably.

– What about you? You alright?

– You think a measly couple of years is enough to break me down?

I belatedly recalled what an amazing dude Yoo Joonghyuk was. The trustworthy Lee Hyunsung, the driven Jung Heewon, and even Han Sooyoung all broke down and lost themselves.

[Giant Story, 'Kaizenix Archipelago', is shooting a dissatisfied glare at Incarnation 'Yoo Joonghyuk'.]

However, Yoo Joonghyuk was completely unscathed.

But then again, that was pretty obvious when I thought about it. The method employed by this worldview's 'Giant Story' to break us down was 'time' itself. However, Yoo Joonghyuk possessed far stronger resistance towards the passage of time than anyone. Well, he had already spent hundreds of years in the Dark Stratum going through harsh training, after all.

[The worldview is expressing its puzzlement over your lengthy silence.]

I raised my head towards the sky.

The current scenario was governed by the rules set out by the worldview. Even Yoo Joonghyuk seemed to have realized how we should start acting from here onwards.

I finished preparing myself and opened my lips. "Hyung."

Yoo Joonghyuk's expression crumpled into something unsightly.

– Hey, don't make a face like that. This is the restriction of our current scenario. Do you think I'm enjoying this, either?

Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes bubbling over like boiling lava finally softened just a tad.

Yup, this guy was going to experience severe difficulties pretty soon; according to Ricardo's memories, the original setting for the First Prince was 'loving and warm-hearted big brother', that was why.

Yoo Joonghyuk opened his lips. "Speak, Ricardo."

"What are you going to do next? It looks to me that even the revolution has failed now. No, besides all that, why did you even appear in the execution ground, anyway?"

"I was planning to kill the false king."

[Character, 'Ricardo Von Kaizenix', is being agitated.]

I was pretty sure of him being dead serious here. The Yoo Joonghyuk I know was fully capable of doing something like that, after all.

Too bad, that wasn't my style.

"But, should you be doing something like that? She's originally your bride, isn't she?"

"Correction. She was supposed to be one. The throne was usurped on the first day of the wedding, however."

Oh, I see. So, it's that sort of development? I felt just a bit relieved now.

Han Sooyoung and Yoo Joonghyuk as a couple? <Kim Dokja's Company> hadn't allowed any dating at the workplace yet, so hell no.

It was at this point in time that an unexpected message entered my ears.

[The worldview finds your words interesting.]

[The genre of the applicable scenario has tilted slightly towards 'Romance'.]

…The genre had tilted?

Yoo Joonghyuk continued on. "It was already far late to save her. She was stained by the corrupted magic and lost her original humanity."

Oh, really?

[The worldview finds Incarnation Yoo Joonghyuk's words interesting.]

[The genre of the applicable scenario has minutely tilted towards 'Fantasy'.]

I gave another signal to Yoo Joonghyuk with my eyes.

– Did you hear that?

He nodded his head.

"In any case, we both are too late now. We can't save them all."

"No, it's not too late. Whatever the case may be, there are two of us, right?"

After saying that, I shifted my gaze down to Bilston on the ground, still snoring away, and carried on. "Maybe, three."

"Those three will be everyone."

"Who knows? There might be more. Maybe, a miracle happens and an existence crossing over from another dimension will help us out."

[The worldview finds your words interesting.]

[The genre of the applicable scenario has acquired the possibility of being 'Fusion Fantasy'.]

And in the following moment, new scenario messages popped up right before my eyes.

[The Selection Point for the Sub-Scenario, 'Genre Selection', has been generated!]

[A new scenario message has arrived!]

We quickly accessed the scenario window.

<Sub Scenario – Genre Selection>

Type: Sub

Difficulty:???

Clear condition: The worldview you've been summoned into can participate in the 'Great War of Saints and Demons'. Choose the 'genre' of the worldview you're now a part of, and lead it to its natural conclusion. The worldview that witnesses the conclusion will earn the right to participate in the war.

Time Limit: None

Reward: Participation of the 'Great War of Saints and Demons', 300,000 coins, ???

Failure: You will be bound to the 'Isle of Reincarnators'.

<List of currently selectable genres>

1. Romance

2. Fantasy

3. Fusion Fantasy

* The attributes of a genre will strengthen the further you act in a manner befitting said genre.

"…So, this is how it was."

I raised my head and found Yoo Joonghyuk's dumbfounded expression.

I kind of understood how I should go about advancing the scenario now. However, the problem here was the difficulty of figuring out which 'genre' was the right one to select.

– We just don't have enough information. It'd been nice if only we knew what the original plot of this world was…

It was unknown what kind of a conclusion we'd get after choosing a particular worldview. What I wanted was to ensure the survival of everyone and move onto the next scenario together.

But, what if someone were to die as the price for me choosing a genre?

Yoo Joonghyuk threw out a question.

– I guess your high and mighty book didn't mention this part, then?

I flinched slightly before making my reply.

– How can I know something that a Regressor like you doesn't know?

– But, I do know.

– What? You know what, exactly?

– The course of this scenario.

I stared at him in pure shock. Yoo Joonghyuk knows of this scenario's plot? But, that couldn't be.

If my memories were correct, then the Yoo Joonghyuk of the 3rd Regression turn had not experienced a scenario like this one. And he'd not go through one in the future, either.

– I read it in a book.

– What book was that?

I momentarily wondered if he was talking about the 'Ways of Survival', but quickly realized that was impossible. Because even that novel didn't contain any in-depth information on this scenario.

– I read the diary written by Han Sooyoung from the 1863rd turn. She experienced this scenario in that Regression.

– Han Sooyoung of the 1863rd turn? And why do you have her diary in the first place?

– I got hold of it via special means.

I glared at Yoo Joonghyuk for a little while.

Well, I was slightly overcome with complicated feelings of betrayal.

Han Sooyoung from the 1863rd turn didn't mention any information on this scenario to me. Why was that? Did she think that I must not know about it? Or… Just to spite me?

My thoughts remained complicated, but I shook my head and got rid of them. They weren't important right now.

– If you possessed such information, you should've told me that already, you dumbass. Okay, so. How did the 1863rd turn Han Sooyoung clear this scenario?

Whatever the case might have been, the important thing was that we did have info on this scenario. If we had info, then that meant there was an already-set method to clear it.

However, Yoo Joonghyuk's expression was gloomy.

– This world is not unfolding in the original direction.

– What are you talking about?

– 'Throne usurpation' didn't happen in the original plot of this world. Meaning, the event of the current king becoming 'king' shouldn't have happened.

– Which means…?

– Before we entered this world, someone changed the plot of this story.

I was flustered.

Currently, we were in a situation where neither of us – Yoo Joonghyuk the Regressor, and me, the sole reader – had any idea on the future storyline. Sure, there had been a few times when the progress of the story didn't match up with the 'Ways of Survival' in the past, but this would be the first time we couldn't predict what the future held for us.

The 'Ways of Survival' I knew didn't contain any potential solutions to a scenario like this one.

「Ma ybe you sho uld have read the Final Re vision.」

Regret belatedly rushed in.

It was at this time that someone knocked on the door.

"Enter."

Almost at the same time Yoo Joonghyuk issued his order, the door was pushed open and the revolutionaries entered. They brought along an older man, currently tied up by them.

"He says he's the secret envoy from the king. He wishes to speak to you, sir."

The older man turned out to be the same butler who handed me water back when I first regained my consciousness after the 'possession'. His beard trembled in fear; he sucked in deep breaths and addressed us.

"First Prince, and the Fourth Prince… Her majesty told me to give you a certain item. Specifically… Her majesty from 40 years ago…"

…40 years ago?

Yoo Joonghyuk and I exchanged glances. Meanwhile, the butler rummaged through his inner pocket and pulled something out.

It was a certain book.

{Three Ways to Survive a Totally Ruined Scenario, by the author Han Sooyoung.}

Chapter 377: Ep. 72 - Three methods, I

I received the book and stood around in a daze, but somehow managed to ask the butler in the end. "When was it that her majesty gave you this book, again?"

"It was 40 years ago when she gave me the first manuscript. And for the next ten years, she consistently gave me more manuscripts. All I did was to bind them into a single book, your highness."

"Have you read its contents?"

"I swear on my life, I've not read a single line, your highness. Let me emphasize it again that I only merely organised them and bound them, sir."

I quickly opened the book and was greeted by the clean, well-organised table of contents.

'…'

Episode 13. Counterattacking Princes

Episode 14. One Prince and I

Episode 15. Three Methods

…

I frantically leafed through the pages. Although the collected book itself was rather thick, I didn't have too much trouble reading it, thanks to the special effect of my attribute.

Someone here was still unhappy about my reading speed, however.

"You're reading it way too quickly."

"It's you who's slow, 'hyung'."

"What does it say?"

I didn't reply right away.

As I flipped through the pages, this vague listlessness washed over me. Each page was thick with the fatigue of the passing time and the sense of desperation, an urgency. I couldn't be sure whether that was Han Sooyoung's intention or not.

But, I was sure that she had foreseen the moment of me reading her book arriving in the future.

I stopped reading the page I was on and went straight to the very last portion of the book. That was where the <Author's Afterwords> were.

「Seriously now. There are always those folks who go straight to the author's afterwords when first reading a book.」

The words greeted me as if they were waiting for my arrival. Even though I knew that couldn't be the case, I almost broke out into an unconscious chuckle, nonetheless.

「By the time you're reading this book, I…」

I steeled my heart and read the next line of the text.

「…I'd still be living a pretty good life, I guess. Hahah, were you scared?」

This idiot…

「In any case. If my prediction is correct, then the person reading these words is Kim Dokja. Prince Kim Dokja, no less. What an unfortunate thing that is, not being able to spectate on that sight.」

Han Sooyoung's trademark dry sarcasm could be sensed so vividly among each and every word she wrote.

「You wanna know how I can tell? Well… Actually, even I can't be sure. There's a limit to how much I can guess what would happen, you know. It's just that, I looked at all the potential circumstances on how you might arrive here, as well as countless cliched conditions attached to it, and predicted the one with the highest odds, that's all. Ah, of course, my prediction could be wrong, though.」

These words were written in a playful manner. However, the contents being conveyed were definitely not a joke.

「In all honesty, I wish I was wrong, though. Me, waiting for someone for decades and decades… You think such a thing is even possible? You crazy fool.」

Han Sooyoung's <Author's Afterwords> wasn't written in one sitting, it seemed. Most likely, she began collecting records the moment she possessed someone in this world. And then, committed those records to these pages once she was finally able to write them down.

Her records continued on.

「I'm sure you have figured it out, but well, I was born into that woman's body. At first, I really thought that I had reincarnated, you know… I almost went crazy out of boredom and frustration during the first year. If I hadn't activated [Avatar] in my head and organised my memories, then I might have really lost my mind back then. Things got better a little bit when I hit four years old and began writing stuff. What a screwed up thing that is, me being a wordsmith and needing to write things even in moments like this. Maybe I want to be saved by writing.」

I didn't know whether to laugh or shed a tear. All I could do right now was to silently turn the page.

「At first, I thought you'd show up in three years at the latest. I mean, you did show up three years later before. But then, after three years went by, then four, and five… (Don't be mistaken that time flew by just because I'm writing like this, okay?) My thoughts changed. And from a certain point on, I accepted it.」

It was getting harder and harder to flip the pages.

「I see. Kim Dokja isn't going to show up for a while.」

Han Sooyoung's handwriting seemed to be trembling just a little.

「That damn asshole told me to wait for him, yet he's still not here.」

What could I possibly say to her?

「However, I guess this can't be Kim Dokja's fault.」

What the hell. It was as if whatever I wanted to say already was conveyed to Han Sooyoung just as she began writing this.

「My bad, I'm sure you don't want to read about something like this, either. But, the thing is, it's not easy to complain in this place, you know?」

Her words continued on.

「I had no idea when I was still writing novels, but now that I've been living in this place, there's just way too many cumbersome details that I haven't thought of before. Like, the shower facility being really terrible, and there are bugs the size of my fist crawling around in my bedroom, and as for food… Let's not even mention that, shall we.」

On the sixth year…

「Did you know that my speech is becoming weird lately? I'm beginning to sound like some kind of a high-class lady from medieval times or something.」

And on the seventh year…

「Dear Kim Dokja-nim, just when will you come?」

Eighth year…

「Blergh…」

Finally, ninth year.

「This is like a bad joke, a person's life fleeting past this quickly.」

From here onwards, the records were occasionally cut off. The sequence of time was not consistent, and I discovered parts that seemed to be added in later on every now and then.

「God damn it.」

「Kim Dokja, you son of a bitch.」

「Just what the hell do you want from me, you stinking Dokkaebi bastards?」

…

…

「The years I've been living in this place is now almost the same as what I spent living on Earth.」

「…So, like, when you see me again next time, you better call me noona, got that?」

Han Sooyoung's handwriting was changing bit by bit, with the distinct feeling of it slowly becoming something no longer hers but someone else's.

「Honestly, I'm writing this because I can pretty much guess what will happen to me in the future. And also, in a way, the future of this world view, too.」

Decades would prove to be a short length of time for Constellations. However, it'd not be the same for a human being.

Han Sooyoung had to endure yet another lifetime in this place.

「I thought that, this scenario probably isn't in the 'Ways of Survival'. Because we've changed too much of the original storyline, right?」

'We'.

You have experienced that lengthy amount of time all by yourself, yet you can still call me that…

「If I take the hands-off approach here, the idiot you and Yoo Joonghyuk will probably go around doing dumb things and mess up the scenario, instead… So.」

At that moment, it felt as if Han Sooyoung was standing right in front of me. I mistakenly thought that she was here and speaking to me in her usual confident and shrewd tone of voice.

「Oh, my sole reader. This is the tale of a certain woman who managed to survive in the messed-up scenario.」

Goosebumps began slowly rising up from the ends of my neck.

This was the recorded history of Han Sooyoung's life; words containing her rage, her resentment, and her longing.

「I don't know whether you're a suitable guy for this 'three methods' or not, but at the least, I'm sure of this one thing.」

The following words were eerily similar to a certain body of text that I was familiar with.

「The you reading this story will definitely make it out of here alive.」

Han Sooyoung's afterwords came to an end there. For the longest time, I couldn't tear my eyes away from the full-stop at the end of the sentence.

"Ricardo."

I looked to my side to find Yoo Joonghyuk staring at me.

"Did that woman possess the power to predict the future?"

"…Maybe."

Now originally, the [Predictive Plagiarism] was the 1863rd-turn Han Sooyoung's power. The Han Sooyoung of this turn, the one responsible for writing this book, also had acquired that power now.

And the result of that was this very book.

Here was the brand-new signpost for me to follow, me who had read the 'Ways of Survival'.

[The worldview is paying close attention to your conversation.]

[Genre of the applicable scenario has tilted slightly towards 'Fusion Fantasy'.]

I flipped to the first page of the book. Now was the time to study the required information in-depth. For some reason, a line of text that I glossed over earlier caught my eyes.

「PS: This novel is an original secondary creation related to 'Ways of Survival', and not created for the purpose of monetary gain.」

I ended up smirking just a little then.

「Episode 1. Birth of an SSS-rank Reincarnator」

I read and re-read the words that Han Sooyoung had written with so much care.

As if I was drunkard walking straight into another world, I voraciously ate up her words. Because that was the only courtesy I could pay to the author of this story as its reader.

And it was fun, god damn it. In some passages, much more so than the 'Ways of Survival'.

Just how long passed by like that? I finally raised my head.

* * *

Han Sooyoung had said this – that there were three ways of clearing this scenario.

「The three clearing methods will represent each different genre.」

The three would be, Fantasy, Romance, and Fusion Fantasy.

「The course of 'dynastic revolution' will fall mainly to the 'Fantasy' genre. If you select this route…」

All the available route had pros and cons; if you got something, then, in turn, you'd have to lose something, as well.

However, there were certain things that would be lost regardless of which route was chosen. For instance, the first thing to be lost would be…

"P-please, spare me! Your highness!! Spare me!"

…Lee Hyunsung's human rights.

"Roll to your left."

"Euh-euhk, Keuh-euk!"

"To your right."

"Y-your highness…!"

"I don't remember permitting you to speak."

Like a military drill instructor, Yoo Joonghyuk was in the middle of 'punishing' Lee Hyunsung. As for me, I was spectating that from the side.

"B-but, why are you making me do this?! Fourth Prince! Your highness! Please, say something to your brother!"

"Can you recall anything now by any chance?"

"Euh, euh-euh… My, my back… I'm an old soldier, so why…"

In order to tread the route Han Sooyoung's [Predictive Plagiarism] had foreseen, we need to make Lee Hyunsung regain his memories first. And certain memories were better remembered by one's body, rather than one's brain.

「This might be a cruel thing for Lee Hyunsung to go through, but…」

Unfortunately, we didn't have any other choice right now.

Even Han Sooyoung's book failed to record the life of Bilston as lived through Lee Hyunsung's perspective. As we had no idea what kind of a life he lived before he got swallowed up by this world, there was only so many methods we could resort to for waking him up.

And so, how long did it pass by like this?

"Something feels strange."

Lee Hyunsung, his head planted on the floor, suddenly began rambling nonsense.

"I feel more comfortable now."

[Character, 'Bilston', is under tremendous confusion.]

[Ego of the character, 'Lee Hyunsung', is wiggling around.]

Yoo Joonghyuk and I stared at each other simultaneously.

Now normally, it'd been a tall order to wake Lee Hyunsung's ego with such little stimulation. However, the story was a bit different right now. Because I was here, and so was Yoo Joonghyuk.

[Beings sharing the same Story as you are in your near vicinity.]

[The bond between the Story is strengthening!]

Right now, three members of <Kim Dokja's Company> had gathered here, in this place.

There was a certain old adage regarding this situation – 'Sam-in-seong-ho'(三人成虎).

Which means, when three people gathered, they could create a fake story of a tiger.

We might not be able to create a tall tale of a tiger, but it could be possible to do something else, instead.

[Stories possessed by your Nebula are beginning to resist against the 'worldview'.]

…For instance, summoning back the memories that didn't exist within this worldview.

[Ego of the character, 'Lee Hyunsung', is slowly opening its eyes.]

Faint rays of light were now being emitted from Lee Hyunsung's body.

[Giant Story, 'Kaizenix Archipelago', is glaring at your group!]

Han Sooyoung said that this scenario played out in a world controlled by that 'Giant Story'. So, if one could escape from the Story's control, then it'd be possible to regain one's forgotten ego.

"Euh, euh-uh, uh…"

Lee Hyunsung blinked his eyes laboriously, his lips bobbing up and down like a newborn trying to form words.

"…D-Dokja-ssi?"

[Worldview is imposing a penalty on the words not aligned with the Probability!]

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!!

"Uwaaaaahhk?!?!"

Lee Hyunsung writhed painfully as he got electrocuted by the sparks. I shifted my head to the side and saw the battle-ready Yoo Joonghyuk standing up from his spot.

The important preparations had been completed now.

Yoo Joonghyuk grasped his [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] and threw me a question.

– Which route are we choosing?

– The one we'd been treading all along.

The author of this scenario was Han Sooyoung. Regrettably, there was no guarantee of the work ending up as a success even if the author did an excellent job.

– Time to start our attack, Yoo Joonghyuk.

Because the ones to complete the story were the 'Characters', not the author, that's why.

[A new 'Giant Story' is beginning to sprout in your Nebula.]

Chapter 378: Ep. 72 - Three methods, II

Erich Striker was the captain of Kaizenix Archipelago's royal guards.

'She' wasn't just the archipelago's best knight in title only; 'she' was also the first sword of the nation's ruler. And the sole reason why 'she' was able to climb up to that position was due to her constant training throughout the day and night.

Swiiiish!

Erich sliced and cut the silent night of the training hall over and over again. Thick sweat drops fell non-stop. 'She' looked down on the droplets and thought that they should've been someone else's blood drops, instead.

'I let them slip away. In front of her majesty, no less'.

The rebellion of the First Prince – the assault on the audience chamber three days ago had found itself in the mouths of the gossipers already. Some minstrels began singing songs about it, too. Most of them were singing songs that extolled the First Prince.

「Oh, oh~ the great revolutionary Schweichen Von Kaizenix~.」

「Look at his wide shoulders and his back~.」

The bright sword light scythed past the darkness of the practice grounds. The hateful face of the Fourth Prince, who had escaped alongside the First Prince, floated up. It didn't want to disappear no matter how many times it was cut apart.

The strange thing was, every time Erich recalled that face, 'she' felt a rather subtle emotion float up, too.

Seeing the backs of the First Prince Schweichen and Fourth Prince Ricardo, as well as Bilston Framer, getting further away, Erich was overcome with this inexplicable longing.

Not wanting to acknowledge that emotion, 'she' continued to swing 'her' sword. As usual, 'she' swung the blade over and over again, trying 'her' best to shake off all the distracting thoughts.

Unfortunately, it seemed that today's training would have to end here.

'Is it a sneak attack?'

There was a slender shadow gently wavering within the darkness.

Erich quickly unsheathed the real sword mounted from 'her' waist. 'She' thought of killing the intruder the moment it displayed any suspicious behaviour. Quite unexpectedly, though, the opponent revealed his presence first.

"Please, put away your weapon. I didn't come here to fight."

Under the faint light of the moon, a man with the slender physique walked out from the darkness. It was Ricardo Von Kaizenix, the Fourth Prince of this archipelago.

Erich loudly shouted out. "Are you out of your mind? With what balls have you come here?"

"Even though the world has changed, you still enjoy swinging your sword."

Erich raised 'her' sword up high while emitting a dense murderous aura. The Fourth Prince, however, placed his sword down on the ground, instead.

The former's eyes narrowed to a slit. "What are you planning here?"

"I know that in ten minutes, guards would show up to surround me. And also, subduing me wouldn't be all that hard for you with your skillset."

"So?"

"I'm turning myself in. Meaning, I'll have you arrest me and take me to the execution ground."

Erich knew that the Fourth Prince was not right of his mind recently. However, 'she' didn't expect to see a situation like this one. It had been only a couple of days ago that he escaped with the First Prince's help, yet he walked right back in, of his own volition, so he could be executed?

Still being wary, Erich slowly walked over to the Fourth Prince.

Without a doubt, he was in a completely unarmed state. Erich didn't miss this chance and quickly captured the Fourth Prince. A pair of pure eyes sparkling under the moonlight met 'her' gaze now.

"In return, I'd like you to listen to my tale for the next ten minutes."

"And why should I do that?"

"I'm going to die anyway. Not hearing the last words of a dying man will leave you with an unclean taste in your mouth."

Erich stared at the Fourth Prince with complicated eyes. "If you're going to plead your innocence, I won't have any of it."

'She' knew that the Fourth Prince was not guilty. However, the throne had changed hands, and Erich was the captain of the guards serving the new ruler.

The Fourth Prince smiled and shook his head. "This story isn't about that."

"If not, what then?"

"Honestly speaking, I was in a serious dilemma on what to say here so we could get the 'you' we know back. I couldn't even make a wild guess at all."

The unexpected opening remarks managed to make Erich flustered and 'she' frowned deeply.

Was this a new type of underhanded scheme? Everyone in the kingdom knew that the Fourth Prince used his silver tongue to seduce many women in this land.

"A long time ago, there was a certain woman."

Regardless of what his listener was thinking, the Fourth Prince began his tale.

"She loved kendo and was talented enough to enter the competition as the representative of her own district."

Along with a faint bout of pain, an unknown emotion began stabbing 'her' head.

"And with her sword, she rescued her precious companions many times."

Something that disappeared a long time ago…

"She swung her sword against the unfairness of the scenarios over and over again, and with that very same sword, she also protected me."

"What are you even talking about? I'm solely the blade of her majesty."

The Fourth Prince looked up at Erich with emotions of lamentation.

"You really can't seem to remember anything."

It was then, another voice came out from within the darkness.

"Prince Ricardo. I'd like to say something."

Erich flinched in surprise and quickly raised 'her' body up. Since from when did those two men appear in the darkness? She growled menacingly and spoke. "So, it was a trap all along."

"No, it is not."

The one to reveal himself from the darkness was Bilston Framer, the only knight she acknowledged in this kingdom.

"Erich-nim."

Bilston took a step towards 'her'. 'She' got startled and quickly issued her warning. "Take one more step, and I shall cut off the Fourth Prince's head."

This is a trap. I must escape from here – Erich thought like that and scanned the exit to the training ground.

However, something felt wrong.

[Stories related to you have begun going on a rampage!]

As if her entire body had become frozen, she couldn't move at all.

[Your Stories are resisting against the control of the 'Kaizenix Archipelago'!]

"We promised never to forget, didn't we?"

Bilston stared at her with sorrowful eyes.

'No, but, his… name is…'

[Stories related to you are ruminating on the old memories.]

"Heewon-ssi."

[Forgotten Stories have begun their storytelling.]

At that moment, 'her' world crumbled away. Stories flooding in covered up Erich's memories.

That was the story of the forgotten ten years. A story from when Erich wasn't Erich yet, while Bilston was not Bilston, either.

It was exactly ten years ago when both Lee Hyunsung and Jung Heewon arrived in this world.

"Hyunsung-ssi! It is you, right?"

"Uht? Heewon-ssi??"

Tsu-chuchuchut…!

They had become the 'possessors' at a similar point in time and luckily enough, got to recognise each other pretty quickly.

– Looks like we'll have to resort to using voice projection in this place.

The two of them began gathering information on this world little by little.

First, they learnt that this was the final preparatory stage before they could participate in the 'Great War of Saints and Demons'.

Two, that there were time differences between the summoning of each member of <Kim Dokja's Company> to this place.

And that the scenario wouldn't begin unless all the actors had arrived.

– Besides all that, Hyunsung-ssi, it looks like you took over a person pretty similar to you.

– Heewon-ssi, you also suit your host really well.

And finally, their sense of self would steadily erode away with the passage of time.

[Giant Story, 'Kaizenix Archipelago', is monitoring your actions.]

[Probability of the world is pressuring you to perform your given role.]

Whenever they sensed the gaze of the Giant Story, they acted out their roles in order to not get on that thing's nerves.

– It seems that Sooyoung-ssi has completely forgotten about everything. It doesn't matter what I say, she…

– Will we end up in the same situation as her?

– I believe that Dokja-ssi will show up before that.

And so, they waited, and then, waited for some more.

– Are Jihye and the kids doing well, I wonder?

– If it's them, they should be alright.

They only had each other to rely on in this world.

[Story, 'Purest Companionship', has begun its storytelling.]

In a world where no one knew of their story, they simply had to continue talking to each other in order to protect themselves.

Claaang!

"Erich-nim! Please defeat it right now!"

"Let us get going, Bilston-nim!"

The hosts of the two being rivals came about quite naturally; they needed to create more opportunity to stay next to each other, as that would increase the opportunities to use [Voice Projection] to talk to each other.

– Looks like your swordsmanship has improved by a lot. Your title of 'Emperor of Steelsword' perfectly suits you, no?

– When we go back, I better ask Dokja-ssi to buy me a new sword.

Every time their blades crossed, they shared voice projections.

– At this rate, we might end up becoming Swordmasters before Dokja-ssi arrives here.

One year passed by, and the second year went by just like that.

And they were assigned to different posts that matched their personalities. Lee Hyunsung was thrust into Fourth Prince Ricardo's faction, while Jung Heewon was put under the banner of the 'Dark Magician'.

Once their affiliation changed, the environment they experienced also changed.

The two of them couldn't cross their swords as often as before. And they had to live the lives of 'Erich Striker' and 'Bilston Framer' more and more, and not as Jung Heewon and Lee Hyunsung.

They had to eat food as Erich Striker and speak as Bilston Framer. In the process of acquiring something that wasn't theirs, Lee Hyunsung and Jung Heewon began gradually forgetting some things about themselves.

The two of them were slowly and steadily becoming the characters of the 'Kaizenix Archipelago'.

There was a time when Jung Heewon, drunken out of her mind, came to speak to Lee Hyunsung.

– I'm a horrible person, Hyunsung-ssi.

– Why are you saying such a thing?

– Isn't that reason why I'm being punished right now?

She then began talking about things no one had brought up until now.

– Do you remember… the Geumho Station's mother and her child? They fought against Cheoldo faction with us.

– …Yes, I remember. We also met them in the Dark Castle, didn't we?

Lee Hyunsung recalled the mother-and-daughter duo from the Geumho Station – the mother who fought to protect her child, and a little girl who was holding onto the hand of such a mother.

The child's mother lost her life in the Dark Castle, and the girl was handed over to the care of the wanderers.

– Both of them could have survived. If only I had realized the truth of the 'Paradise' sooner…

– It's not your fault, Heewon-ssi. That was not something we could've prevented.

– In all honesty, there were many smaller Stories then ours, right? Those stories that couldn't even become proper Stories.

The drunken Jung Heewon laughed out. When she did, the vestiges of Stories staining her hands glowed brightly. All of them were the stories that she had acquired along the way. Stories created by fighting against the great and noble Constellations as a member of <Kim Dokja's Company>.

Jung Heewon was proud of that story, and lived her life without shame.

However, a slightly different thought had permeated her head lately.

– Maybe, the Stories we have collected so far were created after we also trampled on such small Stories?

– Heewon-ssi…

– And maybe, it's our turn now to be trampled on.

Four years, then five, passed by like that. Both Jung Heewon and Lee Hyunsung didn't give up.

– By the way, what were the surnames of Yoosung and Gilyoung?

– Wasn't it… Lee Yoosung, and Shin Gilyoung?

– Something sounds wrong, but…

Their memories disappeared bit by bit. And the sixth year passed them by.

– Where is Dokja-ssi and what's he doing right about now?

– I don't think he'll come this year, as well.

The seventh year passed by.

– Being seven years in arrears with our wages, isn't it completely an evil corporation?

– Let's definitely create a labour union later.

– Yes, we must. Let's not forget it.

Their initial promise of meeting up at least once a week to talk was changed to once a month, and that eventually became once every two months, instead.

The days they did meet but were unable to say anything increased, too.

And on a certain day during their eighth year, Jung Heewon asked him in a dazed voice.

– Weren't we supposed to wait for someone?

Lee Hyunsung couldn't reply to that question.

– You know, Hyunsung-ssi. If I ever forget about you, then…

– I'll remember you.

– …Then, please kill me.

That was the last time they met.

A short while later, the 'Dark Magician' started a revolt. And Lee Hyunsung stood on the side of the former royal family to face off against Jung Heewon.

– Heewon-ssi.

Their swords clashed intensely several times in the air.

Wounds on Lee Hyunsung's body accumulated inside the storm of blinding sword lights. The trajectories of her sword swings were definitely different compared to when they were sparring in the past; each of her attacks contained her clear will to kill him.

– Heewon-ssi!

Even when subjected to the repeated [Voice Projection], Jung Heewon didn't reply. Her silence substituted for her answer.

As if she had been holding back until now, Erich's merciless sword swing sliced Lee Hyunsung down. The latter's vision seemed to grow distant, then. Even though he was staggering about, he still walked closer to Jung Heewon.

One step, two steps…

Finally managing to get close, Lee Hyunsung stared into her eyes and, for the first time ever, spoke the words he couldn't say for the longest time, and quite likely, he'd not get to say ever again.

– I love you, Heewon-ssi.

[Story, 'Purest Companionship', has concluded its storytelling.]

I wordlessly read the unfolding Story. Some words were quietly sorrowful, while some parts were painful enough to tear my heart out.

[Ego of Character, 'Jung Heewon', is waking up little by little.]

Faint light floated around the bodies of both Bilston and Erich. I could sense that their souls were resonating with the Story.

Lee Hyunsung collapsed, but a smile remained etched on his face. I quietly studied that face for a bit, before breaking the silence. "Looks like the company's internal rules need to be changed somewhat…"

In any case, our second goal had been met. Next up would be…

"Over there!"

"Erich-nim is in danger!"

Yoo Joonghyuk picked up both the unconscious Jung Heewon and Lee Hyunsung. But, before we could safely get out from there, the doors to the training ground burst open and the royal guards rushed in.

However, it wasn't just them who showed up here. Someone else was walking out from the line of guards and towards us.

「The First Triple Master of Kaizenix Archipelago」

「The genius who had reached the peak of Swordmaster at barely 18 years old」

「The youngest-ever Ninth Circle Archmage」

「The ruler of the Archipelago who controls an evil black dragon」

No one in the Kaizenix Archipelago was capable of defeating her right now. The 'king' with a silver-coloured crown was quietly smiling at us.

"You dare to steal away my loyal knight?"

The royal guards all knelt down before her.

Yoo Joonghyuk's expression hardened and he sent me a message.

– This is different from our plan.

– Actually, this is for the better.

Because our next target was Han Sooyoung, anyway.

There were four members of <Kim Dokja's Company> present right now. The Story of the Nebula would be strengthened further if more of the Nebula's members were in one place.

I looked at the queen's face and spoke up. "Your majesty, we didn't come here to fight."

Without a doubt, Han Sooyoung's ego was lying inside that queen, asleep. And I simply had to get her ego back from that character, no matter what. And, with things like this, we could use our Story and…

"I'm aware. You came to tell me a story."

Feeling startled just a little, I stared at her.

[Giant Story, 'Kaizenix Archipelago', is sending a mocking jeer in your direction.]

"Why are you so surprised? This one, too, enjoys stories very much. However, this one enjoys telling stories rather than listening to them. So, keep your ears wide open and listen well, Ricardo Von Kaizenix."

The queen spread her arms wide and grinned brightly towards me.

"No, should that be the 'Demon King of Salvation', Kim Dokja?"

Chapter 379: Ep. 72 - Three Methods, III

I stared at the queen wearing Han Sooyoung's face.

That person was definitely not her. But then, how could she possibly know what my name was?

The queen was still smiling away.

"I'm sure you're curious as to how I know your name."

She was the character from this worldview, and she was merely an existence that acted according to the rules set out by the 'Giant Story'. So, it was impossible for a person like that to recognise me not as 'Ricardo', but as 'Kim Dokja'.

On top of that, she spoke of things that didn't align with the worldview, yet the sparks of Probability weren't suppressing her at all.

[Worldview is considering the possibility of expanding the genre types.]

[Giant Story, 'Kaizenix Archipelago', is condoning the current situation.]

[Probability restrictions imposed on some words has been relaxed.]

[Meta words related to the worldview have been acknowledged!]

I wordlessly stared at the queen before activating my skill.

[Unique Skill, 'Character List', has activated!]

<Character Summary>

Name: ???

Age: 50

Overall Evaluation: the applicable individual holds hatred towards you.

The queen's info still didn't want to appear.

I thought that was because it was Han Sooyoung in the beginning. I figured that, as a person not registered with the Character List, her possession of the host would make it impossible to check out the information on the queen herself.

But, what if I was wrong?

"Are you Han Sooyoung?"

"I used to be called that once upon a time."

"What do you mean by that?"

The queen slowly blinked her eyes and continued on with her story. "Do you know the tale of a certain woman who tried to endure decades upon decades of time with nothing but her ultimately empty hope?"

"I do know of a man with a similar story."

It was Yoo Joonghyuk who replied in my stead, as he unsheathed his [Black Heavenly Demon Sword].

The smile remained on the queen's lips as she spoke. "Oh, my pitiful former lover, it seems that you've come to your own execution ground."

"Our engagement has been annulled already. Call me that one more time, and I shall slice your head off."

Almost at the same time, the figures of both people disappeared from view. And then, these two incredible existences collided against each other, as the ear-shattering sounds of explosions rang out. The ceiling of the training grounds blew away; the sword winds and magical energy clashed to create a rising pillar of destructive winds kissing the heavens above.

At a casual glance, they seemed to be evenly matched, but if one were to look deeper into the flow of the battle itself, then that was definitely not the case.

After they exchanged dozens of moves in the blink of an eye, Yoo Joonghyuk was left with a slight injury on his left arm. On the other hand, there was not one scratch on the queen.

Yoo Joonghyuk was being pushed back. That inconceivably strong dude wasn't quite powerful enough to contend with the queen of this worldview.

On top of that, Han Sooyoung's speciality, [Black Flame]'s aura was rising up from the queen's left arm, as well.

"Dokja-ssi! You must get out of there!"

Lee Hyunsung protected me from the royal guards trying to rush in.

"…Dokja-ssi??"

It seemed that Jung Heewon too had somehow regained her wits. Sadly, though, there was no time to pay them any mind right now.

The seconds ticked by and the previously-even balance of the battle rapidly tilted away from Yoo Joonghyuk's favour. Because his opponent today just so happened to be none other than the 'Triple Master'.

"Han Sooyoung! You need to wake up!"

I brought forth the power of the 'Giant Story' without hesitation.

[Giant Story, 'Demon Realm's Spring', has begun its storytelling.]

The Story I shot into the air above with all my power created a gap in the fighting in an instant. I didn't miss that opening and jumped into the battlefield.

The queen grinned and opened her arms wide.

"Oh, the 'Demon King of Salvation'. The woman you're searching for has died a long time ago."

"Stop making me laugh. Han Sooyoung would never speak in that manner."

"Are you aware of what the lifetime of 50 years means to a person?"

No, I had no idea. I hadn't lived that long yet, after all.

[Giant Story, 'Kaizenix Archipelago', has begun its storytelling.]

The entire world seemed to wiggle around, and the figure of Han Sooyoung living in this land floated up on the empty air.

This was her Story. Her history, as she lived in this world.

More specifically, the history as experienced by her host, 'Yuri di Aristel'.

「The beautiful esteemed daughter of an Earl.」

「A girl brought up for the sake of becoming a new queen.」

「"Once you turn 18, you shall enter the royal castle."」

The Han Sooyoung I know could be seen among the chaotically-rising lines of texts.

「"Fine. In that case, should I become a Swordmaster before I turn 18?"」

She began fighting against the world itself. She was living in this world with a clear, focused expression on her face.

She was experiencing this world with an expression I couldn't recognise.

「"Why is a young girl swinging around a sword?"」

「"Magic is nothing but an illusion."」

Certain cliches would try to hinder a person with the pretext of being cliches. And the Han Sooyoung I know hated cliches more than anyone out there.

「"Screw it, you think I'll marry just because you say so?! Bring someone stronger than me, than I'll marry that person, then!"」

Countless men stepped forward to take possession of the Earl's beautiful daughter. Among them were famed knights of the archipelago as well as renowned magicians.

Han Sooyoung became stronger and stronger in order to defeat all the potential suitors with her own hands.

At the end of the harsh training soaked in her blood and sweat, she became the Swordmaster, and eventually rose up as the Ninth Circle Archmage, and finally, the master of fear who controlled the powers of an evil dragon.

Her flesh became younger through the power of the Swordmaster, and the aura from the evil black flame enhanced her air of mysteriousness even further.

Ironically, though – the stronger she got, the world grew to desire her even more.

Han Sooyoung continued to fight against such a world.

She spent a far longer life in this place than she did on Earth, and did her very best to diligently endure that lengthy period of time.

Her Story carried on with its storytelling, but I couldn't hear it anymore from a certain point onwards.

It was lonesome. I felt a sense of rebellion. Even though Han Sooyoung was in this world alongside me…

…It felt as if she was so, so far away.

"This isn't Han Sooyoung's world."

"Who are you to decide that? You have known her for less than four years, no more than that. And if you count the days you spent with her, it'd be less than one year, even."

That was probably all true.

"What do you really know about Han Sooyoung?"

I recalled the Han Sooyoung that I knew in my head.

A person with a strong pride who didn't know how to apologise or take back what she said; a person who pursued efficiency, but who'd readily give up on that very efficiency for the sake of her companions.

A person who acted all selfish and the like, but who'd always go "You guys can't do anything without me" and get ready to risk her life…

…In what kind of manner did she speak?

Was the Han Sooyoung I knew the real 'Han Sooyoung'?

Did she still exist in the story that I know?

"The Han Sooyoung you knew no longer exists. The past 50 years had moulded her into a brand new existence. And that is precisely me."

The Giant Story rushing out from behind the queen's back emitted incredibly dense fighting intent in our direction.

[Giant Story, 'Kaizenix Archipelago', is excluding your existences.]

In front of the time spanning 50 years, the memories of the short time Han Sooyoung and I shared together gradually looked pathetic and insignificant.

To make sure that the memories wouldn't grow any more insignificant, I forced out a smile and had to open my mouth. "As I thought, you are not Han Sooyoung. She's not as serious as you, you know."

There was a faint trace of agitation in the queen's expression.

And from that hint of unrest, I became certain of 'who' this queen was. Without a doubt, she was infinitely closer to being Han Sooyoung. However, she could never fully be her.

"You are none other than 'Yuri di Aristel', the daughter of the Earl and who just so happened to watch Han Sooyoung's life for the longest time. You probably seized the opening created by the Giant Story swallowing Han Sooyoung up and took over her body."

"…"

"Now, speak. Where is the real Han Sooyoung?"

Instead of a verbal answer, an incredible Status poured out from her entire body.

Kwa-dudududu!!!

As if the intense battle we fought until now was nothing but a warm-up, the waves of Status unshackled from her entire being crashed into us, causing our bodies to become rooted to the spot – Yoo Joonghyuk, Lee Hyunsung, Jung Heewon, and me.

The queen slowly made her way towards us as our movements were completely sealed now.

I asked her. "Are you planning to kill us all?"

"Kill you?" A derisive smirk floated up on her lips. "Looks like you still don't know much about this scenario. Since you all have survived this far, that means none of you will die. I, and… Han Sooyoung, also wishes for that."

"However, you tried to execute me earlier, didn't you?"

"That was your assigned test. And you were scheduled to be rescued by the First Prince, anyway," the queen laughed as if she was Han Sooyoung. "And now, the end of this scenario is upon us."

Sparks danced in the air and the new scenario message could be heard now.

[The deciding moment for the Genre Selection has arrived!]

[You must select this worldview's genre!]

The queen stared at the air and spoke. "The end of this world has always remained the same."

A sense of desolation refined through a lengthy period of time brushed past her expression.

The Isle of Reincarnators was a series of islands where the dead Stories were put on display like stuffed animals. It was a grave of Stories that managed to continue existing by supplying suitable stages to other scenarios.

I could more or less guess the life she had lived until now.

The archipelago of Kaizenix must've offered up hundreds of 'possession scenario' and hundreds of Ricardos and Schweichens must've resolved their stories in their own preferred manner.

"The protagonist became a better person by braving all sorts of trials and tribulations, and finally gets his hands on wealth, honour and the love of his life, heading towards the inevitable happy ending. Although the progress of this scenario had been a bit more peculiar… In the end, the conclusion won't change. So, let us just end this already."

She spoke in a fed-up tone of voice. And then, issued an order to me. "Marry me, Ricardo Von Kaizenix."

Yoo Joonghyuk stared at me with a dumbfounded expression. Lee Hyunsung and Jung Heewon freaked out and began shouting something in my direction.

I calmly asked a question, instead. "Is that the conclusion of this scenario?"

"That's right."

"If I marry you, are you going to let us move on to the next scenario?"

"Also correct, but with the exception of one person."

One person, she said.

The deep-seated shadow of avarice danced within the eyes of the queen. "Han Sooyoung must remain in this world. You see, I really like her. And you shall become the tragic lovers saying goodbye inside a scenario."

[Genre of the applicable scenario is tilting towards 'Romance'.]

[Scenario clear condition will be fulfilled as soon as the genre has been confirmed.]

This world was negotiating with us for a deal, telling us to abandon Han Sooyoung.

"Living in this world, and not in her original world, suits her better."

That might be true as well.

Rather than 'Han Sooyoung' of <Kim Dokja's Company>, 'Han Sooyoung' of 'Kaizenix Archipelago' might be able to enjoy a happier life, instead. The queen arrogantly staring down at me extended her left hand out.

"Stand up and kiss my hand. And say your farewell to your long-time companion."

It was a white hand; Han Sooyoung would have fought against this world with that hand.

On the back of her white hand, I could see dozens of scars and calloused skin. Just, for what purpose did she fight so hard like that?

I recalled her book tucked away within my inner pocket and raised my voice. "…Just like you said, I do not know Han Sooyoung."

"Indeed, you've finally acknowledged it."

"That is why I definitely can't let her go."

"What was that??"

"You see, I haven't heard the conclusion of this story from her yet."

I slowly got up from my spot while summoning up every ounce of strength I possessed, in order to resist this world's Story.

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

[Giant Story, 'Torch That Swallowed the Myth', is roaring out!]

[Giant Story, 'Demon Realm's Spring', is nodding its head.]

The queen's expression changed and she glared at me. "You're ruining a scenario on the verge of completion."

"Nope, this is the way it's supposed to go."

"…What was that?"

"I've been curious about this since the beginning. Out of all the potential scenarios out there, why were we thrown into this 'Kaizenix Archipelago' in the first place? However, when I thought about it, the reason was actually quite simple."

I pulled out a certain sword from my inner pocket and spoke. "That's because I am the legitimate heir to the throne in this scenario."

The Unbroken Faith glowed brightly and emitted blinding rays of pure light.

[Worldview is reacting to the Star Relic 'Unbroken Faith'!]

[Applicable Star Relic belongs to this particular worldview.]

[Natural abilities of the Star Relic are increasing tremendously!]

The First Ancestor of the Kaizenix Archipelago was the legendary Storm King, Ulysses Kaizenix – and this was his sword.

"T-that sword is…?!"

"That's the sword of the Storm King!"

The royal guards recognised the sword and they all collapsed down to the ground. The queen fell into a state of panic and began pouring out her powerful physical aura and magical energy in my direction.

Unfortunately for her, though, not even the power of a Swordmaster nor that of an Archmage could do much in front of the Unbroken Faith.

[Star Relic, 'Unbroken Faith', is crying out!]

This was the true power of the 'Star Relic'; it would exhibit a near-omnipotent level of power when inside the Story where it was created.

My hand gripping the sword began trembling non-stop. Sure, the Star Relic itself might be powerful, but 'Ricardo Von Kaizenix' simply didn't possess enough strength to hold the weapon for too long. That was why I needed to end this as quickly as possible.

I smacked away the queen's magical energy waves and got closer to her, a step at the time. By the time I reached her, she had fallen on her butt.

She was carrying an expression of resignation ever since she saw the sword.

[You have chosen the route of 'Dynastic Revolution'.]

[You must kill the queen.]

[Genre of the applicable scenario is tilting towards 'Fantasy'…]

Han Sooyoung's book said that there were three ways to complete this scenario. Unfortunately, she left out the most crucial 'third method' in her book.

If I kill the queen now, then Han Sooyoung would die, as well. But, if I marry her, then she would be left behind. In that case, how should I conclude this tale, then?

What would be the end of the scenario that Han Sooyoung wanted?

The queen spoke. "Hurry, and kill me."

"If I do that, then I'd become a true king. And end the scenario right here."

Han Sooyoung didn't tell me the correct answer. As if she was telling me to use my own imagination for something like that.

That was why I decided to carry out what I thought was the correct solution. The method to save Han Sooyoung without killing the queen and still manage to seize the throne.

"The thing is, though, I'm already the 'king of a kingless world'."

"What was that?"

"Not only that, I'm the head representative of <Kim Dokja's Company>, and the heir of the Underworld, too."

I looked at the queen's scar-filled hands. Han Sooyoung became a Swordmaster and an Archmage through those hands.

The Han Sooyoung that I knew wasn't someone who'd set a simple goal of 'survival' in this world. Because she was an author who knew how to look at the bigger picture.

I smiled and raised my voice. "You see, I'm really fed up with being a king."

[You have chosen a course that has never been thought of before.]

[Worldview is flustered by your selection.]

I held the queen's hand and slowly helped her up. And rather than kissing her hand, I placed Unbroken Faith in there, instead.

"What are you trying to do? This…"

"Don't be mistaken. I'm not trying to give you the ruler's position."

"Then, what?"

"The one who'll become the king isn't you, but my companion."

As the queen's eyes grew wider, I finished what I wanted to say.

"It'll be Han Sooyoung from <Kim Dokja's Company>."

In the following moment, there was an explosion of scenario messages before my eyes.

[Error has occurred during the scenario's selection process!]

[Potential genre option, 'Fantasy', is falling apart!]

[Potential genre option, 'Fusion fantasy', is falling apart!]

[Potential genre option, 'Romance', is falling apart!]

[Hidden option, 'Genre: Kim Dokja's Company', is activating!]

…

…

And then, someone spoke to me.

「You've managed to figure it out, haven't you, Kim Dokja.」

Chapter 380: Ep. 72 - Three Methods, IV

"…Han Sooyoung?"

I thought I heard her voice, but her aura disappeared rather quickly.

[Giant Story, 'Kaizenix Archipelago', cannot acknowledge your selection!]

[Worldview is displaying an abnormal reaction.]

Yuri di Aristel, inadvertently now holding Unbroken Faith, began trembling and shouted out loudly. "You d-dare to do something like this…!!"

[You're a suitable heir to the crown of Kaizenix Archipelago.]

[Your throne is being handed over to the character 'Han Sooyoung'.]

[Worldview cannot understand your choice.]

Rays of bright light began leaking out from Yuri di Aristel's body.

Those were Stories that didn't belong to her; indeed, they were Han Sooyoung's, stuff that I knew very well.

Yuri di Aristel hugged her shoulders as if she didn't want to let any of those Stories to slip out of her.

"I won't let Sooyoung go like this!"

Tsu-chut, chuchuchut!!

"Be still! I told you that I'll take full responsibility, didn't I??" She wasn't speaking to me right now. "I didn't want this sort of development, either! I, I only thought that, if you continued to stay in this island…!"

I could guess who Yuri di Aristel was talking to, and what the topic of their conversation right now was.

[Exclusive skill, 'Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint', has activated.]

The time Yuri di Aristel and Han Sooyoung had spent together was flowing by like a river of fragments.

「"You said that you'll stay with me! You said that you'll become my guardian, didn't you?! I really loved the scenario you've shown me. I can't let you go like this! I…!!"」

「"My bad, Yuri."」

Blood bubbled out of her mouth and she staggered unsteadily before collapsing on the ground. I hurriedly held her in an embrace. Most likely, there was a war being fought between Han Sooyoung and Yuri di Aristel inside this body right about now.

[Giant Story, 'Kaizenix Archipelago', is…]

[Giant Story, 'Torch That Swallowed the Myth', is…]

Giant Stories were bitterly fighting against each other in order to take over her body.

The surrounding folks also fell into a pit of sudden confusion as well.

"Our king has changed?"

"But, with a method like this…?"

"So, does this mean that the legitimate king has appeared among us?"

The royal guards and the kingdom's citizens were exchanging glances with complicated eyes and whispered amongst themselves.

"In that case, what about our world's genre…"

"Shh! Have you forgotten that such words are still prohibited? Just focus on sticking to your role!"

Then again, I'd also form an expression similar to theirs if I heard that this world's genre had suddenly become [Kim Dokja's Company].

Yoo Joonghyuk standing next to me spoke up. "Kim Dokja, we acted too rashly."

"I know."

"This archipelago isn't prepared enough yet to accept Han Sooyoung as its ruler."

"Since she had built up a good foundation already, I thought it was doable, you know. I mean, she was the queen of this place up until a few moments ago."

"She wasn't its rightful ruler. Because there is a faction unwilling to acknowledge her that we still have the 'revolutionaries'."

A forceful change of the throne would always lead to a great deal of birthing pain. For instance, Yuri di Aristel's 'throne usurpation' during this scenario was not a part of the original 'Kaizenix Archipelago' scenario.

The queen's unpredictable action, and our subsequent actions, were completely foreign events to the Reincarnators of the 'Kaizenix Archipelago' who had repeated the exact same scenario over and over again.

[Genre selection has been completed.]

[Applicable genre's clear conditions have not been met.]

This world was not yet ready to accept the brand-new genre that we had created.

* * *

[<Star Stream> is discussing the topic of the applicable scenario's clear condition.]

"Things have become complicated."

Yoo Joonghyuk and I were looking at Han Sooyoung lying on top of a luxurious bed.

From a while ago, the sounds of chaotic explosions continued to ring out from beyond the royal castle's walls. All the ruckus was made by two factions fighting a bloody battle, one agreeing to the ascension of their new ruler, and the other being the citizens who rejected her.

"Yuri di Aristel's rule was bound to fail in the end," said Yoo Joonghyuk in a critical tone of voice. "As for us, we should've tried to gather the king's flagbearers scattered around the powerful families in the kingdom. After that, steadily erode away the king's influence, and unveil the Unbroken Faith to complete the task. If that happened, the archipelago wouldn't have fallen into chaos like this."

"Right, that would've been the best-case scenario."

"If you knew that, then why…"

"However, had we stuck to that plan, then…" I stopped there for a bit and observed Han Sooyoung's face. "…Her 50 years would've become even longer, you know."

"…"

"I didn't want to extend her 50 years by even one minute if I could help it."

I was being serious here.

The moment I arrived in this world and realized that Han Sooyoung had to spend 50 years here, I just couldn't escape from this one overwhelming emotion.

Someone was sacrificed again because of me.

Han Sooyoung who had to endure the time frame of 50 years – could she still maintain a normal, functioning mind?

Was she able to maintain the ego of the Han Sooyoung that I know of?

"This is all because I made a deal with the 'King of Reincarnators'."

「It'd been better if I sacrificed myself instead.」

I turned my head to discover Yoo Joonghyuk glaring at me as if I was a pathetic fool. His lips bobbed up and down several times, but then, squeezed his eyes shut as if to suppress his anger and leaned his back against the couch's cushions.

"I'd like to say something, but it seems that someone else will do that for me, instead."

"What?"

Right in that next instant, fiery pain shot up from the back of my head.

"Hey, Kim Dokja!"

I looked back to find a familiar grinning face waiting for me.

"Everything's screwed up because of you!"

Han Sooyoung brushed her hair lazily and sat upright, before smacking me in the head once more.

Once Han Sooyoung woke up, we immediately dove into an emergency meeting. Other than her pale complexion, she was in pretty high spirits.

"I left behind methods for you to follow, didn't I? How come you lot can't even do what's in the manual?! You guys are even worse than Lee Hyunsung! You hear me?!"

I spotted Lee Hyunsung, guarding the door to our room alongside Jung Heewon, peek his head inside through the open gap for a moment there.

"Kim Dokja. Recite to me the three methods I wrote down."

"First method, 'Fusion Fantasy' route."

"And what did it say?"

"Borrow the powers of the Outer Gods and clear the scenario… Hey, you. That's a stupid idea from the get-go, isn't it??"

"Okay, then. The second one."

Even though I felt this inexplicable sense of unfairness, I nevertheless continued to read Han Sooyoung's book like a school textbook.

"The second method, 'Fantasy'."

"The contents?"

"Start a revolt and kill the king. Hang on a sec, why am I reading thi…"

Her palm smacked me in the back of the head again.

God damn it, this punk…

"The third method, 'Romance'."

"And its contents are?"

"Marry Yuri di Aristel."

"And just what did you choose?"

"The third method?"

"And are we currently married?"

"Nope."

"And why the hell not?!"

I quickly evaded her flying smack and cried out. "Hey! There's no freaking way that these are the correct methods! Did you write these down while seriously expecting us to carry them out?!"

"You think I wrote them for your entertainment, then??"

Han Sooyoung breathed heavily like an angry bull and began wagging her finger at me.

"If only you accepted the marriage proposal, everything would've been resolved by now! If your legitimate claim to the throne was united with Yuri di Aristel's martial prowess, the archipelago wouldn't have fractured into pieces like right now!"

"But, if I did that, then you'd have ended up stuck…"

"I could've easily convinced Yuri! My original plan was supposed to begin properly only after you got married to her!"

"…You were busy praising me for finding a solution on my own earlier, though?"

"I was merely impressed by your stupidly bad interpretation of the situation."

Damn it, that's how it was?

Han Sooyoung spat out a groan and continued on. "So? What are we going to do now?"

The revolutionaries, or the royal guards – didn't matter which side we pick, the situation would quickly descend into the worst situation imaginable.

[Error has occurred in the scenario.]

[Worldview cannot accept the conclusion to the applicable scenario.]

[Worldview is uncertain whether the character 'Han Sooyoung' possesses the qualifications of the ruler or not.]

[<Star Stream> is discussing the topic of the applicable scenario's clear condition.]

Citizens were fighting amongst themselves, and we were unable to leave the scenario.

I looked at Han Sooyoung and spoke. "I'm really sorry for being so late."

She shrugged her shoulders and replied. "Yup, it's been long, these past 50 years."

I couldn't find the right words to reply to her relaxed attitude.

As if wanting to lighten my load, she continued on. "Actually, I can't remember all that well."

"But, that doesn't sound right."

"Do you honestly believe that I'd really live out those 50 years, just like that?"

"What then?"

"I forgot most of them. More correctly, I erased them deliberately. If I did remember them, I'd probably have gone crazy by now."

Only then did I finally realize what her situation was. She possessed the skill [Avatar]. And it was a pretty useful skill in erasing her memories, depending on how it was utilised.

"The reason why I left that book behind was to preserve the stuff I'd forget."

"You made a wise decision."

"It was a cowardly method, you know. Not something to be praised, anyhow."

Han Sooyoung glanced at the corner of the room and spoke up. "Well, there is a monster in the world who had lived far longer than I have and chose not to forget a single thing, after all."

*

She didn't have to say who it was for me to know who she was referring to here.

In order to lighten the awkward atmosphere, I resorted to making exaggerated gestures while raising my voice. "Okay, let's not worry about that and think up of a solution from now on. Speaking from the perspective of a reader, the next portion of the story should be…"

Han Sooyoung realized what I was trying to do and quickly butted in. "Nope. Judging from the perspective of a writer, the things we need to do right now are…"

Han Sooyoung and I began yapping amongst ourselves with whatever we could think up. Such as, summon a Dokkaebi and lodge our complaints, or summon a low-ranked Outer God we are confident of dealing with, or even smashing apart whatever was in our way, scenario or not, and try to escape from here…

"Both of you, shut up."

…And both of us did shut up after hearing Yoo Joonghyuk's words.

Han Sooyoung studied his mood for a bit and stuck to my side while muttering out loudly. "Well, it should be fine to trust the instincts of the protagonist every now and then."

I nodded my head in agreement.

Yoo Joonghyuk opened his mouth in the meantime.

"Later, today in the afternoon, the flagbearers of the archipelago will gather at the royal palace. That's when we fight."

"A bog-standard tactic, then."

"That's the only method."

Yoo Joonghyuk was right, though.

Sometimes, the standard way of handling things was the best solution available.

* * *

Night came knocking pretty quickly. Nobles dispatched by the influential families had gathered in the audience chamber; we hurried our steps towards there as well.

The whole of the archipelago was boiling over with this unidentifiable hostility.

The faction arguing to distinguish the legitimate king; another faction who sympathised with the Dark Magician; and finally, a faction utterly hostile towards our entire group.

As we walked in the hallways filled to the brim with chaotic aura, Jung Heewon muttered to herself. "…If only the kids were with us, it'd have been so much better. How unfortunate."

True, if the kids possessing taming skills were here, or even Lee Jihye with the ability to fight in a large-scale battle, we wouldn't have felt this much pressure.

"They have things they must do by themselves. Most likely, they are in the middle of their own scenarios."

"What about Hayoung-ssi?"

"Technically speaking, Hayoung isn't a member of <Kim Dokja's Company>, so she should've been summoned to a different scenario from ours."

If things were going according to the original storyline, then Jang Hayoung should be performing her own role somewhere else. And that was something I couldn't help her with.

I walked faster through the hallways under the protection of Jung Heewon and Lee Hyunsung.

In front of us, Han Sooyoung and Yoo Joonghyuk were competing in a mini foot race to see who could stay ahead. It felt like I was watching a stork and a crow-tit[1] compete against each other.

Jung Heewon watching the same spectacle as me sneaked closer to whisper something in my ear. "Dokja-ssi?"

"Yes?"

"I might be overstepping my boundary here a bit, but I think you should know about this."

"Regarding?"

She locked her gaze on the backs of Yoo Joonghyuk and Han Sooyoung, and hushed her voice even further.

"In regards to those two's relationship."

---

[1] **Crow-tit and a stork** – "If a crow tit walks like a stork, it will break its legs" is an old Korean idiom meaning "do not bite off more than you can chew."

* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)

Chapter 381: Ep. 72 - Three Methods, V

"Those two, they are engaged."

"Pardon?"

I let my jaw drop at that huge bombshell and slowly shifted my head over to Lee Hyunsung. He blushed his cheeks a little when our gazes met, and I saw him look away soon after.

Yoo Joonghyuk and Han Sooyoung – the First Prince of the Kaizenix Archipelago, and the esteemed daughter of an Earl.

Sure, there was quite a difference in height to overcome, but… When looking at them some more, they did seem well suited to each other. Their personalities were a bad match-up, but then again, they had a surprising amount of similarities, too.

My mischievous streak reared its head and I raised my voice. "Oiii. You two kind of resemble a black bear and a newborn chick…"

Almost at the same time, gigantic murderous intent flew in my direction.

"I'll kill you."

"One more word, and I'll tear your mouth wide open."

Cold sweat trickled down my backside.

Jung Heewon whispered in my ear. "Maybe it's better not to provoke them?"

"I guess so. By the way… Didn't something happen on your side as well, Heewon-ssi?"

"…Excuse me?"

I replied Jung Heewon's confusion with a grin and quickly got in between Yoo Joonghyuk and Han Sooyoung. Their facial expressions were frozen stiff as if they were unhappy about my joke earlier.

"Han Sooyoung. Your role is the most important one. You know that, right? You gotta do your part properly, so that…"

She didn't answer back.

"…Han Sooyoung?"

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

Strange sparks suddenly danced around her figure. I instantly figured out what happened; Yuri di Aristel's ego was pushing aside Han Sooyoung's.

「I'll never let you go.」

Yuri was crying out, tears streaming out of her eyes.

「Sooner or later, you'll regret leaving this place!」

「All the Stories you possess will wither away like ruins with no one visiting them, and no one will remember them anymore.」

「And in the end, they won't even be able to stay frozen in this island and vanish from this world!」

I looked back at her and made my reply. "That could happen."

「What was that?」

Yuri sounded dumbfounded. I quietly observed her for a moment.

Yuri di Aristel – this scenario's original heroine.

If the scenario unfolded as it should have, then by this time, she'd probably have become the king's lover after experiencing a regular life of growing up as someone's daughter.

「If you remain in this world, you'll all be safe.」

I could sympathise with her, who had no choice but to say something like that, but at the same time, I could not claim to sympathise with her point of view. Because we weren't living in the same Story.

In a way, you were simply reading the stories, no matter how many you had read so far. Perhaps that was why, all I could do for now was not to arrogantly convince her, but to simply imagine.

…What if Han Sooyoung was me, what would she have said right about now?

「I'll ask the 'King of Reincarnators' for a favour. Let us remain in this place together. And entrust yourselves to the Samsara's wall. When you do…」

"Then, we'd live on while carrying out the exact same scenario every single time."

「What?」

I slowly blinked my eyes and asked her. "Yuri di Aristel. How did it feel when you became the queen for the first time ever?"

Her irises quaked intensely just then.

「I…」

The 'Isle of Reincarnators' was basically a museum of ancient Stories that had disappeared in the back alleys of the changing era.

The foundation of this world was one of the 3rd generation's medieval-themed fantasy settings. Yuri di Aristel would've lived the same life over and over again while repeating the actions and speeches as set out by the Giant Story.

Han Sooyoung knew this, and she probably wanted to show her host the possibility of new stories.

…Tell her that we were not slaves ruled by the Stories.

「I, only…!!」

Most likely, Yuri had realized it by now. Because Han Sooyoung was an excellent writer, after all.

"You like Han Sooyoung, yes?"

「…」

"If you do, please believe in her. She will definitely not abandon you."

Yuri di Aristel looked at me for a little while before forming a complicated expression; her presence vanished afterwards. A round of lightly-dancing sparks later, Han Sooyoung's white irises reverted back to their normal state.

She staggered a little bit as if she was struck by a dizzy spell. She then looked at me as if impressed by my actions and spoke. "…Kim Dokja. Not too shabby, eh?"

"I learned from you."

"Yuri might really want to marry you at this rate…"

"Stop with your nonsense and get ready. We're about to make our entrance."

We pushed the doors to the audience chamber wide open. And almost immediately, threatening air poured down on us from either sides of the chamber itself.

At the same time, Jung Heewon stood next to me and spoke. "I'm sorry about that time, Dokja-ssi."

I didn't have to ask her to know what she was apologising for.

"In return, I'll protect you properly this time."

"I trust you."

When Lee Hyunsung and Jung Heewon stood on my sides, the threatening air pouring down on me softened by a good deal. I felt reassured with the greatest sword and shield gathered in one place like this.

I scanned the crowd of people lining up on either side of the audience chamber.

On one side, representatives from the revolutionaries.

And on the other, nobles and their flagbearers.

We walked past them and headed straight towards the throne. But, just as we arrived before it, someone among the gathered crowd loudly shouted at us.

"Who is the king?"

Who was the king…

They were here to get the answer to that burning question.

"Is it like what the rumour said and the Dark Magician is the new queen?"

"Show us the legitimate king!"

"Oh, dear Princes! Tell us the truth!"

The moment I saw their faces, a realization dawned on me; none of these people were here on their own volition.

It was this world's Story that had summoned them here.

[Giant Story, 'Kaizenix Archipelago', has bared its animosity.]

Yoo Joonghyuk and I looked at Han Sooyoung simultaneously. She nodded her head and took a step forward.

"I am the new ruler of the Kaizenix Archipelago."

The crowd immediately began protesting.

"You dare!"

"Where is the rightful heir of the Kaizenix line?"

"Kill that wench!"

Han Sooyoung didn't panic and unsheathed the sword.

"And this sword is the proof of my kingship."

Unbroken Faith emitted blindingly pure white light. Several of the crowd recognised the weapon and went down on their knees, but still, the majority were shooting the glares of distrust in our direction.

It was here that Yoo Joonghyuk stepped forward.

"She is indeed the Archipelago's new ruler."

The expressions of fluster appeared on the faces of First Prince's supporters after he made that declaration. Vigorous opposition quickly rose up from the revolutionaries.

"But, but, how can that be… Something like this has never happened before!"

"There's a first time for everything."

"Our family cannot accept this result…!"

And at last, folks breaking character to voice their opinions made their appearance, too.

"Your choice does not align with our worldview!"

"Our worldview simply wants…"

I addressed them with these words. "Your worldview? What could that possibly be?"

The crowd shut their mouths. Without saying anything else, I shifted my gaze above to the message floating in the air.

[Genre of the applicable scenario is 'Kim Dokja's Company'.]

There was no such genre called 'Kim Dokja's Company' in the world. However, there being none didn't mean a story couldn't be told, either.

"<Kim Dokja's Company> isn't like any other genre," Yoo Joonghyuk spoke up again. "<Kim Dokja's Company> is simply <Kim Dokja's Company>."

Han Sooyoung raised Unbroken Faith up high, before stabbing it deeply into the floor.

"Just like how <Kaizenix Archipelago> is simply the <Kaizenix Archipelago>."

[Special effect of the Star Relic, 'Unbroken Faith', has activated!]

This sword utilised Ether of three differing attributes.

[Ether attribute is transforming into 'Fire'.]

Pure-white petals of flame rose up from the blade held tight in Han Sooyoung's hand. I placed my own on the hilt of the sword.

[Ether attribute 'Darkness' has activated in tandem.]

And Yoo Joonghyuk's hand was placed on top of ours.

[Ether attribute 'Divinity' has activated in tandem.]

The three attributes of Unbroken Faith, fire, darkness, and light, began burning up at the same time. The Archipelago's citizens had never witnessed such a miracle before, and they stared at us in wonder.

Han Sooyoung addressed them. "The king? If you want to become one, come here and give it a shot. That is, if you're confident of grasping this sword."

No one tried to come closer. Everyone gathered here knew the truth already – that the moment their hands touched that brilliant light, their bodies would crumble away like fine dust. Even though the overwhelmed crowd trembled in fear, some still managed to ask us questions.

"All of you, why are you doing this?"

"…What are you planning to do to this archipelago?"

This was an unprecedented development. And they had grown fearful of this world's end.

The one who replied to them was Yoo Joonghyuk. "We didn't come here to occupy the measly little 'Kaizenix Archipelago'."

"But, we came here to liberate you all," I quickly followed that up, and several people began muttering among themselves.

「You already know what they mean, don't you?」

Neither Han Sooyoung, Yoo Joonghyuk, nor I said those words.

「We also can't repeat the exact same scenario over and over again.」

No, it was Yuri di Aristel who had raised her voice, instead. She had finally realized what the conclusion to this scenario we've been wishing for was.

「I… plan to journey with these people.」

At Yuri's words, the crowd formed utterly stunned expressions. However, it wasn't just her who had made up their minds. I felt my heart beat powerfully all of a sudden, and someone began speaking through my lips next.

「If she's willing to do so, then I shall do the same.」

These words belonged to my host, Fourth Prince Ricardo. Soon afterwards, another voice came out from Yoo Joonghyuk, as well.

「I can't let my feeble brother go all by himself.」

That was from the First Prince Schweichen. After him, two more voices came from Lee Hyunsung and Jung Heewon's position.

「My sword will accompany you wherever you go, your highness.」

「I'll protect you, your majesty.」

Both Bilston Framer and Erich Striker, too; it wasn't just Yuri who had been watching our tales until now.

Indeed, the original protagonists of this world also had been watching us.

[Giant Story, 'Torch that Swallowed the Myth', is roaring out loudly!]

[Giant Story, 'Demon Realm's Spring', is looking at this world.]

"We will participate in the 'Great War of Saints and Demons'."

Everyone gathered here was looking at <Kim Dokja's Company>. As the company's head representative, I addressed them once more. "And we will liberate every person on this island from 'reincarnation'."

One by one, the crowd began kneeling down. These people, having been playthings of the Giant Story's scenario for such a long time, were looking at us now.

"Let's all go together."

The world was rocked by an intense vibration as soon as those words came to an end. That was the sound of a world crumbling down. And…

[Giant Story, 'Kaizenix Archipelago', is crying out!]

…It was also the sound of a Giant Story collapsing on itself.

[Giant Story, 'Kaizenix Archipelago', is activating its authority to control every citizen in the archipelago!]

The giant story exhausted its own existence to continue its life. Unfortunately, what made a Giant Story a story was…

[Every Reincarnator in the Archipelago 'Kaizenix' is resisting against the Giant Story's control.]

…None other than the people in it.

[Worldview has accepted your reply.]

[You have satisfied the scenario clear condition.]

[Sub-Scenario: 'Genre Selection' has concluded.]

[Scenario clear reward is being calculated.]

[The space-time of the applicable scenario's location is synchronising with that of the 'Great War of Saints and Demons'.]

[Portal to the 'Great War of Saints and Demons' has been generated.]

An enormous portal emitting blinding rays of light was generated in mid-air. It was the doorway leading up to the Great War.

"I'll go first."

Yoo Joonghyuk was the first to walk inside. Other Reincarnators, finished making up their minds, followed after him and entered the portal's innards.

Someone even asked me this. "Do you believe we can really do this?"

"I do not know. I can only pray that you can."

"How honest."

The Reincarnator smiled awkwardly and stepped across the portal.

The waves of people flooded out of here. Han Sooyoung and I stayed back at the end of the queue and watched them leave.

She opened her lips to speak. "You should go ahead first."

Most likely, she still had fond memories of this place. I figured that it'd not be such a bad idea to let her have some alone time to reminisce a bit. But, just before I could step inside the portal, she grabbed me.

"Hey, Kim Dokja."

It seemed that she wanted to ask me something. I quietly stared at her for a bit, and eventually, she grandly sighed and waved her hand about.

"Forget it. It's nothing."

"What's the matter?"

"I said, it's nothing to worry about."

She tried to avoid my gaze while grumbling loudly.

I got worried somewhat and pulled my leg out of the portal with a sigh.

"You can just tell me. We went our separate ways in a similarly meaningful manner the last time, and that's what's making me worried here."

"It's nothing major."

"Well, in that case, you can tell me no problem, right?"

"…Aren't you a persistent one."

Han Sooyoung sighed grandly once more and opened her lips. "In the future…" Her gaze fixed to the floor slowly rose up as her words continued on. "In the future when all the scenarios have ended, I may want to get back to writing novels again."

It was the first time she looked at me with such serious eyes and that took me by surprise just a little.

Meanwhile, she carried on. "When that happens, read my novel, okay?"

"Your novel?"

She nodded her head. "I'm giving you the opportunity to become its very first reader."

"I'm not such a good reader, though."

"Don't be an ass and just read it when I tell you to."

"Fine, fine. I'll definitely read it."

I replied good-naturedly.

Well, it'd not be a problem to read her novel. I mean, I liked reading novels, to begin with.

However, she must've found my response out of her expectation, because she asked me back to confirm it. "…For real?"

"Yeah, for real."

She stared at me with disbelieving eyes. "But, it might be over three thousand chapters?"

"That's probably right up my alley, then."

"It might be boring, too."

"It's you writing it, so that's not possible, you know."

Han Sooyoung's eyes grew wider after hearing my reply.

I felt somewhat embarrassed at myself, so I quickly said something else.
"What genre will it be?"

"I'll cross that bridge when I get there…"

"How about romance?"

"…How can I milk 'romance' for three thousand chapters??"

We shared such light-hearted banter while shifting our gazes back to the portal. That's where Lee Hyunsung and Jung Heewon walking together could be seen. I sensed this awkwardness in the air between them and it was nice to see that.

"Well, those two might need three thousand chapters, and then some."

It was then, nice-sounding messages resounded out from the sky.

[Restriction on indirect messaging has been lifted.]

[Constellation, 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband', is cheering out in happiness!]

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', is enjoying the warm atmosphere!]

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Flame', is freaking out!]

It seemed that, with the conclusion of the scenario, the channel had been reopened again.

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Flame', is shielding her Incarnation.]

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Flame', is being vigilant of Constellation, 'Master of Steel'.]

[Constellation, 'Master of Steel', is feeling wronged.]

Han Sooyoung smirked and muttered to herself. "Romance, is it…"

She and I stepped across the portal together. I could see the Constellations waiting for our arrival in the distance.

[You've come, <Kim Dokja's Company>.]

Finally, we reached the opening stages of the 'Great War of Saints and Demons'.

Chapter 382: Ep. 73 - The Hottest Place in Hell, I

Shin Yoosung opened her eyes because of the bright spotlights that danced in the air. One of the flying drones circled around her head once, before disappearing into the distant black sky.

"Urgh, my head…"

Under the head-spinning dizzy spell, she staggered unsteadily back to her feet. The only things she could see around her were scrap metal and rubbish. She couldn't see any of the companions she was with.

…Could she have landed in this place all alone?

"Shin Yoosung?"

A boy pushed his head out from among the scrap metal like some kind of a baby octopus.

"Lee Gilyoung?"

Feeling happy now, she shifted her gaze over there, but then, the figure of woman leapt out from the piles of rubbish while stepping on the boy's head.

"Get out of the way! You stink, you know!"

"Jihye unni!"

She figured out who came along with her. Her companions brushed away all the trash stuck on their bodies and stood upright.

"What's this? Is it just us?"

"I think so."

"Heh, it's the reformation of Busan Alliance."

Lee Jihye spoke with a slightly excited tone of voice, but Shin Yoosung was different.

Why did it have to be Jihye and Gilyoung? She alternated her gaze between her two companions and made a resolution in her mind.

'I'm the only adult here. So, I gotta stay sharp'.

Whether they knew her thoughts or not, Lee Jihye and Gilyoung continued their glaring contest, only to suddenly delve straight into deciding the pecking order.

"Hm, hm. Hey, kids. We should choose the leader first, like how we've done so far, right?"

"Noona, you were the leader back in Busan Alliance. So, it's my turn now."

"Hey, you. You weren't even born yet when I got admitted to the kindergarten, you know."

"Ah? What's that got to do with anything?!"

"Shh. Both of you, keep quiet!"

The moment Shin Yoosung's voice was heard, all three of them pressed themselves tightly against a nearby wall in unison. A millisecond later, a drone flying around like some sort of an insect shone a spotlight on the alleyway they were standing in just now.

Giiiiii-iiing…

The drone hovered in position for a little while, and eventually, it disappeared beyond the alleyway, its sensors tilting this way and that.

Lee Jihye asked in a tense voice. "Hey, wasn't that a drone?"

It was right then, the system messages could be heard from the sky.

[Someone has interfered with the scenario system.]

[Due to the unprecedented power, you have been forcibly summoned to the Main Island's 'Next City'!]

['Next City' is currently cut off from the space-time of the conflict region of the 'Great War of Saints and Demons'.]

[You can advance to the 'Great War of Saints and Demons' once you solve the sub-scenario of the applicable location.]

"Next City??" Gilyoung's eyes began sparkling. "Let's go and take a look!"

"Stop being childish, Lee Gilyoung. This isn't a game!"

Despite Shin Yoosung's warning, the boy broke into a sprint. Fortunately, there was no drone nearby, and the spot they were hiding in was situated in a surprisingly high altitude.

"Wow, this…"

They were treated to a magnificent sight where the whole city could be seen in one take. Bright neon signs illuminating the night streets; androids emitting blue light beams from their heads, roaming around said streets as if putting on a protest march.

They could immediately tell what the worldview here was from this spectacle.

Lee Gilyoung spoke confidently. "I'm gonna get super strong in this place and surprise Dokja hyung later."

"He'll get even mooore surprised if you get killed here, instead."

"…Noona, why do you hate me so much??"

Disregarding the bickering duo, for now, Shin Yoosung carefully observed the panoramic view of the city below.

If one were to discount the slight disturbance created by the protest, it looked as if the city was functioning systematically according to a set of strict rules. This was a sci-fi worldview retaining a level of social order previously unheard of.

She remembered hearing that the 'Isle of Reincarnators' were graves of fading Stories. If so, why did a world like this one meet its doom?

In the meantime, Lee Jihye and Gilyoung were excitedly yapping away, without any care given for Shin Yoosung's concerns.

"Will they have stuff like a lightsabre here?"

"What a helpless sword otaku…"

"Shut up."

"Uh? Wait, I think they are really equipped with something like lightsabres."

"Really? Where?"

They could see the guards patrolling the city sauntering closer to their location. Maybe because of the worldview's effects, information windows of the guards floated up in front of their eyes after they took a closer look.

[Lv. 12 Guard-type Android]

[The applicable unit is around 4 times stronger than you.]

Lee Jihye freaked out and muttered out loudly. "What the hell? Why are they so strong?"

"I think it's us who got weak."

For sure, the density of the magical energy in the surroundings had decreased noticeably ever since they arrived in this worldview.

[Your main Stats have been reverted back to their initial values in the applicable worldview.]

[This worldview is subjected to the corrective effect of 'Level System'.]

"God damn it, they are coming this way!"

When did they realize it? Guards were suddenly rushing towards the group's position. They looked up at the sky only to discover several drones circling above their heads.

[Reaction to Story energy detected!]

[Reaction to Story energy detected!]

Along with the loud warning sounds, the guards increased their speed by engaging the boosters mounted on their backs and pounced on the group in a row. Lee Jihye, Shin Yoosung, and Gilyoung hurriedly pulled out their individual weapons.

"Screw it, there aren't even any bugs here… Hey, Shin Yoosung, can you summon the Chimera Dragon?"

"The cooldown time isn't over yet."

[Your current level is 1.]

[Earn experience points by hunting low-level enemies.]

With a deeply agonised look on her face, Lee Jihye unsheathed her longsword. She was the only one specialised in close-quarter battles among her group.

Quickly activating [Demon Slaying] and [Ghost Walk], she faced off against a guard in order to protect the kids. Just as the android's lightsabre collided with her longsword…

Giiii-iiing!

The lightsabre simply let her blade slide by and proceeded to cut her forearm.

"Aaaahk!"

[Android 'Lee Jihye' has been seriously injured!]

[Please administer Story energy to preserve your life.]

She backed away quickly, but it was already too late by then.

"Get out of the way!"

Shin Yoosung pushed Lee Jihye aside and stepped forward. The latter's complexion paled instantly and cried out towards the former; Gilyoung stretched his arms out, too.

Unfortunately, the lightsabre was already descending towards the crown of her head.

'Ahjussi'.

At that moment, the girl looked back on her short life. She felt this sense of unfairness, knowing that it'd be over in a place like this; yet, at the same time, there was also a sense of satisfaction, too, knowing that her choice was correct.

Shin Yoosung thought that this was the final moments befitting the Incarnation of the 'Demon King of Salvation'.

And then, in the next second…

[The applicable attack does not work on you.]

Along with the sparks going 'Tsu-chuchuchut!', the guard's lightsabre stopped millimetres away from her nose as if blocked by a formless wall.

"Uh?"

And new messages popped up in the air one after the other.

[Error has occurred in the scenario's system.]

[Giant Story, 'Next City', is expressing its puzzlement over the existence of Incarnation 'Shin Yoosung'.]

It was the exact same story for Lee Gilyoung, as well. The lightsabres attacking the kids were all being powered down simultaneously.

The boy dazedly looked up at the air and muttered softly to himself.

"…What's going on?"

He could see letters written in the faint grey font on the top right-hand corner of his vision.

[Current scenario's age restriction is 18+.]

[Due to the applicable worldview's consideration, murderous actions aimed at children/teenage units are prohibited.]

Shin Yoosung and Lee Gilyoung exchanged glances.

'…Isn't this, like, huge?'

It was unknown how they ended up getting summoned here. However, if it was this sort of a worldview, then…

Gilyoung formed a sneaky grin aimed at Lee Jihye and her wide-open jaw behind him.

"Noona? Get ready for a free bus ride."

While watching the boy shove his shortsword into the guard's upper thigh area, Shin Yoosung began thinking to herself.

'Maybe, remaining as a kid for a bit longer is…'

She didn't know what was waiting for her at the end of this scenario. However, she was sure of one thing – at the end of this scenario, they should be strong enough to utterly stun Kim Dokja.

I was left utterly stunned by the Constellations waiting for me on the other side of the portal. Even at a quick glance, it was well more than one or two here.

…Could it be that they knew we were coming?

"Dokja-ssi."

Lee Hyunsung's voice sounded tense, and I nodded my head at him. Yoo Joonghyuk, Han Sooyoung, Lee Hyunsung, and Jung Heewon. Including me, the five of us gathered in one spot like a constellation in the night sky.

Soon, though, scenario messages floated up in the air.

[Main Scenario has been updated!]

[You and your Nebula have entered the neutral zone of 'Great War of Saints and Demons'!]

[You can select either camp of 'Great War of Saints and Demons'!]

Right after those alerts, a notice message dyed the sky in rainbow colours next.

[Nebula, <Kim Dokja's Company>, has entered the 'Great War of Saints and Demons'!]

Without a doubt, Dokkaebis must've been behind that. We had just got here, yet they were advertising it all over the place already.

[Many Constellations have noticed your presence!]

[Some Nebulas are keeping an eye on your group's next move.]

It wasn't an ideal situation, but naught we could do about it, as it was spilt milk. I met the gazes of the Constellations looking at us from the other side. They were emitting pretty hefty Statuses, too.

I even spotted a familiar Constellation among them.

[You're late, Descendant.]

A man with a dignified smile was looking in our direction. I called out to him in happiness.

"Goryeo's First Sword!"

He was none other than Cheok Jungyeong, the one we had to say goodbye to during the 'Middle Island' scenario.

As expected of a Constellation who had reached the Narrative-grade, it seemed that he advanced to the main island without any issues.

[You must've completed quite a substantial scenario. You've gained more companions.]

His gaze was now studying the Reincarnators emerging from the portal alongside us. They were people from 'Kaizenix Archipelago', entering the main island with me.

"They are folks who'll participate in the 'Great War of Saints and Demons' with us."

Cheok Jungyeong nodded his head.

[Higher number of combat forces can certainly help. More importantly, however… Something seems to have changed with you, Descendant.]

He scanned me from top to bottom as if he was searching for something.

[I can sense this vague depth to your group's Story.]

"…Is that so?"

Cheok Jungyeong's gaze left me and headed towards Han Sooyoung. She met his stare with a pair of impetuous eyes that said, "What are you looking at?"

A strange light flickered within the former's eyes.

[…I see.]

I abruptly recalled what the 'Mandala's Guardian' told me.

– Oh, dear Bodhisattva. Please, try to endure time itself.

Our Nebula's Stories had experienced an unknown change after clearing the Kaizenix Archipelago.

The time Lee Hyunsung, Jung Heewon and especially Han Sooyoung, spent in Kaizenix was definitely not in vain. Everything that happened was recorded as Stories, and they would raise our Statuses in turn.

It might have been due to what Cheok Jungyeong said, but well, I could sense Constellations spying on us from behind, staring far more openly than before.

[Constellation, 'Expert at Playing Both Sides', is getting interested in you.]

[Constellation, 'King of Archers', is observing you in great interest.]

[Constellation, 'Three Mouths But Only One Head', is sneering at the Reincarnators from 'Kaizenix Archipelago'.]

Reincarnators from the archipelago retreated from the feast of Statuses. Now that they have emerged outside the 'Kaizenix Archipelago', they were no longer protected by their worldview.

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', is growling!]

It was Han Sooyoung who stepped forward as if to shield these Reincarnators. The atmosphere wiggled and the aura of the Black Flame Dragon manifested itself behind her. The folks from Kaizenix bowed their heads to pay their respect to her, then.

Indeed, that must be what they refer to as the kingly air.

Unfortunately, some Constellations didn't seem to like her display. It didn't take long for their aura to become threatening.

Ku-gugugugu!

[An Incarnation from a small Nebula dares to…!]

Feeling a bit annoyed now, I decided that I should stop the current flow right about here.

[Giant Story, 'Torch that Swallowed the Myth', is glaring at the Constellations!]

The activation of the Giant Story managed to startle the Constellations and they took several steps back.

I didn't miss that opportunity and asked Cheok Jungyeong a question. "Enough about that. Why have you been waiting for us?"

He formed a slightly troubled expression. The light in his eyes flickered as he tried to decide whether it'd be okay to say it or not.

I could think up a couple of hypotheses just then, and chose to test one of them out. "I know that this is the neutral zone. Have you decided on which camp of the Great War to join yet?"

[No, not yet.]

…I see. He still hadn't chosen his side.

Cheok Jungyeong continued on.

[As you may well know, 'Good' and 'Evil' of the Constellations aren't the same with that of the mortals. If I'm allowed to be honest, then I do not wish to be a part of either camp.]

Cheok Jungyeong, starting as a mortal and reaching the ranks of Constellation through his own power only, like me, wouldn't have agreed to the concept of good and evil as claimed by the Archangels and Demon Kings. That was why I could sympathise with his dilemma.

However, that story would always be his to mull over, no one else's.

I glanced at the Constellations behind him and asked. "They haven't chosen their sides, I presume?"

Cheok Jungyeong nodded his head.

Behind him, scattered groups of Constellations could be seen loitering around tents set up here and there on a huge open plain.

[What is the current war situation like?]

[From what I was able to find, it…]

Faint 'true voices' could be heard coming from them.

I smirked inwardly; in all honesty, it was easy to see what they were thinking of by not having chosen a camp yet.

Constellations in the neutral zone were planning to stay back and observe the proceedings, and then join the side with the advantageous position and enter the Great War.

Yoo Joonghyuk and Han Sooyoung engaged [Midday Tryst] at the same time to talk to me.

– I can tell what the current situation is like.

– These bastards, they are going for 'that', right?

I nodded my head.

The stronger the 'neutral' camp that hadn't chosen a side grew in power, the potential benefits to be gained when it did choose would be even greater.

[Constellation, 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband', is looking down on the Constellations of the neutral zone.]

[Constellation, 'Hell's Scribe', is letting others know that the hottest place in Hell is reserved for those who maintain neutrality in times of moral crisis…]

Didn't matter whether it was 'Good' or 'Evil', they were thinking of selling their influence to the highest bidder out there.

Han Sooyoung broke out in a smirk.

– Their aim is so easy to see through.

It was right about then that Cheok Jungyeong ended his deliberation and opened his lips. [There is someone who wishes to meet you.]

"Who is it?"

[A high-ranking Constellation from the Nebula, <Hongik>.]

Thought as much.

It seemed that Cheok Jungyeong was here to win us over.

I hid this faint sense of disappointment and asked him again. "But, didn't you tell me that high-ranking Constellations of <Hongik> have all disappeared?"

Indeed, I heard something like that a long time ago. Once, at the 'Constellation Banquet', and when facing 'Founder's Mother' back inside the [Dark Castle].

[We did not disappear. Because there is one right in front of you.]

It was a true voice containing aloof, proud Status; the ranks of the Constellation parted, and a Taoist hermit holding a pure-white folded fan was walking towards us. From each of his steps, I felt the power of vigorous winds.

…Hey, I think I know who this is.

[Kneel and pay your respects, oh, descendants of the Peninsula.]

Chapter 383: Ep. 73 - The Hottest Place in Hell, II

This guy just popped out of nowhere and demands us to kneel down…

Han Sooyoung next to me carried a dumbfounded expression, while Yoo Joonghyuk was already reaching towards his sword. Cheok Jungyeong was massaging his forehead; it seemed that he expected a situation like this already.

– My apologies, Descendant. I tried to talk him out of it, but I wasn't successful.

True, he'd not enjoy situations like this. But, he owed <Hongik> a lot, so he probably couldn't say no to them asking him to organise this meeting…

– I shall leave it to your decision.

I nodded my head and looked at the Taoist hermit.

[Constellation ruling over the Peninsula's Winds has revealed his Modifier!]

[Constellation, 'Heavenly Wind God', is now looking at you!]

The 'Heavenly Wind God' – the Constellation who founded <Hongik> alongside the Heavenly King.

His real name was 'Pungbaek', although most of us simply knew him as the God of Wind.

Ku-gugugugu!

The Status of the Constellation who had finally revealed his Modifier, caused strong gusts of wind that resembled the flapping wings of a giant Phoenix, to sweep past the surroundings. And then, all ambient noises disappeared.

The Reincarnators outside the wind wall were shouting something in my direction, but I couldn't hear them. Pungbaek had cut off all the sounds coming from outside.

He probably didn't want others to hear our conversation.

[Oh, descendant of the Peninsula, I've heard the tales of your bravery. As your fame spreads far and wide, the status of the Peninsula rises higher in accordance. This god sees that situation as very satisfactory.]

I quickly sent a signal with my eyes to Yoo Joonghyuk busy raising his momentum – telling him to hold it, let's at least hear this guy out first.

[However, I've heard disturbing stories that lately, you've been building inappropriate relationships with foreign Constellations.]

…I began wondering whether I should keep listening or not, though.

[Archangels and Demon Kings are not Constellations originally from East Asia, or the Peninsula. Meaning, they are foreign influences.]

Han Sooyoung shot me a sneaky glare.

– Hey, you. Are you just gonna let this guy be?

– I shall cut him down.

– What the heck, is the wire crossed or something? How come I can hear Yoo Joonghyuk's voice?

– I combined the Midday Tryst's space.

My declaration prompted an explosion of messages from her and Yoo Joonghyuk.

– Hey! Stop messing around! You want me to listen to that arrogant bastard's voice in my head, too?

– You've taken words out of my mouth.

I sighed softly after seeing the two growl at each other.

– Stop it, both of you. That's not important right now, is it?

While we were squabbling inside our chatroom, Pungbaek was still continuing on with his dull moral lecture.

[…meaning, descendant's friendly behaviour towards foreign influences has caused much dishonour to the Peninsula, and this god considers that as a weighty crime. However, if you, the descendant, reflect deeply regarding this matter and repent, then…]

Hell, a Constellation that agreed with those words even made his appearance, too.

[Constellation, 'Founder of National Isolation Policy', agrees in part with the assertion of 'Heavenly Wind God'.]

Of course, not everyone was like that; our little peninsula boasted a surprisingly wide variety of Constellations, after all.

[Constellation, 'Bald General of Justice', is polishing his head.]

[Constellation, 'First Sorcerer of Joseon', is clicking his tongue.]

[Constellation, 'Prisoner of Golden Headband', is yawning in boredom.]

[Portion of Korean Peninsula's Constellations thinks the declaration by 'Heavenly Wind God' is old-fashioned.]

[Who dares to hide behind anonymous Modifiers and run their mouths off?!]

As Pungbaek's true voice rang thunderously in the air, the weather above began shifting ominously. Suppressed by that tremendous aura, several Constellations quickly shut their mouths.

Whatever the case might have been, he was an existence very close to the ancestor god of the Peninsula.

Although the individual amount received differed, Constellations of the Peninsula had indeed received benefits and favours from <Hongik>, and none could challenge them face to face as a result.

Not even Cheok Jungyeong himself.

[By the way, why are you still standing up?]

Eventually, Pungbaek's gaze landed on me. The current atmosphere shifted ever so slightly from what it was like earlier.

[Did I not tell you to kneel?]

Ginormous pressure pushed down on me. Not just me, though; it pushed down on the entire <Kim Dokja's Company>.

[Stories from Nebula <Hongik> are observing <Kim Dokja's Company>!]

It felt as if a giant ancient tree had bent down to take a look at us – a giant tree that salivated after the nutrients meant for a new-born sprout.

I quietly held that gaze for a little while, before making my reply. "I don't want to."

[Indeed, you don't… What did you say?]

"I said, I don't want to."

[Constellation, 'Prisoner of Golden Headband', is liking your attitude.]

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is coaxing you to start with a punch first.]

"I came here to participate in the Great War, not to kneel to you."

[How boundlessly arrogant. I looked favourably at your bravery and wished to pardon your sins, but…]

"After you pardon me, what then?"

Pungbaek's brows quivered at my pointed reply.

"You were thinking of absorbing <Kim Dokja's Company> through the authority of <Hongik>, were you not?"

As if his hidden plot had been accurately pointed out, emotions could be spied on that stoic Constellation's expression now.

[It is only obvious that your group must come under the wing of <Hongik>.]

"Why do you think that?"

[If <Hongik> did not exercise its might at the beginning, your Nebula wouldn't have been born.]

As if he was a parent being betrayed by his child, Pungbaek began shouting at me.

[<Hongik> is the founder of the Peninsula! We gave birth to you, we set the morality you must follow, and we created the rules. It was us who determined what you'd see, feel, and think. Because the Story of <Hongik> exists, you exist here now, and through that Story, you survi…]

"Four years ago in Earth's time, 'scenarios' began on the Korean Peninsula." I cut Pungbaek's words off. "When the Peninsula fell into mortal danger, what did <Hongik> do at that time?"

[…!!]

"When scenarios began on the Peninsula, when the [Absolute Throne] appeared, when Outer Gods and Calamities descended, and when the Peninsula's Incarnations and Constellations had to work together because of them…"

Certain memories began rushing back every time I spoke a word. Scenarios, overcome by the gathering of people who had no one to rely on; the [Four Yin Demon Beheading Sword] plunging down on the blind throne and the Peninsula's Constellations who lent their Probabilities to that weapon.

[Story, 'King of a Kingless World', is glaring at 'Heavenly Wind God'.]

[Story, 'King of a Kingless World', has begun its storytelling!]

I didn't do anything, yet the Story began coming to life, anyway. 'King of a Kingless World' was born as the [Absolute Throne] was destroyed.

I recited the story of this Story, and through me, this Story spoke of itself. "During those times, where were you and the oh-so-great Constellations of <Hongik>? And what were you all doing?"

Tsu-chuchuchut!

[You bastard!]

Pungbaek glared at me as if he'd start vomiting blood at any second.

"Of course, I know that you and <Hongik> worked hard to aid the Peninsula during its infant stages. I do acknowledge the value of the Story you people possess. Unfortunately, that doesn't mean everyone from the Peninsula must swear loyalty to you," I finished my speech while watching Pungbaek's beard tremble from rage. "Everyone has their own way of clearing 'scenarios'. Even if you're the Peninsula's highest-grade Constellation, you can't interfere with the actions of <Kim Dokja's Company>."

Cheok Jungyeong seemed to be enjoying my daring, fearless tone of voice. It'd probably be his first time seeing Pungbaek get treated in this manner.

[You dare, you dare…!]

In place of the rendered-speechless Pungbaek, a Story's forceful aura rose up from behind him.

[Giant Story of the Nebula, <Hongik>, is staring at you!]

[Nebula, <Hongik>, is extending its roots towards <Kim Dokja's Company>!]

Giant Stories belonging to <Hongik> began rising up to the heavens one by one like tree branches, and eventually, formed an image of a gigantic tree. I knew what that was straight away.

「The tree that connects the Heavens to Earth below, as well as the totality of all the Stories that <Hongik> puts to practice; the one Story that supports all those Stories.」

「The Fabled Tree, Shindansu.」

Every Story of <Hongik> began with that very tree in front of my eyes. Shindansu spread its holy aura all around and extended its branches made up of Stories.

Seeing that admonition alone wasn't doing the trick, it was now trying to show off its might, instead. What a bitter experience that was.

The truly bitter thing about this situation was, though…

"I see that the real highest-ranked Constellations of <Hongik> did disappear."

[…What do you mean by that?]

This Shindansu was so much smaller and shabbier compared to the one that I knew. Not only that, the ends of the tree's roots extending towards us were all horrifyingly damaged. What I saw were Giant Stories failing to sustain their shapes after not having absorbed nutrients for a long time; most of the branches connected to these roots had withered almost beyond recognition.

That was the total sum of what <Hongik> currently possessed.

"I speak of these words because I pity you."

The 'Pungbaek' from the original storyline that I knew was not an obstinate geezer like this guy. Sure, he wasn't exactly the warmest guy around, but still, he was a Constellation possessing far greater class and righteousness.

However, something happened to <Hongik> and the Nebula's influence shrunk back at a rapid pace. The reason why Pungbaek became so destitute probably had something to do with that event.

[You dare to show disdain towards this god?!]

Pungbaek roared out and roused up the powers of the wind; giant storm energy began gathering all around us. As the enormous Status suppressed the entire land, Reincarnators from 'Kaizenix Archipelago' began writhing around in pain.

Han Sooyoung urged me one more time.

– Kim Dokja.

I nodded my head.

Although the current appearance of <Hongik> was lamentable, at the end of the day, it had nothing to do with us.

I took a step forward, prompting Yoo Joonghyuk next to me to unsheathe his sword, while Han Sooyoung unfurled the bandages on her left arm. And then…

[Giant Story, 'Demon Realm's Spring', has begun its storytelling!]

[Giant Story, 'Torch that Swallowed the Myth', has begun its storytelling!]

The Giant Stories that had been held back until now opened their mouths simultaneously. Not only that…

[Giant Story, 'Kaizenix Archipelago', is repeating its storytelling as if it's displeased.]

…Along with a Giant Story that wasn't even one of ours, too.

Shu-weh-eh-eh-ehk!!

The roots of the giant tree flying in towards us began crumbling away from the billowing waves generated from our Stories.

[Body of the Giant Story, 'Shindansu', is in great pain!]

Those menacing roots extending out to swallow us whole faltered in their tracks and scattered away – as if scared by the stories it could not devour. The still-intact roots belatedly retreated, and the withered, bony branches screamed out loudly.

[Body of the Giant Story, 'Shindansu', refuses to heed the orders of 'Heavenly Wind God'.]

[But, how…?]

Shindansu withdrew its roots and instantly vanished from the view.

Perhaps taken greatly by surprise from the Statuses of the Giant Stories we possessed, the freaking-out Pungbaek staggered back several steps.

I sensed the Constellations scattered around the neutral zone looking in this direction after getting startled by this disturbance.

[Baat!]

Biyoo suddenly popped up right above my head as if she was waiting for this moment. At the same time, I sensed her channel opening up.

[A large number of Constellations have joined the channel!]

Biyoo's channel was connected to Bihyung's broadcast channel; I could picture that Dokkaebi's pleased face already.

It was pretty clear why he had induced this situation; although I wasn't too happy about it, this was something that had to be done sooner or later, anyway.

[Constellation, 'Bald General of Justice', is paying attention to your voice!]

[Constellation, 'Maritime War God', is waiting for your story.]

[Demon King, 'Ruler of East Hell', is staring at you.]

[Constellation, 'Scribe of Heaven', is waiting for you.]

[Constellations of 'Good', 'Evil', and 'Neutral' are carefully observing you.]

Several indirect messages floated up one after the other.

I stared at Pungbaek and opened my lips to issue a warning not just aimed at <Hongik>. "I will not say that everything we do will be righteous. However, the paths we tread will be decided by us alone."

I declared loudly towards the Constellations of the world.

"And, no one can change our decision."

Chapter 384: Ep. 73 - The Hottest Place in Hell, III

As if they were waiting for it, gazes rained down from the heavens.

[Constellation, 'Bald General of Justice', agrees with your words.]

[Constellation, 'Maritime War God', nods his head at your words.]

[Constellation, 'Prisoner of Golden Headband', asks you why you had to repeat something so obvious.]

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', is coaxing you to quickly punch that old bastard.]

Pungbaek heard what the Black Flame Dragon said in disbelief and shot a glare at the sky. He was about to say something, but then, the next indirect message made him flinch just a little.

[Constellation, 'Goryeo's First Sword', believes that 'Demon King of Salvation' is correct.]

Pungbaek's head snapped towards Cheok Jungyeong right away.

[Jungyeong, even you…!]

As if he felt ashamed by it, the latter avoided the piercing gaze.

Honestly, even I was surprised.

No matter how badly it had fallen, <Hongik> was still the Korean Peninsula's main Nebula. Even under the current circumstances, it wouldn't have been easy for Cheok Jungyeong to go against <Hongik> and side with me.

[Many Constellations are getting interested in the clash between <Kim Dokja's Company> and <Hongik>!]

Maybe it was due to Cheok Jungyeong's declaration, I now could sense the attention of other Constellations. Among the winds newly blowing in the neutral zone, I could sense their wary eyes locked on me.

I looked back at Pungbaek. "Are you going to continue?"

Honestly, watching his eyelids tremble intensely like that was difficult even for me.

I spoke as if to mock <Hongik> earlier, but in truth, it wasn't as if Pungbaek had been doing nothing to help with the Korean Peninsula's scenarios. The thing was, the Constellation who lent his aid to my mother back during the 'Returnees War' was none other than Pungbaek himself.

That damn event stole away her lifespan in its entirety, though. Maybe, that could be the reason why I was so pissed off right now.

[The Wind shall never forget today's matter.]

Pungbaek glared at me for the longest time before snapping his fan shut to vanish like specks of scattering dust.

[A large number of Constellations are impressed with your backbone!]

[Small number of Constellations will remember that the reputation of <Kim Dokja's Company> is not unwarranted.]

[Gossipers of <Star Stream> have recorded the applicable incident.]

Yoo Joonghyuk, Han Sooyoung, Jung Heewon, and Lee Hyunsung – everyone was staring at me. I couldn't spot any traces of fear in their expressions.

Most likely, they were thinking something similar.

It didn't matter what others said about our Nebula. No, we only had to move forward towards the story we believed to be the right one.

[A choice befitting you, Descendant.]

Cheok Jungyeong, observing us, spoke.

[Some Constellations will like that aspect of you and follow after you. Truthfully, many Constellations of the Korean Peninsula are focusing more on you rather than on <Hongik>. But… In return, those who hold animosity towards you have grown in number, as well.]

I grew cognizant of the fact that the surrounding gazes now felt different after hearing him; some Constellations were glaring at us, while some were looking on with envy. And some even shook their heads, their eyes saying that we'd eventually become just like everyone else.

「Once upon a time, we used to be like you.」

Suddenly, it felt as if the Stories these Constellations experienced were near enough for me to reach out and touch them.

[Ancient Giant Stories are staring at the Story of <Kim Dokja's Company>.]

Every Story was the evidence of one overcoming scenarios. At times, they'd serve as someone else's entertainment.

Every Story that reached this far had to break down and bend over in order to survive. The times when they had to make compromises with the reality of <Star Stream>, and when they had to agree to the demands of the Constellations and Dokkaebis in order to carry on; that was how they managed to get here.

As if he was the voice of those times, Cheok Jungyeong spoke up.

[<Star Stream> hates stories that haven't been broken yet. Especially so, with a story as pure as yours.]

Pure and not broken yet…

A chuckle left my lips after hearing that.

I was surprised that the world viewed us like that. Because that was basically ignoring every road we've walked on so far.

"We had been broken over a dozen times already."

<Kim Dokja's Company> didn't stand on two feet from the word 'go'.

After the Korean Peninsula's scenarios began, it had to endure against the Constellations' schemes and their inexplicable rage. Just like so many other countless Stories, in other words.

"However, we managed to stand back up every single time. And now, we've reached this far."

To us, the word 'pure' was more like an insult at this point.

[Giant Story, 'Demon Realm's Spring', is calmly staring at you.]

[Giant Story, 'Torch that Swallowed the Myth', is holding back its intense crying.]

As if they were agreeing with what I said, the two Giant Stories showed some reactions.

"And in the future, we will continue to get back on our feet."

[The germinating third 'Giant Story' has displayed fetal movements.]

Even the third Giant Story soon to awaken reacted the same. Cheok Jungyeong observing us slowly nodded his head.

[I shall continue to watch your story.]

At the end of those words, he turned around to leave. Korean Peninsula's Constellations under him glanced at us for a bit before disappearing alongside him.

He had surpassed the level of Historical-grade and stepped into the Narrative-grade. On top of that, he had been a Constellation for a far longer period of time than I, and he would be one of the best allies to have on our side as he was a gifted natural-born fighter.

Of course, that would be under the assumption of us fighting on the same side.

I must've stood around looking too cool for my own good, since Han Sooyoung, staring at me from the side, slapped my shoulder and jeered at me.

– Hey, you. Some people might think you're the protagonist or something.

Feeling a bit sheepish, I sneaked a glance in Yoo Joonghyuk's direction, but he wasn't looking at me but at the distant horizon, instead.

"It has begun."

[Scenario event has been generated!]

[Regional conflict for 'Great War of Saints and Demons' is scheduled to take place in the near vicinity of the applicable area!]

Neutral-leaning Constellations and Incarnations sitting around their scattered tents were stunned by the system messages and hurriedly stood up.

[When entering the conflict zone, 'camp selection' will automatically generate!]

The sight of two enormous factions marching forward could be seen from afar.

The white-winged angels, decked out in armours brightly reflecting the light were dyeing the land in a silvery hue along with Incarnations and Reincarnators.

On the other side, Demon Kings stained in corrupted and demonic energy were advancing forward with their dependents in tow.

[Updated Main Scenario has arrived!]

<Main Scenario #80 – 'Great War of Saints and Demons'>

Type: Main

Difficulty: Indeterminable

Clear condition: Participate in the Great War by siding with either camp of Absolute Good or Absolute Evil. 'Good/Evil Points' of the camps will increase when the affiliated camp accumulate a higher number of victories in the scenario. Once the Points of a camp exceeds 100, the victor in the war will be decided.

Time Limit: the applicable scenario's time limit is affected by 'Chaos Points'.

Reward: Story related to 'Great War of Saints and Demons', ???

Failure: Death

[Current state of Great War's progress]

Absolute Good Points: 56

Absolute Evil Points: 56

Chaos Points: 51

[Chaos Points will increase the longer the Great War is being fought.]

[You must select a camp in order to participate in the applicable conflict.]

[The scenario rewards will be greater the sooner you choose your camp.]

We fell into a bout of silence while reading the scenario's contents. The first one to break it was Han Sooyoung.

"Kim Dokja, what next? Do as we always did?"

[Constellation, 'Hell's Scribe', is letting others know that the hottest place in Hell is reserved for those who maintain neutrality in times of moral crisis…]

"That wasn't even something he originally said, yet why is he being so damn chatty with that line??"

[Constellation, 'Hell's Scribe', flinches in surprise and has closed his mouth.]

This 'Hell's Scribe' was actually the author of [Divine Comedy], Dante Alighieri. And that famous line often credited to him actually had been repurposed by the politicians of a later era. Still, that quote served to enhance his fame in the long run, so he should have accepted that as a part of his own Story.

「The hottest place in Hell is reserved for those who maintain neutrality in times of moral crisis.」

It sure was a stirring quote when you first listen to it. Although, it was hard to figure out what meaning was there to it in the world where even one's moral choices served as someone else's entertainment…

"We need to decide this time. It'll be difficult to weasel ourselves out of this one like in the past, unfortunately."

Whatever the case might have been, we were standing on the crossroads just like the others, regardless of what Dante had said. Well, one couldn't even participate in this 'Great War of Saints and Demons' if they hadn't chosen a side from the get-go, anyway.

Yoo Joonghyuk stared at the message and spoke up. "The Great War during the 1863rd turn ended in the victory of 'Evil'. Han Sooyoung chose the side of 'Evil', that was why."

"Why is it me again?? Besides, this isn't the 1863rd turn, you know?!"

Han Sooyoung was right, though – this was not the 1863rd turn.

Indeed, this was the 3rd turn world of <Kim Dokja's Company>.

"Let's go."

The ferocious battlefield where the 'Good' and 'Evil' clashed could be seen in the distance. One of the battlefronts belonging to the expansive 'Great War of Saints and Demons' had raised its curtains.

[113th regional conflict of the 'Great War of Saints and Demons' has been generated!]

[List of individuals participating in the applicable regional conflict has been released.]

Right at the forefront of this Great War stood a Constellation that I knew pretty well.

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is participating in the applicable scenario.]

* * *

"P-please, spare me."

Staaaab!

"Archangel-nim, p-please…!"

Pained moans rose up from all over the place.

Heads belonging to the Incarnations who chose to side with 'Evil' at the crossroad, were being sliced off by the blades of the Archangels.

This was the war of Stories.

Just because of your affiliation with the Story of one side, you'd be treated as an enemy by the other side.

Leaving the fallen Incarnations behind, Uriel studied the battlefield with an expressionless face.

Once upon a time, she sympathised with them. She felt sad at the Incarnations being swept away and consumed by the great narrative, and she was angry at the misfortune they had to suffer. She was like that for a long time. At one point, doing that was the entirety of her life.

'…I wanted to catch up with all the <Star Stream> broadcasts I missed, though'.

Uriel chewed her lip while looking at the waves of a Demon King's army rushing in.

Being born to spread the 'Good' didn't mean you could live your entire life doing only just that; truth was, the physical dangers didn't eat away at a Constellation, but the erosion of one's mind did.

The emotional labour that lasted for an innumerable length of time had instilled a deep-seated disillusionment of the world, as well as unfathomable madness, inside her.

[Soul of Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is trembling unstably.]

Whether it was a strong Constellation or a weak one, there was not one being who could take it easy inside scenarios. Because 'scenarios' were a system like that, to begin with.

Gu-ooooh!

To forget that they were being consumed by the scenario, and to live for yet another day, Constellations had to consume other Stories. They would spectate on the scenario, get angry at someone's situation, pour out their criticism, show respect, or be moved by what they saw.

It was the same story even for an Archangel like Uriel.

[■■■■■, get out of my way! I missed the initial broadcast because of you lot!]

[Hell Flames Ignition] spewing out from Uriel's blade struck the Demon King's dependents and turned them into ashes. She couldn't properly control her own power unleashed out of urgency; also, hastily summoning only half of her true body to participate in the war played a large role in that, too.

[Demon Kings participating in the regional conflict are shocked by the Archangel's power!]

Of course, this half of a true body was none other than Uriel's. So, any ol' Demon King couldn't even serve as her opponent.

[Demon King, 'Monarch of Stars and Logic', releases his Status!]

[Demon King, 'Grand Duke of Dragons and Foul Odour', unleashes a Giant Story!]

[Demon King, 'Speed of Sound Demon King', lets out a crimson howl!]

[Demon King, 'Duke of Everywhere', is being taken over by excitement and madness!]

The problem was, the Demon Kings participating this time were not some run-of-the-mill types, either. Uriel's expression hardened after she spotted the Demon Kings brushing past her [Hell Flames Ignition] to come closer.

[The crazed Archangel is right before us!]

[Do not fear! I, the Demon King, Buer, will be with you!]

Originally, the Demon Kings scheduled to enter this particular regional conflict were not supposed to be them. However, they shifted around the location of combat personnel, and that meant Uriel now found herself having to deal with all these Demon Kings at once.

[You bunch of ■■■! Get lost!]

Arrows imbued with demonic aura blanketed the entire battlefield; Uriel spread [Hell Flames Ignition] like a barrier to block them.

As she tried to look after the lower-ranked Angels retreating in haste, several arrows managed to lodge themselves in various parts of her body.

[How amusing. Oh, great Angels, are you running away?]

[You bring dishonour to the reputation of 'Demon-like Judge of Fire'.]

[Shut up! You'd all be dead meat if only my full body had descended!]

Even under the barrage of attacks raining down, Uriel didn't moan once, breathing angrily like a bull, instead.

[Stop ganging up on me like a bunch of cowards and face me one on one, you ■■!! Fu■! If it's one on one, I can kick all your butts even if you're Agares, Gamygyn, or Marbas!]

Yells from the agitated Uriel only elicited mocking leers from the Demon Kings. They all knew how powerful she was; they knew, and that was why four of them showed up to hunt down a single Archangel. And right up until the last moments, they remained meticulous.

[This is war, oh dear Angel.]

[Hell Flames Ignition] of the Uriel covered in blood clashed with the Demon Kings.

She was seriously strong; with only the strength of half a true body, she still managed to cut the arm off of 'Monarch of Stars and Logic', and crushed the favoured pet dragon of 'Grand Duke of Dragon and Foul Odour'. Not only that, the 'Speed of Sound Demon King' even lost both of his legs.

Unfortunately, that was as far as she could go.

She looked behind the moment she felt a chilling sensation – and the dagger belonging to the invisible Duke of Everywhere flew in squarely aimed at her heart.

[I shall be devouring an Archangel's Story today.]

She belatedly swung her sword in desperation, but her Incarnation Body had been slowed down by injuries and it was far too difficult to respond. And in the next moment…

Staaaab!!

A blade glowing brightly stabbed past the chest of the 'Duke of Everywhere' from behind. Black blood splashed down to the ground.

The blade repeatedly pierced through the Duke's back, right up until the broken Incarnation Body's breath finally stopped, fragments of Stories bursting out in a grotesque fashion.

And a single stream of the white blade sliced off the head of the Duke next.

[Someone has killed the Demon King, 'Duke of Everywhere'.]

Uriel saw the two people standing behind the fallen Duke. The ones she'd recognise no matter how far they were, they were standing so close to her at this minute.

"There's no way I'll sit back and watch my Constellation get beaten up like this."

Indeed, it was none other than her one and only Incarnation.

And then…

[Demon King, 'Demon King of Salvation', is victorious in the 'Demon King Promotion'!]

[Demon Realm ranking is being adjusted!]

[Demon King, 'Demon King of Salvation', has become '50th Demon King'!]

The protagonist of the story she'd been watching for a long time addressed her. "It's been a while, Uriel."

[Demon King, 'Demon King of Salvation', has chosen the camp to side with.]

Chapter 385: Ep. 73 - The Hottest Place in Hell, IV

There were times when a person's emotion of sheer happiness could be felt so vividly. Those moments, when one would go, oh, so you can make that sort of facial expression, too.

[Kim Dokja-!!!]

The current appearance of Uriel was just like that to me.

She extended her arms and vigorously embraced both me and Jung Heewon, proceeding to rub her cheeks all over us for a long time.

In the end, Jung Heewon had to scold her a little. "Uriel, I can't breathe."

[S-sorry.]

She got flustered and backed away, but her eyes continued to sparkle. Sometimes, I found it hard to fathom how such a pure-but-dumb Archangel like her ended up with a Modifier of 'Demon-like'.

[How did you know this place? When did you get here? Huh? Did you finish the 'Kaizenix Archipelago' scenario already? I barely managed to catch a couple of scenes, because I didn't have a lot of spare time… I'm really sorry! Y-you aren't angry because I didn't properly sponsor you, right? I-it wasn't deliberate, you know…]

It wasn't just her expression, even her voice conveyed her happiness, too.

Jung Heewon and I looked at each other while listening to Uriel; she must've felt something similar to what I did, probably.

The Angel spoke without a hint of elegance nor carefully-considered pretence. Fortunately, some words conveyed a greater level of emotion when the speaker was so earnestly over the moon like this.

"Uriel, we understand. However, we should discuss the details at a later date."

[Huh? Ack, you're right! Now isn't the time, is it?]

Uriel's gaze on me quickly shifted and landed on the army of Demon Kings glaring at us from the other side. I saw her expression cooling off in an instant, and realized that my thoughts were perhaps premature.

This Angel was, without a doubt, 'Demon-like Archangel of Flames'.

[Demon King, 'Monarch of Stars and Logic', cannot understand your actions.]

And then, there were Demon Kings willing to face off against such an Archangel.

Ranked tenth in the Demon King Ranking, 'Monarch of Stars and Logic' – 'Buer'.

Eighteenth in the ranking, 'Speed of Sound Demon King', 'Bathin'.

Finally, 29th in the ranking, 'Grand Duke of Dragons and Foul Odour', 'Astaroth'.

Even after excluding the 'Duke of Everywhere' who died at my hands, there were still three Demon Kings alive. Each and every one of them was not an easy opponent to fight against. Especially so, the 'Monarch of Stars and Logic', and the 'Speed of Sound Demon King'.

If both of Buer's arms were still intact, or for that matter, Bathin's legs, then I'd probably have to risk my life here.

['Demon King of Salvation'!]

[What is the meaning of this?! Why are you fighting against other Demon Kings??]

I shrugged my shoulders and glibly muttered my excuse. "I simply continued on with the promotion battle, that was all."

[Do you honestly believe that such an excuse will…]

"Is there a rule that said the 'Demon King Promotion' battles shouldn't be fought just because the 'Great War of Saints and Demons' is underway? Such a thing happened pretty often back in the '1st Great War', too."

[What are you…!]

Bathin became incensed by what I said and formed an expression of a creature wanting to cut my head off, but too bad, there was nothing he could do when both of his legs were gone.

[You have re-enacted a portion of the '1st Great War of Saints and Demons'!]

[Demon King 'Asmodeus' is getting interested in your unexpected actions!]

Actually, what I've done was exactly the same as what Asmodeus did back in the 1st Great War. The 'Monarch of Stars and Logic' Buer's expression hardened as he threw out a question. [You think you'll be fine after doing something like this?!]

"Of course not." I remained utterly unfazed by the Demon Kings' auras while awakening my Status. "However, I do think that you shouldn't be worried about me here."

[You have unleashed the Demon King's Status!]

[Exclusive skill, 'Bookmark', is activating!]

[5th Bookmark has been initiated!]

[Exclusive skill, 'Electrification' Lv.23 (+13) has been initiated.]

[Your current physical constitution is different from that of the applicable character.]

[Your 'Status' has overcome the physical constitution penalty.]

My shoulders itched as the wings broke past my skin and emerged out into the open. And the buzzing sensation of the [Electrification] overlapped on top of that. In an instant, my body was enveloped in lightning.

The three Demon Kings now carried flustered, panicky expressions after witnessing my rapidly-rising 'Status'.

'Monarch of Stars and Logic' had lost one of his arms, 'Grand Duke of Dragons and Foul Odour' had lost his pet Dragon and was wounded all over, and finally, 'Speed of Sound Demon King' had lost both of his legs, so basically, they were no longer relevant to the overall combat situation.

Jung Heewon next to me unsheathed the [Sword of Judgement] and activated [Demon Slaying].

"I wasn't satisfied by the fight I had with a Demon King the last time because it got stopped, so…"

Uriel saw the Demon Kings taking retreating steps and became triumphant in no time at all. She opened her lips to speak.

[You bunch of ■■, weren't you so noisy back then? Why don't you say something now?]

"…"

[Dokja-yah, Heewon-ah, let's go! Let's utterly smash those ■■ Demon Kings apart…!!]

I reached out and grasped Uriel's shoulder as she tried to advance forward with her broken Incarnation Body, currently fuelled by her incendiary wrath. Her shoulder felt so feeble and weak right now. She formed a pair of small rabbit-like dot eyes after being held back so helplessly by my hand and looked back at me.

"Uriel, please step back."

[Huh? Ah… Are you worried about me? I'm fine. I'm Uriel, after all!]

She held my hand with a deeply-moved expression on her face. I felt a bit sad watching her be like that, and could only form a quiet smile. "I didn't mean it that way."

[But, what then…?]

[Demon King, 'Demon King of Salvation', has selected his affiliated camp.]

My participation message was floating up in the air. Most likely, she hadn't read that properly yet. Soon, though, the body of the puzzled Uriel gradually stiffened; her eyes grew wider and wider, too.

I stared into those eyes and spoke. "Please, be still. Uriel, this is going to end very soon."

Maybe, she had seen the message I was looking at by now.

[Camp the Demon King, 'Demon King of Salvation', has chosen is 'Evil'.]

"Kim Dokja pulled another Kim Dokja stunt, didn't he?" muttered Han Sooyoung, as she watched the battlefield in the distance.

The battle had entered a bit of a lull earlier, but after Kim Dokja made his unexpected entrance, it was heading towards a chaotic conclusion now.

He was the Demon King who murdered another Demon King, yet didn't hide the fact that he was 'Evil'.

She now could see the lower-ranked Angels moving to surround him, and the same time, Jung Heewon and her troubled expression, too.

Lee Hyunsung asked, sounding worried. "Will it really be alright like that?"

"Even if it's not, what can we do? Tell him to side with <Eden> now? Kim Dokja is originally a Demon King, you know," grumbled Han Sooyoung, before shifting her gaze over to Yoo Joonghyuk. "You ain't gonna sit back and just watch, right?"

"Of course not."

"You don't need to ask me – I'm 'Evil'."

Han Sooyoung's sponsor was 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon'. From the get-go, she didn't have much of a choice.

"What about you, Yoo Joonghyuk?"

"…"

"What did your sponsor say? Or was there no answer?"

Rather than answering her, he stared at the Incarnation Bodies strewn about the battlefield, instead. Corpses of Angels and Demon Kings could be seen among them, but in reality, most of them belonged to humans – meaning, Reincarnators.

"You see someone you know?"

Without saying anything, Yoo Joonghyuk observed the collapsed Reincarnators. A few still surviving and writhing about extended their hands towards him. Their wounds were too serious and it was too late to save them. He lowered himself and stabbed his shortsword in each of their necks. When he did, they all passed on with a peaceful expression on their faces.

Yuri di Aristel watching that scene suddenly raised her voice.

「Sooyoung.」

'Don't worry, Yuri. I won't let that happen to you'.

She could see the souls of the dead Reincarnators scatter away.

The ones fettered to the Mandala would be revived even if they were killed on this island. However, being an immortal certainly didn't mean that it was okay for them to die.

[Giant Story that lost its name has ceased to exist.]

Every time they were mobilised for a different scenario, they would gradually lose their own worlds. They'd forget their original lives, and eventually, even forget about their own deaths, too.

[Oldest Good advises the Reincarnators to be virtuous.]

[Oldest Evil demands the Reincarnators to choose.]

The majority of the dead would be those who had never thought about the concept of the greater 'Good' or 'Evil'. Han Sooyoung closed the eyelids of a dead Reincarnator. The dead's face, his eyes now closed, was quite obviously neither good nor evil.

[You need to select your camp in order to enter the applicable battlefield!]

"I shall choose my camp."

The moment Yoo Joonghyuk opened his lips to speak, Han Sooyoung narrowed her eyes and asked him. "You, you ain't thinking of something else, are you? Before you guys got to Kaizenix Archipelago, you two fought like crazy, right?"

He didn't answer and simply stared at her. She could pretty much guess what that frustratingly-stiff expression of his was implying, and just as she got ready to yell at him, he finally made his reply.

"This war must not be the 'Great War of Saints and Demons', but a fight between us. Meaning, this place must not become a battlefield of others."

Not the Great War, but the battle of Kim Dokja's Company – Han Sooyoung immediately realized the meaning behind those words.

"Only then, neither 'Good' nor 'Evil' will win this war. And that development should be what Kim Dokja wants."

"I get what you're saying, but that's gonna be really tough, you know?" Han Sooyoung immediately came in with a tackle. "We do that, and we'll be turning our backs on both the <Demon Realm> and <Eden> at the same time."

"You said that this isn't the 1863rd turn."

Han Sooyoung pouted a bit, looking as if she got sucker-punched. "Kim Dokja… He's a hardcore bastard, alright. He might be the only idiot who'd come up with something this crazy as a solution in situations like this one."

"He's originally like that."

"It's the same story for you, too! You two are so damn similar."

At her rebuke, Yoo Joonghyuk retorted with a curt tone of voice. "You aren't that different from us, either."

"Whaaat? I'm different from you two idiots. Anyway, let's stop yapping and get cracking already."

They now could see Kim Dokja getting beaten up by the Angels surrounding him in the distance. But then again, he suddenly declared himself to be 'Evil' in their midst, so it was only natural that the Angels of <Eden> would be quaking in rage born from the sense of betrayal.

Yoo Joonghyuk declared first. "I won't do it in half-measures."

"So what? I'm planning to kill you if things go sideways, you know?"

"Good. Only then is there some fun in fighting you."

"Fine. That match we didn't get to finish back in Kaizenix? Let's finish it right here."

The figures of these two vanished towards the battlefield; Lee Hyunsung, now left by himself and all alone, could only cry out in sorrow.

"H-hang on!! Sooyoung-ssi! Joonghyuk-ssi!!! What about me?!"

"Do whatever you want!"

[Incarnation, 'Han Sooyoung', has chosen her affiliated camp.]

[Incarnation, 'Yoo Joonghyuk', has chosen his affiliated camp.]

[Camp the Incarnation 'Han Sooyoung' has chosen is 'Evil'.]

[Camp the Incarnation 'Yoo Joonghyuk' has chosen is 'Good'.]

Finally, their own 'Great War of Saints and Demons' had begun.

On a wide-open plain of the 'Main Island', where Heaven's entire fighting force had gathered.

The leader of the Heavenly forces, Metatron, was in the middle of listening to the updates on the current situation from other Angels inside the barracks designed to mimic his office back home.

– <Olympus> has revealed their desire to participate.

– <Vedas> has sent a dispatch, saying that they will participate.

– <Asgard> has also declared their intention to participate. However, due to their own Giant Story, it seems that not many Constellations will participate from this side.

– There hasn't been any contact, but we have spied some movements from <Emperor> as well. They are famous for their stick-and-carrot strategy, so…

– 'Hell's Scribe' is diligently moving inside the neutral zone. Thanks to him, the participation rate has shot up irrelevant of whether they are Constellations or the Reincarnators.

Metatron studiously took notes of every single report and after attaching a suitable response, sent them back.

The 'Great War of Saints and Demons' this time was, as the name implied, a war with the fate of 'Good' and 'Evil' on the line. That was why Metatron was far more cautious and careful with this scenario.

[Absolute Good Points in the applicable camp is currently 56.]

And so far, the war was chugging along without any issues – with the sole exception of the special limitation that was attached to this particular 'Great War', that was.

[Chaos Points is currently 51.]

The so-called 'Chaos Points'; when he asked the Great Dokkaebi about it, this was the answer he got.

– It's a very rare occurrence to present a stage of this magnitude for a conflict between ancient Giant Stories. So, there needs to be a suitable risk of danger in accordance with the Probability.

– What does that mean?

– It'll be no fun when detailed explanations are provided, so I won't offer you anything substantial. However, do remember this. No matter what happens, do not let the Chaos Points reach 100. Do you understand? If not, something truly horrifying will occur.

Great Dokkaebis couldn't care any less about the fate of a Nebula. No, they were only hell-bent on creating more stimulating scenarios. So, these 'Chaos Points' must have been the fruit of their malicious scheme.

[This is boring, Scribe.] Michael, polishing his sword in the corner of the barracks, spoke. [I shall bring the head of Agares. Send me out.]

Michael had tasted humiliation twice at the hands of Kim Dokja and Yoo Joonghyuk on the 'Middle Island' scenario; his Incarnation Body had fully recovered through the authority of revival and now, he found himself inside the 'Main Island's' scenario, waiting.

Metatron formed a thin smile at Michael and his hotly-burning desire.

[If we do that, the war will end too soon.]

[Isn't it better to end a boring war as soon as possible?]

[No, not necessarily. This war must be longer and more wretched than any other scenario in existence.]

Metatron looked at the screens being broadcast from all parts of the battlefields. Beings who had chosen the side of 'Good' or 'Evil' through their own decision were pointing their weapons at each other. Metatron knew that, although they were participating in this war as nothing more than simple mercenaries, their moral leanings would gradually change the longer the time went on.

[Oldest Good is wishing for a magnificent holy war.]

Constellations participating in this war would eventually grow to hate each other in the name of 'Good' and 'Evil', and that hatred would burn brightly to create the next generation of Stories.

Michael, watching the battle, spoke in a sulky tone of voice. [In that case, allow me to kill the bastards of <Kim Dokja's Company>, at least. I have a score to settle with them.]

Metatron shook his head. <Kim Dokja's Company> was an important variable in this scenario. That faction had to be used as much as possible.

[If it was before, sure, but it's not possible now. I have a different plan for them. If you step forward, Michael, then…]

It was right there that a scenario message announced itself.

[113th regional conflict of 'Great War of Saints and Demons' has been forcibly concluded.]

Metatron confirmed the attached information on the message. The 113th regional conflict was the battlefront that Uriel participated in.

[…Forcibly concluded?]

There had never been a message like that before. It didn't end there, though.

[Chaos Points have increased by 5.]

[Chaos Points is currently 56.]

[Warning! Chaos Points have exceeded 55!]

…

…

…

[Something is writhing around in the hottest place in Hell.]

[The Calamity of Revelation that decides the end of everything has begun its quickening.]

Chapter 386: Ep. 74 - Great War of Saints and Demons, I

Bluish arcs of electricity danced in the air and the last android rushing towards them collapsed on the ground.

Pu-shu-shuk.

Lee Jihye yanked her sword out from the bisected cables and wiped her forehead.

[Level up!]

Gilyoung, watching her from the sidelines, picked his nose and spoke to her. "Noona, you've gotten really good at this, haven't you?"

She oh-so-badly wanted to smack the boy in the head after listening to his sky-high ego-filled words, but had to stop.

[You can't attack the target.]

Regardless of what else, these two kids were invincible in this worldview. Nothing good would come from rubbing them the wrong way.

She alternated her gaze between Lee Gilyoung and Shin Yoosung before throwing them a question. "What are your levels now?"

"84."

"I'm 87, unni."

"What?! But, you were 83 a few days ago!!"

"I lied, you dummy."

Lee Jihye watched the two kids bicker and replied with a lengthy sigh. "I'm still 79, though…"

Still, she was able to level up quickly thanks to these two kids. Just as the slang implied, her levelling-up was lightning fast, as if she was riding on a bus, and that placed them on the list of the most wanted individuals of Next City.

[Android Lee Jihye – 1888G]

More correctly, it was her alone. From the get-go, the kids couldn't be attacked anyway, so they didn't even show up on the wanted list.

"I guess it's about time we escape from this worldview."

"I think it'll be over if we bring that down, unni."

There was a huge tower occupying the centre of Next City where Shin Yoosung was pointing at. There was a battleship parked on top of that tower, and every time she looked at it, Lee Jihye would receive a message from her sponsor.

[Constellation, 'Maritime War God', strongly recommends that you acquire that Star Relic.]

"…Now that is surprising. Especially from our miserly general, no less."

[Constellation, 'Maritime War God', dry coughs.]

It wasn't as if she couldn't understand her sponsor's heart, though. Anyone who clapped their eyes on that battleship's appearance would indeed understand where he was coming from.

"I just can't figure out why that thing's parked over there…"

If they manage to commandeer that ship, then the skies of all the worlds would become the 'Maritime War God's' ocean.

Lee Jihye tightly grasped the hilt of her sword and spoke. "Yeah, it might be fun to shock the socks off ahjussi and my master. Hey, guys? Why don't we clear this place now?"

"Sure! It was getting boring using the bug all the time, too!"

"Yes, let's."

The three arrived at a mutual agreement and began walking towards the tower, only for a completely unexpected message to enter their ears.

[Emergency patch has been updated.]

[From tonight's midnight onwards, the applicable scenario will institute 'Shutdown' system.]

[From 00:00 to 06:00, children under the age of 18 cannot utilise the applicable scenario.]

Lee Gilyoung and Shin Yoosung merrily running forward side by side suddenly began faltering precariously.

The boy muttered in a flustered vice. "N-noona, I'm sleepy…"

"Unni, run…!"

The two kids plopped down after saying that and fell into slumber. Lee Jihye placed her hand near their noses and confirmed that they weren't dead.

[Applicable player is in 'Shutdown' state.]

For Lee Jihye, this was one flabbergasting situation.

"What the hell? I thought this worldview was 18+ from the get-go? Why is this shutdown thing even introduced??"

Too bad, there was no time to relaxedly stand around and complain; the tower's gates opened up wide and hundreds of drones began sortieing simultaneously in order to kill her, that was why.

"…Oh, shit."

It seemed that this night was going to be a very long one for her.

* * *

[113th regional conflict has been concluded.]

[Outcome of the applicable regional conflict cannot be decided.]

This particular skirmish had no victors or losers. Heavily-wounded Demon Kings supported each other and retreated, while panic-stricken Uriel vanished from here along with the lower-ranked Angels. The only people remaining in the empty battlefield were Reincarnators strewn about like the remnants of a defeated army, plus five men and women among them collapsed on the ground.

"…I had no idea this would happen," muttered Han Sooyoung in a dumbfounded voice.

What <Kim Dokja's Company> did after entering the regional conflict was pretty simple – participate in the war between 'Good' and 'Evil', and suppress every other participant beside themselves. And then, the remaining folks would go for it and slug it out for the war with no winners.

[Applicable battle's outcome can't be decided.]

[Lack of will to fight by the participants of the applicable battle has been confirmed.]

The battle of <Kim Dokja's Company> was not a life-or-death fight but a game, a sparring session, something with no determined winners or losers. And that was why it was not a war between 'Good' and 'Evil', and naturally, was not the 'Great War of Saints and Demons', either.

[Applicable regional conflict has been excluded from the category of 'Great War of Saints and Demons'.]

[New 113th regional conflict is waiting to take place.]

The strength to forcibly break up a battlefield – that was the power <Kim Dokja's Company> possessed right now.

"…My sponsor should be really sad and disappointed by now."

"It couldn't be helped this time, Heewon-ssi."

"If it's at all possible, I don't want to fight against Uriel."

"It's the same story for me."

With a slightly regretful face, Jung Heewon and Lee Hyunsung looked at the Reincarnators of the battlefield. Although many had died and returned to the cycle of rebirth, there were a few who still managed to survive.

They split the [Ellaine Forest Essence] in their possession and distributed it to the survivors. Kim Dokja too, supported the surrounding Reincarnators one by one and stemmed their bleeding by pressing their pressure points.

Han Sooyoung spoke while looking at him. "You started this whole thing with a definite plan, right?"

"I always have a plan before starting anything."

"Then you should know that we can't keep this up forever."

The timing for this particular conflict proved to be fortunate for them, but there was no guarantee that their luck would be as good the next time.

Besides, there were definitely beings among the Constellations on the side of 'Good' or Demon Kings that the strength of <Kim Dokja's Company> couldn't handle, and if they rushed into a battle with a too-great disparity in combat strength, they might find themselves in mortal danger, as well.

However, Kim Dokja maintained a composed expression.

– We don't need to hold out for long, so it'll be fine.

Han Sooyoung heard his relaxed Midday Tryst voice and hushed her own in reply.

– Okay, what then?

– We just have to hold on until the Chaos Points go past 90.

[Chaos Points currently is 56.]

As if it was waiting for this moment, the message floated up in the air and Han Sooyoung shot a glare at it.

– What's this point thing about? It sounds different from the 'Good/Evil' Points, though?

– You're right.

Kim Dokja briefly explained what this 'Chaos Points' thing was – that it would rise up when neither the 'Good' nor 'Evil' claimed victory and the world's order collapsed as a result.

– What happens if that gets to full?

– The Calamity of Revelation will start.

– The Calamity of Revelation? …Hold up, are you talking about the 'Apocalypse Dragon'?

The Dragon of Destruction from the Book of Revelation, also known as the Final Dragon of the Revelation – a being referred to as the so-called

'Apocalypse Dragon'.

A humongous calamity that descended on the 95th scenario during the 1863rd turn, it was capable of sweeping away the Constellations of the <Star Stream> with just a single flick of its tail.

Kim Dokja grinned and nodded his head.

– Right. You knew about it?

– …You want to increase these Chaos Points even after knowing that? Are you insane?! What will you do if the Apocalypse Dragon is revived?? Have you forgotten what happened during the 1863rd turn?

If the Apocalypse Dragon did wake up during this scenario, then it'd bring forth a scale of destruction incomparable to that of the 'Great War of Saints and Demons'.

However, Kim Dokja carried a determined expression.

– It won't revive.

– And how do you know that??

Kim Dokja shrugged his shoulders and turned around as his reply to her question. She was about to fly off her handle and yell out at him, but someone suddenly butted in.

"You're supposed to be a writer, yet you lack imagination."

"What was that, you bastard?"

Yoo Joonghyuk easily caught Han Sooyoung's small fist flying in.

She growled menacingly. "Why are you butting in on someone else's conversation?"

"I couldn't endure any more of your pathetic mutterings, that's why."

"What bullshit are you talking about now?"

"He's not the only one who knows about what happened in the 1863rd turn regression."

Han Sooyoung immediately understood what he was saying.

Indeed, Kim Dokja didn't hop over to the 1863rd turn alone; he departed along with two Archangels in tow, and came back with one of them.

And what that implied was…

"…<Eden> also knows about the stuff in that place, then. And he's using that fact to his advantage."

Kim Dokja's plan was pretty clear-cut.

Once the Chaos gauge reaches 100, the Apocalypse Dragon would be unleashed. And <Eden> was well aware of what would happen if that creature is released, since it had the information from the 1863rd turn.

If they wished to avoid the fate of being destroyed, then they should immediately stop the 'Great War of Saints and Demons'.

That was the crux of the message Kim Dokja wished to convey.

Han Sooyoung felt ever so slightly flabbergasted while looking at him consoling the Reincarnators with an utterly calm expression on his face.

Just who in this world was capable of threatening a large Nebula?

"That evil dude, he… He's basically telling them to choose between surviving together, or perishing together!"

"If things work out well, that's what should happen. However, a future where only we are killed could happen, instead."

Yoo Joonghyuk's expression was hard as he polished the 'Black Heavenly Demon Sword'. It was the most dignified, serious expression he had in a while.

She could see his resolution from that expression. Most likely, his head was filled with thoughts of the worst potential situations – Kim Dokja's plan ends up as a failure, then the members of <Kim Dokja's Company> are annihilated in this place, and finally, he'd have no choice but to regress once more.

Han Sooyoung complained loudly. "Is imagining horrible futures a unique habit of regressors?"

"Only by thinking of the worst will you be able to prepare for the aftermath."

"Someone might think you've regressed ten thousand times if they hear you."

"In some other universe, that might have happened already."

"…Didn't know you could say stuff like that," smirked Han Sooyoung, and she shifted her eyes back to Kim Dokja in the distance.

Him still wobbling about like that reminded her of looking at an inflatable tube sky puppet shaking around against the wind.

Just as she couldn't read the inner workings of an empty sky puppet, she also couldn't read Kim Dokja's inner thoughts. She sometimes felt as if she could, but that was nothing more than some air leaking out from the puppet, instead.

Why was she even trusting that guy, anyway?

Maybe, the one she couldn't really understand was herself. Why was she fighting together with Kim Dokja?

She might find an answer if she used [Predictive Plagiarism], but Han Sooyoung purposely didn't. She thought that she should not do that.

She looked to her side to discover Yoo Joonghyuk staring at the same spectacle as her.

"Hey, I wanna ask you something."

"It's mystifying that you still mistakenly believe I'll answer you earnestly."

"Right, you were one hell of a stubborn dude. I mean, you didn't even moan in pain once after you got tortured that badly during 'Kaizenix Archipelago'."

His expression stiffened. "I thought as much. You were behind that, weren't you?"

"I didn't order it, but my kind Yuri understood my heart, that was all."

[Story, 'Kaizenix's King', slowly nods its head.]

Yoo Joonghyuk never once revealed his identity or information related to him even when subjected to Yuri's horrifying torture.

Han Sooyoung dusted her butt off and stood up. "In any case, you really okay with this? You were trying to kill Kim Dokja earlier, right?"

"It doesn't concern you."

"A guy like you doesn't easily change his mind, so. That means you didn't have a change of heart, but never planned to kill him in the first place…"

"…"

"Well, then. Who was egging you on? Metatron?"

Yoo Joonghyuk's thick eyebrow twitched slightly when Metatron's name was brought up.

"H-mm, so, it was related."

"…It seems that you've done your homework."

"I don't have spare time to do crap like that. Nah, I just brought it up because you suddenly mentioned <Eden>, you know… But, after seeing your reaction, I guess 'Metatron' wasn't the main instigator, then."

Han Sooyoung's power of deduction caused both of his brows to quiver this time.

"H-mm, who could it be… Who could have upset our precious Regressor like this…?"

"He's not a being that someone like you would know."

"Yup, I knew it. It's the 'Secretive Plotter', right?"

Yoo Joonghyuk looked up at the standing Han Sooyoung.

Her lips twitched a little as if to say, why are you so surprised like that. "Hey, I'm not a moron, I'll have you know! I can easily guess the stuff your head manages to come up with."

[Incarnation, 'Han Sooyoung', is using 'Predictive Plagiarism'.]

"More correctly, it's the multiple 'mes', though."

A Story where hundreds, thousands, maybe even tens of thousands of Han Sooyoungs gathered together to predict the upcoming events.

It was Yoo Joonghyuk's turn to ask this time. "Do you know something about the 'Secretive Plotter'?"

"A really powerful Outer God, right?"

He formed a disappointed face for a bit before speaking in a convinced tone of voice. "…I see that even if thousands of morons gather, they can't become a single genius."

"Wanna die?? Fine, you know who that is, then?"

"There is one being that I can think of."

"Ho-oh? Who is it?"

Rather than answering her right away, Yoo Joonghyuk recalled his memories, instead. "…That bastard knew all of my histories. From the 0th regression to the far-flung futures, the ones I haven't even experienced yet."

"H-mm…"

"If my guess is correct, then there can only be one such existence in this entire world-line."

Han Sooyoung nodded her head in agreement. "That sounds about right. There's only one with high enough probability."

The two of them stared at each other for a little while, before muttering out the answers they thought of.

However…

"…Who did you say it was?"

"What kind of bullshit was that?"

Their answers were different from each other's.

Chapter 387: Ep. 74 - Great War of Saints and Demons, II

The first person to raise her voice was Han Sooyoung. "What the hell? How can you even think that? Does one's intelligence get worse the more you regress?"

"Taken words right out of my mouth. To think that a so-called writer would cook up something so unpleasant."

She and Yoo Joonghyuk growled and glared at each other.

And the first one to back off was also Han Sooyoung. "Fuu… Right, regressing three times could mess with your mind and cause you to dream up weird things. So… You're saying that 'Secretive Plotter' is 'Kim Dokja from the future'?"

"That's what I think."

"Fine, well. It's not completely impossible, I'll give you that. All sorts of crazy things happen in the <Star Stream>, and…"

Han Sooyoung was about to say "A novel can also become reality in our world" but quickly swallowed those words back. Even if that was true, she thought that such a thing shouldn't be mentioned in front of Yoo Joonghyuk.

So, she said something else. "Wouldn't it be quickest to ask the 'Secretive Plotter'? Did you try to confirm it?"

He nodded his head. "I had a deal with him. If I do something for him, then he'd answer a single question of mine."

"What did you ask him?"

"I asked if his identity was truly Kim Dokja from the future."

"And then, what?"

"He said that he wasn't."

"In that case, why are you…"

"Let me be more clear. He said, 'Once upon a time, I might have been someone, but now, I am no one'."

…Might have been someone, but now, they are no one?

Han Sooyoung quickly realized what was wrong with that statement.

The 'Secretive Plotter' didn't implicitly deny being 'Kim Dokja from the future' in that reply. No, what he said was much closer to 'I might be Kim Dokja, or I might not be' than anything else.

In that case, Yoo Joonghyuk not backing away from his guess made sense.

Han Sooyoung asked one more time. "Was that all you asked him?"

"He knew of all the regression turns I've lived through."

He was something once upon a time, but now, just a simple 'Secretive Plotter'; a being that knew every regression turn Yoo Joonghyuk had lived in.

"Anything else?"

"No."

"You kidding me? You fought like crazy just to ask him only that?" Han Sooyoung yelled at him while panting like an angry bull. "That guy didn't exist in your previous regressions, right? If you couldn't find out his real identity, you should've at least tried to learn other info, you know?!"

"…I did hear what his goal was."

"What was it?"

"He said that there was something he wanted to change. And, someone he wished to kill, as well."

It felt as if the more she heard, the deeper she was being sucked into the quagmire. By flipping the term 'someone he wished to kill' around, you'd get 'someone he can't kill yet'.

Was there a being on the level that even a godly existence like 'Secretive Plotter' couldn't do anything about?

"That's all I've heard from him. That was all the questions I was permitted to ask."

"You couldn't dig out more info, though?"

"That means I'll have to make another deal with him. If I do, then I'll have to bear a heavier cost than the last time," said Yoo Joonghyuk, and he shifted his gaze to the sky.

She also looked up as well and activated [Midday Tryst].

– Is he looking at us?

– I can't sense his gaze.

That was a slightly disappointing result; they were chatting away openly like this so that the subject in question would hear them, but it seemed that he wasn't even watching them right now. Should she say it wasn't like 'Secretive Plotter'?

Han Sooyoung spoke.

– Well, this is problematic. If a godly being on that level decides to butt into the middle of something important, then no matter how good our plan is, it'll be useless.

Especially so when on a stage as important as the current 'Great War of Saints and Demons'; if a small variable could flip the table on its head, then there was no way she'd not be concerned by it.

However, Yoo Joonghyuk's thoughts were different from hers. "He probably won't step forward personally."

"What makes you think that?"

"The evidence is with him using Kim Dokja or me to carry out his schemes. If he was able to make a move, then he'd have done so already. An existence of his level would need to exhaust a great deal of Probability if he intends to make a move."

"…That makes sense. Who knew that the moment I'd thank the shitty Probability would actually come?"

"I have something to ask you now."

"Huh?"

"I still haven't heard the basis for your unpleasant hypothesis. Why did you say the 'Secretive Plotter' is 'that person'…?"

Yoo Joonghyuk's question elicited a smirk from Han Sooyoung. "What's this? I thought you weren't interested, but I guess it does bug you."

"You never fail to add unnecessary comments, don't you."

Just before he could grasp the cold hilt of his sword, a rather sly voice came towards them from nearby. "You two seem to be enjoying each other's company."

Two people's cold, murderous glares squarely landed on Kim Dokja.

He formed a bitter smile and was about to wave his hands around while backing away, but then, a new scenario message rose up in the empty air.

[New coordinates for the 113th regional conflict have been set.]

The gazes of the group were now fixed on Kim Dokja. Finally, time to make another move had arrived.

"Well, let's go and cause another scene, then."

As if they were all waiting for it, Stories of <Kim Dokja's Company> began clamouring loudly.

[New Story is sprouting in the Demon King, 'Demon King of Salvation'!]

[List of candidates for 'Demon King of Salvation's' second Modifier have been generated.]

The Demon Realm's second-in-command was called by a variety of Modifiers; 'Ruler of East Hell', 'Demon Realm's Proxy', 'Destroyer of Sanctity'.

Even though he carried many varied names, there could ever be only one true name for him.

The Master of the 2nd Demon Realm, Agares.

Ever since the Master of the 1st Demon Realm suddenly disappeared, Agares had been protecting the Demon Realm for the past thousands of years or so.

He cut off the heads of Archangels salivating over his territory, and protected those Stories that allowed 'Evil' to exist as evil.

While he tested the qualification of 'Evil', restricted, and even ruled over it, he focused all of his being on only one question.

What did 'Evil' exist for?

Every time he ripped apart yet another living being, he immersed himself in that question. It was not important whether this question had an answer or not; no, that question simply enabled him to carry on.

[113th regional conflict has been forcibly concluded.]

[114th regional conflict has been forcibly concluded.]

However, this was his first time seeing such a spectacle in the thousands of years he'd lived so far.

– Everyone, be strong for a little bit longer!

– We've almost suppressed them all!

There were people rescuing the Reincarnators from the chaotic battlefield. The expendables being sacrificed regardless of the outcome of the great battle between 'Good' and 'Evil' were being saved by someone.

Now normally, such actions would correspond to the side of 'Good'. However, the problem here was that a Demon King was responsible for performing that very action.

[Chaos Points have increased by 4.]

[Chaos Points are currently 60.]

[Warning! Chaos Points have exceeded 60!]

Chaos. Neither 'Good' nor 'Evil', it was 'something' that existed outside of the world's Probability and its natural order.

[You want to increase the Chaos Points and stop the 'Great War of Saints and Demons', is that it?]

Reddish horns sprouted up below the fedora pushed down deeply on Agares's head, which was his unique quirk whenever he was intrigued by something.

[Stop smaller-scale destruction with the threat of even bigger destruction. It truly is an idea only the 'Demon King of Salvation' can cook up.]

The one to offer his opinion was the 'Devil of Lust and Wrath', Asmodeus.

Agares spoke, his fingers gripping the throne wagging to and fro. [Why does he not side with 'Evil'? Surely, he'd not lose out by joining this side.]

[Once this 'Great War of Saints and Demons' concludes, his 'Twist' will be completed. It also means that the ■■ he pursues is not on the path of 'Evil'.]

[Even then, he doesn't seem to be pursuing the ■■ of 'Good', either.]

This was a far more awkward situation than if he had chosen to side with either the 'Good' or 'Evil'.

Agares asked again. [What are your thoughts?]

[Metatron will make a move first before we do. There is simply no way that the aged Angel who had been thirsting after this war more than anyone else would let his careful plans get thrown into disarray.]

Almost at the same time as those words came to an end, a single line message arrived through the Demon King's line of transmission.

– Agares, I've contacted you with a matter I need to discuss.

The torn corners of Agares's lips curled up in a smile.

– Metatron, I'm sure we don't enjoy a relationship where we can relaxedly chat away our spare time like this.

The highest authorities in the Demon Realm and <Eden> currently were speaking face to face through a screen. Just from the exchange of their gazes, a powerful burst of Probability's sparks exploded out.

– I don't mind shooting the breeze with you, but for now, it seems that I need to borrow your power for a little while.

– Have you ever heard of a story where 'Good' and 'Evil' joins hands?

– Well, the stories of 'Evil' trying to achieve its goal by any means necessary are quite common, aren't they?

Even after hearing Agares's sarcastic tone of voice, Metatron remained composed.

– There is a certain immature Nebula; young juniors, that believe they are the centre of the universe.

It was pretty clear who those juniors were in this little story. Agares chuckled and replied.

– To think, you'd use the hotline just so that you can trample on a small Nebula. How amusing.

– If things go wrong, then even the 'Great War of Saints and Demons' could collapse because of that small Nebula.

– Do you wish to instil discipline in them as a senior of the <Star Stream>, then? Your 'Kkondae' disposition still remains, I see.

– Let's just say that I merely wish to teach them the true ways of the world.

– I decline. I don't need to join hands with someone like you, because crushing a Nebula like that is nothing to me.

– I'm not proposing that we join hands.

– Then, what?

Rather than a verbal reply, Metatron floated a small crucifix above his hand. It rose up in the air and continued to spin around.

– <Kim Dokja's Company> was able to ruin the battlefields due to the fact that they have been exploiting how the forces are balanced, each side's power being equal.

–So what?

– But, what if it's a battle where that balance has been broken from the beginning?

Metatron blew at the crucifix; when he did, its axis of rotation was slightly disturbed and it began spinning unstably. Agares asked as if he was displeased by something.

– Are you suggesting that we create a battlefield where one side is at a disadvantage from the beginning?

– That's correct.

Unless the combat forces of either side were evenly matched, <Kim Dokja's Company> would have to try to shift the balance if it had tilted to one side already. If it had tilted towards 'Evil', then lean towards 'Good', and if it was tilting towards 'Good', then push back to 'Evil'.

If that situation was exploited inversely, then it'd not be an impossibility to engineer a regional conflict where <Kim Dokja's Company> would be met with annihilation, too.

– And you want to start a battle with who in disadvantage now?

– We should play fair in this matter, at least. If we create a regional conflict with the 'Evil' side in a disadvantage, then I shall create another one with 'Good' at a disadvantage.

– Interesting. I guess that you dearly wish to kill them even at the expense of sacrificing angels.

– We can't sit back and watch the Chaos Points rack up like this. Also, by creating several regional conflicts we will be able to disperse <Kim Dokja's Company>.

– What if they don't react to this provocation?

– Wouldn't that still be enough, then?

Metatron's eyes, as seen on the screen, were glowing in white light.

– If they don't respond, then the ultimate victor of this war would end up being 'Good' and 'Evil', after all.

[Gate leading to 115th regional conflict has opened!]

[Gate leading to 116th regional conflict has opened!]

[Gate leading to 117th regional conflict…!]

I chuckled hollowly while watching the Gates blanket space in real-time.

I knew it. There was just no way that Metatron or Agares would let this matter slide like that.

Jung Heewon watched the portals that appeared and disappeared in real-time and asked a question. "Dokja-ssi, what's going on?"

"They've started several regional conflicts at once."

"But, can that even happen?"

"Originally, no. Even if it's nominally a regional conflict, it can't start and end that quickly."

[115th regional conflict has concluded.]

[116th regional conflict has concluded.]

Along with the battlefields that were concluding abruptly, the scenario message floated up in the air as well.

[Current state of Great War's progress]

Absolute Good Points: 57

Absolute Evil Points: 57

Chaos Points: 60

The 'Good/Evil' Points were rapidly climbing up as if to compete against the Chaos Points we had racked up. The one who eventually shot up from his seat first was Lee Hyunsung.

"We can't just sit back and do nothing." He clenched his fist tightly and continued on. "There must be Reincarnators being sacrificed in those battlefields."

"Of course there are. But if we enter one of those, we'll all die," replied Han Sooyoung as she chewed on her nails.

"…Excuse me?"

"Don't you get it? Those are all traps. They made up their minds to totally destroy us, that's what."

Lee Hyunsung dazedly stared at me, and I nodded my head at him. "Han Sooyoung is correct. Most likely, we will be attacked the moment we enter there."

"It'll be the same end even if we don't enter."

The complexions of the group became gloomier after hearing Yoo Joonghyuk's words.

Currently, the members of <Kim Dokja's Company> were split up among 'Good' and 'Evil'.

If the victor of the 'Great War of Saints and Demons' was declared in this fashion, then the losing side would be met with a terrible fate. Obviously, the Incarnation bodies would cease to exist, and even if one's luck was good and they became a soul, one would be tortured by the intense heat of Hell and his or her ego would be destroyed in the end.

We had no choice but to participate in the battles.

"…It can't be helped, I guess."

Sometimes, one had to step right in knowing that it was a trap.

I quickly divided the members. "Jung Heewon-ssi and Lee Hyunsung-ssi, please participate in the 117th regional conflict. Han Sooyoung and Yoo Joonghyuk, you two enter the 119th Gate…"

"Hey, hold up, what about you?"

"I'll enter the 121st Gate alone."

Yoo Joonghyuk glared at me and wordlessly grasped the hilt of his sword, so I quickly made myself clear.

"N-no, I'm not saying that I'll really enter alone, you know."

"Then, who are you going with?"

"Folks who will become our allies."

This time, Han Sooyoung tackled me. "Who? Who'd wanna become our allies in the current situation?"

Indeed, no one would want to side with us, normally.

However, if my thoughts were correct, then at least, there was one. No, make that two.

[Nebula, <Underworld>, is waiting for you.]

I smirked and replied. "My parents."

Chapter 388: Ep. 74 - Great War of Saints and Demons, III

After sharing brief goodbyes with my companions, I immediately sent a message to the <Underworld>. A reply came back in no time at all.

[Constellation, 'Father of the Rich Night', has permitted your entry.]

[Constellation, 'Queen of the Darkest Spring', has permitted your entry.]

[Nebula, <Underworld>, has opened a portal that will summon you.]

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

Now originally, it was not easy to leave beyond the scenario's boundaries when a massive scenario was already underway. However, the <Underworld> had willingly spent an enormous amount of Probability for my sake.

I was really grateful for that.

I might be called their successor, but, I haven't even paid them a proper visit to say hello after getting their help the last time…

Now that I thought about it, I was kind of apprehensive, too; what if the reason for them permitting my entry without any issues was to beat me up for not visiting the <Underworld> until now?

– Kim Dokja.

A message suddenly came flying in and startled me. I quickly looked up. It wasn't via [Midday Tryst], which meant there could be only one who had sent me this message.

– What's this? I thought you'd be busy after becoming the branch manager. But you still have enough leeway to mind what's happening this side, too?

– No, I don't. I made time, though.

Bihyung, floating in the air, grumbled a bit while sucking on leaf tobacco. This guy… It looked as if he was fatigued from overworking after becoming a manager recently. He stared at me with complicated eyes and let a long sigh escape from his lips. I sensed the surrounding channels' transmissions get blocked off temporarily.

– You're trying to do something really dangerous.

– When did I ever not do that?

– This is different from the past. This time, the entirety of the <Star Stream> is paying attention to the things you're doing.

– I think I've heard that hundreds of times by now.

– You keep this up, and all the Probability's karma you've accumulated so far will blow up in your face. You know what that means, don't you?

I nodded my head. I clearly saw all the horrifying things that happened after the twisted Probability exploded forth back in the 'Demon King Selection'.

And honestly, I'd been often feeling as if I was standing on a Jenga tower missing quite a few blocks lately.

– You be careful now. You can't stay lucky forever. Even if you are under protection by Great Dokkaebis or Outer Gods…

– Under the protection of who??

– …Forget it. I shouldn't have said anything.

Bihyung shook his head and lightly spread some smoke in the air. When he did, the frozen channels began opening up once more with the tobacco smoke as the centre.

– Come back alive. Don't die.

– Is that something you should say to a guy heading to the netherworld?

He didn't have to say anything, but I knew that, most likely, Bihyung had been stopping all the interference attempts coming from the Bureau. He was just a measly little low-ranked Dokkaebi the first time we met, but now, he became big enough to help me out in this manner. Indeed, one had to live long enough first to see something like this.

[Transmission through space-time has begun.]

All sensory perception seemed to split apart before me and when I opened my eyes again, the blackened and withered grounds of the netherworld greeted my presence. It was the <Underworld>. Originally, I needed to utilise the services of the boatman Charon and cross the river first, but that step had been omitted this time.

I walked on the gravelled banks of the dried-up river and headed off towards Hades's palace for a while. The moment I stepped inside the outer castle, though, tens of thousands of gazes landed on me as if they had been waiting for my arrival.

From the three Judges of the <Underworld> to the innumerable number of souls – judging from how ferocious the overall atmosphere was, I had to conclude that their gazes were not friendly at all.

[Judges of the <Underworld> have discovered your presence!]

As expected, there was another purpose in summoning me here, wasn't there?

Shu-shu-shut…

Emitting Statuses that might turn every living thing into withered, mummified husks, the three Judges of the <Underworld> approached me as if they were gliding in the air.

Each judge was a Narrative-grade Constellation.

I quickly grasped the Unbroken Faith attached to my hips. Even if I had grown stronger, it was not going to be easy trying to fend off against these three when we were in the <Underworld>.

It was right then that the leading Judge's eye level began lowering towards the ground. That was the start; the second and third Judges also lowered their eye level. All three of them were now kneeling before me.

…Uh?

And the army of the <Underworld> following after them all began settling down like a violent but low tidal wave. I took a closer look, and that volatile atmosphere I felt earlier was a bit different in nature to what I was assuming earlier. In fact, the Judges of the <Underworld> were looking at me while wiping away at their eyes – as if they were deeply moved about something.

Ku-gugugugu!

The <Underworld> itself seemed to have knelt before me to open up a path.

It was the path that led into the inner sanctum of the palace. Only two Constellations were allowed to walk on this path up until now.

[We welcome you to the Kingdom of the Night, oh, Heir to the <Underworld>!!]

Along with the Judge's declaration, a system message floated up in my view.

[You are currently the Prince of the <Underworld>.]

While moving through the palace's interior, I couldn't help but feel a bit strange inside.

I figured that something like this might happen after becoming the 'successor to the <Underworld>', but still, experiencing a near-vertical rise of my station made the inside of my brain go all soft and mushy.

I had never been treated this warmly before in my life. On top of that, what was up with this rather gloomy and decorative costume?

[Character, 'Ricardo von Kaizenix', asks you if you were also a prince.]

The Fourth Prince of the Kaizenix Archipelago, sharing the same vision as me, decided to say something. As I deliberated on what my reply should be, the Judge attentively studying me also decided to address me. [Excuse me, your highness.]

"Yes?"

[I'd like to apologise for the matters of the last time.]

Now that I thought about, this ahjussi, he was the same Judge who 'greeted' me when I entered the <Underworld> in order to recover Shin Yoosung's soul. He was the one who drank lots of 'Yamata no Orochi's Snake Wine' and helped me in secret… What was his Modifier again?

"No, it's fine. Things worked out well in the end so it's alright. I was actually grateful back then."

The Judge lowered his head as if he was feeling apologetic, and pushed the doors to the audience chamber wide open. [The King of the <Underworld> is waiting for you.]

I tensed up and stepped across the doorway along with the Judges. The confidence-inspiring Statuses from them guarding my side made me feel a bit weird inside, though.

If I become the master of the <Underworld>, I'd get to order around Constellations like them.

[…Fufu. I see. So that's what happened.]

Persephone's voice coming from the darkness interrupted my chain of thoughts. She sat on her throne and was busy chatting away with someone sitting on the top of her hand.

[Baat, baat. Abaat!]

[H-mm, it was the same story back then, too?]

[Baat, baat!]

It was a little 'mochi' bouncing around; I knew who that voice belonged to. And even before I could say something, Biyoo discovered me first and cried out in happiness.

[Abaat! Abaat!]

[Our young successor has finally arrived, it seems.]

I didn't know why Biyoo was here, but still, this wasn't a bad development. Persephone seemed to be thoroughly entertained by her adorable antics, after all.

Hades's stony gaze and Persephone's warm, gentle one landed on me simultaneously. It felt as if my whole body was freezing up as this itchy sensation travelled all over me. As expected, just the glance of a Myth-grade Constellation contained enough power to overwhelm all existences.

I recalled Hades's incredible battle against Poseidon and went down on one knee, bowing my head.

"It's been a while, oh, 'Father of the Rich Night', and 'Queen of the Darkest Spring'."

[Indeed, it's been too long, my child. Have you been well?]

"Uh… Yes, I have. How about you, my queen?"

[Fufu, we've been doing well. Although, we were a little saddened that our only son paid us a visit so belatedly like this.]

The conversation we shared had this festive holiday vibe to it. Since I didn't have any experience in things like this, I couldn't figure out at all on how to carry on with the conversation.

Hades sitting on a commodious throne was looking down at me with an expression I still couldn't read, while Persephone carried a brightly-smiling face as she continued to talk to me.

[The loneliness from your absence has been filled by our littlest granddaughter here. To think, I'd get to see a Dokkaebi granddaughter in our old age… Indeed, one needs to live long enough first to see such a thing.]

She must've really liked Biyoo still going 'Baat, baat'; Persephone gently patted the small Dokkaebi sitting on the back of her hand. [Although we have a grandchild, you still regretfully lack a partner. When are you planning to introduce us to your mate?]

"Ah, that, I still need to think abo…"

The top question nobody wanted to hear during the holidays flew in at me right away.

It was right then the silent Judges decided to step forward.

[According to our investigations, there are several potential candidates, your majesty.]

[Ho-oh, is that so?]

[Yes. This data has been compiled after investigating through the Olympus's Fate Matching System「Cupid's Arrow Shot」and「Help us DUO[1] Venus」.]

[Judges, you seem to have done something productive for once.]

…N-no, hang on a minute here. Why were these geezers called Judges investigating my private life??

Unfortunately, a hologram floated up in the air without giving me a chance to stop them.

[Firstly, this is the Candidate no.1.]

What popped up on it was a certain footage.

– Dokja has a dokja's life to live, after all.

– A Dokja's life… Dokja-ssi, that's a wonderful assertion.

What the… Out of all the footages available, why did they have to go and bring out such dark history?

The Judge spoke in a composed tone of voice. [Candidate No.1 is a deeply considerate woman. Not only can she accept our Prince's peculiar sensibilities with tolerance as vast as rivers and oceans, but she also possesses a gentle, warm personality and natural decisiveness, as well as a wonderful outer appearance. Honestly speaking, she may even perhaps be out of our esteemed Prince's league…]

It felt as if the more I heard him speak, the more dazed I got.

[Next up is Candidate No.2.]

Following her, a certain woman sucking on a lemon candy and blessed with prim eyes as well as a distinctive beauty spot just below one of them appeared on the screen.

– Dummy.

– Why are you crying on a nice day like today? I mean, it's even snowing, too… I promise to think up a nice Modifier later on, okay?

The Judge formed a contented smile while looking at the footage and continued on with his story. [Although Candidate No.2 possesses an abrasive personality and often resorts to biting, sarcastic remarks, she also happens to share a special relationship with our Prince. She is the sole existence who fully understands our Prince's dark hobby, and not only that, they can even converse freely regarding that hobby. Truly, a special being, with no one else like her in the…]

Yup, the match-making system of <Olympus> had definitely lost a lot of its marbles, hadn't it?

Before the face of the third candidate could appear, I summoned up all my courage and shouted out. "No, hang on a minute! I don't have any thoughts of marriage yet!"

The Judge lowered his head as if he wanted to apologise and backed off. [If the esteemed Prince isn't ready yet, then the introduction of the next candidate can be delayed until the next time…]

[Hmm… I wonder who'll be able to tame this stubborn Prince of ours.]

Persephone complained in a tone of voice eerily similar to my real mother.

[Well, if all else fails, it'll be fine to bring the Dokkaebi that gave birth to this child as your partner. Both Hades and I are not bound by humanity's trifling and old-fashioned idea of one's preference…]

Marry Bihyung? I'd rather kill myself.

[Hades and I will not interfere even if you possess the sexual preference of 'Man Who Knows His Ignorance' and 'Sage of Idea'…]

[Judges of the <Underworld> are waiting for your choice with keen anticipation.]

[A small number of Constellations are getting interested in your preference.]

[Constellation who enjoys changing genders is paying close attention.]

I lightly sucked in a breath and quickly opened my lips to speak. "Mother."

Persephone's eyes trembled after she heard my words. [What did you…]

"I believe you already know why I came here."

[…]

"I've come to ask you for a favour."

Even if the time flow was slower in the <Underworld>, I couldn't dither about for too long. From the get-go, I had only one reason to pay a visit to this place, anyway.

"Please, lend me the army of the <Underworld>."

My words finally prompted Hades to break his silence. [Do you understand what that implies?]

A voice that seemed to blanket the world in pure darkness began pressing down on the entire palace.

An existence of the <Underworld> permitted to lead the army – there was only one such being, and that was the master of this realm, the King of the <Underworld>.

"I am aware."

[Does that mean you shall officially accept the position of the successor?]

I nodded my head.

[If you agree to become the King of the <Underworld>, then once all these scenarios are over, you must remain here to rule this realm. Do you truly understand what that means?]

"It means that I cannot go to the world of the living without special circumstances."

[Are you saying that you shall willingly succeed the throne of the <Underworld> and be locked up here for the rest of your life?]

"Yes," I unhesitantly replied.

Hades slowly stood up from his throne and stared at me with a certain air of aloofness.

Even though I've grown much stronger, fighting against Hades was still out of the question. My heart felt as if it'd explode from the nervousness, but since I was doing it, I had to see it till the end.

The power of the <Underworld> was essential if I wanted to win the 'Great War of Saints and Demons'.

"I shall become the official successor of the throne of the <Underworld>."

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[1] **DUO** is a match-making company in South Korea, specializing in finding marriage partners.

Chapter 389: Ep. 74 - Great War of Saints and Demons, IV

I'd become <Underworld's> official successor; even though I was the one who said it, it didn't feel all that real to me.

However, it seemed that I wasn't the only one who suspected the sincerity of my declaration. The King of Tartarus and the ruler of the night, Hades, was glaring at me.

[You have spoken a lie in <Underworld>.]

Accompanied by the icy sensation, cold enough to freeze my toes, 'death' was now staring straight at me.

[Right after becoming our child, I see you're already learning to deceive us.]

Hades rebuked me in a cold voice and stood up from his throne to walk closer to my position. I wanted to stand up from my spot right then, but my body didn't want to move.

The Status of a Myth-grade Constellation had currently suppressed my entire body, that was why.

Thankfully, nothing untoward happened. Hades did get to where I was, but then, unhurriedly brushed past me and walked straight out of the royal palace.

I breathed a sigh of relief and turned my head around to find Persephone rubbing her chin with a meaningful smile on her face.

[H-mm… Is this the conflict between father and son that I've only ever heard about…?]

For a tone of voice coming from a troubled-looking face, she sure sounded rather entertained.

[An eternal battle between a father and a son, with the mother in between…]

…That sounded like a narrative deeply stained by the ways of Olympus.

As if to say I shouldn't worry, Persephone lightly patted me on the shoulder. Only then did I sense the muscles of my body frozen by Hades's Status loosen up.

[Do not be too concerned, for your father's personality has always been like that.]

"…"

[However, your guilt in this matter is just as grave after daring to spout a lie first. You've never harboured thoughts of staying in <Underworld> from the beginning, have you?]

She perfectly hit the mark and I had nothing to say. I never wanted to take over for Hades and become this realm's king. What I wanted was <Underworld's> powers, not to inherit its throne.

Hades probably had cottoned onto my motives a while ago.

[It will take some time before that fellow's anger has sufficiently cooled down.]

"I'm sorry."

[No need to apologise – it's true that both Hades and I already knew you never planned to remain in this realm anyway.]

Persephone's eyes arched to a pair of gentle crescents.

[If it's alright with you, accompany your mother to a meal.]

Persephone's dining table I hadn't seen in a while remained pretty much the same; slabs of well-cooked and delicious-looking steaks, as well as salad, laid out in several layers on top of a large plate. On the outside, they resembled foods commonly found everywhere, but I already knew very well that those were no ordinary meal.

[Bravery of an Empress of Swords who Conquered the World]

[Wisdom of a 3rd Circle Magician who Spent his Entire Life in a Library]

[Will of a Swordmaster who Couldn't use Either Sword Strengthening or Sword Manifestation]

I wondered if I saw something wrong here and read the menu one more time.

[Hurry and have your fill. Do you not find the menu to your liking?]

"…No, it's not that, but…"

[Now that you've become a Constellation, you must consume proper Stories to survive. You won't be able to absorb enough nutrients through the foods of regular humans. I hope that, as you're an adult now, you've managed to fix your picky eating habit.]

She sounded like my real mother by saying that.

[Your mother worries a lot about you – whether you're eating properly and on time or not, if you're getting enough sleep…]

My hand moving towards the fork came to a stop at her words. "Have you spoken to my mother?"

[Fufu. We've talked to each other a few times.]

If it was Persephone, then she was fully capable of doing that. The foie gras placed before me had this name, even:

[Heart of a Mother Sending her Child Away]

…This couldn't have been my mother's actual heart, now was it?

I put the fork down and spoke. "I see that the type of foods has changed since the last time. There were Swordmasters and Archmages here in the past, if I recall correctly."

[The 'Isle of Reincarnators' have opened now, so we should enjoy special dishes for a change, wouldn't you agree? I may look this way, but I'm still a member of the Gourmet Association, so I shouldn't be eating the same food every day.]

Her fork and knife moved; accompanied by rich gravy, aromatic paragraphs leaked out from thinly-sliced Stories. Persephone's graceful hand movements brought that food into her mouth. What she ate just now was [Will of a Swordmaster who Couldn't use Either Sword Strengthening or Sword Manifestation.]

[And, some Stories will disappear if you don't make an effort to consume them.]

Dying Stories were disintegrating at the end of the fork.

Stories that no one searched for were pouring out entrancing sentences on the tip of Persephone's tongue right up until she consumed them.

I felt complicated while watching that sight; Persephone looked back and smiled. [I'm aware that you are dissatisfied by the eating habits of the Constellations. You probably don't like the way we easily consume the joys, angers, sorrows, and pleasures of Incarnations.]

"…"

[However, every incident taking place in the universe is destined to be left behind as a Story. You, me, other Incarnations, and Constellations. We'll be consumed by something else eventually.]

The lives of all living beings would become the stories of the <Star Stream>.

[If we're bound by such a fate, then the best any Constellations could do is to act towards preserving the most varied spectrum of Stories… That is my belief.]

Leaving behind varied Stories, and preserve varied types of stories.

Maybe, what Persephone said might not be wrong. In her own way, she was pursuing what she believed to be right in the <Star Stream>. This was probably the reason why she was a member of the 'Gourmet Association', too.

But, I was sure that she didn't invite me here to speak of her philosophy towards Stories.

"May I ask what is it that you really wish to tell me about?"

[In truth, Hades does not want you to remain in this place.]

"…Does that mean he doesn't want me to be his successor?"

[It's different from that. If I were to put it into words…] Persephone spoke, as she began cutting the delicacy placed on the plate in the middle of the table. [Hades, and I… We do not wish for you to stop as just the 'King of the Underworld'.]

"That means…"

[Olympus has fallen. The Underworld, too, has lost its former glory. Being satisfied with the position of the 'King of the Underworld', now that is no different than placing your name on the coattail of a disappearing Story.]

"Underworld is a good Story."

[And it's a declining Story, too.]

Indeed, the power enveloping <Underworld> currently was not like this in the past. An ancient and withered Story; a story that got progressively spoken of less and less in the <Star Stream> would lose its power little by little.

Persephone's unreadable eyes staring at the delicacies contained deep-seated melancholy. Maybe, she had been constantly thinking about this, even as she dined on and enjoyed many different Stories.

The fear that eventually, his and her <Underworld> would be buried under the forgotten alleys of passing time and become another stuffed piece in the 'Isle of Reincarnators'.

[That is the undeniable way of time itself as long as we exist within the <Star Stream>.]

The moment I heard her words, I was overcome by this unfathomably deep, intense sorrow. It was the kind of sadness that I'd never experienced before.

Both Persephone and Hades would disappear. From the memories of people, from my own memories – and the story they had compiled would disappear forever.

I didn't like Constellations. I disliked their actions, and I disliked the way they peeped on the world itself, too. But why…

…Did I not want to see Persephone and Hades disappear?

Maybe I didn't want to acknowledge this truth, because I unknowingly spoke in a curt voice. "Why are you being so nice to me?" I bit down on my lips before opening them again. "I merely came here to use you."

If I failed to acquire the power of <Underworld>, then <Kim Dokja's Company> would end up in grave danger on the 'Isle of Reincarnators'. Even then, I came out and said those words. Perhaps I wanted to confirm something, as a human called 'Kim Dokja', and not as <Kim Dokja's Company>.

['The Fourth Wall' is faintly shaking!]

['Fruit of Good and Evil' is worsening your guilty conscience.]

…Even if that confirmation turned out to be a useless waste of time.

Persephone quietly studied me for a little while, lightly wiped her lips with a napkin, and extended her hand in my direction. Her eyes were gentle and friendly, with not a hint of animosity in them. Flustered, I tried to get up, but her Status had already reached my shoulder.

[A very long time ago, we have received a certain revelation from the 'three sisters of fate'.]

"…A revelation?"

[It said, 'A successor to the darkest night who will end the most ancient Myth, will appear'.]

Abruptly, I recalled the story Dionysus told me before.

– Several Constellations, including myself, believe that you will be the one to reach the ■■.

The 'several Constellations' back then must've been Persephone and Hades.

Meanwhile, she continued on. [I was initially furious after hearing that oracle.]

…Furious?

[Because I possess the 'Story that can't have children'.]

I had no idea that Persephone had such a backstory. Could it be that the reason why she had no children until now was because of that?

Persephone lightly brushed my hair back.

[At first, I waited, wondering if it was possible. Maybe, I'd be blessed with a miracle. Maybe, we'd be blessed with a beautiful child who'd remember our stories. Even if only the darkness, hellish landscape, and prisons existed here, we were confident of raising our child better than any of the 12 gods of <Olympus> as long as given a chance. To teach our child the ways of understanding the darkness of other beings, to tell him the kind of Hell that others could never sympathise with, and to show him the merciless prison punishing the evil that tramples on the righteousness of the universe.]

"…"

[For many hundreds of years, I lived on in that delusion.]

The ends of her fingers were trembling ever so slightly.

I couldn't dare to understand the meaning behind that tremor. I simply couldn't even begin to unpack the pain and the hatred towards <Olympus> contained in each word she spoke.

Persephone managed to sigh softly and continued on. [Hades and I forced our way past many things for a very long time. We knew that we couldn't have children, but we were never unhappy. Even if the <Underworld> would come to an end in our generation and no one would remember the Stories we had lived through – we are different from the 12 gods, that we're different from those parents who forcibly passed on their Stories to their children. That we are complete as just us.]

"…"

[But then, one day, you made your appearance.]

Persephone's eyes were now looking at me.

[Actually, he was the first one to discover you.]

She continued on in the voice of someone in a dream.

[He said that he started watching your history from when you managed to survive in the subway. At first, I could hardly believe that there was a child like you. Because I believed that such Stories were over in this world. I can still remember his excited voice when he talked about you.]

"…"

[We watched a small Story that grew up all alone fighting against the world itself. We watched, as you challenged the mighty Constellations, faced off against the Outer God, and while resisting against Dokkaebis' scenarios… managing to amass five Stories to be reborn as a small Constellation among the stars.]

I recalled the moments of <Kim Dokja's Company> being born a long time ago. Back then, Persephone was one of the five Constellations who supported me.

[That was when we first began thinking about this – that we wanted to become your parents.]

I barely managed to swallow back a certain something trying to well up. I felt that I could just about understand the truth of the affection Persephone had shown me all this time… Just a tiny little bit.

[Both Hades and I do not wish for you to end up as the 'King of the Underworld'. We also do not wish for you to be bound to us, and do not wish for the lives we've lived, our history, to become the rules that you must abide by. No, all you need to do is to advance forward towards the end of all scenarios, like you've been doing all along.]

"But, I… I am the Underworld's…"

[You're our son. That is all that matters.]

I didn't possess a single thing to repay that kindness. All I could give them was just the promise of a future that hadn't been written yet, the one without any guarantees.

"When I reach the ■■ of all scenarios, I… I'll definitely be with your stories, as well."

Persephone formed a faint smile.

[Head to the terrace. Your father is waiting for you.]

I didn't have any good memories of my father.

My father, drunken out of his mind and beating me up; dissatisfaction towards the world spat out like curses, and the inexplicable animosity aimed at me.

I only had memories of a life where I simply had to endure and live on.

"Pardon me…"

Hades, possessing the shadow of the noble night, stood waiting at the far end of the terrace. He was staring at the sight of the Underworld stretching to the other side of the palace.

I didn't know what to say and could only stare at the wide expanse endlessly; I saw the tributaries where the river of hell flowed within, and beyond them, wandering souls looking in this direction.

[Do you see it?]

The deaths of countless people were there; sadness was there too, and so were the joys and pains of life. All those cherished desires that failed to come to fruition floated down the river's surface.

[This is the Underworld.]

While Constellations were fulfilling their desires in the scenarios, souls sacrificed to those desires were swept into this place. The world of those who were discarded, wounded, and broken by the scenarios – that was the Underworld.

I shifted my gaze over to Hades.

He understood this darkness and became the 'King of the Underworld'.

…While never turning away from the tides of sadness rushing in from the world of the living, while saving each and every one of those souls. While listening to other people's stories for thousands of years, nay, even tens of thousands of years.

At that moment, I thought for some reason, I could say the words I held back for the longest time.

"…Father."

Hades didn't reply. Maybe, that word was just as foreign to him as it was for me.

Still, he did reply. [Command the army.]

I looked at him again, utterly stunned now.

And in the next moment, I heard the sound akin to the darkness roaring out.

Souls in the near vicinity of the fortress walls were rushing towards the palace. Some of them carried determined expressions, while others carried heroically grim ones. And in front of them all, stood the Three Judges.

It was an enormous army, crashing in like a tidal wave. I had a hard time trying to hide my heart palpitating from the powerful aura of the great army that had not been seen before.

[For the glory of <Underworld>!]

The first Judge shouted out.

[For the glory of the Underworld's Prince!]

The second Judge prostrated and looked at me.

And as the third Judge powerfully raised his spear towards the heavens, every soul here began roaring out in a single voice.

[For the eternity of all scenarios and their epilogue!]

As the roar continued on, the 'King of the Underworld' addressed me. [Now, go.]

Hades didn't even look at me when he said that.

Even though he didn't, he was still looking at me.

He had always been looking at me.

[<Underworld> is your ally from this moment on.]

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* Official novel illustration (canonical)

Chapter 390: Ep. 74 - Great War of Saints and Demons, V

Du-oong… Du-oong… Du-oong…

The beating war-drums resounded out from the other side of the Gate.

Han Sooyoung stood before the Gate leading to the 119th regional conflict and looked behind her. "Hey, you ready?"

This battle would be fought alongside Yoo Joonghyuk. Their personalities were a bad match, but there was no other ally that instilled as much confidence as he did.

Unfortunately, that Yoo Joonghyuk was displaying a slightly strange behaviour right now.

"Yoo Joonghyuk?"

Rather than getting ready to enter the 119th Gate, he was staring at the newly-generated the 123rd Gate, instead. Now beset with a certain ominous foreboding, she was about to call out his name, but then, his figure suddenly vanished. And then, a strong repulsive force pushed her back forward.

[You're entering the 119th Gate.]

"…Uh?"

The last thing she saw was Yoo Joonghyuk's hard, emotionless expression.

"You go there alone. I've another battlefield to get to."

"Hey, you! You can't make that deci…!"

Even before Han Sooyoung could shout something in reply to that sudden declaration, the surrounding space tore and swirled about to reveal a brand new battlefield.

"God damn it…"

[Incarnation 'Han Sooyoung' has entered the 119th regional conflict.]

[Incarnation Han Sooyoung's affiliated camp is 'Evil'.]

She had already crossed the Gate and couldn't go back now. She simply had to end this battle first if she wanted to return.

[Many Constellations have taken notice of you.]

The only person on the wide-open camp of 'Evil' was just Han Sooyoung alone. On the other hand, frightful gazes from Constellations belonging to the opposing camp were raining down on her one after the other.

[Constellation, 'Master of the Ark', is looking at you.]

[Constellation, 'Guardian of Youths and Travel', is looking at you.]

[Constellation, 'Morning Star Goddess', is looking at you.]

[Constellation, 'The One Who Faces God', is looking at you.]

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is looking at you.]

Han Sooyoung could only moan in horror as she confirmed the owners of those gazes.

Even if she discounted the 'Master of the Ark' Noah, there were the 'Guardian of Youths and Travel', Archangel Raphael, and Goddess Vakarine of <Guardian Tree>; 'The One Who Faces God' Archangel Camael, and the 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', Archangel Uriel, too…

And then, the absolute riot of Valkyries standing behind with nary a gap between right behind them.

Just looking at them alone made her nearly soil herself.

She knew this was a trap, but still, to think that they created a battlefield with such a difference in the combat strengths. No, did this even qualify to be called a battlefield in the first place?

"…I wonder if Kim Dokja will take care of my funeral properly."

[Oh, small 'Evil',]

The moment Han Sooyoung heard the true voice of the 'Morning Star Goddess', she realized that this situation was not something to be made fun of.

[Many in the 'Good' camp wish to judge you!]

Han Sooyoung bit her lower lip and just as she unfurled the bandages on her left hand, someone suddenly stepped up to her side.

[Someone has joined the 'Evil' camp!]

…Someone entered such a disadvantageous battlefield?

But, who?

[I was originally going to sit back and spectate, but… You see, I have someone I must settle a score with.]

It was such a uniquely-annoying voice that Han Sooyoung immediately recognised who it belonged to.

"Asmodeus?"

[It's been a while, Incarnation of the Black Flame Dragon.]

It was right then, she recalled something Kim Dokja told her some time ago.

– Raphael and Asmodeus have a history together. If these two ever run into each other in the battlefield, try to use that to your advantage.

Asmodeus's claws extended out and even without Han Sooyoung doing anything, the Demon King was already brimming full of desire to fight.

[Raphael. Finally, it's time to pay you back for the previous battle!]

Leaving black afterimages behind, Asmodeus dashed forward; at the same time, two immense magical energies collided in mid-air. The Demon King might be an untrustworthy being in any other situation, but at least, it was better than not having any as an ally right now.

Ku-wahhhh!

Han Sooyoung avoided the explosion and rose up higher in the air. The view of the battlefield as seen from above stretched on forever. Even if Asmodeus was fighting against Raphael, there were still a lot of other Constellations left.

"Screw it, Kim Dokja! And screw you too, Yoo Joonghyuk!!"

In order to fight against that huge army, she had no choice but to unleash the hidden card she'd been saving up, until now.

"I, the master of the Black Flame, Han Sooyoung, shall awake the Dragon of the ancient seal! Oh, the Constellation darker than darkness itself, oh, the abyss deeper than the flowing night…"

She really didn't want to mutter out this chant even if she were to die, but with the situation being what it was, her lips began reciting it all by themselves.

Her left arm reacted to her incantation and wiggled around; a Dragon's roar could be heard coming from a distant somewhere.

"Here in this place, reveal yourself!"

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', is getting ready for the 'Advent of Half-God'.]

On the other hand, Yoo Joonghyuk had entered the 123rd Gate all alone and began searching for someone in this battlefield covered in bushes fluttering in the wind.

'No mistaking it. It's her aura'.

The reason why he went against Kim Dokja's request and entered this particular Gate was standing right before his eyes now.

– Yoo Joonghyuk, please become my ally.

He had never forgotten the moment of the distant past when he heard those words for the first time.

Her elegantly-shaped nose and neatly arranged blonde hair; her eye with an ominous red glint circling within, as if to ridicule everything in this world.

"Anna Croft."

She was just as he had remembered.

"You came, Yoo Joonghyuk."

[Incarnation, 'Yoo Joonghyuk', has entered the 123rd regional conflict.]

[Incarnation Yoo Joonghyuk's affiliated camp is 'Good'.]

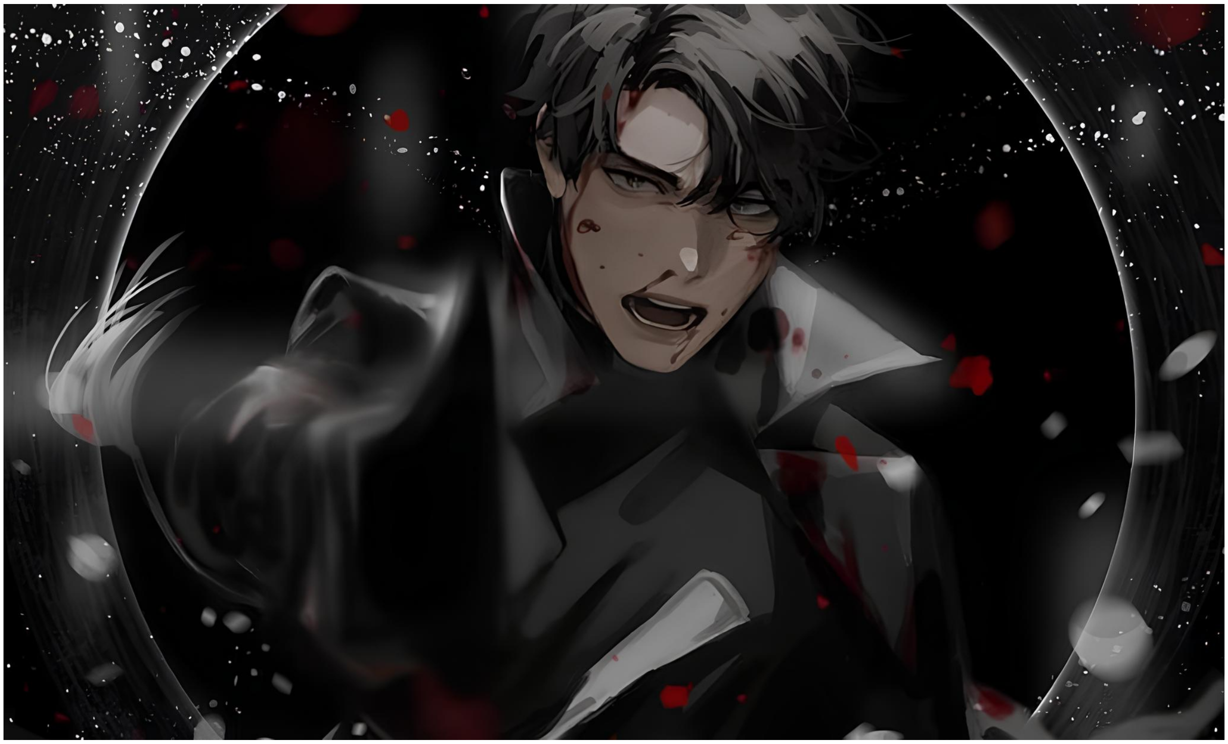
The reason why he entered this battlefield was that he knew Anna Croft would be here. And the Constellation who told him that was…

[Constellation, 'Secretive Plotter', forms a bizarre smile.]

Yoo Joonghyuk gritted his teeth and spoke. "It's time to settle the score from the second regression turn."

He quietly unsheathed [Black Heavenly Demon Sword], and its blade let out a sharp blackened cry.

The moment of vengeance he had been waiting for a long time was here. He pointed his weapon at her as she remained composed in her spot.



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"Take out your weapon."

"I have no desire to fight you."

"Then, just die."

He strode forward threateningly, yet she simply shook her head in reply. "Are you really here to get even for the second turn?"

"…"

"Your revenge is meaningless. You should know that I'm not the 'Anna Croft' from the second turn."

"Is the you of yesterday not you anymore?"

"What do you mean?"

"You have inherited the memories and the desires of the second-turn Anna Croft. You possess the exact same ideal and goal as her. Without a doubt, you are that 'Anna Croft'."

"…What determines one's existence is the Stories in one's possession. I see that your views are the same whether it's the second turn or now."

Even though she was staring at Yoo Joonghyuk's approaching sword, she still remained utterly defenseless. Seeing the signs of near-resignation in her eyes, his expression hardened.

"Where are the Zarathustras?"

"They are not here."

"Don't make me laugh. It's not possible that you'd come alone."

"If it was the 'Anna Croft' you knew, then yes, she'd never do that."

He took another large step forward and her hair fluttered from his Status. Her face, now revealed in full, displayed hints of wounds here and there. What caught his eyes the most was the scar surrounding the [Eye of the Great Demon]. It was as if someone tried to deliberately cut it out.

"…What happened to you?"

"Many things happened." She shoved his hand away and shot back at him. "It means that the lofty Anna Croft you knew has fallen a long time ago already."

Just as her words came to an end, some things came rushing in from the other side of the battlefield.

Constellations that had chosen 'Evil' were dashing across the field while fully unleashing their Statuses. As if he knew something like this would happen, Yoo Joonghyuk moved to take Anna Croft as a hostage. However, something felt off.

[A portion of Constellations from the Nebula, <Asgard>, have entered the applicable regional conflict!]

[A portion of Constellations from the Nebula, <Vedas>, have entered the applicable regional conflict!]

[A portion of Constellations from the Nebula, <Papyrus>, have entered the applicable regional conflict!]

Anna Croft was actually smiling as she stared at the sword pointing at her neck. "Please stop with your foolish actions, Yoo Joonghyuk. We're on the same side, after all."

[Incarnation Anna Croft's affiliated camp is 'Good'.]

"…I thought Asgard was your Nebula sponsor?"

"I understand your grudge, but can you please postpone it until the next time?"

They might have been talking about two different things, but they still fully understood each other's situations.

Such a thing was obvious, however – one was a Regressor who understood the past better than anyone, while the other was a prophet who used to face off constantly against such a Regressor.

Yoo Joonghyuk withdrew his sword and spoke. "A fitting end for you, Prophet."

"And it seems that I'll have to share this end with you."

Ku-gugugugu…

The great army of <Asgard> marching forward while kicking up dust clouds finally came to a halt.

[Constellation, 'God of Fairness and Friendliness', finds this situation regrettable.]

[Constellation, 'Flames of Muspelheim', wishes to burn everything within this battlefield.]

[Constellation who likes to change genders is looking at Incarnation 'Yoo Joonghyuk'.]

As if to show their final bit of consideration, Selena Kim and Iris stood at the front of the marching army that had stopped advancing.

Yoo Joonghyuk could read many emotions written on their faces.

"Their final consideration, then."

Unfortunately, them stopping didn't mean that other Constellations would do the same.

"Dodge it."

At the end of Anna Croft's words, both of their figures vanished from the spot. And then, a massive explosion noise enveloped the entire battlefield. A stupendously large crater could be found caved in on the ground where they used to stand.

Kwa-rurururung!!

Currents of lightning could be seen encroaching the skies above; sounds similar to laughter coming from shady, dark Constellations could be heard.

[Constellation, 'Black Wolf God of Death', has chosen 'Evil' camp.]

[Constellation, 'God-King of Thunderbolt', has chosen 'Evil' camp.]

Anna Croft's complexion paled as she confirmed the Modifiers of the Constellations. The 'Black Wolf God of Death' was a powerful Constellation from <Papyrus>, Anubis. As for the 'God-King of Thunderbolt'…

"Oh my god, it's 'Indra'…"

If <Olympus> had its twelve gods, then Nebula <Vedas> had its eight lokapalas, as well. And one Constellation lorded over those eight lokapalas as their king.

[Constellation, 'God-King of Thunderbolts', has summoned the rain of thunderbolts.]

And that was precisely the 'God-King of Thunderbolts', Indra.

[Many Constellations are pleading for the case of unfairness at the 'God-King of Thunderbolts' involvement.]

It was not difficult to see why some criticised this situation; Indra was not your average Constellation who should be appearing in a measly little regional conflict, after all. It'd not be an exaggeration to call Indra the strongest existence in <Vedas>, if one excluded its three main gods.

[Constellation, 'God-King of Thunderbolts', is currently in 'Advent of Half-God' state.]

On top of this, he was not in an Incarnation Body but Half-God state, as well.

Anna Croft squeezed her mouth shut as she dodged the falling raindrops of lightning. Even if she was an excellent fighter, and no matter how powerful Yoo Joonghyuk was, it was impossible to fight against that Constellation right now.

Meanwhile, Yoo Joonghyuk asked her a question. "Why did you betray me?"

"…Is this the right time for such a conversation?" said Anna Croft, but then, she saw his wordless gaze still locked onto her, and replied with a sigh. "That was the best available way forward at the time. I believed that I'd reach the end I thought of by doing that."

"So, did you reach that end, then?"

Anna Croft didn't reply this time.

The 'Ways of Survival', or the records from the 1863rd turn, didn't explain which scenario Anna Croft of the second turn had managed to reach.

So, only she knew what her own result was.

However, she spat out her words in an angry voice, instead. "…Why do you ask when you know the answer already?"

The 'Black Wolf God of Death' made its move, then. Anubis, the Narrative-grade Constellation wearing a jet-black jackal mast and wielding a black spear – its weapon accurately stabbed past the falling rain of thunderbolts and took aim at Anna Croft's heart. But then…

Ku-dudududuk!

"I'll be the one to kill her," said Yoo Joonghyuk in a low, heavy voice as he grabbed the spear with his bare hand.

[Constellation, 'Black Wolf God of Death', is stunned.]

An incredible Status began emitting from Yoo Joonghyuk's body – the Status of a Transcendent. Now bathed in golden rays of light, magical energy boiled within his body; Anubis's spear began rocking powerfully as if it was having a seizure.

Anubis loudly declared as if it wanted to oppose this power.

[Oh, the one who resists against death, I am the God of Death, Anubis. I shall reap your life in this place.]

"God of Death?" replied Yoo Joonghyuk. "You are no God of Death."

At the same time, blue light exploded from his right arm.

Just as Anubis screamed and backed away, the [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] in his hand roared out once more.

"I've already seen the real God of Death."

This was one of the techniques Yoo Joonghyuk had been hiding until now.

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* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)

Chapter 391: Ep. 74 - Great War of Saints and Demons, VI

A battle fought on a beach not too long ago flitted in and out of Yoo Joonghyuk's irises.

「On that day, the spear that separates the boundaries of the oceans clashed against the abundant night.」

It was the battle of 'Gigantomachia' he witnessed back then. In that place, he saw the boundless ocean and infinite night go head to head.

Poseidon and Hades.

A battle of Statuses between two Myth-grade Constellations; the brilliant showdown of the enormous Statuses possessed by the Constellations occupying the top rungs of the expansive <Star Stream>.

Yoo Joonghyuk bore witness to that battle and was shocked by it, felt moved by it, and had to despair because of it. And he stood back up again. He did what he needed to do in order to surpass those distant enemies.

This sword strike was a technique he created by copying those enemies he couldn't surpass yet.

Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship.

Inner Mysteries. (奧義)

Split the Dark Ocean.

Yoo Joonghyuk's sword moved along with the illusion of the jet-black ocean splitting apart.

It was a sword strike imitating Hades's scythe colliding against the spear of the oceans. The Ether blade burning up in the blue hue was immediately dyed in the black light, and the explosive magical energy from the Transcendent substituted for the darkness of <Underworld>. And in the next instant, Yoo Joonghyuk's [Breaking the Sky Energy] cut apart Anubis's torso.

Gu-waaaaaah!!

The powerful sword strike tore through Anubis's body; it screamed and collapsed to the ground.

Even if they were in the 80th scenario, this power to defeat a Narrative-grade Constellation was…

[Many Constellations are shocked by Incarnation Yoo Joonghyuk's godship!]

The power of a human that had finally exceeded that of Constellations caused them to seethe in agitation.

[Attack him together!]

[Fire! Kill him!!]

Someone's cry became the signal for the bombardment to commence. Arrows imbued with powerful magical energy rained down. Yoo Joonghyuk confronted them all from the front.

Pu-shuut! Pu-shuuut!!

Even as the arrows pierced his side, shoulders, and thighs, he stood before Anna Croft to deflect all of the attacks.

*

She had to ask him. "…Why?"

"You'll die."

"Then, why don't you let me?"

"Not in this place. That isn't a part of Kim Dokja's plan."

She bit her lips, hard.

Kim Dokja. Of course, she knew who he was. However, what was he, anyway? Just what was his importance, that this proud and unyielding man decided to bend his own belief for that guy?

Yoo Joonghyuk muttered loudly as if to answer her silent inquiry. "I once glimpsed the memories from the regression turn of a far-flung future."

A far-flung future, he said.

Before she could say something, though, he continued on. "It seemed that many things had happened."

"Well, looks like you've glimpsed something really fun, then. Did you also happen to see the end of the 3rd turn, too?"

"I did not. However, I did see what your future was like."

Anna Croft's shoulders flinched a little from surprise.

She possessed [Precognition], but all she could spy on was snippets of the future. She definitely couldn't see the distant future beyond this world-line.

Yoo Joonghyuk asked her. "Do you wish to know?"

"Not at all."

He ignored her and opened his lips. "Like how you've inherited the memories of yourself from the 2nd turn, the you of the next turn will inherit the memories of you from the 3rd turn. Just like that, you'll continue to use [Retrocognition] to glimpse into the portions of memories from the previous regression turns and inch forward into the future. Just like how you've doing until now."

"You're speaking of obvious things. Someone who can't see the future can also say stuff like that. What are you trying to tell me here?" replied Anna Croft with a dismissive smirk.

But, Yoo Joonghyuk's expression remained unreadable. "Past the 700th turn… Many things changed. You, me. Under the curse of remembering our past turns, we grew weaker and weaker."

"…'We'? No, hang on!"

"And past the 900th turn, and then, the 1000th… One day, you told me this."

Yoo Joonghyuk slowly blinked his eyes and recalled a certain passage he read from the records of the 1863rd turn.

「Yoo Joonghyuk, I won't be transferring the memories of everything that happened so far to the next turn.」

「I can't do this anymore. I'm not like you. I can't keep fighting on while carrying all this burden.」

「From here on, you'll be alone.」

「Are you confident of carrying the burdens of everything?」

Anna Croft's complexion paled as she yelled out. "That can't be me. I won't break down! I am…!"

"You'll change."

His words digging in like a sharp oracle made her entire body shudder. Her empty eyes began quaking next.

Before she could say something, though, he opened his mouth first. "However, I'd like you not to change."

Her eyes opened wider and wider.

"I wish to keep hating you. I plan to remember every single thing you've done and never forgive you for them. For that purpose…"

He left the trembling Anna Croft behind and stepped forward while unleashing his Status.

"…You must not go to the next turn."

As they broke past the endless rain of arrows, they saw a lone Constellation standing on the field, waiting. He was the strongest being on this battlefield.

[All of you, step aside. I shall fight that human.]

It was the 'God-King of Thunderbolts', Indra. Countless other Constellations could only tremble when confronted by his enormous power that symbolised the Status of <Vedas>.

Ku-gugugugu!!

[Constellation, 'Thursday's Thunder', is keeping a wary eye on 'God-King of Thunderbolts'.]

The Constellation who also symbolised 'thunder and lightning', 'Thursday's Thunder', seemed to be burning with fighting spirit more than usual.

"Yoo Joonghyuk, stop! Even if it's you…!"

Yoo Joonghyuk ignored Anna Croft's words and dashed towards the God-King of Thunderbolts.

He already knew the Status of Indra well enough. This being's power exceeded even that of Surya he fought some time ago. However, he wasn't planning to cower before this being. Not at all.

'Still not enough'.

Indra was not his ultimate target.

Compared to the Myth-grade Constellations or Outer Gods he needed to fight in the future, a being like Indra was simply another crossing on the road he had to walk on.

Also, the being he wanted to surpass more than anyone else was…

[Constellation, 'Secretive Plotter', is impressed by your will to fight.]

[5000 Coins have been sponsored.]

Yoo Joonghyuk's figure soared high into the sky before shooting straight towards Indra.

[How arrogant…!]

The thunderbolts fired by the God-King split the land apart. Ash-coloured arcs of electricity danced violently as the field cracked open like a crashing tsunami wave. The electrical currents pounced up and tore into Yoo Joonghyuk's arm; they tore into his legs and penetrated into his stomach. With every step he took in the air, he looked back to the time he had lived so far, and thought about the lives he might have to repeat.

The 41st regression turn.

The 362nd regression turn.

Times Kim Dokja had shown him. And then…

…The 1863rd turn.

The future he got to spy through the 'Secretive Plotter' flitted in and out of Yoo Joonghyuk's brain.

For him, this was a battle against himself.

The realm he couldn't reach no matter how hard he tried; there he was, the 3rd turn of himself struggling crazy hard, and then struggling some more, so that he could surpass those moments.

Kwa-kwakwakwakwa!!

Yoo Joonghyuk ploughed forward as if he was borrowing all of the possibilities of the life he'd have to live, and the lives he might have lived.

The 'Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship'.

Breaking the Sky Sword Saint once told him this – that he should not permit the heavens existing above him. That he should destroy everything, annihilate, and to disdain everything.

However, what was he supposed to do when, after destroying the sky above, he finds there was something else up there?

The 'Secret Technique: Inner Mystery Transmission'.

[Constellation, 'God-King of Thunderbolts' is ridiculing you.]

The Constellations looking down on Incarnations from beyond the heavens above – this sword strike was created solely to cut them down.

As he sensed the magical energy flowing within [Black Heavenly Demon Sword], Yoo Joonghyuk recalled Cheok Jungyeong's sword.

With just one sword, he cut apart mountains. With that sword, he let the world know that even the oceans could be cut.

So, what did one need in order to cut a star down with just a single sword?

Kaaa-boooom!!

One of Yoo Joonghyuk's legs exploded in mid-air. It wasn't because of Indra's thunderbolts, however. His muscles, tightly bunched together to a nonsensical degree, exploded with a loud noise; this noise was caused by the Stories permeating into every corner of the muscle fibres, exploding to create a forward thrust.

[Stop that! You bastard…!]

He saw the eyes of Indra freaking out.

Yoo Joonghyuk felt the time slowing down. No, it didn't actually slow down, but rather, he had sped up, instead.

「In order to destroy a star, you must become a star yourself.」

This was the answer for someone like him, born as a mere human, to reach the Constellations.

The speed that a lifeform couldn't withstand began tearing apart Yoo Joonghyuk's entire body. That was the price to pay to become a star when he wasn't one.

His body shot forward like a black supernova and broke past the walls of the arcing electricity, shattered all the Constellations daring to block him, and finally, reached Indra's heart.

The 'Shooting Star Slash'.

He felt a definite sensation from the tip of the [Black Heavenly Demon Sword].

And then, there was the voice coming from a star splitting apart; accompanied by the sound of something exploding in the distant cosmos, Yoo Joonghyuk sensed his body falling from the air. His eyesight blurred and he couldn't confirm the sight of the star he managed to cut. The muscles of his body refused to heed his orders; not an ounce of energy remained in him. He still felt someone catching him through his fading five senses, though.

The one he hated the most was busy running away with him in her embrace.

"Yoo Joonghyuk, you're truly insane. But, I already knew that…"

While vomiting out more blood, Yoo Joonghyuk spoke to her. "…Indra?"

"He's probably dead. His Half-God Body exploded, after all. Even if he survived that, he shouldn't be called a living being anymore."

Anna Croft's voice was infused with a certain, unexplainable heat. Just her emotions conveyed in the tone of her voice was enough for him to understand what he had achieved here today.

He had managed to destroy a star.

A measly little human had indeed destroyed one of the eight brightest stars of <Vedas>, the lokapala.

[All Constellations belonging to the Nebula <Vedas> are furious at Incarnation Yoo Joonghyuk.]

Sadly, though, there were still countless stars left in the sky.

"If I hadn't rescued you just now, you'd have died there."

He knew that she was speaking the truth.

Through her [Precognition], Anna Croft must've seen his death.

"Even though I did rescue you, it's nothing more than just delaying the inevitable, though…"

Blood continued to flood out of the wide-open wound on his waist. One of his legs was gone, and he didn't have any strength left to hold his blade upright.

And eventually, her fleeing steps came to a halt, too. He couldn't see the front, but he understood what her action meant.

They no longer had any place left to escape on this battlefield.

Anna Croft spoke. "…Yoo Joonghyuk, I don't have any desire to live up to the 700th turn alongside you."

"I'm the same."

"But then, god damn it, looks like we'll have to live together in the 4th turn."

"That's not going to happen. Because I won't die in this place."

Yoo Joonghyuk didn't possess [Precognition] ability like her. He didn't know what would happen next. Even then, he continued to speak in a hushed voice. "Because…"

His voice was fading away, yet it was definitely not the voice of a man preparing himself for death.

Almost at the same time, roars of crackling thunders could be heard coming from the far side of the heavens. They did not belong to Indra's thunderbolts. The space-time was distorting, and the noises were generated by something crossing over a gigantic Gate.

Yoo Joonghyuk couldn't see that spectacle, but Anna Croft witnessed it in his stead.

It was an army enveloped in pitch-black darkness; a single realm buried deep inside an ancient Myth was currently crossing over to this world.

– Yoo Joonghyuk, you stupid bastard!!

Yoo Joonghyuk heard the loud yelling from the one standing at the forefront of that army and spoke up. "…Because I have allies in this turn who won't betray me."

[Nebula, <Underworld>, has joined the 'Great War of Saints and Demons'.]

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* Official novel illustration (canonical)

Chapter 392: Ep. 74 - Great War of Saints and Demons, VII

The strength of <Underworld> was incredible.

The army of the Underworld that entered the 121st regional conflict completely swept away the combatants from both the 'Good' and 'Evil' camps and reverted all 'Good/Evil' within the battlefield to 'neutral'.

[Advance!!]

Constellations participating in the 121st regional conflict saw the army of Hell encroaching their battlefield and either they ran away, or ended up being incapacitated.

[121st regional conflict has been forcibly concluded.]

[Applicable battle's outcome can't be decided.]

[Lack of will to fight by the participants of the applicable battle has been confirmed.]

[Applicable regional conflict has been excluded from the category of 'Great War of Saints and Demons'.]

I glanced at the now-concluded battlefield and without taking a break, shifted my gaze over to the next Gate.

[117th Gate is currently in activation.]

[119th Gate is currently in activation.]

[123rd Gate is currently in activation.]

According to the plan, my companions should be in the middle of a dogfight inside the 117th and 119th Gates right now, having split up earlier. Jung Heewon and Lee Hyunsung were in the 117th Gate, while the 119th was manned by Han Sooyoung and Yoo Joonghyuk.

Which means, I should help with the situation in the 117th, rather than 119th…

[Constellation, 'Mass Production Maker', says that you must enter the 123rd Gate.]

…123rd?

But, there shouldn't be anyone there?

I focused on the blurry images of the battlefield that could be seen from the Gate. And then…

"What the f…?"

…I immediately issued a new order to advance.

"All personnel, we march through the 123rd Gate!"

My order prompted 30,000-plus combatants from the Underworld to march through the Gate. The great army of the netherworld riding on the pitch-black clouds crossed the portal and began arriving on the skies of the 123rd regional conflict zone.

"Yoo Joonghyuk, you stupid bastard!"

There he was, bleeding profusely and dying. And then, Anna Croft carrying him on her back.

I kind of understood why that fool decided to not stick to the plan and participated in this particular battle.

"'Demon King of Salvation'!!"

I heard her urgent calling and at the same time, I spotted the enemies hurriedly chasing after her and her human cargo.

They were Constellations from the very angry <Vedas> and <Papyrus>. Most of them were Historical-grade, but there were a few Narrative-grade among them, as well.

[Your affiliated camp is 'Evil'.]

Meanwhile, Yoo Joonghyuk and Anna Croft were on the camp of 'Good'.

In other words, the enemies pursuing them were 'Evil'. If this was the 'Great War of Saints and Demons' of the original storyline, then they would've been my companions, instead.

"…Kill them all."

Unfortunately, my allies in this battlefield were neither 'Good' nor 'Evil'.

[For the glory of <Underworld>!]

The Three Judges riding on the Hellsteeds burning in hell's flames roared out in unison and dashed towards the enemy ranks.

Aeacus of Mercy and Righteousness.

Minos of Wisdom and Law.

Rhadamanthys of Impartiality and Incorruptibility.

When alive, they walked the path of the king, and now, they tread on the paths of the netherworld's judges. They unleashed the auras befitting the Narrative-grade Constellations that they were and began cutting down the approaching enemies' numbers.

[How come the <Underworld> has…!!]

[Kuwaaahck!!]

I landed next to Yoo Joonghyuk and Anna Croft while watching the enemies bleed out Stories and die.

His entire body was covered in grievous wounds. Even his coat featuring strong resistance against heat couldn't withstand the high temperature and had melted half-way down; I couldn't really hear his breathing, either.

I observed his left leg, now gone. There were traces of it 'disappearing' due to the internal expansion force.

…This idiot, he must've used 'Shooting Star Slash'.

He might be able to fool the others, but there was no fooling my eyes. This was a truly stunning rate of growth.

Originally, the 'Shooting Star Slash' was Yoo Joonghyuk's hidden trump card that he barely managed to learn after going past the one-thousandth regression turn. But here he was, managing to reach that realm on only his third turn.

"He's still breathing."

"How did he end up like this?"

"He was trying to save me…"

"Yoo Joonghyuk was saving you??"

She quietly stared back at me, but her gaze eventually dropped lower. Her ensuing voice sounded bitter.

"He said that my death isn't a part of your plan."

For a moment there, I felt at a complete loss.

Why would Yoo Joonghyuk…

I took over his care from Anna Croft. I pressed his pressure points to stem the bleeding, and after laying him down, I took a better look at his current condition.

The 'Shooting Star Slash' was a technique the current him couldn't handle yet. The left leg that somehow managed to withstand the explosive forward thrust was beyond saving. Limb dismemberments couldn't be healed even with [Elaine Forest Essence].

I sighed for a brief moment there, before pulling out a certain item from my inner pocket. And it was something that reminded one of a tentacle belonging to a dark, sooty-coloured squid.

[Fragments of Squid Kim Dokja's seventh tentacle]

Anna Croft glared at the item with suspicious eyes. "What is that?"

"I got it as a gift not too long ago."

"A gift? …That?"

I was at a loss again as to how I should explain this.

Actually, this item was a 'not-for-sale' bonus article available only during the "Kim Dokja's Company Collaboration" event held by 'Mass Production Maker' just before the 'Great War of Saints and Demons' went underway.

I remembered that those who purchased a brand-new [Ferrarghini] received this on a first-come-first-served basis. I can still vividly recall the conversation I had with the 'Mass Production Maker' back then.

– Thank you. All thanks to you, this season has been a huge success. The tentacles of Squid Kim Dokja were all gone in less than one minute, you know.

No matter how hard I thought about it, this just didn't make any sense. There were Constellations who bought Ferrarghini just to get their hands on my 'legs'?

The 'Mass Production Maker' grinned slyly and asked me.

– What's wrong? Do you wish to know who they were?

– …No, not really. Besides all that, how did you acquire the fragments of my tentacles?

– Eh? Of course, they are not your real tentacles. No, those were simply [Kraken legs]. Here, why don't you take one yourself as a souvenir?

I was too lazy to explain all this to Anna Croft, so I simply handed the item over to her and ignored her question altogether. Once she got a hold of it, though, more suspicion clouded up her expression.

"Why is your name attached to this [Kraken leg]?"

"You don't need to know. Just activate the [Elixir Maker] attribute, instead. Mix your blood with this item and have him eat them."

A [Kraken leg] possessed the effect of healing grievous wounds such as dismemberment, as well as to maximise the user's base self-healing ability, as well. And then, Anna Croft's blood carried the effects of elixirs, so when the two were mixed together, it'd be possible to heal any serious injuries pretty quickly.

For some reason, though, she seemed to be hesitating, however.

"But, if I feed him my blood…"

"He won't become your subordinate."

It had been said before; Anna Croft's blood possessed a power to make anyone who drinks it come under her influence.

"Because the current Yoo Joonghyuk has higher Status than you."

She flinched slightly when she heard my words.

Meanwhile, I observed the unconscious Yoo Joonghyuk sleeping quietly on the ground. He wouldn't become her subordinate or some such.

I didn't see any trace of him activating [Recovery], though. It seemed that he was planning to keep that power to the last possible second. He made a wise decision; if he wasted Recovery in this place, then I'd not be able to borrow his powers when it was really needed later.

"…Gotta hand it to this sunfish bastard."

I grumbled a little and turned around to see the sight of the Underworld's soldiers sweeping the enemies away like an incoming tidal wave. But then, upon taking a closer look, I could see that wave falter unstably.

As if the ends of the wave were being blocked by a massive dam and were crumbling away. And in the middle of the waves, a stupendous amount of sparks were dancing and exploding.

[Constellation, 'God-King of Thunderbolts', is roaring out in pure rage!]

…The God-King of Thunderbolts?

Anna Croft spoke with a stiff expression. "But, that can't be… I witnessed his Half-God Body getting destroyed, so how??"

With that, I could figure out more or less on what had transpired here. It seemed that the 'star' Yoo Joonghyuk had cut down was that dude over there.

"Indra possesses many Incarnation Bodies. He must've called one over here after paying for the Probability."

Out of all the Constellations of <Vedas>, Indra had so many Incarnation Bodies that one couldn't count them using one's fingers.

It was a pretty famous anecdote of the three main gods of <Vedas> asking Indra "Which number Indra are you?" all the time.

[Constellation, 'God-King of Thunderbolts' has summoned Star Relic 'Vajra'!]

Along with the loud boom akin to the skies splintering, the front of the <Underworld> army began splitting apart.

The 'Vajra', Indra's main weapon capable of shooting thunderbolts containing an incredible amount of magical energy.

But, I simply snatched up the incoming thunderbolt with my bare hand.

Tsu-chu-chu-chut!

And then, I threw it back where it came from.

I could see Indra making a stunned face. But, it's still too early for that.

[So, you're the 'Demon King of Salvation'.]

"And you're Indra."

[Why is the <Underworld> helping you?]

"Do I have a reason to explain that to you?"

Indra stared at me with a look of a person discovering a mysterious lifeform. [You are 'Evil'. Behave according to the scenario's rules. I shall overlook your disrespectful manners this time in consideration towards other Demon Kings, so…]

"It was you who caused my companion to end up looking like that. Right?"

[So? What about it? That is the price to pay for an arrogant human when he opposed a Constellation. Do you wish to avenge him, then?]

Avenge, was it?

"That guy hates it when someone else pays the debt for him. Right, he's the kind of a guy who must settle the score himself even if it kills him. So, the reason why I'm going to kill you now isn't because of Yoo Joonghyuk."

[A Demon King with a uselessly chatty mouth, aren't you.]

Kwaaa-boooom!!

Beams of blinding thunderbolts blanketed the sky and rained down on my position. I managed to deflect a few and defended against others. Some did land on me, but the pain was rather tolerable.

Indra did possess many Incarnations, but accordingly, the dispersion of his powers was just as great.

On top of this, he suffered irreversible damage from Yoo Joonghyuk's attack during his Half-God Body state, so he'd be unable to even summon up half of his usual power right now.

However, Indra was still smiling away. [Oh, you foolish Demon King. You shall regret this!]

[Nebula, <Vedas>, has blessed 'God-King of Thunderbolts' with its grace!]

The Nebula had spent Probability for him.

The power enveloping the God-King was growing even greater. Rapid changes took place on Indra's Incarnation Body, and soon, golden rays of light began shooting out from his entire figure. He grew humongous, and the one thousand eyes he possessed began opening up one by one.

"We can't let him continue!"

Anna Croft must've seen something through [Precognition] because she began crying out next.

…Hell, it looked like to me that Indra and <Vedas> had made up their minds for good this time.

[Constellation, 'God-King of Thunderbolts', has activated the Stigma, 'Eyes that Observe Everything'!]

When all those eyes fully open up, Indra would be able to display the power of his true self through an Incarnation Body. Currently, about half of those eyes had opened.

Ku-gugugugu!

At this rate, every Incarnation participating in the 123rd conflict would be swept away by the overflowing electrical shock.

However, I was getting progressively happier watching that electrical energy filled to the brim with < Vedas'> Probability, instead.

"Actually, I have a score to settle with your Nebula. Make that a very big score."

I remembered everything the Nebula <Vedas> did to me. Well, anyone who had suffered that badly would be the same as me.

I unsheathed Unbroken Faith and continued on. "Because of you lot, I had to become a Demon King."

During the Dark Castle's last scenario, I became the 73rd Demon King.

"I had to order my companions to kill me, and in the process, ended up inflicting them with terrible memories back then."

[You have activated 'Demon King Transformation'.]

The Status I earned after becoming the Demon King flooded out with my heart as the centre. Black wings tore out from the back of my shoulders, and horns broke out from my head.

[Story, 'Demon King of Salvation', has begun its storytelling.]

Back when I lost my life to the swords of my allies and was cast out to the scenario's horizon, I looked up at the heavens and swore to myself over and over again.

「Wait for a little while longer. Because I will bring all of you down from the damn sky.」

The stars in the distant sky, seemingly out of reach no matter what Stories I managed to acquire.

The distance so far away that it induced despair.

Now, I could clearly see the locations of the stars that previously seemed so high up.

I spoke in my true voice. [Back then, all of you seemed so high up…]

I grinned and stared at Indra.

[But it seems that you're all hung a lot lower than I thought.]

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As soon as words left my lips, golden streams of aura flooded out from Indra's entire figure. It was the same story back then with Surya; those from <Vedas> must've had a thing for the golden colour.

Ku-waaaah!!

Waves of powerful Status formed a complicated network with Indra as their centre. Ripples of electrical energy crashed into me, and I could hear Indra's laughter at the same time.

Indeed, this was a mighty power that no Constellation would dare to go up against. A violent suppressive force that ripped through one's body, pulverised it, and crushed it.

[Giant Story, 'Demon Realm's Spring', has begun its storytelling.]

However…

[Giant Story, 'Torch that Swallowed the Myth', has begun its storytelling.]

…I was withstanding it.

Sparks danced in the air like fireflies. I brushed past the currents of the electrical energy and took a step forward, then another one after that.

[Many Constellations are startled by your 'Status'.]

Constellations on the other side of the battlefield were looking at me with wide-open eyes.

[Exclusive skill, 'Bookmark', is activating!]

[Fifth Bookmark has been initiated!]

[Exclusive skill, 'Electrification' Lv.23 (+13), has been initiated.]

[Your current physical constitution is different from that of the applicable character.]

[Your 'Status' has overcome the physical constitution penalty.]

I arrived before Indra's eyes as the blinding flashes of light continued to go off.

[Ku-uhhhhk!]

My powerful kick to his stomach resulted in the opened eyes there to go 'pop' one after the other. Other eyes looked at me in pure shock as if they couldn't accept this situation.

Not that surprising, really.

It was impossible for a newbie Narrative-grade belonging to a small Nebula to exercise this much Status, after all. Indeed, it was impossible to exert this much power with only the two Giant Stories that I managed to acquire.

[Giant Story, 'Kaizenix Archipelago', is aiding you.]

[Giant Story, 'Underworld', is providing you with Probability.]

['A Single Story' you have compiled has almost reached its 'Twist'.]

However, the story was different now.

With my two Stories and Kaizenix Archipelago's Story, as well as Underworld's Giant Story all working together, I could exhibit power on a similar level to a Constellation who had completed their 'Twist', at least within the confines of this 'Great War of Saints and Demons'.

[How can you, with that much Probability… You bastard…!]

The current me wouldn't lose against an upper-rank Narrative-grade Constellation.

[I am Sakra devanam Indra! The leader of the eight lokapalas, and the king of <Vedas>!]

…Even if that Constellation just so happened to be the king of those gods.

[Constellation, 'God-King of Thunderbolts', is activating 'Thunderstorm of Heaven and Earth'!]

Eyes found all over Indra began emitting bright light, and the entire world became awash in pure whiteness. The sky was seemingly writhing within the lightning itself.

I dashed towards that spectacle of a thunderstorm.

[Probability you've used far exceeds the limit by a great degree.]

[Blessing from Nebula, <Underworld>, is protecting your Incarnation Body!]

[Vajra] and Unbroken Faith collided. Indra's lightning and the Status of 'Electrification' opposed each other as grey sparks danced in the air. My sword was pushed back by <Vedas'> Status and flew up into the sky.

A smile of satisfaction crept up on Indra's face.

However, the sword was just a diversion from the get-go. I didn't miss that moment the sword was sent flying and powerfully stomped on his leg.

[Ku-uhrk…!]

Just as Indra's massive figure crumbled, I grabbed the bastard's collars and slammed him down to the ground. He crashed head-first and gasped out in pain, unable to withstand the impact force.

I easily climbed on top of him now that he had lost his balance, and began pounding on his face with my bare fists. Accompanied by the sounds of flesh being squashed, lumps of Stories poured out from Indra's mouth.

[The measly Underworld dares to, Olympus' measly little low-ranked Nebula dares to…!]

[Measly 'Underworld'? You want to belittle my family, is that it?]

The number of Constellations actually affiliated with <Underworld> was less than ten. Even then, there was a reason why other Constellations feared this Nebula.

[Nebula, <Underworld>, has handed down the divine punishment of wrath!]

[You see, my parents? They can get really terrifying when they are angry.]

[Constellation, 'Queen of the Darkest Spring', nods her head.]

[Blessing from the Constellation, 'Father of Rich Night', is protecting you.]

Perhaps as a display of his final struggle, a baptism of electricity exploded forth from Indra's body. My skin began burning up like charcoal, and my heart being electrocuted pounded away irregularly. My vision flickered like a broken lamp, too. I gritted my teeth.

This level of lightning? Compared to what I had to go through at Kyrgios's hands, this was nothing.

I extended my hand out, and Unbroken Faith that got flung away during our initial clash returned to my grasp. I powerfully stabbed Indra's heart with the blade enveloped in the pure-white magical energy.

Along with the sound of 'Pu-shu-shuk!', Indra's Incarnation Body writhed. How much time passed by like that? The trembling body eventually stopped moving and sagged powerlessly.

I leaned closer and whispered to his ear. [Try reviving again and again. I'll just keep killing you.]

And then, a series of messages cascaded down.

[Constellation, 'God-King of Thunderbolts', has suffered horrible damage to his true body!]

[Constellation, 'God-King of Thunderbolts', isn't summoning any other Incarnation Bodies!]

[Constellation, 'God-King of Thunderbolts', has given up on the applicable scenario!]

[Another defeat has been recorded on the Constellation 'God-king of Thunderbolts' Story.]

[You have become one of 'God-King of Thunderbolts' mortal enemies.]

[A portion of Constellations of the <Star Stream> are in awe of your achievement.]

…

…

…

[Nebula, <Vedas>, has been inflicted with terrible damage!]

[Nebula, <Vedas>, is being swallowed up in the storm of Probability's aftermath!]

Every Constellation on this battlefield witnessed a Nebula tasting defeat right in front of their eyes and closed their mouths shut.

[You have achieved an unbelievable accomplishment!]

[A new Story related to 'Nebula' is germinating in you!]

I raised my body up from Indra's corpse, leading to the Judges commanding the battle formations as well as the Underworld's soldiers to kneel before me.

[Your Incarnation Body has suffered serious damage!]

I also felt like collapsing on the ground right about now. Just from thinking about that made me realize how incredible Yoo Joonghyuk was.

He managed to defeat Indra in the Half-God Body State with one attack without the blessing of <Underworld>.

Obviously, I must not lose to him.

[Is there anyone else who wishes to tour the depths of the <Underworld>?]

I couldn't display any weakness in this place. Plenty of enemies remained, and I was the Underworld's Prince, after all.

[Constellations of the battlefield are fearful of you!]

I saw the Constellations previously fighting against <Underworld> hesitantly retreat now. Constellations that had been looking down on me from high up in the sky were now scared of me.

Of course, not everyone was like that; unlike the Constellations from <Vedas> and <Papyrus>, the party from <Asgard> was still intact.

[Constellation, 'God of Fairness and Friendliness', is looking at you.]

[Constellation, 'Flames of Muspelheim', is looking at you.]

[Constellation who likes to change genders is looking at you.]

…Every single one of them were prominent Constellations.

The 'God of Fairness and Friendliness' must be the God of Light Baldr, while the 'Flames of Muspelheim' should definitely be the Flame Giant Surtr.

As for the 'Constellation who likes to change genders'…

"'Demon King of Salvation'."

The Incarnation stepping forward to represent Asgard's forces was someone that I knew pretty well.

[Selena Kim.]

"We don't have any intentions to fight you."

[Is that the intentions of the Incarnations, or the Constellations?]

Selena Kim looked troubled by my question. Unfortunately, this was an important distinction.

[Constellation, 'God of Fairness and Friendliness', finds it unacceptable that it must be affiliated with the 'Evil' camp.]

[Constellation, 'Flames of Muspelheim', wishes for a fight that burns brightly.]

Honestly, I'd be really grateful if that side decided to back away first. Because it wouldn't be good for my side if we ended up fighting <Asgard> here, too.

Whatever their reason was, several powerful Constellations from their side had chosen to participate in this conflict, and <Underworld> would definitely suffer some losses by fighting against them.

On top of this, I had to participate in other regional conflicts as well. Sadly, though, the situation didn't unfold as smoothly as I hoped for.

[A portion of Nebula <Asgard's> Constellations are displeased with the 'Demon King of Salvation'.]

[A portion of Nebula <Asgard's> Constellations argue that they need to make an example out of the 'Demon King of Salvation'.]

As expected, it couldn't be helped when it comes to a great Nebula, could it? Whether it was Constellations or humans, if a large number congregated…

[Constellation who likes to change genders is persuading <Asgard's> Constellations.]

…Huh?

[Using masterful conversational techniques, the Constellation who likes to change genders is arguing that this fight will not be good for either side.]

I couldn't figure out what's going on with this situation.

…The Constellation who likes to change genders was doing what?

[Constellations of <Asgard> are paying attention to the words of the Constellation who likes to change genders.]

It seemed that both Selena Kim and Iris were surprised as well. For a while there, the air was filled with indirect messages thanks to all the back-and-forth.

[Constellation, 'Flames of Muspelheim', says they can't trust the words of a fool who likes to change genders.]

[Constellation, 'God of Fairness and Friendliness', says that one's preference and credibility should be separate from each other.]

[Constellation, 'Thursday's Thunder', argues that, although that fool is naturally a trickster, he can sometimes speak of sensible things.]

[A portion of <Asgard's> Constellations argue that they should not forget the distress <Asgard> found itself in after trusting that Constellation's words before.]

[Constellation who likes to change genders argues that <Asgard> will suffer losses in this battlefield, unrelated to the worth of his own name.]

Well, this was a mess, alright.

In any case, I became pretty sure of who that 'Constellation who likes to change genders' was by looking at the unfolding situation.

[Constellation, 'Goddess of Love and Cats', argues that by leaving this battlefield, they will suffer losses related to the Giant Story of the 'Great War of Saints and Demons'.]

[Constellation who likes to change genders argues that that might not be the case.]

And so, just how long did they argue back and forth for?

[Constellations of <Asgard> have come to a decision.]

A short while later, I spotted Selena Kim's complexion brighten on the other side.

She quickly opened her lips. "Constellation-nims are agreeing with us. <Asgard> does not have any intentions to fight against you and <Underworld>."

[Nebula, <Asgard>, makes it clear that there is no reason to fight you.]

I had no idea how that Constellation managed to convince his uptight, stubborn fellows of Asgard, but there was no denying that this friendly offer would be good for us.

I nodded my head, and Constellations affiliated to <Underworld> and <Asgard> all withdrew their Status at once. I, as well, cancelled the [Demon King Transformation].

[Constellation who likes to change genders is looking at you.]

[Constellation who likes to change genders is praising his own accomplishment.]

…For sure, without that Constellation's help, an unnecessary fight might've broken out. I briefly lowered my head as a sign of my appreciation.

[Constellation who likes to change genders wants a reward.]

"…Do you want coins from me?"

[Constellation who likes to change genders says he has a very small favour to ask.]

"A favour, you say?"

[Constellation who likes to change genders adds that this favour is nothing serious.]

A small, nothing-serious favour, was it. I was getting more worried, instead.

I pondered it for a bit, before making my reply. "If it's not a favour that will harm <Kim Dokja's Company>, then I can do it."

I carefully studied the modifier attached to the indirect messages, before adding something else. "And yes, it must not be about changing genders."

[Constellation who likes to change genders says that it definitely isn't a favour like that.]

If it wasn't, then well.

I nodded my head, and a sound similar to a child laughing could be heard coming from the sky next.

[All beings in the 123rd regional conflict no longer hold any intention to fight.]

Constellations from <Vedas> have lost their will to fight, while only a small number of Constellations from <Papyrus> had participated from the beginning

– and they were unable to carry on due to Yoo Joonghyuk. On top of this, both <Asgard> and <Underworld> currently were not intending on fighting each other, either.

[123rd regional conflict has been forcibly concluded.]

[Applicable regional conflict's outcome can't be decided.]

[Lack of will to fight by the participants of the applicable battle has been confirmed.]

[Applicable regional conflict has been excluded from the category of 'Great War of Saints and Demons'.]

With this, the 123rd regional conflict had drawn to a close.

[Chaos Points have risen by 5.]

[Warning! Chaos Points have surpassed 70!]

The Chaos Points had already gone past 70.

There was no way that Metatron and Agares wouldn't feel the heat with things like this. Especially so with the former, who had seen the destruction of <Eden> during the 1863rd regression turn.

Thinking of participating in the next regional conflict with my other companions in it, I looked up at the Gates in the sky.

[117th Gate is currently in activation.]

[119th Gate is currently in activation.]

One was where Jung Heewon and Lee Hyunsung were, while the other Gate was Han Sooyoung's.

I quietly stared at the two Gates, before choosing which one to enter and walked into it.

But then…

[You can't enter the applicable Gate.]

I can't? Why not?

[Applicable Gate's regional conflict has been concluded.]

…The battle had ended already?

I looked behind me and found Anna Croft staring dazedly at the Gate.

"Kim Dokja."

The moment I heard her, my heart grew cold.

Regional conflicts of the 'Great War of Saints and Demons' with no victor among 'Good' and 'Evil' were treated as invalid and would enter the 'forced conclusion' sequence.

However, this regional conflict had simply been 'concluded'. Meaning…

[Victor has been decided in the applicable regional conflict.]

…Meaning, <Kim Dokja's Company> that entered the Gate in question had failed in their mission.

[Death penalty will be applied to the defeated participants of the regional conflict.]

Chapter 394: Ep. 75 - A certain heart, I

"…Oh, the noble and majestic master of the dark clouds, Black Flame Dragon… What the hell, why is this incantation so lengthy? Hey, is this for real??"

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', nods its head.]

Han Sooyoung spat out a series of expletives and dodged the incoming spears of light. There was a 'Pu-shut!' and a streak of blood escaped from her shoulder.

[Constellation, 'Master of the Ark', is grinning.]

The [Black Flame] Han Sooyoung wielded utterly disintegrated several Valkyries in her near vicinity. Stunned by that evil power, other Valkyries shouted out in unison.

[Kill her!]

[Absolute Evil must not be allowed to live!]

[We must stop her from finishing her spell!]

Han Sooyoung continued to smack away the Valkyries flooding her position and muttered to herself. "Isn't it a common courtesy to wait for someone to finish transforming?"

She bit her lower lip while watching the great army of Valkyries still rushing in. Now normally, it'd not be any trouble for her to deal with lower-class Historical-grade Incarnations.

The issue was with the skill these Valkyries possessed.

[Nebula, <Eden>, has currently activated 'Hour of Divine Punishment'.]

The 'Hour of Divine Punishment'; this skill was really similar to the [Hour of Judgement] Jung Heewon used. Although the former didn't boast the same level of buff as the latter, it still greatly enhanced one's combat abilities against 'Evil'.

Valkyries blessed with that skill were numbering not in the dozens, but in the hundreds.

[Raphael, your skills have become rusty!]

On one corner of the battlefield, Asmodeus was cackling away in madness while swinging his claws around in the air.

And in the air, demonic energy and divinity collided to produce loud explosions. Just above that, there was a piece of floating cloud.

Raphael was riding on that.

[Stop being snarky. Or get your piehole stuffed again.]

[Ahahahaha! Your propensity to quip is still the same, I see!]

The tone of the voice was playful, but the waves of Status contained within were certainly not.

Han Sooyoung could only scowl deeply in silence. No matter how she looked, that insane Demon King didn't seem to have any leeway to help her out.

[Constellation, 'Morning Star Goddess', is deliberating on her participation.]

[Constellation, 'The One Who Faces God', is frowning at the demonic aura coming from 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon'.]

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is looking at another place in restlessness.]

Not only that, there were still three great Constellations on the side of 'Good' remaining, too.

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', says not to worry and complete the spell.]

"…The darkest dark, the most legendary tale, greatest Dragon among them all, the blessing of the Black Flame Dragon shall accompany this bod… Screw this shit! You're doing this deliberately, aren't you? I'm not doing this anymore!"

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', cackles and says that's enough.]

In the following moment, incredible demonic aura exploded out from Han Sooyoung's body.

She closed her eyes after sensing the vast Status rising up from the deepest part of her. As her consciousness slowly submerged under the surface, several things in her mind began snapping loose.

Thoughts of invalidating this battlefield, or <Kim Dokja's Company> striding on the ambiguous ethical line between 'Good' and 'Evil', all broke in half and became paralysed.

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', is starting 'Advent of Half-God'!]

When she reopened her eyes, she had become a different person.

[Incarnation Han Sooyoung's mind has been tainted by demonic aura.]

"Kuk, kuk, kukuk…"

Her irises were now dyed in the purple-coloured demonic aura. She covered half of her face with her hand and wiped the blood on her cheek.

She licked the traces of fresh blood on the back of her hand and asked. "How amusing. Is this all you can do?"

The shoulders of all the Valkyries shuddered after they sensed that unknown aura, and they quickly distanced themselves.

Han Sooyoung shouted out loudly as bright light began emitting from her. "Kneel before me! This is the difference of Status between you and… Hey!! Stop spouting bullshit with my mouth!"

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', says that it can't be helped if his true power is to be unleashed.]

"No, hang on. If you want to say something, then say stuff that makes… Oraaa! Taste my Dark Shadow Phoen…!! Nooo, not something like that!"

Although her incantation effort was a bit of a mess, it still must've been effective, as a huge shadow suddenly drew below Han Sooyoung's feet. The land seemed to quake as the shadow grew even larger and eventually, it took on the shape similar to that of a Dragon.

She had seen similar phenomenons as this one several times in the past.

Back in the [Peace Land] and in [Dark Castle], she saw Constellations using this power before – the Constellation's shadow. Their darkness, existing on the reverse side of their starlight.

Before long, she was riding on the back of a black Dragon, dozens of metres tall.

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', is roaring out!]

This was it, the power that couldn't be unleashed until now due to the restriction of Probability. The shadow of the Black Flame Dragon carried her and soared high into the air.

As the pitch-black shadow was cast onto the skies above, the Dragon began pouring out its Breath onto the ground below.

Kuwaaaaaaahh!!

The battlefield was swept clean by the shockwaves; even the fleeing Valkyries were turned to fine dust in an instant.

This absolute power rendered [Hour of Divine Punishment] and blessings from a Nebula completely meaningless.

[U-uwah, uwaaah!!]

Perhaps he was reminded of a deeply unpleasant nightmare, the 'Master of the Ark' hugged himself and began shivering away. That made sense, though – any Constellation from <Eden> would possess a certain amount of fear towards the 'Apocalypse Dragon', that's why.

And 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' was one of the strongest candidates among the final Dragons from the Book of Revelation.

This was the true power of the 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon'.

Even as she suffered from the suppression of the Probability building up, Han Sooyoung still trembled from sheer joy.

She did good. She really did good by choosing 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' as her sponsor.

"Hahahaha! Die! Diiie! Die! Diiiie! …God damn it, stop it!"

As if she was suffering from schizophrenia, two different things jumped out of her mouth at the same time.

[Your mind is being tainted by the demonic aura.]

This power of the Black Flame Dragon was indeed incredible, but it couldn't be abused; the longer it was used, the ego of the Incarnation would gradually be assimilated to that of the Dragon itself.

'At this rate, I might end up exactly like Kim Namwoon in a few years'.

Completely disregarding her inner worries, Abyssal Black Flame Dragon's shadow proceeded to sweep away over half of the battlefield in no time at all.

As if she couldn't sit back and watch any longer, someone finally made a move.

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', reveals her Status!]

For the first time ever, the Black Flame Dragon's Breath was blocked as the deafening roar rocked the land. The essence of the white flames was cutting down the darkness of the world.

The [Flames of Retribution].

It was Uriel's Star Relic, crafted out of the purest fire that burned in the depths of Hell.

The Black Flame Dragon blotting out the sky broke into a grin.

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', says that he always wanted to have a showdown.]

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is hardening her expression.]

The two Constellation went head-to-head and the surrounding space was immediately flooded with the dancing blue sparks. Valkyries couldn't withstand the clash of the Statuses and collapsed while vomiting blood.

[Oldest Good is enjoying this regional conflict.]

[Oldest Evil is enjoying this regional conflict.]

The great 'Good' and 'Evil' had selected these two Constellations as their representatives. And in the midst of it all, there was Han Sooyoung, currently being cooked into charcoal by the arcs of blue sparks.

"Kuk, kuk, kuk, die! You dumb Archang… Hey you, stop! This is no good!"

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', asks why that's the case.]

"You idiot! If we start fighting Uriel here, everything will be over!"

Han Sooyoung, her face caked with soot, began throwing a wild temper tantrum. She almost ended up fighting for real after getting swept up in the atmosphere earlier, but she knew that nothing good would come out of doing exactly that.

"And you, Archangel! You wake up, too! Are you really going to fight me?"

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is looking at you.]

Uriel was forming a helpless expression. Anxiety was all-too-clear to see in her eyes.

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', forms a troubled expression.]

"You don't want to fight either, right? I know. So, why don't we stop here? And please, why don't you persuade your friends while you're at it, too!"

Han Sooyoung's words only managed to make Uriel's anxiety run even deeper.

However, the [Hellfire] activated separately from what her expressions had indicated and persistently flew in Han Sooyoung's direction. The latter didn't give up, though.

She believed that there had to be a reason why the Archangel was participating in this regional conflict.

[Story, 'Predictive Plagiarism', has begun its storytelling.]

「Uriel must've known that this was a trap designed to kill <Kim Dokja's Company>. That is why she had to come here personally.」

What an unfortunate thing it was that the duo showing up in this battlefield happened to be 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' and Han Sooyoung…

Still, she was a member of <Kim Dokja's Company>. So, she decided to bring out the cheat key she held back for the rainy day.

"What will Kim Dokja think of you if I end up dying here?"

Uriel's shoulders trembled faintly. Han Sooyoung quickly went for another shot. "I'm asking you, are you confident of looking at Kim Dokja, free of a guilty conscience, after killing me?"

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', says that you and your sponsor are 'Evil'.]

"God damn it! Who cares about 'Good' this and 'Evil' that? How is that important? You people decided that on your own!"

[Flames of Retribution] brushed past the Black Flame Dragon's wing. Even as her balance rocked unstably, Han Sooyoung looked at Uriel with pleading eyes. The latter's sword swings had become much more half-hearted than before.

Just a little bit more; one more push, and it'd be over.

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation', is watching the battlefield.]

Goosebumps broke out all over Han Sooyoung after she heard the ensuing indirect messages.

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation', is looking at 'Demon-like Judge of Fire'.]

'…Kim Dokja, you scary bastard.

You have enough leeway to look at this side, too?'

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation', is looking at 'Demon-like Judge of Fire'.]

Kim Dokja didn't say anything. Not a word of request for help, no asking for favours, nothing – just him looking on.

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', has stopped moving.]

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is falling into confusion.]

Han Sooyoung inwardly cried out in elation. Uriel's heart would be a confusing mixture of emotions right about now.

On one hand, wanting to save <Kim Dokja's Company>, and on the other, the desire to win in the 'Great War of Saints and Demons'.

Faint sparks were dancing all around her; Stories that made her who she was, began colliding against each other. The Story that she loved the most, and the Story she had been living with, were clashing with each other.

Was it <Kim Dokja's Company> she liked so much, or the one she belonged to, <Eden>?

[Uriel! Why are you standing around stupidly like that?]

Her indecision prompted other Constellations to step forward; they were unable to sit back and endure this situation any further.

[Constellation, 'Morning Star Goddess', has revealed her Status!]

[Constellation, 'The One Who Faces God', has revealed its Status!]

Han Sooyoung spat out a deep, painful breath rushing up to her throat and frowned deeply.

[Your Incarnation Body has been damaged extensively.]

In all honesty, she tried to persuade Uriel not just because she didn't want to fight the Archangel.

The adverse side effect of [Advent of Half-God] was already affecting her, that was why. Every joint in her body was being paralysed, while she felt like vomiting a huge amount of blood right now. The only reason why she suppressed them all was to not display any weakness to these Constellations, that was all.

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is looking somewhere else.]

Substituting for the dazed Uriel, Camael stepped forward, instead. He spoke up. [My colleague seems to be in distress, so I believe that it'll be better for us to wrap this up soon.]

[I expected much more because it was the Black Flame Dragon, but… Compared to its Modifier, it's nothing much, isn't it?]

Vakarine's crystal staff containing starlight suddenly emitted bright light, causing countless beams of starlight to rain down from the heavens above. The Black Flame Dragon's shadow was gradually shaving away as the beams of light touched it.

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', is roaring out in pure rage!]

The Breath fired out by the enraged Dragon's shadow poured down from above Vakarine's head; she screamed in panic at the dark Ether rushing in, and quickly retreated.

It was Camael who stepped forward to block that, however.

[This much is not going to be enough!]

Camael unsheathed a great sword and cut the Breath apart to advance forward.

However…

"The darkest dark! The legend among legends! Fires of Red Flames!"

Han Sooyoung began spouting nonsense, and the Black Flame Dragon's suddenly-amplified Breath began forcing back both Vakarine and Camael.

Vakarine's complexion paled as her coat burned up in an instant.

[How humiliating! Suffering from such a ridiculous technique…!]

[Uriel! What are you doing! You must regain yourself!]

Camael's true voice must've gotten through to her because Uriel seemed to suddenly regain her wits just then. Han Sooyoung wiped away the streams of blood and focused her blurring eyesight.

If Uriel decided to jump in wholeheartedly, then everything would be over.

Before that happened, she must…

[…Right, you're correct. This ■-up war must end quickly.]

And then, Uriel made her move.

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is revealing her true self.]

The blinding Status of an Archangel dyed the entirety of the battlefield; all of Uriel's wings unfurled in full, and a crown with a crimson-red ruby shimmered brilliantly above her flowing platinum-blonde hair.

Her emerald-coloured eyes proudly observed the world.

Uriel stepped forward while withstanding the incredible storm of Probability's aftermath that came about after unleashing her true body. When facing off against that boundless Status, Han Sooyoung felt her consciousness waver despite the Black Flame Dragon's grace protecting her.

This was the true appearance of the 'Demon-like Judge of Fire'.

The Archangel of Conflagration that cut down tens of thousands of demons, murdered Demon Kings, and eradicated all evil. The moment she saw those eyes, Han Sooyoung realized that she was as good as dead already.

In front of that 'demon-like' existence, all 'Evil' would have to willingly offer up their heads.

'Sorry, Kim Dokja'.

The [Flames of Retribution] rose up high to split the sky, and in the meantime, Han Sooyoung sensed the approaching end for once.

[Story, 'Predictive Plagiarism', can't come up with what will happen next.]

And then, her vision was dyed in pure white. Like a completely blank page with nothing on it.

However, no matter how long she waited, the expected pain never materialised. Did she die even before she could experience pain?

She sneakily opened her eyes, only to be greeted by a completely unexpected spectacle.

The [Flames of Retribution] that was definitely moving in her direction had changed its shape to a ring and was emitting bright light on the ground.

[You, and you. Move an inch, and you'll die.]

More specifically, after it had tightly wound around the bodies of Vakarine and Camael.

[My flames can get a bit hot, you see? I'm not kidding, so if you move a muscle, you'll really die.]

Vakarine could only ask in a dumbfounded tone of voice at this sudden development. [Uriel… But, why?]

[If you do something like this, the Scribe will…!]

Camael's words only made Uriel bitterly complain. [■ck. I'll just enjoy some disciplinary actions or something later. You think that's important right now?]

[This isn't simply going to end with some disciplinary action! What you did was…!]

[Shut up! So what if those Chaos Points rise up or something?!]

Only after hearing Uriel's true voice did Camael realize that his companion was being serious here.

[But you, why…]

It was at this point Han Sooyoung figured out why Uriel had to unleash the power of her true self. If she were to subjugate another Archangel on the same level as her, as well as a high-class Constellation without killing them, she had no choice but to release her real power.

Uriel was suffering from tremendous pain of the Probability's aftermath; and there was the faintest trace of demonic aura permeating into her dark laces, too.

'Corruption'. The harshest punishment that would be bestowed upon her after she refused to heed the divine order.

Just before Han Sooyoung could say something to her, Uriel took the initiative away first. [I don't have time to explain this and that. Let's quickly invalidate this regional conflict and end it!]

Her expression was really urgent for some reason.

It was at that moment that a thought entered Han Sooyoung's head.

Even if Uriel did make up her mind, there was no need for her to be this urgent; if an Archangel was willing to deal with such a huge loss just to start something, then there must be a very good reason for that. So, what could possibly make her behave so urgently like this?

It wasn't that difficult to figure out the answer.

[My Heewon is in danger!]

Chapter 395: Ep. 75 - A certain heart, II

"We can do this. We won't know it until we actually start fighting," said Jung Heewon exactly three hours ago. "Doesn't matter whether they are Demon Kings or not, tell them to come. We aren't that weak anymore, right?"

The ones listening to her were the Reincarnators; the ones that chose 'Good' during the past regional conflicts, as well as the lucky few that survived the battlefields invalidated by <Kim Dokja's Company>.

These were people who had lost their worldview.

[117th regional conflict is commencing!]

[Your affiliated camp is 'Good'.]

"If I knew this might happen, I wouldn't have come…"

"…Can't we return to our old world?"

A few people began muttering in fear and the turmoil spread among the crowd in an instant.

"H-how can we fight against something like that?!"

"Ah, aaaah…"

A ship of 'Evil' was surging in from the distance. It was massive. Without a doubt, it was a Story weapon equipped with incredible functionalities.

Ghi-eeeeehhk!

The waves supporting the massive ship and flooding in were actually a great army consisting of 7th-grade demonkind, Dark Warriors. There were so many that it was near-impossible to count them all. At a casual glance, there had to be several tens of thousands.

It was a spectacle that couldn't be described as a mere regional conflict.

"Uwaaaaah-!!"

Jung Heewon saw the eyes of the Reincarnators filled with fear and thought to herself.

She couldn't demand everyone to be brave here.

It was only obvious that they would be scared.

They lived their whole lives inside the cages of their worldview, only to be used by the invaders from the outside. Demanding such people to be brave was the very act of violence itself.

Jung Heewon wanted to tell them; tell them that they didn't have to fight, that she'd do something to resolve this by herself, somehow.

"Everyone, hide behind me."

There was one man who spoke up for her heart, though.

"I shall block them."

He was one of her oldest companions, as well as a man who bravely met the adversity <Kim Dokja's Company> ran into from the forefront.

"Can you stop that all by yourself?"

"Of course, that'll be impossible."

Seeing Lee Hyunsung's generous smile, her frustrated heart seemed to loosen up just a little. He used to have a seizure just from a simple touch of a fingertip, but at this moment, she sensed that they had grown really close.

"Let's decide on our roles. I'll be in charge of taking on all the attacks. Heewon-ssi, you should…"

"It's to attack, yes? Just like back in Kaizenix."

Back in the Kaizenix Archipelago, there were times when they fought alongside each other like this. They shared memories of fighting against the marauding invaders.

The toughest shield and the sharpest sword of <Kim Dokja's Company>. Although simple, this tactic best optimised their individual strengths and weaknesses.

"Shall we get going?"

[Story, 'Sword and Shield', has begun its storytelling.]

The first one to dash forward was Lee Hyunsung.

"Haaaaaaahph!!"

As befitting of a man believing in the superstition of 'the louder the roar, the stronger one gets', he yelled out loudly enough to shake the world and clashed against the dark waves.

[Incarnation Lee Hyunsung is activating Stigma 'Steel Transformation Lv.10'!]

The steel carapace that had reached their maturity now covered his entire body. The Dark Warriors colliding with the steel outer layer gleaming in the bright white glare fell down like bowling pins and got crushed to death.

[Incarnation Lee Hyunsung is activating Stigma 'Great Mountain Smash Lv.10'!]

His fist of steel rising up into the air powerfully slammed down on the ground – the waves created by Dark Warriors wobbled about precariously, causing the ship's movement to become dull, as well.

Not missing that opportunity, Lee Hyunsung activated his final Stigma.

[Incarnation Lee Hyunsung is activating Stigma 'Great Mountain Push Lv.10'!]

It was a Stigma that could only pry open the stuck door of a subway in the beginning. But now, that very Stigma was allowing him to push back against a vessel the size of a battleship.

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

Both of his hands currently covered in [Steel Transformation] were dyeing in a pitch-black colour, and a portion of the carapace covering his body was stripped away. However, Lee Hyunsung spat out another loud yell and endured the pain.

"Haaaaaaahph!!"

He didn't back off even when subjected to the deluge of sparks.

His back leg dug deep into the ground below, and from afar, he resembled a small nail stuck to the ground. But that small nail was successfully stopping the forward movement of that battleship.

"It, it stopped!"

"Lee Hyunsung-nim has stopped the warship!"

The Reincarnators cheered on at this unbelievable miracle.

Unfortunately, the real battle would only begin from now on. The shield had done its job, so it's now time for the sword to do hers.

Jung Heewon soared high into the air after stepping on Lee Hyunsung's shoulders and landed on the ship's deck, before swinging the [Sword of Judgement] around.

[Kuwaaahk!]

She unleashed the combination of [Demon Slaying] and [Hellfire]. She didn't hold back at all, and a Historical-grade Constellation caught off guard was killed off instantly, its Incarnation Body blowing up completely.

Jung Heewon scattering the bluish ghostly flames and emitting pure-white light looked utterly noble, virtuous.

[A portion of Constellations like the 'Sword and Shield' story.]

Kka-gagagak!!

Unfortunately, it didn't take long for her sword to be stopped.

The culprit was a hand seemingly draped in a dreary black hue. A being cackling ominously had grabbed onto her sword, before throwing her away in the air.

She stepped on the air and spun around to land back on the deck safely.

Before her stood Constellations that already had created a battle formation.

Ku-gugugugu!

No, they weren't Constellations.

[Looking at the accursed Stigma, you must be the Incarnation of that 'Archangel'.]

[You must've known that this was a trap, yet… How foolish. To think that you'd willingly step forward towards your own demise.]

They were completely enveloped in the pitch-black demonic aura; the beings that occupied the darkness within the skies of the <Star Stream>.

Jung Heewon studied the five Demon Kings standing before her.

– This is a list of beings that you should be able to fight, as well as those you should never, Heewon-ssi. Please, you must memorise their appearances no matter what.

She desperately recalled the contents of Kim Dokja's explanation.

The first Demon King her eyes shifted over to was the creature holding a flaming spear and a head of a person.

– This guy is someone you can fight. If it's the current you, Heewon-ssi, activating [Hour of Judgement] should suffice.

The master of the 58th Demon Realm, 'President of Flames', Amy.

– As for this guy… it'll be fine. However, if he suddenly raises up his horn and pounces on you, things will get dangerous, so attack him first without hesitation.

The master of the 48th Demon Realm, 'Golden-horned Ox', Haagenti.

– It'll get dangerous from this guy onwards. When you're at your peak condition, and when you can fight one on one, only then try to fight it.

The master of the 36th Demon Realm, 'Silver-clawed Owl', Stolas.

Judging from the leaking Status, she could feel it – up until this guy, she could somehow fight them.

The problem was with the other two staring at her from behind the front three. First of all, the handsome Demon King looking at her, wearing red armour and a limp in one leg.

– Honestly speaking, your chances of winning are slim when we enter the top 20s. If Uriel was to perform 'Advent of Half-God', then things might be different, but…

The master of the 16th Demon Realm, 'Demon King of Seduction and Infertility', Zepar.

– And from here onwards, you must unconditionally avoid these guys.

She didn't need a reminder to understand it – the very last being at the back of the formation of the five Demon Kings, silently observing the unfolding situation. That was a being that the current her could never win against.

The master of the 8th Demon Realm, 'Merciless Hunter Against the Will of Heavens', Barbatos.

The Demon King with a cowboy-style hat and carrying a rifle was smiling at her through its cascading blonde hair.

[The tastiest despair is the 'impossible hope', indeed.]

Jung Heewon burned her fighting spirit and tightened her grip on the sword.

She had already fought against Demon Kings. Back then, she was not in a condition to exhibit all of her abilities, but… What would it be like now?

[Exclusive skill, 'Hour of Judgement', is getting ready to activate!]

Her Attribute was 'Judge of Evil'.

It was the power of the Archangel that led the Valkyries in the past 'Great War of Saints and Demons'.

No matter how powerful her opponents were, she'd still not lose as long as they were 'Evil'.

Unfortunately…

[Majority of the Absolute Good-type Constellations are opposing the activation of the skill.]

[Skill activation has been cancelled.]

Barbatos began laughing as if it already knew what was happening to her.

[How naïve, oh, Incarnation of Uriel. Do you still not understand what your current situation is?]

Kim Dokja said that this 'regional conflict' was a trap.

He said that, even if they knew, they still had to participate in it.

[Angels enjoy the concept of the 'sacrificial lamb'. And it seems that you'll be it this time.]

The goal of <Eden> was to win the 'Great War of Saints and Demons'.

And to achieve that goal, <Kim Dokja's Company> must not exist. Whether Jung Heewon was 'Good' or 'Evil', she was simply someone to dispose of from their perspective.

She already knew all of that. That didn't mean it felt real to her even now, though.

'…I don't know about other angels, but even Uriel betrayed me?'

[I shall send you away peacefully.]

She heard Barbatos's rifle being cocked. Just as she sensed the back of her neck suddenly grow cold, Jung Heewon threw herself outside the ship.

Ku-waaaaaah!!

The bullet fired in the air tore through the fabric of time and space to puncture a black hole in the sky.

Her hand gripping the sword trembled slightly. She was about to throw herself into a fight against such a monster just now.

– Regardless of what, you must never try to fight a Demon King ranked tenth or higher one-on-one. You must run away without hesitation. And wait for the rest of your companions to arrive. You must remember this.

In any other normal circumstances, she'd have gone against his words. However, it was a different story right now.

"Hyunsung-ssi!"

Lee Hyunsung, busy smacking away the Dark Warriors to death at the front of the pack, looked up at her falling body. That quick exchange of their gazes was enough for him to figure out the current situation of the battle.

The ridiculing voices of the Demon Kings resounded out.

[Hahahaha! You made a wise decision.]

[Indeed, this battlefield is vast. However, how long will you be able to run away?]

A violent tempest of demonic aura raged on in the sky.

The sword and the shield ran.

It was impossible to fight against the enemies they couldn't even stand against. And they also couldn't afford to die here.

"Dokja-ssi and Yoo Joonghyuk-ssi will arrive soon. Let's hold out until then."

Jung Heewon nodded her head. No matter how powerful their enemies were, as long as the company had gathered in one place, they should be able to overcome them. They had broken past battles even worse than this one before. <Kim Dokja's Company> would not crumble in this place.

The two of them took care of the injured Reincarnators and continued to crush the advancing 'Dark Warriors' while withdrawing their battle lines.

[Influence of your sponsor is weakening.]

To make matters worse, even Uriel's blessing had weakened. Her mind cooked up only the worst-case scenarios, but Jung Heewon shook her head to get rid of them. Most likely, Uriel must've been fighting in a different regional conflict; there was simply no way that her sponsor would betray her.

A frenzied true voice of a Demon King swept across the battlefield next.

[Get out of the way, trash!]

Reincarnators that lost their chance to run away were slaughtered in droves everywhere.

The brave ones trying to fight back were the first to lose their heads, while those backing away in terror had their hearts pierced through.

However, there were still some who could endure against the power of a Demon King to put up a fight.

[Hoh-oh, a Swordmaster, is it? You're a pretty good fighter.]

Someone was defending against Haagenti's golden horn.

The Ether Blade coated this man's sword. The old man holding this weapon was someone Jung Heewon knew very well.

"…Kyle?"

Kyle Berthe.

He was the top-ranked guardian knight that accompanied her during 'Kaizenix Archipelago'.

「Captain, it's been my honour to serve you.」

「Actually, I'm too old to step into the outside world, but…」

「I sincerely wish that my measly strength can become at least some kind of aid to you in that place.」

Kyle fought well. He managed to deflect Haagenti's horn several times, and he even inflicted a small nick on the arm of the bovine Demon King.

But, that was as far as he could go.

The Swordmaster's blade broke, and he went down on his knees. From the beginning, his opponent was not someone an aged Swordmaster could fight against.

His throat was captured and he was lifted up like a toy.

[Character, 'Erich Striker', is getting agitated.]

Erich's emotions rose up within Jung Heewon.

At this rate, Kyle would die. Her thoughts moved lethargically; the names of <Kim Dokja's Company> members brushed past her mind.

The first one she thought of was Yoo Joonghyuk.

「"Reincarnators will revive even if they die."」

He'd not have tried to save Kyle. The 'Isle of Reincarnators' didn't permit death, after all. One might lose their memories and become a different existence, but nevertheless, the soul would carry on. So, he'd let Kyle die for the sake of the bigger picture.

The next one to pop up in her head was Kim Dokja.

「We should save him. But, if you do that, you'll die instead, Heewon-ssi.」

Kim Dokja might say the right things, but because he was worried about her life, he'd turn a blind eye to Kyle's plight.

「Why are you in a dilemma? Use that guy to smack the Demon King to death. Simple.」

Han Sooyoung would say something similar to that. Well, she never was all that interested in saving people's lives from the beginning, anyway. In order to end the absolute-worst situation in the best possible circumstances, she'd directly aim for the Demon King's neck by now.

And then, the dying Kyle's lips were mouthing the following words.

'Please, run away'.

However, his eyes were saying something else.

「Please… Save me.」

"Heewon-ssi."

She heard Lee Hyunsung's voice next.

She and he were the most similar out of everyone in <Kim Dokja's Company>.

Sure, their personalities and adaptabilities might be different, but at least when it came to a certain type of situation, they would always come to the exact same decision.

[Exclusive skill, 'Hellfire Lv.10' is activating!]

There was no need to even hesitate here.

Because they too, were saved in the same manner in the past.

Chapter 396: Ep. 75 - A certain heart, III

In that brief moment, the gazes of these two met each other.

「"Everyone knows how to deal with Demon Kings, right?"」

They carried the same pain, and they lived with the same hurt.

They had lost people they cared about right before their eyes.

「"Let's begin the final scenario."」

They had failed to save their companions many times over.

And that was why they could never turn their backs on the people dying right in front of them.

The lives they had lived so far made sure of that.

"Let's go!"

Jung Heewon lightly jumped up and landed on Lee Hyunsung's hand, and he powerfully threw her forward.

She flew like a streak of light and crossed the battlefield. The flames of [Hellfire] drew a stylish arc in the air and shot forward, causing the Demon King Haagenti to gasp out in pain.

The creature quickly put out the fire that managed to slice apart a portion of its flesh and roared out viciously in reply. [So, that's where you've been hiding!]

Haagenti didn't dally any longer and dashed forward while raising a thick cloud of dust.

"Kuwahhhph!"

As Lee Hyunsung grabbed Haagenti's horn to start wrestle with the creature, Jung Heewon began shaking the unconscious Kyle.

"Kyle! Get a hold of yourself! Kyle!"

It was as if she had reverted back to being Erich Striker; she desperately called out Kyle's name. She placed her hand near his nose and much to her relief, found out that he hadn't died yet.

「"Let's try one more time with the scenario…"」

These people came this far after they heard her voice and the words of <Kim Dokja's Company>. They followed after her in order to find their own stories.

That was why she simply couldn't let them die here.

"Allow me to take him away."

With good timing, guardian knights approached her and one of them placed Kyle on his back.

"I'll leave him to your care."

"Please, leave him to us."

The knight nodded his head solemnly and quickly ran towards the back of the battlefield. She then grasped her sword tighter, planning to help Lee

Hyunsung. But then, right at that moment…

…A chilling premonition tickled her entire figure.

She had never felt such a thing before in her entire life.

Not even when she was about to lose Kim Dokja in the [Dark Castle], not when she lost him one more time back in the 73rd Demon Realm, and then…

"Heewon-ssi! Get down!!"

At the same time, Lee Hyunsung bear-hugged her and rolled down on the ground. A thin ray of light brushed past her forearm. It was at that moment that she finally realized such a terrifying scream could come out of her own mouth.

It was a bullet fired by Barbatos.

Lee Hyunsung's complexion had changed to pale blue; even before she could ask him if he was alright, he spoke to her first. "You should evacuate first. I'll try to buy you some time."

He stopped the advancing Haagenti with both of his hands, and he caught the burning spear thrown by Amy in the distance with his teeth. Even when subjected to the intense heat that melted his tongue and cooked his eyeballs, Lee Hyunsung endured it with nothing more than his unyielding, indomitable spirit.

– Hurry!

He sent a voice projection, the skill that connected her to Lee Hyunsung when they were still stuck inside 'Kaizenix Archipelago'. With that very skill, he was talking to her.

– I can still withstand this! But I won't be able to while trying to protect you, as well!

Back then, or now; Lee Hyunsung always insisted that he could do things he couldn't possibly do. That was why Jung Heewon couldn't escape.

She deflected the incoming silver-coloured claws of Demon King Stolas and gritted her teeth. The flames of [Hellfire] were progressively getting weaker, and cracks on Lee Hyunsung's carapace grew larger and more numerous.

The 'Demon King of Seduction and Infertility' Zepar laughed. [What a sad fate this is. But, I do enjoy a tragedy like this.]

"Shut up."

[A few Constellations are tearing up at the story of the Incarnations.]

Jung Heewon desperately wielded her sword so that she could leave behind definite proof of their lives not being some stories of entertainment for the others.

Reincarnators running away watched their struggle.

To save them, Jung Heewon and Lee Hyunsung fought.

[Influence of the Nebula, <Kim Dokja's Company> is growing larger.]

[Foundation of 'Great War of Saints and Demons' is being rocked.]

For the first time ever, the Demon Kings basking in a relaxed air changed their expressions.

[It's regretful that we can't enjoy this anymore.]

And for one more time, another blackish beam of light exploded forth. The bullet tore through space and flew forward. It was Barbatos's speciality, [Star Destruction Bullet].

It couldn't be dodged this time.

Jung Heewon crouched into a huddle, trying to minimise the potential area of damage, only for someone to cover her. Along with the sensation of a dull, heavy impact, she heard something exploding away.

BLAM!

The bullet didn't end with just one.

BLAM!!

The first one, then the second, and another; bullets fired one after the other blew up, broke, and destroyed 'something'.

[Story, 'Purest Companionship', is getting agitated.]

Jung Heewon struggled desperately and hugged the person protecting her to roll around on the ground. It was a person's body, torn to bits by the bullets. A bloodied face was smiling towards her. He was saying something, but slowly, so slowly, he closed his eyes.

[Story, 'Sword and Shield', has stopped its storytelling.]

"Hyunsung-ssi?"

[Constellation, 'Master of Steel', has received great damage.]

"Hyunsung-ssi, please wake up."

As if they had reached the intermission, the gunfires came to a halt just then.

Something inside her head snapped in that moment. Jung Heewon shook Lee Hyunsung one more time.

"Hyunsung-ssi."

He didn't open his eyes. His lips didn't say anything, and his nose didn't breathe anything out. His ears couldn't hear anything, either.

"Get up!!!"

But, she hadn't given him her answer yet.

"Get up! Get up already!!"

And then… the Demon Kings began moving again.

Jung Heewon quickly hoisted Lee Hyunsung's large body up and ran, hard. She ran at the fastest speed she had ever produced before. She ran fast and hard enough that muscles in her legs tore up and her heart began straining itself. The gunfire soon resumed, and scars accumulated on her body.

However, she still continued to run. She continued to escape from everything in this place.

If it was Kim Dokja; if it was him, he should be able to save Lee Hyunsung.

He saved Shin Yoosung, and he also managed to save Yoo Sangah, too. So, he'd be able to save Lee Hyunsung for sure.

Death was nothing in this place.

Death could not separate them.

Jung Heewon ran as tears streamed down her face. Although it was nothing more than buying time, that time was critical in changing everything.

So, she ran. And, she ran some more. How long did she run like that? Her vision grew blurrier and eventually, she collapsed into a puddle of mud. The putrid stench of dead Reincarnators filled up the landscape. There wasn't a drop of energy left in her body.

As for Lee Hyunsung's heartbeat, she couldn't hear it anymore.

[Incarnation of Uriel, where are you hiding?]

She sensed the presence of Demon Kings approaching closer and held her breath. Whether it was due to luck or not, her current Status had been broken to an unrecognisable degree right now and it was difficult to differentiate her from the other Reincarnators.

[If you don't want to come out, then well, we'll just kill the rest.]

Demon King Amy laughed and began swinging its flame spear.

There were still many surviving Reincarnators around her. They were people Jung Heewon should be saving. They were people she should have saved.

She squeezed her eyes shut.

'I'm sorry'.

Her sense of righteousness could only extend this far.

She heard the flames of explosions roaring on, and began picturing the scenes she'd see after opening her eyes again.

The sights of the Reincarnators being burnt to death, demolished, and blown up; the faces of the dying, filled with resentment towards her; their expressions as they pointed fingers at her while trying to run away.

Jung Heewon prayed; she prayed that at least one more would manage to run away. Even if it was only by a little further away, to endure until Kim Dokja arrived.

"Here she is!"

And then, someone shouted out.

"I am Uriel's Incarnation, Jung Heewon!"

She opened her eyes in a fluster; the person who said that was someone she knew very well. It was none other than knight Kyle, the one she saved not too long ago.

And next to him was the knight that carried the injured Kyle away.

"No, I'm Jung Heewon!"

"No, it is I! I am she! Come and kill me instead!"

[…You bastards, have you all gone mad as a group?]

Reincarnators weren't running away.

Those that came along with her from the 'Kaizenix Archipelago', those she managed to save during other regional conflicts, they were all standing by her side to shout at the top of their lungs.

"I'm Jung Heewon!"

"I'm Lee Hyunsung!!"

Reincarnators stood up and spoke her name, and Lee Hyunsung's, as if it was theirs. Even though they knew what would happen if they did.

"I'm Yoo Joonghyuk!"

Everyone here was staring at their own death.

"I'm Kim Dokja!"

"I'm Han Sooyoung!!"

They called out the names of their saviours, the names of <Kim Dokja's Company>.

"I'm Jung Heewon!"

As if this was the righteousness they all decided to adhere to. Or, as if to become the gods that would save them in turn, instead.

"Uwaaaah!!"

After crying out her name, Kyle began dashing towards the nearest Demon King. Reincarnators running away in the opposite direction were now coming back.

Some were in tears, some were in a rage, while some were in despair.

[Influence of <Kim Dokja's Company> in the applicable scenario is strengthening even further!]

The Demon Kings became flustered and began unleashing their Statuses.

[How dare these insane fools…!]

Reincarnators were being ripped to shreds right before her eyes.

They couldn't even endure a light nudge from a Demon King. Even then, they didn't stop shouting out. Some cried out Jung Heewon's name, while some, Lee Hyunsung's. Some called out Kim Dokja's name while flinging themselves into the embrace of death.

Trapped within this battlefield of complete pandemonium, Jung Heewon began shuddering.

Why were they being killed off like this?

She looked at the collapsed Lee Hyunsung below, before casting her glare up at the darkened skies of the <Star Stream>. Countless stars were looking down at her.

Even though there were so many sparkling stars up there…

…Not one came down to help her.

Jung Heewon rose up from her spot.

"…I."

And then, she ran towards the Demon Kings.

"I am Jung Heewon!!"

[So, that's where you were!]

Claws flew in and scratched her back before going away.

[You have requested the activation of the exclusive skill, 'Hour of Judgement'!]

Even if it's just this once, doesn't matter who it is – as long as they can lend me their strength…

[Majority of the Absolute Good-type Constellations are opposing the activation of the skill.]

[Skill activation has been cancelled.]

Why couldn't those she desperately wanted to, be judged?

What was 'Good', and what was 'Evil', then?

"…What rubbish is this 'Absolute' crap?"

Why are you arbitrarily deciding on that?

And why am I supposed to abide by it?

Barbatos's bullet flew in.

Her worn-down emotions became the kindling that began burning fiercely.

[All of your Stories are reacting to your misfortune.]

Every single one of her emotions was now pointing towards just one.

[All of your Stories are reacting to your will.]

And that was 'revenge'.

[<Star Stream> is now looking at your Story.]

「I wish to judge them all.」

[New Story is germinating within you!]

In the next moment, powerful rays of light exploded out from her entire body.

The enormous explosion of light forced the trajectory of [Star Destruction Bullet] off course, and at the same time, the Demon Kings in the near vicinity were pushed back, as well.

Jung Heewon then heard the messages entering her ear.

[Evolution of Incarnation Jung Heewon's Attribute is approaching.]

[Opportunity to evolve your Attribute has come!]

The 'one who shrunk away' once upon a time became 'Judge of Evil' in order to pass judgement on all the evils she encountered.

In that case, what would happen to the judge who was betrayed by 'Good'?

[You have acquired a legendary Attribute.]

An aura of brilliant white light exploded out from her sword; the boiling, overflowing energy of the Story was released from her entire figure. And then, the Ring of Chaos materialised within Jung Heewon's eyes as she took in the sight of the Demon Kings.

[You have become 'Judge of Destruction'.]

[*]

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[*] Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)

Chapter 397: Ep. 75 - A certain heart, IV

[Skills are evolving due to Attribute's evolution.]

[Exclusive skill, 'Demon Slaying', is evolving to 'God Slaying'!]

[Exclusive skill, 'Hour of Judgement's' activation criteria is being modified!]

Jung Heewon looked down at both of her hands, currently covered in the blinding aura. One hand was dyed in the pure-white light, while the other, pitch-black.

['Isle of Reincarnators' is looking at you.]

The ones cheering her on were no longer the Constellations.

[Inhabitants of 'Isle of Reincarnators' are looking at you.]

No, it was people she had protected until now.

Demon Kings began glaring at Jung Heewon in utter disbelief.

[…Her Attribute has evolved?]

[Not bad. I see that the scenario has bestowed its grace unto you.]

However, they didn't seem to be panicking; no matter what, Jung Heewon was still an Incarnation, someone who couldn't borrow Uriel's powers or the blessings of <Eden>.

But regardless of all that, she still took a step towards the Demon Kings.

[Exclusive skill, 'Hour of Judgement', is activating!]

Haagenti caught onto what she was trying to do and began laughing in derision. [You still haven't wisened up yet. Doesn't matter what your Attribute evolves into, the Archangels will never lend their powers to you.]

Skill [Hour of Judgement] needed to borrow Probability from the Absolute Good, so without the permission of the applicable Constellations, it could not be used.

However, a string of strange messages suddenly popped out of nowhere.

['Hour of Judgement' no longer requires the consent of the Constellations on the side of Absolute Good.]

['Hour of Judgement' no longer needs to borrow Probability from the Nebulas on the side of Absolute Good.]

[Constellations on the side of Absolute Good are greatly flustered by Incarnation Jung Heewon's change.]

"I don't need to get their stupid consent anymore," said Jung Heewon, now neither 'Good' nor 'Evil'. "We decide who will be judged from now on."

Sparks danced wildly around her figure as she gripped the [Sword of Judgement]. Demon King Haagenti took several steps back, almost reflexively, after sensing her suspicious aura.

*

[What is this…??]

[Exclusive skill, 'Hour of Judgement', is receiving the blessing of <Kim Dokja's Company>.]

[Voting rights have been distributed to the members of <Kim Dokja's Company>.]

[A portion of the members are unable to participate in the voting.]

[Only the members that can, will participate in the voting.]

And then, the voting began.

[Incarnation, 'Lee Jihye', agrees with the judgement.]

[Incarnation, 'Shin Yoosung', agrees with the judgement.]

[Incarnation, 'Lee Gilyoung', agrees with the judgement.]

[Incarnation, 'Jung Heewon', agrees with the judgement.]

[All members able to participate have agreed with your judgement.]

Jung Heewon looked at the collapsed Lee Hyunsung.- at his cold, unmoving body. This judgement would be for him.

Tsu-chuchuchut!

['Hour of Judgement' has activated!]

[Activation time will be curtailed due to an insufficient number of members participating in the vote.]

[Your physical abilities will transcend the scenario's Probability for the next 4 minutes!]

[All of your Stories will transcend the scenario's Probability for the next 4 minutes!]

And her blade moved. With a speed that not even Demon Kings could catch, in order to judge the ones she desperately wanted to judge.

At that moment, she thought that everything besides her had come to a standstill.

They referred to themselves as stars, with such low speed?

Haagenti was blinking its eyes in sheer disbelief.

An enormous amount of Probability was spent and sparks exploded forth in the air, perhaps to provide proof of Jung Heewon having judged 'something' at this very moment.

[Uh, euh, keok…?]

Haagenti's heart, cut out from its body, was now palpitating on top of the blade of the [Sword of Judgement].

Jung Heewon was bathed in the spray of the dying Demon King's blood. She slowly opened her lips. "None of you will return alive."

She was given four minutes. But, that was plenty enough time for her.

Haagenti's head flew off along with the rising fountain of blood.

[Demon King, 'Golden-horned Ox', has died.]

[Demon King, 'Golden-horned Ox', has been defeated in the regional conflict.]

The 'President of Flames', Amy, muttered in sheer astonishment. [… Haagenti??]

She exhibited the power capable of killing the 48th-ranked Demon King in one hit. No Demon King alive had seen such a feat achieved by a measly little Incarnation until now.

[But, such insane Probability can't be allowed…!]

Demon Kings now found themselves in the pit of sheer shock and couldn't shut their slack jaws.

A tragedy for one side would become a farce for the other.

Reincarnators had been forced back by the overwhelming might of the Demon Kings until then, but now, they began throwing themselves at the miracle taking place right before their eyes.

"Let's go!"

"We can win this! Let's join forces!"

"Protect Jung Heewon-nim!"

Demon Kings watched the Reincarnators rushing towards them and roared out in anger.

Jung Heewon had vanished from her spot by then; she reappeared like it was some sort of magic, and the afterimage of her blade shattered Amy's spear.

Craaaack!!

The Demon King witnessed its spear of flames that couldn't be broken by any known object shatter into pieces, and its eyes shot wide open.

And along with its wide-open eyes, Amy's world came to a crashing end with another single attack.

[Demon King, 'President of Flames', has died.]

[Demon King, 'President of Flames', has been defeated in the regional conflict.]

It was an obvious result. Even the 48th-ranked Haagenti had died in a single hit, so there was no way that the lower-ranked Amy could withstand Jung Heewon at this stage.

The vigour of the Reincarnators soared even higher, and the fighting spirit seething within the battlefield climbed higher, as well.

Wooung… Wooung…

Jung Heewon ran forward while fighting against the pain severe enough to seemingly burn her eyes. She cut down the pouncing 'Dark Warriors', and then cut some more – for the sole aim of taking yet another Demon King's head.

[Oh, Incarnation, you're truly naïve. You're simply borrowing the strength of a single 'Nebula', are you not?!]

The master of the 36th Demon Realm, the 'Silver-clawed Owl', Stolas, might have lacked noticeable combat prowess, but it was still one of the Demon Kings possessing a great pool of knowledge.

It had caught the presence of the 'Ring of Chaos' within Jung Heewon's eyes and cried out loudly. [That is the power of Chaos. A power that is neither 'Good' nor 'Evil', birthed from the beginning of everything, and originates from outside the scenarios! If you use that power-!!]

"Shut up."

Jung Heewon jumped up and ripped Stolas's wings off. The Owl Demon King screeched in pain, and its silver-coloured claws pierced into her thighs and shoulders. Torn flesh flung into the air as the attack that disregarded her own safety continued on; broken Stories sprayed onto the ground like real blood.

However, she paid no heed and wielded her sword. She swung it again and again regardless of whether her innards spilt out or her cheeks were gouged out; her thoughts were dominated by the singular mission of shattering the head of the Demon King before her and to end its life for good.

And so, after the blink of an eye where she swung her sword around fifty or so times, the head of a dead owl could be found in her grip.

[Demon King, 'Silver-clawed Owl', has died.]

[Demon King, 'Silver-clawed Owl', has been defeated in the regional conflict.]

"Pant, pant…"

She had displayed the combat power capable of slaying three Demon Kings all by herself.

[Many Constellations are astonished by Incarnation Jung Heewon's strength!]

[Constellations on the side of Absolute Good find Incarnation Jung Heewon to be ominous and unsettling!]

[Constellations on the side of Absolute Evil are scared of Incarnation Jung Heewon!]

Stars of 'Good' and 'Evil' had divided the sky, and beyond the divide, there were other gazes looking at her. They belonged to those beings that didn't hold any prior interest in her.

[Outer Gods are paying attention to Incarnation 'Jung Heewon'.]

As she was bathed by the numerous gazes of the stars above, Jung Heewon continued to move forward. There were currently two Demon Kings remaining.

[…My apologies, but I don't enjoy such a situation. So, farewell.]

Those words belong to a certain Demon King who had been reciting a lengthy incantation the moment Jung Heewon had gone through her awakening.

[Demon King, 'Demon King of Seduction and Infertility', is leaving the regional conflict after paying an enormous amount of Probability.]

She belatedly threw her blade at the creature, but the 'Demon King of Seduction and Infertility' Zepar had already vanished from the spot by then.

She gnashed her teeth and shifted her gaze into the sky.

Now, only one Demon King remained.

[The supposed master of the 16th Demon Realm running away with his tails between his legs because of a mere Incarnation. How shameful.]

It was the Demon King who murdered Lee Hyunsung, the master of the 8th Demon Realm, the 'Merciless Hunter Against the Will of Heavens', Barbatos.

Even when it had witnessed Jung Heewon's abnormal feats, Barbatos didn't try to escape.

[Demon King, 'Merciless Hunter Against the Will of Heavens', is unleashing its Status.]

Barbatos was actually able to match Jung Heewon's speed with [Hour of Judgement] still active. It chose its actions just as quickly as her, and could attack at the same time as her, too.

It fought in an unbelievably skilful and destructive manner; Jung Heewon was getting pushed back little by little.

As if it was enjoying this, Barbatos laughed out. [Your Story is destructively beautiful.]

As the fight wore on, Jung Heewon gradually realized how truly strong Barbatos was – the Demon King hadn't been going all out until now.

This was the difference between one's spent lifetime, something she couldn't hope to catch up to, no matter what.

Blood poured out from her punctured side. She used the flames of [Hellfire] to singe the wound. Barbatos didn't miss this opening and kicked her in the stomach.

She vomited out a mouthful of blood and managed to barely force herself back up.

[One minute of 'Hour of Judgement' activation time remaining.]

Jung Heewon fixed her grip on the sword, her hand now showing the bones underneath the skin.

'Is it impossible with the amount of time I've lived so far?'

[Blessing from <Kim Dokja's Company> has strengthened!]

Something began granting additional power to her in that state.

[Giant Story, 'Kaizenix Archipelago', is looking at you.]

It was the history she lived in.

[Constellation, 'Master of Steel', is looking at you.]

They were the ones who loved the same thing as her.

Claaaaang!

Jung Heewon held the sword with both of her hands and defended against Barbatos's bayonet attacks.

Bayonet fighting – a man she knew was also proficient in it.

「You usually yell out louder and louder the harder it gets in the military. After I yell out every morning, I get that feeling that I will be able to endure the rest of the day somehow.」

"Haaaaaahph!!"

Jung Heewon yelled out exactly like Lee Hyunsung. Barbatos's bayonet pierced into her waist, but she gripped the weapon tighter so that it wouldn't get pulled out. Along with the sound, "Pu-ook!" the bayonet penetrated even deeper into her waist. Even then, she took another step forward.

「…Even I start things without a plan sometimes. It's not like I've calculated everything beforehand, you know.」

She summoned forth her courage like Kim Dokja, and…

「You shouldn't be wielding it like that.」

…And, swung her sword exactly like Yoo Joonghyuk.

Slice!

[Sword of Judgement] sliced into a part of Barbatos's forearm.

[…Ah?]

The Demon King saw the fragments of Stories dyed in crimson hue explode forth, and its brows quivered greatly.

In that moment, she thought she could hear Han Sooyoung's laughter.

「You know this too, right? The last one to laugh is the winner.」

Jung Heewon spoke, exactly like how Ha Sooyoung would've done. "If you want my bones, I shall give them to you. If you want my heart, then I will gladly hand it over."

Her attitude of not caring about what kind of attacks her body had received; her method of fighting, solely focused on destroying her opponent.

"However, you will have to risk half of all your Stories."

All facets of the Stories she had pushed to their absolute limits began glowing brightly now.

Barbatos fell into a fluster and backed away while firing a barrage of [Star Destruction Bullets]. However, she easily evaded them all. The bullets simply couldn't match her speed as she grew faster and faster. The storm of Probability's aftermath was slowly rushing in to arrest her entire body.

Her hair began to turn snow-white, the price to pay for exceeding her own Status. Even then, she didn't back down.

All she wished for was to kill this Demon King.

Jung Heewon's blade flashed like a ray of light and sliced Barbatos's left wrist off.

It couldn't hold onto its rifle anymore and the Demon King spat out a pained groan. It then quickly hopped onto the deck of the battleship it brought to the battlefield earlier.

[I shall destroy you. I won't even leave behind any trace of you.]

Barbatos's battleship began advancing forward as it emitted chilling blue light. Jung Heewon watched all this unfold as a smile floated up onto her lips.

The fact that it judged fighting her without borrowing the power of that [Story Weapon] was impossible, now that was exactly the same as admitting its own defeat.

The Demon King must've realized it as well, because rage was filling up its expression now.

[Be gone.]

Jung Heewon stabbed her sword into the ground and stood tall. If it was possible, she'd like to destroy that ship, too.

[Activation duration of 'Hour of Judgement' has ended.]

Unfortunately, she no longer had any time left.

The battleship's eagle statue dyed in the greenish hue, and its cannons began spitting out flames next, seemingly with enough might to sweep away the entirety of this regional conflict region.

Jung Heewon pulled Lee Hyunsung's sagging body closer and hugged it.

Hyunsung-ssi.

I really did my best.

I don't have a single regret left now.

I was not wrong.

Even if my scenario comes to an end in this place…

…I have lived this moment the way it's supposed to be.

The once-lethargic perception speed gradually reverted back to how it was. She didn't turn her gaze away from the battlefield and continued to stare at the magic shells raining down.

Sadly, though, her vision continued to grow fuzzier and she couldn't see.

Without a doubt, she had poured everything out, yet why were tears coming out only now?

As her vision grew blurrier, she began crying in great indignation.

How could she not have any regrets?

"…Why is everyone from our Nebula like this??"

Someone suddenly spoke out in a loud ringing voice.

[Constellation, 'Maritime War God', is furious!]

Jung Heewon was stunned by the indirect message coming from a familiar Constellation and quickly wiped her eyes away. Since she hadn't closed them, she was able to see the miracle taking place right before her.

Ku-gugugugu!

A battleship even larger than Barbatos's was now dominating the entire sky above the battlefield.

[Someone has joined the 117th regional conflict!]

The ship had a turtle-like back made out of futuristic metal. And three people she loved so much were riding on top of its figurehead.

Kuwaaaaah!

With excellent timing, Barbatos's bullet flew in. Jung Heewon reached out with her hand in great urgency and called out.

"Avoid it!!"

Her cries were buried under the loud cannon fires.

She plopped down to the ground as the ripples from the explosion swallowed up the whole battlefield.

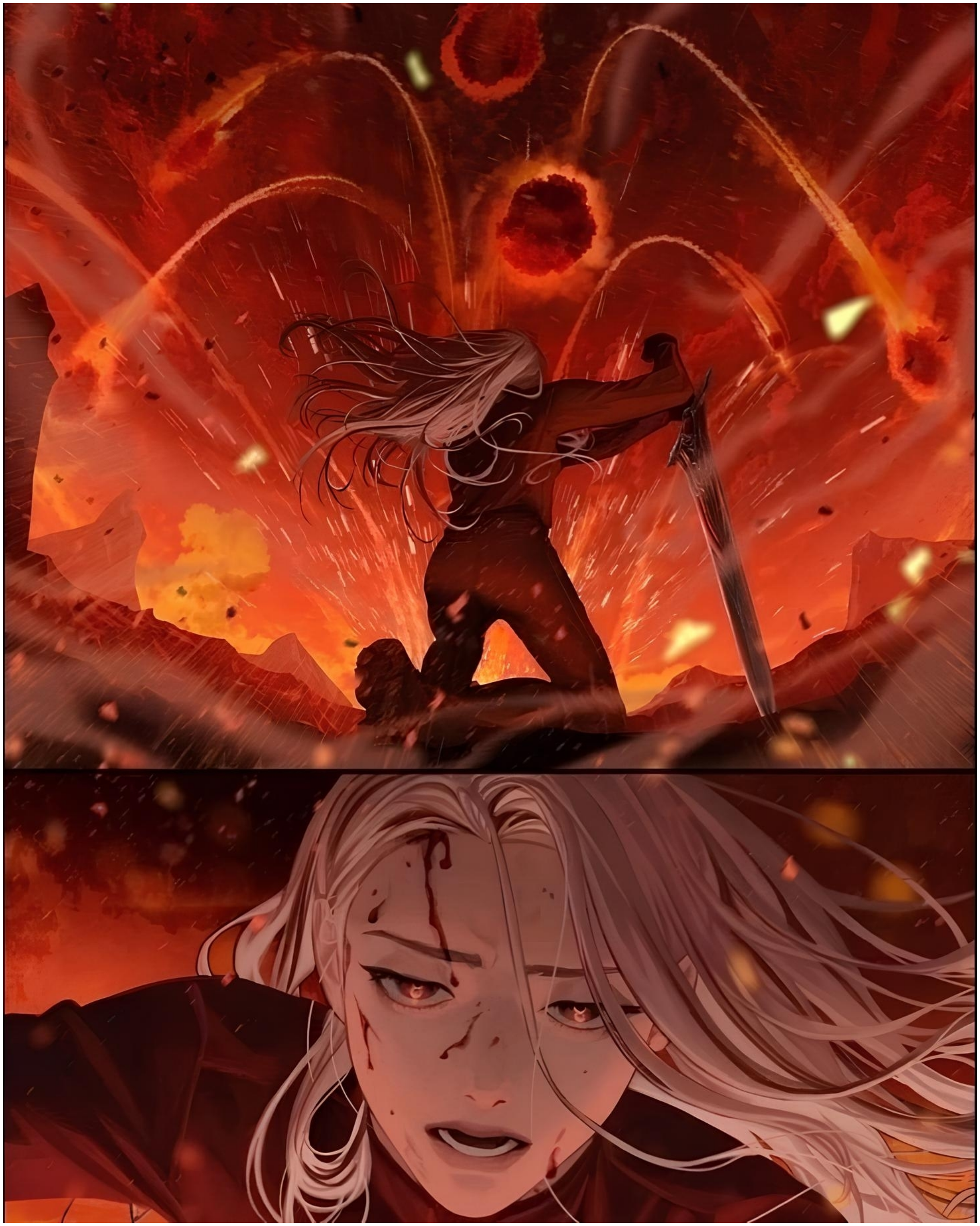
On the spot where the thick smoke dissipated, the battleship stood proudly with nary a single scratch.

[Influence of <Kim Dokja's Company> in the applicable scenario has strengthened even further.]

Lee Jihye and the kids revealed themselves as the smoke of the battlefield abated.

With a perfectly-still expression, Lee Jihye raised her sword.

"Load the cannons."



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* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)
* Official novel illustration (canonical)

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The Demon King and its stunned expression could be seen in the distance.

The hull of the ship was unscathed even after getting struck by the [Star Destruction Bullet] fired by Barbatos.

The bullet capable of erasing even a star couldn't penetrate past that turtle-like back shell.

[Incarnation, 'Lee Jihye', has begun her command.]

[Incarnation, 'Lee Jihye', has activated Stigma, 'Ghost Fleet Lv.10'!]

A ghostly armada of twelve ships used the approaching 'Dark Warriors' as the waves and floated up. Soon after, their cannons began firing in unison.

Barbatos gnashed its teeth at the sudden barrage of cannon fire. [You dare, with such measly little…!]

The Demon King's own battleship, [Nighthawk], was truly sturdy. Although it wasn't assembled with futuristic cutting-edge technology, still, it was a weapon created by painstakingly gathering Stories of the Demon Realm. [Ghost Fleet] alone was insufficient to deal with this enemy.

However, Lee Jihye didn't panic. No, she simply observed her enemy with a calm, composed expression.

Ku-gugugu!!!

As the [Ghost Fleet] continued its barrage, the reddish light was gathered in the dragon-like figurehead of the ship covering the sky.

[Giant Story, 'Next City', has begun its storytelling!]

Jung Heewon looked up at Lee Jihye's current appearance.

She had no way of knowing how the latter managed to come here or what sort of a worldview she had experienced. The one thing she was certain of, though, was the knowledge that the trio of kids managed to survive something just as harsh as the tragedy she had to live through in the 'Kaizenix Archipelago'.

[A ship built upon crude Stories dares to…!]

Barbatos's side finished charging up its attack first and fired it.

Kuwaaaaah-!!

The force behind the shot was at least double that of the previous attack. No matter how strong Lee Jihye's battleship was, it wouldn't be easy to defend against this particular [Star Destruction Bullet].

Four, five ships at the front of the [Ghost Fleet] couldn't endure against the magical energy behind the attack and were extinguished immediately.

Even then, Lee Jihye calmly waited. Until that cannon shell moving at a slow-but-assured speed reached right in front of her nose.

Just a little bit more. A bit more.

[Constellation, 'Maritime War God', is looking at his Incarnation.]

Fragments of Stories, scattering in the air, brushed past her cheeks.

And just before the Story of [Ghost Fleet], being destroyed one after the other, could reach her and her two companions like a wall of white bubbles…

Lee Jihye lowered her sword.

"Fire!!"

Everywhere was seemingly dyed in bright light. Violent, vicious rebound rocked the hull. Strong winds wildly whipped her already-undone hair about.

The Story's energy shooting out from the dragon head swept absolutely everything away in the vicinity. The [Star Destruction Bullet] dyeing its surroundings in darkness had been extinguished already.

[Many Constellations are suspicious of the applicable Story Weapon's Probability!]

The Story Weapon, [Turtle Dragon].

That was the name of the weapon that the 'Maritime War God' had commissioned when he came to visit the Next City a long time ago, but didn't have the chance to collect it yet.

[Many Constellations can't close their jaws due to their great shock!]

Accompanied by a loud explosion, the sounds of something being destroyed could be heard, along with a Demon King's horrible scream.

Lee Jihye issued another order. "Fire!!"

Her voice didn't waver in the slightest, as if to spit out all of her accumulated grievances.

The [Ghost Fleet] re-emerged and began their simultaneous bombardment once more, while the [Turtle Dragon's] main cannon also spat out another round, as well.

"Fire!!"

Everything on the opposing side of the battlefield was gradually disappearing – Barbatos's battleship, the Dark Warriors, everything.

All those hoping to convert Jung Heewon's and Lee Hyunsung's story to a tragedy were now the subjects of Lee Jihye's wrath.

'Our Stories aren't for your entertainment', she said.

She wobbled slightly as the shelling continued on. However, she never faltered once. She was no longer that girl who feared the ocean, but a commander of this vessel.

"Fire!!"

Kuwaaaah-!!

Under the explosions of the energy created by the cannon barrage, Barbatos's Status was steadily being erased.

And until every single one of the Demon King's Stories were completely gone, Lee Jihye didn't let up with the bombardment, and ordered their firing again and again.

Jung Heewon looked up at that spectacle.

That girl was clearly straining herself.

Tsu-chuchuchut!!

Sparks now filled up the battlefield. Two kids broke past the continuous chain of explosions and landed on the ground. They were Shin Yoosung and Lee Gilyoung.

"Heewon unni… Are you alright?"

"Noona!"

Aided by the kids, Jung Heewon carried Lee Hyunsung to the battleship, and approached Lee Jihye at the deck still commanding the bombardment.

"Jihye-yah…"

[Constellation, 'Maritime War God', is exhausting his remaining energy right down to his limit.]

Their opponent was a top-ranking Demon King. Even if they acquired a [Story Weapon], even if they borrowed the Probability of <Kim Dokja's Company>, and even after the Narrative-grade Constellation 'Maritime War God' had come to help…

A price had to be paid in order to create a miracle like this.

"Jihye-yah, it's okay now."

Jung Heewon knew why Lee Jihye was so furious right now. The moment she stepped into the battlefield, she had figured out what happened here. And that was why she didn't hold back at all.

['Ghost Fleet' is returning.]

The scenario messages could be heard coming from the distance.

[Demon King, 'Merciless Hunter Against the Will of Heavens', has died.]

[Demon King, 'Merciless Hunter Against the Will of Heavens', has been defeated in the regional conflict.]

It was a truly splendid feat achieved by only three Incarnations.

A Demon King ranked 8th in the rankings, as well as three others, had lost their lives in this battlefield.

Indirect messages continued to stream in among the outpouring of cheers from the Reincarnators.

[Constellations leaning towards Absolute Evil can't take their eyes away from this unbelievable feat.]

[Constellations leaning towards Absolute Good are forming complicated expressions.]

[Neutral-leaning Constellations are cheering on at this impossible battle.]

[Many Constellations are paying the cost of the impossible scenario.]

[A big player in the sponsorship community has sponsored a large amount of coins.]

[1,100,000 Coins have been sponsored.]

Lee Jihye wiped away the blood trickling down from her nose and smiled brightly. Even though she was smiling, she was crying, too.

"Unni."

[117th regional conflict has concluded.]

[Reward calculation for the 117th regional conflict has commenced.]

[Victors and losers exist in the 117th regional conflict.]

Jung Heewon stared up at those messages with dazed eyes.

['Good' has won in the applicable regional conflict.]

[Current state of Great War's progress]

Absolute Good Points: 68

Absolute Evil Points: 67

Chaos Points: 70

The 117th regional conflict didn't end in the way <Kim Dokja's Company> had planned.

Well, Lee Jihye belatedly joining the battle didn't know of the plans their Nebula had for the 'Great War of Saints and Demons', that was why.

However, it wasn't as if their plan had completely failed, either.

[Power of 'Chaos' intervened in the applicable battlefield.]

[Chaos Points have increased by 5.]

[Chaos Points have reached 75.]

[Chaos Points' rate of increase is speeding up!]

[Shadowy Outer Gods are calling out to Incarnation 'Jung Heewon'.]

[Foreign Gods beyond the galaxy are paying attention to Incarnation Jung Heewon's Status.]

Jung Heewon looked at the Infinity symbol that had appeared on the backs of her hands. She acquired them after awakening the new Attribute, 'Judge of Destruction'.

Kim Dokja hadn't told her about this marking before.

"…Hyunsung hyung?"

The eyes of Lee Gilyoung checking for the sagging Lee Hyunsung's pulse grew wider. Shin Yoosung was taken by surprise too, and hurriedly pressed her ear to the unmoving man's chest.

Jung Heewon watched them and spoke in a suffering tone of voice. "Hyunsung-ssi is…"

…Dead.

She couldn't finish her sentence, however.

Because she thought that it'd become reality if she ended up saying it.

[All regional conflicts have come to an end.]

[Scenario's Chaos Points have increased too much and the main scenario has been updated.]

[Scenario jump has occurred.]

[Linked scenario has been generated!]

They weren't even given enough time to grieve. In the world of the <Star Stream>, the scenario would never look back to the past, that was why.

[New main scenario has arrived!]

<Main scenario #84 – 'Great War of Saints and Demons'>

Type: Main

Difficulty: Indeterminable

Clear condition: Someone who's neither Absolute Good nor Absolute Evil has made the 'Good/Evil' of the battlefield unclear. The Oldest Good and the Oldest Evil wish for a definite conclusion. They have agreed to decide the outcome on one 'great battlefield'. If you wish to see the end of a Giant Story, you must immediately join the 'great battlefield'.

Time limit: -

Reward: Giant Story related 'Great War of Saints and Demons', ???

Failure: Death

[The 'great battlefield' of the 'Great War of Saints and Demons' is opening up!]

[Victor of this 'great battlefield' will acquire 30 Good/Evil Points.]

"…What's this?"

Just as Lee Jihye muttered out in confusion, the regional conflict zone was rocked by a dull, heavy tremor.

The voice of a Dokkaebi could be heard within the wild explosion of sparks going 'Tsu-chuchut!'

[You must've been bored stiff by being confined to small battlefields, haven't you? The real 'Great War of Saints and Demons' will start from now on!]

The time and space torn asunder by the heavens and earth violently convulsing began coalescing back into one.

By the time they opened their eyes, Jung Heewon and the kids found themselves standing on a seemingly-endless vast plain.

The skies were dark and gloomy, while the reddish ground was filled by the Story fragments and broken skulls of angels and demons that had rotted away a long time ago.

This very location was where the final battle of the first 'Great War of Saints and Demons' took place.

Constellations and Incarnations participating in other regional conflicts began gathering here.

[Nebula, <Papyrus>, has joined the great battlefield!]

[Nebula, <Tamna>, has joined the great battlefield!]

[Nebula, <Hongik>, has joined the great battlefield!]

[Nebula, <Guardian Tree>, has joined the great battlefield!]

"…Hey, Shin Yoosung, over there…"

"It'll be fine. We levelled up plenty, didn't we?"

[Giant Story, 'Next City', is protecting the children.]

The gathered Status was so great that just by standing in this field made their spirits falter. Jung Heewon couldn't even begin to fathom just how many Constellations were participating in this great battle.

[A great number of Constellations are showing animosity towards <Kim Dokja's Company>.]

Gazes that had actual form behind them could become dangerous.

Jung Heewon stood at the front of the group even though it was hard to steady herself. She was from <Kim Dokja's Company>. And that was why she couldn't display any weakness in front of those Nebulas.

Just as another wave of enormous Status was rushing towards her…

"Jung Heewon."

…Someone supported her from her back.

[Incarnation 'Han Sooyoung' has joined the battlefield!]

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', is threatening the Constellations of this great battlefield.]

"You really look terrible. And what's the matter with your hair?"

"I don't think you're in any position to talk about someone else."

Jung Heewon smiled dryly, causing Han Sooyoung and her soot-covered face to shoot back a glare. The former then saw the Constellation following behind the latter.

"Uriel…"

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is looking at her Incarnation.]

Uriel, full of wounds, was looking back at Jung Heewon. There were faint traces of turbid aura around her wings. The latter saw that, and almost immediately felt relieved for some reason.

Uriel hadn't betrayed her. Only a brief exchange of glances was enough to know that.

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is…]

"It's alright, Uriel."

The Archangel closed her mouth shut. Jung Heewon quietly observed her Sponsor for a little while longer, before casting her gaze lower to the ground.

They were a Constellation and an Incarnation; they didn't need to say something to understand what was on each other's minds.

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is closing her eyes in pain.]

A humongous Gate opened up on the other side of the battlefield. Its size was on another scale compared to the ones before.

[Nebula, <Eden>, has joined the great battlefield!]

Archangels and Valkyries entered the battlefield as the golden-coloured horns blew noisily.

[Constellation, 'Guardian of Youths and Travel', is looking at Incarnation 'Jung Heewon'.]

[Constellation, 'Friend of Justice and Harmony', is sympathising with Incarnation 'Jung Heewon'.]

[Constellation, 'Lily Blooming in Aquarius', finds it unfortunate what happened with Incarnation 'Jung Heewon'.]

…

At that moment, Jung Heewon's irises, cast down to the ground, began blazing once more.

Sympathy?

Utterly disgusting.

If only you people consented to the 'Hour of Judgement' earlier. If only…

[Constellation, 'Scribe of Heaven', has entered the great battlefield!]

The leader of <Eden> made his entrance under the brilliant, blinding light show. Jung Heewon squeezed the [Sword of judgement] tight and glared at Metatron.

As if they were waiting for this moment, the others began making their entrance from the opposing Gate.

[Demon King, 'Ruler of East Hell', has joined the great battlefield!]

It was the Great Demon King Agares, 2nd in the rankings, as well as other Demon Kings.

[Demon King, 'Black Mane Lion', has joined the great battlefield!]

[Demon King, 'Immeasurable Austerity', has joined the great battlefield!]

[Demon King, 'Devil of Lust and Wrath', has joined the great battlefield!]

The top-ranked Demon Kings didn't cower one bit from the auras of the Archangels. As their numbers increased, the complexions of Jung Heewon and the kids got poorer.

Only then did they realize what kind of a battlefield this was. They also realized what kind of Nebulas they were about to face off against.

And finally, how small <Kim Dokja's Company> actually was.

[Constellations and Demon Kings of the great battlefield are glaring at <Kim Dokja's Company>.]

There were countless strong enemies present.

As the threatening, intimidating auras of the Constellations aimed at <Kim Dokja's Company> bore down on them, the members heard their own breathing become heavier and quicker.

[Nebula, <Asgard>, has joined the great battlefield!]

[Incarnation, 'Anna Croft', has joined the great battlefield.]

Jung Heewon flinched and took a look behind to find Anna Croft looking at her with both of her hands in the air.

"No need to be that wary. I'm not your enemy right now."

Just before she could ask what those words meant…

[Incarnation, 'Yoo Joonghyuk', has joined the great battlefield.]

A corner of the sky seemed to collapse and a man wearing a black coat made his entrance.

He proudly stood tall; the viciously-screeching edges of the [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] bared its fangs at the Constellations.

The ends of Han Sooyoung's lips twitched as she made her comment. "Again. You're acting like the MC again."

"Master!"

It was only one person, yet the atmosphere of the battlefield seemed to change simply from his appearance.

Yoo Joonghyuk scanned the companions and spoke. "With the exception of one fool, everyone's here."

"No, everyone is here now."

That last voice belonged to the one they were all waiting for. Jung Heewon didn't know what to do with the emotions suddenly welling up inside her, but still, shifted her gaze over in his direction.

She wanted to tell him. She wanted to tell him what those bastards of Constellations did in this place, but…

"I know, Heewon-ssi."

Kim Dokja kitted out in his white coat was silently looking at Lee Hyunsung on the ground.

[Demon King, 'Demon King of Salvation', has joined the great battlefield.]

싱숑 장편소설

전지적 독자 시점

Omniscient
Reader's
Viewpoint

PART 4

02

비채

*

Chapter 399: Ep. 76 - Book of Revelation, I

– Kugugugugu!

Inside the screen, Constellations of 'Good' and 'Evil' were emitting scary auras towards each other. The taut tension was stretched firm like a rubber band, ready to snap at any given moment. And it was the smallest, but also bright, Nebula that managed to maintain the balance.

[It's been truly a long time since I last saw everyone from 'Good' and 'Evil' gather in one place…]

The 'Mandala's Guardian', Sakyamuni, was looking at the screen with an unreadable expression on his face. Ancient memories were flowing within his irises.

The scenario before the scenarios, the era when 'Good', 'Evil', and the keepers of neutrality were working together. The tale of everyone working together to fight the Dragon of Apocalypse, in order to prevent the advent of the apocalypse itself…

– I'd also like to help my companions.

Sakyamuni heard that voice and shifted his gaze towards a small cistern. A small ball of soul glowing faintly was speaking to him while hovering inside the tank.

– When will I able to reincarnate?

[That place isn't your battlefield, oh dear child. You shall reincarnate as a being born to carry out an even greater purpose.]

– They are my purpose.

Even after becoming a soul, Yoo Sangah's voice remained resolute.

– If I don't get to save them in that place, then my reincarnation will have no meaning.

[Meaning, is it…]

Sakyamuni shifted his gaze again, this time to another cistern located on the opposite side of Yoo Sangah's. There was a female Incarnation Body wearing a Buddhist robe inside this one.

[You shall be entering the body of a child that I cared about.]

– I'll enter someone else's body? But, I thought I was going to reincarnate?

[You'll reincarnate with that body as your Incarnation Body.]

– But, what about the original owner of that body?

Sakyamuni didn't reply.

Would Buddha feel sorrow, as well?

Yoo Sangah realized something in that moment.

– Is that person your 'meaning'?

Without saying anything, Sakyamuni continued to observe the Buddhist robe-wearing woman inside the cistern.

[She has returned to the providence of the cosmos, that is all. Everything is simply an empty revolution of the wheel.]

– Is that really how you feel? You cared about her greatly, yes?

[You shall understand it soon enough, child. Becoming a Reincarnator is precisely that, after all.]

– I'm not a Reincarnator yet.

[You'll soon realize that there is no meaning in being bound by such shackles – in how everything you held dear was simply an exercise in futility.]

– …Is jinxing someone else your hobby?

[I only speak of the truth, dear child.]

Sakyamuni looked at the battlefield inside the screen once more. Constellations that had lived for a very long time were in there.

[Constellations suffer from insomnia for all of their lives. They can't fall asleep without the scenarios, and even when they dream, they still ingurgitate the Stories of others. Through this greedy devouring, they wish to erase the scenarios they find themselves in. And they feel anxious all the time, even though they don't understand why they feel that way.]

The most ancient Constellation among all of them, Sakyamuni, continued to speak. [As if they are stuck in the eternal daydream, they can't escape from the scenario. They look away from death, so they don't know its true meaning. And because they don't know death, they can't wake up from the scenario's illusion. They all mistakenly believe that there is one story somewhere that might save them.]

Constellations either sponsoring <Kim Dokja's Company> or being hostile towards them were sending indirect messages inside the screen.

Sakyamuni slowly moved its gaze towards the middle of that busy screen.

[However, Reincarnators are different.]

That was where the Reincarnators from this island could be found.

They had followed after <Kim Dokja's Company>. And they were still being forced to slave under the great Story after joining the side of either 'Good' or 'Evil'.

Sakyamuni looked at them and spoke. [Reincarnators will live on forever like Constellations, but they must die and be reborn again. They know what it means to awaken since they understand death, and because they know the meaning of awakening, they also come to realize that they are simply a cog in the scenario's machination. Reincarnation is to comprehend the scenario's true essence.]

Reincarnators with low Status will lose their memories along with their death, but that was not the case for everyone. There were some who retained their former memories, like Nirvana, when they reincarnated. They would reincarnate into various species and various genders and continue on with the scenario.

As a human, as a toad, as an Orc, as an Elf, as an ant…

Most likely, they acquired those expressions after experiencing countless reincarnations.

– They all seemed to have resigned themselves.

[That's because they understand nothing will change regardless of who wins.]

– Scenarios can be changed. That's what we have been doing so far.

[However, that hasn't changed the fact that it's still a 'scenario'.]

– So, you must give up now? Because no matter what you do, the scenario will remain as a scenario? That's just you trying to run away. That's the same as conceding defeat without even fighting first.

[Oh, dear child. You're now insulting the lives of the Reincarnators. They have continuously fought against scenarios through their countless lives…]

– Have you ever fought with everything on the line, not giving up on a single lifetime in the process?

Sakyamuni shut his mouth after hearing that question.

Not giving up on a single lifetime, she said.

Before he could reply, though, Yoo Sangah spoke first.

– There is a person who hadn't given up on his life even if it went past 1800 times.

Yoo Sangah looked at the screen. There was a man wearing a black coat within it.

– There's another person who had lived that life alongside him, too.

And then, a man wearing a white coat standing next to him was observing his companions. His gaze stopped last at Lee Hyunsung collapsed on the floor.

[This body has experienced a far-too extensive period of time to count the numbers. However, there is one number that I can still count.] Sakyamuni continued on as he looked at Lee Hyunsung. [One more will be added to this island's Reincarnators.]

"Not yet."

I felt for the unmoving Lee Hyunsung's pulse. It wasn't beating. He wasn't breathing either, and only whites could be seen after his eyelids were opened.

"…Really?"

Jung Heewon looked at me with a face of someone wanting to believe in miracles.

I looked at her whitened hair and guessed what had happened here.

"For sure, he's not dead."

My companions all carried complicated expressions. Lee Jihye seemed to think that I was lying out of good intentions, while Gilyoung looked as if he'd believe me even if I was really lying.

Han Sooyoung asked me. "Have you decided to change the definition of death now?"

"If Hyunsung-ssi has died for real, then the 'Master of Steel' would've been kicked out of the scenario, too."

I looked up into the sky. Although I couldn't hear any indirect messages to that effect, the 'Master of Steel' hadn't been ejected out of this scenario.

Jung Heewon urgently grabbed my arm. "Then, why Hyunsung-ssi is…"

"Just like how you've awakened, Hyunsung-ssi has also awakened, Heewon-ssi."

I shifted my gaze down to the faint fragments of a Story flowing on Lee Hyunsung's skin, the Story of 'Steel'.

It was not visible from the outside, but his inside should be filled to the brim with the Story of 'Steel' by now.

[Character, 'Lee Hyunsung', is on the verge of Attribute evolution.]

It was not for nothing that Lee Hyunsung was referred to as 'the Greatest Shield' in the original story.

Protecting someone by sacrificing himself would let the 'Emperor of Steelsword' to reach the final stage of the 'Steel Transformation'. By the time he regains his consciousness, he should have become the world's sturdiest shield.

Jung Heewon asked me in a trembling voice. "In, in that case, he's still alive?"

"Yes."

"Is that the truth? You're not lying?"

Tears trickled down her collapsed cheeks. She then placed her hand on Lee Hyunsung's chest. His heart wasn't beating. While feeling that indifferent silence, she spoke again in some difficulty. "But, I can't hear anything…"

"It'll be like that from now on."

"…Pardon?"

I looked at Lee Hyunsung again.

His heart had hardened like steel boasting a 100% purity rating. It'd never beat again. The current Jung Heewon wouldn't be able to understand what that meant, though…

"However, Hyunsung-ssi is definitely alive. So, please, don't worry."

"In any case, he won't be of any use to us now," said Yoo Joonghyuk indifferently as he unleashed his Status. "Every one of you, keep your wits about you. This isn't the time to wallow in sadness."

Kugugugugu!

Two camps glaring at our Nebula could be seen on the other side of the battlefield. One camp was 'Good', while the other, 'Evil'. To us, they were simply enemies, though.

The centres of those two camps were manned by 'Scribe of Heaven', Metatron, and 'Ruler of East Hell', Agares.

[Who defeated Barbatos?]

That question caused the murmurings to spread out through the battlefield.

Barbatos, ranked 8th in the Demon King rankings, had died. However, rather than looking stunned, the Demon Kings present carried entertained expressions, instead.

[To think you'd interfere with the 'Great War of Saints and Demons', you all have lost your minds.]

Their gazes, locked onto my companions, were filled with clear ridicule. Their jeers were filled with the confidence of knowing that we'd not be able to rely on luck to survive anymore, like how we'd been doing until now.

Their guesses were right; the members of <Kim Dokja's Company> were in no shape to fight properly at the moment. Yoo Joonghyuk's magical energy reserve had almost bottomed out from the fight against Indra, while Han Sooyoung was also in an extremely fatigued state after fighting against the Archangels.

There was no need to mention the collapsed Lee Hyunsung or the worn-out Jung Heewon, either.

The ones that would prove to be helpful were the three kids who went to the 'Next City'.

"Ahjussi, don't you worry. I'll sweep them all away."

Lee Jihye pounding her chest while saying that, and Shin Yoosung nodding her head along, instilled much confidence in me. Like how I imagined it to be, they must've experienced incredible growth in 'Next City'. Even Lee Gilyoung's eyes were sparkling brightly, as well.

"Hyung, who should we start killing first? Who will give us the highest experience points?"

Even though we were in an overwhelmingly disadvantageous position, he spoke as if he was playing a game.

[Incarnation Lee Gilyoung's sponsor is looking at you.]

I shook my head.

It was too early. It wasn't the time to utilise Lee Gilyoung yet. And even if I did, there was no guarantee of victory.

Anna Croft next to me asked a question. "Are you really going to fight? You must know that there is no hope of victory for you here, yes?"

It was rather obvious what she was aiming for as she asked that question. She was already a part of the 'Good' camp. It'd prove to be the most ideal outcome for her to stab me in the back if things go wrong and join that side.

"We've never enjoyed good odds of victory, anyway. And yes, I'm planning to fight them, and I'm also confident of winning. As long as you don't betray us, that is."

Anna Croft narrowed her eyes at the mention of betrayal and raised her hand up. When she did, Selena Kim and Iris standing behind her took a step forward.

[Nebula, <Asgard>, is backing <Kim Dokja's Company>.]

Constellations and Demon Kings shouted out in sheer astonishment.

[Asgard, have you lost your minds, too?]

[The god of hammers must've finally hit his own head.]

[Oh, the god of mischief! Are you perhaps planning to cause chaos in this place?]

Even as the true voices were confusedly flying around, there were a few who still broke out in a smirk as if the situation was unfolding in an entertaining direction for them.

Such as, the fifth-ranked Demon King, 'Black Mane Lion', Marbas.

[What a foolish decision, oh dear <Asgard>. Your Nebula might be powerful, but the number of Constellations participating is low. It is simply far too inadequate to rock this battlefield!]

"It's not just one Nebula."

[Oh, then who else is there? <Kim Dokja's Company>? You really want to call the small group with you as its sole Constellation, a 'Nebula'?]

Loud peels of laughter rang out among the Demon Kings. But then…

[Constellation, 'Father of the Rich Night', is icily glaring at the Constellations.]

[Nebula, <Underworld>, is backing <Kim Dokja's Company>.]

…The laughter came to a sudden end.

[…The <Underworld>??]

[Oh, <Olympus>! What is going on?! Isn't that a subordinate Nebula of yours?]

Along with those words, a corner of the battlefield opened up and <Olympus> made their appearance.

As expected, they were participating in this scenario as well. The one standing at their forefront was a Constellation we were quite familiar with.

[M-mm, this is troublesome… We can't re-enact 'Gigantomachia' in this place, either.]

It was the 'God of Wine and Ecstasy', Dionysus, carrying a deeply awkward smile on his face.

"Dionysus, are you planning to fight us?"

[Fuu, you're making me hanker for some booze right now.]

He pulled a bottle out from his inner pocket and gulped down some wine.

[Argh, I don't care. I'll just worry about it after getting drunk first. 'Demon King of Salvation', why don't you have a sip, too? We've got a lot of things to talk about, right?]

"Thank you for the offer, but now doesn't seem to be a good time for that."

Dionysus smirked and raised a toast in my way. That was the same thing as <Olympus> giving me an answer, though.

They wouldn't back us, but they wouldn't get hostile with us, either.

Now that a great Nebula had suddenly decided to postpone their participation, a certain flustered atmosphere permeated into the camps of 'Good' and 'Evil'.

I didn't miss that opening and dug right in. "Well, looks like the introductions are over and done with, now. So, let's start fighting, already."

My provocations aroused the wrath of Constellations and Demon Kings from both camps.

Anna Croft must've not expected me to be this direct, because she was now looking at me with an expression that said, "Are you insane?"

Han Sooyoung spoke up. "You're surprisingly slow in the uptake for a prophet, aren't you? Just sit back and watch."

Anna Croft closed her mouth shut after being rebuked by Han Sooyoung.

In the meantime, a Demon King stepped forward while unsheathing a jet-black sword.

Even though the situation was turning more volatile, both Agares and Metatron maintained their silence.

[Many Demon Kings are displaying strong animosity towards you!]

Along with a sharp noise of air splitting apart, the Demon King's sword moved towards me, but at that moment, a message popped up.

[Members of the same camp clashed against each other!]

[Increase in Chaos Points have accelerated!]

[Chaos Points have risen up by 1.]

[Current Chaos Points: 76.]

The Demon King blinked its eyes in sheer shock.

And in the distance, I could see the hardened expressions of Metatron and Agares, too. They were now staring at the night skies of the <Star Stream>. They must've realized it by now.

In order to attract the attention of the Constellations, I used my true voice.
[The opponents you wish to fight are neither 'Good' or 'Evil'.]

<Kim Dokja's Company> included members of both 'Good' and 'Evil'. And becoming hostile with our Nebula meant that you were going against the very essence of the 'Great War of Saints and Demons' itself.

[If you want to kill us, I'm sure you can. However, what will happen to you if you do?]

On the far side of the sky, the clouds filled with the aura of chaos were swirling around ominously.

When the Chaos Points go past 80, the countdown to the Apocalypse would begin. Which meant that it'd be a game of chicken from now on.

[Oldest Good is glaring at you.]

[Oldest Evil is glaring at you.]

It was the game where the first one to get scared and back off would become the loser.

[Which one will be faster, us dying or all of you getting annihilated by the Apocalypse Dragon? Aren't you curious?] I unsheathed 'Unbroken Faith' and smiled. [I'm really curious, actually.]

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* Official novel cover (canonical)

Chapter 400: Ep. 76 - Book of Revelation, II

If you were to unpack the contents of my declaration, then they went along the lines of "kill us, and you will definitely die, too".

At first, the Constellations were agitated, then they began whispering among themselves, and finally, silence descended in their midst. Some stared at Agares, while the others, at Metatron. They were the holders of the highest authorities on this battlefield, but they simply maintained their silence with unreadable expressions on their faces.

However, even though no orders were issued, the clouds of war unexpectedly began churning slowly on the outskirts of the gathered masses.

[<Kim Dokja's Company>. We know very well what you're trying to do.] It was a Constellation from <Papyrus> who roared out with true voice. [However, we still have a score to settle with you.]

"I wonder about that. It's hard to tell who is owing who here."

My retort prompted the Constellations of <Papyrus> to free their weapons from their sheaths.

[You said that you're neither 'Good' nor 'Evil'. That also means you are both 'Good' and 'Evil', too.]

Nebula <Papyrus> had chosen to affiliate themselves with 'Evil'.

[We will kill all those bastards that have sided with 'Good', at the least!]

What a wise decision that was. The Chaos Points only rose up when 'Good' fought against 'Good' and likewise, when 'Evil' fought against 'Evil'. <Papyrus> had figured out a way to judge us without going against the rules of this battlefield.

[The Oldest Evil wishes for your elimination.]

[The Oldest Good wishes for your elimination.]

We were nothing more than viruses in this 'Great War of Saints and Demons'; hosts that interfered with a system that was operating normally to spread infections around.

With <Papyrus> as the centre, the waves of 'Good' and 'Evil' were growing larger and larger.

Constellations burning in animosity towards each other only a few moments ago were now all redirecting their hostilities towards us.

Ku-gugugugu!

The expressions of my companions froze up. Yoo Joonghyuk changed his attitude and spoke. "Kim Dokja."

He must've known it, too – even if <Underworld> and <Asgard> were with us, even if the members of <Kim Dokja's Company> were in one place…

…If we clashed directly against them, then someone in our group would definitely die.

Suddenly, my perception sped up and time slowed down somewhat.

「Their advancing speed is quicker than I thought.」

「Too many Constellations came to their decision too quickly.」

「Maybe, I should've reached 80 in the Chaos Points first.」

Several sentences flitted in and out of my head.

I recalled the 'Ways of Survival'. Who should I ask for help if I were to emerge victorious from this situation?

My adopted parents in the <Underworld>?

'The Great Sage, Heaven's Equal', who hadn't participated in the war yet?

Or, the Outer God-grade 'Secretive Plotter'?

Cheok Jungyeong and the Constellations from the Korean Peninsula?

Even the faces of my teachers and Jang Hayoung floated up to the fore, too.

Especially Jang Hayoung; although I desperately needed help, I thought that it'd be for the best if she didn't show up.

['Fruit of Good and Evil' is stimulating your guilty conscience.]

Maybe, this could be my sense of responsibility. I hoped that Jang Hayoung, born to this world because of me, wouldn't get swept up in the scenarios. My small wish that she'd get to live her own story in her own terms.

The reason why I didn't advise Jang Hayoung to join <Kim Dokja's Company> or reveal the information on the future was that I felt such ambivalent emotions.

"Aaaahhhhk!"

The ranks of the Reincarnators meeting the enemies at the forefront were collapsing. They screamed as tsunami waves swept them up and tore them apart.

[Die!]

Han Sooyoung looked at the Constellations and Demon Kings rushing at us while spouting trite remarks, and smiled nervously. "Looks like we're going to win. Those muttering such lines would die the quickest."

The corners of the companions' lips twitched energetically at her timely joke.

"Here they come."

Their utterances might have been trite, but their Statuses were certainly not. 'Good and Evil' might have been the stalest of Stories in this world, but it was also one of the most powerful, as well.

The nervousness I felt through my skin was different from all the other battlefields I had experienced so far.

This was all for real.

This was the 'Great War of Saints and Demons', and this was the true power of the Constellations.

Kwa-kwakwakwakwa!

The Status of 'Good' and 'Evil', seemingly large enough to completely blanket the entire great battlefield; its crashing waves had reached right before our noses in no time at all.

300 metres.

200 metres.

100 metres.

Yoo Joonghyuk spoke. "Now."

Everyone knew what their roles were. The members of <Kim Dokja's Company> unleashed their Statuses simultaneously.

[Narrators of Nebula <Kim Dokja's Company> have gathered.]

[Story, 'Demon Realm's Spring', has begun its storytelling!]

[Story, 'Torch that Swallowed the Myth', has begun its storytelling!]

'Demon Realm's Spring' wrapped around us as if to protect us, and 'Torch that Swallowed the Myth' began screeching as if it'd rip anyone approaching us to shreds. Still, these two alone wouldn't be enough to stop them from coming.

Even if they were the same 'Giant Stories', the time experienced was different. That enormous gap couldn't be bridged with the 50 years in Kaizenix Archipelago.

Even then, this was our story.

30 metres.

Lee Jihye finished loading the cannons and raised her sword up high.

Just as the Dragonhead figurehead began reddening up as the 'Maritime War God's' blessing descended upon us…

"Wait!!"

I stopped Lee Jihye. Her jaw slackened from shock; I reached out and grasped her sword faltering aimlessly in the air. The cannon on the verge of firing withdrew its energy.

"What the hell are you doing, ahjussi?!"

Other companions were also surprised by my unexpected action. To think, I'd suddenly interfere when we found ourselves in a situation where we'd surely die even if we struggled with all our might.

Rather than a verbal answer, I pointed towards the opposite side, instead.

"Uh?"

With exactly ten metres to go, the waves of 'Good' and 'Evil' had come to a standstill as if it was all a lie.

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

…As if, they were being powerfully restrained by something.

The faces of Constellations grumbling away and the Demon Kings spewing out choice words could be seen pretty close to us. Some carried dissatisfied expressions, while others looked relieved.

"…But, why so suddenly?"

I realized the reason pretty soon.

A single Constellation and a single Demon King were floating up above the frozen tsunami wave, that was why.

They were Metatron and Agares. Two of the strongest beings in this battlefield had for the first time, unleashed their true voices.

[All Constellations, withdraw your hostilities and return to your positions!]

[The battle will be paused for the time being.]

I raised my head up towards the air above after hearing their sudden declaration of a cease-fire.

The reason for the cease-fire could be seen etched in that spot.

[Chaos Points have surpassed 80.]

[Countdown to Apocalypse has begun.]

* * *

Chaos Points of 80.

It really was a close call, too close for comfort.

What saved us wasn't Constellations or the Demon Kings. No, it was the weakest faction in this battlefield, instead.

"There must've been the cases of the same camps clashing during the Reincarnators dying at the frontline."

Weak 'Good' was still 'Good', and weak 'Evil' was still 'Evil'. The 'Good and Evil' became obsessed only with killing us, and as a consequence of disregarding such 'weaklings', it was now on the path towards the apocalypse.

[From here on, Chaos Points will rise by one point every thirty minutes.]

Once the Chaos Points exceeded 80, its rate of increase would speed up. Even if there was no clash from here onwards, it'd continue to climb up, and in exactly ten hours, it'd reach the critical point.

In other words, the revival of the Apocalypse Dragon would commence.

[The Most Ancient Calamity at the deepest part of Hell is feeling pleased.]

One of the absolute worst calamities in the history of the <Star Stream>, the Apocalypse Dragon. Whether it be the 'Good' or 'Evil' camp, none wanted to see its revival.

Once the dragon revives, at least a quarter of all Constellations in the <Star Stream> would die, that was why. Anyone from this battlefield could become part of that quarter.

[Great battlefield of 'Great War of Saints and Demons' has come to a temporary standstill.]

[Representatives of 'Good' and 'Evil' are currently in an emergency conference.]

And so, that message floating in the air signified both 'Good' and 'Evil' struggling bitterly in order to survive no matter what.

[You have accomplished a feat no one has achieved so far!]

[A Myth-grade Story is germinating within you!]

[Your new Modifier will reflect this Story.]

"Chet. I wanted to see how much stronger I got, though."

I patted Lee Gilyoung's head as the boy grumbled to himself.

We were currently sitting inside the passenger compartment of the battleship, [Turtle Dragon]. Jung Heewon and Shin Yoosung were nursing Lee Hyunsung as he lay unmoving like a dead man, while Lee Jihye looked wholly unconvinced by something else.

"Is this really the end? But, we haven't even fought for real, though?"

Even though she said that, there was a relieved expression on her face as well.

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is congratulating you on your success.]

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is feeling apologetic towards you.]

"…Uriel? It'll be fine to speak in your true voice."

Uriel currently squatting by the corner of the cabin lowered her head towards me. For some reason, I thought I could understand where she was coming from, just a little bit.

Right now, she felt responsible. The fact that her Nebula had attacked <Kim Dokja's Company>, and then, in regards to the things done by those claiming to be 'Absolute Good', too.

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is looking up at you with tearful eyes.]

"You don't have to worry, Uriel. We don't hate you. And as for <Eden>… Honestly speaking, my grievances towards them aren't much. We've received their help before, too."

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', asks if you're telling the truth.]

I was lying.

However, it'd only hurt Uriel if I revealed how angry I was.

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', says that the Scribe isn't such a bad being…]

"I also know what kind of a Constellation Metatron is. Please, you should rest for a bit," I said, before leaving the cabin.

[30 minutes have elapsed.]

[Chaos Points are rising up by one.]

[Current Chaos Points: 82]

Alongside the messages entering my ears, there it was, a giant grey sphere floating up in the air.

Its inside couldn't be spied on. Most likely, every single top-ranked Demon King and Archangel was in there, having a conference right about now.

And it was also quite likely that the 'Good' and 'Evil' were talking crap about <Kim Dokja's Company> and 'Demon King of Salvation' in one voice, too.

"Kim Dokja."

I flinched and looked back to find Han Sooyoung staring at me.

I spoke first. "Whenever you call out my name lately, I can't help but get scared first. It's like, you must've caused another accident."

"It's you who causes accidents instead," complained Han Sooyoung, before shifting her gaze over to the sphere and asking me. "What are they really thinking about?"

"What do you mean?"

"Isn't this whole thing unfolding too smoothly?"

"It's because they don't want to die, either."

"You really think that's all?"

She narrowed her eyes and glared at me.

[Story, 'Predictive Plagiarism', is continuing its storytelling.]

Judging from the whitish fragments of the Story floating around, it seemed that she had activated 'Predictive Plagiarism' and kept it up ever since that conference had commenced.

I asked her. "What do you think, then?"

"They are just too quiet. Even if they are terrified of the Apocalypse Dragon… Something just feels off, you know."

Indeed, the instincts of an author could be very sharp; actually, I agreed with her opinion, too.

A conference of 'Good' and 'Evil' – it sure sounded nice. However… The Metatron I knew would never back off in such circumstances. He was the type of guy who'd sacrifice anyone in order to perfectly fulfil the Absolute Good's premise.

I stared at the grey sphere and spoke. "I don't know what they are cooking up over on that side, but there is a way to find out what will happen in the future."

"What is that?"

I looked straight at Han Sooyoung. And soon, her jaw dropped.

"God damn it, we had that method, didn't we."

Whether it was a conference or war, it'd come to an end in the next nine hours.

And if it was that sort of a near future, then we knew of a being who could read it better than anyone else in this world.

We quickly dashed towards the cabin at the rear. The thing was, the person we were looking for was already with us by now.

"Hey, Miss Prophet!"

We barged in to the room, only to find an unexpected guest there. Yoo Joonghyuk and his scary scowl were busy grabbing onto Anna Croft's collars at that moment.

He spoke. "…What bullshit are you talking about?"

"It is exactly as I said."

The shocked Han Sooyoung hurriedly shouted out. "Hey, you crazy bastard! What are you doing?!"

Yoo Joonghyuk looked back at us with an emotionless expression before releasing Anna Croft's collars. She formed a refreshing grin after discovering us and waved her hand.

"Thank you for saving me. As expected of the 'Demon King of Salvation'."

"Well, I wasn't really trying to save you or anything, but…"

"You came to see me for the same reason, I suppose?"

Han Sooyoung and I stared at Yoo Joonghyuk. And he glared right back as if to ask why we were looking at him.

As expected, he was really quick with things like this. He came up with a solution to this situation way quicker than us, in other words. Han Sooyoung began gnashing her teeth as she was unhappy about this. Sadly, though, he didn't carry the expression of a victor.

Anna Croft spoke. "Let me get right to it, then. I can't see the future."

"What do you mean by that?"

Several thoughts floated up in my head, then.

Now that I thought about it, Anna Croft couldn't predict the future related to me. I remembered that [the Fourth Wall] had something to do with it. What did she say back then? Was it, there's noise hiding the future as if someone drew graffiti all over it?

But then, Anna Croft was shaking her head. "It's not the noise obscuring the future, but I simply can't read it at all. It's not as if someone has doodled on the page, but more like the page with the doodling on it didn't exist in the first place."

Han Sooyoung and I exchanged glances. An ominous foreboding slowly crept up over me.

"Kim Dokja, this…"

Not like doodlings on a page, but the page itself had disappeared. No matter how hard I thought about it, there could only be one type of future like that.

"…Can it be?"

As if it was waiting for this moment, messages suddenly floated up in the air.

[Chaos Points is rising up by one point.]

[Current Chaos Points: 83]

"But, it hasn't been 30 minutes yet?"

"It's not rising up because the time has elapsed," said Yoo Joonghyuk in a hardened voice.

Time hadn't passed by, yet the Chaos Points had risen up. In that case, there could only be one possibility.

[Members from the same camp have clashed!]

[Current Chaos Points: 84]

Someone was trying to destroy this world.

Chapter 401: Ep. 76 - Book of Revelation, III

[Members from the same camp have clashed!]

[Current Chaos Points: 85]

We were left completely dazed at the same time after looking at those system messages.

"…Just who is it?"

Han Sooyoung threw out that question after somehow squeezing it out of her lips. No one could answer her, however.

She asked again. "It can't be the kids going around causing accidents, right?"

I retorted back. "You think they are like you?"

Even if they were still just kids, they wouldn't do something so rash with our situation being what it was.

Sure, I was slightly worried about Gilyoung, but…

I looked at Anna Croft and addressed her. "Anna."

"I'm still searching."

Although the page of the future had been ripped away, the events leading up to its disappearance should still remain. Just like how a defective book would still need some time before it got destroyed.

[Chaos Points are increasing!]

"We can't leisurely wait any longer."

The first one to fly out of the room was Yoo Joonghyuk.

Anna Croft's forehead was soaked in sweatdrops as she endeavoured to find the pages of the future. In the end, both Han Sooyoung and I decided to move, as well.

"Anna, once you find something, let me know through voice projection."

We left her behind and flew out of the cabin. Our companions had gathered on the deck after sensing that something was wrong.

"Dokja-ssi, what's going on?"

I conveyed the situation in the simplest terms possible when Jung Heewon asked me. "Some people are attacking their own camp."

"Ehng? Why do something like that?" said Lee Jihye, while frowning to show that she couldn't understand it. "I thought everyone would die if those Chaos Points went up any higher? Isn't that why Angels and Demon Kings went inside that thing…?"

"Can they be people with similar goals as our own?"

"If that was the case, then they wouldn't have increased the Chaos Points at this point in time."

I didn't need to explain in detail, but my companions seemed to have arrived on their own answers.

"In that case, could it be…?"

I nodded my head. "No matter what happens, we must stop them. If we don't, something really horrifying will occur."

"What kinda crazy bastards would… But, why??"

Why would anyone try to speed up the destruction of the world?

I found it hard to provide a proper answer to that. However, there was this one thing in the <Star Stream> that worked as the universal answer to every single indecipherable situation imaginable.

"…There are truly a vast array of 'Stories' in this world, you know."

It wasn't only 'Good and Evil' that existed in this world. Just like <Kim Dokja's Company> that was neither good nor evil existed, there were people in this world chasing after those Stories we simply couldn't relate to.

Some would live to prevent the end times, but some would only live for the apocalypse.

Tsu-chuchuchuchu…!

Probability was shifting unstably in the air; sparks erupted in several places on the battlefield.

Yoo Joonghyuk standing on top of the figurehead seemed to have latched onto the location of the biggest arcs of sparks.

"There are five in total. Scatter, now."

He finished giving orders, and his figure disappeared towards the north.

I quickly gave instructions to my companions. "Han Sooyoung, you take the east. Yoosung-ie, Jihye, and Gilyoung-ie, you guys take the south, please.

Heewon-ssi, please remain on the battleship, since we don't know what might happen."

"What about you, Dokja-ssi?"

"I'll head west."

Sparks were exploding in all directions. One by the north, one by the east, one by the west, and two by the south.

"We don't know yet which camp started raising chaos. If it's done by the members of the same camp as you, don't fight them and call for other companions."

The situation had flipped on its head now.

If we had increased the Chaos Points by fighting 'Good' with 'Good' and 'Evil' with 'Evil', then we needed to fight 'Good' with 'Evil' and vice versa. Only by sticking to the original rule of the 'Great War of Saints and Demons' could we prevent the increase in the Chaos Points.

"Damn it, I'm really annoyed that our situation has changed so suddenly like this. I get why the Constellations were so pissed off earlier."

"We're going ahead!"

Lee Jihye and the kids departed first, and right afterwards, Han Sooyoung and I also made our move.

Her figure, as she dashed forward while scattering black flames about, was filled with wounds, both large and small.

I spoke to her. "Be careful."

She scowled ever so slightly and flew towards the east.

This punk, I was only worried about her, but even then…

– You be careful, instead. Idiot.

The [Midday Tryst] arriving a beat later made me feel a bit strange. Was I overthinking it when I found both Yoo Joonghyuk and Han Sooyoung had changed a lot?

[Chaos Points are increasing!]

[Current Chaos Points: 86]

I activated [Way of the Wind] and dashed across the air.

As I was in the middle of [Demon King Transformation], the skill's accelerative force had become truly astonishing. I crossed the sky in an instant and arrived at the origin of the sparks. I began to closely scan the vicinity.

…In hiding, was it?

Corpses of Reincarnators were strewn about on the battlefield. And there were a handful of terrified survivors that had fallen on their butts, looking at all the dead bodies.

Without a doubt, someone went on to massacre the people from the same side here.

[Exclusive skill, 'Reading Comprehension', is activating!]

[Attribute, 'Scenario Interpreter', is activating!]

[Your insight that analyses the situation by collecting circumstantial evidence of the incident has increased!]

I quickly read the fragments of Stories scattered about. I was right about a massacre taking place here. However, I couldn't spot any traces of the culprit running away.

"S-save us, Demon King-nim!"

Six remaining Reincarnators knelt down and began prostrating before me. I carefully observed them; most of the six were wounded gravely, blood and Stories continuously pouring out from their bodies.

Except for this one guy, whose Story happened to be exceptionally stable.

"You."

The eyes of the man slowly raising his head up were filled with a certain evil leer. I spoke while meeting those eyes straight-on. "You, are you a 'Seeker of the End'?"

At that moment, the man desperately lunged at me. But I was already ready for him and easily evaded his attack, before grabbing his neck.

"Keok, keo-heok…!"

[Exclusive skill, 'Character List', is activating!]

As I thought, he was the culprit I was searching for – a Demon King's subordinate. There was no real need to peer deeply into his Attribute Window anymore.

"You've begun your actions already? But, it shouldn't be the right time yet?"

The man with his neck grabbed by me formed a disgusting grin.

"T-the great apocalypse will soon come. All scenarios are already set in stone. The noble and absolute Story will come to reality!"

I recoiled just a little bit after looking at his eyes glaring like a religious fanatic.

Right, most of the 'Seekers of the End' were like this guy back in the original story, weren't they.

They believed that there was only one 'Absolute Story' that supported this world, and that every scenario was merely the will of that Story coming to fruition.

「Ke kekeke.」

I heard [the Fourth Wall]'s mocking cackle resound in my head.

Without a doubt, these 'Seekers of the End' had no idea that the Story they thought they knew was actually a novel that I had read already.

「It's true that all are destined to be destroyed.」

'There's no such thing as destiny'.

I recalled the countless regression turns Yoo Joonghyuk had lived. The 'Great War of Saints and Demons' repeated for hundreds of times, and their conclusions were largely the same.

However, that was only during the 'original story'.

"Speak. How many of you have infiltrated this 'Great War of Saints and Demons'?"

Geu-reuk, geu-reuruek…

Foams bubbled up on the man's mouth.

"Do you wish to free the Apocalypse Dragon? You do that, and everything will come to an end. Rather than reaching the end of the Story you've been chasing after, the Story itself will be over, instead."

The man didn't reply and simply cackled on.

I sighed out. "Looks like you don't want to answer."

[Demon King, 'Demon King of Salvation', has unleashed his Status!]

The Reincarnators around us screamed at the ripples of the Status and quickly backed away. The man who received the brunt of my Status head-on shuddered greatly, before blood oozed out from all seven of his orifices.

I spoke without opening my lips. [Recite the list of your friends that are participating in this battle.]

Even under the threat of the imposing Status, the man didn't fall into the clutches of fear. No, it was quite the opposite, actually.

"De, mon King, of, Sal, vation…"

He began forming an expression of sheer rapturous ecstasy. As blood continued to leak out of his lips, he began speaking in a voice of someone being saved.

"Kill me! Hurry!! Please kill meeee!"

I couldn't figure out what the hell was wrong with this guy's head. In any case, I couldn't waste any more time here. If I couldn't extract the list from this guy, then I'd have to personally search around.

I was about to smash the man's head in without hesitation, but then, a message suddenly floated up.

[Members from the same camp have…]

[Current Chaos Points: 87]

Damn it, I forgot that he was also 'Evil'.

Just as I let go of his neck, the Story leaking out of his seven orifices suddenly increased in volume and his body began rapidly expanding. And then, he began smiling in a bizarre manner.

… Self-detonation sequence, was it?

It was too late to dodge.

But then, right afterwards, a streak of light flew in from somewhere and penetrated the man's body in a straight line.

Kwa-jijijijik!

It was a spear made out of light so bright that it must've come from the sun itself.

Inside this bright ray of light, the 'Seeker of the End' shuddered as if he was being electrocuted. The explosive power expanding outwardly was now being absorbed into the spear of light.

He lost all signs of vitality in an instant, and died after turning into jet-black ash.

I studied the Story of light being scattered all around me.

…Wait, didn't I know that Story already?

[You've forgotten to call for me on such a grand celebration. I'm disappointed, oh, Demon King of Salvation.]

The moment I heard that true voice, I figured out who it was.

"Surya!"

It was the 'Supreme God of Light' Surya.

He used to be a Constellation of <Vedas> once upon a time, but after the Olympus battle, ended up sharing a 'Giant Story' with us, instead.

[You've achieved an amazing level of Status since the last time I saw you. I heard that you have defeated Indra.]

"I simply got lucky."

[True, the absent-minded Indra might come across as a neighbourhood dummy sometimes, but still, he's not someone you can defeat by relying on luck.]

Perhaps because he had left <Vedas>, Surya didn't seem all that perturbed while talking about Indra's fate. He scanned the fragments of the 'Seeker of the End' he ended just now, and spoke.

[I was wondering why the Giant Story's state felt off, but now I see that 'Seekers of the End' have shown up in this place.]

"Were you aware of them?"

[These bastards had infiltrated <Vedas> once before.]

…Even <Vedas>?

Now that I thought about it, I heard somewhere that there was an internal conflict taking place in Vedas before. Maybe the 'Seekers of the End' were responsible for that?

Tsu-chut, tsu-chuchut!

Sparks dancing around in all corners of the battlefield began subsiding at a visible pace. It was likely that my companions had successfully managed to suppress the situation.

"…It seems that it's been taken care of, more or less. Maybe, there weren't that many who managed to infiltrate this battlefield in the first place."

Even though the 'Seekers of the End' had made their entrance, this was a rather tame conclusion.

But, then…

[Members from the same camp have clashed!]

[Current Chaos Points: 88]

…What??

I hurriedly scanned the battlefield, but couldn't see a single spark exploding anywhere. Forget about the same camp this and that, there was no battle taking place at all.

[Members from the same camp have clashed!]

[Current Chaos Points: 89]

Even then, the Chaos Points continued to climb higher. A chilling sensation crept down my spine.

Hang on, could this be…?

[It's not on the surface.]

I heard Surya's words and reflexively looked up into the sky.

More correctly, at the grey-coloured sphere floating up there. Archangels and Demon Kings should be having a conference within it, yet it was rocking viciously to and fro while an incredible amount of sparks exploded from it.

…A 'Seeker of the End' was in there, too?

[Members from the same camp have clashed!]

[Current Chaos Points: 90]

The Chaos Points would climb only when those in the same side fought against each other. But, if such a thing was happening inside that sphere…

[Atmosphere of the great battlefield is beginning to change!]

Clouds gathered in the sky began spinning into a massive whirlpool.

[Aura of Calamity at the hottest place in Hell is opening its eyes!]

…God damn it.

Ku-gugugugu!!

Even Surya's expression had hardened noticeably.

[It seems that I've come seeking my own grave today.]

Right then, a message I really didn't want to see floated up.

[Chaos Points have exceeded 90!]

[Giant Story of Apocalypse is beginning to stir.]

[Giant Story, 'Final Dragon of the Book of Revelation', is getting ready to tell its story!]

An earthquake erupted throughout the entire great battlefield.

The indescribable despair I felt during the 95th scenario was reviving again.

Chapter 402: Ep. 76 - Book of Revelation, IV

[Every Constellation in the <Star Stream> has detected the existence of the Calamity!]

[Many Constellations have fallen into a state of fear!]

As the surrounding atmosphere transformed rapidly, Constellations enjoying the cease-fire all began repeatedly roaring out as well as speaking in their true voices. Some were panicking grandly, wondering what was going on here; some sensed the Status of the Calamity and became scared; some Constellations began lodging inquiries to the Bureau, hoping to escape from this scenario.

The bitter struggles of the stars trying to survive turned the battlefield into pure pandemonium in no time at all.

[The Bureau of the Star Stream is responding to the emergency situation!]

Finally, the Bureau was stepping forward.

Seeing that the messages regarding Constellations had decreased by a whole lot quite rapidly just then, it seemed that the Bureau also found the current situation rather concerning as well.

[The Bureau of the Star Stream has begun an internal meeting on the applicable issue.]

It was quite likely that even the Bureau didn't expect this 'Great War of Saints and Demons' to become this big.

Well, from the get-go, the 'Chaos Points' were simply added in as the extra spice for the sake of speedy progress of the 'Great War of Saints and Demons'. But then, that extra points system had surpassed the Good/Evil Points, and it was even trying to awaken the Apocalypse Dragon now.

If that Dragon did wake up, then countless Constellations would end up getting killed. In other words, it'd be the same thing as the number of the Bureau's customers declining rather precipitously.

[Even if the Bureau steps forward, they won't be able to revert the calamity, as if it never happened in the first place.]

I agreed with Surya's assertion.

We were in the 80th main scenario. Even if this was the Bureau, they wouldn't be able to cancel the 'Giant Story'.

So, now wasn't the time to place our faith in their potential response.

"In order for the Apocalypse Dragon to wake up, the Chaos Points need to rise up by another 10."

Although it wasn't a lot, we still had some time.

If we failed to prevent the release of the Apocalypse Dragon, then there was a very good chance that my companions would be killed here.

What should I do to prevent that from happening?

Of course, I could immediately come up with a method to do that – eliminate the source behind the rise in the Chaos Points.

The problem was that the source was hidden inside that 'sphere'.

Tsu-chuchuchuchut…!

"Even if it's a 'Seeker of the End', it shouldn't be able to hold on for long inside there."

Through the 'Ways of Survival', I knew who was on the list of the 'Seekers of the End'. No one on that list was capable of lasting for a long time while inside that sphere.

Not only were Metatron and Agares were in there, but the highest-grade Constellations in this world were with them, too.

Even if they were to take their time, Archangels and Demon Kings should've discovered the 'Seeker of the End' and killed it by now. With that, Chaos Points should stop rising up…

[Members from the same camp have clashed!]

[Current Chaos Points: 91]

It was around at that time that sparks exploded in the air. The sphere violently shook around before a portion of its side faintly spread open, and something began falling from there.

There were six torn wings visible on her back; it was an Archangel I knew well.

I activated [Way of the Wind] and flew up in haste.

The body of the Archangel I caught was quite light. A certain fragrance wafted into my nose; Stories were falling like flower petals from the deep wound running across her back.

"Gabriel."

[Constellation, 'Lily Blooming in Aquarius', is looking at you.]

She was the Archangel Gabriel, who had experienced the 1863rd turn with me before coming back home; the Constellation who fell into a deep pit of shock after learning that she'd betray <Eden> in the future.

I momentarily wondered if she was the reason for the unfolding crisis, but I knew that couldn't be the case; even in the original story, there was a very good reason to her betrayal, and technically speaking, you couldn't even really call what she did a betrayal, either.

Gabriel's lips moved with great difficulty. It was hard to hear her voice.

I pressed her for an answer. "What happened in there? Please talk to me."

She looked up at my face with fatigued eyes, but then, handed something over to me. It was her Story.

Her trembling lips moved. Her voice couldn't be heard, but I could definitely understand the words being conveyed.

｢Please, save <Eden>.｣

Gabriel's Story began telling its story.

Metatron looked at the Angels lining up by his sides, as well as the Demon Kings standing on his opposite side one at a time. They all seemed to be anxious. Also, their expressions displayed their failure at understanding how they arrived at their current situation.

In the middle of all those faces, the oldest rival to Metatron could be seen.

[To think that we'd be in this place because of a single Nebula. How absurd.]

It was the master of the 2nd Demon Realm, the 'Ruler of the East Hell'.

While lighting up a thick cigarette, Agares asked his question. [How will we decide on the victors and losers? Will we enter the 3rd 'Great War of Saints and Demons' right away? Honestly speaking, I'm against it. Gathering this much Probability again would be next to impossible, after all.]

To start this 'Great War of Saints and Demons', both <Eden> and the Demon Realm had to swallow huge losses.

Even among all the 'Giant Stories' of the <Star Stream>, the 'Great War of Saints and Demons' boasted an unparalleled scale. If this scenario ended in annulment, then the 'Story of Good and Evil' they barely managed to scrounge up would scatter again, and both the 'Good' and the 'Evil' could end up on the road to extinction.

Metatron looked up at the outside sky, faintly visible through the grey sphere. Flashes of lightning could be seen within the dark, gloomy clouds ominously gathering above them. Was it because of the end-of-the-world type vibe? He abruptly recalled an event that had taken place a long time ago.

[Agares. It's already been several thousands of years since the master of the 1st Demon Realm had passed on.]

[I don't have the time to leisurely reminisce about the past with you.]

[Do you still remember that day?]

[It was the day I inherited this abominable 'wall', so how could I have forgotten it?]

['Wall that divides Good and Evil' is growling.]

Ominous sparks danced around Agares's Incarnation Body. When that happened, a similar phenomenon happened around Metaron's Incarnation Body, as well.

['Wall that divides Good and Evil' is falling into a reminiscence of the past.]

A wall that was one but at the same time, two. A fragment of the Final Wall, that decided the 'Good' and the 'Evil' of the world.

With that wall in the middle, the representatives of <Eden> and the Demon Realm were staring at each other.

[For a long time, you and I decided on the 'Good and Evil' of this world, didn't we?]

Just what was 'Good'?

Even Metatron, the leader of <Eden>, didn't have the answer to that question. Because 'Good' was simply a collection of countless Stories, that was why.

He read the Stories of his predecessors, figured them out, and learned about 'Good' that way. And those 'Good', rather than explaining themselves, simply pointed to other Stories and spoke like this, instead.

「That is not 'Good'.」

And that was how 'Evil' was created.

'Jung-ui' (Justice, 正義) had morphed into 'Jung-ui' (To define, 定義), and along with that, 'anger' had been invented.

「And therefore, we are not 'Evil'.」

That was how 'Good' was created.

That simple dichotomy had managed to tear the <Star Stream> in half.

The simpler and more unyielding the principle, the stronger its ability to spread out. Countless Constellations jumped on the bandwagon of the principle of 'Good' and 'Evil'.

[You probably have no idea. No idea about how boring it can get, trying to exist as 'Evil' in this world.] Agares breathed out the cigarette smoke and continued on. [It was you who forced the 'Good and Evil' into this state. You erased the particulars of 'Evil', and you also spread that damn 'promotion of virtue and disapproval of vice' like some kind of a plague. Indeed, you bastard, are the original culprit who managed to break the Story of 'Good and Evil'.]

It didn't really matter what kind of minute details, or whether sadness and pain existed within the scenario. What did matter, however, was the conclusion.

The 'Good' judged and punished the 'Evil'. That was enough for the others to shed grateful tears and clap their hands. Without a doubt, such a time did exist.

Metatron spoke up. [But, you also agreed to do that, didn't you?]

[Back then, that was the only way for us to survive.]

The 'Good' stayed alive by punishing the 'Evil', while the 'Evil' continued to exist by resisting against the 'Good'.

And so, tens of thousands of years passed by like that. The division between 'Good and Evil' became blurry, and justice/definition had disappeared. The 'Good and Evil' ended up becoming a concept of bored old men.

No one welcomed the idea of 'promoting virtue and disapproving vice' any more.

Drop.

Agares dropped the cigarette he'd been smoking on the floor, and as if he was stepping on an insect, squashed it to kill it.

[Through the repetition of the scenarios, the 'Good' has become a source of stuffy boredom, while the 'Evil' has become an antiquated cliché. I have to wonder, maybe it's about time that we stop with this foolishness.]

Agares's words prompted the Demon Kings to pull out all of their weapons.

Metatron spoke again. [If we fight here, then everyone will perish together.]

['Evil' has always been easier than 'Good'. Even if you all disappear, we will still remain.]

[The world forgetting about 'Good' does not mean I have forgotten mine.]

[Then, prove it.] Agares's eyes began burning up. [We will no longer be the plaything of the 'promotion of virtue and disapproval of vice' any more. I am 'Evil'. I was born 'Evil', and proving that you exist used to be the reason for my existence. And from today onwards, I shall break free from that reason.]

The Demon Kings all roared out in unison. Their Statuses overflowed as if to sweep away every Archangel present at any given moment.

But, right at that moment…

[Members from the same camp have clashed!]

[Current Chaos Points: 83]

System messages rose up in the air. The sudden spike in the Chaos Points caused the shocked Archangels to exchange glances with each other.

[What's going on?!]

[It's the outside! Someone is slaughtering the members from the same side!]

Agares and the Demon Kings also became flustered. And in the middle of all this confusion, only Metatron maintained his composed chuckle.

[I've been thinking about this for a long time, but it seems that this is the only way forward.]

[What are you…?!]

[If you want a fight, then I'll give you one. However, what meaning is there for us to fight inside this place and end the 'Great War of Saints and Demons'? Who do you think will remember the 'Good and Evil' that fought inside this tiny little sphere and met its ignoble doom?]

There was a hint of bizarre, creepy madness in Metatron's voice.

Sensing that something very ominous was about to occur, Agares loudly shouted out.

[Metatron! Just what the hell are you thinking?!]

[My thoughts are as thus.]

As soon as Metatron finished talking, Michael, standing right at the forefront of the Archangels, unsheathed his sword.

Now that the strongest Archangel had pulled its sword out, Demon Kings didn't hold back and unleashed their Statuses while roaring out, as well. And in the following moment, Michael's sword pierced into someone else.

[…Mi, chael…?]

Eyes trembled softly in sheer disbelief.

The person Michael had stabbed wasn't a Demon King. He began laughing. [How regretful. I always wanted to kill Uriel first, though.]

Archangel Raguel continued to shake its head in disbelief but eventually, it died on the spot as the Stories poured out from its wounds.

Demonic aura began boiling all over Michael's entire frame after he murdered one of his kin. A corrupted Angel's powers would grow stronger by killing fellow Archangels.

[Members from the same camp have clashed!]

[Current Chaos Points: 87]

Status that almost reached that of a Myth-grade Constellation exploded forth, and the massacre commenced in earnest. Angels that had no place to run hurriedly unleashed their Statuses, but they couldn't even put up a proper fight before getting killed. Originally, there was a restriction placed on Michael that prevented him from attacking a fellow Angel on the side of Absolute Good.

Even then, if such a thing was possible, that could only mean…

[Scribe, just why…?!]

Metatron's book was emitting bright white light. This slaughter was taking place under the tacit approval of 'Scribe of Heaven'.

[Members from the same camp have clashed!]

[Current Chaos Points: 88]

The sight of hell itself unfolded as an Angel murdered another Angel.

Demon Kings watched the proceedings like onlookers spectating on the wildfire on the other side of the river, shook from sheer terror, and hastily stepped back.

Michael grinned brightly, and while wiping the Angel blood off his cheek, spoke. [And now, 'Good' will forever be remembered.]

[The Oldest Good has begun its storytelling.]

The battle of Saints and Demons were, in the end, a battle between Stories. And these Stories knew better than anyone on what to do so that they would be remembered forever.

Agares, enraged beyond means, roared out.

[Could it be that, you bastards, wish to revive the Apocalypse Dragon…?!]

Just as it urgently tried to unleash its Status, something dug deeply into its back – a covert, sneaky demonic energy that could even rival its own Status.

[The Oldest Evil has begun its storytelling.]

Agares unstably wobbled about and looked behind itself.

[…You bastard, why?]

[You said it yourself, haven't you?]

The Demon King felt the sensation of the sharp claws cutting out its heart.

Asmodeus, the 'Seeker of the End', was smiling brightly.

[…That 'Evil' is always easier than 'Good'.]

Gabriel's Story was really short. Short, but more than long enough to explain everything. Hell had unfolded inside that sphere already.

「"Run away, Gabriel. Request aid from those people."」

And a small number of Archangels, including Raphael, sacrificed their Statuses at the last moment to send Gabriel outside the sphere.

[Definition of 'Good' and 'Evil' are rapidly changing!]

[Members from the same camp have clashed!]

[Current Chaos Points: 92]

"Kim Dokja."

Yoo Joonghyuk and Han Sooyoung had arrived by my side already. Their eyes were demanding an explanation.

Rather than providing a detailed but time-wasting one, I simply spoke of the core of the issue at hand. "It's Metatron. He was planning to wake up the 'Apocalypse Dragon' from the very beginning."

As if she knew what had transpired already, a big scowl formed on Han Sooyoung's face.

"That fool, I thought he knew what happened in the 1863rd turn?"

During 1863rd regression turn, <Eden> was destroyed by the Apocalypse Dragon. And Metatron was well aware of that.

"He must be believing that this is the only way to avoid their destruction."

It was Yoo Joonghyuk who said that. He continued on. "If the Apocalypse Dragon wakes up, then at the bare minimum, this 'Great War of Saints and Demons' should become a Story no one will ever forget even until the final days of the <Star Stream>."

"What the hell? What's the point of that if everyone is about to die?"

"Not everyone will die. Some that manage to survive will end up remembering the 'Good and Evil' forever."

Even if both Eden and the Demon Realm perished, the story would be different as long as the 'Good and Evil' didn't vanish.

Even if everything were to come to an end, the ideology would still be inherited, that's why.

Countless Constellations and Incarnations would die, and without a doubt, the Apocalypse Dragon would be designated as 'Evil'. Then, the rest of the world would gather together to fight against that calamity.

And <Eden> and the Demon Realm would forever be etched in everyone's memory.

Han Sooyoung shuddered uncomfortably at that out-there show of will.

"Those crazy sons of bitches…"

[Members from the same camp have clashed!]

[Current Chaos Points: 93]

I watched the Chaos Points slowly climb up and felt the helplessness creep in bit by bit. All of this was Metatron's scenario.

"Kim Dokja, what are we going to do?"

From afar, the rest of our companions, plus Uriel, were flying towards our location.

…I need to think.

We had worked too hard to get this far.

Tsu-chuchuchut!!

It was at that moment that a portal opened up in the air as sparks wildly danced about.

"…Dokkaebis?"

[Great Dokkaebi, 'Heoju' (empty throne) has appeared in the scenario!]

[Great Dokkaebi, 'Heoche' (empty body) has appeared in the scenario!]

Two Great Dokkaebis, one wearing a formal black suit while the other, a white one, descended from the sky while scattering around dignified Statuses. They must've come here on short notice because their crumpled, untidy shirts and ties were flapping around in the strong winds.

They approached me immediately and spoke as thus.

['Demon King of Salvation', this 'Dark Stratum' will soon perish. And, it's almost a guarantee that you will die here.]

I figured that the Bureau would start making their move by now. I didn't expect Great Dokkaebis to personally show up here, though.

"If you came here to prophetise the apocalypse, then I'm afraid you're a bit too late now. The system's been yapping on about it for a while."

The two Great Dokkaebis looked at each other as if they were taken aback by my composed reply.

[Just as the rumours suggested, he does possess a glib tongue.]

[And that's why the King is so interested in him, most likely.]

Just before I could ask for a clarification on that, one of the Great Dokkaebis broke out into a smirk.

…As if it was about to make an offer that I couldn't possibly refuse.

[Oh, Demon King. Let us get straight to the point. Give up on this 'Great War of Saints and Demons'.]

This Great Dokkaebi laughed as if entertained by something, and while looking at Gabriel lying down on the ground, spoke again.

[If you do, we shall take you to the 'Final Scenario'.]

Chapter 403: Ep. 76 - Book of Revelation, V

The Final Scenario.

Acting as if they already knew what I wanted, the two Dokkaebis wearing the contrasting black and white formal suits pressed me for an answer.

[You must decide now. Die in this place, or head off to the Final Scenario with us.]

The Great Dokkaebis, Heoju and Heoche.

I knew a few things about these two Great Dokkaebi siblings. Well, they did appear frequently in the latter half of the 'Ways of Survival', after all.

Besides that, though. To think, they would mention 'Final Scenario' with their own lips… It seemed that the Dokkaebis were finally getting ready for the end of this world as well.

Just as Constellations and Incarnations repeatedly fought to ensure their continued survival, the storytellers also had a story that they needed to convey at any cost.

And the Great Dokkaebis were getting ready for that final story.

– Final Scenario? What are these two talking about?

Han Sooyoung didn't seem to know.

Herself from the 1863rd regression turn must've not told her of it, it seems.

I recalled that version of Han Sooyoung, wearing the exact same white coat as me. That meticulous person wouldn't have forgotten about it, so it was more likely that her choice was deliberate.

– It's too long to explain right now.

I couldn't really tell. However, she might have believed that not knowing would be more advantageous for herself in the 3rd turn.

I felt just a bit strange after recalling Han Sooyoung from the 1863rd turn after such a long while.

That turn, when I went to visit it, was already facing its final battle. Did Han Sooyoung survive that battle? If she did, what kind of person would she have become now?

I shifted my head to find Yoo Joonghyuk staring at me.

– Are you going to accept their offer?

– You're actually asking me that?

As if he knew it, he turned his head away.

He looked as if he was rueful about something. If I had accepted the offer, then he might have lopped my head off right this instant or something.

Meanwhile, Great Dokkaebis were still waiting for me.

[Your decision?]

"Well, I'm sure you've already guessed it… No thanks."

[And your reason is?]

"Because it's suspicious."

[Suspicious?]

"From the get-go, the offer itself is strange. Give up on the 'Great War of Saints and Demons', and you'll take me to the Final Scenario… Can't you really see what's missing from that? You're a storyteller, yet your degree of understanding towards my Story is strikingly low."

Great Dokkaebi Heoche looked at me in dumbfoundedness, before eyeing Great Dokkaebi Heoju.

The latter nodded his head and spoke. [If you accept the offer, then we shall lend our aid to ensure the survival of every <Kim Dokja's Company> member present in this place.]

Both Yoo Joonghyuk and Han Sooyoung looked at me simultaneously at that unexpected declaration.

A path that would save everyone from <Kim Dokja's Company> present here, plus taking us right to the Final Scenario?

"Even if it's the Bureau, wouldn't doing something like that as you please tilt the balance of Probability?"

[That is something for us to worry about.]

This could be a once-in-a-lifetime chance, an opportunity to save everyone and reach the Final Scenario. An offer so tempting that one wouldn't even dare to think about rejecting it.

Even then, my head was colder than it was ever before.

"It sounds like you're in a really tight situation right now. Surely, me giving up on the 'Great War of Saints and Demons' can't be everything there is to your offer?"

[…!!]

"I'll have to sign the 'Stream Contract' with you guys in exchange. Am I correct?"

The Stream Contract. A type of contract that I had with Bihyung once upon a time.

The two Great Dokkaebis formed surprised expressions. I decided to land another blow. "In order to become the 'Final Storyteller', you are trying to take my Story and use it, aren't you?"

[…How do you know things like this?]

"I'm not interested in your offer."

[Then, your group will die here.]

"We don't know that. Didn't you say it earlier? It's 'almost' a guarantee. In that case, there's a very low chance of us not dying."

[Have you not seen the Calamity from the other world-line?]

This time, it was my turn to be surprised. It seemed that Great Dokkaebis were now more or less aware of the events of the 1863rd regression turn.

[The Apocalypse Dragon isn't some simple Calamity that a single Constellation or Nebula can stop.]

I knew that. I knew how horrifying the Status of that Dragon was. Well, I did directly sense it back in the future world-line, didn't I?

Even then, I still smiled. "I thought creating an entertaining scenario was the duty of the Dokkaebi? You should just get ready to start the broadcast, instead."

As if she was reacting to my words, Biyoo popped up in the air with a well-timed 'ta-da!'

[Baat!]

[Many Constellations are astonished by your choice.]

[A small number of Constellations believe that you're insane.]

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', is cackling away.]

[Sponsorship community's big whale has sponsored 300,000 Coins for your ambitious spirit.]

As expected, thanks to the enormity of the situation, the incoming sponsorship amount proved to be rather sizeable, too.

The Great Dokkaebi glared at me with unreadable eyes for a little bit, before slowly vanishing from the view.

[You shall regret this decision.]

Their figures scattered like smoke. And with that, the certain method to save every one of my companions had vanished alongside them, as well.

[…Your decisiveness always surprises me.]

Even Surya seemed to be impressed by my decision this time.

I looked at the unconscious Gabriel within my arms.

Han Sooyoung, looking at her, asked me a question. "Kim Dokja."

"What now? What? What do you want."

"…You thought about this long and hard before answering, right? It's not because of some cheap sympathy or a momentary rush of blood or something, right?"

I nodded my head.

"…In that case, fine."

A faint trace of resentment could be felt from her tone of voice.

I spoke. "It's okay for you to get angry. I did reject an incredible opportunity just now, after all."

"…"

"However, by not doing that…"

"Yeah, well, sure. You have your reasons. Honestly, I knew you'd say no, anyway."

"What? Why?"

Han Sooyoung's sigh-filled replies were followed up by Yoo Joonghyuk. "Because that's how you operate, you fool."

Looking at him glaring back at me with his usual eyes, I instantly realized what these two had to give up for my sake.

Right. This was how I lived my life. And it was not how Han Sooyoung or Yoo Joonghyuk lived theirs.

"…Sure, this type of method does suit the stupid Story of <Kim Dokja's Company> the best. I'm definitely recording today's events in my memoir later. Obviously, after surviving this place, that is."

"You better worry about what to do next, instead."

Han Sooyoung and Yoo Joonghyuk, two very different people.

*

I realized something just then. I managed to get this far because these two lived on their own terms – respected my decisions in their own ways.

I began thinking; with these two around, maybe not all hope was lost, after all.

[Members from the same camp have clashed!]

[Current Chaos Points: 96]

Sparks were still flying around in the sky. The battle taking place inside that grey sphere should be winding down by now. The Good and Evil, planning to survive by driving this world to destruction, would soon reveal themselves from there.

Han Sooyoung asked. "Are we going to stop that?"

Yoo Joonghyuk shook his head. "It's impossible to breach that sphere from the outside."

"What then?"

"We can't stop the Chaos Points from reaching the 100 mark. The Apocalypse Dragon will revive. And with that, the 'First Tail-Flick' will begin."

The First Tail-Flick.

It seemed that Yoo Joonghyuk knew about that Calamity. I recalled the prophecy of the Apocalypse Dragon appearing within the 'Ways of Survival'.

「From the centre of the hottest Hell, a Dragon with seven heads and ten horns will awaken.」

「It will be a Dragon among Dragons. A leader of all Dragons born within the centre of Chaos, and the world's oldest hatred.」

「The Dragon will look at the heavens and the earth once, before flicking its tail. That single tail-flick will cause stars to fall, and one direction of the world to vanish.」

Back in the 1863rd turn, I didn't get to witness that 'Tail-flick'. Back then, the Apocalypse Dragon wasn't in the fully-revived state. However, things would be different this time around.

Yoo Joonghyuk spoke in a resolute tone of voice. "We have no other choice but to fight it head-on."

"Fuck… I knew you'd say something like that."

Han Sooyoung sounded resigned in her reply.

[Members from the same camp have clashed!]

[Current Chaos Points: 98]

Only two more points remained in the Chaos Points.

I saw my companions rush over here from the distance.

"Ahjussi!"

"Dokja hyung!"

I saw Shin Yoosung and Lee Gilyoung, and Lee Jihye leading the battleship as well as Jung Heewon. Uriel was accompanying them, her expression complicated.

She saw Gabriel in my arms and was taken greatly by surprise.

[…Gabriel!!]

I handed the wounded Archangel over to her. I quickly looked at my companions first as there wasn't a lot of time for a detailed explanation.

"Ahjussi, is the Apocalypse Dragon really going to wake up?"

I nodded my head.

As if to instil discipline, Han Sooyoung began shouting out. "You all better be ready for this. This isn't going to be a picnic."

"When was it ever?"

Along with Lee Jihye's reply, the companions quickly finished with the preparations.

Everyone… Han Sooyoung, Yoo Joonghyuk, Shin Yoosung, Lee Gilyoung, Jung Heewon, and Lee Jihye, all carried a hardened, determined expression.

Finally, I shifted my gaze over to the face of the still-unconscious Lee Hyunsung.

[Members from the same camp have clashed!]

[Current Chaos Points: 99]

And then, the Apocalypse Dragon's imminent revival drew near.

[Many Constellations are in a state of terror!]

[Constellations of <Star Stream> have fallen into a chaotic state.]

[Nebula, <Olympus>, is getting ready for the Calamity!]

[Nebula, <Vedas>, is getting ready for the Calamity!]

[Nebula, <Hongik>, is…]

Ku-gugugugu!

Something from deep within the island writhed, causing the heaven and earth to shake violently. It felt as if everything was now enveloped within a gigantic flap of a wing; the surrounding view felt like it was precariously hanging on as if it was an ill-fitting block. Smaller Stories had already started breaking down bit by bit.

As if it wanted to deprive the names of all 'calamities' that had existed so far, an enormous Story began waking up.

"Kim Dokja. The ones at most peril when the Apocalypse Dragon awakens are the Constellations."

"According to the prophecy, that's right."

"And you're a Constellation."

The First Tail-Flick would destroy a direction in the sky. Simply put, all the stars and the contexts for the Modifiers found within the applicable location would be destroyed.

Han Sooyoung began smirking. "Hey, Kim Dokja, which direction were you, again? East? Or was it the west? If you are unlucky, I guess you'll be the first one to die?"

"That could be true. So, I might as well pray for my survival before I die."

"…What bullshit are you spewing now? Wait, are you and the Apocalypse Dragon acquaintances?"

Although her tone of voice wasn't exactly nice, Han Sooyoung's eyes were sparkling brightly, nonetheless.

I decided to satisfy her expectations somewhat. "You see, the 'Apocalypse Dragon' isn't actually referring to a 'specific Dragon'. Just like how the Oldest Good or the Oldest Evil doesn't refer to any specific Constellations, the 'Final Dragon of the Book of Revelation' simply refers to the Giant Story itself."

"Hang on. Doesn't that mean…"

"At this point in time, it's not been decided on 'who shall become the Apocalypse Dragon'."

Han Sooyoung's jaw fell ever so slightly.

[Current Chaos Points: 100]

[Chaos Points have reached the limit!]

Along with the chilling sensation travelling down my back, the whole world began to dye in the jet-black colour.

The threatening aura breaking out from beneath the surface began encroaching into the entire island.

[From the hottest Hell, the 'Demonic Dragon Palace' is opening its doors!]

Blinding rays of light exploded out and the surrounding space shattered away. Giant shadows began appearing from there.

After excluding the Outer God-level beings, there were still other monsters in this world that managed to get near the powers of Constellations or Transcendents.

The peak of all types of monsters in the world…

Guh-ohohoooooh!!

A Dragon's Roar, capable of freezing up the listener's body, resounded out. Shadows of the ruined cities seemed to fleet by, as the ancient Dragon Kings that had been forgotten under the lengthy period of time began waking up.

[Kuwaaaahk!!]

Constellations struck by the Dragons' Breaths screamed as they turned to ash. Hundreds of draconic shadows blanketed the sky; the Constellations of the <Star Stream> freaked out as they were subjected to the ripples from the vast Statuses.

Every single one of them was a Dragon King, equal to the power of a Constellation.

All these countless Dragons had shown up here, hoping to be selected as the lone Apocalypse Dragon tasked with destroying this world.

[Giant Story, 'Final Dragon of the Book of Revelation', has begun its storytelling.]

[Giant Story, 'Final Dragon of the Book of Revelation', has begun selecting the Dragon of Calamity.]

I looked up at that overwhelming spectacle and spoke. "We have a Dragon among us, don't we?"

Shin Yoosung looked at me after hearing me speak. There was a Dragon with thick metal armour covering its entire figure sitting next to her.

1st-grade Dragon King, Chimera Dragon.

Thanks to Shin Yoosung's diligent care, it had become strong enough not to get pushed around by any regular Constellations.

A Dragon that was born in the Demon Realm's Paradise, loudly roared into the heavens above.

Han Sooyoung watched it fly up into the sky and asked me a question. "You really think that guy will become the 'king'?"

I shook my head. Sure, the Chimera Dragon possessed an unbelievable rate of growth, but it was still too early for the creature to become a viable candidate for the role of Apocalypse Dragon.

"Then, why are you so confid…"

"We still have one more, right?"

"What? Where…"

Han Sooyoung formed a rather dumb-looking expression.

But then, her right hand began wiggling violently as if it was responding to something. Right in the next second, the empty sky split wide open, and the pitch-black darkness exploded out from within.

Dozens of Dragons nearby screamed pitifully and fell down. The heavens flickered as if the darkness had overtaken it, and black bolts of lightning crashed down to the earth.

Through the gap of the abyss, something began revealing itself. It was a Dragon, covered in elegant scales seemingly crafted out of pure obsidian.

A Status that other ancient Dragons couldn't even hope to match; eyes gleaming like the reddest of rubies; every time its wings, seemingly carved out from the darkness itself, flapped, entrancing black flames blanketed the sky.

I looked up at that lifeform possessing the beautiful, streamlined shape and spoke. "Let's all pray that your sponsor emerges victorious."

It was the existence closest to being the Apocalypse Dragon at this point in time.

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', has incarnated into the scenario!]

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* Promotional illustration (semi-canonical)

Chapter 404: Ep. 77 - Final Dragon, I

Metatron scanned the desolate, ruined conference venue. Demon Kings and Archangels wielding their respective weapons up until a short while ago were all lying still on the floor.

The Story of Good and Evil was scattering away.

The effects of the Chaos Points that broke past the critical point were now invading into the grey sphere.

One of the Angels still conscious reached out towards him.

[Scribe…]

Along with 'Peo-geo-geok!', Michael's heel smashed that Angel's head into meat paste. He kicked the dead Angel away, before pulling out an Archangel the size of a small child hidden inside its robe.

The unconscious Archangel dangled in Michael's hand as she was brought up in the air.

[Should I kill Raphael as well? It's a bit of a waste to let her go like this…]

[If that's what you want. It doesn't matter if you let her live. The Chaos Points have been filled to the maximum already, anyway.]

[Well, in that case, what about that Demon King?]

Metatron shifted his gaze over to the corner of the sphere, where a heated battle was still taking place. Agares and his heavily-wounded body were there.

Asmodeus and other 'Seekers of the End' were pouring out coordinated attacks on him, but Demon King Agares didn't show any signs of collapsing, even though Stories streamed down from all over his body, even though his two eyes burned in resentment like a dreadful phantom.

While stuck inside the deadly battle, the Demon King continued to suck on his cigarette. Not just one, but several of them, in fact.

[Stigma, 'One Ciggie for Prodigious Strength Lv.???', is in activation.]

[Stigma, 'One Ciggie for Agility Lv.???', is in activation.]

[Stigma, 'One Ciggie for Magic Power Lv.???', is in activation.]

That was Agares's Stigma, [Universal Cigarette], at work. Its speciality, developed after living as a smoker for a very long time. A unique Stigma for the Demon King that possessed the Story to overclock the Incarnation Body's abilities.

Even after receiving the combined attacks of five, six Demon Kings, Agares remained standing, prompting Asmodeus to say something in admiration. [As expected, the renown of the 'Ruler of East Hell' wasn't for nothing, I see. However, how long will you be able to hold on like this?]

Agares didn't reply, simply choosing to pull out a new cigarette and light it up.

Metatron and Michael crossed the now-dead battlefield and approached the Demon King.

Agares spoke. [Metatron, you better think again. You won't be able to protect the 'Good and Evil' in this fashion. What meaning is there in being remembered after everyone has perished??]

[As long as it's remembered, it shall revive again sometime in the future.]

[Revive? Like your accursed Corrupted Angel?]

Michael frowned deeply.

[Demon King, 'King of Corrupted Angels', is unleashing its Status!]

Michael's Status crashed in like a surging storm, causing Agares to back away while losing more of his Stories. However, the Demon King's gaze was still firmly fixed on Metatron.

[What point is there in trying to carry on like that? That is not us. We reviving in that manner will no longer be 'Metatron' or 'Agares', but merely the 'Scribe of Heaven' and the 'Ruler of East Hell'!]

[That is precisely what we are, oh, 'Ruler of East Hell'.]

A certain everlasting Story was now flowing behind Metatron's back – Stories that he had read, lived, and believed in.

[The Oldest Good is smiling widely.]

This was the 'Scribe of Heaven', the one who recorded the 'Good' of the world. An existence who judged what was 'Good', and would become its leading standard.

While looking at his oldest rival, Agares too sensed the Story unhurriedly flowing next to him.

[The Oldest Evil is tilting its head.]

That was the immeasurably lengthy history of 'Evil' he had pursued so far – a history of resisting the 'Good', eliminated by it, and being punished for it.

At that moment, Agares sensed that the thousands of years of his life were now being summarised into a single comma.

This 'flow' would not end here as long as the 'Ruler of East Hell' was alive, and the 'Scribe of Heaven' continued to exist. As long as they fought against each other, and repeated their wars over and over again.

Even if Metatron and Agares were killed, someone else would become the 'Scribe of Heaven' and 'Ruler of East Hell'.

[If such a thing is 'Good and Evil', then…]

Agares spat his phlegm on the floor and formed a bitter grin.

[…I shall give up on 'Evil'.]

A cigarette flew up from Agares's fingers. It spun in the air while emitting dense smoke.

Asmodeus hurriedly shouted out. [Stop him!]

The swirling, spinning smoke enveloped Agares's entire body.

[Stigma, 'One Ciggie for Cowardice Lv.???', is activating!]

Greyish, murky smoke exploded as the attacks rained down.

The smoke dissipated, and the only thing remaining on the spot was a single cigarette. The 'Seekers of the End' had no choice but to withdraw their weapons in bitterness.

Metatron looked at the discarded cigarette on the floor. Thick smoke swirled in the air from its tip.

His enemy was gone, and only the 'Good' remained. Was this a sense of loneliness, or a type of freedom he felt? Metatron couldn't tell.

Someone trampled on the dying bud and killed it off.

[The Oldest Evil is closely observing the new 'Evil'.]

He raised his head to find Asmodeus grinning primly towards him. [What a miss that was. I was thinking of taking over Agares's 'Wall'.]

Metatron looked at the Demon King and replied. [You'll soon possess it.]

Whatever the case might have been, the intended purpose had been accomplished now.

[Current Chaos Points: 100]

The Chaos Points were now maxed out, and the Apocalypse Dragon had entered the revival sequence. And soon, the apocalypse would begin.

[Conference venue is disintegrating.]

The grey sphere wrapped around the conference venue crumbled away bit by bit, and the corpses of the Archangels fell to the ground below.

Asmodeus asked a question, seemingly enjoying that spectacle in the meantime. [By the way, will this really be alright?]

Metatron remained silent. Time to argue whether it'd be alright or not had long passed by already. He watched the angels falling, and provided the most textbook-like reply he could think of.

[Everything is according to the will of 'Good'. In order to reach the most ideal ■■…]

'■■'.

The dearest wish of all Constellations, as well as where the story of a star would come to an end.

Asmodeus spoke. [■■… It seems that all Constellations that seek it end up becoming quite similar to each other. You really do resemble someone I know. Your dispositions are completely opposite of one another, though.]

Just before Metatron could ask who that was, he heard the Dragon's Howling tearing through the sky.

Guwaaaaahh-!!

Dragons, easily numbering well past several thousand, were freely roaming around the skies to wage a bloody war. Explosions rang out seemingly endlessly. Dragons and their torn wings were crashing back to the earth.

This was not the spectacle Metatron expected to see.

…The Apocalypse Dragon hasn't revived yet?

[What are you so surprised about? We aren't the only ones pursuing ■■, after all.]

Asmodeus stared back at a certain man looking up at them from the ground and grinned brightly.

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', is roaring out!]

The Black Flame Dragon was indeed strong.

It rose up like a meteor while ripping apart dozens of Dragons blanketing the sky, and announced its presence through the display of its mighty Status.

As expected from one of the strongest Constellations in the 'Ways of Survival'.

Han Sooyoung became excited as her sponsor went on a rampage and shouted out while waving her bandages around. "I'm proud of you for the first time ever, Black Flame Dragon!! Kill them all!!"

"Be strong, Chimera Dragon!"

Shin Yoosung tightly clasped her own hands and looked up at the sky with an ardent look on her face.

[Abyssal Black Flame Dragon's sense of presence is strengthening!]

[Chimera Dragon's sense of presence is strengthening!]

Every time Black Flame Dragon and Chimera Dragon defeated their opponents, their statuses also rose up higher. Seeing their spirited battle, even my heart felt like it was pounding away powerfully, too.

After studying the Dragons for a little while, I signalled Yoo Joonghyuk with my eyes.

"Got it."

He replied to my gaze and along with our other companions, made their move. His job now was to get in touch with the Nebulas near us before the Apocalypse Dragon made its move.

And I too had something to do in the meantime as well. I observed each of the Dragons flying in the air and thought to myself.

This wouldn't be the first time the Apocalypse Dragon had revived. It was quite likely that the previous 'Apocalypse Dragon' was also among the ranks of the Dragons overhead.

[Several Dragon Kings have sensed your presence.]

"Damn it."

Kuwaaaaaaah!!

I reflexively activated [Electrification] and defended against the Dragon Breath. A few Dragon Kings glared in my direction, but then, flew away again while tilting their heads. It was as if they had seen something rather strange.

…What was up with them? Not to mention, I wasn't even a Dragon.

But then, I heard a certain message.

[You are eligible to enter the 'Dragon's Festival'.]

…What?!

[Will you enter the 'Dragon's Festival'?]

My head temporarily blanked out after that message suddenly floated up to my view.

No, hang on a minute. I might be a Constellation, but I was definitely not a Dragon, so how come such a message…

"Why aren't you participating in the proceedings?"

…Just when did this guy get this close to my side?

I raised my guard up and turned towards the voice's origin.

A remarkably beautiful humanoid, whose gender was indecipherable, stood there. Its hair shone in a bright reddish colour; I couldn't sense any powerful Status from it, but still, its outer appearance did possess a certain, unexplainable mystical aura.

…A Reincarnator?

Could be.

This island was home to a tiny number of truly powerful beings who were hiding their powers, like Yoo Hoseong, the 'One Invincible Fist'.

"I asked you why you haven't participated yet."

"I'm not sure what you mean, but I lack the qualification to do so."

"Why not? Do you not possess the heart of a Dragon?"

Only then did I finally realize it.

[Story fragment, 'A Young Gold Dragon's Broken Heart', is stirring!]

Now that I thought about it, my heart actually used to belong to a Gold Dragon, a fragment of a Story I absorbed back in the 'Story Horizon' a long time ago.

[Story fragment, 'A Young Gold Dragon's Broken Heart', wants to participate in the Dragon's Festival.]

I was wondering why my heart was pounding away so madly since earlier… Was that the reason why?

The Reincarnator asked me again. "If you're truly a Dragon, you should really be enraged by this situation."

"…What kind of a situation is this, then?"

"A situation where the great and noble Dragons are being spent as materials for some scenario."

Right then, my wildly-beating heart suddenly cooled down rapidly.

The Reincarnator continued on. "'Good and Evil', communicating, the cycle of life… Inside the great themes of the <Star Stream>, Dragons have continuously been exploited. If you're truly a Dragon, then you must enter the Festival. Become the Final Dragon that will bring the Revelation to reality and contribute towards the annihilation of the world. And witness the end of the scenarios that have stolen your identity, your existence."

I carefully studied the Reincarnator.

Good and Evil, communications, Samsara… If one was a Reincarnator that lived for a very, very long time, it was possible to experience all those themes of the <Star Stream>.

If one was indeed a Reincarnator that lived for a really long time, that was.

I pondered for a little while before replying. "Not every story of the scenarios is interconnected by a series of misfortunes. Some things were discovered only because scenarios exist. You might not have been aware of it by staying in the Isle of Reincarnators, but without a doubt, scenarios are changing."

I hated myself for saying those words, but still, I was being genuine with at least half of them.

I could see Yoo Joonghyuk and my allies rendezvousing with other Constellations.

The mysterious Reincarnator watched the same scenes as me before replying. "Changing? How did the scenarios change, then? Can Dragons or monsters become the protagonists of the Stories now?"

"There are Stories like that already."

"However, they must be quite unpopular."

"Some are rather popular, actually. Some are even from the past, too. I'm sure you've heard of them before? Such as, in 「The Song of the Nibelungs」, or 「The Legend of Saint George」…"

"Dragons were never the protagonists in those stories."

Several Dragons in the air lost their way and crashed into one another before falling back to the earth.

The Reincarnator continued on. "Dragons were always hunted beings. Referred to as the origin of all evil, and portrayed as nothing more than pathetic villains who kidnap human princesses or hoard mountains of gold. When you think about it, it's a rather funny story, isn't it? Why would a Dragon be interested in gold or females of other species?"

"Those aren't the only stories out there. There are a lot of scenarios where Dragons come out to the human world to have fun, as well. For instance…"

"Dragons that 'polymorph into beautiful humans'. Do you really think they are pure Dragons, then?"

I found myself unable to reply.

The Reincarnator spoke. "Tens of thousands of years ago, Dragons were being exploited in the exact same manner. In the end, every single scenario was meant for other species, for other Constellations."

As it continued to talk, I sensed an ominous Status leak out more and more from its voice.

"Not one scenario has treated a Dragon as a Dragon. Dragons were always exploited, were chained to restrictions, and were seen as the scenario's target of subjugation. Probably, nothing has changed greatly even now.

It was getting harder and harder to breathe. The surrounding air was shifting unstably.

The Status capable of tying a Narrative-grade Constellation like me to the spot – the Abyssal Black Flame Dragon, roaring towards the sky until then, hurriedly began flying in my direction.

I stared at the Black Flame Dragon and spoke up. "I'll change it."

"You will? But, how?"

"I'll make sure that Dragons don't suffer that miserable fate ever again."

[Constellation, 'Secretive Plotter', is looking at you.]

The gazes of the stars were gathering on us.

[A massive number of Constellations are looking at you.]

[Many Constellations are freaking out after seeing who is next to you!]

The 'Reincarnator' looked at me with emotionless eyes. "Interesting."

Its external appearance began changing next. It was 'polymorph', the magic often employed by Dragons out to have 'fun'.

"Tens of thousands of years ago, there was a Dokkaebi that spoke to me of the exact same offer. It said that it'd create a world where Dragons could become the master of the scenario."

It felt as if everything in front of my eyes grew darker. All five of my senses didn't want to listen to me. My dimmed vision began shaking around uncontrollably, as Stories leaked down from my nostrils.

Shin Yoosung cheering on collapsed like a puppet with its strings cut; blood was pouring out from Han Sooyoung's mouth and nose as she was staring at us in shock.

Even as the tinnitus loud enough to rupture my eardrums roared on, her message somehow managed to enter my head.

– Kim, Dokja, what, the hell, is this…

My hands and feet were shaking. I fell down on my butt, and tried hard to raise my head up.

How could this even be called 'Status'??

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is urging you to run away!]

[Constellation, 'Queen of the Darkest Spring', is looking at you with an urgent expression!]

[Constellation, 'Father of the Rich Night', is…!]

The boundless Dragon Voice rushed into my ears next.

[The Dokkaebi that deceived me back then has become the 「Dokkaebi King」 now.]

The sun vanished and the whole world was now covered in something's shadow.

The Dragon of the end times, the Final Dragon of the Book of Revelation, unfurled its wings of Calamity at last.

Chapter 405: Ep. 77 - Final Dragon, II

['The Fourth Wall' is violently reacting!]

The prior generation's Apocalypse Dragon flew up and generated a storm of Stories. My vision continued to waver precariously as I wobbled about like a scarecrow without a pole to hold me up.

In the blink of an eye, the creature reached high up in the air and screeched out a mighty howl, seemingly killing every other noise existing in the world at the same time. The heads of the Incarnation Bodies exploded, and the Constellations in the battlefield began vomiting out Stories while covering their ears.

Tsu-chuchuchuchu…

The parts of the sky where the Apocalypse Dragon flew by were torn apart to reveal a jet-black hole.

Other Dragons flying around in sheer confusion ran away in terror, while some of them who didn't know their place rushed in only to become bloody sacks of meat after getting brushed by the Apocalypse Dragon's wings.

In the centre of that chaotic sky, the 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' was waiting for the Apocalypse Dragon to arrive.

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', is staring at its enemy.]

It roared out and charged at the Apocalypse Dragon. The two mighty creatures got into a tangle and began a deadly battle in the sky.

However, rather than calling it a battle, it was closer to being fisticuffs between an adult and a fifteen-year-old kid, instead.

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', is enraged!]

It was several sizes larger than every other Dragon, yet when compared to its current opponent, it simply looked like a little hatchling.

"You better not lose!! If you do, I'm gonna kill you!"

Stories streamed out from Han Sooyoung's figure as she cheered for her sponsor. Her Giant Stories were telling their stories for the sake of her sponsor right now.

"The most destructive apocalypse! The deepest abyss! I'll say all those words as many times as you want, so don't lose!! Please!!"

As if to answer her calls, the 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' spewed out a powerful Breath.

Other Dragons struck by the attack fell like burning kites. It was almost as if the entire sky was covered in the black flames.

[You're indeed a powerful Dragon. Before I went to sleep, there was no one like you.]

[Don't make me laugh, you geezer. I didn't descend to this place just to hear your kkondae-like rubbish.]

[It seems that I need to fix your poor manners somewhat.]

The Apocalypse Dragon dodged the Breath with a flapping of its wings and went on the counter-offensive. It was so fast that there was no time to even think about evading it.

Shu-wuoooo…

The Black Flame Dragon was quick-witted enough to dodge that, however. It literally transformed into a 15-year-old boy in an instant and through the Dragon Voice magic, activated [Meteor Strike].

전지적 독자 시점

*

The Apocalypse Dragon was struck by the falling pieces of rocks and became enraged.

[…Polymorph? You were the same as the rest of them.]

[Screw you! You also polymorphed earlier too, geezer!]

[That is not what a pure Dragon should do.]

The Black Flame Dragon reverted back to his original form and roared out. [I will live the way I want to! Whether it's as a human or an Orc, it's my choice!]

[You seem to be a lacking candidate to represent all Dragons.]

Sparks danced wildly as the battle of biting and slashing continued on.

The Apocalypse Dragon silently absorbed the Black Flame Dragon's attacks and eventually, its jaw slowly split open wide. The latter began charging up its Breath as well.

A clash of a Breath against another Breath; thick, heavy breaths made out of black flames collided with the Apocalypse Dragon's crimson flames.

In the ensuing moment, the colours of the sky changed instantly, followed by the kind of heat that made me think there was a burning sun right in front of my eyes.

Although spectacular, I couldn't stand there and admire the sight. Reincarnators that couldn't withstand the intense heat turned into piles of ashes as the scenes of flames dancing entrancingly engraved themselves deeply into their minds.

[Giant Story, 'Final Dragon of the Book of Revelation', has selected its 'Final Dragon'.]

The Abyssal Black Flame Dragon was the most eligible candidate to become the Final Dragon currently. But, if you flip that around, it also meant that it was still not the 'Final Dragon'.

[The victor has been decided in the 'Dragon's Festival'.]

From below the churning crimson clouds, a creature powerlessly fell down to the ground.

"Black Flame Dragon!"

Its wing skin was on fire, and its body had suffered several tears. As it fell, its eyes were locked on me, conveying its words as if it was thoroughly unhappy about this outcome.

「Ah, ah… So, I guess it was too much of an ask, fighting with only one hand… I'll leave the rest up to you, boy.」

This development was exactly the same as the storyline from the original that I knew.

The previous generation's Apocalypse Dragon possessed the power that rivalled a masterful Myth-grade Constellation. And that Dragon would evolve into a Calamity that surpassed far beyond the previous Status this time around.

Han Sooyoung spat out another mouthful of blood and angrily shouted at me. "Damn it… Kim Dokja!! This wasn't a part of your plan!"

"It's going according to the original story."

"What does that even mean?! Are things going well or not??"

I heard Yoo Joonghyuk's message coming in from behind.

– I've summoned up everyone I could manage, Kim Dokja.

Constellations were busy gathering right behind him. They were all staring at the sky with stupefied faces.

Ku-gugugugu!

The humongous frame of the Dragon that seemed to have sucked in all the light in this world began gathering the Probability of the <Star Stream>.

[Just what is that…?]

The Apocalypse Dragon's revival was already set in stone. A scenario needed an incident, and this creature was that incident itself. As long as the <Star Stream> willed for an incident to happen, its revival was a guaranteed thing.

Back in the original story, several varied attempts were made to stop its revival, but not one of them succeeded.

There was a reason why I stuck around searching for the Apocalypse Dragon even though I knew that; why I chatted to it regarding the Stories featuring Dragons, and even why the Abyssal Black Flame Dragon sacrificed its Status to continue with the battle it was certain to lose; all of those were to… to buy us more time.

[Giant Story, 'Final Dragon of the Book of Revelation', has begun its storytelling!]

The smartphone inside my inner pocket began buzzing noisily and emitting light at that moment.

「The Calamity from the Book of Revelation opened its eyes within the hottest place in Hell.」

It seemed that the Apocalypse Dragon's revival was supposed to happen even within the final revised version sent by tls123.

「Dragons that lost their lives within the extremely difficult Story roared on, and…」

「The crimson season of the apocalypse in full swing has come knocking.」

The falling Dragons cried out in sorrow. The countless score of them, sacrificed to the Story and became frozen in names only after even their souls were ripped away from them, were paying their reverence towards their king.

On the other side of the sky, I saw Metatron and Asmodeus; it seemed that the conference venue's battle had ended just then.

Metatron spoke while looking up at the humongous body of the Apocalypse Dragon.

[You have finally come, oh, Evil Dragon of Harmagedon…]

The Evil Dragon of the Giant Story, [Harmagedon]; although it was the symbol of Evil once upon a time, even the Oldest Evil couldn't bear the weight of this primal evil.

And that very Evil Dragon was looking down at the Constellations of 'Good and Evil' in an aloof manner.

[Oh, aged Stories. It's now time to uphold the promise of Armageddon.]

The air exploded violently and the Apocalypse Dragon's giant frame pierced straight through the atmosphere. An unbelievable amount of sparks danced outside the sky where the creature had disappeared.

[The Main Scenario is being updated!]

[Calamity's Probability has exceeded the scenario's limit.]

[Scenario's difficulty is automatically being adjusted.]

[Scenario befitting the Calamity's difficulty is being reassigned.]

I knew that would happen. If I remembered correctly, the 'Apocalypse Dragon' was the 85th main scenario's Calamity back in the original storyline. And the 'Great War of Saints and Demons' was the 80th.

[Scenario jump has occurred!]

[Calamity's difficulty is abnormally high.]

[Due to the excessive scenario jump, abnormal conditions have developed in your Incarnation Body.]

…

…

…

[89th Main Scenario is starting.]

<Main Scenario #89 – Final Dragon of the Book of Revelation>

Type: Main

Difficulty: Indeterminable

Clear Condition: Defend against the 'Calamity of the Book of Revelation'.

Time Limit: Applicable scenario does not have a time limit.

Reward: Giant Story related to 'Final Dragon of the Book of Revelation', ???

Failure: Destruction of the <Star Stream> will accelerate.

* This scenario will be divided into different phases. Refer to the System Messages for more info and prepare for the Calamity.

I calmly read the scenario messages.

…89th scenario, was it.

The scenario's number was higher than compared to the original storyline. The thing was, the later it got in the scenarios, the higher the amount of Probability being allowed.

Meaning, the Apocalypse Dragon about to descend would be stronger than when it appeared in the original story.

[Calamity warning is ringing throughout the entirety of <Star Stream>!]

[Soon, the revived Apocalypse Dragon will start its actions.]

[Every region within the <Star Stream> will now be considered the location of the 89th scenario.]

"Dokja-ssi, we've brought them all."

I looked back to find Jung Heewon and <Kim Dokja's Company>, plus the Constellations that followed us.

Only a few hours ago, they were busy fighting each other; these were now our new allies that Yoo Joonghyuk managed to rally together while the Black Flame Dragon and I managed to buy us some time.

[My apologies. We didn't gather as many as we thought.]

Dionysus scratched the back of his head in embarrassment. Constellations from <Olympus> stood behind him.

The 'Goddess of Love and Beauty', Aphrodite.

The 'Atrocious War God', Ares.

The 'Spokeswoman of Justice and Wisdom', Athena.

The 'Master of Skywalk', Hermes.

The 'Volcanic Blacksmith', Hephaistos.

The 'Pure Hunter of the Moonlight', Artemis…

They were folks responsible for creating 'Gigantomachia' with us.

[I did call Father and the fish uncle, but…]

The 'Lightning Throne' Zeus or the 'Spear that Draws the Boundaries of the Sea' Poseidon didn't seem to have joined us. When looking back to the splendour the Myth-grade Constellations exhibited back in 'Gigantomachia', it sure was quite a regretful thing.

[This isn't going to be enough, right?]

"If I'm being honest, then… No, it isn't."

<Olympus> was indeed powerful, but it was still impossible to stop the Apocalypse Dragon with only these people. If the 'First Tail-Flick' was exactly as described in the original story, then our current combat force would barely get to survive the first impact wave of that tail.

And then, I heard someone else's true voice.

[My old companions say that they shall aid you, 'Demon King of Salvation'.]

Blinding rays of light formed from the northern sky.

[Constellations of the Nebula, <Vedas>, have incarnated into the scenario!]

Several Constellations broke past the thick clouds accompanied by the rapturous flames and made their entrance. The moment I saw their exterior appearances, pages of the 'Ways of Survival' flipped open all on their own in my head.

I expected to run into them sooner or later, but I certainly didn't think we'd meet like this under the current circumstances.

The 'God-King of Yakshas', Kubera.

The 'Purifying Flames', Agni.

And on top of that, even the 'Unending Storm', Vayu.

They were all Narrative-grade Constellations affiliated with 'lokapala' of <Vedas>, alongside the 'Supreme God of Light', Surya.

[Where is the bastard named Apocalypse Dragon?]

[We now have a chance to acquire a pretty decent Story after a long while.]

[Indra's wounds were too severe and he couldn't come.]

This was only the beginning.

[Constellations of the Nebula, <Papyrus>, have incarnated into the scenario!]

From the eastern skies…

[Constellations of the Nebula, <Guardian Tree>, have incarnated into the scenario!]

And then, from the western skies…

[Constellations of the Nebula, <Asgard>, have incarnated into the scenario!]

[Constellations of the Nebula, <Twelve Zodiac>, have incarnated into the scenario!]

…

One-time enemy Constellations were gathering together in front of the Star Stream's Calamity.

Yoo Joonghyuk, Han Sooyoung, and the companions of <Kim Dokja's Company> stood close to me as the blindingly bright stars continued to incarnate next to us. They all carried tense expressions.

"There's no need to be so timid, everyone. We're one of them, after all."

For sure, the gazes of the Constellations looking at us were different compared to the past. If the eyes staring at us back when <Kim Dokja's Company> had been created were close to contempt and disdain, they were much closer to jealousy and envy now.

<Kim Dokja's Company> had reached this far with our own strengths. And again, we'd reach the 'Final Scenario' with our own powers.

After the Constellations of the regional conflicts that hadn't yet entered the great battlefield joined us, the overall number easily surpassed five hundred.

Unfortunately, there was a problem with the mentality of the newly-joining folks.

[A Giant Story just because of a single Dragon? What a profitable business opportunity this is.]

[All of you, scram. Our Nebula shall hunt the Apocalypse Dragon down.]

[Nope, that Apocalypse Dragon shall be hunted down by none other than us, <Guardian Tree>.]

[Surya, will you give us a ride to that Apocalypse Dragon?]

Surya heard them yapping away and formed a dumbfounded expression. [Have you all lost your minds? Didn't you witness what happened just now?]

[Ah, ah. We all saw the scenario's weird 'direction'.] It was the 'Morning Star Goddess', Vakarine, who said that as she entered the conflict zone. [It's simply not possible for one measly little monster to possess a Status as ridiculous as that, Surya. Maybe, you were in need of extra coins after exiting <Vedas>?]

[We were not acti…]

[It seems that the train's conductor is scared today, so us alone should start the conquest, then.]

Not every Constellation in the <Star Stream> knew what the Apocalypse Dragon was. The last time it revived was already tens of thousands of years ago, that was why.

A certain myth would come across as just another story from the distant past even to Constellations. The length of time was more than sufficient enough for those who survived the Calamity, and those born after it, to forget all about it.

Metatron spoke as if to warn them. [You must all compose yourselves first. Acting individually is inadvisable, everyone. That Apocalypse Dragon is…]

[You, shut up and stay out of this. The whole 'Great War of Saints and Demons' Story went down the drain because of your actions.]

As if it was waiting for this moment, the System Message rang out once more.

['Final Dragon of the Book of Revelation' has started its actions!]

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* Promotional illustration (semi-canonical)

Chapter 406: Ep. 77 - Final Dragon, III

<First Phase Alert>

– The 'First Tail-Flick' will commence three minutes from now.

– The 'First Tail-Flick' is the Apocalypse Dragon's 'Revival Calamity'.

– The 'First Tail-Flick' will annihilate a quarter of <Star Stream>.

A quarter of <Star Stream> would be destroyed.

Quite literally, that was a bombshell of information.

However, the Constellations that read the scenario message didn't seem to realize the severity of the situation.

[A quarter of us will die? So, the Bureau did have a sense of humour, then.]

[Dokkaebis have been exaggerating more and more lately.]

Most of the Constellations present here were more adept at watching the scenarios happen, rather than clearing it. They were beings that exploited the stories of others so that they could comfort themselves.

They were Dokkaebi's customers, and because of that, they believed the Bureau would never create a scenario that would annihilate everyone.

Unfortunately, these people had no idea.

No idea, that certain stories in this world even turned the audience members into the subjects of the scenario, too.

And these Constellations simultaneously dashed towards the Apocalypse Dragon that was charging up its power just beyond the atmosphere.

[Giant Story will be ours!]

Greed was so clear to see in their eyes.

[Final Dragon of the Book of Revelation] was the scenario that replaced the 'Great War of Saints and Demons'. If they manage to bring down the 'Apocalypse Dragon' here, then they would acquire potentially the best 'Giant Story' there was.

Perhaps feeling pressured by their movements, Constellations of the Nebulas that were already present began dashing towards the atmosphere as well.

[Constellation, 'Morning Star Goddess', is unleashing her Status!]

[Constellation, 'God-King of Yakshas', is unleashing his Status!]

The first ones to take the lead were 'Morning Star Goddess', Vakarine, and 'God-King of Yakshas', Kubera.

[Nebula, <Guardian Tree>, is allocating Probability to its affiliated Constellations!]

[Nebula, <Vedas>, is allocating Probability to its affiliated Constellations!]

My companions watched the distancing backs of the Constellations and became urgent themselves.

"Shouldn't we go after them, too?"

"We must never join them," I spoke in a resolute tone of voice.

Excluding those jumping in like moths to the flames, the majority of Constellations with many years behind them were standing still, just like us. They already knew the result of the upcoming fight.

I kept a straight face and asked Metatron, who was wordlessly observing the situation. "Metatron, are you going to create the 'Sealing tool for the Apocalypse Dragon'?"

The Archangel quietly stared at me for a little while, before forming a warm, bright smile. [Yes, of course. That's what happened back in the 1863rd turn as well. A great 'Evil' has appeared in this world, so we should try to save everyone, don't you agree?]

As if he had already forgotten all about the struggles to kill each other a few hours ago, Metatron's eyes were filled with an almost-holy light. I'd been sensing that something was a bit off about him from some time ago, but I was sure of him being utterly insane now.

"But, if that plan is successful, you'll definitely die. And with that, 'Good' in this world will disappear."

[No. It'll be I that disappears, not 'Good'.]

It felt like I was talking to a wall. I shook my head and turned around.

I saw the 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' that had shrunk to the same size as Biyoo, and Han Sooyoung quietly petting it. The fatigued Black Flame Dragon spat out a lick of small flame towards the sky.

Han Sooyoung spoke. "Kim Dokja."

"What now?"

"You. You're still withholding something, aren't you?"

I flinched just a little, before asking back. "What are you talking about?"

"No, well, it's just too suspicious. Now, normally, you'd start by giving us the information first… But, why haven't you told us anything concrete with this scenario?" She narrowed her eyes and glared at me, before continuing on. "You do have a way to win, right?"

"I do."

"Oh, so you can give us your assurances, then? You aren't going to resort to another weird method, right?"

"And what might that weird method be?"

Han Sooyoung drew a straight line beneath her chin with her finger.

I grinned and replied to her. "Don't worry. I'm not going to do that."

Unfortunately, she did not look convinced. At all.

It was Shin Yoosung who followed up after that. "Ahjussi, then why did you activate that Stigma?"

[Stigma, 'Sacrificial Will Lv.8', is currently in activation!]

The unique Stigma that I created was busying pumping more power to my companions while floating up a message in the air.

Jung Heewon spoke. "…Can't you just switch that off now? It's been getting on my nerves for a while now."

"And why is the Stigma's level so damn high, too…?" Lee Jihye also grumbled loudly.

I spoke as if to make an excuse. "I only left it switched on in order to increase your powers, everyone. Really, I'm not thinking of doing anything weird."

This time, Lee Gilyoung jumped in. "But that Stigma, it only comes on when you're trying to sacrifice yourself for your companions, right?"

"Ahjussi, you're lying to us again, aren't you?"

"Dokja-ssi, could you be, again…?"

Enormous amounts of Statuses rose up from my companions and that caused the Constellations nearby to flinch and tremble slightly. Yoo Joonghyuk watching us from a bit of distance away was about to unsheathe his sword, too.

I hurriedly pointed at the Apocalypse Dragon.

"N-no, hang on. Now isn't the time to mind something like that. Well, a really fun spectacle is about to start unfolding over there, so we should just watch that."

The lengthy comet-like tails of the Constellations were about to reach the striking distance of the Apocalypse Dragon.

"All those friends up there, they are going to die soon."

"Get ready. It's about to begin," said Yoo Joonghyuk, as he unsheathed the [Black Heavenly Demon Sword]. "The creature's Tail-Flick is divided into three different stages. Fitting for a powerful calamity, three separate shockwaves will reach us."

"Three of them?"

Lee Jihye's surprised question was answered by me, instead. "It's easier to offset the shockwaves the closer we are to their origin. And the first two can be defended against if we do our absolute best, so you don't have to worry too much."

The really important part, though, was the 'third shockwave'.

If we failed to defend against that, then every single one of us would be dead, and a quarter of <Star Stream> would be blown away.

We could see the clash between the Constellations and the Apocalypse Dragon in the far distance. The waves of light fired by Vakarine landed directly on the Dragon's body, while Kubera's great sabre sliced into the creature's back. It was around then that the Dragon's tail made its move.

['First Tail-Flick' is commencing!]

['First shockwave' is being generated!]

In that moment, I couldn't tell what happened.

Pure-azure light exploded in the distance. I realized much later that the light was actually from the spark that had been condensed to an absurdly high degree. It was the electrical shock of destruction that became the storm of aftermaths itself after far too much of <Star Stream>'s Probability had been gathered and spent in that one attack.

That was none other than the 'first shockwave' created by the Apocalypse Dragon's tail.

[A measly little thing dares… Dares to…!]

Kubera, resisting until the end, roared out, while the shocked Vakarine screamed loudly. Dozens of Constellations that challenged the Apocalypse Dragon all unleashed their Statuses at the same time. And then…

…Something broke.

[Constellation, 'Morning Star Goddess', has been extinguished.]

[Constellation, 'God-king of Yakshas', has been extinguished.]

[Constellation, 'Deep Night's Wolf', has been extinguished.]

[Constellation…]

Indirect messages fell like raindrops.

Stars in the whole surrounding area were exploding at the same time and turned into ashes.

Lee Jihye muttered in a dazed voice. "…You say we can withstand that?"

I had nothing to reply with. Because it was also my first time witnessing the Tail-Flick today.

The electrical shockwave that grew even larger after burning away the Constellations finally finished getting ready to spread to the rest of <Star Stream>.

And we stood in its starting point.

[This is insane! Run away!]

Several terrified Constellations turned around to flee. Unfortunately for them, that attack was not something they could outrun.

I shouted out in my true voice. [Everyone, calm down! There is a way to block that.]

[Stop with your insane babbling! Didn't you see that??]

[Either we use Status of the same attribute to absorb the shockwave created by the Tail-Flick, or we cancel it out with the Status of an opposing attribute. That is, as long as we have enough Probability to shore our efforts.]

The electrical shockwave's rate of spreading gradually gained pace. Now rushing in at a fair knock, the wave bared its fangs at us, as if to devour us all.

[All of you, step aside.]

A Constellation stepped forward. Blinding arcs of lightning coiled around his figure, as he raised a giant hammer, his Star Relic, high up into the sky.

[I am the son of Odin, 'Thursday's Thunder'.]

Indeed, it was 'Thursday's Thunder', Thor, whom I'd met back in the Gourmet Association.

[I shall bury the Apocalypse Dragon's thunder right here!]

A streak of lightning from above crashed into the Star Relic [Mjolnir]. He sprinted forward with a vigour befitting a Viking, and without a shred of fear, threw himself into the Apocalypse Dragon's electrical shockwave.

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!!

Surprisingly, he managed to survive against the shockwave.

The majority of the wave rushing in was being concentrated towards his hammer, [Mjolnir]. Like an electrical rod being showered by the lightning, his entire body writhed in pain. Every Constellation of <Asgard> was lending him Probability.

[Ohhhhh-!!]

Not too long afterwards, every blood vessel on Thor's flesh bulged, and his bloodshot eyes began to pop out from their sockets. His statue-like muscles were scorched black as well. The first shockwave was not the Tail-Flick itself, but merely a by-product of that action, yet such a measly thing was utterly, horrifically killing a Narrative-grade Constellation.

[Uwaaaaaaah-!!]

Just as Thor could no longer endure and was about to let go of his hammer, someone reached his side and grasped it together with him.

[…I was never interested in the myths of northern Europe before, but who knew, you aren't so bad.]

He was someone completely unexpected, actually.

Thor freaked out and roared. [Let go! This hammer is not a relic that someone like you can touch! Besides, you can't even handle lightning!]

[Actually, I can. Just a little. My old man is a god of lightning.]

He was the successor to the Lightning Throne.

It seemed that, after Zeus had left, Dionysus had become <Olympus>'s successor. The only one among them who could inherit the Status of Lightning was Zeus's descendant, after all.

[Story, 'Carnival of Lightning', has begun its storytelling!]

A Story that I could've inherited once upon a time was running amok within Dionysus's entire figure. He gulped down a mouthful of wine from the flask on his hips and let out a cry in exhilaration.

[Kuwaaah~! Now that's good!]

Even though he was being burnt alive by the lightning, he still formed a hearty smile. <Asgard> and <Olympus> were cooperating, and the two managed to endure thanks to the powers of Stories their allies sent their way. Sadly, though, it couldn't last long; the Status of the Apocalypse Dragon crashing down grew even bigger than what the two Nebulas had combined. Seeing this, Surya moaned in shock.

[If only Indra was here… I never thought that I'd miss that village idiot.]

Indeed, even back in the original storyline, the first shock wave was neutralised by the efforts of the three gods of lightning.

But then, <Kim Dokja's Company> ended up defeating Indra, and that meant that one of the three gods was now missing.

[Isn't there anyone who can deal with lightning?]

I wasn't planning to step forward now, but there was no other choice.

"I shall help."

[You have activated 'Demon King Transformation'!]

I was not a Constellation of lightning. But, I could use something fairly similar to that.

['5th Bookmark' has been initiated!]

[Exclusive skill, 'Electrification Lv.23(+13)', has been initiated!]

[Your current physical constitution is different from that of the applicable character.]

[Your 'Status' has overcome the physical constitution penalty.]

The pure, untainted white light of inner energy circulated around my body. While scattering blinding rays of electrical lights, I joined Thor and Dionysus.

[Giant Story, 'Demon Realm's Spring', has begun its storytelling.]

[Giant Story, 'Torch that Swallowed the Myth', has begun its storytelling.]

The two Giant Stories supported me as the storm of electricity pounced on my body.

Dionysus said that this was exhilarating; yup, he was definitely out of his mind.

[It's quite tolerable after a drink or two. Would you like some?]

Dionysus said those words, his entire lower half scorched black now. Thor, now resembling jet-black charcoal, cackled from the side.

['Demon King of Salvation', looks like we'll die together in this place.]

[Dying together with you might go on to create a pretty good story, indeed. Let us become a story passed down through generations, together!]

[Hmph, will that story be <Asgard>'s, or belong to <Olympus>?]

[Let's stop with the inane banter and concentrate.]

Mind-numbing pain rushed in from the palm of my hands.

Thor, Dionysus, and I stood against the waves of electricity like a levee. And the first shockwave's encroaching speed gradually lessened.

Somehow, we needed to withstand this. Just a little bit more. A bit more.

Unfortunately, the speed at which we were being forced back was still much faster than the rate that the shockwave's speed decreased.

Dionysus cried out.

[Damn it, it's going to overflow…!]

If the electrical energy was discharged like this, then all of our companions behind us would be dead.

We knew this, yet we had no way of stopping the shockwave's march. Just before I could shout out to them, telling them to evacuate…

…Someone's hands supported our precarious embankment from behind.

There was another god of lightning left?

Well, there were quite a few beings capable of dealing with lightning in the stories scattered around the world, so… However, I couldn't immediately think up of anyone. On top of that, the rate of absorbing the electrical shock far surpassed not just my own, but both Thor's and Dionysus's, as well. Just where did a Constellation like him…?

[It seems that you were negligent with your training, judging from your inability to withstand this level of electrical shock.]

The moment I heard those words, a hollow chuckle left my lips.

Thor was taken back greatly and he quickly asked a question. [Who might you be? I've never seen a Constellation like you before.]

Those words caused the great, noble Status to waver, as its owner began emitting auras of rage.

People would often say that a handsome man's face was on the smaller side; in that case, there would be no one in the world more good-looking than this man right here.

[I'm not a Constellation.]

I stupidly had forgotten all about him.

I had forgotten that the one who could handle electrical energy the best in <Star Stream> was not a Constellation, but this man. As his azure-coloured hair scattered in the air, his own pure, untainted white electrical energy exploded forth.

[I am Kyrgios Rodgraim, the teacher of this lazy pupil.]

Chapter 407: Ep. 77 - Final Dragon, IV

The first shockwave gradually petered out after Kyrgios joined us. The difference between three lightning-related Constellations working together and four was rather noticeable.

Not only that, but a portion of Constellations also lent us their Probability after Kyrgios showed up, and for the first time ever, our own Probability surpassed the Apocalypse Dragon's shockwave.

[Uwooooooh-!]

Scorched black by the electrical wave, Thor and Dionysus began roaring out as if they had gone half-mad. The latter had drunk such a large quantity of wine that his face was completely red, even though the rest of his body remained jet-black.

[Booze is going down so smoothly, it's so amaaaazing!]

[Now I'm really curious about the taste of <Olympus> label booze. Give me some!]

By the time the storm of aftermath for the first shockwave drew to a close, the two Constellations became completely drunk out of their minds. Kyrgios stared at them with criticising eyes before asking me. [My disciple. Are these fools your companions?]

"No, total strangers."

[First Phase has concluded.]

[Congratulations. You have safely negotiated the first shockwave of the 'First Tail-Flick'!]

…We did it. We managed to withstand that damn tail flick's first hurdle.

I looked behind me. "Everyon…"

I couldn't continue on. Because a desolate, ruined landscape greeted me, with a sea of corpses burnt by the electrical waves filling it up. Some of them were swept up by the electrical energy we couldn't hold back, while some of them died after their Incarnation Bodies exploded, unable to deal with the storm of aftermath taking place nearby.

The five hundred-plus Constellations were reduced to less than half that number through just one encounter. What an utterly fraudulent death toll that was.

…Could I even claim that we managed to endure when it was like this?

It was just the first phase, so what would we do about the second and the third one?

I raised my head and saw the messages from the stars brightening the night sky as if they were losing their minds.

[The absolute majority of Constellations are stunned by the difficulty of this scenario!]

[Many Constellations are lodging complaints at the Bureau in regards to the applicable scenario's Probability!]

[A portion of Constellations are arguing that this scenario cannot exist.]

[The majority of Constellations are requesting for the scenario's cancellation.]

Scenario's cancellation, was it.

What a funny thing this was, there still being idiots daydreaming about stuff like that.

[Applicable scenario cannot be cancelled.]

[All Constellations within the applicable scenario's area are urged to prepare for the next phase.]

No, the apocalypse would carry on.

While the messages from the Constellations freaking out continued on, the baptism of sponsorship messages also rained down from the other side of the sky as well.

[Constellation, 'Lightning Throne', is looking closely at you.]

[Constellation, 'Spear That Draws the Boundaries of the Sea', is glaring at you.]

[Constellation, 'Great Mother God Who Created Man out of Earth', is getting interested in the Story you might earn.]

[Final Scenario's Constellations are focusing on you.]

[Final Scenario's Constellations are enjoying your actions.]

[3,000,000 Coins have been sponsored.]

The Constellations of the 'Final Scenario', including the likes of the 'Lightning Throne' Zeus, the 'Spear That Draws the Boundaries of the Sea' Poseidon, and even the 'Great Mother God Who Created Man out of Earth', Nuwa.

The existences lording over the top stratosphere of <Star Stream> who didn't participate in this scenario, but didn't feel threatened by the unfolding events from the get-go, were there at the 'Final Scenario'.

The location for that scenario was excluded from the 'First Tail-flick's' area of destruction.

Even the destruction of their fellow Constellations was nothing more than a type of entertainment to those on the cusp of reaching the 'end' of this world.

[Second Phase will commence ten minutes later.]

A ten-minute interval, was it.

I breathed a sigh of relief and looked back at Kyrgios. I sensed that his Status had grown even greater than before.

"You must've reached another enlightenment, Master."

[It seems that you're now at the level to discern that, at least.]

Kyrgios's complaining voice sounded thorny. Not only were his looks enough to slap Yoo Joonghyuk's face silly, but even the way he spoke slapped the latter silly, too.

Lee Jihye sprinted to where we were and began shaking me by the shoulders. "Ahjussi!! I thought we'd end up as grilled squid, you know!"

And why did this kid have to go and use that kind of figure of speech…

"Kyrgios grandpa! Where's my Grand Master? Didn't she come with you?"

[The Breaking the Sky Saint has some matter to take care of first, so she'll arrive later.] He replied in a cold tone of voice and peered at me from the corners of his eyes before turning his head away. [I thought that my disciple would've been half-dead by now and came in a hurry. But I see that he's far healthier than I hoped.]

I couldn't tell whether he was rueful or relieved from his tone of voice.

"If you arrived any later, never mind half-dead, I'd have been really dead, you know. Let's not worry about that, though. We need to get ready for the second phase."

As if he was waiting for it, Yoo Joonghyuk approached us as soon as my words ended.

"According to the tale of Harmagedon passed down, the attribute for the 'Second Shockwave' is intense heat."

The Apocalypse Dragon's tail in the far-off distance was visibly getting red-hot. Although it looked to be moving at a very slow speed from here, the truth was, that tail was vibrating at a scarcely-believable speed right now.

That intense friction heat was powerful enough to distort the axis of space-time itself.

Shin Yoosung grasped my jet-black scorched wrist and spoke. "Ahjussi, about the next phase…"

The moment I saw the determined eyes of both her and Lee Gilyoung, I understood what they wanted to say. But Yoo Joonghyuk butted in first. "You two must stay back."

That cold-sounding declaration caused the two kids to immediately lash back.

"Why?? We're also <Kim Dokja's Company>, you know!"

"What do you know, you sooty bastard! I wasn't asking you anyway!"

Lee Gilyoung's provocation was met with Yoo Joonghyuk's emotionless reply. "This isn't the issue of your willingness, but effectiveness. You two do not possess any Stigma or skills related to 'fire'."

In order to cancel the shockwave, we needed the 'Statuses' of a similar attribute. Unfortunately for Shin Yoosung and Lee Gilyoung, though, they didn't possess any skills related to the fire-type attribute.

Gilyoung's shoulders trembled as if he was furious; he eventually shouted out. "In that case, you also can't fight, then! You don't have stuff like that either!"

"But, I do."

The corner of Yoo Joonghyuk's lips curled up as he lifted up his sword. And in the following second, the blade of the [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] was enveloped in a fire-type sword aura.

[Character, Yoo Joonghyuk, has activated 'Furious Flame God Blade Lv.???'.]

"You… You…!"

I gently patted the tearful Lee Gilyoung's shoulders.

As stated clearly in the original storyline, Yoo Joonghyuk possessed almost every attribute there was.

…Hey, now that I thought about it, this guy also possessed lightning-based attribute, so why didn't he lend a helping hand earlier?

Yoo Joonghyuk was glaring at me with his narrowed eyes. "Have you forgotten how you pleaded with us not to aid you?"

"Ahh, I did that, didn't I," I replied, before flinching just a little.

This guy, I haven't said anything yet, so how did he read my mind?

"I shall announce the Constellations that will partake in the next phase."

Yoo Joonghyuk, already finding himself in the middle of the Constellations, began his selection process.

A calamity, unprecedented in the history of the <Star Stream>, had come knocking, and for the first time ever, Constellations were exposed to the threat of their complete death.

Under Yoo Joonghyuk's command, these head-strong and proud Constellations found themselves positioned on the frontline one by one.

[I've heard that you're a Regressor. Does that mean you have information on this situation?]

"Of course I do."

A faint trace of trust could be seen within the eyes of the Constellations. The more urgent the situation was, the more valuable information would get. The rumours of Yoo Joonghyuk doing the rounds among the Constellations were helping his attempt to instruct them.

He only took the blink of an eye to finish distributing the fighting force, standing in the middle of the frontline himself.

Han Sooyoung watched him do that and muttered softly. "…Well, he's the 'Supreme King', alright."

Jung Heewon next to her nodded her head while polishing her sword. "Well, he does have some parts that we have to acknowledge, that's for sure."

"It pains me to say it, but after <Han Sooyoung Corporation>, <Yoo Joonghyuk Company> might be the next most suitable alternative for our Nebula's name."

"Before the top representative changes, we should create a labour union first, though."

"A labour union, is it…"

Han Sooyoung smirked deeply and looked at Jung Heewon. They were working together in the advance party for the 'intense heatwave'.

The [Black Flame] of the Black Flame Dragon contained the Status of red flame, and Uriel's [Hellfire] was permeated with the strength of Hell's flames.

So, it was the same thing as these two being the strongest main force in the current frontline.

"I never figured that we'd ever get to fight side-by-side."

"It's the same story for me, too."

Jung Heewon blew away the specks of dust clinging on to her [Sword of Judgement].

That hard blade with its dull lustre – Han Sooyoung had clashed against that blade on the stage of 'Proof of Stars' a long time ago.

Afterwards, she never had the chance to talk to Jung Heewon like this, one-on-one. Well, they didn't really have anything to say to each other, and she wasn't really talented when it came to that sort of conversation, so that couldn't be helped.

Even if that was the case, she still had to ask Jung Heewon for an explanation this time. "…By the way, why are you still lugging around that?"

"Ah, this?" Jung Heewon looked at the huge 'luggage' on her back and formed a bitter smile.

Lee Hyunsung could be seen wrapped tightly on a cross made out of steel frame.

"This is the only way that I can protect him."

"…But, he looks as if he's already met his noble end, though? Where did you even find a cross, anyway?"

"My sponsor."

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is nodding her head in satisfaction.]

"…You know, this sight comes across as a bit blasphemous somehow. Is Uriel really an Angel?"

"Weeeell, even a Demon King is like that, so it's fine."

The two women's gazes shifted towards the back of the ranks almost simultaneously.

Kim Dokja was among those Constellations sitting outside the ranks. With a melancholic look on his face, he was pressing the ground with his finger. It was as if he was scribbling something down there.

Han Sooyoung spoke first. "Is he writing a will?"

"That might be. I mean, doesn't he make that sort of a face before he's about to sacrifice himself?" Jung Heewon gritted her teeth as if she had had enough already. "If he goes and does something like that again, I'm really going to…!"

['First Tail-Flick' is recommencing!]

It was then, a humongous explosion of light could be seen at the far front of the battleline.

"Get ready."

Along with Yoo Joonghyuk's signal, Constellations all gripped their weapons tightly.

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is issuing clear warnings!]

The wave of the intense heat burned brightly. After seeing those sun-like red flames that burned away everything in the heavens and on earth without discrimination, Han Sooyoung spoke in a fed-up voice. "God damn it, if only my Black Flame Dragon wasn't defeated…"

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', says he has underestimated his opponent.]

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', says that if he had started fighting with both of his hands…]

"Will you just shut up!"

And then, the intense heatwave swallowed the Constellations up.

Kugugugugugu!!

Stuck in the middle of the flooding wave of flames, Han Sooyoung desperately activated [Black Flame]. The Black Flame Dragon's Status permeated her entire being, and the heat from the wave was rapidly absorbed into her body. It felt as if her head was blanking out and all the Stories she'd lived so far were melting away.

…Kim Dokja was enduring against something like this?

The fact that Jung Heewon was next to her proved to be a small consolation. No, not just her, but Constellations who were second to none when it came to wielding fire were guarding her sides, too.

The one who perhaps best represented that was 'Purifying Flame' Agni, over by the very front of the line, defending against the crashing wave of flames by himself.

He'd be one of the strongest Constellations within <Vedas> after one excluded the three Myth-grade gods of that Nebula. And, as befitting a powerful Constellation, he was pouring out so much power that his entire being was now lit up on fire as he withstood the intense heatwave. Hell, even the whites of his eyes were showing…

"…Hey, that idiot is actually burning to death!!"

Along with the noise of "ta-dat", Agni's body began crumbling away in ashes. That served as the starting point, and the screams of Constellations reverberated from everywhere next.

[Kuwaaaaak!!]

Their line was being forced back with a speed far quicker compared to when pushing back against the electrical wave. Constellations melting down from the intense heatwave writhed around in pain, while the advancing flames used them as their firewood to increase the intensity of their heat.

They were losing.

Han Sooyoung's eyes, currently being protected by Status, felt as if they were now going blind. The heat nearing her nose made it difficult to even breathe. Before she had noticed it, the intense heatwave had reached right before her.

Jung Heewon breathlessly cried out. "Uriel!!"

Uriel's and the Black Flame Dragon's powers increased and a momentary defensive wall was created. The intense heatwave seemed to waver just for a second there, but then, it began forcing back their Statuses once more, bit by bit.

Han Sooyoung's and Jung Heewon's shoulders were pressed against each other as they continued to endure. Energies from both Black Flame Dragon were gradually seeping away, as well.

From the beginning, the Dragon had already spent a lot of its strength fighting in the 'Dragon Festival', and due to the partial destruction of <Eden>, Uriel was unable to receive her share of Probability and so, her condition was about the same.

[Nebula, <Vedas>, is withdrawing a portion of their Probability.]

[Nebula, <Papyrus>, is withdrawing a portion of their Probability.]

Even the Nebulas supplying them with Probability began withdrawing one by one.

But, that was only obvious; if they were to spend more Probability than what their Giant Stories could afford, then even if they managed to earn a new Giant Story now, they would still be losing out at the end, anyway.

From their perspective, getting annihilated by the Apocalypse Dragon or by the storm of Probability's aftermaths was just about the same now.

Through her bloodstained, dried-up lips, Han Sooyoung spoke. "Damn it, I shouldn't have been worried about Kim Dokja."

"Worried about me?"

For a moment there, she thought she felt a certain sense of refreshment enter her, and soon, a familiar power enveloped her and Jung Heewon's backs.

Han Sooyoung grumbled loudly. "Are you finished writing your will?"

"…What are you on about?"

[Nebula, <Kim Dokja's Company>, is supplying you with Probability.]

In <Star Stream>, Probability was one's wish, a dream; a desire not to give up until the end on the story that everyone else had given up on already.

The ardent wishes of a small number of people who hadn't given up on the scenario were supporting them now.

Han Sooyoung bitterly smiled. "How foolish…Why didn't you all run away, then?"

"Where can we even go, anyway?"

Lee Jihye advanced forward while firing the cannons of the [Turtle Dragon]. The battleship built with futuristic technology and its hard exterior blocked the intense heatwave instead of Jung Heewon's and Han Sooyoung's crumbling bodies.

[Giant Story, 'Next City', is crumbling away.]

Lee Jihye writhed in pain as she tried to endure against the flames all by herself. No matter how powerful [Turtle Dragon] was as a Story weapon, it was never designed for this sort of situation.

Han Sooyoung cried out in despair. "Damn it! Doesn't matter who it is, just hurry up and help! There are lots of you with fire attributes, right?!"

Unfortunately, not a single one in the night sky replied to her.

[The absolute majority of Constellations are watching the Nebula, <Kim Dokja's Company>.]

[The absolute majority of Constellations are evacuating from the intense heatwave!]

[Constellations of the 'Final Scenario' are watching this scenario.]

Weak Constellations were too occupied with running away, while the truly strong ones seemingly didn't want to miss this grand show.

"…Is it really only us?"

Turtle Dragon's external layer melted away, and Yoo Joonghyuk quickly carried the unconscious Lee Jihye on his back as he continued to activate Furious Flame God Blade.

The intense heatwave that managed to burn everything away in the surroundings began flooding their position once more with a scale they couldn't possibly defend against this time.

Not even Uriel, not even the Black Flame Dragon, not even the 'Maritime War God', not even Kyrgios and that Yoo Joonghyuk…

"Thank you for holding on until now."

…And then, Kim Dokja spoke up. "It's fine now. I was confused a bit earlier. Well, it was my first time doing it, that's why."

Before Han Sooyoung could ask what he was talking about, something suddenly rose up from the ground behind her. That was where Kim Dokja had been squatting earlier. There was a hexagram of darkness spread out widely on the ground, and something was being summoned through that very hexagram.

Kwa-kwakwakwakwa!

A gigantic frame began blocking the incoming heatwave head-on. Han Sooyoung's brows rose up high. "…Pluto?"

That 'something' turned out to be the Giant Soldier Pluto. However, it was no ordinary Pluto, either. There was no way that it'd be able to withstand that intense heat even if it was the Giant Soldier.

Kuwaaaaah-!!

The one riding inside Pluto was blocking the wave all alone when various Narrative-grade Constellations had failed to endure it previously.

Han Sooyoung saw the chilling, dangerous-looking scythe held by the Giant Soldier and instantly figured out who it was. The thing was, the Story weapon Pluto didn't originally belong to Kim Dokja.

[Giant Story, 'Underworld', has begun its storytelling.]

Even if it was a story where only a handful wished to see, the scale of Probability changed depending on who that handful of people was. And the existence that appeared now was a grand being who could handle such Probability all by himself.

[Constellation, 'Father of the Rich Night', has incarnated into the scenario!]

He was the Constellation that protected <Olympus>'s hottest Hell.

The Myth-grade Constellation, Hades, had descended on the battlefield with <Underworld> in tow.

ETERNAL NIGHT

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* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)

Chapter 408: Ep. 77 - Final Dragon, V

The dark but warm current of air approached us from behind. Since I knew whose Status that was, a subtle little grin automatically formed on my lips.

[To make <Underworld> be responsible for the Probability needed for summoning…]

"I'm still at an age where I'd like to rely on my parents."

[I heard that youths of the Korean Peninsula become independent early in their lives, but I guess I was wrong.]

I recalled the day I left the relatives' place for lodging in a hostel. I was seventeen back then.

I shrugged my shoulders and smiled. "Well, a young man like myself is needed to keep the balance, you know."

[Constellation, 'Queen of the Darkest Spring', has incarnated into the scenario!]

Abruptly, a corner of my heart began tingling just a little. I ended up remembering the empty spots reserved for my parents during school events, back when I was still a student.

I always wondered how my friends felt back then. What did it feel like, having someone fill up those spots, having someone who'd come to you when you called out to them?

[Constellation, 'Queen of the Darkest Spring', has unleashed her Status!]

And now, I thought I could finally understand what they felt back then.

Persephone stood beside me and while looking at Hades blocking the intense wave of heat, spoke. [But, we agreed that it's my turn to ride Pluto this time… him and his short fuse.]

The heat blocked by Hades spread out like ashes in the air. Perhaps realizing that a powerful opponent had appeared, the Apocalypse Dragon strengthened its momentum as well.

Kuwaaaaah-!!

Pluto at the far front was getting slowly pushed back as it continued to deal with the intense heat. That made sense, though; Hades was yet to fully unleash his Status.

[Constellation, 'Father of the Rich Night', is wobbling as he looks back at his wife.]

[I told you that it'd be not possible with you alone, didn't I?]

[Constellation, 'Father of the Rich Night', is looking at his wife with an unfortunate expression.]

Judging from the unfolding situation, I could more or less tell what was going on here. On the armour of Pluto, with Hades inside, Stories were wiggling about and going on a rampage.

[Story, 'Listening to One's Wife Would Get You Tteok Even When You're Asleep' has begun its storytelling!]

Persephone sighed grandly and raised her hands up as if to conduct a concert. And right afterwards, small, musical-note-like objects began floating up from the tips of her fingers.

Like the introduction of a classical piece, the Story started opening up.

[Constellation, 'Queen of the Darkest Spring', is mobilising <Underworld>'s Probability!]

Hades wasn't the only ruler of <Underworld>. Indeed, Persephone was not 'Queen Consort', but the 'Queen Regnant'. Meaning, these two possessed an equal amount of shares of <Underworld>.

Hades's attributes were darkness and fire. The guardian of <Olympus>'s night and hell was finally rousing up his true Status.

[Constellation, 'Father of the Rich Night', is unleashing his Status!]

For a moment there, an incredible impact force akin to my entire body being smacked around overwhelmed me. I wobbled about, my vision dizzily shaking around, but still, I raised my head to see Pluto standing up there like an incarnation of darkness and fire.

[Final Scenario's Constellations are very dissatisfied!]

[Final Scenario's Constellations are keeping a wary eye on 'Father of the Rich Night'!]

[Final Scenario's Constellations are complaining about <Underworld>'s interference!]

[A great number of Constellations are impressed by the participation of 'Father of the Rich Night'!]

Kwa-kwakwakwakwa!

Agni from <Vedas> was dead, while the Constellations tasked with dealing with fire from both <Asgard> and <Emperor> had run off quite some time ago. As for Surya, he was using the rays of light from himself to generate something similar to flames and continue his fight that way, but half of his Story had disintegrated already. This was the power of the Calamity that hundreds of Constellations couldn't stop.

And Hades was blocking that Calamity by himself.

[Hades, hasn't it been a while since you completely cut loose like this?]

Hades roared out, and Persephone continued her vigorous conducting in synch with his roar. Stories flowing out from her hands permeated into Pluto's entire frame.

This was the power of <Underworld>, having long been obscured under <Olympus>'s shadow. They were finally proving themselves.

[Story Weapon, 'Pluto', is using the Star Relic, 'Aegis Shield'!]

Constellations from <Olympus> also added their powers, as well. Athena lent her own shield, while others sacrificed Probability of their own Giant Stories to lend their strengths.

Up until now, I always thought that the Constellations of the night sky weren't all that impressive. But then, I realized for the first time ever, today, that my thoughts should change.

[Many Constellations are grateful for the King of Underworld's incarnation.]

[The absolute majority of Constellations are respectful of 'Father of the Rich Night'.]

[The absolute majority of Constellations are singing the praises of 'Queen of the Darkest Spring'!]

Now that I've gotten to witness Hades valiantly defending against the destruction of the world, I could truly appreciate what 'myth' was for the first time in my life.

The willingness to risk his life when confronted by the world's doom; maybe, that was the epic of heroes that the 1st generation of Dokkaebis wanted to show to the Constellations.

"Why are you so dazed like that? It's not over yet, so get your act together."

I looked back to find Yoo Joonghyuk and his stiff expression glaring at me. He too had been sacrificing himself for the greater cause. What would he be thinking of right now as he watched Hades?

[Hahaha, hey, subway grasshopper man! This is my true power! Keke, kekekeke!]

Kim Namwoon's voice came out from Pluto's head.

Ah, so he was also there, wasn't he.

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', is enjoying Pluto's madness.]

Yup, definitely a couple from the original storyline…

[Second Phase will come to an end soon.]

In any case, the current situation was favourable for us. The flames of the intense heatwave decreased at a rapid rate, and Hades was ably defending against that. Pluto's durability seemed more than enough for the job at hand, and the number of Constellations adding their Probability also was increasing bit by bit.

How long passed by like that? Finally, the flames of the intense heatwave were extinguished.

[Second Phase has concluded.]

[Congratulations. You have safely negotiated the second shockwave of the 'First Tail-Flick'!]

We were able to withstand this phase, all because everyone worked together.

If Jung Heewon and Han Sooyoung didn't try their best, if Lee Jihye didn't charge forward with her battleship, if the Underworld's couple didn't arrive on time…

If just one part of that was missing, then we couldn't have stopped it.

[The absolute majority of Constellations are enjoying this 'Giant Story'.]

[Final Scenario's Constellations are uncomfortable with this 'Giant Story'.]

Finally, we had managed to survive two out of the three phases.

All phases of the 'First Tail-Flick' needed to be subjugated at the beginning in order to minimise the damage. If this was back in the original story, dozens of Nebulas would have been destroyed by now and at least one-eighth of the sky, crumbled away to oblivion.

And some spare time to get ready for the last phase should be given to us again.

Ku-gugugugu!

"Dokja-ssi! Over there!"

I quickly looked back after hearing Jung Heewon's voice, and discovered something flooding out from the Apocalypse Dragon's tail.

But, the intense heatwave phase had come to an end already? This couldn't be.

Metatron spoke up as if to put a voice to my thoughts. [It's a lot quicker than expected.]

[Scenario's Probability is being adjusted due to the entrance of Myth-grade Constellations.]

[Scenario's Probability has increased the phase progression speed.]

['Third Phase' will begin in thirty seconds.]

As if to stop the start of the phase, Hades used his Status to pressure the Apocalypse Dragon. Even Persephone and other Constellations were looking really concerned right now.

[…My son.]

If the third phase got underway now, then not even Hades would be able to stop it.

His attributes were darkness and fire; meaning, he was not a suitable Constellation to defend against the third shockwave.

I asked Metatron. "How long until the seal is complete?"

[I'm not certain if it can be done in time.]

A faint trace of despair seemed to have dyed the Archangel's expression. He must've been in the middle of finally realizing what he had done.

[I shall buy us time.]

It was Michael who said that; he had been saving up his Status up until now. Maybe he was stimulated by Hades's actions earlier, because he began unleashing all of his Status and flapping his wings.

He was half 'Good' and half 'Evil'.

Metatron looked at the Story appearing on Michael's face and spoke up. ['Demon King of Salvation'. I'm sure you know this already. The third shockwave can only be resisted by existences possessing the power of 'Chaos'.]

The shockwave began stirring in the distance.

The previous two shockwaves we had experienced were, technically speaking, not real 'shockwaves', but simply the harbinger of the third wave. What we were about to face off against now was the true 'First Tail-flick' itself.

Metatron asked. [You also have someone on your side with the power of 'Chaos', don't you?]

I scanned my companions as well as other Constellations.

Honestly speaking, there was no point in doing that. Not even Yoo Joonghyuk could use the 'Chaos' attribute.

Because 'Chaos' was not an attribute, but more like an anti-attribute, that was why. Now originally, 'Chaos' was not a power Constellations or Demon Kings were permitted to enjoy.

[Power of 'Fruit of Good and Evil' is wiggling inside you.]

But then, I was both a Constellation and a Demon King, an existence that couldn't be categorised as either.

A Demon King who had consumed the 'Fruit of Good and Evil'.

[It should be possible with you.]

I nodded my head.

The nature of 'Chaos' was disorder. If it was me who went against the order of both, it'd be possible to go up against the power of Chaos, too.

It was then, someone grasped my shoulder.

"I can also do this."

"Heewon-ssi?"

I saw the Ring of Chaos within Jung Heewon's eyes. Her hair, now bleached pure white, slowly danced upwards under the mysterious and ominous aura.

I instantly realized what she had awakened as.

"Very well. Let's give it a shot."

I then looked up into the sky.

Actually, I had been searching for a certain Constellation's presence in the night sky for a while now, but unfortunately, I couldn't sense it. If that guy helped us out, we'd be able to overcome this somehow. I even had a plan in mind for that, too…

['Third Phase' is commencing!]

It seemed that it was too late now.

[Demon King, 'King of the Corrupted Angels', is unleashing his Status!]

[Constellation, 'Saviour of the Corrupted', is unleashing his Status!]

One existence who possessed two Modifiers – Michael displayed his true power and rushed towards the forefront. Indeed, those Statuses were more than enough to make him feel confident about himself.

[Judgement Field.]

His speciality that almost wrung me to death in the past began stretching out towards the shockwave of Chaos. It was the wall of judgement, bestowed onto this world through the divine grace.

Kwa-kwakwakwakwa!!

The so-called invincible Field was easily shattered, however. Forget about defending against the wave, it couldn't even buy one second. Michael screamed loudly as he watched his [Judgement Field] shatter like glass.

The Calamity of the 89th scenario, the Chaos's shockwave that had far surpassed that of the original storyline, proceeded to crush Michael's body and utterly disintegrate him.

Yoo Joonghyuk's voice resounded out from behind me. "Dodge it!!"

It seemed that Yoo Joonghyuk had realized something was off. This shockwave was definitely on another realm compared to the previous two.

I finished making up my mind and was about to step forward, but then, Jung Heewon stood in my way.

"Heewon-ssi."

"Please shut up. I knew something like this would happen."

Her back, turned towards me, didn't show any movement – as if she knew what I was trying to do. Lee Hyunsung's giant frame was still dangling on her back. I saw his sleeping face, having fallen into the steel-like slumber in order to protect someone.

I opened my lips again. "Heewon-ssi. If someone must risk their life, then…"

"Don't even try it. I'll really go crazy if you do."

[Story, 'Demon King of Salvation', has begun its storytelling.]

[Giant Story, 'Demon Realm's Spring', has begun its storytelling.]

As if resonating with her emotions, the two Stories began telling their stories. They were acquired through experiencing similar circumstances.

[Stigma, 'Sacrifice's Will Lv.8', is currently active.]

And this Stigma was acquired by going through similar situations, too. I was aware of how much this Stigma hurt Jung Heewon.

Even then, I still had to say it. "If that wave isn't stopped here, Hyunsung-ssi will die."

I had to become more callous than anyone.

"There is a way to stop that. If you were me, Heewon-ssi, what would you have done?"

"I don't want to hear it, so please!"

Jung Heewon turned around, her eyes red with tears.

"Yes, you do have a way! I know already! You're someone like that, Dokja-ssi! You always have a damn, stinking plan that only you know, and when you use it, you'll end up dying!"

"I think you're mistaken about something. I'm not going to die."

She didn't possess the skill [Lie Detection].

"Now is a different story compared to in the past. Heewon-ssi, you and our other companions have changed, yes? I've chosen to do this because I believe in you. That is why…" I spoke while turning my head away. "Heewon-ssi. You must save me later."

I used the powers of [Way of the Wind] and [Electrification] to blow her back to the rear.

"Kim Dokj…!!"

The moment I greeted the shockwave rushing towards my face, I roared out in my true voice with everything I had. [Surya!!]

At the end of my roar, a train rushing forward from behind picked me up. As it was created in haste, the train looked rather bizarre, what with only its front portion existing.

[Let's go.]

As I sensed Surya's Status supporting me from behind, the train set off.

[Giant Story, 'Torch that Swallowed the Myth', has begun its storytelling!]

The train used the Giant Story as its fuel to advance forward – past the fragments of Stories and towards the Chaos's shockwave.

Kwa-dudududuk!!

Accompanied by the impact force akin to my entire body being shattered into pieces, the debris of the train flew about all over the place.

Michael's half-destroyed Incarnation Body trapped within the storm was now looking at me. [You bastard…!]

I went past him and continued to press forward. It felt as if my consciousness was fading away. [The Fourth Wall] continued to issue warning bells, and all the Stories I possessed screamed out in pain.

They were shouting out in one voice that we couldn't withstand this. That we'd all die for sure.

Beyond the shockwave that reverted all existence back to nothingness, I felt the Apocalypse Dragon's gaze land on me.

[You cannot stop this.]

I felt that gaze and smirked.

You're right. I can't stop you. Well, you're not a mere lifeform that can be killed, but the 'calamity' itself, after all. You're 'something' that far exceeds Constellations and Demon Kings.

There was no way that a lone Constellation could resist against such a Calamity.

However, I knew of another Calamity of this magnitude.

[Constellations of <Star Stream> have figured out your scheme and are freaking out!]

[Final Scenario's Constellations are greatly astonished by your plan!]

[All Dokkaebis in the Bureau are looking at the scenario's Probability…]

A scarcely-believable amount of sparks exploded and went on a frenzy in the air. Simply trying to call out its name caused such a reaction. I let all the Probability the Constellations had gathered explode out into the open space, and called out the name of a certain creature one more time.

A creature that, even though they knew its true name, no one would dare to invite to their scenario.

[Come! ■■■■■!!]

Beyond the shockwave, <Star Stream>'s outer space could be seen; the storm of aftermaths produced by the misaligned Probability was rushing in.

The march of the gigantic fog of darkness began erasing the traces of stars and nebulas. I was overcome by shuddering powerful enough to nearly blank my mind as the giant eye on the far, far side of that seemingly-infinite fog fixed its gaze on this side.

I witnessed that thing back in the 73rd Demon Realm a while ago. Back then, it was merely a clone. It was a different story this time, however.

['Indescribable Distance' is looking down on 'Final Dragon of the Book of Revelation'.]

The Outer God born within the Chaos; the greater calamity that brought about the destruction of my Demon Realm was now approaching the Isle of Reincarnators.

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Chapter 409: Ep. 78 - Twist/轉, I

Every muscle on my body ached as if I had been thoroughly beaten up.

I had blacked out for a second but regained my consciousness somehow. I vomited out Stories and opened my eyes within the pitch-black empty space. I couldn't see a single thing nearby, but I already knew where I was.

['Indescribable Distance' is glancing at you.]

The 'Indescribable Distance', also known as the Nameless Mist.

I ran into this guy's clone back in the 73rd Demon Realm.

With nothing but the strength of a clone, this guy destroyed my Demon Realm, and went on to break Narrative-grade Constellations and Transcendents alike.

And here I was, right inside the mouth of one Calamity that I dearly wished not to meet again.

「Kim Dokja thought to himself. This is the only way to stop the Apocalypse Dragon.」

…Right. I was wondering why you were keeping quiet until now.

「In order to stop the world's calamity, summon yet another one. Only someone like the Regressor Yoo Joonghyuk might come up with such an idea.」

I looked at the Fourth Wall's messages floating up in the air and chuckled wryly.

「Even then, Kim Dokja simply had to do it.」

The effects from the storm of aftermaths still lingered in my vicinity.

– You have distorted far too much Probability.

– You keep this up, and all the Probability's karma you've accumulated so far will blow up in your face. You know what that means, don't you?

This was the Probability's karma that I had been accumulating until now. The retribution that Constellations and Dokkaebis had warned me about.

「There is no Story where something precious hasn't been lost.」

Every large, great Story found in <Star Stream> was a story of loss.

In order to awaken a hero, something must be sacrificed, while lovers and friends must lose something when trying to fulfil their love or friendship.

Someone had to lose something, and with that, Stories would become complete.

「Kim Dokja hated that.」

I knew that one day, I'd be paying the price for not losing out on anything. That the time to pay for twisting stories around and distorting the Probability would arrive sooner or later.

「And that was why Kim Dokja decided to use that.」

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

More lumps of Story poured out of my mouth.

This wasn't because the 'Indescribable Distance' attacked me; no, it was the distorted Probability's fault. The distortions of the world, saved up for the purpose of summoning an Outer God, was trying to eliminate me from the scenario itself.

[Story, 'Demon King of Salvation', is continuing with its storytelling.]

I managed to endure only because of my Stories. They continued to whisper into my ears – they said that you're the 'Demon King of Salvation'. You must save people.

Just like how they did to Metatron and Agares, Stories were whispering to me.

[Story, 'King of a Kingless World', is continuing with its storytelling.]

[Giant Story, 'Demon Realm's Spring', is continuing with its storytelling.]

[Giant Story, 'Torch that Swallowed the Myth', is continuing with its storytelling.]

Even though I was inside the quaking fog of darkness, I still could sense what was happening outside.

['Final Dragon of the Book of Apocalypse' is baring its animosity towards the 'Indescribable Distance'!]

['Indescribable Distance' is making its move.]

Thankfully, everything was unfolding according to the plan. The Outer God showing up to devour me had discovered an even tastier prey and it was now far too focused on preying on the 'Final Dragon of the Book of Revelation'.

The fight between Calamities had begun. The Final Dragon versus the Nameless Mist.

These two's mutual destruction was the hope of all the other existences.

The most important thing was to buy enough time. Enough time for the Constellations to reorganise themselves, for those damn stars to reform the nebulas befitting their lofty titles.

[Damage to your Incarnation Body is critical!]

[Indescribable existence's Status is eating into your 'Context of Modifier'.]

[Unity between Stories is weakening.]

[<Star Stream> is stunned by your extraordinary achievement.]

[Your own Giant Story is waking up.]

I heard something faintly resembling a song from afar.

It was a melody I heard a long time ago. I wasn't sure whether that was my mother's, from my companions, or from someone else.

Except that, as I listened to that faint song…

[Story, 'Life and Death Companions', is continuing with its storytelling.]

…I realized that I didn't want to die.

Ku-gugugugu!

One world was colliding with another. Kim Dokja, completely exposed to the Apocalypse Dragon's shockwave, was swallowed up by the jet-black fog of darkness.

And now, it was no longer him dealing with the shockwave, but that horrifying Outer God, instead.

The two powers born from Chaos collided, and everything near their vicinity was sucked into nothingness.

[Constellation, 'Mandala's Guardian', is gasping out.]

Thankfully, the collision location was much further away than it looked, so the companions still on the ground were spared.

Complexions of most Constellations were incredibly poor after having witnessed both the Apocalypse Dragon and an Outer God.

As if all those days where they roamed the heavens like kings were nothing but illusions, calamities that not even Narrative-grade Constellations could handle were engaging in bitter warfare.

Only then did the Constellations of the night sky realize the truth – that the end of the world was indeed right in front of their faces.

For a certain someone, though, a person's sacrifice was a much bigger tragedy than the end of the world.

"Ahjussssiiiiii!!"

Lee Jihye yelled out in sheer desperation and fired her cannons at the fog of darkness. Of course, none of the cannon shells could damage the main body of the Nameless Mist. One couldn't even tell where its body started and ended, after all.

Unfortunately, the companions were unable to control their overwhelming emotions.

"No, no, no!!"

Shin Yoosung fitfully cried out as if she had been inflicted with an illness of repeating the exact same words. And as if it was resonating with her emotions, the Chimera Dragon spat out one Breath after another in the air.

The eyes of Lee Gilyoung standing next to them were half-blurry, unfocused. As his entire body quivered, ominous demonic aura began oozing out from him.

"Contract… I will… I won't… will…"

And in front of these three, another three stepped forward. Facing the horrifying Calamity that they had been dreading all along, each of the companions lost their reasoning in their own ways. Some let themselves go, falling to a flood of emotions, while others managed to hold on to their broken reasoning in some elaborate manner.

Yoo Joonghyuk unleashed his transcended form.

Han Sooyoung was draped by the Black Flame Dragon.

And Jung Heewon had opened the eyes of God-slaying.

Without giving anyone a chance to stop them, the three stepped forward at the same time, and they glanced at each other. Then, someone else did stop them from the front.

It was Anna Croft.

"All of you, please stop! You mustn't break away from the battlefield!"

[Nebula, <Asgard>, is currently commanding the battlefield.]

Anna Croft's voice, along with <Asgard>'s Giant Story, managed to tie all three of them to their spots.

Yoo Joonghyuk's expression crumpled in an unsightly manner. "Get out of my sight."

"This isn't what the 'Demon King of Salvation' wanted!"

"What the 'Demon King of Salvation' wanted?"

Han Sooyoung's left arm was lit in black flames as if there was no more need to listen here.

Anna Croft quickly spoke. "I've begun seeing bits of the future."

The Stories were now flowing within her [Eye of the Great Demon].

"It might be that this is because he has really done it." Anna Croft sounded genuinely impressed. She looked at the fierce battle of the two Calamities taking place in the distant sky and spoke. "To save this world, he really…"

"God damn it! Who cares about saving the world and shit?! We want to…!"

"His sacrifice is truly noble. Do you not understand what that means?"

"You better shut your mouth!"

Han Sooyoung blew her top and roared out. Her scary aura managed to momentarily shut Anna Croft up.

"Why should Kim Dokja save this world? Why should that bastard sacrifice himself for such a stupid waste-of-time?! Is this stinking world even worth saving?!"

Her voice was cracking up from anger. It was a voice belonging to someone who had been suppressing her rage over and over again. The prophet looked at that face, and listened to that voice, and recalled a story from her past.

"The 'Demon King of Salvation' also said the same thing once upon a time."

– Whether this world is worth protecting or not, one should wait and see first.

Was it back during the Gourmet Association? The 'Demon King of Salvation' once said that to her. Anna Croft knew very well what he meant back then.

This world was one being ruled by Dokkaebis and Constellations. She, too, created 'Zarathustras' in order to change this world, after all.

Anna Croft raised her head and looked at the sky once more. Even as a prophet, she couldn't tell if he was still asking that question of this world. However…

"He's over there right now."

Some Stories were to be proven not by words, but through one's actions.

"He has met you people in this world, has he not?"

For the first time ever, the three's expressions changed to something quite similar to one another after hearing her.

Anna Croft continued on with a cautious tone of voice. "Please, have faith in me, the prophet. We need to save up our strength, and then, aim for the moment when the two Calamities fight each other and destroy themselves. Only then will our survival be guaranteed."

"Prophet? You think you're the only one who can tell the future?"

That was when Anna Croft realized something.

Han Sooyoung's surrounding vicinity was overflowing with the Story of [Predictive Plagiarism]. The Regressor Yoo Joonghyuk was studying and observing the situation without rest through his [Sage's Eye] in the meantime.

It wasn't only the prophet who could predict the future. These two also possessed insight far superior to others when it came to reading future events.

Even then, they still chose to save Kim Dokja.

Jung Heewon unsheathed her sword and spoke. "I don't know anything about the future. However, I do know this. You said that you want to save this world? It's the same for me, too."

Her determination manifested in the whitish flames billowing on the [Sword of Judgement].

"That man is the world I wish to save."

At the end of those words, all three of them dashed into the air. Not the Probability of the Giant Story, and not even the pressure from a Nebula could stop them from leaving.

Anna Croft urgently reached out, but by then, they were already soaring towards the distant heavens.

The thing that stopped them, though, was not a Nebula nor Probability.

Han Sooyoung was the first one to discover that 'thing'.

"What the hell?! Son of a…!"

Kugugugugu!!

The equilibrium of the heavens was collapsing under the continued battle of the two Calamities. The new problem had to do with the crumbling balance of the broken scale invading into this world.

[Isn't that…?]

One of the Constellations muttered out. Something hidden within the fog of darkness blanketing the skies wiggled, and began separating itself.

Not content with pressuring the Apocalypse Dragon, the 'Indescribable Distance', AKA the Nameless Mist, had begun creating a clone from itself.

"Ah, ahh, aaaah…"

A sickly-yellow eye of terror revealed itself among the fog of darkness. Shin Yoosung's shoulders began trembling non-stop as if a nightmare of the past managed to creep back into her consciousness.

She had seen that eye before. Incarnations who saw that eye would fail to hold onto their minds and eventually, transform into creatures of the Outer World.

On that day, all existences of the [Industrial Complex] were rendered completely powerless in front of that Calamity.

However, there was someone here who remembered that day's events quite differently from her.

[It's slightly smaller than that day, I see.]

It was Cheok Jungyeong.

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* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)

Chapter 410: Ep. 78 - Twist/轉, II

Cheok Jungyeong unsheathed his sword as he stepped forward. His Stories, tempered on the 'Isle of Reincarnators', wrapped around him and rippled about like real muscles.

[Let us get going, small Transcendent.]

Kyrgios climbed up on Cheok Jungyeong's shoulder. They once worked together to fight the 'Indescribable Distance' in the past.

The latter leapt up towards the heavens, and Kyrgios's [Electrification] danced on his blade next. And as the bright, pure-white electrical current enveloped Cheok Jungyeong's figure, he began glittering like a god of lightning.

[I, Cheok Jungyeong, have been waiting for this day!]

A splendid Status revealed itself.

The enemy that his sword, used to cut apart mountains and the seas, couldn't cut was now right before him.

He trained hard to perfect the incomplete 'Fourth Sword' for this very moment. In order to fight against that sheer, immeasurable emptiness, he spent countless hours creating a sword skill.

And this was the result.

His Story, condensed tightly until it was almost ready to burst, was ignited, and Kyrgios's electrical current violently spun around in their vicinity.

Constellations on the ground all looked up.

One Constellation, and one Transcendent.

As if to mock these two's Statuses, the clone of the 'Indescribable Distance' opened its maws wide towards them. And just before the open jaw of the fog of darkness swallowed up the starlight…

'The Fourth Law'.

…Light gushed out from Cheok Jungyeong's sword.

'Fourth Sword that Beheads the Emptiness'.

The centre of the fog slowly split apart; just like the belly of a beast being sliced open, something began leaking out from that exposed centre.

The yellowing eye protruding from the fog of darkness began to disintegrate while spewing out Stories.

[Many Constellations cannot take their eyes away from the martial glory displayed by 'Goryeo's First Sword'!]

[The jaws of many Constellations have fallen at this unbelievable spectacle!]

All the Constellations on the ground were astonished by what they saw.

Even if it was just a clone, their opponent was still the 'Indescribable Distance', the cleaner of <Star Stream> and the calamity that devoured all distorted Probability.

The calamity widely known as undefeatable, was cut in half by Cheok Jungyeong. No one even managed to clearly catch the shape of that sword strike.

Only Yoo Joonghyuk managed to recognise that attack. Even the man who previously sliced a star in half looked utterly stunned right now.

"The Will-formed Blade…"

The power to cut the world down with nothing but one's own determination; the pinnacle reputedly only reachable through training in martial arts. And Cheok Jungyeong had reached that lofty height after becoming a Constellation.

[There is no existence that cannot be cut down by my blade!]

Standing within the exploding light show, Cheok Jungyeong watched the scattering fog and felt the sense of release wash over him.

Just how long did he endure just to be able to cut that thing?

That ecstasy of the moment, when he stepped into the realm of empty-mindedness and his will itself became the sword. The Four Sword Style's 'Fourth Sword that Beheads the Emptiness' was the cumulation of all the martial arts he had mastered.

He looked in Yoo Joonghyuk's direction and shouted out. [Now go, Descendants! Go and bring Kim Dokj…]

Unfortunately, he didn't get to finish what he was saying; an incredible impact force from behind managed to wreck his entire Incarnation Body. He fell like a meteor and crashed deeply into the ground.

As his vision rocked unstably, he forced himself to look up, and that's when he realized what had happened to him. Someone began muttering near him.

[Oh, dear lord… <Star Stream> might be finished at this rate.]

He couldn't understand it; Cheok Jungyeong felt his body tremble uncontrollably.

…But, how?

I cut it down just now, so how?

As if what happened a moment was all a joke, the giant eye in the sky was still looking down on him.

There was more than one clone.

So many, in fact, the whole sky seemed to be covered by them. Clones of the 'Indescribable Distance', dozens upon dozens of them, were descending to the ground in order to devour every living thing down below.

[Uwaaaahk!!]

Historical-grade Constellations, overcome by terror, began running to the other side of the horizon. Unfortunately, the calamity also flooded in from that side as well.

Crrrraaaack!

Fangs rising up from within the fog crushed the Incarnation Bodies of the Constellations like the soft pulp of a fruit. There was no place to run nor hide now. Although slightly better than dealing with the Apocalypse Dragon's shockwaves, this situation was just as despairing, nonetheless.

[Everyone, calm down! You all saw it, didn't you? We can fight back against this creature!] Dionysus shouted until his voice turned hoarse, but Constellations simply couldn't fight together. [Damn it…]

Constellations from <Olympus> had spent a considerable amount of their Statuses while enduring against the two previous shockwaves and couldn't display their usual prowess now, and even <Underworld> had used up far too much of its Probability and was searching for the right Story. At least, Uriel and the Black Flame Dragon were still putting up a good fight.

"Get lost!! I said, get the hell away from me, you stinking bastards!"

Yoo Joonghyuk, Han Sooyoung, and Jung Heewon unleashed their Statuses, their backs pressed against each other.

They were planning to continue fighting against the fog of darkness and rush towards where Kim Dokja had disappeared into as soon as an opening was created. However, no such gap opened up for them. At this rate, they would be wiped out before they even began rescuing him.

"God damn it! Isn't there anyone else? Isn't there any other friends of Kim Dokja still left somewhere?!"

No matter how much Han Sooyoung racked her brain, she couldn't come up with anyone that could help.

Both the Statuses of the Black Flame Dragon and Uriel were gradually declining now.

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is glaring at 'Scribe of Heaven'.]

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', says he still can't use the 'Right Hand of the Void Destruction'…]

The fog of darkness had enveloped the 'Isle of Reincarnators', which was about the same as it having finished its preparation to devour this place whole.

It was around then when the specks of light akin to a car's headlights shone from the distance. Along with loud screeching, something arrived by their side after breaking past the deflagration.

A vehicle rather familiar to the members of <Kim Dokja's Company> appeared from beyond the choking dust.

[Hmm. It'll get rather troublesome if you get injured here. You still have three more adverts you need to shoot for me, after all.]

The door to the [X-class Ferrarghini] opened, and the grey-haired middle-aged man waved his hand with a smile. He wore a pink-coloured polo shirt with images of pineapples etched on it, plus a torn pair of jeans. Han

Sooyoung saw his outrageous fashion sense that simply didn't match the current battlefield and her jaw fell to the ground.

"…Mass Production Maker??"

Several Constellations fighting against the Calamity began muttering to each other after hearing her.

[Mass Production Maker? Is he a strong Constellation?]

[No, that geezer won't be of much help.]

[I think I've heard about him before. Blinded by Coins, he continues to pump out trashy Stories…]

Han Sooyoung stared at that 'Mass Production Maker'. He was supposed to be a Narrative-grade Constellation, but contrary to his rank, the Status she could feel was nothing to write home about.

The Mass Production Maker chuckled good-naturedly. [Huhuh. It seems that I come across as not all that reliable.]

His relaxed observation prompted Thor to stop chugging wine down his throat and shout back. [Oiii, Mister Steady! Since you came, hurry and lend us a helping hand! We urgently need any help we can find, even from a geezer!]

[Hmm, but, I didn't come here to fight.]

[Then why the hell did you even come here for?]

[Well, I was thinking of sponsoring some Coins.]

[You mad geezer… What good will that do right now?!]

Constellations couldn't hold their anger back and shouted out.

[If you showed up to spout nonsense, then get the hell away from here! A stinking old man blinded by Coins…!]

Strangely enough, the Mass Production Maker didn't show any signs of cowering. It was at that moment Han Sooyoung recalled a certain conversation she had with Kim Dokja in the past.

While she was glancing at the 'Mass Production Maker' chatting to Dokkaebis outside the recording booth, she asked him.

– Hey, Kim Dokja. Just who is that Constellation, anyway? He doesn't seem all that strong to me… Why are those Dokkaebis grovelling before him like that?

Kim Dokja replied as if it was the most obvious thing in the world.

– Because… he's got a lot of Coins.

Like Kim Dokja back then, the Mass Production Maker was grinning brightly right now. [I can't understand you young ones. Why do you all dismiss Coins like that?]

[Who cares about those consumables…?!]

Along with a spinning noise, a Coin popped up on top of the Mass Production Maker's palm. It was just one single Coin. [Now, look closely. Does this Coin look like nothing more than 'consumable' to you? Haven't you ever wondered why <Star Stream> uses these 'Coins' as the standard trading unit? Don't you find that strange?]

[What bullshit are you trying to say now?!]

While staring at the clones that had encroached right before his nose, the Mass Production Maker spoke up. [Let me give you a hint. Everything within <Star Stream> is created through 'Stories'. In that case, what about 'Coins', then?]

[…Is this the sign of senility? I'm busy, so stop talking to me!]

Constellations focused on shooting out their magical energy at the space around them as if they no longer wanted to hear an old man's ramblings. Han Sooyoung, however, continued to listen even when still trapped in this urgent situation.

And, goosebumps broke out all over her skin.

It was as exactly as the Mass Production Maker had said; everything in <Star Stream> was a 'Story'.

In that case, why was the trading unit of <Star Stream> not 'Stories' but 'Coins', instead?

Tsu-chuchuchut!

An enormous amount of Probability was welling up all round the Mass Production Maker. And as he was bathed in the influence of that Probability, his own Status was rising up explosively.

That gob-smacking rate of increase shocked the Constellations of both 'Good' and 'Evil', and they all looked at the Mass Production Maker.

[A very old Story has begun its storytelling.]

The Mass Production Maker – he too was a Constellation pursuing his own version of 'A Single Story'.

In that case, what was the ■■ he was pursuing after?

[What rules this world is neither 'Good' nor 'Evil'. It's 'capital'.]

He then chucked that Coin high up in the air.

Yoo Joonghyuk saw it, so did Han Sooyoung, and Jung Heewon. But none of them saw how much was written on that coin.

[And I possess more Coins than anyone in <Star Stream>.]

More specifically, they would have believed whatever amount was claimed to be written on it. If one wanted to create a miracle like that with Coins, how much would one need to spend?

[Someone has spent a lot of Coins!]

[Story, 'Materialism', has begun its storytelling!]

A short while later, a deafening boom resounded out from the other side of the sky where the Coin had disappeared to. Accompanied by the ripping sound, a doorway whirling about opened up there. It was a Gate.

[A one-way Gate has been generated.]

The Gate that only the Dokkaebis and the Bureau could open up was actually opened by a mere Constellation.

[<Star Stream>'s Bureau is looking at the Probability of the applicable scenario's…]

[Summoning has begun!]

Several humanoid shapes began appearing beyond the Gate itself. With a relaxed face belonging to a holiday maker, the 'Mass Production Maker' shrugged his shoulders. [Oh, by the way. You guys were right about one thing. I'm terrible at fighting.]

Blinding rays of light exploded from the other side of the Gate.

The old man put a pair of sunglasses on as if he'd been expecting that and continued on. [Instead, I can bring a few friends who are very good at that by doing this.]

Some people were being summoned to the battlefield through the Gate. The first one to recognise them was Yoo Joonghyuk.

"…Master?"

The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint and Transcendents were flying out of the Gate now. There were several other familiar faces among the group beside her, too.

Such as, the One Invincible Fist, Yoo Hoseong.

One of the most powerful beings on the 'Isle of Reincarnators' had entered this scenario in order to lend them aid. The reason for the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint's belated arrival must've had something to do with persuading them to come here. However, Yoo Joonghyuk's expression didn't improve even then.

…Will they be enough to stop this calamity?

There were dozens of calamity's clones, each so powerful that Narrative-grade Constellations couldn't even deal with a single one. No matter how powerful the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint and Yoo Hoseong were, this enemy was not something a group of Transcendents could overcome.

But then, there was one more familiar face right at the end of the descending Transcendents.

"Seriously, now! Should've helped us get here from the get-go, you know!"

It was Jang Hayoung.

A few companions shouted towards her, calling her over. She smiled embarrassedly and waved her hand back. "Sorry about being so late! I was trying to persuade someone."

…Persuade?

Jang Hayoung couldn't continue on, however.

Because the entrance of new, powerful beings caused the clones of the 'Indescribable Distance' to change the direction of their attacks.

Nervousness quickly dyed her expression as she watched the Outer God approach her location.

Jang Hayoung had seen those things back in the Demon Realm. She knew very well that the current her couldn't even deal with a single clone.

That was with only her own powers, though.

Right in the next instance, a golden aura exploded out from her figure. An incredible amount of Status was being unleashed with her as its centre.

Her golden locks spread out like waves and a slender golden headband appeared above her pale-smooth forehead. And then, a beautiful golden-coloured fur coat covered her entire body.

She slowly opened her eyes to reveal the swirling ominous aura of 'Golden Gaze, Fiery Eyes'.

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', is narrowing his eyes.]

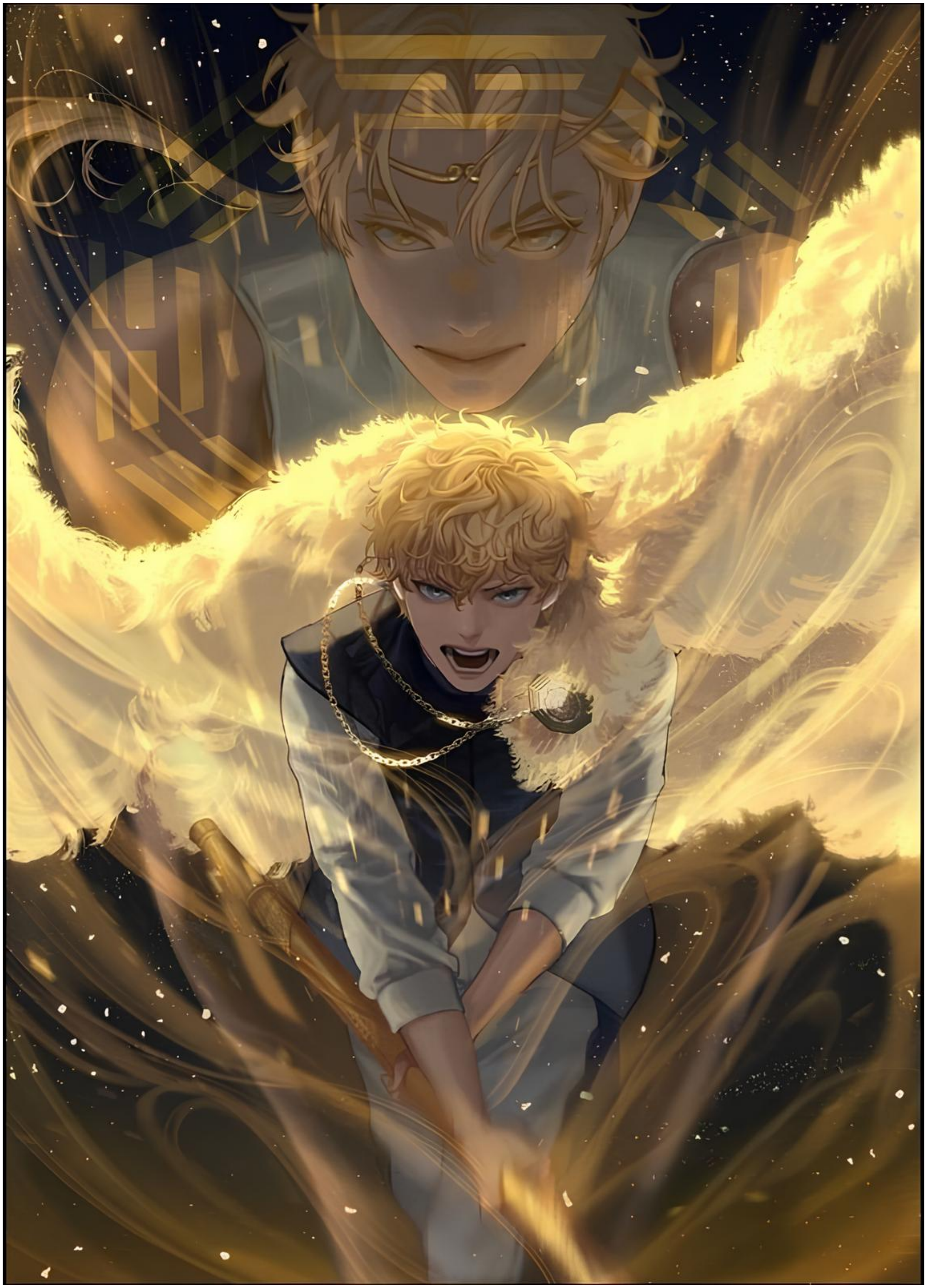
[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is surprised silly.]

[Constellation, 'Goryeo's First Sword', is sighing out.]

[All neutral-type Constellations can't hide their astonishment!]

Everyone present recognised the owner of that Status. It was impossible not to.

Jang Hayoung extended her hand out and the world's heaviest staff found itself in her grip in the next moment. Boundlessly arrogant and aloof eyes glared at the azure sky, and every cloud in the world trembled all at the same time.



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[Go and rescue Kim Dokja.]

Those words were not spoken by Jang Hayoung.

[Constellation, 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband', has incarnated into the scenario!]

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* Official novel illustration (canonical)

Chapter 411: Ep. 78 - Twist/轉, III

During her adventures on the 'Isle of Reincarnators', Jang Hayoung utilised the [Unidentifiable Wall] several times; she used its first-stage function, [Chat System], to engage Constellations in conversation.

– Demon King of Salvation-nim.

– …Why are you calling me like that?

From a certain moment on, she even got to talk to Kim Dokja as if nothing had happened, too.

For a while there, she oh-so-wanted to deny that 'Demon King of Salvation = Kim Dokja' and ended up having a mental breakdown, but she had no choice but to come to terms with it now.

The 'Demon King of Salvation' Jang Hayoung liked so much happened to be Kim Dokja, and the dimwit Kim Dokja was none other than the 'Demon King of Salvation'. She barely managed to accept that fact now. Of course, she hadn't 100% accepted it, though.

– I was talking to 'Demon King of Salvation'-nim. So, Kim Dokja should keep his mouth shut.

– …

– It can't be helped, then. Don't say anything unnecessary, and just gimme the answers I want.

– …What kind of answers are they?

Now that he openly asked her that, the sorrow she'd been suppressing until now exploded onto the surface.

– Why don't you want me to join the 'Kim Dokja's Company'?

She always wanted to ask him that question. She watched her companions use 'Context of Constellation' and get to the next scenario, and was left behind along with the teachers at the rear of the scenario. She did want to go with them. She thought that it'd been nice if she could become one of those shining stars, too.

Is it because I lack the qualifications?

Maybe, it's because I haven't been with Kim Dokja from the beginning of the scenarios.

Jang Hayoung remembered the times they shared during the revolution of the Demon Realm as well as the Demon King Selection fights. For the first time in her life, she experienced bliss during those moments, and now, they had become an indelible part of her.

And that was why, she thought that she too had become Kim Dokja's companion now. But, maybe, she was simply deluding herself.

– I'd like you to live a free life.

Jang Hayoung's anger suddenly bubbled up after hearing his reply. She wanted to shout back and ask, what kind of bullshit was that after they had come this far. But then…

– Forcibly being transferred to another dimension and living in the Demon Realm, neither of those were your choices, right?

She couldn't argue with that. As if her breathing had come to a standstill, all she could do now was to read the incoming messages.

– Hayoung-ah, please live the life you want.

Those words were coming from the 'Demon King of Salvation'. Words of a high and mighty Constellation, who was addicted to the Story of saving someone and periodically disregarded his own life.

That was why these words were not from Jang Hayoung's friend, 'Kim Dokja'.

「His voice can't be heard anymore.」

The 'Unidentifiable Wall' spoke to her. Even with the wall that allowed her to talk to any being in this world in an instant, she couldn't hear Kim Dokja's voice.

He resolutely remained as the 'Demon King of Salvation', just like what she asked of him.

"Come on now. What do you want from me when you say stuff like that?"

That was why… she wanted to hear Kim Dokja's voice.

['Unidentifiable Wall', is bearing its own name!]

That was why, Jang Hayoung was standing in this place.

['Unidentifiable Wall' is evolving into the 'Wall of Impossible Communication'!]

[2nd stage functionality of 'Wall of Impossible Communication' is now available!]

She unlocked the power of her new wall, persuaded all the Constellations that could aide <Kim Dokja's Company>, and brought them to this place.

All for the sake of the life she wanted to live, and not for anyone else.

Tsu-chuchuchut!!

The stupefied faces of the <Kim Dokja's Company> members could be seen looking back at her. Jang Hayoung shouted out, as the sensation of the Status filling her head made her consciousness dimmer and dimmer. "All of you, wake up and get a move on! I can't stay like this for long!"

She shouted, her mind submerging deeper and deeper. The presence of a Constellation was taking over her entire Incarnation Body.

['Wall of Impossible Communication' is currently activating 'Impossible Longing Lv.1'!]

The 'Impossible Longing' – an ability of the 'Wall of Impossible Communication' that allowed Jang Hayoung to form a temporary 'Sponsorship Contract' with a Constellation, even though she had no sponsor backing.

[Constellation, 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband', is looking at his Incarnation Body.]

The 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' – the Great Sage, Heaven's Equal, Sun Wukong. According to Kim Dokja, one of the greatest Constellations in the <Star Stream> itself.

That great and noble Constellation scanned the world with his aloof, arrogant eyes, and spoke in a lofty tone of voice. [Now that I'm here, it's kind of annoying.]

Jang Hayoung became dumbfounded by that and yelled out.

"Ah?! But, you said you'd help! And I even listened to your personal troubles, too! So, hurry up! Please!"

From her perspective, she couldn't help but be flabbergasted by this situation, but it wasn't as if she couldn't understand why the Great Sage, Heaven's Equal said that. For some reason, his condition after incarnating into her body felt strange.

Ju-jujujut…

It was as if several different beings temporarily had become 'one' creature, and his status felt unstable as a result. That 'annoyance' he talked about might have something to do with that condition. However, that was his problem, not hers.

"If you don't keep your promise, then your hair will…"

[I'm doing it! Look, I'm doing it!]

Sun Wukong replied in a voice full of dissatisfaction and grasped the Ruyi Bang. The Status leaking out from his body caused several Constellations to display their interest.

[Great Sage, it'll be a suicide trying to send them back. Even if it's you…]

[And who you might be?]

[…I'm Cheok Jungyeong.]

As if to resist the Great Sage's Status, Cheok Jungyeong opened his chest wide. The former wordlessly studied the emotions etched in the latter's eyes, before throwing a question out. [Hey, you. Do you know who this Master Sun is, then?]

Cheok Jungyeong needed a moment or two before realizing that this 'Master Sun' was the way the Great Sage, Heaven's Equal referred to himself as.

[I'm well aware that you used to be a famous Constellation in the past. Even then…]

[Well, yeah, sure. It's been way too long since this great me did something in a scenario, hasn't it?]

Sun Wukong yawned disinterestedly and after shrinking the size of the Ruyi Bang, he began digging his ear. Cheok Jungyeong was about to blow his top from that arrogance, but then…

[Constellation, 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband', is unleashing his Status!]

Not just Cheok Jungyeong, but the Incarnation Bodies of other Constellations near him were blown away in the air. His eyes opened wide in shock after sensing the powerful presence that could make other Constellations shrink away by simply releasing its Status.

[Look, the sparks…!]

One of the suffering Constellations cried out in pain. Jung Hayoung's body with the Great Sage incarnated into it was now completely enveloped with an insane amount of sparks. It was not an odd thing to see Probability's sparks appear when Constellations unleash their Statuses.

The actual problem here was the fact that this area was currently going through the 89th scenario. In an area that could deal with most types of Probability, such a blinding show of sparks taking place meant…

[Now, look.]

The sides of the Eight Trigram, the Bagua, began spreading on all four cardinal directions of the Great Sage, Heaven's Equal.

Geon (乾, Heaven/Firmament), Tae (兌, Lake/Marsh), Yee (離, Heart of Fire), Jin (震, Thunder), Son (巽, Wind), Gam (坎, Water), Gan (艮, Mountain), Gon (坤, Ground/Earth).

Those letters energetically spun around his Ruyi Jingu Bang (如意金箍棒) and emitted swirling golden light rays. The clones of the 'Indescribable Distance' detected that vigorous aura and began flooding towards him.

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

The Probability's sparks were the precursor to the approaching storm of aftermaths. As if they were pouncing on a tasty prey, the clones of the 'Indescribable Distance' opened their maws all at once towards the Great Sage. There were a total of five, six of them.

Never mind Narrative-grade Constellations, even a Myth-grade would find it difficult to deal with this many.

However, the Great Sage didn't back down.

The moment those vast fogs of darkness enveloped him, his entire figure suddenly lit up in the brightest golden rays of light. And then, his Ruyi Jingu Bang began piercing through the open-mawed fogs along with the vicious whirlwind.

Ku-dudududu…!

Not once did the 'Indescribable Distance' get damaged after getting struck by a lone Star Relic until now. But then, the spinning wheels created by the Ruyi Jingu Bang increased in number to hundreds in an instant and began pounding on the clones, and quite shockingly, horrifying screeches resounded out from the fogs.

Gu-rurururuk…!!

On top of that, one of the clones even tried to dodge the Ruyi Jingu Bang.

Every Constellation in the battlefield couldn't take their eyes off from the Great Sage's Status as he dyed the sky in a spectacular shower of light and fought against the 'Indescribable Distance'.

That included Dionysus, Surya, and Cheok Jungyeong.

[It's a technique of 'Chaos'.]

Hades immediately and accurately read the seditious power permeating within the Ruyi Jingu Bang held by the Great Sage. That power was neither 'Good' nor 'Evil'.

It was a distinct Taoist technique that only the Great Sage, who had compiled unique Stories for himself, could use.

The Mei Houwang. (獼猴王, Handsome Monkey King)

The Great Sage, Heaven's Equal. (齊天大聖)

The Victorious Fighting Buddha. (鬪戰勝佛)

The 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband', Sun Wukong, who continued to exist under many different names, was fighting now.

And he was engaged in a one-versus-many battle against the calamities of the void, something that even Cheok Jungyeong could only barely defeat by giving his all.

As if they didn't want to lose to him, two Constellations decided to pitch in right then.

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is wringing out all of her true powers!]

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', is roaring out as if he doesn't want to lose!]

These two's Statuses were being overlaid on top of the Great Sage's. The [Black Flame] from the Dragon and Uriel's [Hellfire] were combined into one and caused the Riyu Jingu Bang to grow to an abnormal size.

[Story forgotten under a lengthy period of time has begun its storytelling.]

「And so, stars of Good, Evil, and Neutral have gathered in one place.」

Three kinds of Statuses were combined to cause an explosion of a blinding flash.

Go-ooooooh!

The Riyu Jingu Bang, now boasting tremendous girth, slammed into the sky. The heaven and earth rocked violently, and the enormous shockwave distorted time and space itself.

By the time the screaming Constellations opened their eyes again, a huge hole had opened up in the sky once covered in the fog of darkness.

The Great Sage spoke. [Now, go.]

Three people didn't miss that opening and made their move. Yoo Joonghyuk used [Air Steps] to run in the air, Han Sooyoung rode on the shadow clone of the Black Flame Dragon while Jung Heewon borrowed the wings of the Archangel to shoot up vertically.

All three of them penetrated past the fog of darkness and breached the boundary of the sky in an instant.

The moment they escaped the atmosphere, though, their movements dulled rapidly. The cosmic space created by the clashes between the 'Indescribable Distance' and the 'Final Dragon of the Book of Revelation' was filled up with an astonishing amount of Stories chaotically swirling around.

"Keuph…"

Blood trickled out from the corner of Han Sooyoung's lips at the unbelievable density of Stories. Just sensing their presence alone was so painful that her body felt like it'd crumble away.

Kim Dokja was somewhere in this space. Not too long afterwards, they located his trace, scattered around like bread crumbs.

「Only by doing this will I be able to earn the proper Climax.」

A broken fragment of Kim Dokja was floating aimlessly in the empty space. Jung Heewon was the first one to reach out; as if she was catching a very small and fragile bird, she cautiously brought that fragment into her bosom.

Was she mistaken in thinking that she saw the distant world Kim Dokja wanted to reach just beyond the full stop of that sentence?

After catching that sentence, and then, another one… Just like crossing a monkey bar, by continuously moving one step at a time, they would arrive at the end of this trail.

Han Sooyoung spoke. "I guess you're also a Constellation now, Kim Dokja."

All Constellations were addicted to Stories, and in order to reach that single Story they pursued after, they indulged themselves on every other type of Story available.

And that was why they didn't have a true substitute of themselves. Because they had to create all Stories by their own hands in the end.

「My companions will acquire a Story that should allow them to oppose any Nebula out there.」

Even if that Story was meant for other people.

"God damn it, since when did I ask you for this kind of story??"

The clones of the 'Indescribable Distance' discovered the trio and rushed towards their location.

Han Sooyoung shot [Black Flame] out from her hand, while Jung Heewon's [Sword of Judgement] activated [Hellfire]; Yoo Joonghyuk's [Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship] sliced through the space and opened up the path for them.

Normally, they shouldn't have been able to fight against this calamity. The only reason why they could was because of the star existing at the end of that path.

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation', is still activating Stigma, 'Sacrificial Will Lv.9'!]

The 'Sacrificial Will' – a deadly Stigma that raised the combat capabilities of one's companions by risking one's life.

After being strengthened by that starlight, Yoo Joonghyuk swung his sword, Jung Heewon unleashed more Hellfire, and Han Sooyoung continued to punch over and over again.

And eventually, they began sensing the faint presence of Kim Dokja. Like the breathing of a dying man, his weakened Stories were telling them of his current location.

Tsu-chuchuchut…!

Suddenly, Uriel's and the Black Flame Dragon's Status began dwindling rapidly. They had finally reached their limit, in other words.

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is issuing a warning!]

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', says that he needs to use the bathroom and it'll be harder to use his powers…]

They finally spotted a pale, faint star on the far side of the thick fog of darkness. Yoo Joonghyuk and Han Sooyoung both saw it. It felt so desperately within reach, if only they could extend their hands out.

Unfortunately, the path to that star was fraught with much danger. The number of clones rushing in continued to grow, and the pressure of the Statuses surrounding them was getting heavier quite quickly.

All three no longer had much magical energy left in them as they had been flying like a one-way rocket with total disregard for fuel preservation.

Ku-gugugugu!

The distance towards the clones was getting shorter and shorter.

If all three of them marched forward by breaking through all these clones, then never mind saving Kim Dokja, they wouldn't be able to return at all.

However, what if they focused the remaining magical energy into only one person?

"…There's only one way."

All three of them stared at each other at the same time. They couldn't rescue Kim Dokja together.

Which meant that only one among them could reach that star.

Chapter 412: Ep. 78 - Twist/轉, IV

While stuck inside the fog that blocked their view, Yoo Joonghyuk addressed his companions first. "I shall be the one to save him."

The [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] in his hand began emitting the pure-blue light.

"All of you are too exhausted. So, it's only correct that I continue on. Transfer your remaining magical energy to me."

That prompted Jung Heewon to unsheathe the [Sword of Judgement] and speak. "Your own condition is just as messy as ours. I should be the one to go, instead."

His brows quivered slightly. This would be the first time she came out this forcefully.

"Both of you better get out of my way! I alone am more than enough!"

And now, even Han Sooyoung butted in.

The gazes of the two locked in a staring contest shifted over to her. Their eyes so clearly implied, "We get why we want to go, but what's up with you now?" causing her to pout unhappily.

"Why are you staring at me like that for? What, I shouldn't rescue Kim Dokja?"

"I thought you didn't like Dokja-ssi?"

"Ah, of course I don't like him."

Now normally, she'd have dumped such annoying responsibility on Yoo Joonghyuk's shoulders. Unfortunately, she had a reason to step up this time around.

Just as Kim Dokja rushed forward aboard Surya's train, a message from him flew in at her, that was why.

– Hey, you're going to rescue me, right?

…If only she didn't hear that message.

Han Sooyoung grumbled inwardly and was about to open her lips to speak, only for Jung Heewon to snatch the initiative away. "I'm sorry, but Dokja-ssi personally asked me to save him. So, I can't yield to you nor to this guy, not this time."

"What rubbish are you talking about? Kim Dokja asked me to save him."

"Stop lying. There's no way he'd ask you to do that."

"Argh, I'm not lying, it's the truth! You think I'm a habitual liar just because my job was a writer?"

Their gazes collided in mid-air.

And at that very moment, Han Sooyoung was overcome with this rather strange feeling.

Initially, she thought that Jung Heewon was lying in order to save that moron up there. But when she thought about it some more, this woman wasn't the type to lie about stuff like that.

She abruptly turned her head to the side, only to find Yoo Joonghyuk forming a scary scowl.

"Hey, by any chance, you…"

With indescribable rage filling up his expression, he then began glaring at the distant star. It was at this point that Han Sooyoung finally realized something.

…Hang on, could this be?

"Could that bastard Kim Dokja…?!"

The star continued to faintly shine in the distance. It was almost as if she could glimpse Kim Dokja's smirking face there.

Ku-gugugu…

The hole in the sky the Great Sage had opened up was gradually filling back up. The clones hesitating in fear regained themselves and the fog of darkness was blanketing the world once more.

And then, the noise from the Apocalypse Dragon's shockwave reverberated around like crashing waves. Constellations were jolted wide awake and they all looked up at the Great Sage.

[My bad, but I can't do that for the second time. I'm already breaking the rules as is.]

The Great Sage spun the Ruyi Bang around, and as if he found it all rather annoying, shrunk the pole to store it inside his ear.

[Nebula <Emperor>'s 'Promise' has been invoked against the Constellation, 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband'!]

The Great Sage that was pressuring the 'Indescribable Distance' until now began scattering away. As if his body was being torn into several pieces, his clear-as-day Status began crumbling away – and right before the end, he issued one final message.

[Hey, you lot. If you keep standing around looking dazed, you'll all die soon.]

[Everyone, attack! If we're pushed back now, we'll all die for sure!]

Dionysus and the Constellations of <Olympus> had replenished their energy by then, and unleashed their Statuses towards the sky. Those from <Underworld> also stopped preserving their strengths and made their move, as well. The Korean Peninsula's Constellations concentrated their powers on Lee Jihye, and soon, [Turtle Dragon]'s cannons fired blinding rays of energy. Some began fighting, while some began resisting.

It was not the same for everyone, however.

Like falling meteors, stars from the sky continued to fall.

Constellations from <Vedas> and <Papyrus> trying to escape – stars with their Modifiers already known, and those who weren't, were caught up in the battle for supremacy between the Apocalypse Dragon and an Outer God, and were crashing to the ground – as if to announce that the age of the stars was coming to an end.

Metatron was looking up at the sky.

The information Jophiel, the Commander of the Red Cosmos, had sent from the 1863rd turn didn't mention any of this.

Currently, both of his hands were occupied with creating the sealing tool to seal away the Apocalypse Dragon. This tool, created by gathering every Story of <Eden> as well as those belonging to Absolute Good.

Jophiel said as thus:

– Scribe, you'll die using this, but the world will remember the 'Good' once more.

She definitely said that. So how come…

[The target cannot be sealed.]

Even though the sealing tool was almost complete, the Apocalypse Dragon couldn't be sealed away. He didn't know why. He couldn't even figure out how and from where things went wrong, either.

Was it due to reviving the Dragon too early?

Or, could it be because the 'Indescribable Distance' had interfered?

Was the 'Demon King of Salvation' the main culprit as he suspected?

…If they were all wrong, then maybe, Jophiel…?

At the end of his vision, he saw Michael, inching closer to his death with half of his Incarnation Body gone. As long as <Eden> existed, he'd be able to revive, but with this, the Nebula would disappear. Not just it, though, but even the entirety of <Star Stream> would start crumbling away.

[Have you already given up? That's quite unlike you.]

Metatron looked back and his expression hardened instantly. [Did you come here to kill me?]

[You'd die anyway even if I don't do anything, so why should I even bother?]

The Ruler of East Hell, Agares, cackled raucously before frowning a bit.

[Oldest Evil has begun its storytelling.]

With that message, Metatron realized why Agares had come back here.

The Archangel spoke. […For a short while there, I was envious of you. Envious of the fact that you could so easily abandon the Story of 'Evil' and leave, just like that.]

[Lying is one of the virtues of 'Evil'. Have you forgotten that already?]

Agares laughed again, sounding as if he was sick and tired of it. Metatron understood the meaning of that laughter better than anyone.

The 'Good and Evil'; they might be on the opposing sides, but they understood each other better than anyone else in this world.

They would not be able to escape from this 'Story' until their dying moments. Because this Story was already 'them' by now.

[Oldest Good has begun its storytelling!]

[Oldest Evil has…!]

[Shut up. Just how long will this stinking story continue its 'beginning' crap?] Agares scowled after seeing the Stories rise up.

[Oldest Evil is quietly staring at the 'Ruler of East Hell'.]

[It's about time you stop, don't you think?]

Agares shoved his hand into his inner pocket and pulled out a rolled cigarette. Accompanied by the 'chi-eeck' noise, the cigarette was lit on fire and the smoke spread around in the air. The number of stars falling continued to increase and the clones of the 'Indescribable Distance' began to devour all the fallen Constellations. And from afar, the Apocalypse Dragon's roar could be heard, too.

[What a spectacular scenery this is. It's the ideal stage to end this long, dragged-out fight.]

The leaders of the 'Good' and the 'Evil' stared at this spectacle. The tragedy taking place here all began with these two.

It was around then that they heard a bizarre noise coming from behind. A clone had snuck closer without being detected and had its maw wide open in

Metatron's direction.

[Demon King, the 'Ruler of East Hell', is revealing his Status!]

Ku-dududu!

The clone rushing in to rip and devour the Archangel at any second faltered and stopped moving. Agares's hands reached out and grabbed hold of the clone's mouth trying to shut close.

He was none other than the Demon King ranked second in the hierarchy. Out of the current crop of Demon Kings, he was the only one capable of contending for supremacy against a Myth-grade Constellation.

Agares spoke while chewing on the cigarette. [What are you blankly looking at? Were you planning to become a martyr or something?]

[Although it was only for a brief moment, I did think that maybe that's not such a bad idea.]

[You should finish the things you've started first. I'm telling you to finish the 'Great War of Saints and Demons' properly as befitting the high-and-mighty 'Scribe of Heaven'.]

[It's impossible. The power of the Apocalypse Dragon is far greater than I expected.]

[Using the Wall's power should be sufficient.]

[Even resorting to that power isn't enough to seal the Apocalypse Dragon away.]

[I figured as much. However, you'll still be able to save the ones here. After all, the 'Wall' exists to protect something, doesn't it?]

Those words caused Metatron's eyes to tremble. […What are you talking about?]

[You always needed to be told twice before you could understand.]

Agares was there, still pouring out the vicious Status towards the clones. Metatron had fought against that Demon King for a very long time.

Even then, he had never seen that kind of an expression from the latter before.

「At that moment, Good and Evil looked at each other.」

The Demon King's eyes looked at the other dying Demon Kings and Archangels. [Wouldn't 'Good and Evil' be able to carry on to the next generation only after these fools are saved from this mess?]

[That is a funny thing for a Demon King to say.]

[I'm only saying it now, but to me, you don't look much like an Archangel yourself.]

Metatron heard Agares's sullen voice and couldn't help but feel strange. Why did the demon he fought against for such a long time feel so, so close today?

Were their current actions for the sake of Good or for Evil? Metatron couldn't tell.

But, he was sure of one thing.

[Story of the Most Ancient 'Good and Evil' is looking at you.]

Even if they had become the Story itself, what they chose to do now wasn't because Stories told them to do so.

[I can't do this alone.]

[I know.]

['Wall that Divides Good and Evil' is violently shaking!]

With one wall between them, the representatives of 'Good' and 'Evil' extended their hands towards each other.

[Even if we save them here, we still can't stop the Apocalypse.]

[I also know that.] Agares placed his hand on top of the sealing tool Metatron had created. [But then, that's not a problem we should worry about.]

The Archangel and the Demon King held each other's hands. With that, the sealing tool emitted blinding rays of light and began expanding at a rapid pace.

And soon, it couldn't be called a tool anymore, but a large ship, instead.

Ku-gugugugu!

It was an ark that once upon a time protected all beings above ground from the destruction of a world. A mythical vessel that descended to the world in order to protect life itself against the Great Flood.

Metatron spoke. [Evacuate the Constellations.]

[Understood, Scribe.]

The 'Master of the Ark' standing among the Constellations heard Metatron's call and took command of the vessel. The surviving Valkyries began helping the Constellations and Incarnations in the near vicinity to board the ark one by one.

However, Metatron and Agares had to support the Ark's Story and couldn't board it themselves. It wasn't only those two who knew that fact, unfortunately.

[You've done something quite foolish, oh Ruler of the East Hell.]

[Asmodeus.]

Not even giving him time to say something, Asmodeus's claws penetrated deeply into Agares's heart. Even then, the latter's expression remained unflustered as he stared at the face of impending death.

Looking displeased by that expression, Asmodeus spoke. [Why don't you give up the 'Wall' to me now? You no longer have the qualifications to represent 'Evil'.]

The claws sunk in even deeper and dug out Agares's innards. Pitch-black Stories dripped out as the Demon King spoke. [What a persistent bastard you are. Why do you desire the 'Wall' this badly anyway? Do you honestly believe that you can become a god by possessing the 'Wall'?]

[I know very well that possessing it won't turn me into a god. However, at the bare minimum, I'd become one of the cowards belonging to the 'Final Scenario'.]

[I see. So, you knew about the 'Final Scenario', didn't you…]

Agares chuckled bitterly, but then, madness suddenly brushed past his eyes.

[Sorry, but you can't become the owner of that 'Wall'.]

[That's not for you to decide. Besides, when you die, your 'Wall' will…]

[You see, I've already handed my 'Wall' over to someone else.]

[That sort of a…]

It was then, Asmodeus's shoulders suddenly flinched. Through the instincts of a Demon King, it realized that what Agares had said was true.

[…Just to who?]

[Well now, that's something for you to find out.]

Asmodeus roared out in anger and its claws pierced into Agares's neck. As the fragments of Stories splattered around like real blood, the latter looked up into the sky.

[Isn't this quite beautiful, Metatron? This is our end.]

The duet of 'Good and Evil' dimly continuing on was now flowing within the night sky of the apocalypse.

He saw the cascading meteor shower and grinned brightly.

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation', is currently activating 'Sacrificial Will Lv.9'!]

"That's really pissing me off. Seriously. I can't even switch that off, either."

Han Sooyoung panted angrily and shouted out loudly. Still stuck inside the ever-expanding fog of darkness, the three of them were fighting against the clones that seemed to increase in number with every passing second.

They knew that Kim Dokja was just beyond here.

But it was impossible to break past this fog of darkness with the remaining magical power each of them had. So, the best thing they could do under the circumstances was to concentrate their energy into one person right now.

Even though they knew that, the trio didn't want to yield.

If it was simply about Kim Dokja's sake, then it wouldn't have mattered who went there. While looking at the distant star faintly flickering away, all three of them were thinking the same thing.

The odds of the one heading towards that star dying were very high.

The fog of darkness was getting heavier and thicker, and the Apocalypse Dragon's shockwave was also getting more violent as well.

Kim Dokja was still alive. However, the odds of saving him were low. And even if he was rescued, they'd still die alongside him, anyway.

And so, this bickering wasn't about choosing who gets to save him, but to find the person who'd die for someone else, instead.

"Both of you know this already, but I cannot die," said Yoo Joonghyuk first.

Jung Heewon knew what he meant by 'Cannot die' and was about to get angry, but then, Han Sooyoung was a step faster than her. "You need to think about this carefully, Jung Heewon. You aren't going to die alone, remember that."

Right then, Jung Heewon felt the weight of the cross on her back. She had nothing to retort back with.

If she died here, then the person on her back would die as well.

"In that case, you take over Hyunsung-ssi for a…"

"Jung Heewon! Behind you!"

She reflexively looked behind her after hearing Han Sooyoung's yell. However, there was nothing there. The moment she went, 'Ah!', someone pushed her from behind, and while staggering ungainly, she fell back towards the ground below.

By the time she unfurled the Archangel's wings to stop her fall, the figures of both Yoo Joonghyuk and Han Sooyoung had grown so far away.

"Damn it! What's the mea… Stop, both of you!"

After seeing the two hurriedly grow distant without even bothering to receive her magical energy, she instantly figured out what they were trying to do here. And because she knew now, there was simply no way that she'd suppress her emotions welling up.

Kim Dokja asked her to save him. However, in order to do that, she couldn't chase after those two.

"Uriel."

She swallowed back her boiling emotions and extended her hand out. The magical power of an Archangel reaching out from her hand pierced past the darkness and formed blinding wings on the backs of the flying duo.

It was right then, she felt a powerful throb on her back, coming from a certain someone's heart. It palpitated powerfully, as if he had something to say.

Jung Heewon replied. "Me too, Hyunsung-ssi."

She watched the two arrows of light traverse through the space and get further away, and then, at the faint, weak starlight waiting for them just beyond their reach. She bit down on her lower lip as if she was enduring against something.

"But, I think it's not our turn yet."

Chapter 413: Ep. 78 - Twist/轉, V

I remained within my crushed consciousness as Stories continued to send whispers in my direction.

[Story, 'Demon King of Salvation', is continuing with its storytelling.]

Yes, I'm still listening.

I haven't fallen asleep.

[Story, 'King of a Kingless World', is sustaining you.]

I endured on while eating the Stories I lived through like a newborn chick being fed. After every sensation from my skin and joints disappeared, it felt as if time had stopped moving. It was like a clock tasked with maintaining my inner balance was broken.

['Final Dragon of the Book of Revelation' is letting out a violent roar!]

[Indescribable Distance' is glaring at 'Final Dragon of the Book of Revelation'.]

The contest of strength was still going on outside. A face-off, one calamity against the other.

I could sense the vibration from the shockwave spreading from far away, even inside this fog.

Although the Status remained strong, the size of the vibration was gradually weakening. As I expected, it seemed that the 'Indescribable Distance' was in a superior position.

The Apocalypse Dragon was so strong that it surpassed all possible imaginations, but as a calamity, it had woken up from its seal not too long ago. It'd not be quite enough to contend with the 'Indescribable Distance' that had been drifting around in the <Star Stream> for a long, long time.

So, the balance of power would slowly tilt towards the latter. The problem would be with its clones, though.

[Exclusive skill, 'Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint' 3rd stage is activating!]

I planned to not use this power on my companions. Unfortunately, I didn't have any other choice in my current situation.

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

Accompanied by the pain akin to my head being crushed, dim, indistinct images floated up to my view. The white noise was pretty intense, perhaps due to the worsening damage to the Stories, but I could still just about make out the contents somehow.

「"Go and save Kim Dokja."」

The chaotic battlefield appeared before me. And then, I saw the Ruyi Bang rocking the skies of that battlefield as well.

He did come.

Golden-coloured thin fur danced entrancingly in the air. Jang Hayoung, ably enduring the advent of the Great Sage, was releasing her new-found Status towards the sky. The Black Flame Dragon and Uriel were helping her out, and behind them, I also saw Kyrgios and the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint, too.

Hades and Persephone were protecting my companions from the clones. The 'Mass Production Maker' was busy loading the collapsed Constellations in his [X-grade Ferrarghini]…

And soon, a huge explosion noise resounded out from the centre of the battlefield, and a gigantic ship suddenly made its appearance.

「This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come.」

The Story of the Ark as written by <Eden> began dyeing the battlefield. It seemed to me that Metatron had come to a decision. Indeed, he must've realized that sealing the Apocalypse Dragon away would be too difficult at this point.

「"Ahjussi…"」

Shin Yoosung and Lee Jihye aboard the Ark were looking up at the sky. The former was supporting Lee Gilyoung, who seemed to have blacked out. It was her duty to stop the boy from going on a rampage, and thankfully, my Incarnation seemed to be performing her duty admirably.

Constellations and Incarnations had evacuated onto the Ark, and then, I heard the sound of the Island collapsing.

[Constellation, 'Mandala's Guardian', is looking at you.]

I thought that a faint outline of the Buddhist rosary had appeared before my eyes, and that was when I heard his true voice.

[Oh, dear child. It has finally come to this.]

I could only smile weakly towards him.

'You knew this would happen already'.

The 108 rosary beads that appeared before my eyes began emitting wondrous light.

Sakyamuni must've predicted this moment as soon as I appeared in his radar.

To him, the flow of time wasn't in a straight line but actually, one giant circle. He might not know of the detailed information on the future, but through the events of the past, he was able to read the present.

[The history of this island comes to an end here. And things will get rather busy from now on.]

I already knew why he'd get 'busy' thanks to the 'Ways of Survival'.

The rosary beads vibrated all at once as they became whiter and whiter. Soon, this island would be closed. And just like what happened tens of thousands of years ago, this island would seal the Apocalypse Dragon once more.

This island would become a giant rosary that contains the Apocalypse Dragon.

'Please, allow my companions on the Ark to escape from the island'.

The rosary before me emitted a faint trace of light. It was a sign of agreement.

[However, you can't be saved, my child.]

I nodded my head.

I thought as much.

Well, I was stuck right in the middle of the Apocalypse Dragon and the Nameless Mist, after all.

[Oh, dear child, I pray for story's…]

His true voice was swept up by the shockwave as well as the wave of the fog of darkness and got erased.

My whole body began shuddering like a lone leaf in the wind. The rate of my fragmented Stories disintegrating was speeding up. I curled up even more.

I was almost there.

If I endure this part, then <Kim Dokja's Company> would acquire a brand-new Giant Story.

We'd be able to meet the condition of 'Twist (轉)' that leads us towards the Final Scenario.

[Story, 'King of a Kingless World', has stopped its storytelling.]

But then, Stories began cutting out one by one.

[Story, 'Returnee's Disciple', has stopped its storytelling.]

[Story, 'Gourmet Association's Heretic', has stopped its storytelling.]

It became harder to breathe and my vision grew dimmer.

[Story, 'One Who Is Loved By an Archangel', has stopped its storytelling.]

I knew that everything would be over if I lose my consciousness here.

[Story, 'One Who Hunted the King of Calamity', is curling up.]

[Story, 'One Who Killed an Outer God', is resisting.]

That was why I desperately held on to my consciousness.

I filled my head trying to get away from me with intimately familiar words.

Right, let me recall the 'Ways of Survival'.

For some extraordinary reason, though, what appeared in my mind wasn't the contents of the 'Ways of Survival', but my life during my middle school years. Memories of me sneakily using the PC without the knowledge of my cousins to read the 'Ways of Survival', or when I was doodling on the corners of the school textbook. Memories, when I transcribed the contents of the novel on a notebook, or when I drew up the chart of the power scale of all the characters.

– Dokja, would you like to become a writer when you grow up?

A teacher asked me that after discovering my doodling. I replied that what I wanted to become wasn't a writer, but a reader. The teacher formed a strange expression after hearing that, but eventually smiled back at me.

– That's not such a bad idea. Because a book needs a reader to be complete.

That teacher-nim who said that to me passed away four days later due to a car accident.

That was life.

I knew that. I knew that life was not some story.

[Story, 'Demon King of Salvation', has stopped its storytelling.]

However, even still…

[Story, 'Life and Death Companions', is continuing on with its storytelling.]

I would've liked this life to become a story.

'I want to live'.

I reached out, but there was no sense of anything.

From afar, something was breaking past the battlefield of the Apocalypse Dragon and the Outer God to approach my location. Although it was an incredibly faint general outline of a person, I recognised who it was right away.

[<Star Stream> is acknowledging your stunning achievement.]

[You have acquired a new 'Giant Story'.]

Warm rays of light leaked in from somewhere and enveloped my body. Just as I tried to say something, a voice came to me from somewhere.

I want to save him.

I definitely want to save him.

Han Sooyoung bit her lips hard enough to draw blood and thought to herself over and over again.

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation', is currently activating 'Will to Live Lv.1'.]

Anyone who heard that message would think the same as her.

It wasn't from just anyone, but from that Kim Dokja.

"It's still not too late."

Han Sooyoung heard Yoo Joonghyuk's words and wiped the blood trickling down her lip before forming a grin. "You know, I've never yielded to anyone in my life before."

"I know that you've reached your limit."

"You talking about yourself?"

"I can endure longer than you."

Kim Dokja wasn't too far from them now. However, both time and their situation didn't look good at all.

The forward momentum Jung Heewon added earlier could only take them this far. With their remaining energy, they were unable to fight against the clones nor break past that thick fog of darkness.

Ku-gugugugu…

From Han Sooyoung's bandages, now unwrapped, a mixture of blood and Stories flooded out. Her complexion was now incredibly pale.

Yoo Joonghyuk spoke. "Are you planning to meet a dog's death here?"

"It's just that, I can't trust you 100%, that's all."

Something cold flitted in and out of Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes just then.

She still asked him, though. "You know that I possess [Lie Detection], right?"

"Of course."

"Do you really consider Kim Dokja as your companion?"

"You're asking an unnecessary question."

"I know that the two of you went through all sorts of crappy scenarios and built up some sort of a bond in the process. But, separate from all that, there is something I still can't wrap my head around." Unlike what she said earlier, she didn't activate [Lie Detection] during her speech. "You originally didn't have any allies and stuff like that. But, you've changed so much after entering this regression turn."

"…"

"That's why I can't trust you. You used to forsake your allies all for your great cause, so why are you trying to rescue Kim Dokja now?"

Yoo Joonghyuk's gaze met Han Sooyoung's.

It had been such a long time since she last saw him in a pitch-black darkness that for a moment there, she involuntarily ended up shuddering. It was possible that she had touched something she shouldn't have. Because she didn't know much about Yoo Joonghyuk's regression turns, to begin with.

He replied to her. "Once these scenarios come to an end, there is something I must confirm with Kim Dokja."

One couldn't read any emotions or thoughts from his face. That was like his version of despair, maybe his rage, or even his hellish loneliness. Or, it was possible that none of that belonged to Yoo Joonghyuk but to Han Sooyoung herself, instead.

"And that is why, until then I…"

As things stood, there was only one truth she could glean from what he said. "Okay, so, you're planning to keep him alive, is that it?"

She looked to her right hand as she finished speaking. [Black Flame] burning in darkness waited for her there. The very last drops of her magical power were drawing on her hand.

"You better keep your promise. If you can't save him, then…"

Her burning gaze landed on Yoo Joonghyuk next. Her small palm touched his back, and then, an intense storm of magical energy whipped up.

"…Just drop dead and go to the next turn!"

The Black Flame Dragon's grace extending out from her arm permeated into Yoo Joonghyuk for a moment; the magical energy from Jung Heewon and Han Sooyoung combined in that instance to create wings of light and darkness just beyond his black coat.

Kuwaaaaaaah-!!

Yoo Joonghyuk grasped the [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] tightly as he crossed the vast emptiness.

He was able to cross the fog of darkness he couldn't possibly traverse with his own powers alone with the aid of Jung Heewon and Han Sooyoung.

[Grace of the Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is permeating into you.]

[Grace of the Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', is permeating into you.]

Even then, his magical power reserve continued to fall. The density of the fog grew heavier and the starlight grew fainter in turn. Yoo Joonghyuk gritted his teeth.

He needed a sharper, keener, more accurate story.

A Story that could pierce through that fog of Calamity somehow…

[Story, 'One who Opposes the Miracle', is continuing with its storytelling.]

There it was. Right there in the path of emptiness he was gazing at, the history he lived alongside Kim Dokja lay scattered like the Milky Way. Yoo Joonghyuk ran on that path.

[Story, 'One Who Killed an Outer God', is continuing with its storytelling.]

He ran on one of the Stories, and…

[Story, 'Giant's Liberator', is continuing with its storytelling.]

And, as he ran on yet another Story, his Incarnation Body began moving faster and faster. Soon, gentle rays of golden light enveloped his entire figure. Transcendence level two, then three… The moment he surpassed level four, his body transformed temporarily.

Wu-dududuk.

Bones all over his body screamed, and as if it had been completely overhauled, his appearance changed to become even more agile than before.

And eventually, into Transcendence level five.

[Story, 'Life and Death Companions', is continuing with its storytelling.]

He saw a star dying alone in the distance. But to him, that guy no longer looked like a Constellation now.

Kim Dokja.

It was still not too late.

The Stories they remembered still remained, and the people who remembered him were still alive. The story he so wanted to create, it was still alive and kicking in this world.

[Story, 'Kim Dokja's Company', is continuing with its storytelling.]

You mustn't die in this place.

[Incarnation Body's durability has reached its limit!]

[The 'Ark' is calling out to you!]

Yoo Joonghyuk suddenly felt a powerful suction force pulling him from behind. That power was preventing him from getting closer to Kim Dokja.

[Constellation, the 'Mandala's Guardian', is calling out to you.]

"Shut up!"

Yoo Joonghyuk resisted against all those forces and advanced forward. Kim Dokja was right in front of his nose. Ten steps away, nine, eight… He endured against sparks tearing into his body and continued to march on.

Five steps away, four…

He reached out.

He reached out towards the ends of Kim Dokja's clothes drifting aimlessly in the emptiness. The moment his hand was about to touch the fabric…

Along with the sensation of his breathing coming to a stop, the surroundings began shaking. It wasn't because he blacked out or had lost his consciousness.

When he regained his wits, he realized that someone was grabbing his wrist. A firm, strong hand was holding his wrist, not letting it go.

And it happened to be a very familiar hand.

[Incarnation Yoo Joonghyuk's Sponsor is greatly shaken up.]

The entire world was trembling; noises of the Apocalypse Dragon and the Outer God clashing resounded out, and in the distance, the island and its dimension disintegrating could be seen. But what Yoo Joonghyuk saw just then was far, far more shocking than those sights of the apocalypse itself.

Past the 'chaos' that was endlessly ominous and impossible to determine how far it extended, a white coat exactly the same as Kim Dokja's danced in the space.

This being now carried the unconscious Kim Dokja under his arm.

From the pitch-black darkness, that abyss-like pair of eyes was looking at Yoo Joonghyuk.

Slowly, agonisingly slowly, trembling spread up from the ends of his toes, and his grabbed wrist shook like crazy. Because he knew who this being in front of his eyes was. He knew this being so well and because of that, he couldn't say anything at all.

– Are you 'Kim Dokja' from the future?

Some time ago, Yoo Joonghyuk had asked that question to a certain someone.

He asked that because he initially thought that only Kim Dokja knew of the story extending as far as to the 1863rd regression turn.

However, now he thought back to that moment, he realized how stupid that question was.

A being who knew all the stories right up until the 1863rd turn.

A being who understood a story the best was not the 'reader' who had read it, but the 'character' that actually lived through that very story.

[Go back. You can't save anyone.]

Chapter 414: Ep. 78 - Twist/轉, VI

The great battle between the Apocalypse Dragon and the 'Indescribable Distance'.

Stars continued to fall as two calamities collided, and this spectacle of the end times was being broadcast to all corners of <Star Stream>.

[The end of this island is approaching.]

The 'Mandala's Guardian', too, was watching it through a display panel. As the 'Isle of Reincarnators' began to disintegrate, little bits of 'noise' started to appear on his Incarnation Body.

Yoo Sangah still stuck inside the cistern spoke towards the Guardian.

– But, you knew this would happen, didn't you?

[What makes you say that?]

Her soul wordlessly emitted a soft light. Currently, her new Incarnation Body hadn't woken up yet.

– Because… the 'you' I read about in the 'Library' was…

[Please, you shouldn't discuss that story yet. There are those who eavesdrop on our conversation.]

The moment his words came to an end, the entirety of the temple was rocked by a vicious tremor. Ominous, turbid air was pressing down on the surroundings.

Beastly growlings could be heard next; something emerging from the shadows cast by all four corners of the chamber wriggled noticeably.

Yoo Sangah's soul trembled in worry after sensing that foreboding aura. As the bubbles inside the cistern increased in numbers, Sakyamuni finally stepped forward.

[Oh, the Hounds of Tindalos, it seems that you've arrived for the wrong prey today.]

He gently recited a Buddhist prayer, causing the shadows drifting around them to vanish in an instant – as if they were hounds searching for another prey to hunt.

Only after those shadows had completely disappeared did Yoo Sangah begin speaking again in some difficulty.

– What were those…?

[Oh, dear child. The door to the Final Scenario draws near.]

Sakyamuni's voice had become graver, weightier.

Ku-gugugu…

The Buddhist rosary around his neck emitting heat rose up in the air simultaneously. Already knowing what he was planning to do, Yoo Sangah asked him a new question.

– Am I not going to reincarnate?

[Why do you think so?]

– If this island is finished, then you'd also die. And I won't be able to reincarnate, then.

[Dear child, we have already made a deal. A deal where you'll answer my favour, and this body will answer yours. And with that, establish this world's balance.] Sakyamuni smiled benevolently and continued on. [And that is why, my child, you will reincarnate as promised. Although you haven't inherited the Incarnation Body and therefore can't make your mark yet, remember that your role in the 'Final Scenario' will be critical. That is why…]

She wanted to ask him what he meant by that. But before she could, her consciousness began dimming.

[…For the time being, please, get some rest.]

After her soul fell into a slumber, Sakyamuni extracted her Incarnation Body and started the procedure to transmit it to a certain place.

The temple was rocked once more as the 'Kugugugu' noise reverberated throughout its interior. The display panel changed what it was showing as well. It was a scene of two men possessing the exact same countenance staring at each other, one wearing a black coat while the other, a white one.

[Finally, you've also made your move, oh the one who stands at the end of the cycle.] Sakyamuni stood still and watched this scene for a while, before raising his voice as if he was rueful about something. [In that case, I should start making my preparations as well.]

But, how?

Yoo Joonghyuk hated that question. It was the most commonly asked question while living as a Regressor. He even knew all the potential changes in the repertoire, too – from "But, how did you know that?" to "But, how did you do that, you bastard??"

He got so sick and tired of that question, in fact, that there were times where he simply killed those who might throw that question in his way.

But now, he…

"…But, how?"

He ended up asking that very question himself. Even though he knew his opponent would mock him for it.

Tsu-chuchuchuchu…

A face he knew intimately well looked back from within the storm of Probability's aftermaths. It was a face that couldn't be here, something that shouldn't even be here.

[Chaos Points in the applicable region are rising up rapidly!]

[Problem has occurred in the scenario's balance!]

Yoo Joonghyuk staggered unsteadily, but still, he did his absolute best to figure out the current situation. Like the passage of time, delayed by a broken clock, suddenly rushing forward again, countless hypotheses went on a rampage inside his head.

…

「He should've been Kim Dokja.」

「But, he isn't Kim Dokja.」

「1863.」

「But, how? How could something like this…」

[You should know very well that I hate that question.]

As if his thoughts had been read, the person before his eyes replied to the earlier question. Yoo Joonghyuk took another look at the face.

The white [Infinite Dimension Space Coat] glimmering within the bright explosions of sparks; the eyesockets where a pair of empty darkness should've been were now filled by irises of the exact same size as his. It wasn't just the eyes, though – the nose, lips, jawline, and even the build, too. A figure so exact that it was like he was looking in a mirror. The sole difference being a large scar running across one of this being's cheeks.

Yoo Joonghyuk spoke, almost out of disbelief and anger.

"You are not me."

[Correct. I'm not you.]

The eyes containing pitch-black darkness now looked down on Kim Dokja hanging on his waist.

[Constellation, 'Secretive Plotter', is looking at the Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation'.]

The message landed like a final shot to confirm the kill and Yoo Joonghyuk shuddered involuntarily.

"The 'Secretive Plotter'…"

This being right before him was really none other than that 'Secretive Plotter'??

The one who sent Kim Dokja to the 1863rd regression turn, the one who told him Kim Dokja's secret and caused so much chaos, the one who sent all those countless 'indirect messages' until now…

That 'Secretive Plotter' was himself who went past the 1863rd turn??

Yoo Joonghyuk bit his lower lip after hearing a distant explosion. He should think about this at another date.

"Let go of Kim Dokja."

His opponent was the 'Secretive Plotter', an Outer God born from the Chaos itself. Considering his unpredictable pattern up until now, it was eminently possible that appearance was a fake…

[It's a miracle that you managed to survive this far with such a slow head.]

"Shut up, and let go of him. Or else…"

[Or else what?]

Yoo Joonghyuk felt his head become dizzy from the Status pouring out in front of his nose.

He knew that his opponent was powerful. Even then, he didn't expect the gap in strength to be this great. The current him could evenly fight against Indra, an upper-level Narrative-grade Constellation, and not only that, he was able to inflict the god with grievous injuries, too.

But, compared to the being right before his eyes…

[What exactly can you do to me?]

Just what on earth was this?

Yoo Joonghyuk breathed heavily while calming his legs shaking almost out of control. He noticed that the clones of the 'Indescribable Distance' surrounding him from all sides began to sneakily retreat ever since the Plotter's entrance.

「Something like this cannot happen.」

He got angry at the scenario's irrationality, and he grew furious at the <Star Stream> that permitted such a nonsensical Probability.

And when his thoughts reached that far, the inside of his head finally cleared up.

「If I think about everything the 'Secretive Plotter' has done so far, then him incarnating to this place right now should be impossible.」

The 'Secretive Plotter' was different from someone like the Great Sage Heaven's Equal, Uriel, or even the Black Flame Dragon. No, he was an Outer God, and would need an incredible amount of Probability just to make his descent to this world.

Tsu-chuchuchut…!

For sure, the Plotter's entire body was getting swept up in the progressively-worsening storm of aftermaths with every passing second. No matter who you were, you could never be free from the Probability's aftermaths. Which meant that the odds of victory weren't zero.

「If I was Kim Dokja in this situation…」

As if he had become Kim Dokja, Yoo Joonghyuk began speaking in a calm tone of voice. "I don't understand this. You've been staying below the radar until now, so why did you suddenly intervene like this?"

[Because now is the right time.]

"…Right time, is it?"

As soon as that exchange came to an end, a bizarre roar resounded out from the other side of the empty void. It seemed that the battle between the Apocalypse Dragon and the 'Indescribable Distance' had reached its zenith.

The surrounding space distorted greatly after an incredible explosion swept by. Yoo Joonghyuk witnessed the view of the cosmos seemingly being crushed whole and it really dawned on him that the <Star Stream> was indeed marching towards its destruction.

For sure, it'd not be strange for whatever crazy things to appear now with that type of Probability running amok. And the 'Secretive Plotter' had been waiting for this moment all along.

Ku-gugugugu!

The [Great Holes] were opening up far above his head. It'd be his first time seeing that many [Great Holes] appear at the same time.

That was the hole of calamity that supposedly could destroy a world even if only one opened up. And through those vast, distant holes, innumerable tentacles began peeking themselves out.

[Ohhhhh!]

[■■■… ■■■■■■]

[Oh, the great Plotter!]

[The rise of the vanished islands will now commence…!]

…

Horrifying cries could be heard coming from everywhere. Those true voices caused the bodies of the listeners to be stained by turbid energy.

As if he was reacting to those true voices, the 'Secretive Plotter', still carrying Kim Dokja, began rising up slowly. More specifically, towards one of the [Great Holes].

Yoo Joonghyuk's expression stiffened.

"Wait! Stop!"

Even though he had no concrete plan, he still stood in the path of the 'Secretive Plotter'. That's all he did, yet blood trickled down from his nostrils. His vision grew dimmer and the hand holding his sword trembled. Even then, he still spoke. "I can't allow you to leave."

The 'Secretive Plotter' looked at Yoo Joonghyuk in such a condition and spoke. [Don't attempt anything foolish. Being able to regress does not guarantee you an intact life in the next turn.]

Yoo Joonghyuk accurately figured out what those words implied. One life didn't end with that life; all the previous lives would always remain as a curse during the following turns.

He grasped his sword hard enough to break its grip and spoke. "I'm not planning to go to the next turn."

[…Is that so?]

Right afterwards, he felt pain akin to his entire body being crushed. This attack had no sound, no prior warning. Just the movement of the gaze, and Yoo Joonghyuk's entire body was being squeezed tightly as if he was thrown inside a compactor.

He vomited out blood before roaring out. "Don't look down on me!"

[Giant Story, 'Demon Realm's Spring', has begun its storytelling!]

[Giant Story, 'Torch that Swallowed the Myth', has begun its storytelling!]

The pressure from the Status suppressing him faltered momentarily when the auras of the Giant Stories enveloped his body.

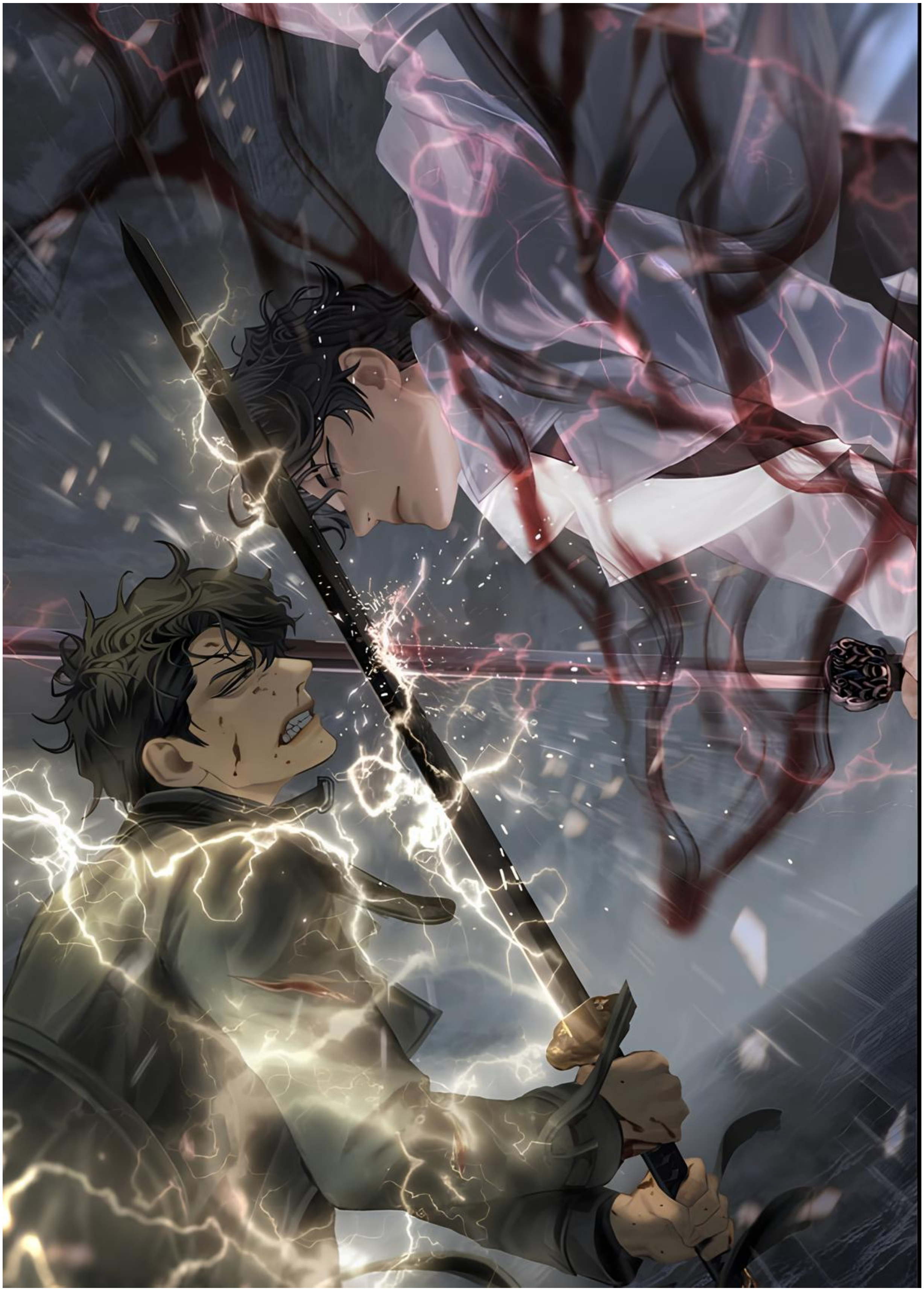
Since Kim Dokja was unconscious, Yoo Joonghyuk was now the holder of the greatest share of the 'Giant Stories' the <Kim Dokja's Company> possessed.

He didn't miss this opening and swung his [Black Heavenly Demon Sword].

He poured all of his remaining magical energy into the weapon, and the waves of Breaking the Sky rode along on its blade.

The sword that could shatter the heavens and had already cut down a star. That very sword was now moving in order to cut down none other than himself. It was a surprise attack with no pretence or tricks.

However, his sword came to a dead stop after a loud, sharp metallic clang resounded out. Something made out of metal had blocked his attack. Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes grew larger.



It was the [Splitting the Sky Sword].

The weapon that broke a long time ago in his 3rd turn life was being held by the 'Secretive Plotter'.

[You can't win against me.]

The two blades collided again, causing the vicious winds of flaming sparks to dance around. Blood poured out from Yoo Joonghyuk's nose and lips. It felt as if his soul was crashing down to the far side of the cosmos just from the clashing of their blades. Just one collision and his right arm were smashed to bits and his ribs shattered.

Yoo Joonghyuk didn't display any hints of the horrifying pain and continued to raise his Status.

At the bare minimum, he'd not die.

Which meant that it was still doable.

"You're also handicapped, just as me."

Indeed, the Plotter's Status was becoming unstable as seconds ticked by. Sparks grew heavier and more vicious, while Stories maintaining the coat and his Incarnation Body had begun scattering away. It was as if Stories that couldn't be fused had been mixed together.

「Without a doubt, the bastard is pushing himself. I need to buy more time.」

On top of this, 'Secretive Plotter' seemed to be worried about something else for a little while, as well. He didn't show it in his expression, but Yoo Joonghyuk could sense it nevertheless.

Indeed, his Status was trying to avoid being noticed by something. Meaning, this bastard wasn't in a situation where he could appear here with complete disregard to everything.

[Trying to buy time, huh… it's a plan that doesn't suit you. Did you learn it from Kim Dokja?]

Yoo Joonghyuk didn't reply. The fact that his opponent had become chatty could only mean that the Plotter had become anxious as well.

[You're only at the 3rd turn. So, your end goal shouldn't have anything to do with Kim Dokja. So, why are you so hung up on him?]

"That's what I want to ask you."

[In order to reach my objective, I require Kim Dokja's presence.]

"Then, that's my answer, too."

At that moment, a faint trace of emotions flickered within the Plotter's eyes. As if he knew what Yoo Joonghyuk was thinking of.

[You won't succeed. Because even Kim Dokja wouldn't know what this regression turn's Final Scenario looks like.]

"If it was only him, true."

[How amusing. The 3rd turn who doesn't even know anything…]

"I may only be the 3rd turn, but…" Stories flooded out from Yoo Joonghyuk's entire figure. "At the bare minimum, I've lived the 3rd turn that you don't know anything about."

New Stories he earned during this 3rd turn became a part of him and continued to circulate within him. Some texts flowed by in sadness, while some others moved about elegantly and beautifully. Stories that didn't exist in the past lives – and those that he might not get to earn again in the future lives.

The 'Secretive Plotter' quietly watched those Stories, before opening his lips to speak.

[No, I do know of this life, oh the puppet of the Oldest Dream.]

Chapter 415: Ep. 78 - Twist/轉, VII

The puppet of the Oldest Dream.

Yoo Joonghyuk frowned deeply, although this wouldn't be his first time hearing that term.

"It's that nonsense about a puppet again. What does it even mean?"

[You still haven't even figured that out yet, and that's why you're only the 3rd turn.]

"Don't speak as if you're so amazing yourself. What do you know about this turn, anyway?"

[I know a lot more than you.]

A burst of anger took over Yoo Joonghyuk and the golden light suddenly dyed his right eye.

[Exclusive skill, 'Sage's Eye Lv.???', is activating!]

The current Yoo Joonghyuk was a Transcendent, repeatedly experiencing the rapid rise of his Status and now strong enough to fight against Narrative-grade Constellations. When considering the fact that the discernment level of the [Sage's Eye] depended on the user's Status, he should be able to read the fragmented information on a Constellation now.

Tsu-chuchuchut!

Only two people managed to perfectly shut out his [Sage's Eye] until now. One was the Prophet, Anna Croft, while the other, Kim Dokja.

However, if his thoughts were correct, then there should be one more being that he couldn't read, as well.

[As befitting the 3rd turn, your judgement is also dull.]

The right eye of the 'Secretive Plotter' also glowed in the brilliant golden hue, exactly the same as Yoo Joonghyuk.

The vision in his right eye was dyed crimson momentarily, and the trickling blood wet Yoo Joonghyuk's cheek.

[Exclusive skill, 'Sage's Eye' has been perfectly defended against by another 'Sage's Eye'!]

[Constellation, 'Secretive Plotter', is looking at the Incarnation, 'Yoo Joonghyuk'.]

"There's no way that a bastard like you are 'Yoo Joonghyuk'." He simply couldn't accept it. "No matter which regression turn 'Yoo Joonghyuk' it is, he'd never use the scenario of the others as his entertainment."

He was certain of this.

Even if he existed in other regression turns, regardless of how many lives he'd go through, he was completely certain of never changing his creed.

The eyes of the 'Secretive Plotter' quietly gleamed. [You're correct. I'm merely the 'Secretive Plotter' now.]

He was merely the 'Secretive Plotter' – something this being continued to mention up until now.

He continued on. [The 'Yoo Joonghyuk' from the 3rd turn only existed to destroy <Star Stream>.]

"…So, you knew that."

The 'Secretive Plotter' glanced at the [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] crying out viciously and vigorously, and formed a faint smile. No, rather than calling that a smile, it'd be more correct to describe that as a 'slightly unsettling movement of lips', instead.

[When you destroy <Star Stream>, every Constellation within it will fall. Which means this fool will die as well.]

The ends of the Plotter's gaze fell on the slumped figure of Kim Dokja. He wavered as if his breathing would come to an end at any second, causing Yoo Joonghyuk to dash forward.

Claaaang!

The [Splitting the Sky Sword] and the [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] clashed and blue sparks danced everywhere. Blood trickled down from the corner of Yoo Joonghyuk's lips.

[Giant Story, 'Torch That Swallowed the Myth', is roaring out!]

He didn't even bother to wipe that off and swung the sword once more. That was an attack borne out of the need to get rid of all the unnecessary thoughts from his mind. An act of one last-ditch effort, to focus on the target right before eyes by simplifying his thought process. Unfortunately, his opponent knew already what he was trying to do here.

The 'Secretive Plotter' evaded the [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] and threw a question as if to make fun of him. [Why are you trying to rescue Kim Dokja? At the end of the day, isn't he just another Constellation you hate so much?]

The faintest hint of unrest briefly flickered on the attacking blade.

The Giant Story's Status emitted by Yoo Joonghyuk wavered ever so slightly, but the 'Secretive Plotter' didn't miss that opening and took a stride forward.

[According to your creed, this fool should've died already. After all, there are no good Constellations in this world, are there?]

The Constellations. Beings that coveted the scenarios of <Star Stream>, acted like voyeurs on the incarnations and their lives, and gluttonously devoured everything in this world as the subjects of Stories. Technically speaking, the 'Demon King of Salvation' was nothing more than a Constellation, just like them.

And the current Yoo Joonghyuk's goal was to destroy all Constellations. However, he didn't kill Kim Dokja after the latter had become one.

「But, why not?」

It was a question he couldn't readily answer. That was why, he also had been delaying facing it, too.

「Why did Yoo Joonghyuk not kill Kim Dokja?」

All those human connections surrounding Kim Dokja briefly flitted in and out of Yoo Joonghyuk's mind.

Shin Yoosung and Kim Dokja; Lee Gilyoung and Kim Dokja; Kim Dokja fighting against other Constellations.

Kim Dokja, who sacrificed his life for his companions.

And Kim Dokja, dying in such a wretched state like this in the end…

"Kim Dokja, he…"

Fragments of Stories floated around Kim Dokja told his tale as he lived as the 'Demon King of Salvation'. Yoo Joonghyuk knew of those Stories, too.

They were the ones he also lived through, as well.

[Baat…]

Biyoo's voice came from very far away; Yoo Joonghyuk heard that voice, and slowly opened his lips. "He, the 'Demon King of Salvation', might be a Constellation, but…"

There were no good Constellations in this world. That belief hadn't changed in Yoo Joonghyuk's mind as he lived through the 0th turn all the way to the current 3rd turn, a total of four lives.

The only good star was a fallen one, a good Dokkaebi was a dead one, and there was no such thing as a 'good' scenario.

Even then, Yoo Joonghyuk was betraying his own creed right now.

"That 'Kim Dokja'… He isn't a Constellation. No, he's simply a human."

Even though he knew that made no sense.

Keu-reuk…

Something cried from within its hiding place in the darkness. Keu-reuk, keu-reuk, keu-reuk… It almost sounded as if the darkness itself was crying. No, it sounded perhaps more like laughter, instead.

Right in the middle of that darkness was the 'Secretive Plotter'.

[The puppet of the Oldest Dream. You don't know anything about 'Kim Dokja'.]

The [Splitting the Sky Sword] gripped in the Plotter's hand let out a lonesome howl. That was the 'Sword Song', possessed only by a being who had endured a life no one could possibly understand. Yoo Joonghyuk raised his own momentum, not wanting to be pushed back. "Do not speak as if you know something that others don't."

Rather than a verbal answer, the 'Secretive Plotter' lightly tapped the unconscious Kim Dokja. That caused Stories to tumble out of him like the tears of a child trying and failing to hold himself back.

「"I'm Yoo Joonghyuk."」

The young Kim Dokja said those words repeatedly.

There he was, leaving the cousin's place to live alone and receiving wages for part-time work that was well below that of the minimum hourly wage.

「"I'm Yoo Joonghyuk."」

It was a humble and rather common story – poverty seen pretty much everywhere, a down-on-luck tale commonly found everywhere.

A story so common that it was not even worthy of a novelisation treatment.

And there he was, Kim Dokja, living such a story.

「"…I'm Yoo Joonghyuk."」

Here was the main character who moved through high school, university, the army, and the company while repeating those words.

While reading the web-novel, while empathising with its lead character, while being encouraged by the story, while being moved, enraged, and saddened.

「"I am…"」

That's how Kim Dokja had lived.

While reading Yoo Joonghyuk's 'Story', he survived a common and unremarkable life.

In place of his own misfortune, he substituted it for Yoo Joonghyuk's, and rather than his own misfortune, he consumed Yoo Joonghyuk's deaths instead; while writing comments, while meddling in with the story itself.

「"Dear author-nim, how about you do this in the next episode…?"」

[From his birth, Kim Dokja has been a Constellation.]

The Plotter's figure was getting more and more unstable. As if he was being influenced by the deep darkness, the ends of his white coat were scattering away into black pieces.

And just like that coat, Kim Dokja's life was crumbling away as well.

[He's a Constellation who consumed another being's life to extend his own.]

Yoo Joonghyuk got to peer into such a life of Kim Dokja. He had seen those Stories some time ago – he remembered seeing the fragments of those memories back when Yoo Sangah forcibly sucked him into that place called the 'Library'.

[…The 3rd turn. You don't remember anyth…]

"I do not care how Kim Dokja of the past lived his life."

The golden aura flooded out from Yoo Joonghyuk's body, as if the only reason why he kept listening to the Plotter's story was just for this moment.

He slowly opened his eyes, his entire body now dyed in the clear-as-day golden light. Abundant Status flooded out from his core after he reached the fifth stage of Transcendence.

"What matters now is that we need him to see the end of this world."

The Breaking the Sky Energy's flow on the [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] was now going through a transformation.

"And if he needs to die, then I shall be the one to perform the deed."

Yoo Joonghyuk's [Air Step] crossed the space.

['The Ark' is calling out to the Incarnation 'Yoo Joonghyuk'!]

[Constellation, 'Mandala's Guardian', is summoning the Incarnation 'Yoo Joonghyuk'!]

There truly wasn't much time left.

[Giant Story, 'Demon Realm's Spring', has begun its storytelling!]

[Giant Story, 'Torch that Swallowed the Myth', has begun its storytelling!]

The two Giant Stories now permeated into his blade. The familiar Statuses of light and darkness were also combined into his attack, too. They were the magical energy from Han Sooyoung and Jung Heewon.

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', has graced the Incarnation 'Yoo Joonghyuk' with her blessing.]

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', has graced the Incarnation 'Yoo Joonghyuk' with its blessing.]

Right in this moment, Yoo Joonghyuk was not alone.

The opposing Statuses permeated into the single blade, causing the [Black Heavenly Demon Sword]'s clear light to spew out a destructive Story.

He ran on the path his blade was guiding him. Every situation the <Kim Dokja's Company> had lived through was ingrained in all corners of that path.

The Breaking the Sky Thunder Sword.

The intense-blue arcs of electricity enveloped and danced around Yoo Joonghyuk's blade. It was the Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship's profound technique he didn't dare to use even as the Apocalypse Dragon's electrical shockwave rushed in earlier.

On top of this, he added the secret technique he had been training with all of his heart and soul until now.

The Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship.

Secret Technique: Inner Mystery Transmission.

Shooting Star Slash.

The technique that even managed to thoroughly defeat Indra, one of the lokapalas of that powerful <Vedas>.

The blade drew an arrestingly entrancing trajectory of destruction as it moved to cut down yet another star.

This one single attack carried everything of the 3rd turn Yoo Joonghyuk.

[You can't be reasoned with at all, it seems.]

In the following instance, Yoo Joonghyuk saw it.

The surrounding space-time distorted and a certain Story began telling its story next.

「"I shall definitely kill you all."」

That was an intimately familiar voice to him. A voice directed to the heavens above, filled with hatred.

「"Over and over again."」

From the 0th turn all the way to the 1863rd – a Story created by the total of 1864 lives.

「"By reviving over and over again."」

That was the Hell of Eternity.

「"I will kill every single one of you."」

When the two swords collided, Yoo Joonghyuk felt as if his whole existence was being erased. The difference in their Statuses went beyond the realm of overwhelming him and into one of pure respect now.

He understood the despair, the regret, the sadness and the hatred engraved into every facet of that Story. And at the same time, he couldn't understand them at all.

He couldn't even bring himself to fathom the depths of those vast emotions.

That was why, just like the countless Yoo Joonghyuks within that Story, he began despairing.

When facing that Story, he was indeed merely the '3rd turn' Yoo Joonghyuk, as pointed out earlier by the 'Secretive Plotter'.

Just what did he need to do to understand that incredible vastness of time itself?

When he regained his wits, Yoo Joonghyuk was flying backwards in space. The wings Jung Heewon and Han Sooyoung had granted him were torn now; his [Black Heavenly Demon Sword], now broken in two, spun and fell alongside him, just like his life.

The seemingly-slow moving [Splitting the Sky Sword] was now closing in on his heart next.

[Chaos Points are rising rapidly!]

[Someone is growing wary of the existence of the 'Secretive Plotter'!]

['Hound Chasing After the Abyss' has made its appearance!]

It was then that an unexpected event occurred.

Strange lifeforms, just as ominous and foreboding as 'Outer Gods' suddenly popped out from the corners of the distorted space. They cried out like perfectly-trained hounds and ignored the laws of space-time to pounce on the 'Secretive Plotter' as if they were stuck in fast-forward.

Tsu-chuchuchut…!

[Annoying hounds…]

The [Splitting the Sky Sword] falling towards Yoo Joonghyuk's chest changed its direction and began smacking away the hounds. However, it still failed to block every single one of them.

Only then did Yoo Joonghyuk realize that those hounds were what the 'Secretive Plotter' had been trying to avoid until now. After getting bitten by one of the hounds, the Plotter hurriedly flew towards the distant [Great Hole].

Along with Kim Dokja still clutched in his arm.

Yoo Joonghyuk extended his hand without much energy, but by then, the star had grown far too distant to reach.

He no longer possessed any strength to go to that star now.

The broken pair of wings crumbled like sand, and just like that, he crashed towards the darkness of the ground below.

[We need to disembark now.]

"No, you wait! My master and ahjussi haven't come back yet!"

The cold sweat drops oozed out from the troubled 'Master of the Ark' as he watched Lee Jihye make an unreasonable demand.

[The conclusion of the 89th scenario – 'Final Dragon of the Book of Revelation' is impending.]

There were only 30 seconds remaining until the closure of the island; they had to leave this place in the next 20 seconds at the latest. In the end, the Master of the Ark made his decision and was about to start rowing the oar, but then…

"There they come!"

Something was falling from the sky above.

"It's Yoo Joonghyuk!"

An unconscious man in a tattered coat, Yoo Joonghyuk, was falling towards the ground.

"Master! What happened up there??"

Lee Jihye leapt up, caught him, and returned to the Ark. Both Han Sooyoung and Jung Heewon quickly came in closer to shake him around.

"Hey, Yoo Joonghyuk! Why are you alone?! Where's Kim Dokja…?!"

"What happened to Dokja-ssi??"

Yoo Joonghyuk didn't reply. Realizing what that signified, both women looked up towards the sky, but then, the Ark began moving.

"N-no, wait! Hang on for a sec! There's one more person still coming!"

"I said, stop! Goddammit!"

Unfortunately, the words of the companions were swept away by the shockwave, as well as the fog of darkness belonging to the 'Indescribable Distance', crashing in viciously.

[Location for the scenario is shutting down.]

[Warp is starting.]

Constellations screamed. And under the cascading meteor shower, the closing curtains descended on a world.

A smaller apocalypse to prevent an even bigger one.

Inside this spectacle, the 'Isle of Reincarnators' was disappearing into the 'forever'.

"No! Stop!! I said, stop!!"

The Ark was disappearing into the clear, bright streak of light. And some people aboard it were desperately reaching out with their hands.

Some plopped down. Some cried out.

And some watched all of this happen.

"Kim Dokja-!!"

[You have acquired the scenario's calculated reward payment.]

[Someone from <Star Stream> has completed his 'Twist/轉'.]

[Giant Story, 'Season of Light and Darkness', is born!]

And then, only a story nobody wanted to hear remained in that place.

Chapter 416: Ep. 79 - The Secretive Plotter, I

Two days passed by since the end of the 'Great War of Saints and Demons'.

The nightmare-filled 'Isle of Reincarnators' could no longer be seen; Constellations were gradually leaving the Ark for their rightful spots in the night sky.

– This stop is for <Olympus>.

Constellations from <Olympus> stood up from their seats after the ship made the announcement. Dionysus, standing as their representative, shifted his gaze over to Jung Heewon and addressed her. [My apologies for leaving first, even though this is a difficult period for you.]

"No, we'll be fine, thank you."

[Do not be overly worried, however. He's no ordinary Constellation, after all. Without a doubt, he's still alive.]

He lightly tapped her shoulder and soon, disappeared beyond the Dark Dimension while leading other Constellations. She stood there and silently waited until they were gone from her view before climbing down from the bow of the Ark. When she got to the bottom of the stairs, she found a person waiting for her – Han Sooyoung.

"Dionysus?"

"He left."

"Both Cheok Jungyeong and the <Underworld>, too?"

"I think they'll be leaving pretty soon."

"And Uriel?"

Han Sooyoung continued to ask, and Jung Heewon continued to answer. Most of what they chatted about were trivial information, stuff like Hades and Persephone, Uriel, Cheok Jungyeong's abode, etc. Some who would be leaving, some who would be staying, some who would accompany them… A part of the info was about the matters everyone knew already. The thing was, though, it was not really important whether someone knew this or that.

"Hayoung-ie is still completely worn out and teacher-nims are helping her out by performing 'Chu-gung-gwa-hyeol[1]'."

"And Jihye?"

"At the back, fixing her battleship."

"What about Lee Hyunsung?"

One would ask, while the other would answer. They walked on the corridors of the Ark and repeated this process. It was as if they wouldn't be able to hold back even for a second by not doing it.

"What about the kids?"

"Well, they…"

Before Jung Heewon could finish her sentence, they heard the kids' voices coming out from one of the cabins lining up the corridor.

– I knew it. I gotta sign the contract with the darkness right now so I can get my revenge for hyung…

– Revenge? What revenge? Ahjussi is definitely alive. I can feel it.

– …Well, uh, I also knew that. If it's Dokja hyung, he's definitely…!

– You need to wake up already. We need to come up with a sound plan right now.

Jung Heewon's and Han Sooyoung's steps came to a halt at the same time as if they had promised to do so. They listened to the kids' conversation. Those two were bawling uncontrollably only the day before. However, the two of them, as they appeared through the cabin's window, were…

"…I guess they will be fine, after all," said Jung Heewon.

Han Sooyoung waited for a beat before asking her. "What about you, then?"

The latter didn't reply. Instead, her gaze slowly faltered. The former stopped looking at her conversation partner, and shifted her own gaze lower, too.

Jung Heewon opened her lips eventually. "He asked me to save him."

"…"

"He pleaded with me to rescue him."

She tightly clenched her fist. They didn't need to stare at each other to feel this emotion resonating between them.

It sounded as if dry rain was falling somewhere; Han Sooyoung listened to that noise impassively, before speaking up. "We'll have a lot of things to do when we get back."

"…Right. I know." Jung Heewon rubbed her face with her sleeves and smiled weakly. "For the time being, we should go back to Seoul, right?"

"We should."

"There will definitely be some bastards aiming for Seoul now that Dokja-ssi has disappeared. And we'll have to sort out the law and order back home, too."

"Who'll tell Lee Sookyung, though?"

"That, well…"

The two women stopped talking and stared at the empty space for a while. The first person to break the silence was Han Sooyoung. "I wish we still had Yoo Sangah with us in times like these."

"…I miss Sangah-ssi."

They had lost far too much getting here.

Their gazes shifted outside the window to see the passing view of the Dark Dimension. They saw the stars on the faraway galaxies sparkle softly.

The universe wouldn't be destroyed just because a single star suddenly vanished. There was a countless number of them, and their light would continue to exist afterward, too.

But for those living on a certain planet, that particular star would be everything they knew about the light itself.

Han Sooyoung did her best not to look at Jung Heewon's reflection on the window. The latter muttered in the meantime. "Just what on earth has happened to Dokja-ssi?"

The former didn't reply and began walking again. Not too long afterward, they arrived at the last cabin in the corridor. They quietly opened the door and entered to find Yoo Joonghyuk wrapped from head to toe in bandages lying on a bed.

Han Sooyoung spoke as she rummaged through her inner pockets to find a lemon candy. "…We should be able to find out once this idiot wakes up."

This happened back when I was still in the middle of reading the 'Ways of Survival'.

I was scrolling down the chapter, fully satisfied knowing that I had completed the day's work, only to discover something written on the [Author's words] corner at the bottom.

– Dokja-nim, what do you think?

I've already forgotten what that question related to. It might have been about the plot development, or he might be implying something about the novel itself. Now, how did I answer him back then?

– Mm. Well, such a simple twist is a bit…

– You thought so, too?

I was startled anew by this portion of my memories. Did something like this really happen? I remembered so well about the 'Ways of Survival' itself, so why have I completely forgotten about this part of the memories? I couldn't understand it at all.

Right, now that I looked back, the author did chat with me every once in a while, didn't he?

As for me, I wrote comments to engage the author; most of the time, it was to cheer him on, or to ask questions regarding the next regression turn, but sometimes, I did try to tackle him over the novel, too.

I think it was around when Yoo Joonghyuk had just gone past the 600th turn.

I just couldn't understand something about the novel no matter how hard I thought about it, so I end up arguing with the author through the comment section.

– Author-nim. Was that a typo? How can Joonghyuk-ie smile brightly?

'tls123' replied back.

– Anyone would change like that after regressing over 600 times.

I thought that the answer kind of made sense after hearing it. And that must've been the first time that I began thinking earnestly about the number of times Yoo Joonghyuk had regressed.

Regressing over 600 times, was it. What did life even mean to a being that had to repeat such a life over and over again?

「Kim Dok ja, wa ke up.」

Dull pain pulsed inside my head and my consciousness returned gradually. My body felt lethargic, and terrible pain buzzed from all corners of my Incarnation flesh. I barely managed to tear my eyes open, and the faint rays of light pierced into my eyes.

And then, a familiar voice came flying in my ear.

"Looks like he's finally woken up."

Yup, he just couldn't be nice about it, now could he.

I smirked a little and shifted my head in the direction of the voice.

However, something… seemed off.

"So, this fool is that Kim Dokja?"

By the time I fully opened my eyes, I discovered myself surrounded by countless Yoo Joonghyuks.

I needed another ten minutes or so to regain my consciousness again.

I had blacked out once more, and after waking up, kept my eyes closed and tried really hard to figure out what the heck was going on here. At least, I needed to get a bead on the current situation.

Firstly, the 'Great War of Saints and Demons' was over.

I was certain of that; messages waiting in the log proved that fact, at least.

[You have acquired the Giant Story, 'Season of Light and Darkness'!]

[Your third Giant Story has completed its 'Twist/轉'!]

[Third condition for the hidden scenario – the 'One Single Story', has been met!]

[Final Story is waiting for you.]

[The entirety of <Star Stream> is set abuzz over your achievement!]

[Majority of <Star Stream>'s Constellations are now paying attention to your Nebula!]

[Regarding your Story, the absolute majority of the Constellations are…]

I had finally completed the 'One Single Story's Twist/轉. The energy belonging to an unimaginably enormous Story was now roiling powerfully inside me.

The Giant Story, the「Season of Light and Darkness.」

It was my first time hearing about such a Giant Story. But that made sense – the collision of the Nameless Mist and the Apocalypse Dragon didn't occur in the original story, after all… With that as the starting point, the entire world-line should begin experiencing sudden and violent change.

The march towards the apocalypse had sped up, so it was only obvious that the rate of the entire scenario's progress would speed up as well.

Secondly, someone did rescue me.

My problem began from this point on. Just who did save me?

"It's no use pretending to be unconscious."

As an aside, the very last face I saw was that of Yoo Joonghyuk's, coming to save me. So, maybe it was obvious that I'd end up seeing his face now.

But, uh, the problem was…

"Not just his dumb looks, but it seems that even his head is dumb."

"Just like what I've heard."

…Why were there so, so many 'Yoo Joonghyuks' in this place??

Not only that…

In complete stupefaction, I gazed at the five, six 'kkoma[2] Yoo Joonghyuks' currently standing around on top of the bed. Without a doubt, they were Yoo Joonghyuks, but all of them were… big-headed chibis with short limbs and about the same size as Kyrgios.

…Am I still dreaming??

Right, this had to be a dream. Right, the stress he put me under every single day had piled up and must've caused this horrifying delusion. That had to be it. I hurriedly slapped my cheeks, prompting the kkoma Yoo Joonghyuks to speak one after the other.

"He must think this is a dream. Like a fool."

"He may need some time to figure out his current situation first."

"What an annoying bastard. Do we need to wait for him, then?"

I cleanly ignored them and scanned the room I was in. It was a huge circular-shaped room; everything, including the table, the chairs, the other smaller knick-knacks, and even the bed I was sitting on, was circular-shaped.

…Where the hell was I?

I thought hard and long, but nothing came up. A room with such peculiar furnishing would be more than memorable enough, but I couldn't remember ever reading about it in the 'Ways of Survival'.

Wondering if I stumbled into an area for a new scenario accidentally, I summoned the scenario window, only to be smacked in the head with the following message.

[Currently, <Star Stream> is in the middle of scenario system maintenance.]

Meaning, there was pretty much nothing I could learn in my current situation.

"Looks like he's almost done with analysing his situation."

"I shall ask again. Are you the one called Kim Dokja?"

The kkoma Yoo Joonghyuk with a hot-tempered facial expression asked me. Now that I took a closer look, there were different numbered cards stuck to the chest of each kkoma Yoo Joonghyuk, and the one who asked me just now had [999] written on his.

I decided to answer them for the time being. "Correct. I'm Kim Dokja."

The kkoma Yoo Joonghyuks looked at each other and nodded their heads simultaneously. These little guys, even though they were much smaller than the original, they acted exactly the same as Yoo Joonghyuk.

"Looks like the correct one has been brought over, then."

Even the voice was the same, too…

I didn't know what was going on here, but by this time, I had to accept it. I was not stuck in a dream. And thanks to some unknown crazy whims of the Probability, I somehow ended up in a strange, fantastical kingdom where kkoma Yoo Joonghyuks lived.

"Who are you guys?"

I decided to ask them first. I knew that they wouldn't answer me straightforward if they were anything like the original Yoo Joonghyuk, but still. One of the kkomas began muttering out. "How pathetic. Can't you tell by looking?"

Yup, thought as much. If I was to be stuck in a world like this, then I'd have preferred to be surrounded by the kind, gentle kkoma version of Yoo Sangah, instead. I was wondering how should I retort back in order to hear a proper answer from these guys, but then, the 'Yoo Joonghyuk' with [888] written on his card spoke some rather unexpected words. "With your dull head, you'd never arrive at the correct answer no matter how long you agonise over it. So, I shall tell you. We are a part of the 'great Plotter'."

…Great Plotter? Could it be?

A chilly sensation flitted in and out of my head just then.

The 'Yoo Joonghyuk' with [777] on his chest must've interpreted my silence on his own way and spoke in a mocking tone. "Your pathetic intelligence shouldn't be enough to understand it now."

Right, these guys, they were definitely Yoo Joonghyuk. There was absolutely no doubt about that now.

"If you're fully awake, then get up. Someone is waiting for you."

"Who's waiting for me?"

"You'll see when you get there."

I got up unsteadily and followed after that kkoma. The round door opened up and a huge corridor appeared before me. The one to take the lead was the kkoma Yoo Joonghyuk number [999]. I followed him. The rest of the kkomas trotted after us, too.

I asked one of them. "What is this place?"

That prompted one of the Yoo Joonghyuks following me to speak up. "Eun gui ei soup."

"What was that?"

"It means, the N'Gai's Forest. You're supposed to be a prophet, yet you can't even tell that?"

What the hell. Why did you say that in English, then?

The kkoma Yoo Joonghyuk number [666] glared at me as if he was disappointed and turned his head away, obviously unhappy.

It was around then I began thinking that maybe, those numbers represented the regression turns each Yoo Joonghyuk had lived through.

…What did Yoo Joonghyuk do around the 666th turn? Was that when he partnered up with the Abyssal Black Flame Dragon?

I spotted the view of a silver forest outside the windows lining up the corridor. N'Gai's Forest, was it? Sounded familiar, as if I had heard about it somewhere. However, I wasn't sure whether this place ever appeared within the 'Ways of Survival'…

It was then when our group encountered another one walking towards from the other side of the corridor.

[So, is he the one the Plotter had brought along?]

No, could I even describe their movements as 'walking'?

Overcome with the sensation of all the hair on my body standing up, I subconsciously gripped the hilt of my Unbroken Faith tighter.

Because 'Outer Gods' were walking towards us from the opposite side.

Existences that emitted auras incomparably more unstable and ominous than any Constellations. One of them sported a horse's head, while others were monstrous creatures covered in disgusting-looking tentacles. Those tentacles extending up to the air seemed to tilt their 'heads' for a bit, before shuffling closer to my direction. No matter who looked at that, they wouldn't be able to describe their intentions as friendly at all.

Unexpectedly, the one to step in their paths was none other than the kkoma Yoo Joonghyuk number [999].

"He's our guest. Don't even think about harassing him."

[But, it should not be a problem just to have a little chat?]

"I shan't permit it."

The kkoma Yoo Joonghyuk number [999] declared as thus, and unsheathed the miniature version of [Splitting the Sky Sword] from his back.

Following that, the kkomas numbers [888], [777], and even the number [666], they all unsheathed their weapons mounted on their backs and hips.

…These guys, could they even really fight? I mean, they all kind of looked like action figures, so…

Maybe the other party thought the same as me, because they began emitting stubbornly persistent hostile aura towards us.

[How dare you… Just because you're the dependents of the 'great Plotter'…]

As the stand-off quickly became even more volatile and the tentacles and the kkomas were about to start fighting, a loud 'Thud' resounded out from somewhere. Outer Gods busy wiggling their tentacles about suddenly all knelt down.

The only one among them still standing was the horse-head that showed animosity towards me.

[■■■…!!]

Another 'Thud' resounded out. Finally, even the horse-head had to slam its head on the floor. Those tremors couldn't have been a simple shockwaves of an earthquake.

No, someone was intimidating these Outer Gods with incredible Status right now.

[Wu, wuwu…]

Outer Gods groaned in pain and moved out of the way. At the end of the corridor, there was an entrance leading to a huge hall. It was an open-type, with the massive circular ceiling decorated by the tumbling, roiling branches of trees. I walked into this hall accompanied by the kkoma Yoo Joonghyuks.

Thin rays of sunlight permeating in between the branches illuminated an ancient, worn-out throne right in the middle of that great hall.

No one needed to tell me, but I knew it right away. The being sitting on that throne, he was the king of this forest.

Not only that, I knew who he was already, too.

The scar on his face, revealed under the faint rays of the sun, and the exact same white coat as mine.

The being I thought I'd not get to meet again was sitting right on that throne.

[It's been a while, Kim Dokja.]

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[1] **Chu-gung-gwa-hyeol** is a technique often seen in martial art novels, where one transfers Qi from themselves to an injured/weaker person to heal them/power them up.
[2] **Kkoma** is an informal Korean word denoting a child, or in this case a small and chubby figure.

* Official novel illustration (canonical)

Chapter 417: Ep. 79 - The Secretive Plotter, II

I took my time studying the person before my eyes. My heart rate sped up greatly, and my breathing became ragged, as well. Something touched a box of memories that shouldn't be touched, and words began leaking out from this box buried deep within the recess of the darkness.

「"Where is the Arondight? Are you the one hiding it?"」

That was the first time I encountered that dude. While firmly holding me by my collars, he asked me that question.

「"If you're not planning to answer me, then I shall use force to find out."」

The golden [Sage's Eye] gleaming brightly just like back then was right there, waiting.

A migraine assaulted me, and my view distorted like that of an abstract painting. The voice from the memories continued on in the meantime.

「"That 'world' you've shown me, does it really exist?"」

…

…

…

「Applicable individual isn't a 'Character'.」

There existed certain memories that should never be forgotten even if one wanted to, and perhaps the memories of that regression turn were precisely 'that' for me.

I failed to save Yoo Joonghyuk of that turn. He left for the next turn, still wearing the white coat.

I had never forgotten the sight of his back, surrounded by bright light and leaving me and Han Sooyoung of the 1863rd turn behind in complete freedom.

"You are…"

For the longest time, I lost myself and stared at the 'Yoo Joonghyuk' sitting on the throne. The scar on his sunken cheeks, those dark, deeply withdrawn eyes – everything belonged to the 1863rd turn Yoo Joonghyuk that I remembered.

However, my shock didn't end there.

[Constellation, 'Secretive Plotter', is looking at you.]

…The Secretive Plotter??

Only then did I finally discover the ominous, evil aura rising up from that Yoo Joonghyuk's entire figure. This 'evil' was different from that of the Demon Kings. No, this was Chaos that the <Star Stream> didn't recognise as either 'Good' or 'Evil'.

I was about to say something, but then, something emitted bright light from within my inner pocket.

[Exclusive Attribute, 'Scenario Interpreter', is activating!]

[Giant Story, 'Season of Light and Darkness', is reacting to your Attribute.]

As if it was waiting for this moment, the Story began telling its story. Two Yoo Joonghyuks were in a certain place.

「[Go back. You can't save anyone.]」

「"…The Secretive Plotter?"」

As if they were stuck in fast-forward, scenes sped along in my mind. They were fragmented information, sure, but still, they were also plenty enough for me to figure out the current situation.

…So, that's what happened.

I began to gradually understand what was going on here.

Next up was the sight of Yoo Joonghyuk crashing, Lee Jihye catching him, and finally, the Ark leaving the Isle. It seemed that the <Kim Dokja's Company> had safely escaped from the 'Isle of Reincarnators'.

[Giant Story, 'Season of Light and Darkness', has stopped its storytelling.]

I sighed softly under the breath and shifted my gaze over to the existence atop the throne. The 'Secretive Plotter' looked down at me from his spot at the same time.

['The Fourth Wall' is strongly activating!]

My heart calmed down and my reasoning returned to me bit by bit. I sucked in a couple of quick but deep breaths and opened my lips to speak. "If you were planning to make me panic using that appearance, then well, congratulations, you succeeded splendidly."

[Have you not used polite speech towards me earlier?]

"I'm merely treating you the way that fits with your choice to appear as Yoo Joonghyuk."

*

I appeared completely unflustered by his aura, and as if he was amused by it, the Plotter's lips twitched slightly. Not caring whether he did or not, I simply continued on. "The 'Secretive Plotter'. I suggest we do the 'Three Divine Questions and Answers'."

[And why would I agree to do that?]

"There's no way that you're the 1863rd turn Yoo Joonghyuk. It's impossible, actually."

[What makes you think that?]

"You wish to know? As an aside, there are three reasons."

A faint flash of light flickered in the 'Secretive Plotter's eyes.

"So, are you interested or not?"

[Although tempting, it's not a fair trade, is it.]

The 'Secretive Plotter' stared at me with a pair of quiet, contemplative eyes. He seemed to be thinking about something, and also, maybe a bit angry, as well.

Just how long passed by like this? His left eyebrow quivered rather greatly. I suddenly recalled a certain passage from the 'Ways of Survival' just then.

「Whenever Yoo Joonghyuk makes a serious decision, his left eyebrow would quiver.」

The Secretive Plotter spoke. [I'll put forth a condition.]

"What kind?"

[I'm sure you're curious as to why I brought you here.]

I nodded my head. Of course I was curious.

[However, you can't ask me about that. Because I can't tell you. Some answers can only be resolved by you actively searching for the right question first.]

"What kind of a Buddha-like utterance is that??"

[I shall agree to the 'Three Divine Questions and Answers' now. You can ask me about three things, but you can't ask me a question related to 'why you've been brought to here'.]

"Is that your condition?"

[One other thing. When you're done with the Three Questions, you must figure out the 'reason you had to be brought' here.]

Now that was something I didn't expect at all and I momentarily panicked. "What if I fail to do that?"

The 'Secretive Plotter' didn't reply. Instead, he raised his lengthy finger and rested it on the armrest of his throne.

Just that simple action alone sent a chill down my spine.

「Can I defeat him in my current condition?」

I began inspecting all the Stories I possessed, from the legendary grade one all the way to the Giant Stories…

"It'll be better for you to stop doing something foolish."

It was none other than the kkoma Yoo Joonghyuk number [999] standing next to me who said that. I smirked and looked down at him. "Are you worried about me?"

"It's annoying to remove a corpse, that's all."

"…What are you exactly, anyway?"

[Are you using your allotted questions, then? Good.]

"No, hang on a minu…"

Before I could finish my sentence, though, messages began floating up.

– Three Divine Questions and Answers has begun.

– Both sides can exchange three questions and three answers.

– Both sides can refuse to answer one question each.

– Questions and Answers will not end until both sides have asked a question and answered it properly.

– You are now using your right to ask the first question.

I caught the kkoma Yoo Joonghyuk number [666] grinning slyly on the side. Sons of bitches.

Still, now that things had ended up like this, I figured it'd not be so bad to hear their story now.

[They are my dependents.]

"I hope you aren't planning to end your answer like that. I'd prefer for you to be a bit more in-depth now that you're planning to tell me things anyway. I'd be eternally grateful if you so graciously explain yourself properly on what your definition of dependents are, whether it's something like [Avatar] or if it's something similar to the dependents Demon Kings have."

I spoke as cautiously as possible to make sure that what I said didn't sound like the second question. That prompted the kkoma Yoo Joonghyuk number [777] to sigh in admiration and speak up. "He sure talks a lot, doesn't he."

"I wasn't talking to you."

[They are beings that have received my memories.]

– You have acquired the first answer.

"So, it's similar to the [Avatar] skill, then."

[It's my turn. Tell me the first reason why I can't be the '1863rd turn Yoo Joonghyuk'.]

"If you were really Yoo Joonghyuk from the 1863rd turn, then there's no way you'd be wearing that white coat."

[…Why not?]

"The Stigma 'Regression' only sends back one's soul. It doesn't send back the items in your possession. The coat I gave to the 1863rd turn's Yoo Joonghyuk was destroyed as he regressed. So, if you're really from the 1863rd turn, you shouldn't be wearing that coat."

[Interesting. However, this is merely an item I personally purchased.]

"Yoo Joonghyuk doesn't wear the colour white often."

[…Ask your second question.]

– You are now using your right to ask the second question.

I didn't hesitate and spoke up. "My second question. Are you the '1863rd turn Yoo Joonghyuk'?"

My question caused the Secretive Plotter's complexion to waver ever so slightly. […Are you trying to mess with me?]

"No, I'm being dead serious."

[I am Yoo Joonghyuk who had experienced the 1863rd turn.]

"In the past tense, is it."

[I'm merely the 'Secretive Plotter' now, that's why.]

– You have acquired the second answer.

Unless one placed a special condition, one had to speak only the truth during the 'Three Divine Questions and Answers'. If one didn't, then one would be swept up in the storm of Probability's aftermaths immediately.

However, I didn't spot any signs of the storm around the 'Secretive Plotter'.

[Now, speak the second reason why I can't be the '1863rd turn's Yoo Joonghyuk'.]

"There are just too many inconsistencies for you to be the Yoo Joonghyuk from the 1863rd turn."

[What kind of inconsistencies?]

"If you're really him from the 1863rd, then why did you send me over there to kill yourself? Logically speaking, it doesn't make sense, does it?"

[That's because that action would create me. It's a simple time paradox. I was Yoo Joonghyuk from the 1863rd turn, and only by you killing me there would I be reborn as the 'Secretive Plotter'.]

"Sounds like you've been rehearsing that answer for a while there. It sounds so natural, too. Even if I assume that you're being truthful, quite unfortunately for you, you seemed less than satisfied after I succeeded in my mission. Also, you looked quite surprised, too."

[…Ask your next question.]

"No, you go ahead first. I'll ask mine last."

The 'Secretive Plotter' stared at me for a little while before eventually opening his lips. [Fine. What is the final reason why I can't be 'Yoo Joonghyuk from the 1863rd turn'?]

"I have a special method to find that out. I possess a skill that allows me to read the inner thoughts of the other party."

[So?]

"But then, the 1863rd turn's Yoo Joonghyuk became an existence that I can't read anymore."

I clearly remembered the moment that Yoo Joonghyuk left for the next turn. The moment when he broke free from being a 'Character', and even my exclusive skill, 'Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint' could no longer read him.

[Does that mean you can read my private thoughts?]

"No, I can't read yours also."

[Then, what?]

"However, the reason why I can't is different."

[Activation of the skill 'Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint' has been cancelled!]

[Your degree of understanding on the applicable individual is simply far too inadequate!]

[Your degree of understanding simply can't catch up to the Status of the applicable individual!]

I quietly looked up at the messages floating up in the air.

The 'Secretive Plotter' frowned deeply. [I can't accept that as your reason. You are…]

"I'll ask my last question," said I, not giving him any chance to speak. "Back in the planet where I used to live, there happened to be a novel called 'Three Ways to Survive a Ruined World'."

Almost instantly, the surrounding atmosphere changed. The expression on the Secretive Plotter's face sunk to its coldest yet. His eyes had become cold-blooded, as if he'd murder me at any given second.

I desperately resisted that aura and continued on. This was one question that I wanted to ask all along. "'Secretive Plotter'. Are you someone who knows the epilogue of that novel?"

Yoo Joonghyuk had a dream.

It was a really old and worn-out dream.

For some reason, he was wearing a white coat inside it.

He held the [Splitting the Sky Sword] that fit him like a glove. While gripping that weighty weapon, he was fighting against someone. When he took a closer look, he realized that the person in front of his eyes possessed the exact same countenance as he did.

It was another Yoo Joonghyuk, but wearing a black coat, instead.

He wasn't sure of why he had to experience such a dream.

'The 1863rd turn'.

Maybe, it was because he ended up running into that guy. That was probably why he had to dream about something like this.

Yoo Joonghyuk gritted his teeth. The gap he felt between his and the 'Secretive Plotter's overwhelming Status the moment they clashed remained so vividly etched in his mind even now.

Utterly disregarding his sentiments, though, the memories continued to slowly seep into him. He had become the Yoo Joonghyuk from the 1863rd turn and was swinging his sword around.

「I'll die.」

「I'll regress.」

Every time the swords collided, Yoo Joonghyuk felt the despair and loneliness of the 1863rd turn. Strangely enough, everything felt so natural to him.

As if those emotions were his all along, since from a long time ago.

Stab!

Finally, the two swords stabbed deeply into the two stomachs.

「This story will come to an end here.」

「Even then, everything will start from the beginning once more.」

Yoo Joonghyuk wearing the black coat scattered away first, and soon, even himself began scattering as well. The memories dissipated, and the emotions he barely managed to comprehend began abandoning him. He summoned up the last of his remaining energy and looked behind.

His vision blurred and he couldn't see clearly what was there.

However, it felt as if he had seen a bright and pure star.

「"I had grown curious of that world's ■■."」

「"For the next regression…"」

Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes shot open along with the loud noise of 'Beeeeep!'

He panted heavily and spotted the white ceiling of the hospital room. And then, also heard someone's voice, too.

"Finally, our slumbering prince of the forest has woken up."

He turned his head to the side to find Han Sooyoung and Jung Heewon. The former bit and broke the lollipop before spitting out the stick and began growling at him. "Time to tell us just what happened back there, Dear Good Regressor, sir."

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* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)

Chapter 418: Ep. 79 - The Secretive Plotter, III

Han Sooyoung's demanding tone prompted Yoo Joonghyuk to start with his story. However, his tale sounded incoherent and he repeated himself over and over again. Ten minutes passed by like that – she eventually stopped listening quietly and spoke up.

"Okay, that's enough. I think you're not in the right frame of mind here, so let me organise everything you said for you. You just indicate to me if I got it right."

Now normally, such a one-sided declaration would've elicited a strong reaction from him, but Yoo Joonghyuk simply chose to nod his head, his expression dark, gloomy.

Han Sooyoung immediately began her job. "You went to rescue Kim Dokja. But then, someone else showed up first to snatch him up. And that someone was whom we all know, the 'Secretive Plotter'."

Yoo Joonghyuk nodded again.

"However, that guy had the exact same face as you and was wearing a white coat."

"Correct."

"What are the odds of that being a fake? I mean, that guy's so hard to believe, right? It's possible that the 'Secretive Plotter' disguised himself to look like you."

"No, it couldn't have been a fake."

"How come?"

"He used the Story that the me from the 1863rd regression turn possessed."

"…You mean, that Immortal whatever chuuni-sounding Story?"

Han Sooyoung went "Thought as much," and nodded her head. Her irises expanded ever so slightly as her Story kicked into gear once more.

[Story, 'Predictive Plagiarism', has begun its storytelling!]

The only one left out of the loop, Jung Heewon, tried to say something, her voice sounding confused. "What are you two talking about? Are you saying that the 'Secretive Plotter' looks like Joonghyuk-ssi?"

Han Sooyoung glanced at her for a bit, before replying with a long sigh. "Simply put, there are two Yoo Joonghyuks in this world-line."

"…Is that even possible?"

"No reason why it can't be, if Yoo Joonghyuk from another world-line has crossed over to this one."

"You can do that?"

"Well, Kim Dokja went to another world-line through a similar method, didn't he? Now, the problem here is, just how powerful a being is he, when he's capable of doing something like this…?"

Even the highest-ranked Constellations from either <Eden> or <Papyrus> couldn't cross to another world-line with their own powers. However, this 'Secretive Plotter' was powerful enough to deal with the requisite Probability all by himself.

Jung Heewon's jaw dropped slightly as she muttered. "Just from which world-line could he…"

"There is only one with the highest possibility, actually. The one Kim Dokja went to, the 1863rd world-line."

The 1863rd regression turn. The final world-line for Yoo Joonghyuk as it was written in the 'Three Ways to Survive a Ruined World'.

Yoo Joonghyuk looked at Han Sooyoung and asked a question. "How much do you know about that world-line?"

"A bit."

"At the end of that world, the me of the 1863rd turn divided into two and fought against each other. One of them died, and the other regressed."

"I know. I saw it in my dreams several times already."

"…Your dream?"

As if she was sick and tired of the whole thing, she vigorously waved her hands about. "We don't have the time to get into the details. In any case, you think the current 'Secretive Plotter' is you from the 1863rd regression turn. Am I right?"

Yoo Joonghyuk spoke up, his face full of dissatisfaction. "It's not a definite thing. There are a few points that don't add up."

"Such as?"

"The strength of the 'Secretive Plotter' far exceeded that of 'me from the 1863rd turn' that I read about."

"And then?"

"Then…" Yoo Joonghyuk chewed on his lips for a while. "…I also got the feeling that he was hiding something from me. Such as, his white coat."

"The white coat?"

"My Stigma, 'Regression', doesn't send the items I possess alongside me when I regress. Meaning, there's no reason for him to be wearing that coat."

"Maybe, he likes the white colour?"

"I detest the colour white."

"Isn't it possible that your taste might change?"

"This matter can't be answered as easily as that. This…"

"Are you saying that it's an issue with your gut feeling?"

Yoo Joonghyuk nodded his head. "It was as if that bastard was mocking me."

"Mocking you?"

"It was as if he deliberately wore that coat."

He massaged his forehead and the words left behind by the 'Secretive Plotter' flitted in and out of his mind.

[…The 3rd turn. You don't remember anyth…]

A weighty silence descended in the room.

Han Sooyoung was deeply immersed in her thoughts as she rubbed her chin, while Jung Heewon could only smack her lips, not fully getting what was going on.

A while later, the former opened her lips to speak. "Alright, fine. Let's sum it all up. Logically speaking, the 'Secretive Plotter' must be the 'Yoo Joonghyuk from the 1863rd turn', but your gut feeling says otherwise. That's it, right?"

"…"

"In that case, let's begin with this assumption first. 'The Yoo Joonghyuk from the 1863rd turn is not the Secretive Plotter'. Meaning, the Plotter is lying to you."

Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes trembled. "…It's just my feeling, yet you are willing to believe it?"

"It's not just anyone's gut but yours. Isn't it supposed to be, you know yourself the best?"

Han Sooyoung grinned refreshingly. He then addressed her with a suspicion-filled expression. "Speak your hypothesis, Han Sooyoung."

"Mm? What do you mean?"

"You already suspect who the 'Secretive Plotter' might be. Am I wrong?"

This time, it was Han Sooyoung's eyes to narrow to a slit. "Hmm, since when did you become this quick on the uptake?"

"…It's impossible for you to believe what I say, that's why."

For a short moment there, their glares collided in mid-air. And through that exchange, both of them came to realize just what kind of images were floating up in the heads of the other.

Not too long ago, they had discussed the possible identity of the 'Secretive Plotter'. Back then, Yoo Joonghyuk opined that the Plotter was 'Kim Dokja from the future', while Han Sooyoung, she…

"Argh, just how long are you two going to talk among yourselves?! Just who is this 'Secretive Plotter'??"

Jung Heewon's pressing words prompted Han Sooyoung to cautiously open her lips. "What I'm about to say is just a hypothesis, nothing more."

"I don't care whether it's a hypothesis or not. I just want to know!"

"I have been curious about something for a really long time, you know?"

"Curious about what?"

"What if, the novel 'Ways of Survival' didn't become reality?"

"…What are you talking about out of the blue?"

"So, like, what if, somewhere out there in the universe, there is a world of 'Ways of Survival', as pure as intended and not been affected by either me or Kim Dokja?" Han Sooyoung continued on with her explanation. "In that world where neither <Han Sooyoung Corporation> nor <Kim Dokja's Company> exist, let's say there is this dumbass 'Yoo Joonghyuk' who repeatedly goes through countless regressions while losing his companions over and over again."

"…Wait, you bastard…"

"What if that Yoo Joonghyuk managed to reach the Conclusion (結) through innumerable losses… What if a version of Yoo Joonghyuk that saw the end of <Star Stream> through his own powers alone existed somewhere in the universe?"

Han Sooyoung waited for a beat before shifting her gaze over to Yoo Joonghyuk.

In his violently-rocking eyes, her reflection could be seen.

"And what would a guy like that be thinking about when he's looking at the current '3rd turn'?"

The 'Secretive Plotter'.

The Constellation that didn't appear within the original 'Ways of Survival'. Even then, a being that possessed more power than any other Constellations

I've met so far.

– 'Secretive Plotter'. Are you someone who knows the epilogue of that novel?

That was the reason why I decided to ask this question. I was sure of guessing the Plotter's true identity correctly as long as he provided me with the 'right' answer.

Eventually, the Secretive Plotter opened his lips. [I am refusing to answer that question.]

"What? No, hang on…"

– Constellation, 'Secretive Plotter', has used the 'right to refuse' on the third question.

God damn it, I forgot about that. Both sides could exercise the 'right to refuse' once during this 'Three Divine Questions and Answers'.

The Plotter was looking down at me with a pair of eyes that couldn't be read. For a brief moment there, I witnessed the Probability's sparks envelop his coat.

[I feel tired. Enough. Now, go back.]

"Hang on! The Q&A isn't ove…"

Before I could finish, I was overcome with the sensation of space folding around me, and soon, found myself standing outside the hall.

The sense of dejection rushed in as I stared at the firmly-shut door to the hall.

– 'Three Divine Questions and Answers' has been temporarily suspended.

– You still have one more right to ask a question remaining.

Normally, the 'Three Divine Questions and Answers' wasn't a ceremony that one side could wilfully delay like this. However, this 'Secretive Plotter' managed to do exactly that. I couldn't even estimate how powerful a Status he must've possessed in order to make something this unbelievable happen.

I pounded on the hall's door and shouted out. "Open the door! This is not what we agreed upon! I need to get back to my companions!"

In that instant, a powerful Status rocked the door and my Incarnation Body was flung away. I staggered back up to my feet and got ready to unleash my own Status.

Unexpectedly, it was the kkoma Yoo Joonghyuk number [999] who dissuaded me from doing that. "It'll be better if you don't."

I sensed the ominous flow of air beyond the doorway and urgently withdrew my Status. Indeed, this kkoma Yoo Joonghyuk was right. My Incarnation Body was still gravely injured, and the other party was a being so strong that the current me couldn't even guess his actual power level.

"You'll have another chance, Kim Dokja."

"…And when will that be?"

Kkoma Yoo Joonghyuks began looking at me with eyes reserved for when looking at a dumb fool, before one of them spoke up. "Follow us. We're going back to your lodging."

I felt hopelessly lost by the prospect of returning to that circular room again, but as I was now, I didn't have much of a choice.

I could sense the multiple presences of 'Outer Gods' looking at this way from all corners of the corridor. Thankfully, I was a guest of the 'Secretive Plotter'.

It was all too clear to see what would happen if I try to escape and become an 'uninvited guest' in the process.

Go-ooooh…

…Yup, not making a rash decision would be for the best, after all.

Also, it wasn't as if I walked away with nothing from the current situation, anyway.

['The Fourth Wall' is faintly vibrating.]

「(There are quite a few faces I haven't seen in awhile. Looks like a group of Shantaks.)」

I was startled by the sudden voice coming from my inside. It was coming through the [The Fourth Wall]'s messaging system.

Judging from the way it spoke…

'…The Devourer of Dreamss?'

「(It is indeed I.)」

Now that I thought about it, I had an 'Outer God' residing inside me, didn't I? I completely forgot about it somehow. I began thinking that maybe I could ask for his help in my current predicament.

「(Looks like they are being friendly towards you.)」

'Being friendly? You mean, that?!'

I stared at the 'Outer Gods' raising their tentacles up threateningly in my direction. The moment our gazes met, the end of one of the tentacles suddenly bloomed open to resemble a horrifying-looking flower.

「(They are curious about you. Now that is a rather uncommon event among Outer Gods.)」

I looked at that 'flower' bud swaying this way and that as if to win me over and shook my head in helplessness.

'…It'll be hard to become friends with those guys'.

「(Hard? Why?)」

'You must know why by now after reading this and that in the Library'.

I walked past the Outer Gods emitting gloomy, foreboding aura and began recalling the final episode of the 'Ways of Survival'.

「(The final battle of the <Star Stream> is related to those 'Outer Gods'.)」

In the original story, Yoo Joonghyuk lost everything still remaining with him by that point. Every single Incarnation that helped him up until then all died in that war. Died, because of those monsters of Chaos that brought the destruction of the world.

But then, the 'Devourer of Dreamss' said something rather unexpected to me.
「(Do you know why Outer Gods have become the Calamities?)」

'That is…'

I seriously pondered it for a moment, only to fall into this strange, inexplicable chain of thoughts.

Indeed, it sure was a strange thing; even a novel as brimming-full of detailed explanations as the 'Ways of Survival' failed to mention the origins of the Outer Gods.

It was at that moment a certain theory popped up in my head.

The true identity of the 'Secretive Plotter' and the origins of the 'Outer Gods'. Could there be some kind of a connection between the two?

Before I could throw out a question regarding that theory, someone engaged me for a chat first.

"I heard that you like reading novels."

It was the kkoma Yoo Joonghyuk number [999].

I nodded my head. "Sure, I do. What about it?"

"If you want, I can tell you a short story."

"A story?"

It was then the kkoma Yoo Joonghyuks number [666], [777], and [888] all looked at [999] with baffled expressions. It seemed that this wasn't a part of the plan.

Not even waiting for my reply, the kkoma Yoo Joonghyuk number [999] began telling his story. "There was a wolf that continued to fight a lonely battle for a very long time. He had a goal he was chasing after, and there was a question he wanted to ask. For the answer to that question, he continued to fight."

"Is it an allegory?"

"The wolf kept fighting. Hundreds of years, thousands, and maybe even for tens of thousands of years."

I wanted to say that a wolf couldn't possibly live for that long, but regardless, the story continued on.

"The wolf eventually reached the end of the battle and became the 'wolf king'. And he managed to find the answer in his own way. He had to pay the price of losing his entire pack in the process, but in the end, he came to accept that answer. Because it was the best possible answer that the world could provide him with. Now with that answer, the king began roaming the world."

This was a rather vaguely abstract story, yet…

"But then, one day, the king learned that there was yet another 'pack' existing somewhere."

…Even then, this story sounded undoubtedly familiar, too.

"In that pack, he found the exact same wolf as himself. That wolf possessed the exact same goal as him, and was surviving for the same purpose as him, as well."

I listened to the tale as if I had been entranced by it.

"But then, something was different. The 'wolf' of this pack hadn't lost anything."

Right now, this guy was telling me the story that the 'Secretive Plotter' didn't want to tell me earlier.

"Finding his prey, protecting his pack, the distant goals he longed for – this wolf was achieving all those with the minimal amount of pain. Without losing anything in the process. The king watched this spectacle, and suddenly thought to himself."

Slowly, so very slowly, a chill crept down on my back.

"If this story is brought to its conclusion as it was, then what was the purpose of the life I've lived so far?"

Yoo Joonghyuk was now asking straight at me.

"Kim Dokja. Have you ever thought about a life like that before?"

Chapter 419: Ep. 79 - The Secretive Plotter, IV

All sorts of complicated thoughts rushed past my head.

"I…"

It felt as if someone was ringing a gong right next to my ear. I covered my mouth from the sudden rush of the sick feeling from my stomach. The kkoma Yoo Joonghyuks kept looking up at me as I began wobbling about unsteadily.

「Kim Dokja knew who these beings were.」

The final revision of the 'Ways of Survival' spat out bright texts from inside my pocket.

「He knew, but at the same time, he didn't want to know.」

"Kim Dokja?"

The kkoma Yoo Joonghyuks realized that something was wrong with me and called out.

I needed to stop thinking.

['The Fourth Wall' is shaking.]

Stop thinking.

['The Fourth Wall' is shaking intensely.]

However, I couldn't.

Pages were flipping over inside my head. As if there was a storm raging about in there, all those pages swirled up and flew at the same time to completely blanket my consciousness.

"…Hey, you?"

And eventually, my vision was dyed in pitch-black darkness.

"Looks like he's learned of it now."

The kkoma Yoo Joonghyuk number [41] spoke as if it was in passing. Next to him was the 'Secretive Plotter', sitting on the ancient, worn-down throne.

"By any chance, did you deliberately give out that hint?"

[That wasn't my intention.]

"I don't see any reward for you after you even prepared props to put up a show like this."

The kkoma Yoo Joonghyuk number [41] spoke as he stared at the Plotter's white coat. It was the same coat as the one Yoo Joonghyuk from the 1863rd turn wore.

The Plotter felt that stare. While taking the coat off, he spoke up. [I wasn't putting on a show. That guy from the 1863rd should've been a part of me originally. Just like all of you.]

"However, he opened the door and left without warning, didn't he. While leaving behind that coat, too."

The kkoma Yoo Joonghyuk number [41] took over the white coat. As if the two had been talking about something forbidden up until now, a short silence descended between them.

The 'Secretive Plotter' wordlessly extended his hand towards the empty air. A circular table suddenly materialised next to the old throne. There was a wine glass filled with red wine on top of it. He lightly picked the glass up.

[It seems that the scenario is progressing far quicker than expected. Its ripening degree is nothing to write home about.]

"It's all because of that fool, Kim Dokja."

[Has the Dokkaebi King made his move yet?]

The kkoma Yoo Joonghyuk number [41] flipped through the message log in the empty air. "No, not yet. However, Great Dokkaebis are now moving behind the scenes. The Wennys have contacted us, as well."

[It'll soon start, then.]

"I guess so."

Two Yoo Joonghyuks stopped talking for a little while. Ominous howls could be heard coming through the cracked walls of this palace built to resemble a circle. Those were the cries of the Outer World's hounds searching for them.

The 'Secretive Plotter' opened his lips. [41st. You are the most similar 'Yoo Joonghyuk' when compared to me.]

"What an honour that is."

[You'll soon die.]

"Have we not come this far for that exact purpose?"

They stopped talking again. Pale-white light suddenly glowed in the empty air, and soon, <Star Stream>'s broadcast screen appeared there. The 'Secretive Plotter' flipped through the screens as if he was bored and spoke up.

[There isn't much left till the end of this long story, then.]

When I opened my eyes, I found myself inside the Library.

「Kim Dok ja, so an noy ing.」

I heard the Wall's faint voice and shook my head to regain my wits.

'Sorry about that'.

The lights from the lanterns brightened up the dim darkness. It seemed that I was sucked into [the Fourth Wall]'s interior once more. The Wall had protected my mind from breaking down, in other words.

I massaged my pulsing head and took quick, short breaths. I needed a bit more time before my mind cleared up sufficiently enough. How long did it pass by like that?

Eventually, only one line remained etched inside my once-chaotic mind.

「The 'Secretive Plotter' is Yoo Joonghyuk from the original 'Ways of Survival'.」

He was not the Yoo Joonghyuk I met in the 1863rd turn, nor the guy I experienced the 3rd turn with.

No, he was someone I had never met before.

Indeed, he was Yoo Joonghyuk who witnessed the conclusion of the <Star Stream> before the '3rd turn' even had the chance to begin.

– Hang on, author-nim! What will happen to Joonghyuk-ie now? When it's like this…

I recalled the last comment I made on the final chapter of the 'Ways of Survival'. That novel came to an end and left everything up to the epilogue. The answer to the question I was dying to know…

I slowly got up from the spot and took a look at the bookshelves around me.

[Yoo Joonghyuk, records from the 4th turn, eighth volume]

I stood there dazed after looking at the book's spine, revealed under the gentle light.

The stories that I grew up reading were here.

I slowly reached out towards that book's spine. My fingertip touching the end of the spine trembled faintly. This was the story that I read over and over again. Each of those phrases was my life, my blood, and my flesh. But now, why did such a story feel so…

…Alien to me now?

I forced myself to grab that book, hoping to get rid of this feeling. This was a story that I could enjoy reading regardless of what time it was and which page it was, anyway.

This story wouldn't betray me. If I read it, I should feel better. Just like how it always did.

Rather coincidentally, the page I flipped to was the scene of Anna Croft and Yoo Joonghyuk in a face-off.

The novel's Yoo Joonghyuk spoke his line.

「"This is because of you."」

My hands trembled as I flipped the page. I couldn't work up the courage to read what was on the next page. Maybe, I didn't have the qualification to do so, too.

I was happy reading this story?

My entire life amounted to nothing but me reading about someone else's sorrow and pain? In that case, how was I any different from those damn Constellations up in the sky?

「(What will you do?)」

I looked behind to find Nirvana there.

「(There are two 'Yoo Joonghyuks' in this world.)」

The librarians had gathered around me. Three pairs of eyes were now looking at me, pitying me. Nirvana, Simulation, and then, the Devourer of Dreamss.

I met each of their gazes and asked. '…What do you guys think?'

「(Do you wish to acquire the opinion of this one?)」 Nirvana stepped forward to reply. He sounded confident as if he knew the right answer already. 「(No need to fall into a dilemma. Every creature started as one in the beginning, after all.)」

"You're going on about that 'one' again?"

「Everything was one, to begin with, so what does it matter if there are two or more Yoo Joonghyuks? Becoming one with all the Yoo Joonghyuks is the utmost important providence of the cosmos…!」

Yup, it was my fault to ask this idiot in the first place.

I shifted my gaze and discovered that the master of the theatre dungeon, Simulation, looking back at me.

「(It seems that you're suffering under the weight of the guilty conscience.)」

Guilty conscience – was it alright to bluntly label what I feel into that sort of emotion? My hand holding the book trembled, causing the pages themselves to tremble as well.

「(Why do you feel guilt? Are you tormented by the misfortune he had suffered?)」

"I'm not too sure."

「(Regardless of what, you can't save him. He has already lived a life like that, and you simply read about his story. That is the summary of your reality.)」

His voice, tinged with a certain logical sense, contained the wisdom of an ancient being who had read many stories for the longest time.

The last one to speak was the 'Devourer of Dreamss'. It pushed up its glasses with its tentacles and spoke as if to mock me. 「(Oh, dear Constellation. Do you honestly believe that the great Plotter is asking for your sympathy?)」

The moment I heard those words, my emotions cooled down as if they were bathed in icy-cold water.

It was correct. This emotion I've been feeling was the same thing as me insulting every story I had read.

Besides, now wasn't the time to swim in these trivial emotional mires.

Nirvana glibly continued on. 「(Looks like you've finally regained some of your lost senses.)」

Right now, I need to worry about much more realistic problems first.

'I need to return to my companions, but I don't have any methods of getting out of here'.

The 'Devourer of Dreamss' nodded its head. 「(I'm sure that's the case. Within the N'Gai's Forest, he's basically the god, after all.)」

'Do you know something, by any chance?'

「(I do know, but there's not much meaning even if I explain. Because you'd get only further away from their origins the more you try to explain anything related to the 'Outer Gods'. Just like what the 'Recorders of Fear' have done.」

'Recorders of Fear'… I seemed to have heard a similar story once before.

Meanwhile, the 'Devourer of Dreamss' continued on. 「(The entrance and the exit lay in the same place. In most cases, a door with 'Pull me' written on it would open when you push at it. You must figure out why you're here. When you do, you will naturally discover the exit yourself.)」

I heard what the 'Secretive Plotter' said earlier after hearing those words.

– When you're done with the Three Questions, you must figure out the 'reason you had to be brought' here.

The reason why I had to come here.

When I thought about it, maybe the 'Three Divine Questions and Answers' being suspended was a fortunate thing for myself.

I might have been able to guess the identity of the 'Secretive Plotter', but I hadn't been able to figure out the reason why he brought me to this place.

That guy, why did he bring me here?

「(He's a being who witnessed the end of one world.)」 The 'Devourer of Dreamss' spoke as if it already knew what my question was. 「(What can compel a being who already knows of ■■ to throw himself back into the great cycle once more…?)」

In that moment, I recalled a certain moment in my life. It was a piece of my memory from a very long time ago. I was a young boy, sitting opposite my mother and reading a book resting on my lap.

– Dokja-yah, please read it again.

What would be the reason for an existence that knew the story inside out to read it again?

「Yo u go ou t now Kim Dok ja.」

In the following moments, my view broke up and I was swept up in a whirlpool. The sight of the Library scattered away like smoke. Everything spun around until my consciousness returned to where it belonged. Still suffering from the slight case of migraine and dizziness, I slowly opened my eyes along with a soft groan.

[Current Incarnation Body recovery rate: 34%]

Drips of Story fell one at a time from the IV pack filled with Stories, currently attached to my arm. And there was information on my Incarnation Body floating up on the display in the air.

[Currently, the injection of healing medicine cannot be administered due to the extensive damage to your foundational Story.]

[Natural recovery is recommended.]

[You currently possess high resistance against elixirs.]

[You can consume a new type of elixir to boost the rate of recovery.]

I struggled to push myself up. Every corner of my body still ached like crazy, but still, movements in my joints felt a lot smoother than before.

"Biyoo."

As expected, Biyoo didn't reply. However, I was greeted by another message, instead.

[You're currently connected to a temporary channel.]

A temporary channel – meaning, this place was not an official scenario location of the <Star Stream>.

"Total numbers of connections."

[Number of Constellations currently connected to the temporary channel: 2]

It was saying '2', which was as clear as you could get, as much as the number of clicks the 'Ways of Survival' got.

I began thinking. If I wanted to escape from this place, there was little choice but to have another face-to-face with the 'Secretive Plotter'.

But, I wasn't sure if he'd meet me again that easily.

In that case, there was only one other method left.

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation', is calling the Constellation, 'Secretive Plotter'.]

If the bastard didn't want to meet me, then…

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation', is looking at the Constellation, 'Secretive Plotter'.]

Then, until he looked at me again.

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation', is throwing a temper tantrum in the Constellation, 'Secretive Plotter's' direction.]

Yup, I just needed to annoy him.

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation', is…]

[Constellation, 'Secretive Plotter', is glaring at you.]

As expected, a response came. Just before I could send back another message, though, the door to my room flung open with some force.

"You insane fool. Why are you making a ruckus like this?"

"Oh, so you came."

The kkoma Yoo Joonghyuk number [666] was glaring at me. "If you want something, you can simply call for me. So, stop with the barrage of noisy indirect messages."

Since these kkoma Yoo Joonghyuks were all dependents of the 'Secretive Plotter', they must've been able to hear my indirect messages, too.

In any case, that [666] seemed to be tasked with caring for my well-being. What surprised me there, though, was that he held what looked to be some kind of a smartphone-like device. Unfitting for a mini kkoma, the phone itself was the regular 'big' size.

"Why are you looking at that thing? Were you playing a mobile game?"

I got up from the bed and quickly snatched the phone away from the unguarded hands of this idiot.

Yoo Joonghyuk's original profession was the 'Pro Gamer', so it wouldn't be all that strange for him to play a game of some ki…

…Eh?

"Give it back to me this instant!!"

[666] leaped up and smacked me in the waist while roaring out in anger. I simply stared at the display in pure stupefaction, though.

…Hey, this isn't a game, now is it??

[You're currently connected to two channels.]

[You're currently in the area outside the scenario's control. You are now connected to the official channel via a proxy channel.]

The smartphone's screen was displaying a rather familiar background.

「"Dokja ahjussi is alright. He's definitely alive. I can tell."」

Just below the [LIVE] icon, indirect messages from Constellations I was familiar with were cascading down as if it was some kind of a chatroom.

[Constellation, 'Bald General of Justice', is nodding his head energetically.]

[Constellation, 'Maritime War God', is consoling the members of <Kim Dokja's Company>.]

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', is…]

What shocked me even more could be found at the bottom of the chatroom display.

[Constellation name: Secretive Plotter]

[You're currently a VIP subscriber.]

[Due to one of the VIP membership perks, you are exempt from the cost of indirect messaging.]

– Please select the expression you wish to convey.

[Currently, you have selected (Stay Strong).]

– Please enter the amount of coins to be sponsored. (You can sponsor from 50 Coins upwards in the applicable channel.)

[(No amount has been entered) C]

– Please enter the message you with to convey through indirect messaging.

[Forgetaboutfoolslikehimandchooseanewleader (You have exceeded the word length input limit.)]

I stopped reading there and looked down at the kkoma Yoo Joonghyuk number [666] in sheer dumbfoundedness. "Hey, I'm asking you just in case…"

"…"

"By any chance, the one who sent all those indirect messages was…"

"It's merely my turn today! Give up the device immediately or I'll kill you, Kim Dokja!!"

The deeply-blushing kkoma Yoo Joonghyuk number [666] held the [Splitting the Sky Sword] tightly and panted angrily. Only then did I finally figure out something that I failed to understand until now.

So, I had these kkoma idiots to thank for all those countless indirect messages the 'Secretive Plotter' allegedly sent my way.

「"When he comes back this time, let's just throw him inside a coffin and bury him somewhere. It'll be better to let him out only after the scenarios are over."」

Lee Jihye said something hair-raisingly scary just then. I watched the kids sitting together on the screen and my heart began aching as if I had been sneak attacked just now.

It hadn't been that long since we parted ways, yet I missed them already.

Whatever the cost, I had to return to them.

Because the 'Apocalypse Dragon' scenario was already over, so if I didn't hurry back to where they were, then…

Tsu-chuchuchut!

That was when the Probability's sparks went on a wild dance; one by one, Dokkaebis began appearing in the skies of Seoul. I spotted Bihyung among them as well.

「[New main scenario has arrived!]」

God damn it… So soon?

Bihyung inside the screen began speaking up. 「[<Kim Dokja's Company>. It's now time to leave for the Final Scenario.]」

Chapter 420: Ep. 79 - The Secretive Plotter, V

"…Final Scenario?"

Jung Heewon frowned deeply while staring at the blinking message in the air.

The 'Final Scenario' was already starting?

The Apocalypse Dragon scenario was supposed to be 89th. So, did this mean that the 90th scenario was the last?

It wasn't just her who was confused by this, though. Every Constellation still riding on the Ark exchanged glances and began murmuring among themselves.

[…What does that even mean?]

[Wait, did the 99th scenario start already?]

Some of them even began lodging complaints to Dokkaebi Bihyung, too.

[What kind of an underhanded scheme is this? It's not the time for the Final Scenario to start…]

[Are you planning to take <Kim Dokja's Company> away separately?]

Bihyung studied the reactions of these Constellations before shaking his head. [The invitations to the Final Scenario are being issued since from a while ago. More correctly, ever since all of you decided to wake the 'Apocalypse Dragon', that is.]

His declaration caused the Constellations to become noisy among themselves. A few of them seemed to have realized something, and while looking around the vicinity in worried eyes, began shouting out loudly.

[I-in that case, send us to the Final Scenario, too!]

[T-that's right! We also possess the qualifications!]

Bihyung spoke as if to pacify them. [I'm sorry, but I'm not in charge of you, everyone. But, if you possess the requisite qualifications, then the assigned Dokkaebis will arrive soon to guide you, so please rest easy.]

However, his tone of voice was definitely not a friendly one.

[That is, as long as you are qualified, of course.]

Complexions of the Constellations paled visibly. And soon afterwards, the Ark made another announcement.

– Next stop is the 8612th planetary system.

The 8612th planetary system. Where the planet Earth was, the home to <Kim Dokja's Company>.

Bihyung shifted his gaze over the members of <Kim Dokja's Company> as if he could no longer delay the matter.

[Well, now. Everyone from <Kim Dokja's Company>, please gather around.]

That prompted Han Sooyoung to step forward. "No, hang on a minute. We finished the last scenario only a few days ago, you know?"

"Please let us head over to Earth first. We haven't completed our preparation for the next scenario yet."

Jung Heewon also pitched in. One by one, the companions gathered around – Shin Yoosung, Lee Gilyoung, and Lee Jihye, too… They all carried confused, unsettled expressions.

Bihyung sighed softly under his breath. [As I thought, it's really inconvenient without Kim Dokja around, isn't it. If only he was here, he'd have understood it already.]

"Just what's the reason for hurrying us up like this? If you can't give us a proper explana…"

Bihyung's lips quietly moved.

– There aren't that many entry tickets remaining. You gotta go there as soon as possible to secure yours.

Those words were conveyed through the 'Dokkaebi Communication'.

The members of the <Kim Dokja's Company> looked at each other at the same time. If this Dokkaebi was sending a covert message like this, it could only mean that he didn't want other Constellations to hear him.

However, what was with this 'entry ticket' thing? Did they need such a thing for the next scenario?

Yoo Joonghyuk suddenly made his entrance from behind the hesitating group. "Let's get going."

"But, hang on!"

Yoo Joonghyuk remained adamant even when Jung Heewon tried to stop him. "The Final Scenario won't start just because we enter its location. It's the right decision to heed his recommendation."

"But, what about Hyunsung-ssi…"

"Entrust him to my master."

Jung Heewon hurriedly looked at Han Sooyoung. The latter seemed to be thinking about something for a bit and then, grabbed the former's shoulder. "…For the time being, let's go there. There must be a reason if he's being so insistent like this. Maybe, Kim Dokja might have gone ahead of us and is waiting there. It's worth checking it out."

The words 'Kim Dokja' brought about resolute determination on the members' expressions.

"I agree."

"Me too! Me too!"

Shin Yoosung, Lee Gilyoung, and even Lee Jihye all quickly made up their minds. Jung Heewon seemed to be worried about Lee Hyunsung until the end, but eventually nodded her head after listening to Yoo Joonghyuk's words.

"We might be able to find a way to revive the 'Emperor of Steelsword' sooner by going to the Final Scenario's location."

"…In that case, I don't have a reason to hesitate anymore."

[Well, let's get going, then.]

Along with Bihyung's voice, <Kim Dokja's Company>'s surroundings were dyed in bright light in an instant.

[Scenario transmission is starting!]

Perhaps due to the higher-ranking Dokkaebi's authority being invoked, the time it took to move through the portal was short and comfortable.

In the blink of an eye, the group found themselves transported to the middle of pitch-black outer space. More specifically, on top of a semi-transparent disk that allowed them to look down on the universe itself.

"Where…"

The disk was protected by a dome-shaped barrier with only one entrance/exit, while there were several Dokkaebis standing in front of this very doorway.

Yoo Joonghyuk took a look at the Dokkaebis once, and then at the doorway, before muttering to himself. "It's the <Gate of Star Stream>."

"You know where this is?"

He nodded his head at Han Sooyoung's question. "It's where the Bureau's headquarters is. You have to pass through here in order to enter the Final Scenario's location."

"Sounds like you've been here before? Were you caught by the 「Probability Appropriateness Evaluation」 or something?"

"No, it's my first time here."

"Then how did you know? Did the records from the 1863rd turn mention this place?"

"That is…"

Suddenly, he grabbed his temples and staggered unsteadily.

He knew of the records from the 1863rd turn, thanks to the 'Secretive Plotter'. However, those records didn't contain any information regarding this scenario. Kim Dokja hadn't said anything in particular, either.

In that case, how did he know of this information already?

Tsu-chuchut…

Sparks faintly danced just above his coat. Lee Jihye sensed that something was wrong and as she reached out to him, rays of bright light exploded from the Gate's vicinity. Another batch of Constellations, as well as Dokkaebis, warped into this place.

[Constellation-nims, please, it's this way.]

Constellations and Incarnations brushed past their group in perfect order under the guidance of Great Dokkaebis. And among them walking past <Kim Dokja's Company>, was 'Heoche', the very same Dokkaebi who showed up to offer them a choice earlier.

[Didn't I say it before? That you'll all regret your decision.]

Han Sooyoung and Yoo Joonghyuk glanced at each other after hearing that Great Dokkaebi's passing voice.

Something was off about this whole thing.

Quite unlike this Great Dokkaebi's group that went past the Gate rather easily, <Kim Dokja's Company> wasn't even able to approach its vicinity at all.

Bihyung was standing by the entrance, and the group could hear him arguing with the gatekeepers there.

[What is the meaning of this? We've already gone through all the procedures. These Incarnations possess the right qualifications to enter the Final Scenario. So, please step aside.]

As the Gate emitting pure light swallowed up the Great Dokkaebi's group, it stopped first and whispered something to the captain of the gatekeepers.

Unable to wait any longer, Bihyung stepped forward, only for this captain to open its lips. [Higher-ranking Dokkaebi Bihyung, you and <Kim Dokja's Company> can't enter the Final Scenario.]

When I was young, I often had dreams where I became Yoo Joonghyuk. Well, he occupied the places inside me that should've been filled by the likes of Superman or Batman, that was why.

Not only that, I often acted as him even when I was wide awake. I got beaten up because of that, and also experienced some pretty horrible ordeals, too.

Even then, I managed to survive until now because I became such a 'Yoo Joonghyuk'.

「"Captain, let's hurry and head over to the next scenario!"」

Of course, it wasn't only Yoo Joonghyuk who made an appearance in my dreams. Indeed, the brave Lee Jihye was there, too. And…

「"Maintenance of the equipment is complete, Joonghyuk-ssi."」

…The dependable Lee Hyunsung was also there, and finally…

「"Captain, are you alright? Your complexion isn't so good…"」

…The thoughtful Shin Yoosung was there, too.

In a way, they were like my family. If Yoo Joonghyuk was my parent, then Lee Hyunsung was my hyung, Jihye was my older sister, and Yoosung was my friend.

I loved their stories. I cheered them on during their fights, and took a peek at their misfortunes. And I…

…I wasn't really sure if this could serve as an excuse, but I truly wished for them to be happy.

What had happened to them by now, I wonder?

The last thing I saw was Yoo Joonghyuk's face.

「"It's all because of you."」

Suddenly, my view spun around. I spat out a pained groan and opened my eyes.

"Your complexion isn't so good. Are you alright?"

I was wondering why my chest felt heavy, but as it turned out, the kkoma Yoo Joonghyuk number [999] was standing on it. He used his mini [Splitting the

Sky Sword] to pick up a cup resting on the nearby table and handed it over to me.

"Drink."

"…Thanks."

My mind gradually woke up after drinking some cold water.

[Current Incarnation Body recovery rate: 36%]

Although negligent, my Incarnation Body was slowly recovering. Of course, it wasn't enough to make me feel satisfied.

– <Kim Dokja's Company>. It's now time to leave for the Final Scenario.

The sight I saw in [666]'s smartphone last night didn't want to leave my head. My companions were already facing the offer of the Final Scenario. I no longer had time to waste here.

"You can leave whenever you want. As long as you can figure out the answer yourself, that is."

"It's that thing again?"

I grumbled unhappily and sat up, but then, the kkoma Yoo Joonghyuk number [999] threw an unexpected question in my way. "Name the type of food you hate."

"Why, all of a sudden?"

"Shut up and answer the question."

I was momentarily overwhelmed by the little guy's force. "…It's tomato."

He pulled out a small memo pad from his inner pocket and jotted down 'tomato' in neat handwriting.

Why was he writing that down, anyway?

"What about your favourite food?"

"…Murim dumplings with chicken broth."

My answer prompted a change of expressions in [999]'s face. "Looks like your tongue knows its stuff."

Well, sure, my three-inch tongue helped me live this far, that's true.

"81st turn is in charge of cooking. His swordsmanship might be lacking, but he's quite talented when it comes to making food. Look forward to it."

Now that I thought about it, 81st turn Yoo Joonghyuk learned quite a lot of cooking skills for some reason, didn't he? It seemed that he was in charge of meals in this place, then.

[999] finished jotting down on the memo, jumped off from the bed and glanced back at me. "If you're uncomfortable about something, tell me. Even a dumb guest is a guest nonetheless."

"There is something I want to ask, actually."

"As long as it's not an unnecessary one."

"Why did Yoo Joonghyuk become an 'Outer God'?"

The kkoma Yoo Joonghyuk's expression hardened ever so slightly. I continued with my questioning. "Not only that, he even acts as a Constellation with a moniker of 'Secretive Plotter', too… The 'Yoo Joonghyuk' that I know of would've never done something like this. He's…"

One of the things I realized after coming here was that almost all the kkoma Yoo Joonghyuks didn't really like me. Quite often, they would try to pick a fight with me for no reason, and rarely did they provide a proper answer whenever I asked them about something.

However, this [999] was different. There was that story about the wolf, too. It was as if he wanted to tell me something here.

Thankfully, my gut feeling wasn't wrong.

"Just what is the 'Yoo Joonghyuk' you think you know?"

His voice contained faint traces of scorn. I didn't know what to say.

"Do you still believe that you can understand someone through just a few lines of text in a couple of chapters?"

I couldn't reply.

I wasn't sure why. It could be because I thought that I had no right to answer him, or maybe I couldn't find the correct words to say.

[999] quietly studied the indecisive me, before shooting me a criticising glare. He then pulled some things out from a drawer attached to the table to throw them at me. "I heard that you like to read. Maybe, reading that might help you. That book is written for the purpose of understanding the fear of the unknown by foolish humans like you."

What [999] threw at me were several books. I picked one of them up to take a look.

[A Brief Overview of Outer Gods – regarding the 'Secretive Plotter' and the 'Oldest Dream']

Chapter 421: Ep. 79 - The Secretive Plotter, VI

This was a book written by the 'Recorder of Fear'.

The 'Recorders of Fear' – the very first humans to encounter the Outer Gods, and the writers who also spread the word on their existences.

[Exclusive skill, 'Reading Comprehension', is activating!]

[Exclusive Attribute, 'Scenario Interpreter', is activating!]

I couldn't help but feel my anticipation grow after seeing the book's title. To think, this would be a story regarding the 'Secretive Plotter' and the 'Oldest Dream'.

The Plotter often brought up this 'Oldest Dream', so I hoped that this could be an important opportunity to learn more about that 'thing'.

I didn't even notice that [999] had disappeared by then, all my being focused on reading this book.

Exactly eight hours later, I closed the book's cover, my face one of pure stupefaction.

"This…"

I knew of a perfect expression to describe this sort of book.

"It's even more boring than 'Ways of Survival'…"

I had no idea who wrote it, but if this book got published in the various platforms of the 21st century, then I was sure of it tanking as badly as the 'Ways of Survival'.

Not only was it boring, it was also quite a hard read, too.

"…Just what on earth was it even talking about?"

However, there was this one thing that I did understand. Which was, there were five great 'Outer Gods' in the expansive [Great Hole].

「The 'Living Flame' that rises up from the east.」

「The 'Master of the Sunken Island', the calamity of the world in the west.」

「The 'Monarch of the Great Abyss', the ruler of the northern universe.」

「The 'King of Silver Heart', the ruler of the interstellar space in the south.」

「And finally, the 'Great Plotter' that crawls from the place of nothing.」

"…This set-up is even cooler than the Ways of Survival."

In the context of the things so far, this 'Great Plotter' moniker seemed to signify the 'Secretive Plotter'. Actually, there were several interesting parts among the texts related to the Plotter himself.

「A few Recorders of Fear who had encountered the 'Great Plotter' came to learn that he was searching for the 'Oldest Dream'… (Omitted)… Those lucky

Recorders were able to ask the Great Plotter about the identity of the 'Oldest Dream'.」

「[It is the beginning of this universe and the master of the gigantic cogwheel. My oldest mortal enemy and my parent. And the one who decides the end of everything.]」

「The few Recorders of Fear managed to see the Great Plotter's expression the moment those words were spoken, and they fainted right away. After waking up, they could no longer remember who they were anymore.」

…Records written by a bunch of people who couldn't even remember themselves? Was that why the author of this book was simply stated as a 'Recorder of Fear', instead?

I wanted to read more about either the 'Great Plotter' or the 'Oldest Dream', but the majority of the book didn't contain records of those two, but rather, a collection of boring anecdotes related to the general overview of the 'Outer Gods', instead.

Even the plot development was all over the place.

Quite often, a story would end abruptly without warning just as it was getting interesting, or the sequence of events would be jumbled up even within the anecdote itself and made it utterly impossible to make heads or tails of it.

I wasn't just talking about one story here, but every single one of them, so I just couldn't get immersed within the book at all.

「(What an interesting story.)」

It was none other than Simulation who decided to butt in.

'…Which part was interesting to you?'

「(This book has been deliberately engineered this way.)」

'Are you saying that it was written deliberately to be boring?'

「(The message this story wishes to convey is quite clear.)」

'If the author wanted to convey a message, then he should've written it in a way that others could understand'.

「It's written with the idea that 'Those who can't understand it, will not'.)」

'Pardon?'

I thought I heard a light sigh, and then tiny sparks danced in front of my eyes. The power leaking out from [The Fourth Wall] flipped through the pages of the book and began extracting several paragraphs.

And once those seemingly disparate paragraphs, taken from different short stories, were connected, they formed the following lines of texts.

「Emotions, passed down from the distant, remote universe. That is the flow of the ancient times that this writer could never follow after. We were terrified.」

「They were like monsters from a universe we couldn't recognise.」

「This 'Fear' didn't stem from what we could predict. This was pure 'Terror' emanating from those that we could never understand.」

「With great difficulty, we assigned names to each of those Terrors. We wanted to pretend that, by assigning names to the creatures of the unknown, we'd be able to understand them.」

Only now did it feel like the message this book wished to convey was revealing itself.

「Of course, whether our attempt has any meaning or not, only they can decide.」

After reading that resignation-filled paragraph, I thought I could see why the 'Outer Gods' ridiculed these 'Recorders of Fear' so much. All those Modifiers attached to them, strictly speaking, didn't reflect their original essence.

「If you, the reader, meet them someday, remember this. The one who stares into the abyss will have no choice but to either go mad, or become the abyss itself.」

Having finished my second read-through, I closed the book while feeling despondent.

"…I've gained pretty much nothing here."

In the end, there was only one thing I got to figure out from this book.

「'Outer Gods' are unfathomable creatures.」

Those were some pretty irresponsible words, that's for sure.

Such words could be applied to just about anybody, not only to the 'Outer Gods', now couldn't they?

「'Yoo Joonghyuk' is an unfathomable creature.」

「'Han Sooyoung' is an unfathomable creature.」

You could say something like that and it'd still fit the context.

Even if it was not an 'Outer God', it was true that we couldn't fully understand each other. We might feel like we could, but that was nothing more than a momentary delusion on our part.

Some time ago, I had a conversation with Jang Hayoung regarding this topic.

The 'Devourer of Dreamss' silently listening to my thoughts began cackling away. 「(You're correct. That's the message this book wishes to convey. In the end, we are all simply 'Outer Gods' to each other.)」

I put the book down and looked outside the window. It was circular-shaped, just like the circular room it was in.

Sunlight poured in faintly. I spotted the 'Outer Gods' enjoying the sunbath in between the forest's dense foliage. Some of them discovered me and waved their tentacles about. As if I was looking at a scary scene from a fairy tale or something, I continued to stare at those tentacles. It could very well be that their outer appearance didn't reflect their true nature.

Now that I took a closer look, their movements seemed to be rather graceful, too.

「(Only those who reach out can discover the truth.)」

Maybe, there was no need for me to read that book from the get-go. Well, 'Outer Gods' were everywhere in this place, weren't they.

I sneakily observed my surroundings for a bit, before activating [Miniaturisation] to slip outside the window.

I floated up and approached one of the 'Outer Gods'. It also extended its tentacle towards me. I didn't sense hostility behind that action.

「I d on't car e if yo u reg ret it.」

Even after [The Fourth Wall] warned me, I still reached out towards that tentacle.

I always regretted about something in my life. However, my regret over the things I hadn't done was way bigger than for those that I did do.

[Exclusive skill, 'Reading Comprehension', is activating!]

The very last scenario of this <Star Stream> was a great war against the 'Outer Gods'. And through that war, the 'Outer Gods' would disappear from this world.

They were the only creatures in the 'Ways of Survival' without any detailed explanation.

I wanted to ask them. Ask them just where they came from.

Ask them for what purpose they were fighting against the <Star Stream>.

Not even once during the original story did the 'Outer Gods' reply to those questions. They only roared on, or spat out incomprehensible utterances and fought against the Constellations. That was all.

Tsu-chuchuchuchu…

['The Fourth Wall' is warning you!]

I grasped the Outer God's tentacle. As if it was responding to my touch, the tentacle wrapped around my hand like a tree's vine.

The 'Recorder of Fear' said this.

They said that the 'Outer Gods' were unfathomable, unexplainable existences. They said that no one knew where they came from or what their real identity was.

They could be right. My current actions might be completely meaningless.

We might end up fighting each other later, like how it was in the original storyline, and bring forth the wretched destruction and ruination to all.

Suddenly, my surroundings seemed to be blanketed by a slow-moving melody. Under the brilliant sunlight, 'Outer Gods' were, one by one, bowing their heads in my direction.

[Story, 'One Who Is Loved by All', has begun its storytelling.]

Tiny flowers began blooming on the vines created by the Outer Gods, as if they were giving me their precious hidden something. Fragrance wafted out from those flowers, soon becoming lyrics to a song. And afterwards, it formed a story.

「"Captain."」

It was a fragment of a very old memory.

「"Yoo Joonghyuk-ssi."」

I listened to those voices like an entranced man. They belonged to different people, but I could accurately guess the owners of those voices with my eyes closed.

I had been thinking about this for a long while.

If the 'Secretive Plotter' was Yoo Joonghyuk from the original story, and just like what he had shown me, if the countless world-lines of the 'Ways of Survival' existed out there, then…

The innumerable failed stories within those regression turns, just where would they have ended up in?

「"In the next life, without a doubt."」

「"Even if you regress many more times, I'll always accompany you, captain…"」

The surging waves of memories swept me up in an instant.

These memories lacked any obvious starting point, and they were not consistently linked to each other, either. However, I was able to follow them. As if I was connecting the constellations that couldn't be connected previously.

Perhaps only I was able to connect them in this world.

And in that moment, I understood.

I understood what the 'Outer God' was, why Yoo Joonghyuk from the original story had to become one willingly.

…And, why he had no choice but to become the 'Secretive Plotter'.

The story of pain that went on for tens of thousands, hundreds, maybe even for millions of years. Stories discarded by the world-line and couldn't be acknowledged as 'Stories'. And the fragments of Stories that became the subconsciousness of the worlds, drifting around in the universe and ruminating on the ancient memories. Finally, the voices of those that were not saved.

[Oooooooohhhh…]

Branches of the 'Outer God' enveloping my surroundings like a garden began expanding. I couldn't take my eyes off these memories, even though it felt as if I'd asphyxiate from the crashing waves of them.

「"Please, remember us."」

I grabbed hold of the Stories crumbling away at my touch and began sobbing. These were simply far too precious. And I felt uncontrollable sorrow now that no one remembered them.

I could neither understand or change this.

All I could do, whether it was back then or now, was to simply 'read' them.

'Outer Gods' began screeching out all at the same time.

[YouknowusYouknowusYouknowusYouknowus]

[WhoareyouWhoareyouWhoareyouWhoareyou]

The vines began tightening around me. I heard sobbing noises coming from the Outer Gods. It sounded like they were happy. Or maybe, sad.

It was the ancient cry resonating from the distant other side of the universe.

「Tol d y ou not to do it.」

Outer Gods rushing towards me soon formed a dense, impenetrable forest. Vines grew and grew, choking me harder and tighter as if to swallow me whole. As if, they wanted to accept me as one of them. As if, they wanted me to join them and stay forever.

I somehow managed to regain my wits and struggled hard to get out of there while pushing the vines away. Unfortunately, the more I did that, the tighter their restrictions became.

[DON'T GO]

[HOW COME]

I couldn't afford to get devoured here.

If I really wanted what's best for them, then I must not faint here.

[CAN'T GO]

Even before I could unsheathe the Unbroken Faith, both of my arms were sealed off. Just as I was about to get helplessly dragged into the darkness of the vines, blinding rays of light split them apart.

It was a mini [Splitting the Sky Sword], visible under the faint sunlight. I raised my head to find the kkoma Yoo Joonghyuk number [999] glaring at me.

"You bastard, what have you done?"

Chapter 422: Ep. 79 - The Secretive Plotter, VII

"Just what the hell happened back there?"

Bihyung hung his head low after hearing Han Sooyoung's words.

"You were busy talking a big game, but then, we got refused entry at the door… Oii, Dokkaebi, will you say something already?"

[Well, that is… Fuu…]

In the end, the <Kim Dokja's Company> couldn't go to the 'Final Scenario' and had to return to Earth. The reason? Their 'qualification is insufficient'.

[It seems that the Great Dokkaebis were behind this.]

"You think everything'll be fine after saying that? How're you gonna make up for wasting our time?"

[…I'll compensate you with suitable rewards so please, stop grilling me.]

While the grumbling Bihyung was rummaging through his pockets, Han Sooyoung sighed deeply and took a look at her companions.

They had somehow returned to Earth after going through all sorts of crazy ups and downs. Predictably, none of them were themselves at the moment.

"He might have died for real this time… I'm sorry, hyung… I… I wasn't qualified… Because I didn't do the contract…"

Lee Gilyoung had been muttering some indescribable things to himself while crouching over there, while Shin Yoosung had her eyes closed and both of her index fingers were pressed to her temples as if she was meditating or some such. Meanwhile, Lee Jihye and Jung Heewon had taken Lee Hyunsung to Aileen at the [Industrial Complex] and had vacated the premises for the time being.

"…This place hasn't changed at all. That ahjumma didn't even bother to clean the house, did she?"

Han Sooyoung muttered to herself as she patted away the dust on the aged couch.

Once upon a time, she, Yoo Sangah, and Lee Sookyung stayed together in this very house. A place where they lived together for three years during Kim Dokja's absence…

Her brief reminiscence was cut short by the doorbell.

She utilised the [Black Flame] to remotely open the door and smirked to herself. "…I guess the 「Devil showing up when you talk about her」 could be a Story as well."

"It's been a while, Sooyoung-ah," said Lee Sookyung as she scanned the messy state of the house. She eventually shook her head. "You're still the same as before. You should at least ventilate the place."

"I'll have you know, I've returned only just now. And it's already been so many yea…"

Han Sooyoung flinched when she got that far. She might have spent dozens of years in the 'Isle of Reincarnators', but that was time spent within the island itself. She couldn't really tell exactly how long it had been on the outside.

Lee Sookyung opened all the windows in the house with a simple flick of her hand and sent away all the stuffy dust outside. Her eyes remained fixed on the group sagging on the floor in the meantime.

Han Sooyoung sneakily blocked the older woman's view towards them and coughed to clear her throat, before asking a question. "By any chance, did Jung Heewon tell you already?"

"Tell me what?"

Han Sooyoung lightly bit her lip. She wasn't sure how to explain this situation.

"Well, you can see that Kim Dokja isn't here."

"Hmm, that's true. I learned of it just now, too."

She thought that maybe, she shouldn't have brought it up, but it was spilt milk already. Han Sooyoung squeezed her eyes shut and spoke. "The reason why he's not here, it's… Me, Yoo Joonghyuk and Jung Heewon, we all wanted to save your son and tried to go with the soul's one big hit, but…"

"Please get to the main point."

"Huh. Actually, ahjumma, your son's gone to some place with someone. But that place is…"

"Are you perchance speaking of that?"

Han Sooyoung followed Lee Sookyung's pointing finger and turned her head. The TV mounted on the wall was playing a news footage.

The scene on the screen showed a man wearing a white coat floating in the jet-black sky, with Kim Dokja dangling off that man's arm.

– Breaking news! <Kim Dokja's Company>'s president kidnapped!

Han Sooyoung's jaw dropped to the floor as she muttered softly. "…What the heck is that?"

For some unfathomable reason, the Earth's media had found out about that event. Lee Sookyung and her rather relaxed expression stared at the screen for a little while, then she nodded her head. "That boy. He's still so popular."

"Ahjumma?! Don't you get that it's a pretty serious problem??"

"But, he looks like Yoo Joonghyuk-gun[1]. So, what can be a serious problem?"

"Because that's not the 'Yoo Joonghyuk'. That's the problem."

Han Sooyoung spat out a groan. But then, the TV's screen suddenly rewound itself back and the exact same footage played out again.

– Breaking news! <Kim Dokja's Company>'s president kidnapped!

She looked around wondering what was going on here, only to discover the stupefied Yoo Joonghyuk continually poking the TV remote. He rewound the footage several times and repeated it over and over again.

Han Sooyoung asked him. "…Hey, are you alright?"

"…"

"You won't regress even if your rewind that, you know? Did you even forget how to go back now?"

He didn't even pretend to hear her. His eyes burned scarily as if he wanted to engrave the appearance of the 'Secretive Plotter' in them. The Status of the Regressor who refused to accept his defeat oozed out from him and made the air in the living room rather stuffy and hot.

Han Sooyoung spat out an even greater groan. "Dammit. Just who the heck distributed that footage…"

[Hum, hum.]

She turned her head yet again to find Bihyung this time, coughing to clear his throat.

"…You haven't left yet?"

[Here's your reward.]

Now that she thought about it, she had forgotten all about the reward payout. She extended her hand out, and the Dokkaebi's small hand placed 500 Coins on her palm.

"Are you messing with me??"

[Well, the thing is, the financial state of the Bureau's Seoul branch is a bit strained lately, you see… And what with all these many things that require our attention, it's like…]

Bihyung whistled while glancing at the other side of the sky.

The Seoul's sky that should've been clear was now dyed in the ominous colours of crimson and yellow. There were Probability's sparks lashing down like lightning bolts, as well as the pitch-black [Great Hole] swirling around viciously.

Han Sooyoung frowned deeply and asked. "Did something happen to Seoul?"

"The skies have been like that for a while now."

This city was no longer the location for the main scenario. But, if the apocalyptic phenomena were still persisting like that, it…

[It's because of the Apocalypse Dragon.]

Bihyung looked at the sky with a bitter expression, pulled out a lengthy smoking pipe from his inner pocket and mouthed it.

Perhaps she found that sight unacceptable, Han Sooyoung snatched the pipe away and yelled at the Dokkaebi. "What are you talking about?! Why does the Apocalypse Dragon's effect reach this far?"

[You don't know? I thought Kim Dokja would have told you already.]

"That idiot never tells us the most important information."

Bihyung pulled out a second smoking pipe looking rather unperturbed and spoke while lighting it up. [The revival of the Apocalypse Dragon is the first button of the great annihilation for all of us. You can think of it as the world-line now rushing towards its end with that thing wide awake… This was why I told you that we need to hurry to the 'Final Scenario'.]

"…What will happen if we don't get to the Final Scenario?"

[As the word implies, it's the apocalypse. You, me, this world.]

That composed declaration prompted the dumbfounded Han Sooyoung to sharply shoot back. "What the heck, what is even… What's the point of this 'Final Scenario' when the whole world is about to be destroyed? Why did you people even create such a scenario in the first place?!"

[The great annihilation is not a scenario planned out by the Dokkaebis. It's simply meant to be. And because the annihilation is real, the 'Final Scenario' has gained its purpose at last.]

Bihyung looked up at the distant skies with an expression of remorse. He saw the movements of a group of stars, hurriedly trying to get to some place. Stars of the heavens were getting further away like shooting stars.

* * *

[Oh-oooooooh!]

[Ah-aaaaaah!]

The 'Outer Gods' unleashed their jet-black Statuses, dyeing the entirety of the N'Gai's Forest in pure darkness.

The kkoma Yoo Joonghyuks managed to extract me from the vines and quickly stood all around me. The kkoma number [999] spoke up first. "Protect Kim Dokja."

"I told all of you this before, didn't I? I knew he would cause a problem."

"Indeed, we should've killed him the first time we saw him."

Even though they spat out some seriously scary words, all of the mini Yoo Joonghyuks continued to hold their [Heaven Shaking Swords] firmly and didn't lower their guards. They sliced and cut the approaching tentacles and advanced forward little by little.

Maybe because it was directly after witnessing something truly shocking, my entire body seemed to be wrapped in this cold air. The kkoma number [999] took off his black coat and placed it over my shoulders.

"I only remember telling you to read a book, so why did you have to provoke them?"

I wasn't sure what I could say back to him here. [999]'s eyes trembled.

"…You fool."

[Oh-ooooooh!]

The howling Outer Gods' true voice reverberated heavily in the sky. Insects within the forest vomited out their bodily fluids and died, while some of the Gods even began fighting among themselves, too.

[999] spoke in a grave tone of voice. "These beings have not been understood for a very long time. And you just had to get involved."

'Outer Gods' were flooding into where we were.

[GivetomeGivetomeGivetomeGivetome]

[KimdokjaKimdokjaKimdokjaKimdokja]

What was even more concerning, though, was the fact that not all Outer Gods carried the same sentiments as their peers. A few of the higher-ranked ones, after sensing my presence, began to exude unfiltered animosity in my way.

[Stin ki ng Cons tel ation has lo oked down on us.]

[Ki ll him get r id of h im.]

[No fo rgiving e ven if y ou are Plo tter's gue st.]

"Step aside, members of the Shantak!"

"We will cut you down if you come closer."

The kkoma Yoo Joonghyuks all unleashed their Statuses and resisted, but the 'Outer Gods' didn't back down at all. They approached closer one step at a time, and while emitting dizzying Statuses themselves, cried out in a loud roar.

[Oh, Pl otter! We can no lo nger wa it!]

[F or ho w long do we n eed to wa it? The wo rld-l ine's end is ap pro aching!]

I knew very well what they were talking about.

The world-line's end.

Even these guys, as expected, were fully conscious of the 'Final Scenario'.

[Th is wo rld mu st unde rstand us]

"Step aside!!"

The tentacles closing in grew even more ferocious. Eventually, their Statuses became simply too much for the kkoma Yoo Joonghyuks to deal with, but then…

The forest parted ways, and 'he' made his entrance.

He walked forward while crossing the tentacles that none of us could block. Each of his steps contained the solitude of indescribable eternity as well as the entirety of the 1863rd lives he had experienced.

Once upon a time, his name was Yoo Joonghyuk, but now, he was the 'Secretive Plotter'. A man who knew of every world-line's sorrow.

Outer Gods knelt down in front of that absolute, overwhelming nobleness.

[Oh, the gr eat Pl otter.]

However, not all of them did. There were some 'Gods' who didn't want to bend their opinions even when subjected to the intense pain of their existences turning into nothingness.

[Oh, the gr eat Pl otter, we can no lo nger wa it.]

The ones no one could ever understand were wailing in sorrow. They raged on, and they mourned. Even then, their rage and sorrow were not understood. They didn't belong to this this world-line, and they couldn't be understood through the existing 'Stories'.

One needed to work really hard to understand their rage, their sorrow and their grief.

[We wan t to be un ders tood.]

[We w ant to bec ome sto ries.]

Stories that needed one to work hard to understand could never be Stories. Stories that needed one to throw oneself deeply in first couldn't be consumed.

The 'Secretive Plotter' opened his lips. [You will not be understood.]

He looked at each and every one of them with subtle gazes, studied them, and gifted them with the cruel reality.

[That is because this <Star Stream> has labelled all of you 'Terrors'. Because this world has described you all as 'Chaos' that destroys the order, as calamities that could never be understood. That is why.]

It was then I finally understood why the 'Secretive Plotter' has chosen to side with these creatures.

「Why would a person who knows the end of everything repeat the same story over again?」

When I thought about it, the answer was a rather simple one.

「That's because he didn't like the end he witnessed.」

In the original story, Yoo Joonghyuk and Constellations defeated the 'Outer Gods' together. That's how he got to the end of the scenarios, and destroyed the <Star Stream>.

[You will never shine in the sky like the Constellations, nor can you become the main actors of this world. As long as the <Star Stream> exists, you will all remain forever as 'Outer Gods'.]

However, he didn't find what he wanted. And now, after becoming the 'Secretive Plotter', Yoo Joonghyuk was stepping up to the battlefield once more.

[Soon, the war of annihilation will commence. The end of everything will soon begin, where stars will fall, worlds will collapse, and all Stories will be extinguished.]

I spotted the eyes of the 'Secretive Plotter' looking at me from afar. The [Sage's Eye] spun around within his pitch-black iris.

[Oh, the great Plotter…!]

[Oh, ooooooh!]

According to the plot of the original story, these creatures would meet with defeat.

「For the sake of the conclusion Kim Dokja wishes for, these beings simply had to be defeated.」

<Star Stream> would be destroyed, while the stars of the heavens and the solitary gods would die with no one to remember them. The defeated would die extremely sorrowful deaths, while the victors would not get to bask in their victory.

I began walking towards the 'Secretive Plotter'.

"…Kim Dokja?"

I heard [999] call out to me, but I didn't look back. I undid the [Miniaturisation], and my eye level changed rapidly. The black coat [999] placed on my shoulders wavered along with every step I took.

[<Star Stream>'s Probability is now shifting!]

[Stream of the great main scenario is now dwelling in you.]

Past the canopy of the vine-covered forest, the sea of stars of the <Star Stream> could be seen. On one side of the sky, stars were emitting bright light, while on the other side, ominous-looking galaxies alongside the [Great Hole] were quietly flowing about.

Half of it, light, while the other half, darkness.

Soon, the final war would begin. And most likely, I would have to stand on one of the sides to witness the end of the world.

[Your second Modifier has been decided.]

A small star flickered on the far side of the sky. I stared at it for the longest time, before slowly reverting my gaze back to the ground. The 'Outer Gods' were now looking at me.

I returned their gazes and finally chose the side I'd stand.

[Your second Modifier is the 'Watcher of Light and Darkness'.]

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[1] **gun** is a relatively rare Korean honorific, for casual use and peers.

Chapter 423: Ep. 80 - Our greatest ally, I

[Kill him.]

[KimdokjaKimdokjaKimdokjaKimdokja!]

I began walking towards the 'Outer Gods'.

The 'Secretive Plotter' didn't try to stop me. It was as if he was telling me to try anything I want.

I took another step forward. The movements of the vines grew even more vicious. They extended out in an instant, and grabbed both of my arms.

[HeknowsusHeknowsusHeknowsusHeknowsus]

"Right, I do know you."

I nodded my head towards them.

[ButhowButhowButhowButhowButhow]

'But how'.

I didn't know how to answer that question. When I failed to provide an answer, the animosity directed at me by the vines grew even heavier. Eventually, one of the tentacles wavering around flew in and pierced my shoulder. It hurt like crazy, but the true pain didn't come from the injured body part.

I could hear someone's voice coming from the end of that tentacle.

「"I don't want to die."」

Was it an illusion?

For a moment there, the tentacle piercing my shoulder looked like a sword.

…Not just any, but the Twin Dragon Sword. And I knew the owner of this sword well.

「"I don't want it to end like this."」

Lee Jihye was crying. I belatedly reached out, but her crying face had disappeared by then. Her face slowly vanished, crumbling into debris and only the short, aimless voice fragments lingered on.

'The Nameless Ones'.

"…I know."

I suppressed the pain and spoke up. And then, yet another tentacle flew in towards me. The kkoma Yoo Joonghyuk number [999] shouted out. As the bloody noise of my flesh being pierced resounded out, another voice entered my head.

「"Yoo Joonghyuk-ssi, which number Lee Hyunsung am I?"」

The Incarnation of steel, sturdier than anyone in this world. Just like before, Lee Hyunsung's figure scattered like bubbles as I reached out. My hand wandered the empty air, and his voice came to me from beyond the void.

「"Truly, is there an end to these scenarios?"」

"Yes, there is."

I bit my lip and continued to walk forward.

One step, and then, another one.

Every time I did, fragments of the forgotten world-line talked to me.

「"I believed we could carry on for a little while longer."」

Lee Seolhwa, dying with her heart penetrated.

「"I don't resent you. Still, there is one thing I do regret…"」

Shin Yoosung, smiling faintly as she scattered away.

「"You're so dumb. Captain, I'm Kim Namwoon. You think I'll kick the bucket here? I won't die. I will definitely not die. I'll survive, and survive again to see the next scenario. For sure, the next scenario…"」

Kim Namwoon, passing on with his eyes still open.

Memories from the regression turns that I couldn't even begin to guess.

These were simply by-products of the failed world-lines, a collection of memories with no meaning to them anymore. The precious something that Yoo Joonghyuk had been protecting even at the cost of becoming the 'Secretive Plotter'.

「"I ain't going to be your ally in the next turn. So, don't come looking for me."」

Gong Pildu.

「"Looks like you'll be left alone again, Yoo Joonghyuk."」

Anna Croft.

「"It's been an honour to fight alongside you, Supreme King."」

Selena Kim.

Even the memories of those who used to be Constellations fleeted past me.

Goryeo's First Sword, Cheok Jungyeong.

The god of wine and ecstasy, Dionysus…

I stopped walking because of the sensation of the fierce flames from my right side. The tentacle holding onto my arm burned as it spoke to me.

「"I can still burn them some more."」

…Uriel.

I nodded my head and replied. "I know."

['Outer Gods' are now looking at you.]

I knew. But I couldn't understand.

Because I wasn't them.

And that was why all I could say to them were these words.

"This story isn't over yet."

['Outer Gods' are paying attention to your words.]

"There are still some things left to be told, right?"

I looked up at the 'Outer Gods'.

These beings, portrayed always as either cephalopods or tentacled monsters. Creatures cursed with the most disgusting appearances by the world-line, because they were not needed by it.

I spoke to them. "I'll tell your story."

Right away, the surroundings were swept up in the frenzied storm winds.

[Reallyreallyreallyreallyreally]

[WhatdoyoumeanWhatdoyoumeanWhatdoyoumean]

And from the other side, vicious animosity rained down on me.

[Lies!]

[Y ou th ink we wi ll fall for it the se cond ti me?]

Upper-grade Gods began emitting their auras at me.

I swallowed back the blood rising up in my throat and stared at them. I knew why they were reacting so violently like this. Because they had been continually used by the 'scenario' until now.

[Do kkae bis sa id the sa me th ing.]

It was the 'Bureau' that learned of their existences first and had used them – the storytellers who, under the pretext of incorporating them into the scenarios, exploited their powers and Probability, and turned them into the 'Evil' of this world.

I spoke up with my true voice. [I'm not a Dokkaebi.]

[Y ou are a Con stell ation.]

[I'm not affiliated with the Bureau, nor am I a collaborator of Dokkaebis.]

[All Con stell ations are the sa me.]

Those words stabbed and dug into my chest like a dagger.

They were right. I was also just another Constellation who craved after Stories and leered on at their stories. However, because I was a Constellation, I got to know about something important, as well.

[You will all definitely be destroyed when the 'final war' commences. Doesn't matter how you fight, you will still end up losing.]

[How in sol ent, y ou ca n't tell th at wi thout fi ght ing fi rst…!]

[No need. I already know. I've already seen all the world-lines where you fight. I do not wish to see you die like that this time around.]

The branches of the 'Outer Gods' trembled from my words.

[What do y ou me an]

[You say that you wish to be understood. In that case, I'll make you into a Story.]

Right at that moment, the surrounding space-time distorted. Tentacles were trembling ever so imperceptibly.

I sensed that vibration and continued on. [I'll ensure that you can stand on equal terms with the stars in the sky. What I'm saying is that, I'll create a Story where no one will misunderstand you or despise you.]

The unrest slowly spread out. A large current of air swept across the 'N'Gai's Forest' as if it was the sign of an incoming storm.

I didn't miss this opening and spoke again. [There is no reason for the 'final war' to start. There is no need for you to remain as <Star Stream>'s evil…]

[Sh ut up]

[The lik es of y ou da res to!]

In the end, I did vomit out some blood. Upper-grade ostracised gods capable of destroying my body and killing my consciousness completely were descending down on me.

[KimdokjadangerKimdokjadanger]

[DontattackDontattackDontattack]

Vines wrapped tightly around me.

The 'Nameless Ones' were protecting me from the auras of the powerful historical-grade Outer Gods.

[Pathetic ones that don t even possess egos.]

Ku-gugugugu!

Just one true voice, and the dozens of branches were torn off. Even though they emitted painful screams, the smaller 'Outer Gods' protected me. And then, the kkoma Yoo Joonghyuks stepped in front of me as well.

The 'Secretive Plotter' didn't try to stop them or dissuade them. He simply watched on as if he was not allowed to interfere with the decision making process this time.

Just as the Statuses of the historical-grade Gods reached the critical point…

[You speak of some amusing things.]

Someone suddenly spoke up. A creature was walking out from a portal spinning around ominously.

[Oh, pitiful illegitimate children of the world-line, he speaks of the truth.]

[And you, are?]

[You shall become a Story once more and be a part of the story within the stream of stars. That is, as long as that unfortunate Constellation is willing to sacrifice himself for your sakes.]

It was an old man with a very small stature, yet the shadow he cast was unimaginably large.

There were two lumps shaking about on the cheeks of the giant shadow.

[Devil of horizon…]

I too knew of the race that old man belonged to. Indeed, I had a deal with one of them when I went to the Demon Realm for the first time.

However, this creature right before my eyes was on another dimension compared to the 'Wenny' I met back then.

There were countless Wennys in this world, but there could only be one with two lumps among them.

[Oh, the master of the ancient library.]

I raised my head to find the Wenny King staring at me with eyes filled with malicious interest.

[Are you truly planning to become the <Star Stream>'s enemy for the sake of these discarded waste?]

I could see the circular-shaped exit open up in the distant forest. And behind me, many Outer Gods had come to see me off. Their tentacles danced side to side like a forest of gigantic reeds.

[KimdokjaKimdokjaKimdokja]

[GoodbyeGoodbyeGoodbye]

Most of them possessed similar outer appearances, but even then, I could just about tell them apart.

That guy over to the left side was the kind-hearted one possessing a tiny little bit of Shin Yoosung's memories from the 12th turn. The one on the far right, meanwhile, was blessed with a fair amount of 44th Kim Namwoon's… Hang on, didn't that guy stab me in the thigh earlier?

"There is no need to go this far," said the kkoma Yoo Joonghyuk number [999] riding on my shoulder. "The deal with the Wenny King is as absolute as they come. If you do this, then you will definitely…"

"I won't die, so don't worry. By the way, are you planning to come with me?"

[999] formed an unhappy expression after hearing my question. "As per our agreement, I'm tasked with monitoring you. It'd become troublesome for us if

you get in touch with the members of<Kim Dokja's Company> and come up with an underhanded scheme."

"But, I even did the existence pledge, saying that I won't contact them… Seriously, you Yoo Joonghyuks can be too much sometimes."

The first agreement I made with the Wenny King, as well as the Outer Gods, was that I'd not contact the <Kim Dokja's Company> nor reveal my identity to them.

And the second agreement was…

[Your actions have triggered a new scenario to be created in the <Star Stream>!]

[Hidden scenario has been generated!]

I chuckled hollowly as I read the scenario messages.

Even things like this became a scenario… As expected of the <Star Stream>, then. But then again, this world wanted to create a story out of its own destruction, so it shouldn't that surprising, really.

<Hidden Scenario – Verifying Agreement>

Type: Hidden

Difficulty: ???

Clear condition: Introduce 'Outer Gods' to the <Star Stream>'s main Giant Story. However, they must not be introduced in the existing role of 'Outer Gods' as before.

Time limit: 100 days

Reward: Outer Gods' trust, ???

> Failure: You will lose all of your memories and transform into an Outer God.

Give Outer Gods a role that wasn't about being 'Outer Gods'…

Such a scenario didn't exist anywhere in the original story.

A scenario acquired after persuading the Outer Gods and making a deal with the Wenny King. If I failed it, then I'd be transformed into an Outer God like them.

This was the second condition of the agreement I made with the 'Wenny King'.

「However, succeeding in this scenario will ensure that Outer Gods wouldn't be destroyed.」

I looked at the exit of the N'Gai's Forest and did a light stretching exercise.

[999] asked me, perhaps finding me rather untrustworthy. "Where are you planning to go now? There shouldn't be any scenario with a 'Giant Story' remaining by now."

He was right. Most of the Giant Stories existing in <Star Stream> had come to their conclusions by now. However, if my memory served me correctly, then one powerful 'Giant Story' should still remain.

I pretended to ask [999] in passing. "By the way, do you also know about the stories from the 1863rd turn?"

"I've heard about it from the Great Plotter."

"If you guys enter the 'final war' like this, then you'll definitely lose. And even if you somehow miraculously win, not many of you will end up surviving."

"Are you trying to curse us?"

"No, I'm only stating the truth."

No matter how powerful the faction of the 'Secretive Plotter' and the 'Outer Gods' was, they still couldn't fight against the entire <Star Stream>. Whatever the case might have been, the current rulers of this universe were the <Star Stream>'s Nebulas and the stinking 'Bureau'.

"The best way to avoid war is to inform the other side that they would lose a lot by starting one in the first place."

"What are you implying?"

"Do you know which Constellation slaughtered the most number of Outer Gods in the 'final war'?"

[999] carefully combed through his memories after hearing my question and made his reply. Although, his expression indicated that his pride had been wounded just a little bit.

"No, I do not."

"The Status he possesses is so strong that normally, he has to divide himself into several pieces. Well, if I'm to describe him, he'd be pretty similar to the 'Secretive Plotter'."

"…Similar to the Great Plotter?"

"That's right. If only that guy didn't stand on the side of the <Star Stream>, if only he didn't perform the suicidal attack on the tens of thousands of ostracised gods… the course of the 1863rd turn would've changed by a lot."

My words caused [999]'s eyes to tremble for the first time. It seemed that he had finally realized the identity of the Constellation I was talking about.

"…Could it be?"

The Constellation who sacrificed himself to take out countless other gods during the 'Ways of Survival's final war.

There was only one being capable of doing that. I grinned and spoke. "You're right. We're going to go where he is and make him our ally."

Chapter 424: Ep. 80 - Our greatest ally, II

A white figure of a person rose up in the pitch-black darkness.

Yoo Joonghyuk swung his sword several times at this figure. From the Breaking the Sky Thunder Sword, even to the Shooting Star Slash. However, not one of his sword skills managed to even touch the enemy's shadow.

Right after that, Stories collided. Jolted awake now, he opened his eyes while gasping out a pained moan.

He was sitting inside the darkened training dojo, the sun having set already. A lengthy shadow was looking down on him.

It was the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint.

"Was he really strong?"

His master bent her back to settle down, her eyes filled with concern towards her disciple. Yoo Joonghyuk bit his lip and replied. "…He was."

"By how much?"

"Even after unlocking the Transcendence level 5, I couldn't win against him."

The fifth level of Transcendence was the absolute limit that the current Yoo Joonghyuk had reached.

The Breaking the Sky Saint quietly observed him for a little while, before opening her lips. "When you break past the Transcendence's sixth level, you'll no longer be bound by the [Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship]'s gender requirements."

Originally, the [Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship] was a martial technique designed for women. But, as was the case with every martial technique out there, once one stepped past a certain level, they would reach the stage of 'Breaking Beyond Boundaries'.

The process of endlessly exceeding many boundaries was the part of a Transcendent's training regime.

"There is no guarantee of defeating him even if I reach the sixth level."

"Why do you think that?"

"He is me."

For the first time ever, Yoo Joonghyuk's always-confident voice contained a faint trace of fear. "That man, he's none other than me who has regressed over 1863rd times. How can I defeat someone like that?"

It was a clear sign of despair.

The moment he stood face to face with the 'Secretive Plotter', he witnessed a wall he couldn't overcome no matter what he tried. There was the gap of time between them that could never be bridged by the mere 3rd turn regression. His enemy had already surpassed that lengthy period of time to enter this world-line.

The Sword Saint spoke. "He is not you."

"…He is also Yoo Joonghyuk."

"He has not tread on the same path as you have. And he'll not do so in the future, either."

As if she wanted to wipe away the despair rooted in her disciple's eyes, her large hand gently stroked his cheek.

She spoke again. "It's not the level of Transcendence you have reached, but which Stories you have acquired that's the most important part. You may be only a little chick who has regressed three times, but you know of Stories that he doesn't."

Yoo Joonghyuk heard those words and looked down at his fist. It was a fist that failed to reach the 'Secretive Plotter'. He slowly unfurled his hand and Stories leaked out from there.

Stories that he had acquired himself. Stories that the 'Secretive Plotter' didn't know. And…

"The path of Transcendence is different for everyone. So, do not try to chase after him, and search for the path only you can tread."

He wordlessly clenched his fist tightly. As if he didn't want to permit any of the Stories to leave him.

"…Have you heard any new information, Master?"

The Breaking the Sky Saint shook her head.

It had been over a week since Kim Dokja's disappearance.

Unfortunately, neither his whereabouts nor the location of the 'Secretive Plotter' had been discovered until now.

"You say that he crossed over from another world-line."

"That's correct."

"I do not know what his aim is, but if he bothered to enter this world-line at this point in time, then it's possible that his goal is somehow related to the

'Final Scenario'."

Yoo Joonghyuk agreed with her opinion. In other words, there was a good chance that he'd encounter the 'Secretive Plotter' again by going to the location of the Final Scenario.

"However, the current situation is that the <Kim Dokja's Company> can't enter the 'Final Scenario'."

He nodded his head.

– Stories you have acquired are insufficient to approve your participation in the 'Final Scenario'.

On that day they failed to enter the 'Final Scenario', the <Bureau> one-sidedly sent that communique in their direction. However, he thought that made some sense. Because not only were they a newly-created Nebula, the number of Stories they managed to acquire was also rather small, as well.

However, one couldn't strictly argue that when taking into consideration the grade of the Stories they had acquired. Especially so with the 「Season of Light and Darkness」, the Giant Story they earned the last time that would be extremely hard to find its equal anywhere in the <Star Stream>.

– Where is the representative of your Nebula?

In the end, everything boiled down to Kim Dokja's absence.

After the person possessing the highest percentage of the Nebula's Story shares left the group, the aggregate amount of Stories for the whole Nebula had become simply too inadequate.

It was unknown what Yoo Joonghyuk was thinking to himself as he maintained his silence. And how long went by like that? He slowly raised himself up off the floor, sheathed the [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] and although still unsteady on his feet, got ready to leave.

"Where are you planning to go?"

"I'm leaving to acquire a new Giant Story, Master."

He needed to acquire the qualification to get to the 'Final Scenario' even without Kim Dokja's shares. <Kim Dokja's Company> was neither that fool's private army nor his underlings. This group needed to be able to protect themselves without him around, and even if they end up losing him somehow…

…They needed to be capable enough to clear the 'Final Scenario'.

[Baat…]

Biyoo murmured in despondency from somewhere in the empty air. Yoo Joonghyuk silently stared at her for a little while, before activating the [Sage's Eye] to sift through the information he possessed in his head.

There weren't that many locations left at this point in time where he could acquire a 'Giant Story'. When flipping that statement around, it also meant that the remaining Stories would be that much more powerful than others.

He had already acquired one powerful Giant Story called the 「Season of Light and Darkness」. If he managed to earn 'that Story' on top of this, then it might be possible to fight against the 'Secretive Plotter' once more.

The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint watched Yoo Joonghyuk walk away and asked him. "Are you planning to go alone?"

"I've always been alone, Master."

"But, that path is the one already tread by the other party."

His Master's words caused Yoo Joonghyuk's figure to flinch.

In the next moment, a voice came out from beyond the walls of the training hall.

"Hey Yoo Joonghyuk, where are you?? We gotta get going, now!"

With the blinding light behind them, the members of <Kim Dokja's Company> opened the door and rushed inside the dojo.

Shin Yoosung, Lee Gilyoung, Lee Jihye, and Han Sooyoung…

It was unknown since when they got ready to leave, but regardless, everyone from the Nebula was here.

The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint spoke again. "They are precisely your Story now, Joonghyuk-ah."

Something that the 'Secretive Plotter' did not possess.

Yoo Joonghyuk dazedly looked back at his Master, and she addressed him again.

"You don't have to fight alone in this regression turn."

The location of the new 'Giant Story' was four days away. It would've been so much quicker to get there by borrowing the powers of the Dokkaebis, but the current situation didn't permit that.

– You cannot borrow the powers of Dokkaebis you are friendly with.

– You must never reveal the truth that you're 'Kim Dokja'.

All thanks to the stinking agreement I had with the 'Wenny King'.

Because of it, I couldn't enter Biyoo's channel or send word of my wellbeing to the <Kim Dokja's Company>.

In the end, I had no choice but to personally drive the [X-grade Ferrarghini] I purchased from the 'Mass Production Maker' to the destination.

The kkoma Yoo Joonghyuk number [999] polishing his [Splitting the Sky Sword] atop my shoulder grumbled softly. "Your driving sucks."

"Then, why don't you drive? By the way, you're not planning to stick to that appearance now, are you?"

Without a doubt, we'd run into Constellations that will recognise us once we entered the scenario location. The existence of the kkoma Yoo Joonghyuk was just too eye-catching.

Well, Yoo Joonghyuk himself was just too famous by now, so…

"Indeed, I am too inconspicuous like this."

[999] seemed to be pondering something. His body suddenly jolted a bit, before a 'Pow!' noise resounded out and he transformed into a Murim dumpling.

I was shocked silly by this event. But [999] sounded utterly disinterested as he addressed me.

– This should be fine.

"…Hey, you. Carrying a dumpling around on my shoulder will be even more eye-catching, you know?"

– Why don't you change your pathetic appearance as well?

Just as the kkoma Yoo Joonghyuk couldn't maintain his original appearance, I too needed to make sure that my identity as 'Kim Dokja' wasn't discovered.

The now-dumpling-fied Yoo Joonghyuk roughly rubbed the dumpling skin all over my face as if he was trying to paint a wall. I sensed the Story on my face change as creaking noises resounded out. How long passed by like that?

By the time I opened my eyes, I ended up freaking out by what I saw.

[999] spoke to me as I stared dumbfoundedly at the mirror, my eyes blinking non-stop.

– It's done.

Holy moly. This might not be enough to slap Yoo Joonghyuk's cheek silly, but still… It should be enough to make me ponder whether I should slap him or not, at least.

I rubbed my new statuesque face and muttered to myself. "…Can't I keep this face forever?"

– If you do, you'll be struck by the storm of Probability's aftermath.

As if he had touched something dirty, [999] diligently patted down his dumpling body. Completely disregarding whether he was doing that or not, I continued to stare at the mirror.

A long time ago, I absorbed the Story fragment of the 'Casanova Who Died During Sexual Acts' and became pretty good looking for a while, but this was on another scale compared to that.

I spoke in an admiring tone of voice. "It's true that the 999th regression turn is amazing. The 3rd turn doesn't have skills like this one, you know."

– …3rd turn?

"Oh, you didn't know? Yoo Joonghyuk in this place is the 3rd turn. And this is the 3rd turn world-line, too."

The kkoma Yoo Joonghyuk number [999] stared deeply at me for a while after hearing those words, and asked me a question.

– Why do you think that?"

"What do you mean why…?"

I was about to reply with "Because the 'Ways of Survival' starts off with the 3rd turn, that's why" but stopped. I decided to refine my answer just a bit.

"…Because the beginning was the 3rd turn, that's why."

– But, why does it start from the 3rd turn? Don't you know how numbers work? The beginning is the 0th turn.

He was right.

The first chapter of the 'Ways of Survival' started off from Yoo Joonghyuk's third turn, but if you get technical about it, then you could say that the story began with his 0th turn.

I felt a bit weirded out after thinking like that.

…Why did I come to Yoo Joonghyuk's 'third turn', anyway?

I wasn't going to follow the 3rd turn's story as it was in the original, so there wouldn't have been a reason for me to start in this particular turn even if that's where the novel began.

…I don't know. It's not as if I can figure this out right now, anyway.

"Yoo Joonghyuk in this world-line said that he was the 'third turn'. So, this place is the third regression turn."

And the information I confirmed through the [Character List] said so, too.

But then, [999] spoke in a mocking tone.

– Trusting such information at its face value. How naïve.

"What?"

– Never mind. We've seemed to have arrived.

Along with the blinding light, the lengthy dimension tunnel finally came to an end. What appeared next was a giant Gate leading to the new scenario's location.

I spotted a group of beings waiting to enter in front of the Gate. I collected the [X-grade Ferrarghini] and joined the group.

A Constellation was manning the entrance to the scenario location, rather than the usual Dokkaebis. But that made sense, since the host for this 'Giant Story' scenario was a Nebula.

Although it was one of the largest Nebulas out there, it had almost no point of contact with me until now.

[Next.]

It was a Constellation holding a massive three-pronged spear on one hand, while wearing a combination of aged crimson crown and armour set.

The domineering Status exuding from his entire body attested to the fact that he was a Narrative-grade Constellation possessing a pretty hefty Status.

The Guardian of Buddhist Laws, Virudhaka.

He was one of the Four Heavenly Kings that protected the entrance of the <Heavenly Palace>, the headquarters of the Nebula <Emperor>.

[Next.]

Not too long afterwards, my turn came around.

Virudhaka glared at my face intently as if he wanted to discover anything suspicious on it and eventually, threw out his first question.

[Your purpose for visiting?]

[I came to participate in the Giant Story.]

[Your Modifier.]

Obviously, I couldn't use the 'Demon King of Salvation' here. Fortunately, I did have a brand new Modifier I received not too long ago.

[It's the 'Watcher of Light and Darkness'.]

Chapter 425: Ep. 80 - Our greatest ally, III

My words caused a handful of Constellations standing behind me to murmur among themselves.

I wondered if others had heard of my new Modifier already, but fortunately, that didn't seem to be the case.

[I'm sure the Bureau's naming division was behind that title? Do they still do that nowadays?]

[I thought there wouldn't be any other Modifiers that could exceed the 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', but…]

[Tsk, why do young ones these days prefer such Modifiers anyway?]

…Well, I guess I can tell what they are complaining about, then.

Virudhaka completed the simple entry procedure and then, stared at my shoulder.

[What is that dumpling?]

[It's my lunch.]

[…How peculiar. A fool showed up with cotton candy yesterday, and now we have you.]

Cotton candy?

[Next.]

Much to my relief, Virudhaka let me through without much hassle.

[You have entered the channel that directs the scenario's location.]

Right after I went past the Gate, I was greeted by the rainbow-coloured aura swirling around, followed by the guide message as well as an accompanying video.

[We welcome you to the world of the Nebula <Emperor>!]

…Yeah, even the entry video was on another scale.

When I blinked, I found myself standing atop a white cloud.

It was flying at a fairly decent knock with me as its sole passenger. I looked around and found a handsome golden-coloured monkey flying alongside side me.

「"Let's go, friend."」

The monkey winked at me playfully and performed a somersault in the air while swinging his Ruyi Bang around. The image in the sky changed and now showed countless Yogoe[1] creatures rushing towards us.

I knew this was all fake but still, couldn't help but get absorbed by it.

[The world's most beautiful epic.]

Because well, this was the most famous Giant Story that the Nebula <Emperor> possessed, that was why.

The scene now showed the Great Sage, Heaven's Equal Sun Wukong fighting against all those Yogoe creatures. And right behind him, a great army of thousands following in his footsteps.

[We invite you to experience this grand adventure.]

The footage came to an end, and I found myself standing on a plaza before I even noticed it.

The dumpling on my shoulder spoke up.

– What a showy salesmanship that was.

"Stop yapping. You're supposed to be a dumpling, remember?"

I complained for no reason from the embarrassment I felt after getting all worked up a bit just now. I then slowly took in the surrounding sights and observed the panoramic view of the <Heavenly Palace>.

The plaza was filled with elegant ancient palaces. The vestige of civilisation gleamed brilliantly in the golden hue. Stars among stars had gathered here, and the world created by Stories acquired by those stars was now laid out before my eyes.

I had been to the bases of other Nebulas before, but this would be my first time in a worldview with this many people in it.

For the time being, I decided to investigate my surroundings a bit more.

It was around then that I saw a hologram appearing on one of the electronic boards installed in the plaza.

– Whereabouts of Nebula <Kim Dokja's Company>'s members unknown!

– They are understood to be participating in a new Giant Story scenario…

['The Fourth Wall' is strongly activating!]

– What is the next destination of <Kim Dokja's Company>?

It was playing the scene of Yoo Joonghyuk and my companions entering a Gate emitting blinding light. I stopped walking for a little while and watched them disappear through that light.

['The Fourth Wall' is activating even stronger than before!]

…Brand new 'Giant Story', was it?

I could more or less guess what happened there.

My companions must be wandering around here and there, searching for a way to acquire a new Giant Story. Well, after I left the <Kim Dokja's Company>, their share of Stories wouldn't have been sufficient enough to let them into the 'Final Scenario'.

I shifted my head to find [999] looking straight at me.

– I advise you not to make any unwise decisions.

"…I know already. Don't you worry."

Sure, I desperately wanted to return to my companions right away, but right now, my situation didn't allow me to contact any one of them.

– It's not for you, but for the sake of your companions.

"I know."

Even if I forget about the agreement for a second here, the road I'm about to tread was lined with dangerous thorns with no guarantee of walking away alive. If I carelessly contacted them, every one of my companions might fall into life-threatening danger.

[Will you travel to the Giant Story scenario location?]

I nodded my head.

[Automatic guidance to the scenario progress location will now commence.]

As expected of a Nebula that pursued convenience above all else – my legs actually began running all by themselves.

I noticed a few Incarnations around me who also started their automatic running thing, sporting the same body posture as me. We all became rather embarrassed and avoided meeting each other's gazes.

[Automatic guide will now end.]

The place I arrived at was in front of a giant holographic panel installed to the west of the plaza.

There were many Constellations and Incarnations present here already. I could see golden-coloured bronze statues rising up above right next to the sea of crowds.

The one taking the centre-most spot was a Constellation that I knew pretty well. The 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband', sporting a head full of golden hair and wielding a gigantic Ruyi Jingu Bang.

These were the statues of protagonists of the Journey to the West, including the Great Sage, Heaven's Equal Sun Wukong.

Not surprisingly, <Emperor> seemed to be well aware of which story out of their worldview was the most famous of them all.

[New main scenario is available!]

And the upcoming scenario was related to that 'famous story'.

I accessed the scenario window.

<Main scenario #94 – Journey to the West Remake>

Type: Main

Difficulty: ???

Clear condition: Work together with other Constellations and/or Incarnations to create 'Story chamber' and remake the Journey to the West. The remade Journey will be evaluated in real-time by judges as well as audience members. Through the judging criteria which may include 'Popularity', 'Degree of Faithfulness to the original', and 'Originality', overall points will be assigned at the end. The Story that manages to acquire the highest number of votes will be judged the winner of the scenario.

Time Limit: -

Reward: Giant Story related to the 'Journey to the West', goodwill from the Nebula <Emperor>, 3,000,000 Coins, ???

Failure: -

* The copyright to the reconstituted Stories will be shared between the Nebula <Emperor> and the participants.

* Depending on the judges' votes, you may acquire either a 'legendary' or 'historical'-grade story.

* A participant may only take on one role. (Excluding extras)

* Additional Coins will be rewarded according to the rankings.

Indeed, <Emperor>'s scale was on another realm altogether.

Putting up a scenario where you were supposed to dramatise their Giant Story…

If this explanation was correct, then even if one failed to clear the scenario, simply participating in it would let you acquire either a legendary or historical-grade Story.

Strangely, though, the kkoma dumpling Yoo Joonghyuk spoke in a confused voice as if he couldn't understand something.

– Remake the Journey to the West??

"…Ah. You didn't come here during your turn, did you? But, the turns before yours should've come here before."

– It's not as if I retain all the memories of my past regressions.

"Well, it's as the explanation says. If I were to summarise it, then the participants are supposed to pick a role from the Journey to the West and act out the story itself."

– In that case, wouldn't everyone try to pick the role with the most importance?

"You're right. That's why we have that thing called the 'Story chambers'."

– Story chambers?

Rather than a verbal answer, I simply pointed to the advertisement boards the Constellations had put up here and there.

[Looking for anyone willing to open a Story chamber with us!]

[All the roles are still available, with the exception of Sun Wukong, Tang Sanzang, Sha Wujing, or Zhu Bajie! We even have a scenario writer ready! Let us create a truly enjoyable Story together!]

The Story chamber. Every participant was forced to create one before being allowed to enter the scenario.

– I see. You're supposed to form a team like that and compete against one another.

"That's right. Only by doing so will you ensure the diversity of the Story."

– Diversity?

"In the end, the real goal of this event is to enhance the impact of 'Journey to the West'. By increasing the number of varied and entertaining versions of the

'Journey' in circulation, the strength of the original will grow even greater, and that would, in turn, serve to advertise the position of <Emperor>, too."

– You're surprisingly smarter than you look. I thought you were a fool.

I grinned sheepishly.

To be honest, what I uttered just now was nothing more than me quoting what Yoo Joonghyuk from the 1287th turn had said.

That's when we got to hear the complaints coming from ancient-looking Constellations.

[I simply can't fathom what <Emperor> is thinking lately. Is this what they mean by the water in the rear of the Yangtze washing away those in the front? Huh…]

[Even if they are trying to go along with the changing times… Isn't this tantamount to insulting the original work?]

It kind of made sense for the ancient Constellations to think like that. But, what could anyone do about the ever-changing taste of the times?

In all honesty, most of the Constellations had already adopted to the already-changed times, anyway.

[Currently, 5412 'chambers' are remaking the Journey to the West.]

…There were already 5412 of them??

Only then did it really hit home that an incredible number of Constellations and Incarnations had rushed over to this particular 'Giant Story'. But then again, many Constellations must've been feeling the heat after the Final Scenario had opened up. The Giant Story related to the 'Journey to the West' could very well prove to be their golden ticket, after all.

"So, the problem here is that I can't enter the scenario alone…"

Meaning, I'd have to create 'Story chamber' like other Constellations and join the scenario. I took a look around my vicinity and spotted an occasional few that had newly opened up their chambers and were recruiting members to fill their quotas.

[Recruiting a Constellation willing to play the 'Hong Hai Er' (The Red Boy). An Incarnation of a Narrative-grade Constellation is also OK.]

[Recruiting the 'Golden Horned King'. Accepting only Historical-grade or higher.]

Those indicated that the casting for the main characters had been filled already.

As I expected, chambers recruiting villains far outnumbered those looking for the main characters. It was all because of the distribution of the Giant Story's shares when they did acquire it later.

Well, you'd get a greater share by playing a main character, rather than a villain, so it couldn't really be helped.

[Recruiting the actor for the 'Yellow Robe Demon'. Coin split is 7 to 3. No Story shares. We don't care about your Status.]

By the way, it might be just my gut talking here, but this…

[Recruiting an extra for multiple roles. We don't judge your Status. No Story shares. Every appearance is a guaranteed 1000 Coins.]

[Oiii, hyung-ssi over there! Come this side! We'll treat you right!]

…I looked everywhere, but it felt as if there were only con men around this place.

I was hoping against hoping, but well, I failed to spot any familiar Constellations, either. Maybe that was an obvious result, seeing that famous Constellations would've already joined Story chambers by now…

For the time being, I approached the panel and decided to look at the list of 'Story chambers' first.

The list was automatically organised by the rankings. Surprisingly, the highest-ranked chamber belonged to someone even I knew of.

> [The Real Journey to the West]
>
> – Current number of votes: 8651
>
> – Introduction: The previously-unknown secrets of the authentic Journey to the West will be revealed.
>
> – There are no more open spots available.
>
> – [Cider][2], [Regression], [System]…
>
> – Current ranking: First

If my memory served me correctly, then this Story chamber should belong to the Nebula <Emperor>'s 'Fei Hu'.

Out of many regression turns, this Fei Hu's Story was always picked as the winning one for the current 'Giant Story' scenario. It was to such an extent that even before the competition was over, the saying "Victory already belongs to Fei Hu anyway" routinely made rounds…

– Hurry up and decide already.

"Just hold on."

I might look like this, but this great I possessed over ten years' worth of experience as the reader of genre novels.

Just by looking at the titles, I… No, well, I only had to read the introductions to easily figure out what kind of Stories we might get here.

I reorganised the list by 'Newest' and began scrolling through the Story chambers.

"Right now, it's a bit of a trend to change the protagonist."

– Change the protagonist? How?

"For instance, the majority of people think that the MC of the Journey to the West is Sun Wukong, right? But when you actually get down to it… Ohh, it really appeared."

[I've reincarnated as the last disciple in the Journey to the West?!]

– Current number of votes: 3313

– Introduction: Just for how long will Sun Wukong remain as the hero? It's time for Pigsy to show his stuff!

– Recruiting extras at all times.

– [Reincarnation], [Possession], [Healing]…

– Current ranking: Eighth

– It's already underway.

"Dammit."

I scrolled down once more. Not too long afterwards, I discovered a couple more excellent-sounding chambers.

[Disciples that I managed to rear]

– Current number of votes: 3310

– Introduction: Here comes Tang Sanzang, after training the strongest disciples!

– [Possession], [Rearing], [Healing]…

– Current ranking: Ninth

[The Journey's Extra]

– Current number of votes: 3221

– Introduction: I've somehow ended up inside the Journey to the West. But I… seemed to have become Tang Sanzang's horse.

– [Extra], [System], [Animal]…

– Current ranking: Eleventh

…Dammit, all the Story chambers with potential for great popularity were already full.

– You've been dilly-dallying too long and now, it seems you're already done for.

I didn't want to acknowledge it, but he might be right on this one.

Many high-ranked chambers had finished casting their main characters and not only that, their Stories were already well underway, making a bit hard for me to butt in now.

I couldn't help but wonder whether I should just apply to become an extra or not, but then, I'd not be able to acquire what I want through a role with such little importance.

[The 4th Story chamber list will close soon!]

[After closing, it'll become impossible to register additional roles with the exception of extras!]

It was literally one thing after another. Now, the chamber closing time was approaching, too. I had to make a decision here.

How long passed by like that?

Out of all the classifieds that I scrolled through in a hurry, I ended up spotting something rather suspicious.

– (Urgently recruiting) Searching for a Sun Wukong who will ride on the bus. All the other roles have been cast already. Just show up and you're hired.

…Still recruiting Sun Wukong, was it?

Hang on. Not just any other role, but the 'Sun Wukong'?

[I've become the retired SSSSS-grade Son Wukong!!]

Haven't I seen that many 'S' letters somewhere before?

Even though I knew I was being taken for a ride here, I still tapped on the info tab of this chamber.

And that's when I saw its introduction.

– Introduction: Only I know the end of the Journey to the West.

---

[1] **Yogoe** is a Korean supernatural entity, a type of spirit or ghost.
[2] Korean use of **[Cider]** as a story tag refers to something refreshing or gratifying.

Chapter 426: Ep. 80 - Our greatest ally, IV

Only I know the end of the Journey to the West?

Where have I heard of that introduction before?

I decided to enter and confirm the situation of this chamber first.

['Player 8' -nim has entered the 6731st Story chamber's waiting area.]

Thankfully, it seemed that their Story hadn't started yet. But then again, they shouldn't be able to start without the role for Sun Wukong filled up, so there was that, too.

After I entered the chamber, the surroundings changed and a large round desk suddenly materialised.

Square chat windows were floating above the desk's chairs, rather than actual people. They signified the participants playing the other roles.

[Player 1 has currently selected the role of 'Zhu Bajie'.]

[Player 2 has currently selected the role of 'Sha Wujing'.]

[Player 6 has currently selected the role of 'Tang Sanzang's White Horse'.]

The faces of the players were all obscured by question marks. It seemed that this was done in order to protect the personal information of the actual players.

Okay, but never mind that for now… There were so many players here, yet no one had selected the role of 'Sun Wukong' yet?

– Player 8: Hello, everyone.

Maybe they had all logged off or something, because no one bothered to write a message in the chat room even after I made an appearance. But then…

– Scenario Master: sup?

– Scenario Master: Which role you wanna?

I quickly inputted my reply in the chatroom in the middle.

– Player 8: Is the role for Sun Wukong still vacant?

– Scenario Master: yup vacant.

– Player 8: That's so strange.

– Scenario Master: Had someone we want, but got delayed… Wanna do Sun Wukong?

This guy, he seems to have a habit of not typing proper sentences.

Just as I was getting worried about if it'd be okay to have someone like this guy as the scenario's master, a message popped up with a suspiciously good timing as if its sender had read my mind.

– Scenario Master: me know that genre inside out. No worries 'bout scenario 'qual'.

Yup, it was just so hard to trust anyone with that type of grammar. Still, I decided to test a couple of things out anyway.

– Player 8: I'd like ask you about the chamber's title. That [I've become the retired SSSSS-grade Sun Wukong].

– Scenario Master: yup me responsible.

– Player 8: Why are there five 'S' letters?

– Scenario Master: need that many to attract aggro.

…Hmm, maybe he does know something after all?

It got on my nerves a bit that he didn't bother to use any polite speech, though.

I continued on with my questioning.

– Player 8: Sun Wukong really is the protagonist, yes?

– Scenario Master: yup yup yup

– Player 8: Wouldn't the audience feel fed up with leaving the original work's MC as is? I thought it was a trend for the side characters or extras to become protagonist lately.

I thought I had accurately picked on his weak spot, but the master's response was surprisingly calm.

– Scenario Master: Oh, looks like you did some market research.

– Player 8: It was a mere simple browse-through.

– Scenario Master: True about nim's words regarding extra-turned-hero stories doing good business. But, Sun Wukong has to be MC if we wanna be numero uno. Think from POV of a judge.

– Player 8: Hmm…

– Scenario Master: important bit not who's MC and whatnot, but how much 'unfamiliar character' he is. And too many extra-turned-hero stories out there.

…Would you look at this guy?

At a glance, he might seem to be yapping on whatever came up into his mind, but well, what he said just now was not wrong.

More often than not, the ones to take the top spot at times like this would be stories featuring the traditional heroes.

For instance, Fei Hu's [The Real Journey to the West] featured Sun Wukong as its main protagonist.

– Player 8: Is that why you went with 'retired Sun Wukong'?

– Scenario Master: yup yup

– Player 8: What will the retired Sun Wukong be doing?

– Scenario Master: nothing.

– Player 8:??

– Scenario Master: ah, it's a spoiler so no talking. So, you in or not?

I was in a dilemma.

– Scenario Master: If you're not, hurry and leave. We don't have much time. No answer in next 5 sec, and I eject you.

I was kind of curious about how would a retired Sun Wukong work as a protagonist, too…

[The 4th Story chamber list will close in five minutes!]

I'd be cutting it too fine if I were to search for another chamber now.

Dammit, I don't have a choice here.

Regardless of what kind of scenario it was, as long as I do my best, it'd be fine, right?

– Player 8: I'm in.

– Scenario Master: Hmm. Then my turn to ask questions.

– Player 8: Regarding?

[Scenario Master wishes to confirm your details.]

[Please select the information you wish to reveal.]

He wants to view my information?

– Player 8: Is it really necessary?

– Scenario Master: Just wanna know your name.

…My name, was it?

I decided to reveal some of my info.

[Player 8-nim is a 'Constellation'.]

[Player 8-nim's Modifier is the 'Watcher of Light and Darkness'.]

[The applicable information is made available only to the 'Scenario Master'.]

The Scenario Master didn't respond for a while.

Heh, he must've been shocked by what he saw.

– Scenario Master: Ehng? You were a Constellation-nim? But, why here in a low-rent chamber?

I replied quickly.

– Player 8: I may come across that way, but I know how to fight a bit. I dearly wish to become the retired Sun Wukong!

– Scenario Master: Something smells fishy, tho?

– Player 8: The real fun is in raising an unpopular Story from ground-up, wouldn't you agree?

– Scenario Master: BTW, what's up with the dumpling?

…Dumpling?

[You're currently accompanied by your pet 'Murim dumpling'.]

Dammit, I forgot that this guy was here with me.

– Scenario Master: But, we ain't got no roles for pets, tho?

– Player 8: It's just a dumpling. It's not even strictly a pet per se.

– Scenario Master: Hmm, it's a bit awkward, innit. Your opinions, pls?

Surprisingly enough, the Scenario Master actually went and asked for the opinions of other players.

[Player 1-nim says that 'It's fine if it's a Murim dumpling'.]

[Player 4-nim says that 'Master should do whatever takes their fancy'.]

[Player 3-nim says that 'I want to play this game right now'.]

Thankfully, other players didn't object.

–Scenario Master: ok we doing it so might as well ask for Murim-type ppl

– Player 8: Thank you.

– Scenario Master: see ya

A short while later, the countdown began.

5, 4, 3, 2, 1…

[Story chamber, 'I've become the retired SSSSS-grade Sun Wukong' has begun its storytelling!]

[This Story chamber's plot will follow the one set out by the Scenario Master.]

[The main plotline of the Story Chamber can be interfered with by the judges or the audience.]

['The Journey to the West Remake' will commence!]

Bright light dyed my vision ash-grey next.

((I've become the retired SSSSS-grade Sun Wukong))

Letters appeared in a stylish manner from the darkness.

And so, I had become this story's main character, 'Sun Wukong', and would participate in this play from now on. Honestly speaking, my heart was palpitating just a bit.

To think, I'd really become the protagonist of an actual story…

「Kim Dok ja cou nting chi ckens alr eady.」

Along with [The Fourth Wall]'s voice entering my head, messages floated up before my eyes.

[Prologue is starting.]

[Prologue will be told through a flashback sequence.]

[During the applicable section, players can only speak the assigned dialogue.]

[Scenario Master's narration is now commencing.]

Finally, a voice came from beyond the darkness next.

(At the end of the lengthy travel alongside Sanzang's company, Sun Wukong had eventually arrived in the Western Regions and succeeded in obtaining the sacred Buddhist texts.)

Oh, so it's begun.

The scene actually changed as well, and before I even realized it, my body had morphed to that of Sun Wukong's. Folks that could be my companions were around me, but maybe because this was a flashback sequence, their faces were blurred out. And my lips began moving all on their own.

"Finally, retirement, is it… It sure was a long itinerary."

At the same time, Sun Wukong's memories fleeted past my eyes.

Getting chased away by Tang Sanzang, getting stabbed in the back by Zhu Bajie, and even abandoned by Sha Wujing. Memories of dragging around a ragtag bunch of utterly useless morons as his companions, fighting against countless Yogoe creatures until I became a bloody mess…

Now that I saw those things, it did seem somewhat saddening and bitter. So, this was how the Journey to the West looked like from Sun Wukong's perspective, then.

But it was then when I heard a strange voice.

[Are you planning to end it like this?]

I looked down to find the scared texts suddenly talking to me.

[Are you really satisfied by this sort of a story?]

I was somewhat impressed by this. So, our story's plot would start in this manner, now was it?

Words continued to rise above the sacred Buddhist texts.

[Do you not resent the unfairness of it? You've experienced expulsion by Sanzang because of illogical reasons and had to suffer oppression many times over.]

[Was that all? You've been tortured by the Constrictive Headband because of crimes you were not guilty of.]

[Nothing more than the reason of walking on the path of Buddhism, you had to protect Tang Sanzang and stick to a gruelling itinerary, even though you'd have arrived in your destination in the blink of an eye by riding on your Somersault Cloud.]

For sure, the Journey to the West did have cruel aspects when it came to treating Sun Wukong.

[And the result of such an arduous journey is for you to ascend to 'Paradise'? Are you not truly incensed by this conclusion?]

Now that I heard it, this did sound like a great injustice somehow.

[You can restart from the beginning.]

"…Restart from the beginning?"

[You can start this journey from the beginning once more.]

It was around then when I got this ominous chill creep down my backside.

Goddammit, this was a regression story?

My lips began moving all on their own again. "What the hell? I got here after going through so much rubbish, yet you want me to go through that crap again from the beginning?"

[No, you won't suffer this time.]

"What?"

[Exploit your companions to the fullest, and become an existence that does not save anyone. Indeed, you shall become a 'Demon King' that only lives for himself.]

Right then, blinding rays of light exploded out from the sacred texts.

[Flashback sequence has concluded.]

[The play will begin in earnest!]

It seemed that the story up until here was all a part of the prologue. Which meant that the real episode would start from now. As if it was waiting for this moment, the words 'Episode 1' floated up to the view.

And I grandly freaked out next.

~Episode 1. The Demon King of Salvation~

…Wha??

As if it had read my mind, the narration started again.

(It was not a well-known tale, but once upon a time, Sun Wukong used to be called the 'Demon King of Salvation'.)

I wondered what kind of dogshit crap this was, but for the time being, decided to hear it out till the end.

(This small stone monkey had a nasty habit of sacrificing himself to save other people, and many of those who received his unwanted rescue attempts ended up with psychological scars.)

(Gods and Buddhas of the heavens all criticised him for it, yet that dumb rock-for-brains continued to throw his life away to save other people over and over again.)

N-no, hang on a minute here.

(The heaven's Great Jade Emperor and Buddha felt that they could no longer accept such actions from Sun Wukong anymore and imprisoned the Monkey King inside the stone crate under the Marble Mountain.)

(And our story starts from there.)

[Judge, 'King of Stone Monkeys', likes this particular backstory.]

[Portion of judges have awarded points for the plot that mirrors the current trend.]

[2 points have been awarded.]

My attention was drawn to the 'mirroring the current trend' message. Ahh, so could this be the reason?

[First episode has begun.]

[Unrestricted speech section has begun.]

[Do your best to create an interesting and enjoyable Story by acting according to your role.]

I shuddered greatly and regained my wits. Chills crept up from various parts of my body, and my back hurt like crazy as well. I heard the noises of pitch-black soil fall around me. My current situation was that only my head was peeking out from beneath the mountain.

[Currently, you're sealed under the Five Elements Mountain.]

Well, it seemed that I was currently being squashed flat by the Five Elements Mountain.

[Audiences are curious about what your reaction will be.]

(Scenario Master is urging you to say something fitting your role.)

This was the very first scene after the MC had just finished regressing.

Since I saw this situation appearing frequently in genre novels, I figured that I'd be rather familiar with what to say here, but after finding myself in those characters' shoes, I couldn't even imagine what to say anymore.

Still, I decided to say something regardless.

"Where am I? Wasn't I returning with the sacred texts just now?"

Obviously, no normal, sane-minded person would be talking to himself like this.

"…Five Elements Mountain?! Holy cow, did I really regress?"

So, I couldn't help but get shocked at myself capable of muttering out such lines with ease.

[Audiences now understand your current situation.]

(Scenario Master is nodding their head in approval of your instincts for dialogue.)

(Scenario Master has acknowledged you.)

Goddammit. I wanted to hide in a hole so bad right now.

[Portion of the audience is waiting in anticipation for the next scene.]

I recalled the Journey to the West's plot points.

According to the original, Sun Wukong was supposed to wait for 500 years below the Five Element Mountain. And so, five minutes passed by, then ten after that.

…E-eiii, there's no way, right?

(Sun Wukong's ears perked up after hearing noisy voices coming from afar.)

I breathed a sigh of relief. Now according to the original, the first person Sun Wukong met was Tang Sanzang.

(As he looked at the familiar people approaching him, Sun Wukong began reminiscing about the ancient past.)

Two children were walking closer to my location. Two kids that wore cute-looking Buddhist robes and sporting toy-like crowns on their heads.

(The memories of that day, when he first met Tang Sanzang.)

(Sun Wukong was lost within the rose-tinted reminiscence.)

Chills slowly crept down my back now.

That faintest sense of deja vu I felt earlier was now gradually becoming reality. [The Fourth Wall], buzzing noisily, then asked me.

「Y ou re ally d idn't kn ow?」

I couldn't answer back.

That suspicion I had when I saw those five 'S' letters; even though I believed it couldn't be possible, a part of my heart still hoped against hope.

I gritted my teeth and did my best to hold onto my consciousness trying to slip away.

"Ah, he's over there. I think it's that ahjussi."

"Let me go ask him."

They were perhaps the world's smallest pair of 'Sanzang'.

Lee Gilyoung grabbed my head to lift it up and asked me next.

"You bastard, are you the 'Demon King of Salvation', Sun Wukong?"

Chapter 427: Ep. 80 - Our greatest ally, V

Not knowing whether to laugh or cry, all I could do was to look at the kids and reply. "I am."

And then, I heard the warning message next.

[Warning! You have come in contact with some of <Kim Dokja's Company>'s members!]

[Chaos residing somewhere deep inside you have begun wiggling.]

[Judge, 'King of Stone Monkeys', has revealed his displeasure!]

[The contest this time doesn't have anything interesting to watch.]

A young monkey covered entirely in a coat of rather beautiful golden fur roughly scratched his mane and, while looking at the screens displayed on holographic panels, yawned over and over again.

Another monkey wearing a cowboy get-up watched that from the sidelines before making a retort.

[Judge, 'Manager of Heaven's Stables', is chastising the 'King of Stone Monkeys'.]

[Meihouwang (Handsome Monkey King), you truly are an impatient one. If you took your time perusing, then you'd have found one or two interesting stories by now.]

[Hng, Bimawen (Keeper of Heavenly Horses), so was it your lofty patience that allowed you to clean up horse shit for over two weeks straight?]

[…I'd like to talk about only the refined matters in this place, if we could.]

[I can already tell what you're going to do with my eyes closed. I mean, you'll just slap high scores to any story that doesn't feature stables in it, anyway.]

[But, don't you also lose your mind in excitement whenever a story features Mountain of Flowers and Fruit?]

[Oiii, Great Sage! What do you think? Have you found something interesting to watch yet?]

That question was directed to a certain pure-blonde haired man yawning loudly with his chin supported by the Ruyi Bang. He lazily opened his lips. [This year doesn't seem to have anything fresh, that's for sure.]

[Thought so.]

[We had quite a few people running around with wild imaginations in the past, hadn't we? Like, how we were portrayed as members of a battle-maniac species that grew stronger by overcoming deadly hurdles…]

[Hmm, yeah. That was really fun back in the day. But I didn't like the way they portrayed us as humans.]

Bimawen's words elicited a smirk from the Great Sage. [Oi, looky here. You guys might be monkeys, but I'm almost human, you know?]

[…But you changed only because of that Story's influence, didn't you?]

Meihouwang, Bimawen, and the Great Sage.

They were different Story Bodies of the one that enjoyed the true name of 'Sun Wukong'. At first, they were all one being, but after each of the Stories developed separately, the various personalities split apart from one another as well.

[This kid, Fei Hu's rate of growth is no joke… At this rate, we might have ourselves a brand new 'Sun Wukong'.]

[Yeaaah, sure. Something that hasn't happened in the last few thousand years will suddenly happen now. Sure thing.]

Three separate Sun Wukongs had gathered inside this large judge's office to take a gander at the various Stories of the 'Journey to the West Remake' being played out on the holographic panels. Some of them were boring, while a few seemed to be promising enough. They even pressed the 'Like' button on a couple of unfamiliar but interesting ones, too. They also didn't forget to assign scores as the three of them constantly bickered among themselves.

Meihouwang asked. [Hey, Great Sage. I forgot to ask you. What happened to those guys the last time?]

[Which guys?]

[You know, back when you asked us for help so Bimawen and I lent you our powers.]

[Ahh, you mean the 'Great War of Saints and Demons'? It worked out alright. But their representative went missing.]

That prompted a retort from Bimawen. [Are you talking about that fool whom you kept chasing after but never chose you as his sponsor?]

[…Hey, I never chased him around, got that? I only responded once or twice at his ardent pleas, that's all.]

[Oh, but for that once or twice, I remember you willingly sacrificing some of your scant hair, though?]

[Shut up.] The Great Sage roughly dug his ear with the Ruyi Bang and changed the topic. [By the way, why hasn't Douzhanshengfo (Victorious Fighting Buddha) arrived yet? All the Sun Wukongs have gathered in one place, so how come he's missing from this occasion?]

[You know that nerd's always late.]

[What about Bajie and Wujing?]

[They went to speak to the Heavenly Palace people.]

[…That Jade Emperor dude, is he thinking of butting in during the judging again?]

[As long as our opinions don't clash, it doesn't matter if that side wishes to interfere.]

[But, our opinions have never matched before, so there's our problem.]

As if they were waiting for this very moment, the door to the judge's office was pushed open, and Zhu Bajie and Sha Wujing made their entrance.

[Excuse me, hyung-nims. The higher-ups say that it's about time we announce this year's best candidates…]

[Shut it. Can't you see we're still busy?]

Both Zhu Bajie and Sha Wujing flinched from Meihouwang's threatening voice and took hurried steps back.

The Great Sage asked them. [By the way, who's the lady behind you?]

[Ah, apologies for the late introduction. She's this year's new judge. I heard that she's also Sakyamuni's successor.]

[…Sakyamuni had a successor?]

Someone entered the office in a calm, composed gait.

However, the moment the Great Sage saw the woman wearing a fine, elegant Buddhist robe and a slender crown, his eyes trembled from shock.

Bimawen sensed that and asked him. [Someone you know?]

The Great Sage didn't reply and simply stared at her face for a while. The woman didn't reciprocate that gaze, instead choosing to cross the table and head towards the panel displaying the Stories.

Bimawen used his chin to point and speak. [This is actually good news. It might not be a bad idea to hear the newbie's opinion. Hey, Miss Sakyamuni's successor, which Story takes your fancy?]

The woman's robe, busy swaying about, came to a stop in a certain spot.

Sakyamuni's successor stared at a certain story with a pair of still eyes. Her hand slowly reached out and touched the display, causing ripples to spread out like the emotions of longing itself.

[I seem to like this Story the most.]

「You knew already Kim Dokja.」

[The Fourth Wall] was right. In a way, you could say that I knew something like this would happen. I kind of suspected that the folks in this Story chamber might be the <Kim Dokja's Company>'s members.

[The agreement with the Wenny King is in danger!]

And also, I thought that it'd give rise to such a result, too. Even then, I couldn't not make this choice.

– You've been warned not to get in contact with them.

[999] sitting on my shoulder whispered to me. Just by meeting the kids, a change was already taking place within my Incarnation body.

[The transformation to the Outer God is accelerating due to the risk to the agreement condition.]

'I haven't gone against the agreement itself. Technically speaking, the content of the deal was to [never reveal my identity to Kim Dokja's Company], wasn't it?'

– The moment they find out, everything will be over.

'I know that already, so stop worrying'.

[Outer God transformation progress percentage: 3%]

Most likely, I'd end up as an Outer God like the 'Secretive Plotter' when that percentage maxes out. I was thinking that honestly, it shouldn't matter as long as I fulfil our agreement before that. For now, I was happy to see the kids walking in front of me in such great harmony.

[A small number of audience members complain that Sanzang can't be two people.]

While listening to the messages streaming in, I continued to walk behind the kids leading in the front. I heard that children grow remarkably fast every day; that statement really hit home, after realizing that they indeed had grown so much taller already.

Now that I thought about it, it sure had been a while since I spent some time with them like this.

I had no idea what either Lee Gilyoung or Shin Yoosung were thinking about most of the time. It was what the Scenario Master had said. I 'saved' them on my whim, and abandoned them behind with no thoughts of taking any responsibility.

Just like how it was like for me in the past, these two kids had been left alone and neglected by me.

"Oii, Demon King of Salvation."

"Yes?"

…So, this was more or less the punishment that I deserve.

Shin Yoosung watching on from the side spoke up. "You shouldn't be so rude to someone you don't know."

"But, Sooyoung noona said I should act like this, you know?"

"Even then, you should still stick to basic etiquette."

As expected of my Incarnation.

She studied me with pitying eyes, before whispering to Lee Gilyoung via [Nebula Chat]. Of course, since I was also a member of the same Nebula, I could hear her words just fine.

– This way, he'll trust us more, you dummy. What will you do if he decides to wreak havoc later?

I felt goosebumps break out on my skin.

– …You're actually scared of him? Look at his current state, will ya?

For sure, I didn't buy the [Great Sage, Heaven's Equal Avatar Set] sold by <Emperor> so my current attire consisted of nothing more than the 500-year old "standard" ragged clothing.

Shin Yoosung patted the dirt away on my clothes and politely greeted me. "It's a pleasure to make your acquaintance, Constellation-nim. We'll be in your care."

"I'll be in yours as well. Ah, also. How should I call you both?"

Lee Gilyoung replied as if he was waiting for that. "I'm the monk Xuan (玄). And she's the monk Zang (奘). Call us that from now on."

His voice was full of mischievousness as if he was playing a game.

So, then. Lee Gilyoung was the monk 'Xuan', while Shin Yoosung was the monk 'Zang', was it? To think, they'd split the name of the monk Xuanzang and give it to the kids. It was indeed a rather adorable idea.

[A portion of audience members think that the two monks are quite adorable.]

[Portion of judges find the setting of 'Two Monks' interesting.]

[4 points have been acquired.]

Lee Gilyoung, still drunk on all these new settings, continued to yap about himself. Meanwhile, Shin Yoosung whispered in my ear. "I'm sure you're a little bit confused by all these strange set-ups, yes? I'm really sorry. Our Scenario Master is a bit of an eccentric, so…"

"No, it's fine."

I could guess who the Scenario Master was already. Well, there could ever be only one person capable of coming up with such an out-there story in <Kim Dokja's Company>, after all.

"Still, you don't have to worry about anything. We'll definitely look after you well. All you have to do is to ride the bus well and just quietly follow us."

Tears almost broke out from my eyes after being subjected to all this friendly treatment. It would've hardly been enough for me to console the kids first, yet they were worried about me, instead?

What a shameful thing this was.

(At that moment, Sun Wukong swore to protect Sanzang in this life, as well.)

That's right. I'd definitely protect these kids.

I might not have been able to do my role properly in the past but at least, from now on I…

"Kugugugugugu!"

Noises of explosions came from somewhere. I reflexively scanned my vicinity.

"Ku-dudududu!"

It did sound like explosions, sure, but something also felt a bit off about them. Something must've exploded, but why did it sound as if the noise was made by someone's mouth??

Shin Yoosung hurriedly approached my side and whispered again. "Please don't panic. We're simply mirroring the original's setting."

"…Pardon?"

"I heard that in the original story, all onomatopoeia were written in between quotation marks."

[A portion of the judges are impressed by the unexpected mirroring of the original work!]

[10 additional points have been acquired!]

What the hell? I thought such a thing was a mistake solely reserved to mass-market fantasy genre novels…

I wasn't even given enough time to get flustered by the unexpected level of observation by the Scenario Master on the original work. The kids pushed me behind them and took large steps forward.

Having a look again, I realized that the so-called explosion noises seemed to have originated from a large canyon in front of us.

(Sun Wukong stared deeply at the Shepan Mountain's Yingchou Stream Canyon. Since this was his second stab at life, he knew what would pop out from that canyon.)

If my memory was right, then the second being the group encountered in the Journey to the West was…

(The third son of the Dragon King of West Sea, Jade Dragon.)

…Right, it's him. And he would become…

(He was the existence that would be reborn as Tang Sanzang's White Dragon Horse.)

Well, since the narration took care of everything, I didn't have much else to say here.

I stepped forward and spoke up. "Both of you, please hide somewhere. I shall handle this."

If my memory was working fine, then one of the players took on the role of the 'Tang Sanzang's White Dragon Horse'. I was pretty sure that he was the one behind the current event.

Seeing that the kids were participating in this Story chamber, the rest of the players should also be from <Kim Dokja's Company>, but if someone with ill intention had somehow butted in here…

"…We told you, you just stay on the bus."

A small but pretty darn strong hand grabbed my shoulder. I looked back to find Shin Yoosung forming a rather scary smile.

"A guy who can't even afford proper clothes wants to show off? Step back!"

Lee Gilyoung cracked his knuckles and took a step forward, as well.

I tried to urgently chase after the kids, but they had already ran ahead to the canyon and started fighting a blue-hued Dragon that flew out from there.

"Ku-kwakwakwakwakwa!!"

Lee Gilyoung shouted out the onomatopoeia and rushed forward, and the blue Dragon jumping out from the canyon also roared out in response. I immediately recognised who that Dragon was.

…It's the Chimera Dragon??

Kids fought with the blue Dragon as if they were having a dance-off in the air, and through [Taming], subjugated the creature in no time at all.

[Audience members are impressed by the kid Sanzangs' martial prowess!]

[A small number of audience members are lodging a protest, complaining that Sanzangs are too powerful.]

[A portion of judges are surprised by this unexpected turn of events!]

And a short while later.

['Player 6' -nim has joined the group.]

The Chimera Dragon was transformed into Xuanzang's white horse, and was dragged over here by the two children.

While trying to understand this situation, which was resolved without me needing to do anything, I recalled the conversation I had with the Scenario Master earlier.

– What will the retired Sun Wukong be doing?

– Nothing.

Only now did I understand just a little bit. This story seemed to be created for this from the word go. And right in the next instant, a message from a familiar Constellation landed in my ear.

[Judge, 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband', finds the current Story's plot quite interesting.]

[10 additional points have been acquired.]

A day passed by like that, then another day went by. I was gradually waking up to the 'identity' of this Story chamber.

"It's a grasshopper. Eat."

"Demon King of Salvation-nim. Do your legs hurt?"

「This Story is 'one for Sun Wukong's benefit'.」

(Sun Wukong was really comfortable.)

This would be my first time to be all relaxed and leisurely ever since the scenarios began. My brain had almost seized up after it got submerged in the sea of comfort for too long.

[New Story is germinating in you!]

[Story, 'Sneezing Without Hands', has begun its storytelling.]

I could just about make a guess as to why Han Sooyoung came up with a scenario like this one.

[Judge, 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband', likes this plot development very much.]

The Journey to the West was a story built around Sun Wukong's sacrifice. Even the later variations had similar themes, too.

So, what would happen if a 'Story specifically for Sun Wukong' made its appearance?

[Judge, 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband', is envious of you.]

[Judge, 'Manager of Heaven's Stables', is envious of you.]

[Score: 312]

It seemed that Han Sooyoung's claim of being a popular author was true. The Story's total votes had already surpassed 300 and we were enjoying smooth sailing so far.

And well, such a plot wasn't necessarily bad for my companions, either.

Nominally, the MC of the story was Sun Wukong, but as every battle was handled by my companions instead, all the shares of the Story at the end of the scenario would naturally belong to <Kim Dokja's Company> alone. What a well-thought-out scheme this was – get a nice score tally, and also ensure you'd walk away with Story shares, too.

"Argh, I wanna play some games on my phone."

"But you played so much before coming here."

Even though the kids adorably bickered with each other, they didn't forget to feed me, helped me fall asleep, and hell, even groomed the fur on my head, too.

Lee Gilyoung asked me with a pout. "So, like, what do you do originally?"

"It's bad manners to ask about his private life, you dummy."

Shin Yoosung pulling out premature grey hair on my head tackled the boy immediately.

I was slightly worried whether such a meta conversation was allowed or not, but for the time being, I decided to answer him. I thought about it and realized that I hadn't had a chat like this with the kids up until now.

"I just enjoy reading novels."

"Novels? Ohhh, I like reading them, too."

Lee Gilyoung liked reading novels? Really? That was an unexpected piece of info.

He was now really amped up as he continued on. "Can I recommend you a novel?"

He dared to make a recommendation to me, a veteran of over ten years in reading genre novels? Fine, let's hear him, then.

"It's [SSSSS-grade Infinite Regressor]. It's a super-duper awesome novel, so make sure to read it later, okay?"

Before I noticed it, my second ego jumped out to the fore. "But, as I understand, that novel was a resounding failure."

"Failure? I heard it was really popular, though? I guess you don't have a discerning eye~."

Han Sooyoung, that moron. Did she boast her novel to these young, gullible kids?

Shin Yoosung listening on quickly joined in, as well. "I also really like reading novels!"

"Oh, really? May I ask what kind of novels?"

I kind of was looking forward to her answer. Indeed, if it was Yoosung-ie…

"Yes, you may! Raymond Carver, Murakami Haruki…!"

…Now that was a line-up of authors I had heard of before.

I was able to figure out who was in charge of the children's education during my absence.

Yoo Sangah-ssi. She should have reincarnated safely by now.

Shin Yoosung looked at the dumpling on my shoulder and asked me a question. "By the way, you must really like Murim dumplings?"

"Yes, I do."

"…An ahjussi I know also really likes them, too."

I knew well who she was talking about there.

Lee Gilyoung rubbed his stomach and muttered to himself. "Aah, I wish I could eat some dumplings right about now."

I thought I could sense the 'Murim dumpling' on my shoulder suddenly flinch a little. Indeed, it had been way too long since I had a proper meal.

(But suddenly, the aroma of dumplings began wafting out from somewhere.)

The majority of events taking place within the Journey to the West all began with 'suddenly', just like this.

We exchanged glances and tracked down the origin of that fantastic smell.

And so, who long did we walk on the mountain trail? A huge factory now stood before us.

"…Can a thing like that even exist in this era?"

Just as I began wondering if Han Sooyoung's version of the Journey was set in the steampunk universe, several humanoids began running outside the factory and headed this way.

"Euh, euh! Everyone, run away!"

However, the escapees were caught by some kind of an invisible force and were dragged back to the factory.

"Nooooo!"

Wondering what on earth was going on here, we quickly sneaked our way inside the factory.

Not too long afterwards, we got to witness the spectacle of thousands of slaves busy kneading and manufacturing something while sticking very close to the moving conveyor belts.

"Could that be…?"

The dumpling [999] on my shoulder whispered.

– They are making [Murim dumplings].

Thousands upon thousands of Murim dumplings were being carried away by the conveyor belts to a destination unknown.

I stared at the unending 'river' of dumplings and began wondering about the person we were about to meet this time.

(There was only one creature in the whole of the Journey to the West that lusted after food this badly.)

As if he was waiting for us, a man suddenly began speaking to us.

싱숑 장편소설

전지적 독자 시점

Omniscient
Reader's
Viewpoint

PART 4
03

비채

*

Chapter 428: Ep. 81 - A dumpling's reminiscence, I

"Hello there! Are you all out-of-towners?"

The one who spoke to us was a man on the wrong side of middle-age.

The well-mannered Shin Yoosung stepped forward first and offered up a greeting. "We were on our way to the Western Regions to visit Buddha-nim."

"Hoh, Buddha, is it? Unlike how you look, I see that you are high priests of Buddhism!"

Lee Gilyoung saw how the middle-aged man was impressed by the revelation and began standing tall with his hands behind his back while going "Ahem!"

The older man studied both children with unreadable eyes before finally shifting his gaze in my direction.

"In that case, the gentleman next to you is… Hiiieeek?!"

His complexion paled instantly as he stared at the [Murim dumpling] on my shoulder.

"T-that, that's a [Murim dumpling]…!!"

"Ah, this guy's just a doll. I like dumplings, that's why."

"…I-is that so? You really surprised me there."

The middle-aged man patted his chest down, still looking somewhat freaked out. Judging from the armband slung across his upper arm like that, he must've been the supervisor of this factory.

Thinking that this was a fortunate turn of events, we decided to ask this man some questions.

"What is this factory, exactly? Why are you making lots of dumplings like that?"

"…Could it be that you came here without knowing anything?" The middle-aged man studied us with a troubled look on his face, before carrying on as a lengthy sigh escaped from his lips. "This is all the fault of that scary Yogoe."

"A Yogoe, you say?"

"Indeed. Originally, this place wasn't a factory."

According to the middle-aged man, this place used to be a peaceful little rural village.

But on a certain day, a tall, hulking swine-type Yogoe with jet-black skin suddenly made his appearance, kidnapped every female in the village, enslaved all the men, and created this very factory.

"That bastard took my daughter and wife as his concubines and locked us up in this place! I'm sure you can tell that there's a strange supernatural power swirling around here and it prevents us slaves from leaving this factory. Not only that, that Yogoe devours so much, too… We're forced to make dumplings all day long, but it seems to never be enough."

[The factory's manufacturing system is searching for the 'Supervisor'!]

"D-damn it! I have to get going now."

The middle-aged man hurriedly put on a pair of sanitary gloves and a face mask before rushing towards the conveyor belts.

Before I could step up and say something, Shin Yoosung reached out and grabbed the middle-aged man first. "It's unfair for you ahjussis to perform slave labour like this. Not only that, you said that Yogoe even kidnapped females of the village too. We can't overlook this."

As expected of my Incarnation.

Sure, we had to do this in order to advance the plot, but still…

"We shall help you. Where can we find that Yogoe?"

"Even if it's you monk-nims, that Yogoe is… Will you really help us?"

"Of course we will."

The middle-aged man kept rolling his eyes around for a bit but eventually told us the direction where we could find this Yogoe.

"We leave it all up to you! Please, defeat that Yogoe!"

We nodded our heads and walked in the direction pointed out to us.

(The Dumpling Yogoe was waiting at the end of this「Dumpling Road.」)

We walked alongside the so-called Dumpling Road, created out of the conveyor belts.

As if he couldn't hold it any longer, Lee Gilyoung began picking up and chowing down dumplings every couple of steps. "…Hey, this is really tasty!"

Of course they were. These were none other than [Murim dumplings], after all. However, it seemed that the foremost expert on all things [Murim dumpling] was thinking a bit differently than us.

– The aroma is a little off.

'What?'

– Hand me a dumpling.

While walking behind the two kids, I cautiously picked up a dumpling and handed it over to, uh, the dumpling on my shoulder. And sure enough, watching one dumpling eat another one proved to be a rather grotesque sight.

– The combination of ingredients is wrong. It seems that he has not mastered the art of [Murim dumplings].

Murim dumpling number [999] formed a somewhat dissatisfied expression and began ordering me around out of the blue.

– Take half a spoon of the substance inside the green container and add that in.

Since we still had a long way to go anyway, I decided to follow this little guy's orders and began adding the ingredients inside the dumpling skins.

– You must familiarise yourself with the flames of True Samadhi Fire. Place the steamer so that the yellow flames are touching it in the middle and then, heat it.

This had to be some kind of a dream.

To think, I was learning how to make dumplings from a dumpling while walking on the Dumpling Road.

And so, how long did I walk on this dreamlike road?

At the end of this 'road', I was rewarded with a packet of appetising [Murim dumplings].

While looking at [999] nodding his head triumphantly, I began wondering what the hell I just did here.

"Looks like that's our destination."

I looked in the direction Shin Yoosung was pointing at.

There was a pathway at the end of the conveyor belt leading to large stone walls and a newly-built residential area. A handful of workers were delivering the packaged dumplings over there.

It seemed that we had arrived at where the dumplings' consumer was.

We walked closer, prompting the security guard to approach us.

"Who are you people?"

Shin Yoosung grinned brightly and replied. "We are but humble monks on our way to the west to seek an audience with Buddha-nim and acquire the sacred texts. We coincidentally stumbled across this place during our journey. Will it be fine for us to enter?"

"Ah, are you by any chance the 'party of the Tang Dynasty's monks'?"

"That's correct."

I was dumbfounded by that conversation. It had been only a few days since this journey had begun, so there was no freaking way that the rumours of us would've arrived here already.

[You've learned of the Story, 'Words Swifter Than Feet'!]

Shin Yoosung whispered in my ear. "I heard that this is how it's like in the original."

…Ah, so that's how it was?

[A portion of the judges are impressed by the Scenario Master's high level of research.]

[10 additional points are awarded for the excellent reflection of the original work!]

To think that they would judge us imitating the improbable timing as seen in the original as research… How shocking.

The gatekeeper spoke. "My apologies, but our village doesn't permit entry to any outsiders. I'm sorry that you had to walk this far to get here, but I implore you to turn ba… Kek?!"

Lee Gilyoung must've found the gatekeeper's explanation long-winded, because the boy punched the poor man in the belly and knocked him out flat. As if he was making an excuse, he quickly spoke. "Let's just rush inside and beat up that dumb Yogoe. Sooyoung noona said that the audience members like speedy plot development."

Han Sooyoung, that idiot. She seemed to have taught these kids something reaaaally nice.

[A portion of the audience is satisfied by Tang Sanzang's decision.]

[One additional point has been acquired!]

I looked at Shin Yoosung and Lee Gilyoung and spoke to them. "In that case, let's go in."

"Nope. Ahjussi, you stay here and relax."

"Excuse me?"

"We told you, Sun Wukong is supposed to ride the bus and that's it."

"But…"

"Hah-ah… I really didn't want to do this but seriously now."

Shin Yoosung held the rosary beads and began reciting something. "Prajna-paramita-hrdaya-KimDokja. Don't-try-anything-unnecessary-and-stay-put-sutra…"

…Wha?

[Tang Sanzang has recited the 'Constrictive Sutra (緊箍咒)'!]

[Item, 'Constrictive Headband (緊箍兒)' is reacting to it!]

I was immediately overcome with pain akin to my head shattering into pieces and blacked out on the spot.

…So, that must've been the 'Constrictive Sutra' that I had read about.

By the time I woke up, both Shin Yoosung and Lee Gilyoung had disappeared into the village. I looked to my side to discover a damn dumpling staring at me with a mocking leer.

– What will you do now?

'…Go after them, obviously'.

Now normally, it should be fine to let those two kids be. They had become strong Incarnations that didn't require my help, after all.

However, something felt off to me here.

(If Sun Wukong's gut feeling was right, then it was pretty obvious which creature they would encounter here.)

I could think of someone when it came to all things Murim dumplings-related. But to think that idiot would use slaves to operate a factory, and even become a villain that kidnaps women… I couldn't wrap my head around it.

(It was then, someone discovered Sun Wukong.)

"Kyahk! It's a Yogoe!"

I turned my head to find several women standing over yonder.

(Ladies who saw Sun Wukong's appearance were greatly shocked.)

They pointed to my pointy monkey-like ears peeking out from the golden hair and began backing away. But then, they spotted the dumpling on my shoulder and became rather chatty all of a sudden.

"He must like Murim dumplings…"

"…Does that mean he's a good Yogoe?"

I wasn't sure how these ladies got to that illogical-sounding conclusion, but I figured that, what with things developing like this, I might as well exploit the situation a bit.

"By any chance, are you the kidnapped villagers?"

My question caused the ladies to stare at each other, evidently confused about something.

"…Kidnap? We've never been kidnapped, though?"

"But, I heard that a pitch-black-coloured swine-like Yogoe has kidnapped you all?"

"A swine…? No way… Are you perhaps talking about Zhu Bajie-nim?"

…Zhu Bajie "-nim"??

"Sure, our Bajie-nim's skin is somewhat tan, but it's not to the point of calling it pitch black…"

"But, he does resemble a swine in some aspect, doesn't he? Like, his thick biceps, or those tough, strong thighs. But, that's not the same as being a swine…"

Something was definitely going down the wrong direction here.

With an excellent timing, a huge commotion broke out in the middle of the village so I quickly ran over there. It was pretty obvious who was behind that disturbance.

"Stop right there!"

A boy's voice loudly resounded out. I pushed my way past the wall of women until I came face to face with the village's large plaza, a large litter in its middle, and the two children standing in front of it.

There was no need to mention that they were Lee Gilyoung and Shin Yoosung, of course.

The boy stepped forward like a kid general and shouted out. "You're the Yogoe that kidnapped many of the village's women and constructed a dumpling factory to satisfy your selfish interests and desires, aren't you!"

[A portion of the audience is singing praises of Tang Sanzang's adorableness!]

[Judge, 'Successor of Sakyamuni' has added 5 additional points.]

…Right, he was really adorable.

Didn't matter who was inside that litter, there was no way anyone would be able to fight this kid after hearing… No, hang on, if it was that bastard, yeah, he might actually.

And like clockwork, an incredible level of Status whipped up into a frenzy from inside litter currently covered in screens.

"Lower the litter."

A heavy-sounding tone of voice came out from inside the carrier. It seemed to contain this surprising power to change the mood of the surrounding atmosphere with just a single word.

I swallowed my saliva and walked up to the kids.

"…We told you to stay back because it might get dangerous!"

"Leaving me behind like that is actually even more dangerous."

Soon, the screen of the litter slowly rose up, and the problematic Yogoe finally made its appearance.

(Sun Wukong knew who that was.)

(Marshal Canopy/天蓬元帥, Zhu Bajie.)

Shin Yoosung's jaw dropped in dumbfoundedness. "That's… the Pigsy?"

(Sun Wukong thought that something was definitely wrong here.)

(Because what he saw was not the 'Zhu Bajie' he remembered.)

For a moment there, I had this feeling that this world's balance of beauty had tilted to one side. A nonsensical amount of cheering erupted out all around us next.

"Oh, ooooh! Dear Zhu Bajie-nim!"

For sure, calling a face like that 'Yogoe' didn't seem all that out of place. Because well, it was inconceivable that a normal human would be blessed with such looks, after all.

Eyebrows seemingly drawn by a single, uninterrupted stroke of a famed artist's brush; a nose and a chin shaped in perfect angles that defied attempts to measure them through mere devices of men; a pair of deep eyes seemingly carved out of a beautiful jewel containing all the misfortunes found in this world.

If someone saw those features and not get immediately drawn in by them, then there must be something wrong with that person.

And sure enough, the villagers, regardless of gender or age, were pouring out their praises towards this 'Zhu Bajie'.

"Zhu Bajie-nim, hooray!"

"The creator of [Murim dumplings], hooray!"

The so-called 'Pigsy', half of his black-coloured vest unbuttoned and wearing a pair of black jeans, climbed down from the litter.

"Finally, the day we decide the victor has arrived! You sooty bastard!"

Lee Gilyoung triumphantly roared out as if he was expecting this. He began swinging his small fists around as if he was playing 'Jwibulnori' and dashed towards Zhu Bajie. Of course, there was no way such a thing was going to work.

"Let me go! You pig!!"

Zhu Bajie easily picked the boy up by the scruff of his neck, glanced at Shin Yoosung briefly, and strode over to where we were.

"…You bastard must be Sun Wukong."

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* Official novel cover (canonical)

Chapter 429: Ep. 81 - A dumpling's reminiscence, II

Right, I had a feeling that he'd be 'Zhu Bajie' from the beginning. However… Just in which aspect was he anywhere remotely 'Pigsy'?

[A small portion of the audience cannot comprehend the outer appearance of Zhu Bajie.]

[A small portion of audience members are complaining that this is an insult to the original work!]

[Judge, 'Meihouwang', argues that this doesn't even make sense!]

It seemed that there were some members of the audience with a similar train of thought as me. And then, in the next moment…

[The majority of the audience welcome the choice of the current Zhu Bajie.]

…Huh?

[Number of votes obtained is increasing greatly!]

[Story chamber's ranking has increased greatly!]

…Could it be?

[Judge, 'Cleanser of Altars', is satisfied with his outer appearance.]

Those in the know should already be aware of it – this 'Cleanser of Altars' was Zhu Bajie's Modifier.

[Judge, 'Cleanser of Altars', is deeply satisfied by the casting of his role.]

[150 additional points have been awarded!]

As Yoo Joonghyuk glared at me with his trademark piercing eyes, large letters slowly floated up before my eyes.

~ Episode 2. The Supreme King, Zhu Bajie ~

[Congratulations! Your Story chamber's ranking has broken into the top 100.]

Han Sooyoung looked at the message floating up before her eyes and scrolled to the next page with a wry grin on her face.

*

The folks inside the panel screen were acting according to the plot she had cooked up. She pushed up the horn-rimmed glasses on her nose that didn't have any lenses and muttered to herself.

"…These kids' sucky acting might cause me a heart attack at this rate."

Fortunately, though, her Story chamber broke past the 1000 voting points mark and had entered the upper ranks. There was a knock coming from the door behind her, and Lee Sookyung stepped into the room.

"I've brought some fruits."

"If you bothered to even knock, you should at least wait for an answer. Or don't knock at all."

"How is everything going?"

"…About as I expected. That Fei Hu's rank is way too high and it's not as easy as I thought to catch up."

Lee Sookyung confirmed Han Sooyoung's Story chamber ranking over the latter's shoulder and spoke. "It's only been a couple of days, but you're already so high up. Amazing."

"Compared to my heyday, this sort of achievement is nothing, you know. Besides, we don't know what'll happen next."

Han Sooyoung bit into the apple as she fiercely burned the torch of determination. She could see the dumbfounded face of Sun Wukong within the panel screen. "…From here onwards, it'll depend on how well that Sun Wukong does his job."

"You're right. I'm Sun Wukong."

Yoo Joonghyuk heard my reply and glared at me with questioning eyes. Right afterwards, his right eye glowed in the golden light.

[The usage of 'appraisal skills' isn't allowed within the applicable scenario location.]

Due to the worldview's restriction, his [Sage's Eye] didn't activate. Since I had already expected that to happen, I wasn't even remotely surprised by it.

"Looks like you wanted to shoot lasers from your eye," said I with a refreshing grin on my face.

Whatever the case might have been, Zhu Bajie was fated to become my underling, according to the original story.

"Shin Yoosung! What are standing around dazed for?! Quickly defeat this guy!!"

Lee Gilyoung, still dangling in the air, began to thrash about frantically.

She glanced at him as if it was none of her business, and asked Zhu Bajie, instead. "Even if you like dumplings that much, how could you build a factory and use people like slaves? And why did you kidnap women in the first place?"

While listening to her yell, I studied our surroundings.

「Zhu Bajie was a demon king of lust and gluttony in the original 'Journey to the West'.」

If you thought about the original's storyline, then the episode we were currently experiencing wasn't a complete impossibility.

However, even if she detested Yoo Joonghyuk, Han Sooyoung wouldn't have stuck this closely to the original. She even changed the 'Ways of Survival' to that minute degree, didn't she?

Besides, even if she wrote such a scenario, Yoo Joonghyuk wouldn't have agreed to…

"I didn't kidnap these women."

His words quickly prompted the surrounding ladies to yell out.

"That's right! We weren't kidnapped at all!"

I studied their expressions. Not one of them looked to be under the mind-control spell.

Meanwhile, Lee Gilyoung yelled out in response. "So what?! Didn't you enslave people to make lots of dumplings so you can eat them all??"

Right, that's what the slave in the factory told us. However, there was one thing that I couldn't understand.

Yoo Joonghyuk really liked [Murim dumplings]. It was verging on obsession, even. But, would someone like him ever touch dumplings mass-produced in a factory?

「"I do not eat what others have made."」

Yoo Joonghyuk even declared as thus, so it didn't make sense for him to use slaves just for the purpose of eating mass-produced dumplings.

And as if to prove me right, Yoo Joonghyuk spoke in a slightly sorrowful tone of voice. "I haven't eaten these [Murim dumplings]."

"What are you talking about?! You dumpling psycho! Shin Yoosung! Do something already!"

Rather than answering the boy, Yoo Joonghyuk stared past the crowd around us. Dozens of houses were lined up along the alleyway. The delivered dumplings were placed before each house's entrance. I could see the village's young kids flocking around them to happily eat them.

"…Could it be?"

It was at this point that a warning message suddenly appeared over the whole village.

[A revolt has occurred in the 'Dumpling factory'!]

The village's entrance once guarded by the gatekeeper crumbled and the factory's slaves rushed in.

"We will no longer labour for you!"

"Dumplings over here, dumplings over there, dumplings freaking everywhere!!"

"Kill him! Kill that pig bastard!!"

The eyes of the slaves gleamed viciously as they wielded hoes and rakes.

Women were greatly astonished and began shouting out.

"Those Yogoes still haven't learned their lessons!"

"Yogoes?? But, this guy here is the real Yogoe, isn't he?"

Lee Gilyoung shouted out, still oblivious to the situation.

Yoo Joonghyuk put the boy down as his expression hardened. "…Indeed, I should've killed them from the get-go."

In that moment, I figured out what was going on here.

Currently, I was the 'Sun Wukong', so it'd be possible for me to borrow some of his powers. I stared at the waves of Yogoes rushing over here and strengthened my vision.

[Stigma, 'Fiery Golden Eyes Lv. ???' is activating!]

The 'Fiery Golden Eyes'. The Great Sage's unique Stigma that allowed him to discern Yogoes and demons.

The colour of the world gradually changed, and the appearance of the humans rushing over here transformed. Twisted figured emerged, their eyes filled to the brim with murderous intentions. As expected, they were not human beings.

"Zhu Bajie is not our enemy."

Lee Gilyoung's eyes went extra-round after he heard me. He even looked disappointed for some reason. "Whaaat? Dang it…"

"Rather than ruling the village, Zhu Bajie has liberated it, instead. It's those creatures that had been tormenting this village as they are not humans, but Yogoes that previously ruled this place."

The slave Yogoes finally revealed their true colours and unleashed their Status to destroy the village. Lee Gilyoung and Shin Yoosung only then realized what had happened and began directing the crowd.

"Everyone, step behind us!"

…The revolt of the factory's slaves, was it?

This situation was the complete opposite of the [Demon Realm Revolution] in the past. What we had to do now was not liberation, but suppression.

Yoo Joonghyuk stepped forward first and unsheathed his [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] from… No, hang on a second??

[A portion of the audience members are puzzled by Zhu Bajie's choice of weapon.]

[Several judges are curious as to why Zhu Bajie is suddenly using a 'blade' instead.]

[Judge, 'Cleanser of Altars', is complaining about the whereabouts of his 'Nine-Tooth Spike Rake'!]

According to the original story, Zhu Bajie didn't use a bladed weapon, but a rake called [Nine-Tooth Spike-Rake].

[Many audience members are overwhelmed by the 'Supreme King Zhu Bajie's' fighting spirit!]

[A portion of audience members are deeply arrested by the handsome Zhu Bajie's charms!]

[A portion of judges are accepting the change in weapons that reflect the current trend.]

[Judge, 'Cleanser of Altars', coughs awkwardly and says that he'll overlook it this time as it looks cool.]

[5 additional points have been awarded!]

Dammit, were you implying that one's face could even serve as Probability?

Yoo Joonghyuk stepped forward and suddenly brandished the [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] in my direction, then drew a very tiny circle on the ground around my feet.

"You do not step beyond this line."

"Eh?"

"Move one step, and I'll kill you."

And then, Yogoes' necks began flying away next.

His sword technique on display was beautiful enough to entrance the viewers. His swordsmanship had taken yet another major leap forward when compared to before, making it impossible to imagine just how far he had to push himself to reach such a realm.

"You're doing okay, Pigsy!"

"Go get them!"

Even before I noticed it, both Lee Gilyoung and Shin Yoosung were standing next to me and cheering on. We stood there and spectated on Yoo Joonghyuk soloing the great army of Yogoes.

[Judge, 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband', feels happy about this pleasing and relaxing progression of the story.]

Only now did I finally understand the deeper meaning of Han Sooyoung author-nim's firm resolution. Indeed, the story of the retired Sun Wukong was a pretty good one.

[Judge, 'Cleanser of Altars', is drunk on the coolness of himself.]

[Judge, 'Meihouwang', is slightly dissatisfied by the cool-looking Zhu Bajie.]

[30 additional points have been acquired.]

It was around this point in time that I heard a rather numinous voice resounding out from the skies above.

[Wait! Stop your actions!]

The half-dead Yogoes screamed loudly and began prostrating on the ground. The skies above the village opened up, and a Constellation kitted out in a Taoist robe made his entrance.

Judging from his attire, I was pretty sure that he was Taishang Laojun (the Grand Supreme Elderly Lord).

[Oh, Supreme King Zhu Bajie, those Yogoes you have slain are pigs that I reared back in my palace in Tushita. They escaped after fearing their fate of being served up on the heaven's dining table, so show them sympathy and allow me to take the surviving ones away.]

Yup, that pattern had finally shown up.

The entirety of the Journey to the West's plot unfolded in such a fashion. An event would occur, the culprit would be revealed as a Yogoe, and when it was about to be vanquished, some weird Taoist dude would suddenly pop up and say "Actually, that Yogoe is XX that I'd been rearing" before taking it away with him.

[A portion of judges are awarding extra points for the development that reflect the original work.]

[30 additional points have been added!]

Of course, there was no way I'd let such a development slide without saying something, what with my twisted disposition and all. "If you were planning to take them away anyway, why didn't you come and help the villagers from the beginning?"

[My apologies. I was somewhat occupied earlier…]

Nope, actually, you couldn't be bothered earlier.

Even in reality, countless Constellations of <Emperor> rarely tried to aid their Incarnations, just like now, when they had prior knowledge on what was going on in the scenarios.

"Take them away."

[Thank you.]

Yoo Joonghyuk gave his permission, and Taishang Laojun ascended up to the sky along with his 'pigs'.

(Once Taishang Laojun took his pigs away, peace finally visited this rural village.)

A normal story would've come to an end here.

But then, my [Fiery Golden Eyes] suddenly stung and the outer appearances of the Yogoes leaving alongside with Taishang Laojun wavered about greatly.

[…Don't want… go]

[…For how long…]

I heard the Yogoes' voices, their tone sounding eerily familiar. Even though they luckily avoided getting killed, none of them looked happy about it. How should I put this?

It was as if they wanted to die in this place, instead.

"This village is now yours. Although you'll have to operate the factory by yourselves, you won't go empty-bellied like in the past."

With that, Yoo Joonghyuk joined our little group.

The villagers held a tearful farewell party for us before we left. Or more specifically, they seemed to be disappointed not of us leaving, but due to Yoo Joonghyuk going with us…

"Chet. I wanted to beat him up and then drag him away."

Once the party ended, Lee Gilyoung and Shin Yoosung set off on the road again, and I followed after them as well. Meanwhile, Yoo Joonghyuk was keeping a few steps of distance away from us.

What an awkward atmosphere this was.

Now that I thought about it, I had no clue what Yoo Joonghyuk was like around my other companions when I wasn't around.

I ended up worrying about him and so, I had to say something. "Excuse me, Junior Brother. Why don't you walk closer to us?"

"…And who's your 'junior' now?"

That idiot glared back at me with incredibly intimidating eyes and I couldn't say anything else.

Meanwhile, the kids sidled up to my side and began chatting away in happiness.

"Hey, Demon King of Salvation, you did alright back there."

"If you haven't discovered the truth about those Yogoes back then, we might have ended up in a big disaster, disciple-nim."

To be honest, I hadn't done anything of note. Yoo Joonghyuk killed Yogoes, and the one who saved the village was also him. All I did was spectate from the sidelines and say a couple of lines. Even then, kids were busy praising me, not him.

I glanced at him. As if he hadn't heard anything, he concentrated on polishing his [Black Heavenly Demon Sword].

「In that moment, Kim Dokja began wondering for the first time ever. 'How did my companions see Yoo Joonghyuk while I'm not around?」

Not too long afterwards, it became evening.

Gathered firewood burned brightly and we formed a small circle around the campfire to bathe in its warmth. It felt almost as if we were out camping.

It was Yoo Joonghyuk who oh-so-suddenly decided to act like a wet blanket in this pleasant atmosphere.

"I shall act on my own from now on."

His voice sounded utterly disinterested, as if he was still polishing his damn sword, prompting me to respond unconsciously. "What do you mean by that?"

"Going to India and fetching the 'sacred texts' will end this journey, is it not? I alone will be sufficient for this task. I shall go there and…"

"You must not do that!"

Indeed, Zhu Bajie using his Cloud Riding technique, or even me utilising the Somersault Cloud, would reach India in the blink of an eye. For sure, Sun Wukong mentioned this fact back in the original story too, and when I was much younger, I also questioned the logic behind it as well.

「Why didn't Sun Wukong go and get the texts by himself?」

I now had a better understanding of why he didn't.

"If you do that, then there will be no meaning to this story."

Taking over fourteen years of slow crawling to cross the distance short enough to traverse in one night – that time existed for the sole purpose of completing the story that was the 'Journey to the West'.

However, Yoo Joonghyuk's thoughts were different. "I don't have the time to waste here."

"This trip should not be that long. It'll definitely not take over 14 years for us, so please be patient. Progressing according to the itinerary while meeting the rest of our companions should prove to be a good experience for you."

He must've found it unexpected that I said those words, because he began staring at me while speaking up. "You are not one of my companions."

Yup, of course.

There was no way that this deeply-suspicious-of-everyone Yoo Joonghyuk would believe me.

"I know that."

Silence descended among the group.

Lee Gilyoung wordlessly tossed a pebble inside the campfire, while Shin Yoosung nervously studied Yoo Joonghyuk's and my current moods, her fingers fidgeting around with the soil on the ground.

It was then we heard the sound of a stomach growling loudly. Lee Gilyoung frowned tearfully and rubbed his belly.

"I'm starving…"

I grinned slightly and pulled something out from my inner pocket. "Would you like some dumplings?"

It was my secret stash of dumplings that I made while walking on that 'Dumpling Road'.

Lee Gilyoung warily eyed me but still received a dumpling anyway. He eventually bit into it. His eyes opened up real wide, his irises trembling powerfully.

"What the heck?! This is so much tastier than what I ate back in the factory!"

Of course, it was tastier. It simply had to.

[A portion of the audience members are getting really curious about the taste of 'Murim dumplings'.]

I sensed Yoo Joonghyuk [999] flinch ever so slightly on my shoulder.

In the meantime, I handed the dumplings over to Shin Yoosung and Yoo Joonghyuk as well.

The latter frowned and shook his head. "I don't eat food made by other people."

"Other people didn't make this."

He seemed deeply puzzled by that. Most likely, he had no idea what I was talking about. He then glared at the [Murim dumpling] resting before his eyes with some suspicion, but eventually made up his mind and cautiously reached out to it.

And very slowly, so very slowly, as if he was studying his new enemy, brought the dumpling near his nose.

"…This aroma??"

That's right, eat that damn dumpling, you bastard.

Yoo Joonghyuk continued his pained deliberation over and over again, and in the end, brought the dumpling towards his lips very slowly. As if he was tearing into the neck of the enemy commander, he took a small bite out of it.

Lee Gil-Yeoung, Shin Yoosung, and I tensely observed the sight of him chewing the dumpling. Even the chef [999] on my shoulder had stopped moving and waited for the dude's reaction.

Gulp.

Yoo Joonghyuk finally finished swallowing his initial mouthful, then proceeded to take another bite. Very, very slowly, the frown on his forehead disappeared. His lips bobbed up and down in great haste.

The speed at which he consumed the dumpling increased. Second bite, third bite…

Eventually, his hand reached out to the second dumpling. But then, he flinched and stopped, and began glaring at me instead.

"What are you looking at?"

I sneakily averted my gaze and began chowing the dumplings as well.

…If I used the [Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint] here, I might have heard something much more entertaining just now, but well, I swore not to use that anymore, so…

"…It's not that bad, I suppose."

I heard Yoo Joonghyuk's nearly-inaudible muttering and quietly looked up at the sky. The stars of the night sky sparkled as they looked down at us, as if the destruction of the world was a story belonging to a distant realm.

While chewing the dumpling, I began thinking this for the first time. That I wouldn't have minded this story going on for a little while longer.

*

[Deep night has arrived.]

['Journey to the West Remake' System will enter one hour of maintenance.]

The darkness descending was pitch-black. Everyone had fallen asleep.

Sun Wukong used his arm as his pillow and began snoring away, and as for the pair of Tang Sanzangs, they used each of the Monkey King's legs as their own pillows to sleep as well. They must've been fatigued by the journey.

However, a shadow quietly stood up, utilising this dead of night where the messages from the audience members and the judges had disappeared temporarily.

It was Yoo Joonghyuk.

He silently unsheathed [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] and approached the sleeping Sun Wukong.

And very slowly, he pointed the tip of his blade against the sleeping figure.

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* Promotional illustration (semi-canonical)
* Promotional illustration (semi-canonical)

Chapter 430: Ep. 81 - A dumpling's reminiscence, III

Yoo Joonghyuk pointed the tip of his blade at Sun Wukong and slowly opened his lips.

– How did you expect me to respond when you were emitting that much demonic energy?

The [Voice Projection] was meant to send one's voice to a designated target. However, Sun Wukong didn't reply. Instead, it was the [Murim dumpling] on his shoulder that did.

– [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] is a good weapon.

That voice was thick with an untold length of time it had lived through, prompting Yoo Joonghyuk to strengthen the sword aura permeating on his blade.

The dumpling spoke while opening its eyes to stare at the [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] buzzing with the transcendental power.

– However, will you be able to cut me down with a broken weapon?

Indeed, there was a faint crack running in the middle of the sword.

By using the repair tools sold in the [Dokkaebi Bundle], it had been patched up somewhat, but as that statement implied, it was nothing more than a temporary measure. After it broke once, [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] couldn't even display half of its original might.

Yoo Joonghyuk spoke.

– We can find out, right now.

– And that's precisely why you couldn't win against the 'Secretive Plotter'.

Yoo Joonghyuk's dark brows quivered noticeably at the mention of the 'Secretive Plotter'.

The outer appearance of the Murim dumpling seemed to slowly morph in the darkness, and the kkoma Yoo Joonghyuk number [999] regained his former look. Indeed, it was the miniaturised version of Yoo Joonghyuk.

The regular-sized Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes trembled faintly.

– Are you an underling of that bastard? What is your goal here?

– The current you will never defeat the 'Secretive Plotter'.

– If you came here to pass on such a meaningless message, then…

– It'll be the same story even if you try your luck hundreds of times. Exactly the same as your pathetic repeated regressions. Surely, you must be aware of this by now.

The tip of the [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] trembled faintly as well.

Perhaps, that was true. Even after he borrowed Han Sooyoung and Jung Heewon's powers, he still failed to defeat that enemy. It was obvious that he'd not be a match even if they met again.

The kkoma Yoo Joonghyuk [999] spoke in the tone of voice indicating that he understood that feeling.

– Yoo Joonghyuk of the 3rd turn. How much do you know about the 'Secretive Plotter'?

An ancient slumber.

This dream was from the days when he was still called Yoo Joonghyuk (Hanja: 劉衆赫).

From 0th turn all the way up to 1863rd.

The story of when he was still the puppet of the Oldest Dream, repeating countless lives and fighting over and over again.

[…Oh, you foolish puppet. You, can't, save, anything.]

Yoo Joonghyuk finally reached the 1863rd turn, only to lose every single one of his companions.

The Maritime War God, Lee Jihye.

The Beast Lord, Shin Yoosung.

The Emperor of Steelsword, Lee Hyunsung.

The God of Medicine, Lee Seolhwa.

The Delusion Demon, Kim Namwoon.

The Hermit King of Shadows, Han Donghoon.

The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint, Namgung Minyoung.

…His little sister, Yoo Mia.

Just like how he had many companions, he also had as many enemies to contend with.

Such as, Gong Pildu of the 'Ten Evils', Anna Croft, Ranveer Khan, Fei Hu…

"I told you, I won't become your ally. However…"

Some enemies remained hostile until the end.

"Maybe, this regression turn will be your last."

Some enemies realized he had succeeded and congratulated him.

And then, the final war began.

[Oh, the 'Iron Blood Supreme King'.]

Fighting alongside him as his sworn friend, the 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband', the Great Sage, Heaven's Equal.

[I'm helping you because the <Star Stream> is an even greater evil.]

Working as his ally at the final hurdle, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', Uriel.

[…This one is simply avenging the death of his Incarnation, that is all.]

Standing on his side for the sake of avenging Kim Namwoon, the 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon'.

[Y ou fool ish Con stell ations…]

They advanced forward while breaking past the waves of the Outer Gods. They cut down countless packs of tentacles rushing at them, and faced off against the enormous Statuses emitted by these gods from the other world.

Stars in the sky fell non-stop.

Lights from the great Nebulas continued to disappear. <Olympus>, <Vedas>, <Asgard>…

Along with the noises of one era coming to an end, the skies of the <Star Stream> were covered by the falling rain of shooting stars.

The Korean Peninsula's Constellations also died. Goryeo's First Sword and the Maritime War God fought bitterly right till the end, but they still couldn't avoid their deaths.

It was the same story for Yoo Joonghyuk's companion in arms.

[What an amusing life it was.]

The first one to lose his head was the 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon'.

[…Gabriel… I'm sorry.]

Not too long after, the wings of the 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' were broken.

By that time, however, even the majority of 'Outer Gods' had perished as well.

The one to land the final, deciding blow was the Great Sage.

[That's the end of all stories, it seems.]

His Ruyi Bang grew to an enormous height. He then dispersed into tens of thousands of clones and utilised every single Story he possessed to open up a path. As he scattered away in a golden-coloured Story, the Great Sage spoke up.

[Complete your story, Supreme King Yoo Joonghyuk.]

Yoo Joonghyuk could never forget the moment he ran on that path.

It was the moment that his life, continued on breathlessly from the 0th turn up until now, was about to be completed.

Slice.

The head of a god from another world fell in vain.

[Reg ret will be the on ly th ing that ke eps you al ive.]

And that curse completed Yoo Joonghyuk's 'Conclusion'.

[You have acquired a new Giant Story!]

[Giant Story, 'Pilgrim of the Lonesome Apocalypse', has completed its meaning!]

[The 'Conclusion(結)' for your final Giant Story has been completed!]

[Hidden Scenario – 'A Single Story's' final condition has been met!]

The only one remaining on the battlefield where everything had perished was Yoo Joonghyuk.

The Conclusion he finally reached by using the deaths of everyone as its fertiliser. What he wished for at the end of this lengthy fight was just this one thing.

'To see the end of this damn regression'.

For that sole purpose, he persisted and got himself here.

Unfortunately, a wall prevented him from 'going beyond'.

「There are three ways to survive in a ruined world. Now, I have forgotten a few, but one thing is certain. The fact that you who are reading these words will survive for sure.」

Incomprehensible texts were written on that wall.

That was where Yoo Joonghyuk met the 'Dokkaebi King'.

[Oh hear ye, the poor, tragic puppet. You have come far too quickly. I'm sorry, but past here 'doesn't exist' yet.]

Yoo Joonghyuk couldn't understand what that meant. To figure it out, he threatened the 'Dokkaebi King'. But the damn guy didn't reveal its true meaning even as it died.

[You can't complete this universe.]

It was a gigantic wall that Yoo Joonghyuk couldn't go past with his power. But he still instinctively understood it.

'Past this wall is where I'll find the answer I've been looking for'.

Unfortunately, his [Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship] that shattered the heavens and destroyed stars failed to break this wall. It was as if this wall didn't possess the nature of 'breaking' in the first place.

Yoo Joonghyuk despaired.

He came this far while losing everything, yet he couldn't go past this one wall?

[Your 'Conclusion' is guiding you towards a brand new existence.]

He needed to become stronger.

He needed many more Stories.

He needed the force capable enough to break past this 'Wall' and go beyond it.

[You have become an 'Outer God'.]

And that was why Yoo Joonghyuk had become an Outer God.

He now could drift along the countless world-lines he had lived through, and eventually, he was no longer 'Yoo Joonghyuk'.

Other gods respected him who wandered among the universe of stories, and Dokkaebis from other world-lines feared him.

The Wennys liked him, though. One of the Recorders of Fear even created a title for him, too.

– The great schemer who dreams of journeying past the Wall… The 'Secretive Plotter'.

0th regression turn, 1st, 2nd… 1863rd.

He aimlessly floated around all these numerous world-lines and memorised the stories of his life once more.

He had earned many Stories along the way, but his overall power remained the same after paying for the Probability of traversing through different world-lines. However, he got to learn many new pieces of information that he failed to notice when he used to rely on regression only.

Such as, the origin of all of his regressions, his sponsor.

The 'Oldest Dream'.

The 'Secretive Plotter' wandered around again and again for the sole purpose of finding this being.

Once, he discovered its traces in <Eden>, and he also discovered the records of it within <Vedas> as well.

But he couldn't find its actual, real body anywhere.

And that was why the 'Secretive Plotter' became even more convinced. He was sure that the answer to everything was beyond the 'Final Wall' he encountered at the 'Final Scenario'.

Sadly, though, he failed to discover the method to breach that wall even after searching through all of the world-lines.

His hope slowly withered. His will that not even regressing for 1863 times could break was slowly becoming dimmer. He dreamed many times of falling into an endless slumber. If only he really could.

If only he could find… the eternal rest he'd been searching for.

It was at this point that he discovered a single planet shining so brightly. The 'Secretive Plotter' was quite familiar with it.

The 8612th solar system, Earth. The location where the tragedies of all scenarios began.

However, something was wrong. An unfamiliar sensation wrapped around this world-line stabbed into his memories.

'…Was there a regression turn like this one?'

And it was here that the 'Secretive Plotter' witnessed an existence he had never encountered before.

…

…

…

The 'Secretive Plotter' slowly opened his eyes.

He saw the N'Gai's Forest above the cold darkness. His jet-black exhaled air dispersed within the now-chilly air.

It was unknown for how long he was there, but nonetheless, the kkoma Yoo Joonghyuk number [41] was next to him.

"You had a nightmare. Someone like you who had witnessed the Conclusion still can't escape from dreaming, it seems."

【…Well, I too am nothing more than a mere 'puppet', that's why.】

Tsu-chut, chuchuchut…

Perhaps as the after-effects of spending an exorbitant amount of Probability, thin layers of sparks danced around the entire figure of the 'Secretive Plotter'.

[41] quietly observed that phenomenon for a while before opening his lips. "I see that the effects from the 1863rd's story changing is rather considerable."

【…Your business here?】

"All contact from [999] has been cut off."

The irises of the 'Secretive Plotter' drew in deeper after hearing those words. Dark and deep light flitted in and out of his eyes as if he was reading something, before he opened his lips again.

【…[999] hasn't died.】

"Then, the meaning of his contact being cut off is…"

The 'Secretive Plotter' didn't reply.

[41] spoke with a voice containing a faint trace of rage. "It was a mistake to send him. Send me, instead. [999] is too soft."

【He is not as soft as you think.】 Faint vestiges of a Story brushed past the eyes of the Secretive Plotter as if he was re-reading the events of the 999th regression turn. 【Even if it was through sheer luck, [999] is the only one besides myself to reach the edge of the 'Conclusion'. Because of his experience, I too was able to witness my 'Conclusion', as well.】

That reply prompted [41]'s expression to crumple. "However, he's also the one who willingly gave up on the 'Conclusion'. Think about this. He can mess up our goal."

【It doesn't matter. He is also a 'Yoo Joonghyuk', after all.】 The Plotter's unfathomable eyes now stared at the skies of the N'Gai's Forest. No one could tell what exactly he was thinking about. 【He too, has the right to pursue the end he wishes to see.】

[41] quietly observed the Plotter's eyes before lowering his head slowly.

The 'Secretive Plotter'. Yoo Joonghyuk who had lived the longest time in all of the universes out there. No one in the <Star Stream> could understand the depths of his sorrow.

"…If that's what you want."

Even if it was another Yoo Joonghyuk.

[Scenario maintenance will conclude in five minutes.]

[The channel will re-open soon.]

As the message reverberated throughout the empty air, two Yoo Joonghyuks were still standing face to face. [999] was the first one to form a wry grin.

– It seems that you don't know anything. But then again, I guess it's only obvious.

"Don't know anything" – those words really got under Yoo Joonghyuk's skin. This bastard or that other one, they were all saying the same damn thing.

'Yoo Joonghyuk who doesn't know anything'.

Just what the hell didn't he know?

The blade of the [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] faintly shifted over to Sun Wukong as if he had managed to swallow back his anger.

– Just spit out what you're plotting here. Why did you come? Is this Sun Wukong one of your collaborators?

[999] glanced at Sun Wukong after hearing that threat, and replied.

– He isn't an Outer God. We're simply using each other.

– In that case, it'll be fine to kill you both.

[999] then stepped up slightly as if to defend Sun Wukong and spoke.

– If you wish to give up on this regression turn, then go ahead.

– What rubbish are you talking about?

– Complete this 'Journey to the West Remake' with this guy. If you do, I shall teach you a way to defeat the 'Secretive Plotter'.

– Why should I believe…

Almost at the same time, blue sparks danced around [999]'s body.

The [Existence Pledge].

Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes trembled from unrest.

– You said that I'll never defeat him even if I regress hundreds of times.

– And I merely meant that you can't defeat him by 'regressing' hundreds of times.

[999] lightly leaped up and landed on the blade of the [Black Heavenly Demon Sword]. Yoo Joonghyuk reflexively took a step back, but his mini version approached him regardless.

– You always thought that your life so far has been a living hell. Because you've been dealing with everything all on your own.

A chaotic Story instantly spread all around. Yoo Joonghyuk flinched and stared at it.

It was of an eternal nightmare that a certain someone had lived through.

[Story, 'Hell of Eternity', has begun its storytelling.]

As if it was reacting to this Story, the [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] permeating with shining light shuddered greatly.

Yoo Joonghyuk who experienced the 999th regression turn spoke again.

– How many such hells do you think exist in this world?

Chapter 431: Ep. 81 - A dumpling's reminiscence, IV

The ensuing scenario afterwards proved to be plain sailing. Zhu Bajie had a big role to play in that.

[Current rate of Journey to the West's progress: 24%]

The Journey to the West had the storyline of overcoming a total of 81 different adversities in the 14-year period. But, as the original work used the stories passed down orally as its foundation, this level of changes didn't seem to matter one jot.

Even then, I couldn't help but wonder if the story was progressing a bit too fast when we hadn't even met Sha Wujing yet. And I also kind of wondered who'd play that role, too.

"Ku-waaahk!"

Currently, Yoo Joonghyuk's [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] was busy cutting the heads off the unlucky bandits that showed up as a sort of intermission event.

[A portion of judges are dissatisfied by the viciousness of 'Zhu Bajie'!]

[Audience members are satisfied with the taste of the Journey to the West's cider!]

[10 additional points have been acquired.]

Even back in the original story, Zhu Bajie and Sun Wukong often killed all human-type villains they came across. That resulted in 'Tang Sanzang' lecturing them, or when the matter became too serious, they even suffered expulsion, too.

There were quite a few readers who felt turned-off by the stuffy uptightness of Tang Sanzang, though.

"Joonghyuk ahjussi, how about sparing those people…?"

[A portion of judges are satisfied by the reflection of the original work.]

[Many audience members are arrested by Tang Sanzang's adorableness.]

[20 additional points have been acquired.]

For sure, the question of who was playing the role seemed to make a big difference overall.

The leader of the bandits, beaten up to within an inch of his life by Yoo Joonghyuk, yelled out as if he was furious about his treatment. "Keu-euh-euk! Who would've thought that a mere Zhu Bajie was that strong!"

Surprisingly, he was someone that I knew.

Kids next to me whispered to each other.

"Poor Myungoh ahjussi."

The department chief Han Myungoh activated [One-legged Swift Horse] and while running away as if his butt was on fire, sent us a knowing wink.

To think that Han Myungoh was one of the players participating here, too.

It seemed that he was hired to perform multiple roles, specifically as leaders of various bandit troupes. Shin Yoosung softly muttered as we watched his distancing back. "Heewon unni said that it was okay."

Yoo Joonghyuk returned to our side while lightly polishing the [Black Heavenly Demon Sword]. He especially paid more attention to the centre of the blade. When I took a closer look, a minute crack could be spotted there.

His sword was broken on the battlefield of the 'Great War of Saints and Demons'.

This would be his second sword to be broken after the [Splitting the Sky Sword]. Even if he didn't show it, he must've been hurting over this whole thing.

It'd be good if he could get himself a new weapon from this 'Journey to the West'…

But, I couldn't recall any weapons that might suit him. Sun Wukong's Ruyi Jingu Bang wasn't the type of weapon that Yoo Joonghyuk was familiar with, and Zhu Bajie's Nine-Tooth Spike Rake didn't match his taste. No need to even mention Sha Wujing's Demon Slaying Staff, either…

Maybe he found me, deeply submerged in my thoughts, suspicious, as he suddenly addressed me off-handedly. "Thankfully, you behaved yourself."

(Interpretation: Senior brother! Are you injured anywhere?)

I couldn't help but glare at the narration floating up in the air.

What the heck was that now?

"Behave yourself even in the future. Then I won't kill you."

(Interpretation: Fufufu, Senior Brother, do not worry. Even if I have to sacrifice my life, I shall definitely protect you.)

I became slightly dismayed and glared at the sky.

Hey, there's just no way he'd be thinking like that. Besides, Yoo Joonghyuk would never laugh "Fufufu" in his life.

Han Sooyoung, you dumbass…

[A fair number of audience members are greatly moved by Zhu Bajie's inner thoughts!]

[A fair number of audience members have fallen deeply for Zhu Bajie's magnetism!]

[One of the audience members wish to sponsor Coins.]

[Judge, 'Cleanser of Altars', is greatly satisfied!]

[50 additional points have been acquired!]

…What an outstanding author she was.

(The journey proved to be rather uneventful. Sun Wukong began thinking. Is this what it means to lead a 'retired life'?)

In any case, the trip was indeed quite stress-free, as long as I excluded the constant war of nerves with Yoo Joonghyuk, that was.

As for Yogoes or bandits that periodically appeared, either the kids or Yoo Joonghyuk took care of them even before I could spot them.

"Oii, Mister Demon King of Salvation. You must be really comfortable, aren't you?"

"Yes. It's all thanks to you the Masters."

I should also thank Han Sooyoung for me getting referred to as the 'Demon King of Salvation' even though my identity hadn't been revealed yet.

This [I've become the retired SSSSS-rank Sun Wukong] had a strange backstory of Sun Wukong being nicknamed the 'Demon King of Salvation' in his past. I couldn't really figure out why she'd use such a nickname here…

[A portion of audience members like the story where the 'Demon King of Salvation' is treated poorly.]

[10 additional points have been acquired.]

…Nope, I think I know now.

"Stop picking a fight with someone you're not familiar with, you dummy."

"No, that's not it. I mean, he should earn his keep, right? Dokja hyung told me that even if your body's relaxing, your head should still be working overtime."

I definitely never said that. When you were relaxing, you should relax your mind, too.

Lee Gilyoung narrowed his eyes to a slit and stared at me while adding a few more words on top. "That's why you should give up some tasty info already. I mean, you're supposed to be a second-turn Sun Wukong according to the backstory, right? Don't you know where we can find some hidden elixirs or something?"

"…Mm. Sure, I know of a few."

Indeed, the 'Journey to the West' did feature quite a few useful elixirs. Such as, the [Peach of Immortality] that Sun Wukong ate, or the [Ginseng Fruit] the group finds during the journey itself.

"One of the best elixirs can be found nearby."

"Really? Where?"

I didn't reply and simply stared at Lee Gilyoung.

"Where is it? Hurry up and spit it out!"

Before I could explain, the narration began first.

(In the original Journey to the West, Tang Sanzang was kidnapped by Yogoes dozens of times because of the legend that any creature devouring the monk would ascend to the heavenly world. But that made sense, considering that Tang Sanzang was the reincarnation of Golden Cicada, the disciple of Buddha who had gone through ten cycles of rebirth.)

While watching the jaws of the two kids drop gradually, I added an extra explanation on top. "Most likely, you Masters are the best-known elixirs found within the entirety of the 'Journey to the West'."

Lee Gilyoung and Shin Yoosung flinched before taking quick steps away from one another, and glared fiercely at each other.

"Hey, Shin Yoosung, you don't need a finger or two, now do you…?"

"You probably don't need anything above your neck, though?"

Watching the kids growl at each other like that, I couldn't help but snicker on the side. The dumpling on my shoulder didn't seem to be happy with my current actions and whispered to me.

– This is no time to snicker like a fool. It's you who needs an elixir or two, not them.

Along with his rebuke, a window popped up in my view.

[Outer God transformation progress percentage: 48%]

…The rate of assimilation was chill-inducingly fast. I didn't expect this one to be quicker than the Journey to the West's progress.

– It's because your Incarnation Body's rate of recovery is too slow.

'…This was not a part of the deal'.

– And you sneakily cooperating with <Kim Dokja's Company> was not a part of the plan, either.

I bit my lip.

As expected, the Wenny King was a scary guy. But then again, he had been fighting the Dokkaebi King for his entire life, hadn't he? It was highly likely that he even foresaw the current situation.

[999] spoke as he studied my Incarnation Body.

– You only have around four days. You need to fulfil the agreement before then.

'That's impossible. I need to finish this scenario first in order to do that, but I don't have enough time'.

The deal with the Wenny King was to create a Giant Story that contained an 'Outer God'. I was planning to fulfil that agreement through this Giant Story, but four days simply was too short.

At the bare minimum, I needed over a week.

– In that case, there is only one method remaining. We need to strengthen your frail Incarnation Body.

I nodded my head and checked out my body's condition.

[Current Incarnation Body recovery rate: 45%]

[Damage to your foundational Story is critical.]

[You can consume a new type of elixir to boost the rate of recovery.]

The reason for the rate of transforming into an Outer God speeding up was simply because my Incarnation Body hadn't recovered fully from the damage I suffered during the 'Great War of Saints and Demons'.

[Story fragment, 'Young Gold Dragon's Broken Heart', is unable to function properly.]

Now that I thought about it, I was too focused on gathering Stories and neglected on enhancing my Incarnation Body's durability. Well, I half gave up on the idea after I kept dying and stuff, so… As for the 'Young Gold Dragon's Broken Heart', now that was a Story fragment I acquired a really long time ago.

Just like what the 'One Invincible Fist' Yoo Hoseong told me, though, I needed to train my Incarnation Body if I wanted to bring out the full might of the Stories.

Because if Stories were 'words', then one's Incarnation Body was the 'paper' those words could be written on.

– Every elixir that can be found in here should all be replicas. Still, it'll be better than not consuming one.

[Score: 2963]

[Currently, five judges are watching the applicable Story chamber.]

[Currently, many audience members are interested in the upward trajectory of the Story chamber.]

[Current ranking of the applicable Story chamber is 31st.]

In a fairly short period of time, the scenario created by Han Sooyoung managed to earn the support from many people out there. And a story where many were sharing the cost of 'Probability' could exhibit pretty strong power as a result.

[As the Story chamber's ranking rises higher, the grades of Star Relics found within the applicable chamber will also rise up.]

As the chamber's ranking climbed up, every item that showed up here would get closer and closer to the grade of their original counterparts, and if we manage to win, then they would become originals outright.

In other words, everything we find in this Story chamber would become 'real' things.

If our chamber's ranking continues to climb as smoothly as it had done so far, and if I manage to successfully gather the elixirs, then…

[Giant Story, 'Season of Light and Darkness', is currently asleep.]

[You don't have the qualification to use the applicable Story.]

…Then maybe, I might get to utilise the power of this 'Giant Story' that I earned but hadn't been able to unleash until now.

[Giant Story, 'Torch that Swallowed the Myth', is afraid of 'Season of Light and Darkness'.]

Even the [Torch that Swallowed the Myth] was scared of this Story. Right now, I couldn't even begin to imagine how incredible the power of this Story was.

"Stop."

It was at that moment when Yoo Joonghyuk walking out in front came to a stop.

The sky that used to be clear and blue was now dyed in a yellowish hue. I took a closer look to find that the yellowish fog had blanketed the surrounding landscape as well as the sky above.

[You have arrived in Yellow Wind Cave at Yellow Wind Ridge.]

Yellow Wind Ridge, was it?

This was the residence of one of the Journey's villains, 'Yellow Wind' Demon King. If my thoughts were correct, then one of the elixirs I need should be found nearby.

It was here that we heard an incoming message.

[A large number of Players are joining this 'Story chamber'!]

The original number of Players for this chamber was eight. However, there was a sudden influx of additional Players.

Lee Gilyoung muttered as if he was dumbfounded by it. "…But, why now?"

It was logically difficult to explain. The newly-entering Players to a Story chamber that no longer recruited roles could only become 'extras' and not much else. And these extras would not get any proper rewards even after the chamber was concluded successfully.

That was the situation for the top-ten ranked Story chambers, so there was no need to even mention participating in this 31st… No, hang on, there was.

[A small number of audience members are wary of the 6731st Story chamber's rise in the rankings.]

[A portion of audience members are looking forward to your destruction.]

[Many audience members are paying attention to the Story chamber's sudden upheaval!]

The current situation was this: our Story chamber had shot up from the bottom of the ranking all the way up near the top in a proverbial blink of an eye.

Yoo Joonghyuk spoke, his expression hardening. "Bastards are trying to ruin our scenario."

It was unknown who might be the instigator in this case, but I could think of something.

Most likely, these guys were 'spies' sent in from the great Nebulas participating in the 'Journey to the West Remake', as well as from other top-ranked Story chambers.

They must've been fearing what might happen in the <Star Stream> if <Kim Dokja's Company> managed to snatch away yet another 'Giant Story' here.

Ku-gugugugu!

The fog rushed forward in an instant and swallowed us up.

The first one to disappear under the fog was Yoo Joonghyuk's figure, looking back at us and issuing a warning; and then, the surprised voices of Shin Yoosung and Lee Gilyoung resounded out next.

"Disciple-nim! Hurry and hide behind us!"

"Stay behind and don't step forward! Got th…"

Even before I could make my reply, the kids disappeared as well. And the fog came to a stop right before my nose. Soon, I heard the sharp noises of weapons clashing coming from here and there. The dumpling on my shoulder asked in a quiet voice.

– Aren't you going in?

"I want to, but…" said I, as I felt the presence approaching me from behind. "…I think their aim is me this time."

I looked back and saw the 'extras' hurrying over here on the Yellow Wind Ridge's pathway. Constellations disguised as the underlings of the 'Yellow Wind' Demon King were walking closer while emitting unfriendly auras in my direction.

"So, that's the 'Sun Wukong'?"

"He must be a weakling, judging from his Status."

"Did they really think we'd be scared by them attaching the 'Demon King of Salvation' moniker onto a weakling like him?"

Only then did I figure out what their real goal was. No matter what, the main protagonist of the [Journey to the West] was 'Sun Wukong'. If he dies, the Journey would end, too.

[A portion of judges are worried about your safety.]

[A portion of audience members are worried about your safety.]

I watched the Constellations come closer and felt really conflicted about this whole thing.

(Retired Sun Wukong didn't want to fight. Why? Because it was annoying.)

['Retirement penalty' has steeply decreased your will to fight.]

Yup, it was all because of that damn 'retired' setting.

[Judge, 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband', is digging his ear as if he can't be bothered.]

[Judge, 'Bimawen', is opening a book to read with a refined expression.]

[Judge, 'Meihouwang', is yawning out in boredom.]

Those 'Sun Wukongs', feeling sick and tired of hard-carrying the [Journey to the West] by themselves originally, wouldn't enjoy this type of development at all. Utterly not caring about that, the 'extra' Constellations wielding scary-looking weapons finally arrived in my near vicinity.

"Kill him!"

(Interpretation: Haha, kill that baldy monkey.)

"Kill him!"

(Interpretation: Fuc■! It's the bastar■ that cleans up the poo of the heavens.)

"Kill him!"

(Interpretation: A roc■-for-brains monkey.)

I was about to throw a tackle, arguing about the validity of such interpretations, but then, the channel was suddenly flooded with an explosion of messages.

[Judge, 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband', is enraged while holding onto his hair!]

[Judge, 'Bimawen', is shuddering angrily at the filthiness of this story.]

[Judge, Meihouwang', wishes for the heads of those fools to roll.]

[A portion of judges are providing a great amount of Probability towards the progression of the applicable Story chamber!]

[If this story's direction is changed, then a large amount of additional points will be acquired.]

…Ehng?

[A private message has arrived from the Scenario Master.]

["Hey, you said you can fight a bit, right?"]

The narration began even before I had time to reply.

(There was one thing that all these Yogoes rushing in didn't know. Without a doubt, he was the 'retired Sun Wunkong'. However…)

(…He was also Sun Wukong that didn't hide his own strength, either.)

Along with all the messages clogging up my view, the title card for the new episode floated up as well.

~ Episode 3. The Demon King of Salvation isn't hiding his powers ~

Chapter 432: Ep. 82 - Outer God, I

The Constellations rushing in flinched after checking out the title card floating in the air.

"…What's up with this episode? He's 'not hiding his powers'? What?"

"Never mind that and just kill him!"

I sighed out grandly while looking at all those weapons brandished at me.

…That damn Han Sooyoung.

I began wondering if this was how every character felt inside.

Characters that had to follow along with the plot that the author had cooked up, and had no choice but to overcome the obstacles set before them. Yoo Joonghyuk had overcome such trials and tribulations for tens of thousands of years.

If I had one advantage over him, then that would be me knowing who the author of this particular scenario was.

Swiiiiiish!

Two strands of sword auras tore apart right before my eyes. I easily avoided the attacks with airy footsteps and thought to myself.

I had a chat with Han Sooyoung in the past about a certain something.

– There are two types of writers in the world. One, a diligent type of writer who plots everything out in advance. And then, the genius beautiful girl writer who entrusts herself to the feelings of the moment without relying on prior planning.

– Oh? And which one are you?"

– Hey you dumbass. You asking me because you really can't tell?

So, then. That genius author-nim had written this very scenario, did she?

[Judge, 'Meihouwang', is readying some beer.]

[Judge, 'Bimawen', is readying some drip coffee.]

So, you want to abuse me a bit for the sake of satisfying the tastes of the main 'readership', was that it? I stared at the sky and muttered out. "Hey, listen. You know that this is a trade, don't you?"

[Scenario Master is tilting her head after hearing your words.]

Even if that was her 'reaction', Han Sooyoung should've realized what I was talking about here. In the meantime, the Constellations had me surrounded.

"You came riding on a bus this far, so it's time that you make your exit."

Making an exit… Now, where would these idiots learn such a scary phrase from? "We'll have to wait and see who will make their exit first, now don't we?"

I couldn't activate either the [Electrification] or [Way of the Wind]. Not only that, I couldn't use my usual Unbroken Faith, either.

After all, it'd be troublesome to let others know that I was 'Kim Dokja'. Still, there was no need to utilise my main attack options when dealing with these low-levelled mobs right now.

Tsu-chuchuchuchut…

Because I was none other than 'Sun Wukong'.

[Judge, 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband', is nodding his head.]

[You've been permitted to use a portion of 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband's' Stigmas.]

If I was a regular Constellation, dealing with such a Stigma would've been a tall order. However, I was a 'Narrative-grade Constellation', and possessed three different 'Giant Stories', to boot.

Ku-gugugugu!!

This time, the onomatopoeia was not made by someone's mouth but from actual thunders cracking in the sky for real. As the lightning bolts flashed in the air, I yanked out a handful of hair and blew them into the air.

[Stigma, 'Body Outside Body Magic', is activating!]

The 'Body Outside Body' technique.

Simply put, it was Sun Wukong's version of the skill [Avatar].

"W-what is this?!"

"Kuwaaahk!"

The clone Sun Wukongs proliferated in the blink of an eye and began pummelling the enemy Constellations to pulps. Suddenly, narration speech bubbles floated up above the heads of the clones rushing forward.

("The Demon King of Salvation!")

("Isn't hiding!")

("His powers!")

It seemed that she had momentarily forgotten that she was the narrator here.

Tsu-chuchuchuchuchu…

I only borrowed the power of a single magic skill, yet the condition of my body worsened noticeably. It was exacerbated by the fact that I was gravely injured already.

…Goddammit, why hasn't Yoo Joonghyuk come out of the fog yet?

[Your Incarnation Body's recovery is being delayed!]

[Condition of your Incarnation Body is worsening!]

I gazed at the murky interior of the fog and pretended to be unconcerned. The retired Sun Wukong needed to look strong, no questions asked. And I must never go all out, no matter what.

「Kim Dokja thought to himself. 'I'm Yoo Joonghyuk'.」

I bit my lips and formed the expression similar to the coolest person that I knew.

"Screw this… We're retreating!"

It seemed that my ploy worked, as the Constellations began retreating from the perceived threats to their lives.

[A great number of Players are exiting the scenario!]

In the blink of an eye, the only things remaining around me were the empty husks that the Constellations left behind.

"Euh, euh…"

However, even these husks possessed egos. They were creatures tasked with acting as Yogoe 'extras' in this world.

Suddenly, my heart began beating irregularly.

[Chaos is writhing within in your heart.]

[Rate of Outer God transformation is accelerating.]

[Stigma, 'Fiery Golden Eyes Lv.???', has been forcibly activated!]

As my vision burned in the crimson hue, the collapsed Yogoes revealed their true appearances.

[WhereisthisWhereisthisWhereisthis]

[AhAhAhAhAhAh]

[AgainAgainAgainAgainAgain]

Yogoes carrying suffering expressions had their heads shoved against the ground while screaming out. It wasn't that difficult to understand why. I had witnessed similar existences to them on the 'Isle of Reincarnators' already.

They were creatures mobilised to fill up the 'lacking Probability' in the Story chambers of this [Journey to the West Remake]. Expendables, cursed to eternally repeat the life of being used as extras of other stories.

The problem here was, what was the 'real identity' of those creatures?

[Power of Chaos is writhing within your heart!]

Pain welled up in my chest like vomit.

I staggered unsteadily and approached one of the Yogoes. The moment my hand touched its slick body, its appearance changed.

To that of a tentacled cephalopod-type monster.

Pages of the 'Ways of Survival' flipped open in my head.

「Some Nebulas deliberately nurture the cast-off skins of the lower-ranked 'Old Beings'.」

「They use these beings as sacrifices to fill up the necessary Probability of the scenarios.」

My heart was beating much louder than before. Indeed, such sections did appear in the 'Ways of Survival'. However, it never revealed which 'Nebulas' did such things even until the end…

It can't be, it was the <Emperor>?

[Pilgrim Sun, stop right there!]

I looked up into the sky and sure enough, one of the Constellations in charge of the heavenly worlds was busy making his descent. I wasn't sure of his name. Probably some loser like Metal Lord of the West or Lingji Bodhisattva or something. Well, there were literally hundreds of Constellations with similar names like that in the <Emperor>, after all.

[Those Yogoes are beasts that used to cultivate at the foot of Yeongchi Mountain! However, they stole and drank the sacred oils from the Great Leiyin Temple where Buddha was residing and became Yogoes as a result. Please, show them mercy and graciously pardon them of their sins and hand them over to…]

After realizing the truth, I finally understood why <Emperor> folks wanted to retrieve these so-called Yogoes. From their perspective, these creatures must be like their resources.

A must-have resource in order to operate the scenarios.

[A portion of judges are satisfied by the story's reflection of the original work.]

[5 additional points have been awarded.]

[Judge, 'Meihouwang', is yawning in boredom.]

The defeated Yogoes either dying or reverting back to the property of the deities. That development, without a doubt, truly reflected what happened in the original work, something that hadn't changed in the past thousands of years.

However, if that was the correct flow of events and the correct rules of the [Journey to the West], then…

[WhoamIWhoamIWhoamIWhoamI]

…Then, what meaning was there to the lives of these Yogoes?

[Judge, 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband', is looking at you in puzzlement.]

When I didn't say anything for a while, the Lingji Bodhisattva opened his mouth once more. [Hmm, hmm. In any case… It is fine for me to take the Yogoes away, yes?]

In the end, the narration decided to step in first.

(Sun Wukong nodded his head and towards the Lingji Bodhisattva…)

"I can't let you do that."

(…Said that he can't allow that.)

I sensed the angry gaze of the Scenario Master bearing down on me from the sky. It was a reproachful gaze, seemingly asking me what I was thinking of when making such a reply.

The Lingji Bodhisattva was stunned just as much as she was, it seemed. [… What did you say?]

"Whatever the case may be, you people don't look after these guys properly anyway."

[W-what are you talking about?]

"You'll just mobilise these Yogoes as extras in other Story chambers."

[Judge, 'Meihouwang', is looking at you with deeply intrigued eyes.]

[Judge, 'Bimawen', has closed the book he was reading and is now looking at you.]

[Judge, 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband', is paying attention to your words.]

The panicking Lingji Bodhisattva yelled out loudly. [They are nothing more than simple Yogoes. You're chasing after a greater purpose in this journey, so why are you minding the fate of these worthless creatures?]

"They are folks who also carry out the 'scenarios' as well. You're supposed to pursue Buddha's teachings or discuss the true meaning of the universe and be on the righteous path, so how come you're so disinterested in the lives of those that are not human?"

While saying such things, I began thinking about Han Sooyoung. Did she already plan out the 'conclusion' of this scenario?

[Many audience members are intrigued by your argument.]

Just like what Han Sooyoung said earlier with her own mouth, she was the so-called 'genius-type' writer who relied on the feelings of the moments to create the overall narrative. But that also meant she'd suffer the torture of creation, always wary of the potential responses the readers might display.

[Scenario Master is waiting for your next declaration.]

She probably had to participate in this scenario in a hurry and didn't enjoy the luxury of time to come up with a satisfying conclusion nor to establish an overarching theme.

Indeed, it'd be already pretty tough to create storylines that would constantly excite the audience members.

But, what if I aided her in her quest?

I slowly got up and, while standing in front of the Yogoes, raised my voice. "I shall take these guys with me."

As the Lingji Bodhisattva's expression was filling up with pure astonishment, I could also see the Yogoes falling into confusion as well.

There were some things that could only be seen from the perspectives of a writer or the reader, and some that could only be understood by being one of the main characters.

[Judge, 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband', likes your unwillingness to concede defeat.]

[Judge, 'Bimawen', likes your unwillingness to concede defeat.]

[Judge, 'Meihouwang', likes your unwillingness to concede defeat.]

[150 additional points have been acquired!]

[The theme of the applicable Story chamber is beginning to change greatly!]

Yogoes were now looking up at me.

[A possibility of a new 'Giant Story' is germinating!]

[Shares for 'Outer God' has been generated for the new 'Giant Story'!]

…As I expected. However, the messages didn't end there.

[The agreement with the Wenny King is activating!]

[In order to fulfil the agreement, you need to increase the shares of 'Outer God' for the applicable Story to over 30%.]

[Currently, shares of 'Outer God' for the applicable scenario is 0.0003%.]

…0.0003%???

As I began despairing at that nonsensical percentage, the Lingji Bodhisattva began yelling again in mid-air. [You fool! You're truly boundlessly arrogant, aren't you! Do you think you're the real Pilgrim Sun or some such??]

This Bodhisattva must've forgotten about his role for a second there, because he began pouring out powerful Status at me. It was right after I had finished dealing with the Great Sage's Probability, so I no longer possessed enough energy to contend with that.

But, just before the waves of Status, fired like lightning bolts, could stab into me…

"Hey, you. Did you know that you sound exactly like Dokja ahjussi?"

…Along with that voice, the lightning bolts split apart in the air.

I looked around and saw that the sandy fog had died down already. My companions were approaching me from the distance. And then, Yoo Joonghyuk was standing before me as if to shield me. He glared at the sky, and pointed the [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] scattering electrical energy at the opponent.

"I won't say this twice. Scram."

[Y-you bastards… This insult, I will definitely…]

The Lingji Bodhisattva sweated buckets out of sheer fright and quickly disappeared, leaving Yoo Joonghyuk to look at me with an icy expression. His [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] was pointing at me next.

"Didn't I say I'll kill you if you don't behave yourself?"

"Uh… My apologies."

"I've defeated the 'Yellow Wind' Demon King."

"…Congratulations."

I began aiding the Yogoes still collapsed on the ground.

[WhoareyouWhoareyouWhoareyou]

They stared at me in fear, but eventually came closer and sniffed my hands. However, they still scampered away in a hurry. Like some sort of abandoned puppies, they hid behind distant trees and began peeking around the corners at me from their hiding spots.

[A portion of abandoned Yogoes are now following you.]

Yoo Joonghyuk addressed me. "You know that this is a meaningless action, right?"

"…"

"The <Emperor> Nebula will retrieve them once this Story chamber is complete."

"I'm aware of that."

"Something like that has happened thousands of times to them. Your kindness means nothing to them."

"I'm also aware of that."

"They will perform the exact same roles in the exact same scenario in the future, and forget all about you. They won't be able to remember anything about you."

"Do the ones that can't remember anything…" I stared straight at Yoo Joonghyuk and replied. "…also forget about their sorrow, too?"

His eyes staring back at me trembled powerfully. I remained still as he continued to shiver. Was it because we had already reached the 94th scenario? His face was covered with quite a few scars now.

"You…"

Before he could form a proper sentence, the kids arrived first. When I took a closer look, though, our companions had ballooned up by one.

"As expected of my Mast… N-no, hang on. You're the Senior Brother in this place, right? In any case, you were so cool! What was that technique earlier? Please teach me that!"

Her energetic voice caused my heart to ache even before I noticed it.

Ah, I see. So, you were our 'Sha Wujing', then.

['Player 2' -nim has joined the group!]

"Hi~ Sun Wukong. Hey, you sure know how to run your mouth, don't you?"

Lee Jihye, wearing a T-shirt with a large butterfly printed on it and chewing on bubblegum, lightly slapped me on the shoulder and extended her hand to me.

*

(And so, all the main actors of the [Journey to the West] have finally gathered.)

I smiled faintly and extended my hand towards her. But then, my body suddenly collapsed as if the ground beneath my feet had disappeared.

"Uh? What's wrong with him?"

Lee Jihye hurriedly supported my collapsing frame. As the faintest trace of demonic aura leaked out from my body, my vision grew dim at the rate of knots.

[Your Incarnation Body has currently sustained great damage!]

[Rate of Outer God transformation is accelerating!]

[Outer God transformation progress percentage: 71%]

It seemed that there weren't that many days remaining in my happiness-filled journey.

「"I shall take these guys with me."」

Han Sooyoung heard the words coming out of the display panel and her jaw dropped to the floor. Her lemon candy rolled around on the floor.

Lee Sookyung happened to be tidying up the vicinity just then; she cautiously came closer and asked. "Did something happen?"

Han Sooyoung remained utterly stupefied until then, but her lips finally began bobbing up and down a little. "N-no, wait. That guy…"

She looked at the list of characters on the holographic display.

[Player 1, 'Yoo Joonghyuk' -nim, is playing the role of 'Zhu Bajie'.]

[Player 2, 'Lee Jihye' -nim, is playing the role of 'Sha Wujing'.]

[Player 3, 'Lee Gilyoung' -nim, is playing the role of 'Tang Sanzang'.]

…

…

[Player 8, 'Watcher of Light and Darkness' -nim, is playing the role of 'Sun Wukong'.]

She stared at that list for a very long time, then suddenly rubbed her eyes while tilting her head back.

How long passed by like that?

Han Sooyoung let out "Ah, aaaah" noise, and started cackling away.

Lee Sookyung cautiously asked her again. "…Are you Black Flame Dragon right now?"

"No, no. I'm Han Sooyoung. Han Sooyoung the moron, actually."

Han Sooyoung opened her eyes, her cheeks flushed ever so slightly.

Holographic messages began rising up one after the other.

[The declaration made by the applicable individual is welcomed by many audience members.]

[A portion of judges are awarding additional points for 'twisting cliches'.]

[Current ranking of the applicable Story chamber is 25th.]

"You arrogant schmuck. Who asked you for your help?"

Her fingertips pressing on the key panel for some reason looked more cheerful than before.

"Being number one is what I do best, you idiot."

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* Official novel illustration (canonical)

Chapter 433: Ep. 82 - Outer God, II

The bitterness akin to the broth you'd get by boiling red ginseng spread inside my mouth. I ended up unknowingly smacking my lips, prompting a familiar voice to enter my ears.

"Uh? Looks like he's coming around. Put this in, too."

Someone forcibly pried my eyelids open and dropped a substance similar to eye drops on my eyeballs, causing a really cold sensation to spread out and help me regain my wits in an instant.

[Due to consuming new types of elixirs, your Incarnation Body's recovery has accelerated.]

My vision was restored, and I found myself lying against the belly of a horse. The White Dragon Horse – Chimera Dragon – of Tang Sanzang neighed unhappily and glared at me.

"Oh, he's awake!"

I saw Lee Gilyoung's and Shin Yoosung's worry-filled faces brighten up. Lee Jihye forcing my eyelids open was grinning as well.

"Hey, what will we do with you when you're too frail to ride on a bus?"

"Hmm, hmm. You're supposed to serve your Master, so it's no good for you to be this feeble, you know?"

The boy put his hands on his waists and fake coughed. I grinned bitterly and tried to prop my upper body up, and Shin Yoosung lent me a hand.

"Are you really alright? You fainted all of a sudden…"

"I'm feeling better, thanks to all of you. By the way, these elixirs…"

I looked at all the remnants of various elixirs around me. A few of them were unfamiliar, but there was also one that I did recognise.

It was the eye drops contained in a reddish bottle, called 'Three Flowers and Nine Fruits Sap' (三花九子膏), and was one of the treasures found within the Journey to the West that could be earned by defeating the Yellow Wind Demon King.

I was somewhat flustered by this and asked the kids. "…Did you use that on me?"

For a moment there, I thought I could see Yoo Sangah's face in Shin Yoosung's bright smile.

The 'Three Flowers and Nine Fruits Sap'. Just by putting some in your eye, it restored energy in your body and expanded your eyesight.

[A portion of judges are satisfied by this attempt at reflecting the original work!]

[10 additional points have been awarded!]

Actually, it was Sun Wukong who ended up using the 'Three Flowers and Nine Fruits Sap' in the original storyline, too. However… to think, they willingly spent an item on me that they could've used on themselves. For some reason, I felt guilty about it.

I felt my right wrist getting numb so I took a look, only to see something rather horrifying happening there.

"You're just as weak as that bastard. What's the matter with your Incarnation Body?"

Yoo Joonghyuk was holding my right wrist with enough force to pop it like a balloon while feeling for my pulse. Now that I thought about it, this guy possessed the next best medical skills after Lee Seolhwa in our group.

He scowled deeply as he continued to observe my condition. "Not a single blood vessel in your internal organs is intact. It's a miracle that you even managed to participate in this scenario."

"…Is that so."

"It's rare to see a Constellation ending up in such a situation. Are you being chased by someone?"

I looked at him with a bit of surprise.

There was no way he'd ask me that out of concern, so… Seeing how he was firmly grasping the [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] with his free hand from a while ago, I could more or less figure out what he was planning to do here.

"No, it's not like that. I was just in an urgent need for this 'Giant Story' so I didn't have enough time to recover my Incarnation Body."

"I shall end you right away if you prove to be a burden to this group even for a second." Yoo Joonghyuk discarded my wrist like trash and stood up from the spot. "…We've wasted precious elixirs."

Yoo Joonghyuk strode away and settled down on a nearby boulder to polish the [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] again. It had been broken once before, so its durability must've fallen by a quite lot now.

Lee Jihye, watching that, spoke to me. "My Master, no wait, my Senior Brother is really cool, isn't he? Even though he's saying that, he was the first person to recommend using elixirs on you."

…That Yoo Joonghyuk did?

I couldn't understand no matter how hard I thought about it. Even if I was 'Kim Dokja' and not the 'Watcher of Light and Darkness', he wouldn't have…

– He's not as cold-blooded as you think.

I heard the dumpling [999]'s voice quietly enter my ear.

「"Do you still believe that you can understand someone through just a few lines of text in a couple of chapters?"」

[999] told me that not too long ago.

He was right. Even though I knew his words were correct, I kept forgetting them over and over again.

One's life would always be greater than a story written about him.

「Yoo Joonghyuk was always behind his companions.」

There were countless paragraphs in the 'Ways of Survival', but they couldn't fully explain the time lived by Yoo Joonghyuk.

3rd turn, 4th, 5th… He always was looking at his companions from a certain distance. He stood there and protected them, and faced off against their enemies.

「"Yoo Joonghyuk, were you able to protect everything you wanted to protect?"」

Always, he failed to protect those he had to protect.

Even then, he remained in the same spot.

It was quite likely that I'd never get to fully understand the depths of his determination even if I died and woke up again.

Shin Yoosung walked over to Yoo Joonghyuk polishing his blade.

"Joonghyuk ahjussi."

He looked back at her with his trademark disinterested eyes, and her small hand pressed against his cheek. Upon closer inspection, a cream-type ointment was applied there.

"…What are you doing?"

"Be still or it'll get infected, you know. Ah, don't turn your head!"

"Even without applying things like this…"

As if he was some kind of a vicious wild beast currently being tickled, Yoo Joonghyuk's expression became rather complicated.

It took a single person's name to stop him from shooting up from his spot and leave.

"Seolhwa unni asked me to do it. She said that ahjussi wouldn't care about stuff like this so someone has to mind it for his sake."

Lee Seolhwa's name caused his shoulders to flinch rather grandly. He seemed to be torn over his decision for a very long time, but then, settled back down on the boulder awkwardly. He loudly declared in a charismatic voice next. "Finish it in ten seconds or less."

Shin Yoosung giggled and nodded her head, and began rubbing the ointment all over him energetically. His lips continued to twitch but he didn't try to stop her.

The wounds on his body healed at a visible pace after her hands brushed past them.

As expected, Lee Seolhwa's remarkable ointment was something else, indeed. Back in the original story, the [Mass Production Maker] even imported her ointment and sold them as a cosmetic product, too. What was its name again? Was it 'Purest White Story Cream' or something?

"Bubble, hiss…"

My ears caught the sounds of onomatopoeia for the first time in a while, so I looked to my side to see what was what, only to find Lee Gilyoung and his figuratively-blazing eyes there.

As if he suddenly developed cross-eyes, the boy began alternating his gaze between Yoo Joonghyuk and Shin Yoosung rapidly.

…Oh-ho?

Eventually, he began striding towards where the duo was in a vigorous fashion as if he had made up his mind about something.

"Hey, Shin Yoosung!"

His calling prompted Yoo Joonghyuk and Shin Yoosung to look back at him simultaneously. Lee Jihye sidled up next to me and nodded her head, her expression one of contentment. "Finally, Gilyoung-ah. You have woken up."

[Judge, 'Sakyamuni's Successor', likes these young Tang Sanzangs.]

[A portion of audience members enjoy watching the adorable antics of Tang Sanzangs.]

[20 additional points have been awarded.]

Lee Gilyoung hesitated greatly where he stood, unable to do anything under the outpouring of attention other than bobbing his lips up and down. He had started this whole thing, but his expression clearly showed that he had no idea what to do next.

In the end, he resorted to shouting out, his face flushed beet red. "I'm gonna apply Dokja hyung's ointment from now on!"

As if he had finally realized what needed to be said here, he spoke in a triumphant voice next. "Got that? You'll be in charge of that sooty bastard from here on!"

Lee Jihye dashed forward before I even realized it and smacked the back of Lee Gilyoung's head. Unsurprisingly, the boy grandly faceplanted nose-first into the ground.

"Why did you mention Kim Dokja there, you dumbass?!"

She pinched his ear and pulled him up to lecture him properly.

Meanwhile, Shin Yoosung watched the proceedings and shook her head, before returning to her job of applying the ointment.

Yoo Joonghyuk was stroking his cheek in awkwardness as if he couldn't really get used to the cream on his skin…

「Kim Dokja watched all these happen with a quiet smile.」

['The Fourth Wall' is gradually getting thicker.]

「As if, he was looking at a spectacle happening in the distance.」

The smartphone inside my inner pocket was busy creating paragraphs on its own. As the texts floated up, I looked at my companions and thought to myself.

Right, maybe I…

「Maybe in that moment, Kim Dokja made up his mind up over a certain something for the first time ever.」

* * *

The transformation into the Outer God gradually sped up. What was once 71% soon became 75%, and it only took a proverbial blink to shoot past 80%.

But when it got around to 85%, it suddenly came to a dead stop.

It was all thanks to my companions looking after me.

"Here, eat this. Oh, and this, too."

As if it was inversely proportional to my 'infection' rate, the scenario clear speed of my companions actually accelerated gradually. As expected, the combination of the 94th scenario's Yoo Joonghyuk and Lee Jihye was incredible to behold.

"Senior brother, over there!"

"Below us."

As befitting the disciples of the [Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship], they were in perfect sync with one another.

The majority of the enemies were taken care of even before they could approach us or come up with dastardly schemes against us. On top of that, they even resorted to using power levels that surpassed the scope of the original to suppress our enemies.

[Current rate of Journey to the West's progress: 43%]

[Story chamber ranking has improved!]

[Current ranking of the applicable Story chamber is 21st.]

[Judge, 'Golden-bodied Arhat', is happy with his current appearance as a pretty young girl swordswoman.]

Shin Yoosung, now finding herself with nothing to do just like me, muttered to no one in particular. "It'd been nice if Heewon unni and Hyunsung ahjussi could come along, too."

It seemed that those two couldn't participate this time.

Lee Hyunsung wouldn't have woken up just yet. He had entered the final phase of [Steel Transformation], so I figured that he'd be sleeping for a long while. However, there should be no problem in regards to his life.

The real problem would be with after he had woken up, actually.

Whatever the case might have been, I thought that this scenario could come to an end in less than ten days at our current pace.

And so, yet another day came to a close, and then another one, and eventually, four days went by.

[Current rate of Journey to the West's progress: 64%]

[Current ranking of the applicable Story chamber is 15th.]

[A large number of competitors are keeping a hostile eye on the applicable Story chamber.]

All I did during those four days was ride on the bus, sleep to my heart's content, chat with my companions about nothing important, and consume a ton of elixirs.

[Your Incarnation Body has recovered to a noticeable degree!]

[Energy is returning gradually to your Incarnation body.]

…It felt like my cheeks had become fatter by a bit, too.

As I enjoyed this abundant, easy-going life, Lee Jihye, Shin Yoosung and Lee Gilyoung all observed me with satisfied expressions on their faces.

…As if they were farmers feeling happy about a pig growing all fat and juicy and the like.

"Here! Eat this one, too!"

"Please, take this."

…Why were they so happy about me consuming these things, anyway?

Lee Jihye to my side complained a little while chuckling out. "They say that if you can't get a pheasant, then get a chicken instead. I mean, it's nice to see you eat well and be healthy, you know. If only we fed that guy as diligently as we're doing now."

Time continued to tick by.

"Keu-heuk! This isn't over, Zhu Bajie!"

We encountered Han Myungoh playing different roles many times, and…

…We even ran into a potential helper of ambiguous identity, sporting a wild beard as if 'he' was some sort of a Taoist deity or something.

[Hmm, hmm. I'm this mountain's deity spirit. I've learnt a long time ago that you are on a noble journey to India. I have been waiting for you to reach here so that I can provide you with a little bit of help…]

The kids cried out at the so-called 'deity spirit' blessed with a head full of bright blonde hair and the obviously-fake beard.

"Hayoung unni!"

"Hayoung hyung!"

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[Uh-hum. I'm not this Hayoung-or-rather, but someone simply passing b… Damn it, hey, Disciple Sun. Get over here and fetch this elixir already.]

The blondie mountain deity spirit promptly gave up on her acting and called out to me.

Such a thing happened often back in the Journey to the West.

[A portion of judges are complaining that such events didn't need to be imitated.]

[One additional point has been awarded.]

A spirit would suddenly pop out of nowhere and help out the group, saying that it was the will of the Buddha-nim or something similar. Such blatant acts of ignoring probability and deus ex machina ran rampant in the original Journey to the West; so much so that I had to wonder whether it was the very first 'lump all lucky coincidences to one person' type novel or not.

I courteously bowed a little and spoke. "Thank you for helping us out always."

[…Only doing it because I've been told to.] Perhaps reminded of someone right now, Jang Hayoung looked up at the sky with a resentful expression and muttered to no one in particular. [Count yourself lucky… If I hadn't been late, the role of the 'Demon King of Salvation' would've been mine…]

That came out so naturally, didn't it. It seemed that this role was supposed to be Jang Hayoung's.

"…Why did you want to perform this role?"

She looked at me with distant eyes before shaking her head with a smirk.

[Well, yeah, you wouldn't know anything about how awesome the 'Demon King of Salvation' actually is.]

I thought about it for a little while, before speaking up with a voice overflowing with affection towards, uh, myself. "I also like the 'Demon King of Salvation' very much."

[Oh, really? Have you heard some kind of Stories about him, then?]

"For instance, the 'Liberator of the Industrial Complex' he earned in the Demon Realm."

[Oh-oh?]

That must've flipped a switch in her somewhere, because Jang Hayoung suddenly started telling me a long-winded tale of her adventure. If I were to simplify the contents somewhat, it went something like this.

[So like back then, I managed to rescue the dying 'Demon King of Salvation', you see? So when you get right down to it, I actually saved the 'Demon King of Salvation'. So? It was fun, right? It wasn't…? In any case, we came to a mutual understanding right below the Root of Darkness and made a pledge of brotherhood. We worked together to liberate the 'Industrial Complex' from the grips of a dastardly Demon Duke, and…!]

…The story was more or less accurate, but I couldn't be sure why it felt like I was stuck listening to a novel being read here.

[And then, the 'Demon King of Salvation' looked at me with gloom-filled eyes and said, "My dear friend, become my warrior that will fight for my sake."]

I began wondering if it was alright to let a baseless story such as this one to float around, but messages suddenly floated up in the air en masse before I could do anything about it.

[Judge, 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband', is criticising the deity spirit's nonsense!]

[Judge, 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband', is arguing that it was him who performed the most heroics back in the Demon Realm!]

[Judge, 'Meihouwang', is ridiculing the 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband'.]

[Many audience members are getting interested in the Nebula <Kim Dokja's Company>'s Story.]

As things stood, I couldn't really tell apart whether we were in the [Journey to the West] or [Kim Dokja's Company's Disorganised Great Adventure Get-Together].

Maybe, that was what Han Sooyoung was aiming for.

As the <Kim Dokja's Company>'s Story grew stronger, the potential 'Giant Story' we'd earn through this [Journey to the West Remake] would also become stronger, too.

[Stories of the <Kim Dokja's Company> are spreading throughout the <Star Stream> via word of mouth.]

Well, we'd have to wait and see if that was ultimately a good decision or not.

How long passed by like this? Lee Jihye yawned out of pure boredom and spoke up. "Argh, just finish up and hand over the elixir, will you?"

[…Here.]

Another week went by.

We defeated countless Yogoes and also faced off against the Constellations from <Emperor> that showed up to retrieve those creatures afterwards.

[Those Yogoes that you subjugated earlier were creatures that I raised in my backya…]

"Scram."

Yoo Joonghyuk kicked them away instead of me. Seemingly wanting to avoid fighting the 'Supreme King' Zhu Bajie, <Emperor>'s Constellations went away willingly even though they expressed their dissatisfaction over the matter.

[Outer God transformation progress percentage: 95%]

[Rate of your Outer God transformation has been slowed down.]

The rate of becoming an Outer God hadn't progressed all that much during that time. On the other hand, our group's rate of advancing through the Journey to the West was shockingly fast.

[Current rate of Journey to the West's progress: 94%]

We had finally broken past the 90% mark.

Lee Jihye spoke while panting breathlessly. "Wow, now that was really tough."

"It seems that way, especially for today."

"What are you even talking about? You are just riding a bus, aren't you?"

I ignored her retort and confirmed the Story chamber ranking, instead.

[Current ranking of the applicable Story chamber is 4th.]

[Score: 21912]

[Many audience members are marvelling at the applicable Story chamber's stunning rate of growth.]

It hadn't even been ten days, yet we had already brushed aside all the other, starrier chambers and climbed up to the 4th rank. I couldn't help but respect Han Sooyoung's talent, even if I didn't want to.

[Current number one in the rankings is the 'Real Journey to the West'.]

[Score: 30408]

With our current speed, I thought that it'd not be impossible to catch up to Fei Hu, currently the undisputed number one in the rankings.

Of course, it was still too early to celebrate. The competition wouldn't end even if we managed to surpass Fei Hu's chamber and claim the top spot.

Because the overall victor would be determined only after collating the total voted points and the judges' opinions.

I looked up at the stars blinking high up in the night sky – at the Constellations, currently listed as mere anonymous audience members.

[A portion of audience members are holding animosity towards you.]

Without a doubt, <Emperor> must be watching the rise of our ranking right now.

「The pride <Emperor> feels about their 'Giant Story' is enormous.」

They would never accept their 'Giant Story' being inherited by a weak little Nebula. Besides, there was a good reason for them to feel dissatisfied with us, too.

Such as…

"There are a lot of them now, aren't they."

…The group of 'Yogoes' currently following us.

The ranks of 'Yogoes' filling up the footpath of the mountain were so humongous that I couldn't even see their end anymore.

Every single one of them were creatures we had spared.

[The agreement with the Wenny King is underway.]

[In order to fulfil the agreement, you need to increase the shares of 'Outer God' for the applicable Story to over 30%.]

[Currently, shares of 'Outer God' for the applicable scenario is 15.772%.]

The Journey to the West was marching closer to its end, yet the shares for the 'Outer Gods' remained depressingly low. I had saved that many Yogoes, but the percentage was only over 15…

But then again, it was pretty obvious why. Sure, there were a lot of them, but they didn't impact our story all that much. Meaning, the core of the 'Journey to the West' hadn't changed. They had been participating as mere 'extras' on this stage and not as its main actors.

The only reason why their shares had risen past 15% was simply because many in the audience ended up paying attention to this rather abnormal situation, that was all.

[Many audience members are looking at the 'Pilgrimage' in awe.]

[A portion of judges are focusing on the possibility of a new 'Journey to the West'.]

[A small number of judges are worried about the perversion of the original…]

This march of the Yogoes even earned a nickname, to boot: the Pilgrimage.

Countless Yogoes, journeying to India so that they could become enlightened on their existence.

[A portion of audience members are entering the applicable scenario in order to view the 'Pilgrimage'.]

Heck, recommendations for our Story chamber even showed up in the 'Journey to the West' recommendation bulletin board, too.

[Cool Zhu Bajie and Sha Wujing, adorable Tang Sanzang, and the soft Sun Wukong.]

Author: uri9158

– Review: Zhu Bajie is so cool, and Tang Sanzangs are super cute, too.

['I've become the retired SSSSS-rank', a masterpiece that initially sounds like a mass-produced Story.]

Author: Non-Mass Production Maker

– Review: In all honesty, the real protagonists of the 'Journey to the West' are 'Yogoes'. Sun Wukong, Zhu Bajie, Sha Wujing, they are all 'Yogoes'. Yet the Journey to the West's theme is infinitely closer to 'humanism'. It's because all the Yogoes appearing in the original had been humanised extensively from a human's perspective. Meaning, Yogoes from the Journey to the West had to live as 'humans' after their status as Yogoes had been stolen from them…

…It felt as if the names of the authors were kind of familiar, but that must be a mistake on my part. Surely.

Whatever the case might have been, we were getting quite a few puzzling recommendations.

"They are still following us…"

Shin Yoosung walking at the rear of the group next to me kept glancing behind her as if something was bothering her. She seemed to hesitate slightly, but then, extended her hand out to a Yogoe acting like a puppy by her feet.

"…Hi?"

I was slightly nervous about the Yogoe suddenly attacking her, but thankfully, what I feared didn't happen.

Yogoe crouched like an obedient puppy and rubbed its nose against the tip of her fingers. This guy was no longer the terrifying 'Outer God' that I knew of.

[SowarmSowarmSowarmSowarm]

They were not the 'demonic beasts' that Shin Yoosung could tame. Well, 'Outer Gods' weren't designated as one of those friendly lifeforms, after all. They were simply 'things' that lost their usefulness, wandering around on the outside of scenarios.

Even then, Shin Yoosung carefully paid attention to them with a serious expression on her face.

[YoosungYoosungYoosungYoosungYoosung]

[NamemeNamemeNamemeNamemeNameme]

Did she actually understand them?

Could she understand their words and see what their real appearance was?

I hesitated a little before asking her. "Aren't you afraid?"

"Not at all. It's like, when I keep looking at them, I find them kind of cute, in a way. And…"

Small tentacles resembling those of an octopus tickled the back of her hand like a stoke of foxtail.

"…A person I like appeared like this once before."

Suddenly, a short bout of migraine and dizziness rushed in along with a zing in my head.

[Exclusive skill, 'Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint' level 2, is forcibly activating!]

「Maybe, he could be here with us this time, too.」

I saw her determined eyes scanning the ranks of Yogoes and bit down hard on my lip.

[Notice to all Constellation-nims currently participating in the scenario.]

An unannounced broadcast suddenly came from somewhere.

The surrounding atmosphere trembled and Yogoes all looked up at the sky with worried expressions.

[TheycomingTheycomingTheycomingTheycoming]

[DontlikeDontlikeDontlikeDontlikeDontlike]

Cries of the 'Outer Gods' rose up from here and there.

A Great Dokkaebi appearing as a semi-transparent figure was being transmitted in the sky above.

[The 'Journey to the West Remake' scenario is gradually inching towards its conclusion. I heard that recently, due to the point gap between the upper ranks and the middle being too great, many Constellation-nims are half-way giving up on the scenario itself.]

What an ominous-sounding opening remark that was.

[<Star Stream> is fair with its opportunities. An eel that struggles can become a Dragon, and inversely, a Dragon ruling the sky can also fall to the ground, as well.]

For a moment there, the Great Dokkaebi seemed to have glanced in our direction.

[So, ending things here would leave behind a bit of a sour taste, wouldn't you say?]

"Uh? What's going on?!"

Along with Lee Jihye's loud yell, our surroundings began transforming. As the rays of bright light exploded, our group as well as the Yogoes had been transferred to the bank of a massive river.

[Story chambers are being consolidated!]

[The 'I've become the retired SSSSS-rank Sun Wukong' has been incorporated into the 'Giant Story'.]

(Sun Wukong knew which river this was.)

(They were now in the western riverbank of Tongtian River. This was the final hurdle before reaching India.)

The Great Dokkaebi laughed. [Deciding the first spot through just the score alone is not amusing. However, isn't 'finding out which 'Story' is stronger' the natural law of <Star Stream>?]

[Many audience members are cheering on and agreeing with that declaration!]

[A small number of audience members are smacking their lips!]

[A portion of judges are frowning at the interference of a Great Dokkaebi.]

As the messages streamed in, large pillars of light began flashing in various spots of the riverside.

[421st Story chamber has been consolidated!]

[The 'My Sun Wukong is broken from a certain point on' has been incorporated into the 'Giant Story'.]

We found another group exactly like ours over there.

The stunned-silly Lee Gilyoung shouted out. "Who are those people?!"

That group also featured Sun Wukong, Tang Sanzang, Zhu Bajie, Sha Wujing, and the White Dragon Horse.

Indeed, they were a 'Journey to the West' expedition team from another Story chamber.

[7133rd Story chamber has been consolidated!]

[The 'I thought I was Sun Wukong but I was just a regular monkey' has been incorporated into the 'Giant Story'.]

[6523rd Story chamber has been consolidated!]

[The 'Omniscient Sun Wukong Ruyi Bang's Viewpoint' has been incorporated into the 'Giant Story'.]

As the pillars of light continued to descend, many 'Sun Wukongs' revealed themselves on the riverbanks. Some possessed weak Status, while some others possessed mighty ones. And then…

[1st Story chamber has been consolidated!]

[The 'Real Journey to the West' has been incorporated into the 'Giant Story'.]

…Some even possessed an overwhelming Status, too.

Every single one making up that particular Story chamber was among the top elite of elite Constellations.

The 'Sun Wukong' currently ranked number one was looking over in our direction, his eyes burning in the pale-blue ghostly flames.

…As expected, it had come down to this.

I had been anticipating that something like this might happen. Because at the rate the things were going, Fei Hu's side would've lost to us in the points tally.

[A portion of judges are worried about your safety.]

[Judge, 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband', is furious at this development!]

[Judge, 'Bimawen', is getting curious about the conclusion of this scenario.]

[Judge, 'Meihouwang', orders you to sweep every one of these people away!]

Not only that, the main judges were already siding with us to boot, too. Indeed, that side probably had no choice but to do something before the situation worsened even further for them.

[Details of the main scenario have been updated!]

The voice of the Great Dokkaebi resounded out next.

[And so, the final event of the 'Journey to the West Remake' will start now.]

Chapter 435: Ep. 82 - Outer God, IV

[The final event of the 'Journey to the West Remake' will start now.]

Jung Heewon bit her lip as she listened to the voice coming out of the panel in the air. She wanted to be there as well. She wanted to fight alongside her companions.

"…Hyunsung-ssi."

However, she couldn't go because of the man lying in slumber on the hospital bed. It was Lee Hyunsung, currently covered from head to toe in steel, with no signs of a heartbeat.

He hadn't recovered from the damage he suffered during the 'Great War of Saints and Demons'.

The mirror next to the bed reflected Jung Heewon's hair, now half-covered in a silver colour. Another after-effect from the aforementioned Great War.

– You take a breather for a bit. I don't have any roles to give you, anyway.

She understood very well that this was Han Sooyoung's, and her companions', way of showing their concern towards her.

She had been inflicted with simply too heavy a wound. Both her body and mind were in a mess. She failed to rescue Kim Dokja again, and the man trying to protect her had fallen into a coma. That was how the sharpest blade in the <Kim Dokja's Company> had lost her edge.

Her [Sword of Judgement] resting against a corner of the bed trembled noticeably.

This weapon would vibrate only when 'evil' was nearby. A weapon that Kim Dokja had gifted her. Its tip was pointing straight at the display panel. Perhaps it also knew that the place she should be right now wasn't here.

Jung Heewon cautiously reached out and as if to pacify the blade, embraced its hilt.

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is looking at her Incarnation with a helpless expression.]

As a result of the Great War of Saints and Demons, both <Eden> and the Demon Realm had collapsed. Countless Archangels and Demon Kings died, and the 'justice' Jung Heewon believed in couldn't be found there.

Even then, she had to wield this sword.

It was then that she felt a subtle movement on the bed.

"Hyunsung-ssi!"

How long ago did it happen? Lee Hyunsung had opened his eyes and was staring at the display panel. His lips bobbed up and down, trying to say something.

"…Excuse me?"

She pressed her head closer, but still couldn't hear his voice. His lips moved slowly. She began recognising the shapes of his lips.

Can't.

Lose.

Again.

Her fists clenched tightly once more. Her fury began rising up. Why was he being like this? Even when his body had ended up in this state.

Jung Heewon couldn't suppress her emotions any longer and was about to grasp his hand, but then, his entire body suddenly began transforming.

He emitted blinding rays of silvery light, before shrinking down and becoming a single sword.

"What is this…?!"

She was so stunned that she inadvertently let go of this new version of Lee Hyunsung.

Now lying on the bed, the blade Lee Hyunsung began sobbing. As if that was the only thing he could right now.

She vacantly fell on her butt, lowered her head and muttered softly. "Just what are you trying to…"

It was then when the hospital room's door flung open.

She looked back to find Han Sooyoung there, even though she should've been working as the 'Scenario Master'.

"Jung Heewon."

The moment she heard that voice, Jung Heewon's heart began beating even faster.

And just like her, the sword of steel shuddered on top of the bed. She knew very well what the heart of that weapon was thinking about.

Everyone had their own ways of enduring against the world.

She slowly reached out to the Steelsword and while tightly grasping its hilt, raised her voice. "You have a role available for me, yes?"

As the Great Dokkaebi's voice resounded out, a new scenario window popped up in the air.

[Linked Main Scenario is starting!]

<Main Scenario #95 – Owner of the [Journey to the West]>

Type: Main

Difficulty: Indeterminable

Clear condition: Break past the horde of Yogoes and acquire the「Sacred Texts」on the other side of the Tongtian River.

Time limit: 2 hours

Reward: Giant Story related to the 'Journey to the West', 5,000,000 Coins, ???

Failure: -

* The applicable scenario contains a hidden 'piece'.

Almost at the same time, the water level of the Tongtian River swelled up rapidly. Walls of water rushed in like tsunami waves and instantly filled up the surroundings.

Right afterwards, the screeches and howls of the Yogoes blanketed the sky.

[KillthemKillthemKillthemKillthemKillthem]

[AhAhAhAhAhAhAh]

The horde boasted far greater numbers than the Yogoes following us currently.

[Current shares of 'Outer God' for the applicable scenario is 15.872%.]

The remaining 'Outer God' shares to fulfil the agreement with the Wenny King were 14.128%.

Meaning, I had to reach the rest of the amount during this event.

[WuWuWuWuWu…]

I looked back to see the Yogoes making up the 'Pilgrimage' with us were howling out towards the sky.

[Well, then, I shall be anticipating a wonderful finale to this scenario.]

The Great Dokkaebi vanished, and as more pillars of light descended, the 'protagonists' from other Journey to the West began making their entrance.

"Let's go!"

"The sacred texts are ours!"

The crowd from all the consolidated Story chambers were scything past the Tongtian's waters to advance forward.

"I'm the real Sun Wukong!"

Some rode on the Somersault Cloud, while others resorted to magic spells to fly over the river's tumbling water. It seemed that they were planning to cross this river by gliding over it.

Unfortunately, that was a really bad decision to make, if my knowledge on the 'Journey to the West' was correct.

[All skills and Stigmas related to 'Flight' are restricted from use in the applicable scenario.]

Powerful sparks danced in the sky and everyone flying in the air crashed into the river below along with their screams.

"What's the meaning of this?!"

After falling into the river water, the members of other Story chambers began shouting in anger at the Great Dokkaebi up in the air. However, it simply shrugged its shoulders nonchalantly.

I looked at this spectacle and spoke up. "This journey wouldn't have any meaning to it if we were allowed to fly from the beginning."

Yoo Joonghyuk next to me muttered out as if he was chewing on his words. "…Everything happening here is also destined to become a Story, is it."

"That's correct."

In the end, the 'Journey to the West' was a story of travelling on a tough road in great adversity.

Even if you were travelling on the same road, choosing how to travel changed the story greatly. Traversing the distance that could be bridged in one day by riding on the Somersault Cloud, for over 14 years while surviving and enduring against all sorts of trials and tribulations – because such a 'Story' existed, the sacred texts at the end of the journey now had meaning to its existence, too.

(And so, the final hurdle to this very story was waiting for the travelling group.)

Lee Gilyoung heard the narration and softly grumbled to himself. "…I'm not very good at swimming, though."

The Tongtian River was truly wide.

Since not everyone could ride on the back of Tang Sanzang's White Dragon Horse, we had to swim across the river to get to the other side.

For sure, several teams had already jumped into the water and started swimming vigorously. It was unknown where those things had been acquired, but well, some teams were busy paddling their boats forward, while some others were riding on logs, propelling themselves forward by using wind magic.

Lee Jihye watched that unfolding spectacle and lightly slapped the boy's shoulder before stepping forward. "Hey, don't worry about it. We aren't going to do that."

Along with her confident voice, a new message came from the sky above.

[An audience member is revealing himself.]

[Constellation, 'Maritime War God', is nodding his head.]

…I had completely forgotten about him.

"Come, Geobukseon!"

[Giant Story, 'Next City', has begun its storytelling!]

Lee Jihye raised her Twin Dragon Sword up high into the sky.

The river water before us parted in the middle and the hull of a massive battleship rose up to the surface accompanied by a magnificent light show.

Several Incarnations getting swept up by the waves screamed out.

"What the hell?! What's this??"

The battleship sporting a turtle-like back and the head of a dragon – the [Turtle Dragon]. The Star Relic Lee Jihye and the kids earned by clearing the 'Next City' scenario revealed itself before our very eyes.

However, I couldn't help but wonder if it was okay for us to ride that. Because in the 'Journey to the West'…

[Star Relic, 'Turtle Dragon', corresponds with the「Journey to the West Remake」!]

(As the group fell into danger and struggled to move forward, a gigantic white turtle Yogoe appeared to give them a ride.)

[A portion of judges are satisfied by the minutely-detailed reflection of the original story.]

[20 additional points have been awarded!]

…To think that such an event happened in the 'Journey to the West'. What an excellent development that was.

We quickly climbed aboard the battleship.

"Set sail!"

Along with Lee Jihye's loud yell, the battleship rapidly advanced forward while splitting the river water.

The teams crossing the water before us all looked at the battleship with dazed, forlorn faces. Although unfortunate, we didn't have the leeway to worry about them at the moment.

"Uhm… Unni, please do your best not to harm the Yogoes."

"Don't worry."

I couldn't tell where she learned to drive, but well, Lee Jihye utilised her preternatural driving skill to evade the horde of Yogoes rushing at us. Not only that, the Yogoes trying to attack us with animosity flinched and stopped after spotting all the other Yogoes riding on our ship.

[Who ar e y ou gu ys?]

A portion of the Yogoes that joined the 'Pilgrimage' were hanging on the battleship, while the rest was crossing the river right behind the vessel.

Perhaps these creatures interfered with their own journeys, the Sun Wukongs from other Story chambers began wielding their Ruyi Bangs.

"Those sons of bitches…!"

The enraged Lee Jihye clenched her fists tightly, but it was not possible to save everyone. The deaths of Yogoes were unfolding all over the Tongtian River, after all.

[Gu-waaaaahk!]

The members of other Story chambers advanced forward while slaughtering Yogoes blocking their paths. Yogoe's flesh and blood rained down from everywhere.

[A large number of audience members are cheering on this spectacle of slaughter!]

Yogoes continued to die. The monsters that didn't earn their meanings because they failed to create their Stories. They were sacrifices offered up to complete this 'Journey to the West'.

The novel, 'Journey to the West'. A lengthy journey for the goal of transcending one's humanity.

To let the audience watching the Story reach enlightenment of their own, Yogoes had to be buried under this Tongtian River's waters.

"Kill them! Kill them all!"

These protagonists of the 'Journey to the West' supposedly walking on the road of enlightenment used the dead Yogoes as their bridge and tried to cross the Tongtian River. Innumerable Yogoes became their footholds, and those unfortunate protagonists from some Story chambers who got killed off also became another foothold for someone else.

Sadly, no one would remember the names of the footholds.

[Our stories are]

[I wanted to continue but]

If only they could live.

And if only they could become the main characters of this 'Giant Story'…

"Myungoh ahjussi, just stay still, will ya! I'm telling you, it's safe here."

"Safe, my ass! You think I'll fall for that again?!"

[Stigma, 'One-legged Swift Horse Lv.???' is ready to activate.]

Whether one's leg was cut off or its arm was lost… That creature would be remembered by this world.

[7133rd Story chamber's entire roster has been annihilated.]

[487th Story chamber's entire roster has been annihilated.]

With every passing second, the number of Story chambers being ejected continued to increase. And as if to proportionally match that figure, the number of Yogoes crashing down also increased exponentially.

[AhAhAhAhAhAh]

[SavemSavemSavemeSavemeSaveme]

[Currently, shares of 'Outer God' for the applicable scenario is 15.773%.]

The 'Outer God' shares that I worked so hard to increase began dropping little by little. Even though so many Yogoes still remained…

[Currently, shares of 'Outer God' for the applicable scenario is 14.973%.]

And then, the shares began tumbling down at an alarming rate next.

[Currently, shares of 'Outer God' for the applicable scenario is 14.473%.]

But then again, maybe it was an obvious result.

Because they were villains to be defeated in this world, not its main characters.

[AhAhAhAhAhAhAh]

Perhaps he noticed the direction of my gaze, Yoo Joonghyuk suddenly began talking to me. "…Surely, you fool must've realized this. You can't save everyone."

Those words hurt especially more so because they came from Yoo Joonghyuk himself.

"Like what you said earlier, it's because this is a 'Story'."

His eyes were now looking at the dead Yogoes beneath the surface of the water.

Because this was a Story, not everyone could be saved. I knew exactly what those words meant.

"Not everything in this world can become its protagonist."

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An extra couldn't become a main character.

And the 'Outer Gods' couldn't even serve as the extras, so they were being forced out of the 'Story'.

The dying Yogoes were looking up at us.

[IcouldalsodoitIcouldalsodoit]

[CaptainCaptainCaptainCaptain]

[WhoamIWhoamIWhoamIWhoamI]

Yoo Joonghyuk couldn't hear those voices.

I thought that might be a good thing.

"All you can do right now is to let everyone know that they exist here." He stared past the fog-covered Tongtian River and spoke. "With that… You have done everything you set out to do."

What I set out to do.

As if to respond to our conversation, the narration suddenly began yapping on.

(The best they could do was to let the world know that Yogoes were in this place.)

Perhaps Han Sooyoung was feeling as much indignation and grief as I had.

The Tongtian's water rained down, corpses of Yogoes floating away on the river's surface.

[Many audience members are resonating with the theme of「I've become the retired SSSSS-Grade Sun Wukong」.]

[A portion of judges are currently feeling melancholic.]

Extras were just that, extras, while the main character would be the main character.

A story where everyone could become its protagonist didn't exist.

I knew that.

[Judge, 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband', is repeatedly grabbing and letting go of his hair.]

[Judge, 'Bimawen', is contemplating on the lives of the Yogoes.]

[Judge, 'Meihouwang', is asking, although he isn't sure, if they could all be saved.]

However, even if that was true…

[Shares of 'Outer God' are tumbling lower at an alarming rate.]

[Current shares of 'Outer God' for the applicable scenario is 13.473%.]

I just couldn't be satisfied with this result and end it here.

[Scenario Master is now looking at you.]

It seemed that perhaps Han Sooyoung was thinking along the same line.

"It's the turtle! Steal it!"

Several uninvited guests clambered up on the side of the [Turtle Dragon] and shouted out. They were from other Story chambers, feeling envious of our ship.

"Get rid of them! As soon as we kill…"

Unfortunately for them, they picked the wrong opponents today.

Slice!

Lee Jihye's [Twin Dragon Sword] sliced off the head of a hapless Sun Wukong that landed on the deck.

[Judge, 'Meihouwang', is rubbing his neck with a spooked expression.]

The Sun Wukong who lost his head fell back into the river water, unable to even mouth a scream. Sha Wujing and Zhu Bajie freaked out from that sight, roared out loudly, and landed on the deck next.

"You insolent…!"

"Seeing that you're still sticking to the script, you guys aren't going to win."

Lee Jihye's [Kendo] mercilessly slashed out and split the air apart, while Lee Gilyoung and Shin Yoosung also ran to her sides to use their experienced fists and kicks to punt other Incarnations off the deck. Chimera Dragon had morphed into a full-on Dragon Horse and flapped its wings to create a powerful gust of wind.

"You measly little…!"

Yoo Joonghyuk had already climbed up to the highest point in the ship by then. He unsheathed his weapon with an icy-cold expression. Sparks danced violently on the blade of his [Black Heavenly Demon Sword].

Breaking the Sky Thunder Blade.

His sword attack, capable of even shattering the heavens, slammed into the waters of the Tongtian like a thunderclap.

"Kuwaaaahk!!"

Incarnations were roasted black by the azure-blue lightning and exploded like fireworks. Only then the surviving ones realize the severity of their current situation and yelled out to each other.

"How the hell can a Zhu Bajie be that strong?!"

"C-could it be, that Pigsy is…??"

"It's them!! They are the main characters from [I've become the retired SSSSS-Grade Sun Wukong]!!"

…It seemed that our identity had been exposed now.

[Hidden information of the scenario is now open to the public.]

[Your Story chamber ranking will rise up by defeating the main characters from another Story chamber with a higher ranking.]

"Even if we don't get our hands on the sacred texts, our ranking will rise if we just kill them!"

After reaching the higher rankings, even if they didn't win the event, they could still enjoy quite the amount of rewards.

"Kill him!! Hunt down that Zhu Bajie first!"

Dozens of actors rushed in towards the battleship while stepping on the corpses of the Yogoes. Some of them happened to be quite powerful Incarnations as well as Constellations.

I urgently looked back at my companions, but they didn't seem to be flustered at all.

"I guess it might get a little more entertaining now."

"Sun Wukong, be still and stay back."

Lee Jihye grinned and unleashed her Status.

[Giant Story, 'Next City', has begun its storytelling!]

[Constellation, 'Maritime War God', is revealing his Status!]

Under Lee Gilyoung's and Shin Yoosung's control, the Dragon Horse regained its former appearance of the Jade Dragon.

Ku-ohhhh!!

At the same time, energy from powerful Stories exploded out of my companions' Incarnation Bodies.

[Giant Story, 'Demon Realm's Spring', has begun its storytelling!]

[Giant Story, 'Torch that Swallowed the Myth', has begun its storytelling!]

The Chimera Dragon breathed out fire from the sky and dissipated the Tongtian's waters, and Yoo Joonghyuk dashed in and out among the rising screen of vapour.

Slice! Slice!!

Every time jet-black light flashed, Sun Wukongs and Zhu Bajies with unknown names died in droves.

I shuddered from that sight. I knew that my companions were powerful, but I still didn't expect them to be this strong. This was the result of them surviving many nonsensical scenarios up to this point.

"Kuwaaaahk!"

Participating in the 95th scenario together didn't mean that everyone's level was the same.

It was rather similar to the 'Journey to the West' itself.

People's methods of reaching its end destination were all different. Some wanted to fly in comfort, while some would only select the easiest roads to walk on.

However, the members of the <Kim Dokja's Company> were different.

(They arrived at this point in time through the hardest method there was.)

They couldn't fly nor could they choose to tread the easiest paths. They walked on their own two legs again and again.

They beat back many unfair trials and tribulations, endured against misfortunes, and while holding back their grief, they reached this far with their own strengths.

(And the result of that was this.)

This story's true protagonists were them, receiving the blinding light of grace belonging to the 'Giant Stories'. As I bore witness to this spectacle, I began recalling a certain old memory.

(That place back in the 1863rd turn was also the 95th scenario.)

I wanted to show this to Han Sooyoung of the 1863rd turn. I wanted to tell her. Just like how you had proved it to me, there were people here who also had survived, as well.

(This is the story of the 3rd turn that you don't know.)

Yoo Joonghyuk number [999] sitting on my shoulder was also watching this unfolding spectacle.

What would the one who lost his own regression turn and entered this world-line, think about after taking in this sight?

[Story chamber ranking has risen up!]

[Score: 25912]

[Current ranking of the applicable Story chamber is 3rd.]

[Many audience members and judges are awarding additional points!]

Our Story chamber's ranking climbed really quickly.

It seemed there were a few actors from higher-ranked Story chambers than ours mixed in among all the assailants coming after us.

[Story chamber ranking has risen up!]

[Score: 26412]

[Current ranking of the applicable Story chamber is 2nd.]

Finally, second place.

We had brushed aside thousands of other chambers and finally reached the cusp of victory. That only served to make me more anxious, however.

[Current shares of 'Outer God' for the applicable scenario is 13.142%.]

Even as the real protagonists were leaving their mark, the deaths of those relegated to the role of extras continued on unabated. So, the shares of the 'Outer Gods' continued to plummet.

In order to fulfil the agreement of the Wenny King, the shares had to exceed 30%. Even if our chamber won this 'Giant Story' event, everything would go back to square one if I failed to uphold that agreement.

Booooom!!

The hull of the battleship was rocked to the side just then.

Powerful magical cannon shells were raining down from beyond the fog of the battlefield.

"What the hell?! Which arseholes…?"

Lee Jihye quickly regained her balance and activated her Stigma.

[Character, 'Lee Jihye', has activated the 'Ghost Fleet Lv.10'!]

A dozen phantom ships rose up on either side of the [Turtle Dragon] and commenced firing at once. Caught between the exchange of a vast number of cannon shells, the Incarnations and Yogoes in the surroundings were vaporised without a chance to even scream in pain.

Soon, the shelling stopped and dozens of battleships revealed themselves from the murky fog of the cannon smoke.

[Constellation, 'Maritime War God', is gasping out.]

Ku-gugugugu.

Those ships had surrounded ours in a crane wing-like formation.

Even if the 'Maritime War God' was an excellent Constellation when it came to naval warfare, there simply were way too many enemies this time. Not only that…

"…Fei Hu."

As I listened to Yoo Joonghyuk's heavy voice, I spotted a certain someone standing on the gunwhale of the opposing ship.

The protagonist of the Story chamber ranked number 1, the [Real Journey to the West], was there.

It seemed that they had prepared the battleships in advance. And their numbers vastly outstripped ours.

"Aren't they Narrative-grade Constellations?"

We also spotted other members of the [Real Journey to the West]. As expected, the roles of Zhu Bajie and Sha Wujing were played by <Emperor>'s

Constellations.

Zhu Bajie was played by the Master of the Three-Pointed Double-Edged Spear, Erlang Shen.

Meanwhile, it seemed that the actor for Sha Wujing was the third son of Vaisravana, Prince Nezha.

They were actual characters from the original 'Journey to the West', and Sun Wukong's old foes as well.

It was not for nothing that the saying of 'Victory is already Fei Hu's' did the rounds back in the original 'Ways of Survival'. The actual Constellations from the 'Journey to the West' made their appearance as Fei Hu's team members, so it was only obvious that the Constellations from other chambers didn't even stand a chance against them.

[A portion of audience members have revealed their identities.]

[Constellations of the Nebula, <Emperor>, are looking at Fei Hu's battlefield.]

Not only that, even the lights from the constellations of the '28 Mansions' were glittering behind them, too.

Those gazes, implying that they'd enter the battlefield at any given moment, presented us with incredible pressure just by being there.

Yoo Joonghyuk scanned the battlefield and spoke. "I don't see their Tang Sanzang."

Now that he mentioned it, I couldn't see their Tang Sanzang, either.

The one to receive the sacred texts in the original story was Tang Sanzang. So, they wouldn't have stashed him somewhere safe under the current situ…

No, hang on. If the person tasked with retrieving the sacred texts was supposed to be Tang Sanzang, then…

"I think something is busy running away over there?"

At the place Lee Gilyoung pointed at, we could see battleships hurriedly distancing themselves away from here.

It seemed that a portion would remain behind and block us, while the rest would set sail towards the 'sacred texts'.

Which meant that Fei Hu's Tang Sanzang was somewhere among those fleeing ships.

"They are planning to secure the 'sacred texts' while wasting our time here."

Lee Jihye loudly yelled out. "Dammit! I'll take care of this place, so go ahead!"

One of the ships from the [Ghost Fleet] came to our side and Yoo Joonghyuk, Lee Gilyoung, Shin Yoosung and I climbed onboard it. The phantom ship then also began rushing forward in great haste.

Kuwaaaaah!!

I wasn't worried about Lee Jihye. She was now a respectable admiral. As long as the battle was fought on water and not anywhere else, she'd not lose even if she failed to eke out a victory.

The real problem was with this side.

One of the enemy battleships accurately blocked our route and stuck close to our side.

And it was the ship containing Fei Hu and his companions.

"So, you are the <Kim Dokja's Company>."

This particular Sun Wukong had piercing blue eyes. He stared at us as if he had just discovered strange lifeforms.

Yoo Joonghyuk unsheathed his [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] once more and stood in front of us, wary of his new opponent.

[Constellation, 'Master of Three-Pointed Double Edged Spear', is unleashing his Status!]

[Constellation, 'Third Son of Vaisravana', is unleashing his Status!]

They must've decided to give up on their roles at this point. Both Erlang Shen and Prince Nezha began sending warning signals in our direction from the get-go. That wasn't all.

[Constellations of the 28 Mansions of the Nebula, <Emperor>, are preparing to descend.]

[Lords of the Nine Stars of the Nebula, <Emperor>, are preparing to descend!]

…Goddammit.

I spoke sarcastically. "I guess you can't do anything without your Nebula's help?"

"<Emperor> is me, and I'm <Emperor>. It's even more foolish not to utilise what's yours already."

Even the current Yoo Joonghyuk wouldn't be able to deal with the situation if both the '28 Mansions' and the permanent fixture of the sky, 'Nine Stars', decided to descend here.

Besides, they were the original characters from 'Journey to the West', so they didn't even need to spend all that much Probability to enter, either.

Goddammit, we were basically trapped in the playground set in <Emperor>'s backyard.

"There is one thing I wish to confirm, however."

Fei Hu pulled out his Ruyi Bang and began unleashing his real Status.

The candidate for the strongest Incarnation back in the original 'Ways of Survival', Fei Hu.

I had seen his face several times before today, but never did we get into a conflict with him until now.

But that made sense, considering that he was the gold-spoon Incarnation greatly coddled and protected by <Emperor>.

[Giant Story, 'Inheritor of the Heavenly Palace', has begun its storytelling!]

[Giant Story, 'Survivor of Great War of Righteous and Evil', has begun its storytelling!]

Fei Hu had diligently earned his own Giant Stories in places we weren't aware of. While receiving support that was on another scale compared to ours.

[Giant Story, 'Successor of Chiyou', has begun…]

Shin Yoosung watched those Stories appear and muttered out as if she was puzzled by something. "…Isn't 'Chiyou' a Korean Story?"

Perhaps that got under his skin, Fei Hu scowled deeply and flung a sword aura in our direction.

Yoo Joonghyuk blocked that. Accompanied by the loud "Clang!", the crack in the [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] grew even more noticeable.

Fei Hu's eyes flickered as if he was amused by something. "Not bad. So, you're that Zhu Bajie."

Fei Hu was strong. However, the current Yoo Joonghyuk was more than enough to defeat him, no matter how strong he was now.

The actual problem laid with the [Black Heavenly Demon Sword]. With his main weapon damaged, Yoo Joonghyuk wouldn't even be able to exert 70% of his overall strength.

"I heard that Korea's greatest Incarnation is with <Kim Dokja's Company>. That must be you, then."

As if he was waiting for this moment, Yoo Joonghyuk stepped forward.

Yoo Joonghyuk versus Fei Hu.

The battle of the century was about to get underway.

However, I couldn't continue riding the bus and spectate anymore. Because that side still had Erlang Shen and Prince Nezha as well.

[Current Incarnation Body recovery rate: 71%]

[Outer God transformation rate: 96%]

[Rate of Outer God transformation currently is in a slowed-down state.]

Unfortunately, there was no way I could fight against those two in my current condition.

Shuruerueng…

The first one to make their move was Fei Hu's camp.

Prince Nezha's divine weapons emitted gloriously brilliant rays of light, while a stunning level of Status exploded out from Fei Hu's body.

At the same time, a clump of light suddenly wavered in the air.

[Player 9-nim has joined the「I've become the retired SSSSS-Grade Sun Wukong」as an 'Extra'!]

…A new actor at such a late stage?

Kugugugu!

As the lightning crashed down, a person appeared on top of the phantom ship's cabin. The light from the lightning cracking in the dark, gloomy skies drew a lengthy shadow. A slender figure stood there.

A pair of giant horns rose above this person's head.

[Player 9-nim's role is 'Bull Demon King'.]

…The Bull Demon King.

Now that I thought about it, I had forgotten that such a role existed.

He was a sworn brother and a companion-in-arms of the Great Sage Heaven's Equal, Sun Wukong.

They did fight each other in the original story, but in our Story chamber [I've become the retired SSSSS-Grade Sun Wukong], he had not made his appearance yet.

In that case, just who would take on that role…?

[Voting rights are being distributed to the members of <Kim Dokja's Company>.]

[A portion of members are unable to participate in the voting.]

[Only those able to vote will participate.]

The moment I heard those words, the inside of my head blanked out.

[Incarnation, 'Lee Jihye', is agreeing with the judgement.]

[Incarnation, 'Shin Yoosung', is agreeing with the judgement.]

[Incarnation, 'Lee Gilyoung', is agreeing with the judgement.]

[Incarnation, 'Jung Heewon', is agreeing with the judgement.]

[Incarnation, 'Han Sooyoung', is agreeing with the judgement.]

[Incarnation, 'Yoo Joonghyuk', is agreeing with the judgement.]

I didn't know whether to laugh or cry as I watched the windows containing messages continue to pop up.

[Will you use your voting right for the 'Hour of Judgement'?]

I saw the faces of my companions under the cascading shower of light.

I wanted to speak to them so badly.

However, I simply couldn't.

Instead, this was all I could do for them right now.

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation', is agreeing with the judgement.]

For a moment there, unreadable expressions floated up onto the faces of my companions. A heavy silence descended on the flowing waters of Tongtian River.

Another bolt of lightning crashed down, and Jung Heewon lightly jumped off from the top of the ship's cabin.

I thought that her shoulders trembled imperceptibly as her feet landed on deck, but they regained their calmness soon after.

[Everyone able to participate in the voting has agreed with the judgement.]

['Hour of Judgement' is activating!]

Jung Heewon slowly raised her head and opened her lips to speak.

"We can still fight."

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'We can still fight'.

Jung Heewon declared this and stepped forward while emitting a calm, still Status.

Meanwhile, [Nebula Chat] messages entered my ear.

– Dokja hyung is still alive.

Lee Gilyoung said that.

– He may not be here, but he's still looking at us from somewhere.

Shin Yoosung nodded her head.

On the other hand, a warning message was resounding in my head.

[Outer God transformation rate: 96.1%]

…

…

…

[Outer God transformation rate: 96.3%]

The rate was suddenly climbing up rapidly.

[The Wenny King is doubting the agreement you two have made.]

The reason why I didn't immediately transform into an 'Outer God' was because even though my companions knew that the 'Demon King of Salvation' was alive somewhere, they didn't know that the person playing Sun Wukong, me, was their real 'Demon King of Salvation'.

My deal with the Wenny King stated that I should not reveal myself to the <Kim Dokja's Company>, after all.

[Outer God transformation rate: 97.1%]

Perhaps something was in his mind, because Yoo Joonghyuk was silently staring up at the sky. Jung Heewon placed her hand on his shoulder and walked forward.

He spoke in a weighty voice. "…You alone will not be sufficient."

"No, I'm more than enough."

Her refreshing grin imparted the feeling of her being utterly dependable right now.

[Exclusive skill, 'Hour of Judgement', has received <Kim Dokja's Company>'s blessing.]

Her [Hour of Judgement] was no longer influenced by <Eden> or those sitting on the 'Absolute Good' spectrum. Her blade now only needed to borrow from <Kim Dokja's Company>'s Probability, and it was currently pointing at the targets of her judgement.

[Nebula, <Emperor>, is unhappy at the unannounced participation of the applicable role!]

The members from <Emperor> seemed to be taken aback by Jung Heewon's sudden intrusion.

Fei Hu tilted his head and stared at her. "And who you might be?"

"Was it you?"

"…?"

"The one who was looking for Korea's best Incarnation."

Right at the end of those words, Jung Heewon's figure dashed forward like an arrow.

Fei Hu panicked and quickly raised his Ruyi Bang, blocking her sword strike just in time. The friction sound of "Kwa-du-duk!" resounding out was unusually heavy.

He frowned deeply as his body slid back quite some ways. "That is a pretty heavy sword. However, that isn't the 'Bull Demon King's' weapon, is it?"

"Correct."

Jung Heewon's hands were gripping a Steelsword that no one had seen before. It was not the Bull Demon King's weapon, or for that matter, Jung Heewon's own [Sword of Judgement], either.

[Player 10-nim is participating in「I've become the retired SSSSS-grade Sun Wukong」as an 'Extra'!]

…Huh?

[Player 10-nim's role is 'Ruyi Jingu Bang'.]

Just as I began thinking that such a role shouldn't even be possible, her sword suddenly extended in an abnormal fashion. It was like watching the actual

Ruyi Jingu Bang that weighed thirteen thousand and five hundred 'geun'.

"What is this…?!"

Her sword continued to extend. Ten metres, twenty, thirty, forty… Her hands tightly grasped the sword that grew to a truly nonsensical length.

[Exclusive skill, 'God Slaying Lv.3', is activating!]

The 'God Slaying', the higher-ranked skill derived from 'Demon Slaying' after she evolved into the 'Judge of Destruction'.

The violent power of Chaos flowed viciously within the Steelsword, now hundreds of metres long. The world seemed to vibrate slowly, and her hands moved from left to right.

Fei Hu sensed something deeply ominous at that moment and loudly shouted out towards the other Constellations. "Evacuate, now!!"

Some managed to reflexively escape, but the majority didn't even know what befell them.

A single silvery line drew along the impressively-vast river's surface, and every single battleship in the vicinity exploded into bits and pieces in a loud screech.

[Nebula, <Emperor>, is astonished by the strength of 'Bull Demon King'!]

The truly gob-smacking firepower that could set the surface of water ablaze, turning it into a sea of flames with just one attack.

That wasn't Jung Heewon's power alone.

The Steelsword vibrated within her hands. I recognised that weapon right away.

Although it was impossible to talk to the guy since he had entered weapon mode via [Steel Transformation], he was without a doubt, Lee Hyunsung.

Jung Heewon ran on the burning surface of the river and shouted back at us.

"Go! Leave this place to me!"

She not only stopped Fei Hu's advance, but also that of Erlang Shen and Prince Nezha. Having sensed the enormous fighting spirit flooding out from her entire figure, I looked back at my companions and spoke up. "Let's get going."

For sure, I'd be able to leave this battle to the current Jung Heewon.

"Do your best, noona!"

"You should escape if things look bad!"

Lee Jihye's phantom ship quickly disembarked.

Behind us, Fei Hu was roaring out in anger after being blocked by Jung Heewon. We didn't care and continued to scythe past the Tongtian's dense fog. We then spotted Fei Hu's Tang Sanzang hurriedly escaping up ahead of us.

[Location of the sacred texts is close by.]

We could sense the gazes of the audience and the judges on top of us.

[Many in the audience are focusing on your Story.]

[Judge, 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband', is telling you to work a little bit harder.]

[Judge, 'Cleanser of Altars', is cheering on as his belly fat jiggles around.]

[100 additional points have been awarded.]

Thanks to Lee Jihye and Jung Heewon's hard work, the point gap between Fei Hu's chamber and ours had pretty much disappeared.

If we manage to scoop up the 'sacred texts' first, then we should become the winner of「Journey to the West Remake」.

It was right then that the skies of all four cardinal directions distorted.

[Nebula, <Emperor>'s 28 Mansions, are making their descent!]

From all directions of the blackened sky, 28 stars shot down to where we were.

"Evade it!"

Yoo Joonghyuk and I each grabbed Lee Gilyoung and Shin Yoosung, and flung ourselves into the river. Along with the explosive noise of the Tongtian itself blowing up, our phantom ship shattered and sunk beneath the water.

We found debris floating on the river's surface and managed to barely grab hold of it.

"Woo-ehck! Hey, I can survive by myself, so let me go!"

Lee Gilyoung kicked around and shouted out.

We stepped on to our own floating debris. And in the meantime, 28 stars were blocking our way forward.

[What an incomprehensible bunch of people.]

[Why do you stain this noble story with the blood of Yogoes?]

[You're not qualified to complete this 'Giant Story'.]

They were openly declaring their intentions to hinder us.

I expected this to happen, but now that <Emperor> had come out like this, I couldn't help but feel dismayed somewhat.

[A portion of the audience members are complaining about the unfairness to the Constellations of <Emperor>!]

Lodging complaints wouldn't change anything. Whatever the case might have been, the 'Journey to the West' was <Emperor>'s Giant Story, and they wouldn't want to lose it to other Nebulas.

From the get-go, this event was created for the Incarnation of <Emperor>, Fei Hu.

The only reason why other Incarnations and Constellations were allowed to participate was simply to enhance the status of the entire Story itself and turn this event into a proper scenario.

This was a game where Fei Hu had been decided as its final winner beforehand.

As for the ensuing dissatisfaction of Constellations and their Nebulas, simply supplying them with Coins and adequate-enough Stories as compensations would calm them down pretty quickly. That was the truth behind this <Emperor>-planned「Journey to the West Remake」, and other Constellations already had some idea without being explicitly told about it.

Even if you participate, you can't win. But we will compensate you accordingly.

[Why do you insist on disrupting the order of the scenario? You have already climbed up to second place, yet are you still not satisfied by the number of votes?]

In that regard, it was the same thing as us already crossing that unspoken line that <Emperor> had drawn.

[It's not too late to back down. If you do, we will not confiscate the Story you have compiled up to this point.]

One of the directions of the 28 Mansions, 'Seven Mansions of the Azure Dragon of the East' – Horn Mansion, Neck Mansion, Root Mansion, Room Mansion, Heart Mansion, Tail Mansion, Winnowing Basket Mansion – stepped forward and unleashed their Status.

The strengths of the individual Constellations hovered between bottom-tiered Narrative-grade or Historical-grade, but the real problem was when they were together like this.

Azure Dragon of the East, 7 Mansions.

Black Tortoise of the North, 7 Mansions.

White Tiger of the West, 7 Mansions.

Vermilion Bird of the South, 7 Mansions.

These were the guardian Constellations tasked with defending <Emperor>, as well as the enforcer of the Jade Emperor himself.

Even back in the 'Journey to the West', they got into conflict with the Great Sage Heaven's Equal.

['Constellations of 28 Mansions' are unleashing their Status!]

When 28 stars all released their light simultaneously, the waves of truly blinding Status smashed into us in full. Even if they were individually nothing more than Historical-grade, with that much aura…

Shu-ru-rung.

Yoo Joonghyuk unsheathed his sword and stepped forward. He glanced at me as he did so. "Take the kids away and acquire the sacred texts."

That prompted Lee Gilyoung to shout out as if he was having a breakdown. "Who's taking who here?! I…!"

The boy's lips snapped shut after he sensed Yoo Joonghyuk emitting his Status.

His jet-black coat danced in the air. It was as if he had suddenly transformed into a black hole; his back faced us as he stood there against the lights shining from 28 stars. That was the back of a man who had been silently protecting certain people.

Lee Gilyoung faltered a little after being overwhelmed by that and muttered out softly. "…Let's go."

Even if it was Yoo Joonghyuk, there was no guarantee of victory against the entirety of the Constellations of the 28 Mansions. However, we had no choice but to believe him. The current him was strong enough to fight against <Lokapala>'s best, Indra.

I nodded my head and replied. "Do your best."

"Get going!"

Yoo Joonghyuk's [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] carved out a path on the border where the river and the sky met.

Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship.

Inner Mysteries.

Split the Dark Ocean.

One sword strike that cut the ocean of the night. Like the miracle of Moses, the river's water dispersed and the pathway to the front split apart.

Several stars failed to dodge the strike in time, and they were sunk under the water as a consequence.

[How can such a nonsensical Status be…!]

[You bastard!]

The astonished 28 Mansions roared out and quickly scattered. Yoo Joonghyuk didn't wait and continued to swing his sword about during that space of time.

Breaking the Sky Thunder Sword.

A make-shift raft made out of floating debris was dashing forward on the road created by Yoo Joonghyuk's lightning.

"Chimera Dragon!"

The Dragon Horse powerfully flapped its wings. A powerful gust of wind caused the raft containing me, Lee Gilyoung and Shin Yoosung to shoot forward. Even though the number of passengers had decreased, the speed of the voyage was so great that it actually consumed Chimera Dragon's Status. The distance to Fei Hu's Tang Sanzang decreased in an instant.

They discovered us overtaking them and began shouting in our direction. Lee Gilyoung flipped them a middle finger, instead. "Why don't you munch on this!"

[Nebula, <Emperor>'s Lords of the Nine Stars, are descending to the scenario!]

"Dang it! More's coming? What a cheat!"

<Emperor> wasn't a great Nebula for nothing.

Simply from the number of 'Constellations' alone, <Emperor> could easily be called the <Star Stream>'s strongest Nebula.

The heavens before our eyes split open along with descending rays of light, and nine indistinct humanoid figures appeared. They could be distinguished only through their different individual colours.

The Lords of Nine Stars.

They were automated combat weapons of <Emperor>, created by condensed Stories. Each one was a weapon possessing as much combat capability as a Narrative-grade Constellation, where seven heavenly bodies – the Sun, Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus, and Saturn – plus the Solar and Lunar Eclipses, had become anthropomorphised.

Kwa-kwakwakwakwakwa!

Particle cannons fired from the mouths of the weapons burned one half of Tongtian, while the other half was frozen solid.

The moment I went, "Dammit!", a single streak of light flew out from the thick wall of rising steam.

"Shin Yoosung!"

She was focused on controlling the Dragon Horse and couldn't dodge in time; her figure was flung up into the air. Lee Gilyoung and I reached out at the same time to reel her back in and place her on the back of the Horse. Perhaps the attack has struck her vital point, because she was knocked unconscious.

"Those sons of bitches…!"

Lee Gilyoung took over the control of the Dragon Horse and unleashed his own Status. However, the Lords of the Nine Stars were still perfectly fine, and to make matters worse, they weren't our only problems.

[Nebula, <Emperor>'s Twelve Star Lords, are preparing to descend!]

[Nebula, <Emperor>'s Dragon Kings of the Four Seas, are preparing to descend!]

I finally realized the truth by then. <Emperor> was dead serious about this 'Giant Story'.

[Outer God transformation rate: 98.1%]

The enemy's battleship overtook us and shot forward again.

[Many audience members are looking at you with great anticipation!]

[Currently, the difference in voting score between you and the first ranked chamber is negligible!]

If we lose here, the Giant Story would become Fei Hu's.

I turned to look at Lee Gilyoung and spoke to him. "Xuan High Priest-nim."

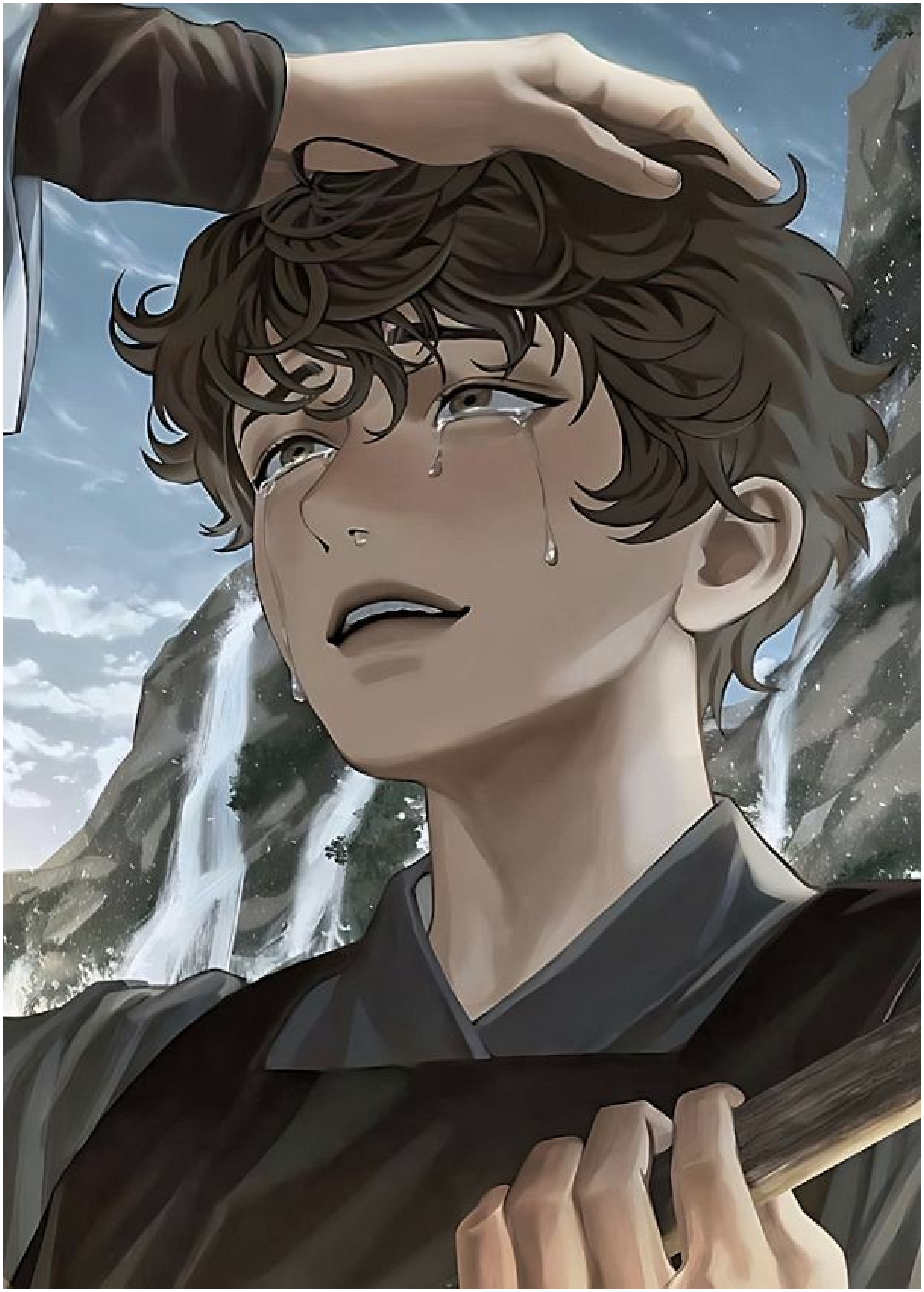
"I'm busy, so don't talk to me!"

"Please protect Zang High Priest-nim here. I shall break past them and retrieve the sacred texts."

"What? What are you…"

He failed to comprehend the situation and was about to shout out, but before he could, I placed my hand on top of his head first.

"You understand? Gilyoung-ah."



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* Official novel illustration (canonical)

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For a moment there, Lee Gilyoung's lips bobbed up and down. Tears rapidly welled up in the boy's clear eyes.

"Y-you, you…"

I finished patting his head and dragged a nearby piece of floating debris to me.

(Sun Wukong fired a wind-type magic behind him.)

[Exclusive skill, 'Way of the Wind Lv.10', is activating!]

Along with the gust of wind, the debris, with me as its passenger, shot forward at a rapid pace. Lee Gilyoung's voice called out to me from behind, but it was buried under the noise of the rushing winds.

[Someone in the <Kim Dokja's Company> is suspecting your real identity.]

[The Wenny King is glaring at you!]

The Nine Stars noticed my movement and began pursuing me instead. A couple of them even shot past me, rather than stopping me here.

I spotted the location of the 'sacred texts' in the distance. A single book emitting beautiful light rested on top of a small island shrouded in a mysterious fog.

And also, the Nine Stars and <Emperor>'s Constellations were standing before it.

I sighed softly under my breath.

[Outer God transformation rate: 98.3%]

[Damage to your Incarnation Body is critical.]

There was only one remaining method now.

Out of the blue, Yoo Joonghyuk [999] maintaining his silence on my shoulder spoke up.

– This is an idiotic move. Do you wish to become an 'Outer God'?

I broke out in a smirk.

'Are you scared?'

– If you force yourself any further, you will really become an 'Outer God'. If you do, you'll fail this scenario.

I accessed the scenario window to confirm my goal.

<Hidden Scenario – Verifying Agreement>

Type: Hidden

Difficulty: ???

Clear condition: Introduce 'Outer Gods' to the <Star Stream>'s main Giant Story. However, they must not be introduced in the existing role of 'Outer Gods' as before.

Time limit: 100 days

Reward: Outer Gods' trust, ???

Failure: You will lose all of your memories and transform into an Outer God.

* During the progress of the applicable scenario, you must not contact <Kim Dokja's Company> and reveal your identity. If this condition is violated, the transformation into an 'Outer God' will accelerate.

* Warning! Your identity is on the verge of being discovered.

* Currently, the rate of Outer God transformation is accelerating due to the poor condition of your Incarnation Body.

As I thought, reading it again only confirmed my suspicion.

'Even if I become an Outer God, I still won't fail the scenario. Becoming one is simply the 'penalty' for failing the scenario, not the 'condition' leading to its failure'.

– There is no difference between the…

'No, it is different. I'll be turning into an Outer God first before failing the scenario itself'.

The time limit of the 'Hidden Scenario' I got from the Wenny King was 100 days. Meaning, I only had to accomplish my task in that time frame.

The problem had to do with the 'transformation into an Outer God' bit.

"The reason why I'm transforming quickly into an Outer God isn't that I failed the scenario, but due to the bad condition of my Incarnation Body. So…"

– …You won't fail the scenario even if you become an 'Outer God'. Is that it?

'Right'.

I nodded my head and studied our immediate front. It seemed that [999] had finally realized what my goal was.

[Shares of 'Outer God' in the applicable Story currently is 12.171%.]

[In order to complete the scenario, you must secure over 30% of the shares for 'Outer God'.]

At this rate, I'd not be able to meet that goal even if I got my hands on the sacred texts and acquire the Giant Story. However, what if I became an Outer God…?

[Your role in the applicable Story is 'Sun Wukong'.]

[Your share in the applicable Story is 22.51%.]

What if the role of the greatest Yogoe, 'Sun Wukong', was played by an Outer God, and what if my goal was accomplished by doing so…?

– Why are you willing to go this far?

'What do you mean?'

– You won't lose anything even if you let the 'Secretive Plotter' or Outer Gods be on their own.

'Won't lose anything…'

– Are you by any chance pitying the 'Secretive Plotter'? He doesn't need sympathy from a fool like you.

'I'm sure that's the case. He's Yoo Joonghyuk, after all'.

– Yoo Joonghyuk? Don't make me laugh. He's not the 'Yoo Joonghyuk' you think you know. He has already become a completely different 'something'.

I didn't reply to him. [999] continued on as he scanned the Constellations of <Emperor> rushing towards us.

– You don't understand what it means to become an 'Outer God'. Once you become one, you rapidly lose all the memories you have accumulated in your life. Even the 'Secretive Plotter' had to create 'ports' like myself in order to endu…

So, that was the reason why these 'kkoma Yoo Joonghyuks' existed, I see.

I lightly nodded my head and replied.

'I know what I'll have to pay'.

– In that case, why…!

'Because… I have to do it'.

I replied with a simple grin.

I slowly blinked, and during those short moments of darkness, the figures of the 'Outer Gods' brushed past my mind.

[AhAhAhAhAhAh]

[SavemeSavemeSavemSavemeSaveme]

[MymemoriesMymemoriesMymemories]

The Outer Gods.

Creatures born out of all the countless world-lines where Yoo Joonghyuk had failed.

The worlds that allowed me to live on until now. The traces of the worlds that I loved so much.

'How can I make any other choice after seeing the truth?'

Especially so, when I could still clearly hear them even now?

Kuwaaaaaah!

An energy blast destroyed the log I was riding on. But I simply ran on the surface of the water by using the scattered debris.

['Way of the Wind' is accelerating even further.]

[Way of the Wind' is evolving due to your speed that has reached its limit.]

My leg speed gradually picked up and soon, I began running on the water without the debris serving as footholds.

[You have understood the pinnacle of 'Walking on Water'.]

[Due to the usage of an excessive amount of Status, the damage to your Incarnation Body has worsened!]

[Outer God transformation rate: 98.6%]

My heart began pounding away in an ominous rhythm.

[Outer God transformation rate: 98.7%]

That beating noise, it was the sound of me becoming something that was no longer 'me'.

[999] said something to me, but I couldn't hear him as the river exploded all around us. What I did hear, though, was another voice coming from the inside.

「Kim Dok ja.」

[The Fourth Wall] was talking to me.

「Thi s is in sa ne.」

It seemed that this guy had also been observing everything until now. But that was pretty obvious.

「Y ou w ill forg et ev eryt hing.」

「Kim Dok ja no lo nge r w ill be Kim Dok ja.」

[The Fourth Wall] was right.

[Outer God transformation rate: 99.1%]

Once I become an 'Outer God', I'd lose every memory I acquired until now.

「Kim Dokja was scared.」

It was a horrifying prospect when I thought about it.

「To lose all the memories he had made until this moment.」

I looked at the paragraphs rising above the wall and spoke up.

'It'll be fine. Because you remember everything, right?'

「Wha t?」

'You've recorded everything about me, so I'll never forget about myself'.

The normal me wouldn't have tried something like this. I'd never want to experience losing all my memories, after all.

['The Fourth Wall' is greatly shaken up!]

However, I possessed [The Fourth Wall]. I had no idea how I acquired this skill, but nevertheless, this Wall recorded everything the moment this story began.

I recalled the sight beyond the Wall – the Library shrouded in forlorn yet cosy darkness, as well as the Librarians that greatly cared about the place.

The important story of the 'Ways of Survival' that contained every Yoo Joonghyuk regression turn had been recorded there, and…

…Even the unimportant life of 'Kim Dokja' was recorded there, as well.

「That Library was recording everything about Kim Dokja, even in this very moment.」

「Kim Dokja's breaths, his appearance, his laughter, and his manner of speech.」

「The food Kim Dokja likes and the ones he dislikes. Songs he hummed occasionally. Expressions he makes when he's sad or happy. His habit of muttering to himself when he's not feeling confident, and the ensuing self-deprecation.」

「His habit of leaning his head slightly when worrying about the kids. The slight twitch of his eyelids as he closes his eyes after thinking about his mother. The smile he makes whenever he's talking to Yoo Sangah. His arcing eyebrows and naughty smile whenever he's making fun of Han Sooyoung. The guilt when he thinks about Lee Hyunsung. And…」

「The glint in his eyes when he recalls the story he loves.」

That was why I could say it openly like this.

'I can just read from the beginning again'.

「But」

'From the moment the subway arrived, all the way up to when I arrived here in the Journey to the West. I can just read them all again'.

The shell made out of light, fired from afar, landed near my feet.

I was swept away in the explosion of light and sunk into the water below. I flailed about and grabbed hold of a piece of nearby floating debris.

[Damage to your Incarnation Body is critical!]

[Outer God transformation rate: 99.3%]

I stood up and ran again.

I really had only a little more remaining.

'Because I love reading the most in this world, after all'.

Breathing got heavier and harder.

[Outer God transformation rate: 99.4%]

It felt as if my memories were beginning to scatter away already, bit by bit.

A spear fired by one of the Nine Stars brushed past my shoulder. But the pain shooting up didn't even feel like it belonged to me.

At that moment, I inexplicably recalled a post I made a long time ago in the online community portal.

– I'm looking for eyes that haven't read the 'Ways of Survival' yet.

I felt really bummed about the fact that the story I loved so much was coming to an end and so, posted such a thing online. Recalling it made me smile ever so faintly.

'To think that I'd forget about such an entertaining story and read it from the beginning again. That'll be a good thing in my case, actually'.

「Kim Dok ja is an id iot.」

As if it was angry, [The Fourth Wall] yelled back.

「I wo n't t ell y ou an yth ing.」

Even if it was saying that, I knew it'd help me out anyway.

「I w on't fo rgi ve y ou forg etting」

My skin was ripped up from the barrage of the firestorm and the pain akin to my back snapping in half tore through me.

[Exclusive skill, 'The Fourth Wall', is strongly activating!]

And such pain was being blocked by [The Fourth Wall].

I swung my fist at the Nine Stars pouncing on me. My knuckles ached as if they were punching hardened steel, but I didn't back off.

[Giant Story, 'Demon Realm's Spring', has begun its storytelling!]

[Giant Story, 'Torch that Swallowed the Myth', has begun its storytelling!]

…

…

…

[Setting of, 「I've become the retired SSSSS-grade Sun Wukong」, is activating.]

[Due to the 'Retirement Penalty', your will to fight has decreased.]

[Due to the 'Retirement Penalty', you can't use all of your strength.]

…Come to think of it, I forgot about that stupid setting being in place.

All the power of the Stories wrapped around my body were quickly abandoning me.

[Block him!]

[He must not reach the sacred texts!]

The ruins housing the 'sacred texts' were right before my eyes. It was an island made out of granite, a treasure that withstood the hardships of a lengthy amount of time. The 'answer' that Tang Sanzang and his companions acquired after 14 years of journeying was there.

[Many audience members are looking at your Story.]

[Judge, 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband', is waiting for your choice.]

[Judge, 'Meihouwang', is waiting for your answer.]

[Judge, 'Bimawen', is studying your Story.]

[Judge, 'Sakyamuni's Successor', is looking at you.]

Everyone on this ride along with me was staring at this very moment together.

[Outer God transformation rate: 99.7%]

The Nine Stars desperately blocked my path. Fei Hu's Tang Sanzang was hurriedly running towards the 'sacred texts' in the meantime.

If I wasted any more time here, then more Constellations from <Emperor> would arrive and I'd not be able to retrieve the sacred texts.

[Score: 50412]

[Ranking of the applicable Story chamber is 1st.]

I looked up into the sky.

[Scenario Master is looking at you.]

For some reason, I had this feeling that, if it was her, she should've realized it a long time ago.

That she knew already who I really was.

And why… I had to keep my identity a secret from my companions.

For some reason, I had this baseless hunch that she knew everything but decided to feign ignorance until now.

And then, the Scenario Master's voice came to me next.

(…Goddammit.)

I smirked after hearing that. As the Constellations rushed at me, a new narration began to unfold.

(Sun Wukong looked at his enemies.)

(He had already fought against them in his previous life.)

[Outer God transformation rate: 99.8%]

(All those tiresome battles.)

(He was a retired man, and he swore that he'd never fight again. However…)

I blinked my eyes while listening to the narration that sounded like a lovingly-crafted letter.

Right, if it was you, I knew you'd have figured it out already.

…Figured out how this story would conclude.

(As he slowly clenched his fists, strength from a long time ago welled up uncontrollably.)

[Your 'Retirement Penalty' has been completely removed.]

(Heaven's Equal, the power to control the clouds and lightning of the sky.)

[Fifth Bookmark has been initiated!]

[Exclusive skill, 'Electrification Lv.23(+13), has been initiated.]

[Your 'Status' is overcoming the physique requirement penalty.]

Pure-white physical energy swirled around; the electrical arcs from the [Electrification] tore into the heavens above and destroyed the stars of the Lords of the Nine Stars.

(He was called the 'Saviour' because he saved many with his fists. And he was called the 'Demon King' because he killed many living creatures.)

Jet-black wings tore out of my shoulder blades.

(And that was why he was the 'Demon King of Salvation'.)

(These were memories of the distant past.)

I shifted my gaze back and saw the corpses of Outer Gods dyeing the Tongtian River's waters.

(Back when he reigned supreme at the zenith of all 'Yogoes'.)

(He ruled Yogoes, he fought, and in the end, was defeated.)

(The lengthy journey changed him, and through his awakening, he became a Buddha.)

They had died as the expendables for the sake of this scenario.

(And this was the result of his awakening.)

The headband on my head began hurting me. Even when suffering from this pain, I still dashed forward.

Powerful Constellations of <Emperor> pounced on me next.

[Stop him!]

[He must never lay his hands on the sacred…!!]

(For the sake of all the Yogoes that died…)

(He decided to become the 'Demon King of Salvation' one more time.)

[Demon King, 'Demon King of Salvation', is revealing his Status.]

Every Constellation before my eyes was flung away as blinding light exploded. And beyond that light, a single book was waiting for me.

I reached out towards the 'sacred texts'.

[Outer God transformation rate: 99.9%]

[Your existence is evolving into an 'Outer God'.]

Chapter 439: Ep. 83 - Dokja's Incarnation, I

The boiling power of Chaos encroached into the blood vessels in my entire body. One by one, Stories began resisting against the invasion of this foreign power.

[Story, 'One who opposes Miracles, dreams of miracles.]

[Story, 'One Who Killed an Outer God', is resisting against your change!]

[Giant Story, 'Demon Realm's Spring', is protecting you!]

I barely managed to hold onto my wavering consciousness and staggered towards the sacred texts.

「…」

I thought I heard voices coming from somewhere, which could've been a side effect of transforming into an Outer God. I figured that my consciousness breaking apart somehow automatically activated [Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint].

However, it wasn't only one person this time; as if I was seeing many people's POVs, several voices came at me at the same time.

「…I already knew.」

That was Yoo Joonghyuk.

「It was just too obvious from the get-go, you know. I thought that it might as well be.」

Lee Jihye.

「If he didn't tell us up-front, then he must've had his reasons.」

Shin Yoosung.

「I, I already was suspecting it too, you know?! D-Dokja hyung! Dokja hyung!!」

Lee Gilyoung.

「…Dokja-ssi?」

Jung Heewon.

To these folks who understood it all already without being told – just what could I possibly say to them?

「What a powerful Sun Wukong he is… Who could he be?」

…That was Lee Hyunsung.

I ended up smirking softly.

Right, maybe it's for the best that he doesn't find out.

I sensed my memories beginning to crumble away. Once the transformation into an Outer God was over, all of my memories should scatter away like cosmic dust.

「Kim Dokja was scared.」

[The Fourth Wall] probably was aware of it already – that big talk of mine was nothing more than just a coward pretending to be tough.

｢After losing all my memories will I still remain as 'me'?｣

I did die a few times so far, but never have I lost all of my memories. What would happen to the 'me' that remembers everything, from here onwards?

[What really scared him was not death.]

Even if I got to read them all again, would I be able to regain the emotions I felt back then in full?

[Story, 'Life and Death Companions', is looking at you.]

[Story, 'One who Hunted the King of Calamities', is looking at you.]

[Story, 'Liberator of Giants', is looking at you.]

Would I really be able to feel the same emotions that I felt during the acquisition of all these precious stories?

｢And finally, the 'sacred texts' were waiting for Kim Dokja right before his eyes.｣

The [Journey to the West Remake].

That book was the 'Giant Story' itself. The moment I grasp it, this Giant Story would become <Kim Dokja's Company>'s, as well as the Outer Gods.

｢Kim Dokja reached out towards the 'sacred texts'.｣

With this, we'd be able to complete this [Journey to the West].

Tsu-chuchuchuchu…

It was at this moment that something strange happened.

[Due to the unexpected event in the scenario, your transformation into the Outer God is being delayed.]

…It's being delayed?

Sparks exploding all around me got even more violent while the roars from the Constellations grew further away. The flow of space-time was being warped strangely. Probability so powerful that it gave me chills and back-wetting goosebumps was being mobilised. It felt as if the entirety of the <Star Stream> was writhing around.

Someone was intruding into the scenario by breaking through the distorted space.

[Great Dokkaebi, 'Heoju', has incarnated to the scenario!]

[Great Dokkaebi, 'Heoche', has incarnated to the scenario!]

[Great Dokkaebi, 'Harong', has incarnated to the scenario!]

[Great Dokkaebi, 'Haram', has incarnated to the scenario!]

[Great Dokkaebi, 'Haesol', has incarnated to the scenario!]

Several Great Dokkaebis were incarnating before my eyes.

Tsu-chuchuchuchuchut!

As if it had turned into stone, my hand reaching out towards the 'sacred texts' froze up in place.

This shouldn't be happening.

[You cannot acquire that story.]

Dokkaebis weren't able to interfere with the main scenarios.

No, actually, some did try indirectly to pick fights with us, but there had never been an instance where a Dokkaebi with "Great" as its classification personally distorted a scenario like this.

However, these ones had betted away their Probability and did indeed intervene with the scenario.

[<Star Stream> is violently convulsing!]

Great Dokkaebis were also a part of the <Star Stream>.

Even if they were tasked with controlling the system, they were not exempt from the consequences of abnormally abusing the Probability.

Perhaps that was the reason why the powerful sparks were dancing around wildly on the bodies of the Great Dokkaebis.

[The forgotten ones need to remain forgotten.]

I thought I could understand just a little why they were willing to go this far. If I took the 'sacred texts' and acquired the 'Giant Story' in the process…

[AhAhAhAhAhAh]

[OhOhOhOhOhOh…!]

Then, the Outer Gods they had been excluding from the story would officially be incorporated into a 'Giant Story'.

Outer Gods were beings that couldn't be controlled fully by the system they possessed. Never mind the mid-to-lower grade [Old Beings], if the higher-ranked Outer Gods were to enter the scenarios indiscriminately, then the <Star Stream> would fall into unbridled chaos.

Even then, I simply had to complete this task.

[Give up.]

Statuses from the Great Dokkaebis had tied my entire body down like chains, and my fingertips reaching out to the 'sacred texts' came to a dead stop only a single hand span away. However, I didn't get flustered.

As the Great Dokkaebis appeared here while going against the Probability, there's was no doubt that another creature tasked with fixing the tilted balance of the distorted Probability would appear soon.

Ku-gugugugu!!

Speak of the devil – a whirlpool suddenly formed in the middle of the sky. It was the [Great Hole]. And an existence revealed itself and looked down at me from beyond the opening.

[Take the 'sacred texts', oh apostle of ■■.]

It was none other than the Wenny King, the one I met back in the N'Gai's Forest.

Great Dokkaebis discovered the Wenny's presence and roared out in sheer astonishment.

[How dare…!]

[The devil of the horizon, how dare you show yourself here!]

[You do not possess the Probability to appear in this scenario!]

The Wenny King sneered back at them. [It's the same story for you, too.]

The Statuses of the Great Dokkaebis and the Wenny King collided, and my previously-restrained body regained its freedom. And my hand crossed that final distance.

[Outer God transformation has resumed.]

The Wenny King smiled brightly.

[Oh, dear <Star Stream>. The worlds you have erased shall advance once more.]

The moment my hand touched the 'sacred texts', my consciousness faded away within the brightly-lit storm of electricity.

I could barely sense what might happen from here onwards.

I looked behind me and slowly closed my eyes.

「The only thing he could trust now was…」

* * *

Showers of light exploded and scattered in the distant sky.

Even the Nine Stars, even the 28 Mansions – they all had no choice but to look at the explosion in that moment.

[Every Constellation of the Nebula, <Emperor>, is freaking out!]

Lee Gilyoung atop the Dragon Horse was busy evading the Nine Stars' attack until then, but even he had to bring his mount to a stop.

"…Shin Yoosung?"

Shin Yoosung regained her consciousness and opened her eyes on top of the saddle. The moment she did, her eyes quickly snapped towards the western sky where Lee Gilyoung was also looking at.

Her heart was beating powerfully.

[Something has gone wrong. Eliminate these small fries quickly, and…]

The Lords of the Nine Stars and <Emperor>'s Historical-grade Constellations recovered from their fluster and hurriedly rushed towards Lee Gilyoung and Shin Yoosung once more.

The boy spoke up, his gaze still fixed to the western skies. "I'll create a path, so get going."

No one needed to explain it to them. The story they were searching for was over there.

"Go and rescue Dokja hyung!"

That was where Kim Dokja was.

Shin Yoosung could sense it. Maybe, far better than anyone out there.

Just as Lee Gilyoung jumped off from the Dragon Horse and unleashed his Status, Shin Yoosung made her mount break out into a dash. The horse reverted back to the Jade Dragon and flew forward like a speedboat on the river's surface. A nostalgic scent of a Story wafted in from the distance.

That's where she could see the starlight from her Sponsor that protected her for a long time.

It was shining so brightly like that, yet… why hadn't she been sure of it before?

Countless questions raged on in her head before slipping away.

Why was Kim Dokja in this place?

Why didn't he reveal his true identity to anyone?

Shin Yoosung couldn't answer any of that. However…

…She felt that if Kim Dokja was lost again in that place, she'd never be able to see him ever again.

Kwa-kwakwakwakwa!

Beams of light fired by the Nine Stars slammed into the Dragon Horse. Shin Yoosung screamed as she plunged into the river water.

However, there were creatures that dragged her back out of the water.

[KimdokjaKimdokjaKimdokjaKimdokja]

[WeareWeareWeareWeareWeare]

From when did this happen? Yogoes that had been previously floating around gathered into a large group and were crossing the river.

Somehow, she ended up on top of the group. Yogoes were floating up like stepping stones and created the path forward.

[SavehimSavehimSavehimSavehimSavehim]

And as Shin Yoosung ran on top of the Yogoes, she belatedly realized it.

「The reason why ahjussi is here, it's for the sake of these guys.」

The moment she realized it, something welled up from deep inside her.

She saw Kim Dokja's Story scattering away within the blinding rays of light.

She didn't need anyone to explain to her that he was clearly in serious danger right now.

「Why does ahjussi, always alone…!」

The first emotion she felt was resentment.

Why didn't Kim Dokja ask his companions for help?

「There must've been a reason for that.」

She knew that. But…

「He probably thought that this is for the best.」

Even then, there were some things that remained difficult to accept.

It was the same story back in the Dark Castle, and also in the Demon Realm. And even during the 'Great War of Saints and Demons', too. Their lengthy scenario was simply Kim Dokja's history of continued sacrifices.

「And that was why this resentment wasn't directed at Kim Dokja, but towards Shin Yoosung herself.」

She was none other than Kim Dokja's Incarnation and that's why she felt this sadness. The pain she was experiencing right now was nothing when compared to his determination.

「For sure, Kim Dokja would've said something like "Yoosung-ah, listen. There's no 'weight' to sadness."」

Shin Yoosung didn't agree with those words.

Sadness did indeed have 'weight'.

The despair of a person risking his life trying to save someone else, and another's grief borne from powerlessness while watching that feat unfold, would never carry equal weight.

In the end, to every human being, the most precious thing was themselves.

And Kim Dokja risked everything of his, always.

It was right at that time that the river water suddenly exploded in front of her eyes. Constellations of <Emperor> vomited out as they crashed back down to earth.

[Come, you disappeared stories!]

Accompanied by the voice reverberating throughout the world, the entire world began changing.

Several [Great Holes] opened up in the various parts of the sky, and creatures possessing unimaginable Statuses started to cross over.

They were no longer the 'Outer Gods'.

[■?■?■■ is participating in the role of 'Extra'!]

[■■?■ is participating in the role of 'Extra'!]

They were Yogoes from the Journey to the West.

(This was the final war to determine the owner of the 'sacred texts'.)

(The horde of shadowy demonic beings rushed in to put the finishing touches to the final pages of this lengthy tale.)

A spectacle akin to the world meeting its annihilation played out.

And in the centre of that apocalypse, Kim Dokja with his two blank eyes was wandering among the Yogoes.

Was Shin Yoosung mistaken when she thought that he no longer seemed to be 'Kim Dokja', but a Yogoe?

'I need to stop him'.

On top of the broken Yogoes' path, Shin Yoosung looked down at her small hand. It was a hand that she believed was capable of achieving things far greater than any adult could. And it had done precisely that many times before. However, at least in this moment…

…She felt that it was nothing but a child's small hand.

[■■■■■■■■■■■■…!!]

The heavens split up and the ground caved in. The Tongtian River's waters overturned in its entirety, and the living creatures atop it died in their droves as blood and Stories flooded out.

[Judge, 'Sakyamuni's Successor', is looking at you.]

It was exactly then that she felt someone's gaze and heard that person's voice.

[Yoosung-ah, only you can do it.]

It was a voice she knew so well.

"Sangah unni??"

[At this rate, Dokja-ssi won't be able to come back. Only you can prevent that.]

There was not enough time to ask how something like this was possible. So, Shin Yoosung only asked the necessary question first. "What, what should I do?"

Yoo Sangah didn't answer her right away. However, what she did say sounded like a Buddha bringing up a new topic for a conversation.

[Do not forget your role.]

Shin Yoosung stared momentarily at the sky in stupefaction, before her gaze shifted over to Kim Dokja's direction. A golden headband glowed faintly on top of Sun Wukong's head.

She looked down at her fist again. It was still that of a little child's. But at the same time, it was the fist of 'Tang Sanzang', as well.

"…Can I really do it?"

Her voice was trembling.

Kim Dokja's figure staggered about in the distance.

[Story, 'Demon King of Salvation', is continuing with its storytelling.]

Finally, the tears she was holding back broke free. "But, that could be what ahjussi wants, you know?"

And to such a child, Yoo Sangah spoke.

[He has been alone for a very long time.]

Kim Dokja (金獨子).

[To someone like that, telling him that he's not alone a few times won't suddenly change anything.]

Shin Yoosung was Kim Dokja's Incarnation.

[You need to tell him, always be next to him, and reaffirm it for him.]

As she cried, Shin Yoosung stepped forward.

[Until he realizes that he's truly not alone anymore.]

She gathered every little scrap of her Status and began running hard. Just like Kim Dokja using the [Way of the Wind], she too gave everything she had and ran on top of the river.

While stepping on the water's surface sinking in bit by bit, Shin Yoosung shouted out loudly as if to tear out her vocal cords.

"Ahjussi!!"

Kim Dokja wasn't listening. In the midst of the bloody battle between Yogoes and the Constellations, he was looking back at her with empty eyes as he slowly morphed into another Yogoe.

His body was changing. Kim Dokja was scattering away.

"Don't go! Please!! Please don't go!"

She watched her Sponsor slowly disappear right before her eyes and shouted even louder and louder. It didn't sound like words, but screams, instead. These were things that couldn't be conveyed with mere words.

[A brand new Story is sprouting within you!]

Not everyone could use special methods to communicate, and that was why Stories existed. Words that couldn't be conveyed would become stories eventually.

The golden letters of the Constrictive Sutra had become a Story and they began emitting bright light now.

「I'm not going to give up. Just like how you keep rescuing me, ahjussi, I…!」

As the meteors rained down all around her, Shin Yoosung looked straight at her 'star' and told her tale.

｢I'll definitely save you, too.｣

Chapter 440: Ep. 83 - Dokja's Incarnation, II

The sounds of explosions spread out from the centre of the battlefield. The surrounding atmosphere was going through a change.

Ranks of Yogoes were rushing over there and <Emperor>'s Constellations continued to descend.

Fei Hu's eyes chased after those ranks before shifting back to the enemy blocking his path. "…You're truly strong. Are there more Incarnations like you in Korea?"

Jung Heewon's whole body was riddled with wounds. However, her Status remained firm and unaffected, while her will to fight burned brightly.

He looked down at his sliced-off chest and waist, the wounds inflicted by her Steelsword.

He wasn't fighting alone; currently, both Erlang Shen and Prince Nezha were aiding him, plus he was receiving support from his Nebula, as well. Even then, he had failed to defeat a single Incarnation from another Story chamber that entered the scenario as a mere 'Bull Demon King'.

"Stop yapping and just come at me."

Fei Hu stared into Jung Heewon's blazing eyes and slowly shook his head. "The mere fact that we had to fight so bitterly against a single opponent already signifies our loss."

As if he was no longer interested in fighting her anymore, he sheathed his weapon and looked at the distant sky.

"And more importantly, the true battlefield doesn't seem to be here."

As those words came to an end, Fei Hu flung himself in the direction of the 'sacred texts', along with Erlang Shen and Prince Nezha.

Jung Heewon was about to hurriedly chase after them, but then, a battleship suddenly summoned onto the river took them away at a rapid pace.

[Activation of 'Hour of Judgement' has ended.]

…That was a really close call.

If the fight continued on for a little bit longer, she would've lost for sure. As expected of Fei Hu. He wasn't a direct Incarnation of the <Emperor> for nothing, it seemed.

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is worriedly scanning the centre of the battlefield.]

Wings of an Archangel grew on Jung Heewon's shoulders. She began half-running and half-flying on the water.

"…Just what is going on here?"

Several skirmishes were unfolding all around her and she couldn't tell where she should go first.

Lee Jihye, battling against <Emperor>'s fleet. Yoo Joonghyuk, fighting against the 28 Mansions Constellations. Lee Gilyoung, dealing with the Lords of Nine Stars…

Dozens upon dozens of [Great Holes] had opened up in the sky and the Outer Gods crossing over had all transformed into Yogoes to battle the Constellations.

And in the centre of it all…

"Yoosung-ah!"

A young girl was reaching out towards a star.

Shin Yoosung studied <Emperor>'s Constellations rushing at her.

[Nebula <Emperor>'s Twelve Star Lords are descending!]

[Nebula <Emperor>'s Dragon Kings of the Four Seas are descending!]

(One by one, Sun Wukong's sworn enemies were gathering.)

[It's not over yet!]

[It's fine as long as Tang Sanzang doesn't touch the 'sacred texts'!]

[Divide the army. One side shall retrieve the texts, while the others will suppress their Sanzang!]

She grabbed tightly onto the Chimera Dragon's mane, currently in its Jade Dragon form. The main attack force of <Emperor> was now taking aim at her.

Kim Dokja, meanwhile, was still too far from her.

[<Emperor>'s Twelve Star Lords are baring their Statuses!]

Ka-booooom!

Light exploded before her eyes.

The Chimera Dragon protected her by wrapping around her body. Choking heat penetrated into her entire figure. The second and third explosions went off one after the other and the Dragon screeched out loudly. Shin Yoosung gritted her teeth and leapt up by stepping on her mount's back.

[Your Sponsor's blessing is influencing you.]

[Your stunning talent has blossomed!]

[You have comprehended the 'Way of the Wind' on your own!]

She didn't know how this was possible but still, Yoosung ran on the river's surface. The blessing of [Way of the Wind] was exploding out from the tips of her feet, and golden ripples spread out everywhere they landed.

「Shin Yoosung ran as Kim Dokja had.」

This was the same method that her Sponsor used to run.

A mixture of blades and spears pounced on her from the surroundings.

Three from the left, one from right.

Two more, from below.

She evaded them all by a hair's breadth. However, the more she dodged, the more vicious the attacks became. Hundreds of sharp blades rained down like a dangerous storm. It was a spectacle akin to a monster opening its maw wide to bare hundreds of fangs at her.

And as she found herself right in front of such a monster, Shin Yoosung pulled out a dagger from her inner pocket.

「Shin Yoosung analysed the situation like Yoo Joonghyuk.」

There was something she learned from Yoo Joonghyuk some time ago.

[Story, 'Supreme King's Disciple', has begun its storytelling!]

「"In the future, you shall become the 'Beast Lord'. Countless monstrous beings will cower before your feet and serve you."」

「"However, that does not mean you can become friends with every monster out there."」

During Kim Dokja's three-year absence, Yoo Joonghyuk taught her how to hunt.

Ways to face off against large monsters. Ways to hunt monsters with sturdy outer shells. And even ways to kill monsters that were hard to fight against in close quarters.

「"If you must kill, then do not hesitate and end its life."」

「"If you don't, the one dying will be you."」

The moment she held her breath, she spotted a gap between the blades.

It was the calm eye of the raging storm.

She unleashed all of her Status and threw the dagger in that gap.

Kwa-kwakwakwakwa!

Waves of winds scattered away and the blades flying in at her fanned out away from her.

Unfortunately, she couldn't evade every single weapon; a blade's edge brushed past her small figure. Blood spluttered out from her shoulder.

「Shin Yoosung crouched as Lee Hyunsung would.」

She crouched and, while hiding behind one of the floating debris, Lee Hyunsung's face flitted in and out of her mind.

「"This is how you hide, you see? Don't forget to always memorise the location of all the covers in your vicinity, okay?"」

Ahjussi, moving his bear-like huge body and assuming a crawling position with a troubled smile on his face. And then, Jung Heewon's voice, adding one more thing on top of what Lee Hyunsung had said.

「"It's possible that you won't find a place to hide if there are too many enemies around."」

「"Mm, you're right."」

The powers of the Dragon Kings of the Four Seas were currently controlling the river.

Sharp spears made out of water aimed at Shin Yoosung's body and rushed in. Debris continued to explode one after the other, and there was no more place left to hide behind on the river's surface now.

「"When that happens, you should use your enemies, instead. Like this."」

Han Sooyoung spoke as she grabbed and lifted the head of the crouching Lee Hyunsung. Jung Heewon was shooting a glare at her, while Lee Gilyoung was cackling away.

Shin Yoosung recalled all those memories and grabbed one of the Incarnations attacking her to use as a shield.

"W-what are you… Kuwaaahk?!"

「Shin Yoosung became as cold-hearted as Han Sooyoung.」

She discarded the Incarnation Body riddled with grisly holes and continued to run forward.

[She's a pretty smart kid.]

[Do not let her get away!]

The distance to Kim Dokja had closed up quite a bit.

"Ahjussi!"

Kim Dokja's figure stopped as if he heard her call.

As she looked into his empty eyes, Shin Yoosung recalled what Yoo Sangah told her in the past.

「"I'm sorry that the world is like this."」

She could see her companions gathering around one by one.

「"I'm sorry that you got hurt like this. I'm sorry that you had to rely on powerless adults like us. Even if that's case, I'll promise you one thing. We'll always be by your side. We'll do our best so that you don't get to use these types of skills."」

Shin Yoosung remembered those words well.

「"To make sure that you don't forget who you are."」

Slice!

A long spear brushed past her cheek. She unconsciously touched there as blood trickled down. No one was around to help her. Neither Yoo Joonghyuk's back that protected his companions, nor Jung Heewon's sword that she could always rely on, were here.

A lengthy arm used the moment that she had lowered her guard and grabbed her collar. <Emperor>'s Twelve Star Lords were getting closer and closer.

[…Didn't expect her to be a real kid.]

[They let a child play such an important role?]

The Status of <Emperor> that defied all attempts to resist pressured her entire frame.

In any other normal circumstances, she'd never be able to fight against these enemies. Running away was the obvious route to take, and seeking help from her companions was the best she could do.

But, Shin Yoosung didn't try to run away.

[Condensed Story has caused an abnormal event!]

She slowly blinked and opened her eyes. Her heart previously pounding away like crazy suddenly grew calm. A cold glint flickered in her eyes next.

[Incarnation, 'Shin Yoosung's', Attribute evolution is imminent.]

[You have found the opportunity to evolve your Attribute!]

"I'm not just a little child."

[…What did you say?]

Shin Yoosung grabbed the Star Lord's left arm. The powerful grip emanating from the child's hand caused the Constellation's arm to tremble.

"My name is Shin Yoosung."

[You have acquired a legendary Attribute.]

[You have become the 'Beast Lord'.]

"Shin Yoosung, from <Kim Dokja's Company>."

A Status as white as snow ran amok on the surface of the river. As the Star Lords screamed and backed away, a girl wearing a white coat made an appearance before their shocked eyes.

[Beast King's Sensitivity].

It was the greatest defensive skill of the 'Beast Lord' deployed by Shin Yoosung from the 41st turn.

The surrounding river water overflowed and every Yogoe, as well as monsters submerged under it, leapt out at once.

Gu-ooohhhhhh!

As if they wanted to pay respect to their 'king'.

[Son of a… Where did these things come from…?!]

[Attack! Kill these beasts first!]

<Emperor>'s Constellations began their bombardment. But a rising tide of monsters protected her.

"Chimera Dragon!"

Gu-aaaaahhh!

Affected by her Attribute, the [Chimera Dragon]'s body had grown even bigger. The creature swam in the water like an Imoogi and swallowed up the Star Lords while screeching out loudly. Constellations being torn apart by the sharp fangs cried out.

[You stinking lizard…!]

Shin Yoosung disregarded those Constellations and ran forward.

[OhOhOhOhOhOhOh]

[YoosungYoosungYoosungYoosungYoosung]

Yogoes created a clear path for her.

And now, the star was literally right before her nose.

"Ahjussi!"

She shouted at Kim Dokja. However, he showed no signs of movement as if her voice didn't reach him.

It was then she heard the Wenny King's laughter resound out as it battled the Great Dokkaebis. [It's too late. He now belongs to the 'Great Plotter'.]

Those words seemed to be the trigger; the heavens above powerfully shook right away.

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

A [Great Hole] boasting a size so immense that others couldn't even be compared to was slowly revealing itself.

Great Yogoes on the river's surface simultaneously lowered themselves. All the fur on the white coat of the [Beast King's Sensitivity] rose up like fuzzy hair.

She could sense it without anyone telling her. The one descending right now, it was an existence far surpassing all the Constellations of the <Emperor> Nebula.

And Kim Dokja was now that creature's possession.

"I won't allow that."

[Tang Sanzang has recited the 'Constrictive Sutra'!]

The moment Shin Yoosung activated the skill, the golden headband on Kim Dokja's head began emitting bright light.

[Item, 'Constrictive Headband', is reacting!]

The Constrictive Headband was a treasure to control Sun Wukong.

Didn't matter whether it was an Yogoe transformation or not, every change taking place in Sun Wukong would come to a halt when the Sutra was being recited.

[What foolishness…!]

The Wenny King's Status bore down on Shin Yoosung's whole body. She tasted blood in the deepest part of her mouth. The coat created through [Beast King's Sensitivity] flapped around crazily. She staggered on her feet as she walked closer to Kim Dokja. One step closer, and yet one more step.

She saw his messed-up face, his gaunt cheeks. Her Sponsor, his eyes quietly closed.

"Ahjussi!"

[A brand new Story is sprouting in you.]

She still had so many things to tell him.

She'd tell him about that stuff that saddened her.

And also tell him that ahjussi looked terrible right now.

For the first time ever, she'd earnestly tell him everything.

"Please, please listen to my voice!"

She'd tell him that she wanted everyone to stop by at a PC Bang.

She'd pester him to buy her pizza and Cola and have a picnic by the Han River. And while talking about her impossible wishes in a world where many things have become impossible to enjoy…

…She'd become happy again.

Her vision quaked and tears streamed down without rest.

Finally, her hand touched the ends of Kim Dokja's fingertips.

One hand covered in scars wrapped around yet another, also covered in wounds. It hurt as wounds rubbed against each other. Even then, Shin Yoosung didn't let go of that hand.

[Quasi Myth-grade Story, 'Saviour of a Star', has been acquired!]

[Story, 'Saviour of a Star', has begun its storytelling.]

"I still have too many things I haven't told you yet!"

Like, when she was studying history with Sangah unni.

Or, when she was cooking the hunted game with Joonghyuk ahjussi.

Back when she learned how to wield a sword from Heewon unni.

And when she practised riding a skateboard with Jihye unni.

Also, when Hyunsung ahjussi lifted her up and carried her around like an aeroplane…

When she ate ice cream with Lee Gilyoung and read a manhwa, knowing that the follow-up volume would never be released…

"I, really…"

If only ahjussi was also in those memories.

"So many things…"

'I'm not wishing for many things' – she simply couldn't say those words.

Because the world's Probability and this screwed-up <Star Stream> didn't allow that.

"I just wanted to be normal…"

The stars in the sky were moving quickly.

Individual heavenly bodies sang their own Stories and looked at her.

[Many audience members are looking at you.]

Actually, she understood it already.

She knew that the ordinary happiness of an ordinary person in this world would not be able to attract any interest whatsoever.

And that was why that ordinary happiness…

…Was the greatest luxury in a ruined world.

Even then…

[Audience members are paying the cost to reveal their Modifiers.]

[Constellation, 'Queen of the Darkest Spring', is…]

[Constellation, 'Bald General of Justice', is…]

Even then, if someone was willing to hear her story…

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is…]

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', is…]

[Constellation, 'Goryeo's First Sword', is…

As the indirect messages continued to pour in, Shin Yoosung held Kim Dokja's hand even tighter.

It was precisely at that moment that a certain indirect message landed in her ear.

[Judge, 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband', has heard your story.]

Warmth began returning to Kim Dokja's hand.

A blinding torrent of golden rays shot out from Sun Wukong's headband, and that was followed up by a raging storm of Probability's powerful sparks.

Constellations of <Emperor> shouted in their great astonishment.

[C-could it be?? But that doesn't make sense…!]

From several places in the sky, lightning-bolt-like rays gathered towards Kim Dokja's figure.

[Judge, 'Bimawen', has heard your story.]

(And in that moment.)

(Something that had never happened before in the history of 'Journey to the West' finally happened.)

[Judge, 'Meihouwang', has heard your story.]

(The retired Sun Wukong has finally turned over a new leaf.)

[Judge, 'Dou-zhan-sheng-fo (Victorious Fighting Buddha)', wishes to hear your next story.]

Chapter 441: Ep. 83 - Dokja's Incarnation, III

[Exclusive skill, 'Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint' 3rd stage, is currently active!]

My consciousness grew dim. The first thing I heard within this pitch-black darkness was the paragraphs coming to me from beyond [The Fourth Wall].

「In that moment, Lee Jihye looked at the battlefield.」

Lee Jihye's battlefield was there, alongside dozens of ships seemingly blanketing the whole of Tongtian River.

Incarnations of <Emperor> prepared to fire the cannons, while Historical-grade Constellations were in charge of the command.

「"Open fire!"」

<Emperor>'s battleships surrounding the [Turtle Dragon] commenced firing simultaneously.

Lee Jihye advanced forward while brushing past the wreckages of other destroyed vessels. Some attacks she let them land her ship, while some others, she dodged.

「"Load the cannons."」

It was like watching an orchestra. Her ability to command the fleet, that had surely reached the realm of a naval god, allowed her to move the [Turtle Dragon] and the Ghost Fleet as she saw fit.

「"Fire."」

Naval Admiral Lee Jihye's fleet opened fire. The Ghost Fleet had rearranged their formation according to her command and they soon repeated the accurate hit-and-run tactic, and the enemy fleet tasted destruction in the blink of an eye.

「"How can something this unbelievable be…?!"」

Her ability to overcome the difference of overwhelming numbers – this was the moment that the true worth of the 'Naval Admiral', one of the strongest Incarnations in the 'Ways of Survival', announced itself to the world.

「[Constellation, 'Maritime War God', is proud of his Incarnation.]」

Lee Jihye actually surpassed her Sponsor in the latter half of the original story. Maybe, I might get to see that spectacle unfold during this regression turn.

「"We're changing our tactic!"」

Perhaps they realized that things weren't going so well, as <Emperor>'s fleet suddenly began charging at her. An armoured battleship was taking the lead. It seemed that they had chosen to engage her in a close-quarter melee since they lost out in the long-range firefight. Unfortunately for them, though, there was something that they didn't know.

「"…Argh, I created this technique so that I could give Dokja ahjussi a good one later on, but this…"」

The thing was, the Naval Admiral Lee Jihye was also very handy in close-quarter battles, too.

Seeing her crouched posture getting ready to draw her sword, I could just about guess what she was thinking of doing here.

「Instant Kill (瞬殺).」

I could see that she had mastered one of the best anti-personnel combat skills in 'Ways of Survival'.

Kwa-aaaahh!

As the loud explosions burst out from the side of the ship, Lee Jihye began her close-quarter combat. She cut, sliced, and then, cut some more. A sword demon's blade cut through the waves of water and reaped the head of the enemy commander.

And how much longer did she continue to cut after that? In the middle of the Tongtian's battlefield, now dyed crimson by the spreading Stories, Lee Jihye lay on her back utterly fatigued, having dealt with all of her enemies.

She stared at the darkening sky and asked softly as if she was talking to me.

「…Ahjussi. You're okay, right?」

I wanted to tell her that I was fine, but my lips didn't want to part.

[Your current level of proficiency for 'Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint' is very high.]

[It's now possible to split the POV.]

[Character Jung Heewon's viewpoint has been added to the '3rd Person POV'.]

The second person I saw was Jung Heewon.

「"Get! Out! Of! My! Way!!"」

She was in the midst of chasing Fei Hu down. Lee Hyunsung's blade, as she held him tightly, was busy shooting out the licks of flames belonging to [Hellfire]. Everywhere she passed by, ashes danced in the air.

I could more or less figure out what happened here. To think that 'Fei Hu' gave up on the fight first… Maybe the strongest Incarnation in Korea was Jung Heewon, after all.

[Character Jang Hayoung's viewpoint has been added to the '3rd Person POV'.]

Jang Hayoung, still wearing the fake beard, was running on the river, Han Myungoh stuck under her arm. The end of her gaze was fixed on Lee Gilyoung, currently engaged in a bitter battle against the Lords of the Nine Stars.

「"Hey, kid! Step aside!"」

The Lords of the Nine Stars were a part of <Emperor>'s elite forces. Jang Hayoung got ready to unleash the power of [Breaking the Sky Force Punch] at them.

However, Lee Gilyoung shook his head and shouted back.

「"Please don't interfere, Hayoung-ie hyung. I'm more than enough for this!"」

He looked at the distant centre of the battlefield and gritted his teeth.

「"…I can't lose to Shin Yoosung."」

Lee Gilyoung's voice, darkness seemingly overflowing from it, was tinged with an ominous undertone. And in the following moment, a yellow-coloured storm exploded out from the boy's entire body.

No, hang on a sec. Could that be…??

Before I could come to any sort of conclusion, the scene changed.

[Character Yoo Joonghyuk's viewpoint has been added to the '3rd Person POV'.]

Next up was Yoo Joonghyuk, currently facing off against the 28 Mansions Constellations by himself.

「"No matter how strong he is, in the end, he's still an Incarnation from a weak little Nebula!"」

「"You think a lone bastard like yourself can deal with actual stars?"」

Even though they were acting tough, Yoo Joonghyuk's hand was currently holding a couple of severed heads belonging to dead stars. His coat had turned into a tattered rag from the concerted attacks of the 28 Mansions, and there was a noticeable wound on his arm, but beside that, he was completely fine.

「If you're talking about 'Constellations', then I've cut down plenty of your kind already."」

Blood trickled down his forehead. His hair stained by the Constellations' Stories danced about, and like some kind of an evil monster, Yoo Joonghyuk raised his head up.

「"And that is why all of you will fall today."」

And the screen changed for the final time.

「"Ahjussi."」

It was my own Incarnation.

「"Please, please listen to my voice!"」

Her figure trembled as if she was sobbing.

Next up, I saw my hand, held tightly in hers. That limp, powerless hand couldn't even hold hers at all. Her words cut off intermittently, and the things I need to say to her and the things I need to hear from her all disappeared in between the flitting words.

[Story, 'Saviour of a Star', is continuing on with its storytelling.]

I… wanted to move. I wanted to wipe her tears away. I wanted to kneel down and hug her, before telling her that, her wishes were…

…Also mine, too.

Tsu-chuchuchuchut.

Memories were crumbling away.

Letters floated around the surroundings. I sensed myself scatter away inside this darkness. I heard a voice calling out to me from beyond the empty abyss.

I saw something resembling a violently-whipping [Great Hole] in the distance. Slowly, very slowly, my soul was being sucked in there.

[Ti me to ke ep yo ur pr omi se]

I was scared.

If I were to forget all of these… These emotions, where would they go to, then? And from where and to how far would [The Fourth Wall] remember my story?

[Baat, baaaht!]

Biyoo suddenly appeared and grabbed hold of my soul being sucked out. She did everything in her power to pull back at that clump of soul.

[Ba-aaaht!]

I could only look on at her confused, flustered struggling.

I, too, didn't want to go there.

[Co me to th e si de of th e Gr ea t Pl ot ter]

That was, if only I could.

[Are you really planning to go there?]

Along with the noise of "Tsuchuchuchu!" the flow of the surrounding atmosphere changed. The letters stopped scattering away, and the suction force pulling at my soul disappeared.

Someone was using his own Status to forcibly suppress my extinguishment.

[This Master Sun is asking you.]

I looked back, and discovered a rather familiar Constellation standing there. His platinum-blonde hair gently danced in the air, and his headband was emitting a soft glow.

"…Great Sage."

Indeed, it was the Great Sage Heaven's Equal, a mischievous smile etched on his lips. However, he wasn't alone this time.

「The re are too ma ny Sun Wu kongs here」

[Oh, so that's the 'Fragment of the Final Wall' that I heard about? What a noisy bastard.]

[Hmm… What an interesting visualised world this is.]

One was a handsome monkey kitted out in a cowboy get-up, while the other monkey had this languid expression on his face, his hand stuck under the tiger-striped thong and busy scratching away at something…

I immediately recognised who they were.

"…Are you Bimawen and Meihouwang?"

Before any reply could come to me, voices resounded out from the air above.

[Ki ng of mo nk ey s]

[Ar e yo u pl an ni ng to in te rf er e wi th us]

[Urgh, shut up. We're busy talking here.]

Meihouwang got irritated and unleashed his power, causing the ripples from the 'Outer Gods' to instantly disappear. That was truly a gob-smacking Status.

[Demon King of Salvation, we came here to ask you about something.]

The one who said that was not the Great Sage, Meihouwang, nor was it Bimawen.

Someone I had never seen before was there. He had an exotic countenance, a face oozing with this mysterious aura preventing anyone from identifying his gender. Short, neatly-trimmed black hair, and an elegant Buddhist robe on his frame.

And judging by the fact that he was also carrying a Ruyi Jingu Bang, he too was definitely Sun Wukong. The odd thing was, though, I couldn't see the usual constrictive headband on his head.

「To Kim Dokja's knowledge, there was only one 'Sun Wukong' like that in the world.」

"Douzhanshengfo (Victorious Fighting Buddha)."

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

Thin sparks exploded in the air as if to react to what I said.

Douzhanshengfo asked me with an expressionless face. [I've been watching your story from the beginning.]

"…My apologies for that."

[It was a Story with a meaning. Even out of all those numerous times when the 'Journey to the West' repeated itself, there never had been a Story that focused itself on the pain of the dying Yogoes.]

Meihouwang, listening to him talk on the side muttered, "Here comes the sermon-loving idiot". Completely disregarding him, Douzhangshengfo continued on.

[However, their pain is their preordained destiny. Not everyone can become protagonists, after all.]

"Why do you think so?"

[You speak as if all Yogoes are victims, but not all of them are wrongly thrust into their positions. Some among them had never worked hard once in their lives, while some carry evil intentions and choose to hurt others. Therefore, it is quite obvious that they will never become the main characters.]

"You're correct. However, just like what you've implied, some of them are not guilty of anything. No, make that quite a lot of them."

[And that is why countless Stories exist in this world. Giant Stories aren't the only good Stories. Those who are nothing more than small, insignificant beings inside a Giant Story can still become the main character of a different Story.]

He was right.

Indeed, as right as it can be. However…

"…That is only applicable when they are allowed to participate in Stories."

There were some creatures in this world that were excluded from entering even those Stories. Beings that were simply spent as expendables in various Stories while not even receiving a single percent of shares.

[AhAhAhAhAhAh]

[ComeComeComeComeComeCome]

"Stories should be permitted to even those who have failed."

The ones that had forgotten about themselves weren't even allowed to enjoy the opportunities of the scenarios. The <Star Stream> gagged them, and made sure that their words would become incomprehensible to others.

[…Is that what you truly believe?]

Douzhanshengfo asked, his unreadable eyes still locked on me. No, more correctly, he was looking at the power of Chaos rising out from my body.

[And you wish to sacrifice your whole being and become an 'Outer God'?]

"…That's correct."

The Great Sage was yawning with a bored face during my answer and once he was done, spoke his opinion. [Are you done with your confirmation? I told you, didn't I? This guy's really like that.]

[…Indeed.]

[Seriously, man. Convincing the dear ol' Buddha-nim is the hardest thing ever.]

I had no clue what these guys were talking about.

Four Sun Wukongs glanced at me while yapping among themselves.

[Okay, so. Who's going to do it, then?]

[I shall do it. I had lost most of my memories after I was granted the Buddhahood, after all.]

[…Well, I guess you being a fakey monk can be helpful in situations like this one.]

Right in the next moment, bright light rose up all around me, causing my scattering memories to come back. And as the Probability's sparks exploded, my body glowed brightly too, as if I was being electrocuted.

[Someone is dealing with the penalty of 'Outer God Transformation' in your stead.]

…Wha?

[Demon King of Salvation, you're wrong about one thing.] said Douzhanshengfo, as he unleashed the power of Chaos. [Becoming a 'Yogoe' will not help you in understanding them. You simply do not have the qualifications to represent them.]

He was right once more.

I couldn't possibly have known anything about the 'Outer Gods' suffering pain and agony as the Yogoes from the 'Journey to the West'. Because I was just another actor playing Sun Wukong.

Meihouwang sniggered and remarked sarcastically. [You should know your place.]

Bimawen quickly added something else. [Your 'main topic' is not in this place.]

The last person to speak up was the Great Sage. [Leave the matters of Yogoes to other Yogoes. And you, you should live your own Story.]

Only then did I finally figure out what was going on here.

[Giant Story, 'Journey to the West', has begun its storytelling for you.]

But, why? Why were they doing this for me?

The Great Sage smirked and replied. [Because we like your Story. That's all.]

I thought I could hear the loud roars of the upper-rank Outer Gods coming from afar. At the same time, I sensed the power of the Outer Gods strengthening gradually.

[HeisHeisHeisHeisHeis]

[OursOursOursOursOurs]

[My bad, but we can't give him to you.]

[NoNoNoNoNoNo]

[KingiscomingKingiscomingKingiscomingKingiscoming]

The [Great Hole] continued to churn angrily within the darkness.

Something was trying to descend to this world.

It was the king of all these 'Outer Gods'.

[Constellation, 'Secretive Plotter', is glaring at the 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband'.]

That message brought out a bright smile on the Great Sage's face.

[Right, I wanted to have a go at you sometime, didn't I?]

Four Sun Wukongs stood all around me.

[So, who'll be the main this time?]

[Of course, it'll be me, the Great Sage.]

[And thus the dumbass Sun Wukong is born.]

[Hey, you. Don't flip your finger like that. You think this is a fusion fantasy?]

In the following moment, Sun Wukongs around me grasped each other's hands.

[Oh, <Star Stream>! We will be accepting the 'Demon King of Salvation' as our fifth self!]

Chapter 442: Ep. 83 - Dokja's Incarnation, IV

"Ahjussi!"

Powerful rays of light exploding out from Kim Dokja's entire body, and the waves of magical energy containing <Emperor>'s Giant Story pouncing on Shin Yoosung's position, happened almost at the same time.

She reflexively embraced his body. The durability of her [Beast King's Sensitivity] had dropped to a critical level after defending against countless attacks so far. But she had no other methods to defend against this new wave other than this one.

She squeezed her eyes shut and the moment she hunkered down, a storm of blinding light exploded and the waves of Stories blanketing the surroundings disappeared as if they were washed away.

"…Ah?"

Her body, raised up to the sky, slowly descended back down again.

The spot where Kim Dokja had been standing only until a moment ago was now occupied by a tall man. He was blessed with the blindingly pure platinum-blonde hair, forged steel-like muscles, and [Fiery Golden Eyes] burning in a crimson hue.

*

<Emperor>'s Constellations freaked out.

[T-this can't be…!]

The Outer Gods were also shocked by the emission of the stupendous level of Status from him.

Currently possessing the bodies of the Yogoes, these Outer Gods expressed their fluster at the stunning Status of Chaos rising from this tall man.

[WhoWhoWhoWhoWho]

The man grinned brightly. [For them to not recognise me. I guess my retirement has gone on for too long.]

Shin Yoosung couldn't figure out what was going on here. She could definitely sense Kim Dokja's aura from this man, but he was not 'him'.

In that case, just who was this man?

"Ahjussi…?"

[So, you're Sanzang?]

The Great Sage calmly looked down at her before slowly lowering himself. Soon, their gazes were locked on the same eye level.

[Kim Dokja is safe.]

An unfathomable sense of lonesome longing flooded out from his [Fiery Golden Eyes]. Shin Yoosung unconsciously reached out. The moment her hand touched that cold golden headband on his head…

[Story, 'Demon King of Salvation', is continuing with its storytelling.]

Her hand trembled.

She could sense it so clearly.

Kim Dokja was living and breathing within this person. Not only did he not transform into a mysterious something, but the figure of Kim Dokja she was familiar with remained as was.

"Yoosung-ah!"

Jung Heewon dashed in from the distance and hurriedly shielded Shin Yoosung away while shooting the Great Sage a glare. He simply grinned back at her, and shifted his gaze up to the sky.

That was where a portion of <Emperor>'s Constellations, Great Dokkaebis, as well as the Wenny King could be found.

[Why do you all look like that? Weren't you yapping on happily among yourselves without the protagonist of 'Journey to the West', me, present earlier?]

Indeed, he was the main protagonist of the Journey, the Great Sage Heaven's Equal.

One of the Great Dokkaebis asked him a question. [Why have you stepped forward? Do you not have an agreement with the <Emperor>?]

[I didn't break the deal. Besides, do you even have any idea what that deal is in first place, before asking me that?]

The Great Dokkaebi didn't have the chance to reply, as the Wenny King's true voice butted in first.

[Monkey King! Are you insane? The 'Demon King of Salvation' is ours. He's an Outer God now, in other words. That was our agreement!]

[He's my brother now. And also…] The Great Sage's [Fiery Golden Eyes] emitted bright light. [I'm also an 'Outer God' now.]

Due to Douzhanshengfo's transformation into an Outer God, the aura of Chaos was billowing out from Sun Wukong's entire body.

[Shares of 'Outer God' in the applicable scenario currently is 35.333%.]

[Hidden Scenario – 'Verifying Agreement' has been completed!]

[Power of the Giant Story has begun moving!]

[Scenario, 「Journey to the West Remake」, is entering its final phase!]

(And then, Sun Wukong looked at his long-time companions.)

Yogoes that had fallen into confusion were all looking up at him. The majority of them were 'Outer Gods' used as expendables in the scenario. Up until only a few moments ago, they had been searching for their king, yet now, they were shaking their heads in a clear sign of fluster.

[KingisKingisKingisKingisKingis]

[WhichoneWhichoneWhichoneWhichoneWhichone]

Yogoes were at a loss, stuck between the Great Sage appearing as a brand-new 'Outer God', and the 'Secretive Plotter' they had been following originally.

He spoke to them as if he could understand their confusion. [You all suffered greatly until now, my friends.]

(These Yogoes, they had experienced this really lengthy tale together with him.)

[I know very well of the ordeals you were subjected to. I was born as a Yogoe, but got influenced by men's ways, and ended up accepting their ideals and customs. I carried out what they deemed to be true righteousness, and walked on their path of Dao.]

(Sometimes, they were his enemies. At other times, they were his allies.)

[And the result of that, is this. Yogoes were sacrificed. And the meaningless epiphany repeated itself. Now, 「Journey to the West」 has become a tool to strengthen the Nebula's influence by spreading around the tired, obvious truths.]

(However, all of that was nothing more than a Story, a play performed on a stage.)

[I'm sure it'll be impossible to atone for the past. Even then, if you are willing to forgive me…]

(The ancient king of the Yogoes. Their king, who used to fight against the heavenly worlds once upon a time, was now speaking to them.)

[Then I shall fight for you from now on.]

One by one, Yogoes raised their heads.

[ReallyReallyReallyReallyReally]

The Great Sage replied to them. [I shall put my true name on the line and swear to you.]

Yogoes began moving towards him. One and two soon became ten, grew to a hundred, and before long, went past a thousand. Yogoes hiding under the river's water, ones hiding within the clouds in the sky, they all revealed themselves. They gathered like swarms and began forming a horde. As if they were trying to worship the king they had served a long time ago.

[Ancient 'Giant Story' is waking up.]

[Halt! Cease what you're doing!]

[You're a judge! A judge cannot interfere with a Story in progre…!]

Great Dokkaebis urgently stepped forward to stop this situation, but it was useless, at least this time around.

[<Star Stream> has acknowledged the Probability of the 95th Main Scenario.]

[Main theme of the「Journey to the West Remake」is changing drastically!]

Even the Great Dokkaebis couldn't go against the gigantic flow of the <Star Stream>. As for the Wenny King, it stepped back without resistance as if it wished to observe the unfolding situation first.

Its original aim was to send 'Outer Gods' into a scenario anyway, so technically, that goal had pretty much already been accomplished. The only problem was…

…Who was the one leading all these 'Outer Gods'?

Ku-gugugugu!

Thunderbolts crashed down from the [Great Hole] in the sky, and soon, something broke past the abyss to make their descent.

[H-he is…!]

Status emitted by him was so powerful that the Outer Gods appearing so far couldn't even compare to him. The Great Sage, the Wenny King, even the Great Dokkaebis – they all witnessed that person's incarnation into the world.

The Great Sage smirked. [So, he finally showed up.]

[Constellation, 'Secretive Plotter', has incarnated into the scenario's location!]

[Someone has joined the scenario in the role of 'Demon King of Confusion'!]

The 'Secretive Plotter', currently in the form of a jet-black lump of shadow wavering around in the wind, took on the role of a Yogoe to participate in the scenario. Perhaps due to him not going through a proper entry procedure, blindingly bright sparks were enveloping his entire body.

The Great Sage asked him. [Are you here to hinder this great Master Sun?]

【That depends on your choice.】

[As expected, you have a rather insidious-sounding voice, 'Secretive Plotter'.]

This would be the first time that these two came face-to-face. A confrontation was brewing between two Constellations who had been watching Kim Dokja for a long time through Bihyung's, and later, Biyoo's channel.

The Great Sage growled and spoke up. [You pretended to be all slick and sophisticated in your indirect messages, but today, you finally reveal your true colours.]

The 'Secretive Plotter' quietly studied the Great Sage. 【Meanwhile, you are just as thoughtless as your indirect messages suggest.】

Sun Wukong emitted a stupendous amount of Status and roared out triumphantly while gripping his Ruyi Jingu Bang. [Enough talk. Since you're here, let's fight. This situation won't get resolved unless I kick your ass first, anyway.]

The Plotter's entrance caused agitation and unrest to spread among the surrounding Yogoes. It seemed as if they were hesitating on who to follow among these two absolute beings.

Submit to the king of all Yogoes, the Great Sage, Heaven's Equal?

If not, submit to the king of Outer Gods, the 'Secretive Plotter'?

The possibility of a sudden confrontation between two Constellations brought about a palpable sense of tension to the Great Dokkaebis, Wenny King, and to other Constellations floating in the air.

On one side, an Outer God who dreamed of the <Star Stream>'s destruction, while the other, the strongest Constellation within <Star Stream> itself.

A battlefield that had never been created before was about to commence.

Sun Wukong, burning with the will to fight, was about to raise his Ruyi Bang high up into the sky, but then…

【I'm sorry, but your opponent today isn't going to be me.】

Accompanying those words, the heavens split open wide and a great amount of sparks exploded out.

[Nebula, <Emperor>'s, Constellations are descending to the scenario!]

The number flooding in was in another realm altogether compared to <Emperor>'s forces that had entered so far. Half-destroyed stars of the 28 Mansions, the few remaining Lords of the Nine Stars, Dragon Kings of the Four Seas, and after that, a countless number of immortals and wargods from the Taoist pantheon were incarnating into the scenario.

[Constellation, 'Master of the Immortal Peach Garden', is incarnating into the scenario!]

[Constellation, 'Heaven's Wise Man', is incarnating into the scenario!]

[A great number of Constellations hiding their Modifiers are incarnating into the scenario!]

That wasn't all. Spirits that ruled the plains, the mountains, and the rivers, and even the great cosmic army that guarded the heavenly palaces – an army consisting of over 100 thousand in total blanketed the scenario's sky.

[The Pagoda-Bearing Heavenly King Li Jing, Prince Nezha, and Erlang Shen. Now that is a nostalgic combination. And not only that, the heavenly palace's lazy-arsed geezers are here too…]

(The enemies from the heavenly palace he used to fight against a long time ago were now standing before him.)

[Great Sage, what's the meaning of this?]

Prince Nezha, the very one who tried to suppress Jung Heewon along with Fei Hu earlier, was now brimming full with the power of a Story incomparably mightier than before. That was because he was no longer playing a role from the Story chamber, but making an appearance as himself.

[What do you mean, what? I'm here to end this scenario.]

The Great Sage's curt reply prompted an immediate opposition from <Emperor>'s Constellations to rise up.

[You can't arbitrarily decide on the conclusion like this!]

[Don't you realize that the「Journey to the West」will end up in the hands of a weakling Nebula if you do this?!]

[Hurry and give up on the 'sacred texts'!]

The Great Sage looked at the 'sacred texts' held in his hand, and then, took a glance at Shin Yoosung next to him. Then, a smirk formed on his lips.

[Argh, it's fine if it ends up with them. What's the problem? I mean, it's good that its fame is spreading out even further, am I wrong?]

[This is against our agreement!]

[Nope, it isn't. Us helping you out was until 'The four Sun Wukongs choose the same Story', wasn't it? And that day has arrived, that's all.]

Having realized what the Great Sage was thinking of, the <Emperor>'s Constellations began exchanging glances with each other.

[Nebula, <Emperor>, is greatly enraged at the 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband'!]

Erlang Shen stepped forward to represent his Nebula. [Great Sage. Do you understand what your actions mean? Could you be possibly planning to start the 'Great War against the Heavenly Worlds' in this place?]

[Hmm? No, I didn't think of that, but well, if you wish to fight, then…]

Ku-gugugu!!

The incredible aura flooding out from the Great Sage's Incarnation Body forced Constellations of <Emperor> to falter and retreat. His Story that swept across the heavenly worlds in the past was being unshackled in this scenario.

However, Erlang Shen's voice remained composed. [I acknowledge your strength. No one from <Emperor> can even dream of besting you in one on one combat. However, you can't win in this fight. Because the Story will simply repeat itself.]

Tsu-chuchuchuchut…!

Signs of「Stage Transformation」could be spied now. Stories collided, and the event from a long time ago was about to be recreated once more.

A great war between the king of Yogoes, the Great Sage Heaven's Equal, and <Emperor>.

The Great Sage spoke up. [For sure, I did lose back then. However, that was when I was just the 'Great Sage, Heaven's Equal'.]

The <Emperor> sensed something was off and made their move first.

[He's about to use his magic! Subdue him, now!]

[Lord Daode Tianzun! Your Jingangzhuo…!]

[Come, Six Brothers from the Mae Mountain!]

The Great Sage summoned his Somersault Cloud while watching the army of the heavenly worlds pounce on him. Dark clouds dyeing the sky black heeded Sun Wukong's Story and began gathering into one place.

[Giant Story, 'Journey to the West', has begun its storytelling!]

And then, he opened his mouth. [My true name is Sun Wukong.]

「The Great Sage Heaven's Equal.」

「Meihouwang.」

「Bimawen.」

「Douzhanshengfo.」

And, finally…

「The Demon King of Salvation.」

A storm began raging on top of the Tongtian River. Thunder and lightning crashed down. And in the centre of this storm, the Great Sage was slowly clenching his fists.

* * *

As the blinding lightning bolts pounded down on the battlefield, Yoo Joonghyuk finally arrived at his destination.

The godly figure of the Great Sage bringing down numerous Constellations in the middle of the Tongtian was truly something to behold.

'…Kim Dokja is inside that guy, huh'.

Thanks to his golden-coloured [Sage's Eye], Yoo Joonghyuk got to quickly confirm Kim Dokja's current situation. It seemed that the fool was still alive. And for some strange reason, that powerful 'Great Sage' personally incarnated to grant the man his own powers.

Jung Heewon and Shin Yoosung could be seen some distance away. They were basically hiding among the great battles taking place between the Yogoes and the Constellations, which was a wise decision on their part, really.

As for Lee Gilyoung, Lee Jihye, or even Jan Hayoung, it seemed that they hadn't arrived in this location as of yet.

'We need to finish this scenario soon'.

Their Story chamber had already reached the top of the rankings, and the 'sacred texts' were in the hands of Shin Yoosung, currently playing the role of Tang Sanzang.

[The 「I've become the retired SSSSS-grade Sun Wukong」 Story chamber is currently holding the 'sacred texts'.]

[Guarding the 'sacred texts' for one hour will automatically conclude the scenario.]

[54 minutes remaining until the conclusion of the scenario.]

Even the final phase of the scenario had been activated, as well. Just by holding on, the Giant Story of the 'Journey to the West' would be <Kim Dokja's Company>'s.

However, there was one thing that concerned him. And that would be…

Ku-gugugu…

It was that 'person' currently spectating on the battlefield from the middle of the sky.

The 'Secretive Plotter'.

He was simply watching on at the fight between the Great Sage and <Emperor> without getting involved. Yoo Joonghyuk could guess what he was planning here. He was probably planning to wait until the Great Sage ran out of strength and launch a sneak attack on his opponent afterwards.

However, the incarnated Plotter's aura wasn't the same as before.

– He seems to have wasted a lot of Probability. He indeed has far too much riding on this regression turn.

Those words were spoken by Yoo Joonghyuk [999]. From some time ago, this damn dumpling was making himself home on the full-sized Yoo Joonghyuk's shoulder.

He glanced at [999] with disinterested eyes before silently unsheathing the [Black Heavenly Demon Sword].

"Meaning, this is my chance to kill him."

That was when the Secretive Plotter accurately locked eyes with him. Just from meeting that being's gaze caused Yoo Joonghyuk to freeze up on the spot.

[Story, 'One who Opposes Miracles', is shrinking away.]

[Story, 'One who Hunted the King of Disasters', is refusing to fight.]

His Stories were shivering in fear. So, becoming weak meant falling into such a state? The memories of defeat brushing past him now ruled over him.

Perhaps, the [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] wasn't the only thing that broke on that day.

[999] addressed him again.

– Looks like you're afraid.

Yoo Joonghyuk didn't want to acknowledge it, but it was the truth.

– Indeed, the current you will never defeat the 'Great Plotter'.

It was the 'despair' that couldn't be overcome no matter which history he was willing to bet away. Yoo Joonghyuk stared at that overwhelming wall of time. That wasn't something mere 'effort' could overcome.

– However, it's not as if there are no other avenues left for you.

"What?"

[999] leapt off from Yoo Joonghyuk's shoulder, and his outer appearance began transforming. A Murim dumpling was changing to that of Yoo Joonghyuk.

[999]'s height grew back up in an instant, and regained the exact same appearance as Yoo Joonghyuk's.

The distinctive Status of a Transcendent oozed out from the back of another him currently facing away. Yoo Joonghyuk became keenly aware of who this was in this moment.

Yoo Joonghyuk from the 999th turn.

As his black coat danced in the air, [999] addressed his counterpart. "Remember. Remember who you really are. Remember what you wished to achieve by coming this far."

[999] then slowly pulled out a sword from his inner pocket. Surprisingly, it was not the [Splitting the Sky Sword].

No, it was the [Black Heavenly Demon Sword], the exact same weapon that the 3rd turn Yoo Joonghyuk possessed.

[999] spoke up once more.

"Let me show you the battle from the 999th turn."

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* Official novel illustration (canonical)

Chapter 443: Ep. 83 - Dokja's Incarnation, V

Anyone would've read about Sun Wukong's story at least once in their lives. In my case, the first thing I'd recall after hearing his name would be his description as written in the 'Ways of Survival'.

「Ruyi Jingu Bang that destroys the heavens.」

「Body Outside Body spell that allows him to fight against a Nebula all by himself.」

「Thunderclouds capable of bringing down stars of the world.」

One of the strongest Constellations in the 'Ways of Survival', that was the Great Sage Heaven's Equal, Sun Wukong.

[Giant Story, 'Journey to the West', is continuing on with its storytelling!]

And right now, I had become that very Sun Wukong.

Kugugugugu!

Every time the Great Sage's fist pointed at a spot in the sky, the stars of <Emperor> fell in droves. I ended up holding my breath after witnessing that overwhelming power from a first-person perspective.

I already knew that he was powerful, but never did I guess that it'd be by this much.

'Hey, maknae-yah. What are you busy yapping on about?'

I heard Meihouwang's voice in my head.

It seemed that including myself, all five versions of Sun Wukong were watching the Great Sage's rampage in real-time as well.

'Are you shocked by your hyung-nims' power level?'

'…To be honest, I'm really impressed'.

Kwa-kwakwakwakwa!

[Kuwaaahk!]

A giant that got sent flying away just now was a Narrative-grade Constellation.

Come on now, how could blowing away a Narrative-grade with a single lightning bolt even make sense?

Meihouwang spoke as if to mock our opponents. 'Hng, was that the Giant God? That measly little Narrative-grade made a mistake by trying to fight us'.

'But, wasn't the Prisoner of the Golden Headband' a Narrative-grade as well…?'

The one who answered back this time was Bimawen. 'If we were on our own, sure. But you now understand what kind of an existence we are, don't you?'

He was right. This was really hitting home for me.

The main protagonist of the 'Journey to the West', Sun Wukong, was created by four different Sun Wukongs.

The king of all monkeys that ruled the Water Curtain Cave, 'Meihouwang'.

Acknowledged by the Jade Emperor for his magical prowess and awarded the post of 'Bimawen'.

The 'Great Sage Heaven's Equal', who fought against the heavenly worlds that looked down on him.

And finally… 'Douzhanshengfo' who gained enlightenment through the events of the 'Journey to the West'.

Only after the Stories of these 'Sun Wukongs' gather in one place would his true power be unleashed.

Bimawen muttered out. 'That Great Sage dude, he's really having fun, isn't he? Well, I guess it's been a long time since he got to cut loose like this'.

Indeed, the Great Sage's true voice sounded as if he was really enjoying himself. [The heavenly worlds have become a lot weaker, haven't you! Is this all you've got?]

Narrative-grade Constellations couldn't even endure ten-or-so exchanges of blows and all came crashing down into the Tongtian River's waters.

[Attack him!!]

Despite that, <Emperor>'s forces still remained powerful. After all, it was the Nebula that boasted the highest number of stars in the <Star Stream>.

The thing was, though, the Great Sage's Story was only getting started, too.

[OhOhOhOhOhOhOh!]

Outer Gods roared out all at the same time, and a lightning bolt landed on Sun Wukong's Ruyi Bang. Ripples of golden light exploded then, and he powerfully threw his weapon into the sky.

Kwa-aaaaah!

Ruyi Bang's torpedo-like attack burned the heavens and flew forward with ferocious momentum. Incredible gusts of gale winds whipped around.

Finally, the dispersing spray of water died down. One of the Constellations, soaked to the bone like a mouse that fell inside a well, muttered out in disbelief.

[W-what is the meaning of…?!]

A portion of the skies was now empty.

That single attack managed to annihilate thousands of divine immortals rushing in.

[T-this, is this the real Great Sage, Heaven's Equal…]

Even then, even when facing this overwhelming spectacle, <Emperor>'s spirit didn't diminish one bit.

[There's no need to fear! His Story is bound to hit its limit soon!]

[Do not let up and attack! He's all alone in the end!]

The number of divine immortals swelled back up again and refilled the empty void in an instant.

This was how <Emperor> fought.

I got goosebumps. No matter how strong our side was, that side had no end to their supply. At this rate, the one to lose would be…

'Hng, no need to cower already. That fool hasn't used his power yet, after all'.

'That fool?'

'I meant Douzhanshengfo'.

Ah, Douzhanshengfo, the Victorious Fighting Buddha. He was the one who dealt with the Outer God transformation penalty earlier in my stead.

'Is he alright?'

'The fourth is fine. He's enlightened in the ways of the Four Noble Truths (苦集滅道), so the memories of the material world are meaningless to him. Everything would return to 'nothingness', that's why'.

Bimawen quickly tackled Meihouwang down. 'Since when did Douzhanshengfo become the fourth?'

'Since he was the fourth one to make the appearance, that's why. Isn't it normal to count chronologically?'

'With that thought process, then…'

'Obviously, I am the first since Sun Wukong started off with me. And congratulations, even though you're the least famous one, you get to be the second'.

'Acting exactly like a dumbass monkey that you are, busy spitting in your own face. You think anyone would actually remember a king of monkeys stuck in a cave?'

'Well, it's a lot better than you fool who had to clean horse shit out of a stable'.

Was it because of the two Sun Wukongs' bickering? The construction of the Great Sage's Story became unstable for a moment there, and he ended up getting struck abruptly by an enemy attack.

As the main body began shaking, the Great Sage finally exploded in irritation. [Shut the hell up! I can't concentrate!]

Of course, he didn't forget to add one more thing triumphantly, as well. [I'm the most famous one, so obviously I'm the first!]

Meihouwang and Bimawen exploded in a fit of dissatisfaction at the same time.

For the first time since the battle commenced, the Great Sage had to be on the defensive against the incoming vast wave of the stars.

If he got pushed back here, then he'd not be able to win this war. Maybe both Meihouwang and Bimawen understood that point as well, as they stopped bickering and concentrated, as well.

Boom!! Bang!! Ka-boom!!

It was at that moment that a corner of the battlefield collapsed and a huge battleship made its entrance.

"Ahjussi! I'm here-!!"

It was Lee Jihye, advancing forward while destroying <Emperor>'s vessels. The members of <Kim Dokja's Company> had made their move in order to support Sun Wukong fighting alone. That wasn't all, though.

[Constellation, 'Golden-bodied Arhat', is incarnating into the scenario!]

The Great Sage's real companions began entering the scenario one by one. The Golden-bodied Arhat, Sha Wujing, appeared in the sky in his Incarnation Body and smiled contently as he looked at Lee Jihye down below.

[So, you are the one who played me?]

"…Who the heck is that monster??"

[Constellation, 'Cleanser of Altars', is incarnating into the scenario!]

The next one to appear was the owner of the Nine-tooth Spike Rake. Zhu Bajie kitted out in a piece of loincloth so flimsy and small that it might not as well be there flapping below his jiggling belly fat, shouted out loudly. [Where are you, the Supreme King Pigsy, Yoo Joonghyuk? Hahaha! I was thoroughly impressed by you, the one who played me!]

It seemed that the 'Cleanser of Altars' was fixated on Yoo Joonghyuk at this point.

The Great Sage looked at both Zhu Bajie and Sha Wujing, and nodded his head. [You came, fellow disciples. A bit late, weren't you.]

[I didn't really come to help you out, senior brother. No, I was just curious about the actor playing me, so don't be mistaken.]

Zhu Bajie muttered out some excuses that sounded oddly coy for some reason, and along with Sha Wujing who looked somewhat shocked and hurt, stood next to Sun Wukong.

When the Demon-Slaying Staff and the Nine-tooth Spike Rake unleashed their Statuses right next to the Ruyi Bang, it finally dawned on me that all of the 'three musketeers' from the 'Journey to the West' had gathered in one place.

[Giant Story, 'Journey to the West', is regaining its original Status!]

Soon, the nervous Constellations of <Emperor> loudly yelled out.

[Judges! Are you saying that you'll be siding with the Great Sage?]

[It's not just them.]

Six more humanoids were standing tall behind the three Journey to the West's main characters. One of them resembled a monkey, while others resembled a shark, a lion, and even a roc.

I immediately recognised who they were.

The Great Sage Who Covers the Seas, Saurian Demon King.

The Great Sage Who Brings Chaos to the Heavens, Roc Demon King.

The Great Sage Who Moves Mountains, Lion Spirit King.

The Great Sage Who Pierces Through the Winds, Macaque Spirit King.

The Great Sage Who Chased Away the Immortals, Snub-nosed Monkey Spirit King.

The last person wasn't a Yogoe, but Jung Heewon.

"…This just got rather interesting."

Thanks to the blessing from the 'Great Sage who Pacifies Heaven' Bull Demon King, the Status of the actress playing that role, Jung Heewon, was rising up at a break-neck pace.

[We will fight alongside you, Great Sage, Heaven's Equal.]

The Seven Great Sages that waged the 'Great War against the Heavenly Worlds' alongside Sun Wukong had finally gathered in one place once more.

These Yogoes didn't get much page-time during the original 「Journey to the West」 and as a result, their presence had always remained behind the veil of obscurity. They appeared today to undo the knot of resentment in their hearts.

[I always felt wronged because my nickname also happens to be 'Meihouwang'. Today, I shall resolve my deep-seated grudge!]

After the Seven Great Sages jumped into the fray, the flow of the battlefield changed greatly in an instant.

Those Outer Gods hesitantly studying the Plotter's moods until then joined the battle as well.

Meihouwang (Handsome Monkey King) watching the battle unfold muttered to himself. 'Where did that Supreme King Pigsy disappear to, anyway?'

Now that I took a look, I couldn't see Yoo Joonghyuk anywhere.

He should've been battling the 28 Mansions Constellations just now, so…

Suddenly, I had this ominous foreboding.

I looked up at the Wenny King and the Great Dokkaebis watching the climax of this scenario from high up in the sky.

[Advance! Do not retreat and continue fighting! The victory shall be <Emperor>'s in the end!]

<Emperor>'s Constellations roared out energetically and continued to push forward.

The ones taking the lead up front were the Heavenly Palace's Four Heavenly Kings.

Dhrtarastra of the East.

Virudhaka of the South.

Virupaksa of the West.

Vaisravana of the North.

Not only that, there were the Pagoda-bearing Heavenly King Li Jing as well as Prince Nezha. It seemed that they were getting desperate as well.

And then, even the Queen Mother of the West, and the owner of the Jingangzhuo, Daode Tianzun, too… Constellations that you might recognise by their names alone had descended to this place and unleashed their Stories.

There was little doubt that the 'Great War against the Heavenly Worlds' was being recreated right now.

[Nebula, <Emperor>, is releasing its Giant Stories!]

This was the might of a 'Great Nebula'.

Even then, the Great Sage didn't back off.

[Many in the audience can't close their slack jaws while watching this abrupt spectacle.]

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', declares that if the 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' loses today, they will no longer be considered rivals.]

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is cheering on the 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband'!]

[Constellation, 'Goryeo's First Sword', is expressing his respect towards the 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband's' martial prowess.]

The first one to kneel was Dhrtarastra, followed by Virudhaka. Everywhere the Ruyi Bang flew past, the Heavenly Worlds army crumbled.

The divine level of martial arts, the might of the greatest Constellation, Sun Wukong was in full display.

But then, a Buddhist chant coming from somewhere caused the Great Sage to come to a stop for the first time.

Tsu-chuchuchuchu…

Even I ended up gasping out in pain.

It seemed that I wasn't the only one suffering here. Both Meihouwang and Bimawen spoke in annoyed voices.

'Goddammit…!'

'…It's that baldy monk'.

The constrictive headband was tightening around the Great Sage's head. He massaged his temples with one hand while issuing a warning. [Guanyin. Do not interfere!]

Those words prompted a Buddhist lotus pedestal to appear among the clouds. Guanyin was sitting in the middle of the pedestal in the lotus sitting position.

[Wukong, have you forgotten about what happened in the past?]

[What are you talking about!?]

[Please stop this. This is not the righteous path.]

[What if I don't want to?]

[Have you not received my aid until this moment? Can you not concede in consideration of that, at least?]

[…Your aid?] The Great Sage's brows shot up higher. [All thanks to your oh-so-wonderful aid, I got to enjoy untold hardship.]

As if he was venting out all of his built-up resentment, the Great Sage began shouting out loudly. [All those trials and tribulations we had to go through came to be because of your voyeuristic tendencies…!]

The Great Sage's memories related to Guanyin, the one who perceived the sounds of the world, began telling their tale.

「"The law stipulates that one has to fulfil all nine by nine, eighty-one tribulations in order to return to their 'self'. However, they have only experienced the eightieth calamity, and thus lacks one. Five Gates, I now task you to go after them and create the final calamity!"」

The 'Journey to the West' final calamity – the one behind it was none other than Guanyin.

[The ones responsible for the world's calamity by raising up the army of demons and inciting the Yogoes, were you and <Emperor>!!]

[…They were all necessary tribulations. You must cool your ire now.]

As the Great Sage grew even more agitated, Guanyin began reciting the Constrictive Sutra once more.

[You think you can stop me with such a pathetic sutra?]

Pah-chuchuchut!!

The Status emitted by the Great Sage, Heaven's Equal disrupted the Constrictive Sutra's effect.

Guanyin was taken greatly aback by this development and while retreating along with her lotus pedestal, she raised her voice.

[…Your powers have grown too strong. I alone can't handle him.]

The Pagoda-bearing Heavenly King bit his lower lip. [We'd be able to win if we drag out the fight, but…]

Less than 30 minutes remained until the conclusion of the scenario. They knew that, even if they emerged victorious through a protracted battle, there would be no meaning if they were defeated in the scenario.

[Sakyamuni! Where is Sakyamuni?!]

In the end, <Emperor> had to make the obvious choice as their final move.

[We only need the 「Five Pillars」! As long as we have that Story, defeating that damn monkey bastard will not pose any problems!]

The 「Five Pillars」 referred to the Buddha's five fingers.

Even if it was the heaven-defying Sun Wukong, as long as there existed the Story of him being subdued by the Buddha's palm, he'd not be able to escape from the 「Stage Transformation」's influence.

And one of the split bodies of the Buddha, Sakyamuni, existed in this world.

Prince Nezha whispered to the Pagoda-bearing Heavenly King next to him.

[Have you forgotten? Sakyamuni's whereabouts are unknown since the 'Great War of Saints and Demons'. Most likely… I fear that he had perished during the process of sealing away the Isle of Reincarnators.]

[Sakyamuni has died? Doesn't that mean, there is no method to suppress him…?!]

[Please, do not worry. We do have his successor with us.]

At the end of those words, the army of <Emperor> split open.

[Come, 'Sakyamuni's Successor'!]

The highest-ranked Constellations of <Emperor> were walking out from the space created by the army. Each and every one of them were powerful beings that rivalled the likes of <Olympus>'s 12 Gods.

But when I saw the person wearing the airy Buddhist robe walking in the middle of them, I quietly grew agitated.

「Yoo Sangah was there.」

Yoo Sangah, reincarnating through the promise with Sakyamuni. And by the eternal chain of Samsara, she was reborn as the 'Sakyamuni's Successor'.

'…Great Sage?'

The Great Sage's body had stiffened up immediately. I could sense a great deal of emotional turmoil within him.

I also heard Meihouwang's and Bimawen's voices just then.

'So, that was why, when he saw her for the first time…'

'Who'd have thunk that it was 'that' Incarnation Body?'

At that moment, a certain part of the Great Sage's memories rushed in. That lengthy storyline of the 'Journey to the West' was abridged in an instant.

And I realized it then. Yoo Sangah hadn't simply reincarnated as the 'Sakyamuni's Successor'. No, her current Incarnation Body used to belong to someone very special.

「"Oh, dear Sanzang."」

Tang Sanzang (三藏法師).

The one whose mastery of the Constrictive Sutra had surpassed everyone else's in the whole world, and also the only one capable of coercing Sun Wukong with just one sentence.

<Emperor>'s Constellations loudly shouted out.

[Hurry and suppress that bastard, oh 'Sakyamuni's Successor'!]

Even as he saw Yoo Sangah walk towards him, the Great Sage Heaven's Equal showed no sign of budging – as if he had fallen deeply into the reminiscence of the ancient past.

'Great Sage! Get a move on! What are you doing?!'

'We're going to get done in at this rate!'

Hearing those words made me a bit anxious as well.

Was the 'Yoo Sangah' before my eyes the 'Yoo Sangah' that I used to know? What if she lost her memories, like how the reincarnated Shin Yoosung lost hers?

What if she became a completely different person to whom I used to know?

Yoo Sangah's hand gently reached out and touched Sun Wukong's headband.

[You seem to be in great pain. It must've been difficult for you.]

But the moment I heard her clear voice, I realized something.

This person… was definitely someone that I knew.

She was neither 'Tang Sanzang' nor 'Sakyamuni's Successor'. No, she was the one companion that I could trust the most – Yoo Sangah.

[I believe that this item will look better on someone else now.]

Her hand slowly moved and took Sun Wukong's Constrictive Headband off.

The headband that had been tightening around the Great Sage's head fell to the ground with absolutely no resistance whatsoever.

Meihouwang, Bimawen, and even the Great Sage – all of them stared at her in pure disbelief.

<Emperor>'s Constellations freaked out grandly and tried to rush in, but by then, it was all too late.

As the roars from the Constellations rained down, the prisoner of the oldest prison was finally being freed.

[Awakening condition for the Constellation, 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' has been satisfied.]

[Douzhanshengfo's Story is being unsealed.]

[Modifier for the Constellation, 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband', is evolving!]

As the glorious rays of light exploded forth, the 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' slowly opened his eyes.

[Constellation, 'The Most Ancient Liberator', has been freed from his seal.]

Chapter 444: Ep. 83 - Dokja's Incarnation, VI

After he was freed from the seal, the Great Sage Heaven's Equal became more like a Yaksha.

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', is greatly astonished.]

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is dazedly watching the battlefield.]

[Constellation, 'Spear that Draws the Borders of the Oceans', is opening his eyes wide.]

[Constellation, 'Great Mother God Who Created Man out of Earth', can't tear her eyes away.]

This power that, never mind the highest-ranked Narrative-grade Constellations, even the Myth-grade Constellations had no choice but to pay attention to.

Sun Wukong's clones multiplied through the Body Outside Body spell to number in the hundreds, nay, into thousands, and began dealing with the

Nebula's great army. Thunderbolts shooting out from their fists obliterated a group of Historical-grade Constellations in one go, and a dozen or so Narrative-grade stars crashed to the ground below after getting struck by the Ruyi Bang.

The entirety of the Tongtian River couldn't handle his power and began crying out.

Kwa-aaaaaah!!

This was the might of Sun Wukong, the one who had completed the conclusion of the grand epic, the 'Journey to the West'.

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

Sparks exploded non-stop on our body. We were inside the 'Journey to the West', the location of his Story no less, yet the <Star Stream> was still suppressing his powers. The disjointed Probability was returning in full to the Sun Wukongs as well as myself, and thanks to that, I thought I might lose my mind here.

[Excessive distortion in the Probability is eroding your consciousness away!]

'Looks like maknae is finding it hard to handle'.

'Let him leave'.

[Four Sun Wukongs have agreed to separate the 'Demon King of Salvation'.]

My body grew out of the main one like a sprout and began crashing down to the earth below.

I wretched uncontrollably and by the time I regained my wits, I found myself sagging on top of a piece of floating debris on the Tongtian River.

I could see Sun Wukong that I used to be a part of only a moment ago busy engaging the <Emperor>'s Constellations in a bitter warfare up in the sky.

"Ahjussi!"

A voice came to me from somewhere. And soon enough, two humanoids crashed into me. One fairly large, and one fairly small.

[Baat! Baaaaaht!]

I raised my upper body with great difficulty and saw Shin Yoosung and Biyoo clinging onto me.

While crying her eyes out, the former was hugging my arm dirtied by the blood and flesh of various Yogoes. I wiped my hands caked in blood on my coat and carefully hugged her.

Even though [The Fourth Wall] existed, the incoming rush of emotions couldn't be restrained.

I was back.

I had managed to come back again.

"Dokja-ssi."

I raised my head to find Yoo Sangah in her white robe standing nearby.

She had reincarnated into the Incarnation Body of Tang Sanzang. Even though her body was now different, her appearance was the same Yoo Sangah that I remembered.

I smiled weakly at her. "You came back."

"I've seen all the things you've done while I was away, Dokja-ssi."

My shoulders flinched just a bit before I knew it. I wondered if she'd scold me, but to my relief, she simply smiled benevolently.

"It must've been hard for you."

Before I could say something in reply, though, she continued on.

"However, please stay that way for a little while longer."

Huh?

Just as I was about to open my mouth, Yoo Sangah gently reached out and placed something on my head.

[You have become the owner of the 'Constrictive Headband'.]

[Due to the effect of the 'Constrictive Headband', a new Modifier has been generated.]

[You have become the 'Prisoner of the Constrictive Headband'!]

My jaw went slack from this unbelievable event.

"Hmm, so, what should I do with you now?"

Seeing Yoo Sangah pressing her finger to my forehead and wagging it around a bit, I was overcome with this slight sense of terror. I was well acquainted with the pain from the headband already.

I quickly opened my mouth. "I-I know that I made a few mistakes. I do. However… Can, can I tell you in detail about them a little later? Right now…"

"Right now, that side should take priority, I know."

I nodded my head.

We looked up at the sky where the [Great Hole] was still whirling around. And in the middle of the hole, at the two Yoo Joonghyuks currently locked in a bitter battle.

Yoo Joonghyuk [999] wielding the [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] dashed into the air while scattering the Status of a Transcendent.

At the end of his travel awaited the king of all Yoo Joonghyuks.

【So, this is what you chose in the end.】

The oldest Yoo Joonghyuk in the universe.

He was Yoo Joonghyuk who broke past the 1863rd regression turn and witnessed his own Conclusion.

[999] stared at that 'Secretive Plotter' and recalled his own ancient memories.

'■■'.

The end that came around to all living creatures just once.

[999] also experienced his own version of the end. Although what he saw was different from the Plotter's Conclusion, he at least glimpsed his end just a little.

The 999th regression turn was quite different from the others.

The majority of people would never understand what it meant for a single person to live a thousand lives. However, [999] did just that, and he knew that he'd get to live just as many lives in the future. And that was why, he…

「"…At least for this turn, I shall live for all of you."」

He sacrificed himself for his companions during the 999th turn.

「"Captain, just forget about me! I'm telling you, leave me behind and go!!"」

During the 38th scenario, he lost his left arm trying to rescue Lee Jihye.

「"Joonghyuk-ssi! No!! Joonghyuk-ssi!!"」

During the 55th scenario, he lost his right leg for Lee Hyunsung's sake.

「"But, but why did you, for someone like me…"」

And during the 74th scenario, he sacrificed both of his eyes to awaken Shin Yoosung.

「"It's because all of you also did that for me. That is all."」

Whether this was him trying to atone for his past lives, or an odd, unlikely whim resulting from the thousandth stab at life, he couldn't tell.

Except that, Yoo Joonghyuk of the 999th regression turn earnestly lived his life like that. For the first time ever, he gave up on the idea of wanting to see the 'Conclusion'. What he wished for instead, was…

「"I wish for all of you to see the end of this world."」

Didn't matter even if he didn't make it, he just wanted one person at the very least to see the end of this <Star Stream>.

Yoo Joonghyuk of the 999th turn sacrificed his memories and soul for that purpose. He didn't hesitate to form the 'Other World Pledge' if that allowed his companions to grow stronger.

And at the end of the road where he sacrificed his everything…

「"Captain, we're almost at the Final Scenario."」

A small miracle happened.

「"Just a little bit more, a bit more and we're there! Joonghyuk-ssi!!"」

He couldn't even walk with his own power anymore. He no longer possessed hands to swing a sword, he didn't have eyes to look at the world anymore, and couldn't use any of his skills after his bloodstreams all went haywire.

But as the reward for his sacrifice, his companions managed to get near the Final Scenario.

「"Please wake up! Please. Please!!"」

In the end, though, he didn't get to see the conclusion to all the scenarios. The 'Other World Pledge' had taken away his life on the verge of the Final Scenario, that was why.

The 'Secretive Plotter' stared at such [999] and spoke up. 【Yoo Joonghyuk from the 999th regression turn. I respect the life you led. Excluding me, you were the only one who managed to get near the 'Conclusion'.】

[999] quietly pointed with the [Black Heavenly Demon Sword].

From the body of the 'Secretive Plotter', shouts directed at [999] coming from other Yoo Joonghyuks flooded out.

– Are you being serious?

– Do you really wish to fight the Great Plotter?

– You need to wake up, [999]!

【However, you are a part of me. No matter how much history you drag out and use it against me, you'll still never defeat me.】

"If you are really me, then you should know that you can't persuade me."

【The life you experienced only amounts to half of mine. Besides, your memories aren't even perfect. Yet, you wish to fight me regardless?】

[999] didn't reply and simply built up his momentum.

Perhaps he read something from such a [999], the Plotter's attitude suddenly changed.

【If this is what you truly want.】

Jet-black smoke rose up and began creating the outer skin of the 'Secretive Plotter'. A certain man's outer appearance slowly materialised within the smoke.

The loneliest king in this universe, the white coat-wearing Yoo Joonghyuk from the 1863rd turn now stood there.

*

【I too no longer have the need to carry on with this pointless charade.】

At the end of those words, the 'Secretive Plotter' discarded the coat he was wearing. The white coat flew away with the wind and landed on the surface of Tongtian.

Pitch-black darkness seemed to wrap around his shoulders, and before long, a black coat was now covering him. It was the same coat that stayed with him through to the 1863rd turn.

The [Splitting the Sky Sword] in his hands began emitting ominous aura.

And at the same time, the figures of two Yoo Joonghyuks vanished in the air.

Kwa-kwakwakwakwakwa!!

Countless friction noises arising from two swords clashing alerted others to the unfolding fierce battle. The vicious collision of two Statuses caused sparks to explode endlessly and dyed the sky pure blue.

This sudden eruption of the violent clash prompted the eyes of the audience, focused on the Great Sage's struggles until then, to shift away.

That also included Yoo Joonghyuk, standing on the surface of Tongtian and looking up at the ferocious battle between the 999th turn and the 1863rd turn.

His clenched fists trembled as his muscles tightened. Both of them would prove to be a difficult opponent for the current him. If he continued to diligently acquire more 'lives', then he might have reached that lofty height.

Yoo Joonghyuk kept his eyes wide open and fixed his gaze. As if he wanted to absorb everything about [999] and the 'Secretive Plotter', he read their Stories over and over again.

[Story, 'Hell of Eternity', has begun its storytelling!]

The Story depicting the truly unfathomable hellish landscape – the 'Yoo Joonghyuk' who had walked half of that hellish nightmare, and another 'Yoo Joonghyuk' who had actually witnessed the end of that hell, were clashing against each other.

Two [Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship]'s drew long arcs in the air like shooting stars. One was from the [Splitting the Sky Sword], while the other was the [Black Heavenly Demon Sword]. Two swords burned brightly like a pair of supernovas.

【Now that I look back, you didn't use Splitting the Sky Sword as your main weapon, did you?】

During the 999th turn, Lee Jihye inherited his [Splitting the Sky Sword].

The 'Secretive Plotter' used the [Breaking the Sky Meteor Strike] (破天流星決), piercing through [999]'s entire body.

【You will never win against me with such poor sword technique.】

"…I'm sure that's the case. However."

[999] became riddled with wounds in the blink of an eye, yet he didn't back off and held the sword even tighter.

For a moment there, the Plotter's eyes quaked.

[999] had disappeared for a blink, but then, he materialised right before the stunned Outer God's eyes. This was not the [Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship].

It was 'Instant Kill'.

"At least, I can show you the history that I lived through."

It was Lee Jihye's technique.

【Something like this…!】

The [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] was deflected away in the nick of time, but it now smoothly drew the arc belonging to [Kendo] next.

Tsu-chuchuchut!

The eyes of [999] now flickered with the lights of [Demon Slaying].

The life Lee Jihye lived during the 999th turn was now unfolding from [999]'s hands. The kick as sturdy as Lee Hyunsung's. The Claw Technique as ferocious as Lee Seolhwa's. Shin Yoosung's natural perceptiveness, and even Kim Namwoon's excellent battle sense, too.

Histories that [999] experienced through his body, began telling their stories now.

In this very moment, [999] wasn't alone.

Techniques from the companions he had saved were being recreated through his flesh.

[Kendo] broke past the [Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship], and the combination of [Blackening] and [Demon Slaying] dug into the open gaps of [Red Phoenix Shunpo].

And so, as Lee Seolhwa's [Thousand Spirits Poison] took aim at the Plotter's heart…

【With these measly trivial techniques…!】

[Giant Story, 'Pilgrim of the Lonely Apocalypse', has begun its storytelling!]

[999]'s Story began crumbling away. Lee Hyunsung's defenses crumbled and Lee Seolhwa's claws broke. Kim Namwoon and Lee Jihye both fell, while Shin Yoosung went down on her knees. The [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] flew out of his hands after he failed to withstand the impact, and the weapon fell to the surface of the Tongtian River.

Just like always, [999] was left alone.

【999, you have failed.】

Confronted by the unfathomable life lived by one individual, the lives of his companions all crumbled away.

@1L9I2Aa8UCL0IGJ

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[999] nodded his head, yet he did not despair. "…In another universe, it might be different."

[999]'s gaze was redirected to the Tongtian's battlefield, something that the Great Sage and <Kim Dokja's Company> had created. Events of this universe that had never happened before.

【…Even you have been fooled by the baseless hope in this place, it seems.】

"You speak as if it's someone else's business, Great Plotter." [999] staggered unsteadily, yet he continued to speak. "We have failed. We failed to save a single one of our companions, and witnessed the end by ourselves. Was that really the end we wanted to see?"

【That is futile sentimentality.】

"This universe is different."

【No, this universe shouldn't even exist from the beginning.】

The 'Secretive Plotter' spoke coldly as his figure moved.

【This universe was created by the end result interfering with the cause. This universe hastens the collapse of Probability with its mere existence. Indeed, this place shouldn't even be allowed to exist, as it's simply a practical joke by the 'Oldest Dream'…】

"Great Plotter, you already understand this, don't you? Within that closed-off universe of the oh-so-great 'original storyline', it was impossible to see the story we wanted to. And that was why you…"

For the first time there, the 'Secretive Plotter' faltered slightly. But that lasted only for a moment.

He lightly wielded the [Splitting the Sky Sword] which pierced into [999]'s body.

【Return to me, [999]. I need you back.】

The stabbing [Splitting the Sky Sword] began sucking out [999]'s memories. Their ego that had been split apart was now being reclaimed.

[999]'s blurring vision shifted down to the Tongtian's surface below. The 'Secretive Plotter' already knew who was down there and spoke in a mocking tone. 【He has already tasted defeat at my hands. Do you honestly believe that someone who can't even remember anything is capable of stopping me?】

"Yoo Joonghyuk, take hold of the sword!"

A sorrowful voice reverberated throughout the Tongtian. And at the place where that voice reached stood Yoo Joonghyuk, who was neither [999] nor the Secretive Plotter.

He was looking up with a confused expression but then, looked back down to the two items resting on top of the debris floating on the river.

[999]'s Black Heavenly Demon Sword, and then… the white coat the 'Secretive Plotter' had discarded.

「"I wish to live."」

「"If I have a chance, just like the world that I saw…"」

Pain assaulted him in his head. Unknown memories brushed past his mind.

[Your Stories are getting agitated.]

"You need to remember who you really are!"

As if he was under a spell, Yoo Joonghyuk grasped the [Black Heavenly Demon Sword]. It felt so natural in his hand, as if it had been his since a long time ago. And he picked the coat up from the debris as well. It was white, the colour he disliked.

– You are not the 3rd turn Yoo Joonghyuk.

That day, [999] told him that.

– Haven't you ever wondered why something felt off? Even if Kim Dokja was here, does you of the mere '3rd turn' developing this fast make sense to you?

As he fell deeper into this familiar sense of deja vu, he slowly put the white coat on. It fit him like a glove, as if he had worn it before.

– Do not try to bullshit me. I'm 3rd turn. I…

It'd be a lie if he had never thought about it at least once before.

Was he really the '3rd turn' Yoo Joonghyuk?

– …And even if I'm not the '3rd turn', all I can remember are the memories of up to the 3rd turn, anyway.

Yoo Joonghyuk slowly raised his head and looked up at the sky.

The slowly-vanishing [999] was looking back at him.

– Don't you have companions now?

The face that he had not seen once, even with a mirror.

– Companions, that remember your life far better than yourself?

The Plotter's [Splitting the Sky Sword] moved. The jet-black Status capable of rending even the universe itself took aim at him, and in that moment, Yoo Joonghyuk recalled someone.

And then…

[The 'Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint' 3rd stage has activated!]

As if a Sponsor had descended, the power of a familiar star incarnated into him.

「Let's go.」

And the story began.

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* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)
* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)

Chapter 445: Ep. 84 - 1864, I

"Dokja ahjussi?"

I hesitated while watching the distant battle between two Yoo Joonghyuks.

[Your Incarnation Body's condition is currently unstable!]

I'd not be any help whatsoever if I joined the fight in my current condition. And when I took a closer look, the ones fighting were [999] and the 'Secretive Plotter'. I wasn't sure why, but [999] must've decided to side with us.

I clenched my fists tightly.

｢Kim Dokja made a decision. There was only one method remaining.｣

The [Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint].

Just like back then against Nirvana, or during the fight against Poseidon…

– Maknae-yah, what are you hesitating for?

The Great Sage Heaven's Equal spoke to me. Even though he was in the middle of a huge battle in the sky, he still sensed my emotions.

I muttered in a voice that could barely be heard. "…I've gotten a little afraid of reading them."

It was probably after fighting against Yoo Joonghyuk back in the 'Isle of Reincarnators'. And more recently, right after I heard what [999] had to say.

「"Do you still believe that you can understand someone through just a few lines of text in a couple of chapters?"」

Up until now, I had been a 'reader' of the stories. However, for how long would it be okay for me to remain as one?

– Right, you possess the power to read another person.

He had accurately guessed my ability. He stuck around my channel for a long time as the 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband', so it wouldn't have been that difficult to figure that much out.

– There was a time when I too, wanted to know more about someone.

I sensed the Great Sage's gaze landing on Yoo Sangah. Or more correctly, not her exactly but her current 'Incarnation Body'. He was staring at the body's 'former owner'.

– I still haven't fully understood why Sanzang chased me out twice.

During the original 'Journey to the West', Sun Wukong was expelled from the party twice.

– However, I never asked Sanzang about it properly. Maybe it was because of my worthless pride. I was stuck in a loop, thinking and wondering only to myself. Why did that idiot do that? What was the reason for those decisions? What was the point of such obstinacy? What did I do wrong, and where did a problem come from? Even after our journey was over, those questions kept bubbling inside my head.

This would be my first time hearing such a story.

Even to someone like the Great Sage, there were unresolved questions reserved only for him.

– And by the time I finally found the courage to ask, my opportunity had slipped away already.

The faintest trace of dejection could be felt from his voice.

Since I didn't know much about the story after the conclusion of the 'Journey to the West', I had no way of estimating the depths of his sadness.

One thing that I could be sure of, though, was the fact that the real 'Sanzang' was no longer with us in this world, as Yoo Sangah had reincarnated into the Incarnation Body in question.

– And to find out the answers to those questions, we kept repeating this 「Journey to the West Remake」, hoping that maybe, someone else would tell us the story that I didn't know before, something that I had not read before.

Only then did I realize why the Great Sage participated in this scenario event. I felt curious just then. Did he finally find his answer?

– I couldn't find it. However… I did find a small solace.

The Great Sage's gaze was now fixed on Shin Yoosung. As the <Emperor>'s attacks rained down, he continued to speak.

– And about that solace, let me tell you all about it.

[Giant Story, 'Journey to the West', is continuing with its storytelling.]

– I'd probably never get to understand certain things. I'd never even get close, and maybe, everything I did might be in vain. However, even if we know it's impossible, we still have to read the Story. That is what it means to exist as 'Constellations', as the stars of the heavens.

The Great Sage failed to understand Sanzang. And quite likely, he'd never get to understand even into the future.

Even then, he didn't give up.

– That's why you should read it.

'However, I alone can't…'

– Why do you think you're alone?

I reflexively raised my head after hearing his words.

– Maybe not like you, but people always are reading each other. So, you should not stop reading, either.

In a way, this advice wasn't really on point.

However, I still ended up feeling a certain something. It was as if small feathers had piled up. I began thinking that maybe this was the solace the Great Sage felt while watching our story.

"Yoo Sangah-ssi."

I called out to her, and she looked at me as if she was waiting. "Will you be alright?"

"Yes. By the way, if it's possible, be gentle…"

Yoo Sangah nodded her head and chanted the Constrictive Sutra in my direction.

My body slumped to the floor as if a fuse had gone out. My consciousness managed to slip out and quickly flew towards where I needed to go.

['Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint' 3rd stage is activating!]

[Your degree of understanding of the applicable individual is very high!]

[The '1st Person Protagonist's POV' is activating!]

My vision slowly stabilised and at the same time, powerful strength overflowed within my body. It was Yoo Joonghyuk's strength.

A short while later, the enemy's figure could be seen before us. An existence enveloped in the aura of immense Status and arrogantly glancing at us.

The 'Secretive Plotter'.

The Great Sage was right. That guy could never be defeated alone.

「Let's go.」

The Transcendent's Status violently raged within my body. I added every ounce of my own Status to Yoo Joonghyuk.

[Transcendent's Status has encountered the Demon King's Status!]

The powers that I earned so far interweaved with that of Yoo Joonghyuk's and began boiling up. Vigorous energy circulated within the blood vessels as if they had a complete overhaul.

Yoo Joonghyuk slowly opened his eyes gleaming in golden light and spoke back to me. 'You're late'.

He didn't get angry or reprimanded me, simply choosing to say that.

He probably knew that I was playing the role of Sun Wukong, though…

「I'm sorry.」

'Talk about unimportant matters later. Defeating this bastard takes our utmost priority'.

Kwa-aaaaah!!

The Plotter's [Splitting the Sky Sword] lightly danced, and the Tongtian River was split in half. With nary a hair's breadth, we managed to evade the attack. Constellations and Incarnations coincidentally within the range were swept away and became nothing more than fading screams. That was truly a nonsensical attack power.

【You're struggling in vain. Even if you managed to regain your memories, you still can't defeat me. Because you too also began from me.】

「What is he on about now?」

Yoo Joonghyuk running on the river's surface replied in annoyance. 'According to him, I'm not Yoo Joonghyuk from the 3rd turn'.

「Really? Then, what?」

I reflexively asked him, but to be honest, several dizzying theories were floating around in my brain already. Perhaps this was the question that had been building up from a long time ago.

「'The 3rd turn Yoo Joonghyuk shouldn't have known about such information, though?'」

Back during the [Green Zone] scenario.

「'…No matter what, his rate of growth is just too fast'.」

…And even back in the [Cinema Dungeon], too.

All the questions I secretly had every time I checked Yoo Joonghyuk's [Character List] began rising up one after the other. Even the conversation I had with [999] entered my head.

「"Yoo Joonghyuk in this world-line said that he was the 'third turn'. So, this place is the third regression turn."」

「"Trusting such information at its face value. How naïve."」

By the time I came around, I was already initiating the [Character List].

[Applicable individual's information is far too numerous. 'Character List' will change to 'Summarised List'.]

[For the convenience of the user, only the selected items will be displayed.]

<Character Summary>

Individual: Yoo Joonghyuk

Exclusive Attributes: Regressor <3rd turn> (Myth), Ruler of Amusement (Legendary)…

It said 3rd turn. He was definitely from the 3rd turn.

In that case, just what on earth were those guys talking about…?

「Kim Dok ja re ally ca n't t ell?」

Pages of my memories began flipping. Memories that I tried so hard not to recall.

「"That 'world' you've shown me, does it really exist?"」

「[The applicable individual is not a 'Character'.]」

'Wake up, Kim Dokja!'

I abruptly regained my wits after hearing Yoo Joonghyuk's shout. Now wasn't the time to think about something else.

The Plotter's Status as he floated up in the air was strengthening gradually.

【It seems that you still haven't really regained your memories.】

"…I won't lose so easily this time."

As if to oppose that rising Status, Yoo Joonghyuk raised his own power level. The movement technique, [Red Phoenix Shunpo], and the power of the [Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship] were pushed to their absolute limits. The

[Breaking the Sky Thunder Sword] completely covered the [Black Heavenly Demon Sword].

He fought in the same manner the last time. And still lost.

However, those weren't the only things accompanying him this time.

[5th Bookmark has been initiated!]

[Exclusive skill, 'Electrification Lv.23 (+13)', has been initiated.]

[Exclusive skill, 'Way of the Wind Lv.18 (+8)', is activating!]

['Demon King Transformation' is activating!]

Effects of the [Way of the Wind] were added to Yoo Joonghyuk's [Red Phoenix Shunpo], while the electrical energy from the [Electrification] permeated into the [Breaking the Sky Thunder Sword]. And finally, the power of 'Demon King' was added to the power of 'Transcendent'.

Double the power, triple, quadruple… Yoo Joonghyuk's Status multiplied in an instant and threateningly spread over the Tongtian's surface.

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

As the sparks danced in the air, we dashed towards the 'Secretive Plotter'. The [Electrification] and the [Breaking the Sky Thunder Sword] permeated in the [Black Heavenly Demon Sword]. The greatest technique belonging to both Kyrgios and the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint emitted blinding light simultaneously, causing a truly incredible storm of sword aura to gush out.

Kwa-aaaaaah!!

This was the power capable of cleanly splitting mountains in half and vaporising the ocean itself.

Unfortunately, the 'Secretive Plotter' remained unperturbed even when facing such power. Two swords then clashed, emitting screeching friction noise. As I was sharing the sensation with Yoo Joonghyuk, I felt the full brunt of the pain akin to my hands being torn to pieces.

We were attacking with both hands, while he used only one. Even then…

【How pitiful, Yoo Joonghyuk.】

…We failed to cut the 'Secretive Plotter'.

Tsu-chut, tsu-chuchuchut.

Sparks exploding around him indicated that he wasn't even going all out. How could there be such a large gap between our fighting power if that was the case?

[Story, 'Hell of Eternity', is continuing on with its storytelling.]

The surroundings were morphing into his stage. The hell of regression that reached 1863 turns. 'Outer Gods' moaning in pain inside burning craters and countless corpses of the stars strewn about.

【The price for escaping the closed universe and dreaming of a new story is for you to not even remember who you are. Is that the world you've been truly wishing for?】

That evil demon-like voice came from beyond the hellish landscape.

I was confused. It was as if I could almost get what he was saying, but at the same time, I couldn't readily accept it.

Yoo Joonghyuk that escaped from a closed universe and dreamed of a new story. I knew of only one 'Yoo Joonghyuk' that fit that criteria.

And if that was true, then…

Then, if the Yoo Joonghyuk I knew was that 'Yoo Joonghyuk'…

['The Fourth Wall' is getting even thicker.]

'Kim Dokja, we won't win unless you use that powerful skill'. Yoo Joonghyuk suddenly yelled out. 'Utilise the Story from the last time'.

I knew what he meant by 'last time'.

The 「Hell of Eternity」, the Story that I used while fighting against Poseidon in the past.

Back then, we killed Theseus by borrowing the memories of the 362nd turn Yoo Joonghyuk. I looked at the Story of darkness flowing around the 'Secretive Plotter' and could only sigh in doubt.

「Honestly, I'm not sure whether we can win or not even after using that.」

The regression turn I used all my being to read back then was only 362nd. Things would've improved somewhat by now compared to then, but still, I couldn't even guess whether that'd be enough to defeat the guy before our eyes or not.

「And also…」

That wasn't the only thing making me hesitant here.

If I succeeded in borrowing the strength of Yoo Joonghyuk from higher turn than 362nd, then this Yoo Joonghyuk would lose his memories alongside me.

Just like how Constellations and Incarnations read Stories, I too read Yoo Joonghyuk's 'Ways of Survival'.

If I used the 「Hell of Eternity」 here, then Yoo Joonghyuk would have to experience the 'reading' stained by my misunderstandings along with me.

The 'Ways of Survival' I read in order to survive. History that I 'remembered' as I pleased.

I had one-sidedly twisted or exaggerated the 'Yoo Joonghyuk' in that 'history'. My version was questionable at best, an idealistic depiction of the reality.

「…Dammit.」

Even then, I had no choice but to do this unfair thing.

[Story, 'Hell of Eternity', has begun its storytelling!]

While stuck inside the feeling of powerlessness, I flipped the pages. Whether it was before or after the apocalypse, it was the same story – all I could do at any given moment was to flip through the pages of a book.

Countless regression turns of Yoo Joonghyuk went past my eyes.

3rd turn, 4th, 5th… 41st… 182nd…

Memories continued to flow by.

Many Yoo Joonghyuks were now staring back at us.

362nd turn… 598th… 724th…

[Your 'Comprehension' is advancing towards a new possibility!]

[Pages you couldn't read before are now available!]

862th… 999th…

Blood welled inside my throat. Pain pummelled my head as if to shatter it into pieces.

[999]. The regression turn that I really liked.

Yoo Joonghyuk's dialogues gradually decreased in the number. This was my limit.

[You have reached the highest turn you can read.]

[The highest turn 'Yoo Joonghyuk' you can read is '999th'.]

The message popped up like the final score tied to the book report. But I couldn't lift up my head. How could reading something be this shameful and feel so wrong?

It was in exact moment that Yoo Joonghyuk opened his mouth. 'Doesn't matter how you read it, the one to judge it will be me. So, you simply concentrate on reading'.

He deflected yet another one of the Secretive Plotter's attacks even though his body was riddled with wounds. He spoke again. 'It's my freedom to decide what I hear and what I remember. And I shall decide who I am'.

With a voice I knew so well, he was talking about a story that I didn't know.

'You fool, you are not reading it alone'.

The moment I heard him, something woke up inside me.

It wasn't the memories related to the 'Ways of Survival'. No, it was of the conversation I had with my mother a long time ago.

「"Why are we rereading the story we know already?"」

There were stories that didn't change even if you read it again. It'd not change, because the one reading didn't change.

My mother replied to that question in this manner.

「"Shall we read it together, then?"」

Reading it together.

[Your 'Comprehension' is rapidly being enhanced!]

As my head became even more of a mess, the pages that I couldn't flip with my powers alone began flipping over.

1146th… 1398th… 1561th… 1733th…

The people I met in this world were flipping the pages together with me. I still failed to understand some things, but I got to figure out a few others just then.

And there were some paragraphs that I'd seemingly never understand.

【…!!】

I thought I heard the 'Secretive Plotter' shout something.

My consciousness continued to waver. Like a man fighting the drowsiness, I continued to flip the pages again and again – while vomiting blood, while enduring against the merciless barrage of sparks.

I still didn't know much about Yoo Joonghyuk.

「"You can only return to that world after I die, correct?"」

「"If you remain here, you won't be able to save that world."」

However, what if my misunderstanding built up over the period of ten-plus years could help me reach just a tiny sliver of understanding like some kind of miracle?

「"I've become curious about that world's ■■."」

Then, I'd be able to read it again.

[The highest turn 'Yoo Joonghyuk' you can read is '1863rd'.]

The Plotter's Status flying in touched the [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] and scattered away.

I dazedly blinked my eyes. As if the overwritten letters were being peeled off, the [Character List] began changing. The number '3' was peeled off, and new numbers were being engraved there, instead.

And on top of this empty piece of blinding white paper, a page I had never read before began unfolding.

<Character Summary>

Individual: Yoo Joonghyuk

Exclusive Attributes: Regressor <1864th turn> (Myth)

It was a completely new story.

Chapter 446: Ep. 84 - 1864, II

The 1864th turn.

We were not in the 3rd turn, but in the 1864th world-line.

The moment I saw that attribute window, waves of realizations that I could barely digest right now crashed into me.

「…This 'Yoo Joonghyuk' is the one that disappeared during the 1863rd turn?!」

「How can that even be possible?」

「But, didn't that Yoo Joonghyuk escape from being a [Character]?」

「Yoo Joonghyuk from the 1863rd turn escaped from being a [Character] because the 3rd turn exists. But if that's true, then how could he be the 3rd turn Yoo Joonghyuk from the get-go…?」

Numerous questions brushed past my head, and the last thing to pop up was the final conversation I had with tls123.

「I was thinking of sending you a special gift as a way to express my gratitude, Dokja-nim.」

That 'gift' the author was talking about, could it be…

Kwa-kwakwakwa!!

The Story's power overflowed; the surrounding view of the hellish landscape began changing. The world was wailing in sorrow, and Outer Gods fallen into lamentation cried on.

And on that stage of despair, a thin and thread-like, but clear, ray of light existed. It was the sword light belonging to the [Black Heavenly Demon Sword].

【Have you regained your memories, then?】

The 'Secretive Plotter' asked, but Yoo Joonghyuk didn't reply. I knew why he didn't, of course – the explosive amount of memories were making an utter mess inside his head, that was why.

My reading wasn't perfect.

No matter how diligently I read it, and even though Yoo Joonghyuk worked together with me, it was physically impossible to completely restore the '1863rd Yoo Joonghyuk'.

As he staggered about, fragmented memories continued to enter his head.

「"Eat dirt, Yoo Joonghyuk."」

「"Happy memories! Happy memories!"」

「"Yoo Joonghyuk, sit."」

"You son of a…"

「This isn't the time to think about that, you idiot!」

I hurriedly awakened Yoo Joonghyuk. Because the [Splitting the Sky Sword] carrying the Status of a Hellscape was slashing towards his nose right at that moment.

Along with "CLANG!!" two swords clashed loudly once more.

The attack still felt considerably heavy. However, it wasn't as intolerable as before.

【…I wanted to fight you.】

For the first time ever, the light of emotions began spreading within the Plotter's eyes that used to remain calm no matter what happened. The 'Yoo Joonghyuk' who survived the 'original story' I read, and who saw its finale – the 'Secretive Plotter' was now talking to us.

【You bastard, you disappeared to the 'beyond' without a word.】

I had no idea what he was talking about. It seemed that Yoo Joonghyuk, too, had no idea. The stuff I read in great haste was imperfect, and because of that, there were lots of holes in Yoo Joonghyuk's memories.

He then angrily spat out. "Looks like I'll have to teach you how not to speak in riddles."

[Giant Story, 'Demon Realm's Spring', has begun its storytelling!]

[Giant Story, 'Torch that Swallowed the Myth', has begun its storytelling!]

[Story, 'Hell of Eternity', is continuing on with its storytelling!]

The Stories we shared were shoved into the [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] simultaneously. The ensuing attack clashed against the [Splitting the Sky Sword]. And the moment two Hellscapes collided, a whole universe opened up between the blades.

It was basically a Big Bang of memories.

[Two remarkably similar beings are colliding.]

['Disconnected Film Theory' is activating!]

The moment I saw the view of the universe, I instantly realized which phenomenon was about to unfold here.

It was none other than the [Disconnected Film Theory].

A similar event also occurred back when the two Shin Yoosungs from the two different world-lines met.

「【…This is a new world-line?】」

These memories were brought up to the surface after two definitely-similar Yoo Joonghyuks walking on completely opposing paths collided.

「【It's not possible for this kind of a world-line to exist.】」

These were the Plotter's memories. Memories of the very day that he had discovered this particular '3rd turn'.

…

…

…

【Interesting. Is this really the 3rd turn…?】

The 'Secretive Plotter' couldn't tear his eyes away from the 3rd turn's story playing out before his eyes. Someone he didn't recognise was advancing the story along with himself from the 3rd turn. He couldn't understand how such a thing could even be possible.

【However, you'll still fail.】

They used some methods he recognised, while he hadn't even thought of some others before. Sometimes, they looked to be reckless, and in some other times, they got real lucky. This was a Story he had never seen before. The 'Secretive Plotter' watched the Story of this world-line as if he was sucked right into it.

And so, how long had he been watching this Story?

He finally realized that he had become exactly the same as the Constellations that he loathed so much.

All the 'Yoo Joonghyuks' he had absorbed were talking to him.

– Have you forgotten, the Great Plotter?

– We wish for 'death'.

– That regression turn will not succeed, anyway.

Death. That was the ardent wish of all Yoo Joonghyuks cursed with the fate of regression. The 'Secretive Plotter' existed solely for the sake of fulfilling that mission.

– It's impossible to kill the 'Oldest Dream'.

– As long as we are alive, we must regress again.

– Even if dying is impossible, what would it be like to get infinitely close to it?

The reason for sending Han Sooyoung's Avatar to the 1863rd turn was precisely because of that. By using the irregular discovered in this 3rd turn, they'd complete their 'death'.

He was planning to seal away every Yoo Joonghyuk via the [Disconnected Film Theory] – to merge with the 1863rd Yoo Joonghyuk and fall into an everlasting slumber.

But on the verge of that plan's completion, he had a sudden change of heart.

「"I'm simply heading towards the 'Final Chapter(終章)'."」

It was because of one certain Constellation that searched for his own ■■.

The Final Chapter. The name of ■■ that he dearly wished for, but never received.

[41st turn's 'Yoo Joonghyuk' is shocked.]

[416th turn's 'Yoo Joonghyuk' is shocked.]

[967th turn's 'Yoo Joonghyuk' is shocked.]

[1472nd turn's 'Yoo Joonghyuk' is shocked.]

…

Yoo Joonghyuks from all the regression turns inside him also witnessed that spectacle. Some Yoo Joonghyuks marvelled, some despaired. And some Yoo Joonghyuks grew furious.

The 'Secretive Plotter' belonged to the last category.

【…It's not possible for another Final Chapter to exist.】

His world had already come to an end. He had reached his 'Conclusion' by going through trials and errors of the 1863rd regression turn. He had lost everything, and he witnessed the end of all scenarios. And he reached that Wall.

He hadn't been wrong – and he wanted validation for it.

【Let's say that you reached the end and saved the world through your methods. If so, what are you going to do about the 'other worlds'?】

【What will happen to other worlds that you didn't save?】

And so, the 'Secretive Plotter' sent Kim Dokja to the 1863rd turn.

He made the fool witness the end of the story.

To tell him, "This is the true 'original story'."

To tell him, "This is the end of the world I have decided on, and nothing can change that fact no matter what."

「"I'll end your story for you."」

However, Kim Dokja, he…

「"I won't be returning to the 3rd turn. I'll remain here and witness the end with the people of this place."」

…He changed that.

Tsu-chuchuchuchuchut!!

The Yoo Joonghyuk sealing plan failed, and the direction of the story that should've been set in stone was diverted.

[1863rd turn's 'Yoo Joonghyuk' is refusing to cooperate with you.]

「"I wish to live."」

Yoo Joonghyuk who should've been sealed away, chose 'regression' instead, and entered a brand new world.

The 'Secretive Plotter' hurriedly collected the memories of all the 'dead' Yoo Joonghyuks and chased after him. He chased after the Yoo Joonghyuk wearing the white coat, crossing the blinding starlights of the world-lines while his memories scattered away.

This Yoo Joonghyuk had cast off the mask of [Character] and flew towards the brand new world.

【Stop!! You cannot head to the next part!】

Only the 'Secretive Plotter' knew of this world's conclusion.

The 1863rd turn was the 'end of all stories'. And after it was…

「I wish to witness that 'world'.」

【Return to me. The place you're supposed to be, is here! You…!】

The 'Secretive Plotter' roared out. Even if the 'Oldest Dream' permitted this regression, in the end Yoo Joonghyuk was bound to repeat the nightmare again. And not to forget, him starting the scenarios without his memories would mean…

「That fool definitely said it. He said that universe definitely exists.」

['Oldest Dream' is growing curious of that story.]

Yoo Joonghyuk was reaching out. He was now picturing it, a world located so far away. A world that didn't exist within the universe of the 'Ways of Survival'.

The 'Secretive Plotter' managed to catch up to Yoo Joonghyuk's soul form in the nick of time. But what he grabbed onto was simply the white coat. Yoo Joonghyuk's body had already disappeared by then.

The 'Secretive Plotter' muttered out hollowly. 【You fool…】

The 'Yoo Joonghyuk' who lost his memories succeeded in regressing.

This would be another futile story where the beginning and the end were already set in stone. The everlasting nightmare was about to repeat itself again in that place.

The 'Secretive Plotter' began searching for this world-line.

He wanted to learn more about the world-line that the oh-so-amazing idiot disappeared into even at the cost of his memories. The Plotter thought that he'd feel better about himself after witnessing that fool living out the scenarios in wretched, broken misery and regret.

Eventually, he discovered the world-line in question. Shockingly enough, he knew about this world-line already.

【…This can't be possible.】

But only then, everything seemed to click into place.

The reason why a world-line he didn't recognise suddenly appeared.

The reason why a completely different world-line existed where the 3rd turn should've been.

Every regression he experienced was used as a sacrifice to create this 'world-line above the Wall'.

['Oldest Dream' is dreaming the 'Final Dream'.]

This was the impossible world-line created by the end result interfering with the cause.

His universe was shaking now.

…

…

…

As the explosion resounded out, Yoo Joonghyuk's and the Plotter's figures separated. We fixed our grip on the [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] and glared at the enemy before us.

The 'Secretive Plotter' spoke. 【…Now you know. This universe shouldn't even exist.】

Finally, I could understand what this guy was talking about. And also, I could understand just a little how this world-line came to be, and why these events had occurred.

The 'beyond' that Yoo Joonghyuk from 1863rd turn chose during his regression – that was the regression turn we were experiencing right now.

【What a cruel thing this is. You just about managed to escape from being the puppet of the nightmare, yet you became the puppet once more.】

His tone of voice was heavy with grief. I couldn't even fathom the depths of resentment contained within his words.

【If you read the same book hundreds of times, you might come up with a different interpretation. However, the texts will not change. Because those are the events that had already ended, and can't be turned back to the beginning.】

The Plotter's [Splitting the Sky Sword] was drawing a long trajectory in the sky. It contained the weight of the 1863rd turn.

The one who used to be Yoo Joonghyuk once upon a time, but now lived on as the 'Secretive Plotter'. The one who dreamed of the death of all the 'Yoo Joonghyuks' in the world.

He spoke up once more. 【The only reason why all of you managed to survive was because I exist.】

And that existence was wielding his history like a weapon.

【All of you, you should've died in that subway. Or back in that Cinema Dungeon. You should've died at Nirvana's hands, and should've perished in the Dark Castle.】

He was right.

【You should've died in the Demon Realm. You should've died during the 'Gigantomachia', and you should've all died tens, no, hundreds of times already during the 'Great War of Saints and Demons', and during the 'Journey to the West'.】

If his life didn't exist, if his failures didn't exist…

…Then none of us would have survived until now.

【So, how did you all manage to survive??】

And now, he was asking us.

【Why, why is it not me, but you??】

Chapter 447: Ep. 84 - 1864, III

I recalled that time when I visited the 1863rd turn.

When I first saw the 1863rd turn Yoo Joonghyuk, I thought that he was the 'Yoo Joonghyuk from the original'. The main character that I spent my childhood years with, the very one that propped up my life.

But then, he was not him.

The 'Yoo Joonghyuk' who helped me endure, had finished his tale a long time ago. He had reached the conclusion of the 1863rd turn and witnessed the end of the world, and then, roamed the horrifying abyss of the world-lines. For thousands of years, maybe even for tens of thousands.

I didn't know just how long he lived on like that. But, what I knew for sure was that one, he had survived until now, two, he remembered all of those times, and…

…And, he was being hostile towards me.

【You all do not possess the right to witness the ■■.】

He was right.

The only reason why I managed to wade past the scenarios was due to the Plotter's life preceding mine.

His Status was growing even stronger. The 'Outer Gods' observing the situation in the vicinity all knelt down simultaneously.

[OhOhOhOhOh…]

His aura mushrooming up like clouds wrapped around the [Splitting the Sky Sword]. That was the power he gained after living through 1863 lives, and also, while roaming the world-lines afterwards.

[Giant Story, 'Pilgrim of the Lonely Apocalypse', has begun its storytelling.]

Countless 'Yoo Joonghyuks' were looking straight at me from inside him.

['Yoo Joonghyuk' from 41st turn is looking at you.]

['Yoo Joonghyuk' from 362nd turn is looking at you.]

['Yoo Joonghyuk' from 666th turn is looking at you.]

['Yoo Joonghyuk' from 999th turn is looking at you.]

The histories they had compiled together – all their sins, they were right there. Sins so numerous that not even Jophiel's [Eye of Sin] could see the end of.

He was an existence deemed to be 'Terror' by this <Star Stream>. A being that went beyond the boundaries of 'evil' and had been declared as 'incomprehensible' by the world. He was the king of the Outer Gods.

However, his true nature was neither evil nor was it terror.

No, the reason why he had to be ostracised by the <Star Stream> was because his character proved to be simply too uncompromising.

「"I shall destroy the <Star Stream>."」

And the thing was, the <Star Stream> didn't like such characters that lacked any flexibility whatsoever.

One's character had to bend sometimes, had to know when to yield, and also, had to know when to crumble away. However, the 'Secretive Plotter' wasn't a character like that.

That's why he was able to get this far, and was able to become the 'Secretive Plotter'.

「"I shall definitely kill the one that started this story with these hands."」

That was the 'apocalypse' of this world, the one he wished for. And also, the 'end of regression' that all Yoo Joonghyuks wished for, as well.

[Constellation, 'Secretive Plotter', is looking at you.]

He was definitely in the right.

He definitely… was far more qualified than anyone to witness the conclusion of all the stories. Especially so, when compared to someone like me, whose only achievement was reading the 'Ways of Survival'…

'Stop with your unnecessary thoughts. And don't stupidly sympathise with him, either,' said Yoo Joonghyuk. 'Are you planning to yield to some random bastard after you came this far? Was the Story you managed to compile so far created solely by copying that bastard's life?'

I couldn't reply.

'If you sympathise with what he says, then it's the same thing as denying the lives of your companions who fought alongside you'.

For sure, I did rely on the 'Ways of Survival' in the beginning to skirt past the dangers, but things were different after that. Events that didn't happen during the original novel occurred, and dangers not found within it also came to visit us. And I managed to overcome those dangers with my companions.

As our Story continued to grow, so did my distance from the 'Ways of Survival', and from a certain moment on, I stopped consulting the original. That was also the reason why I hadn't read the final revised version yet.

This world was not the same one from the 'Ways of Survival' that the Secretive Plotter lived through.

Yoo Joonghyuk continued to speak. 'He could be right. His decisions might have been right, too. However, it's still not a good enough reason for you to yield to him'.

[Story, 'Life and Death Companions', has begun its storytelling.]

'Because we are also right,' said Yoo Joonghyuk, the one who also endured the tragedies of the 1863 regression turns. Without a doubt, he too was also 'Yoo Joonghyuk'. 'It still doesn't really feel real to me, but if I have been truly experiencing the 1864th turn, then…'

Yoo Joonghyuk, gripping the [Black Heavenly Demon Sword], shifted his gaze for a brief moment towards our companions on the Tongtian River.

Lee Jihye's fleet was continuing their barrage, and Shin Yoosung's [Chimera Dragon] was spewing out its Breath attack. Lee Hyunsung gripped tightly by Jung Heewon was also fighting hard as well. Meanwhile, Jang Hayoung was running hard with Lee Gilyoung on her back.

None had died, and they were trying their best. So that they could see the end of this stinking world.

'Most likely, I came here to witness this sight'.

The [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] and the [Splitting the Sky Sword] clashed once more. Two swords that didn't want to back down continued to roar on, their blades filled with the self-belief of their wielders.

The 'Secretive Plotter' shouted out. 【Do you still not understand? Even if you have regained your memories…】

"How persistent. Just what do you expect to hear from me, then?"

【…What?】

"Do you want us to admit our loss? If not, do you want us to understand your life?"

【Understand? You can keep your…!】

"Indeed, you probably don't need it." Yoo Joonghyuk replied disinterestedly. And because he was also Yoo Joonghyuk, he could say these following words. "I too don't need you to understand me."

He said that, because they understood each other already.

Loud metallic clangs resounded out every time two swords collided. One Status violently clashed against another Status.

[Story, 'Hell of Eternity', is roaring out!]

Two hellish landscape intertwined to create this battlefield.

Frustratingly, all I could do was to watch these two Yoo Joonghyuks. And do whatever it took to flip these damn pages.

[Giant Story, 'Season of Light and Darkness', is thrashing violently.]

The winner couldn't easily be decided. Even then, the 'Secretive Plotter' remained utterly relaxed.

Perhaps that was obvious; our side only just got to use the power of the '1863rd' turn, after all. In terms of proficiency and familiarity, we were in an overwhelmingly disadvantageous position.

Maybe thinking that victory was in the bag now, the 'Secretive Plotter' leisurely asked a question. 【I'm curious. The puppet of the 'Oldest Dream', what is the conclusion you wish to see?】

"And why should I answer you?"

【Could it be that it's the same thing as that 'Demon King of Salvation'? Do you honestly believe that man?】

Two blades clashed in mid-air and huge shockwaves spread out.

Yoo Joonghyuk took a step back while wiping the blood off his lips.

【You have no idea. No idea how pathetic that 'companion' you trust so much actually is. You don't know what the 'conclusion' of the world he wishes for is.】

The 'Secretive Plotter' faintly grinned as he rained down his [Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship].

【When this world-line opened for the first time, Kim Dokja's goal was to merely 'survive'.】

「I dazedly raised my head and looked at Yoo Sangah. Quite likely, this woman will die. And so will I.」

In the gap between the two blades, the Stories I lived through were breathing with life.

【His next goal was to… To become stronger by using you.】

「"Make me your companion. I can fill in the part you lack."」

「Yoo Joonghyuk is definitely necessary in order to clear the numerous scenarios still remaining in the future.」

As if pages were flipping over, Stories I lived through were being projected right before our eyes. As if to stop that story, Yoo Joonghyuk viciously swung his sword, but all of his attempts were denied by the Plotter's [Splitting the Sky Sword].

Meanwhile, the Plotter continued on. 【After that, well. After he found himself with a little bit of leeway, he even dared to dream of this 'world's conclusion'.】

「"Hyung, aren't you going to make a wish for something?"

I quietly stared at Lee Gilyoung for a little while before making my reply.

"I made a wish to see the epilogue of a certain novel."」

The Great Sage Heaven's Equal said this before, that it wasn't only me who read other people. Just as I've read them, they were also reading me at the same time, he said.

He was right.

While I was busy reading the 'Ways of Survival', the 'Secretive Plotter' was also reading my story. He had been observing the entirety of the life I experienced.

【Kim Dokja began dreaming the same thing that I used to dream about once upon a time. He wanted to destroy the heaven's <Star Stream>, and destroy the world beyond the 'Wall' that I couldn't overcome. He wanted to save every one of his companions, and even…】

「I saw the group of Nebulas floating in the middle of the darkened sky. <Vedas>, <Olympus>, <Papyrus>… I shall never forget everything you have done.」

「"I will create a 'Story' that hasn't existed before."」

Memories continued to stream by before our eyes. Some were as exactly as I remembered, while some were distorted or twisted around. Because it wasn't an intact 'Story', that's why.

This was the Plotter's interpretation of 'Kim Dokja's story'.

「This is what the 'Secretive Plotter' feels.」

He continued to speak. 【Kim Dokja will not achieve that goal now. Specifically, he won't be able to.】

I wanted to ask why he thought that.

['The Fourth Wall' is faintly shaking.]

【A Story could be made up, but it'll never tell a lie.】

The Plotter's left hand touched Yoo Joonghyuk's hair. The [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] reflexively slapped that hand away, but by then it was too late.

[Story, 'One Who is Loved by an Archangel', has begun its storytelling.]

As if they were newborn babies, the Stories I possessed began crying out one by one. Some of them were Stories I was familiar with. On the other hand…

[Story, 'The Fifth Sun Wukong', has begun its storytelling.]

Some were Stories I had earned not too long ago. And…

[Story, 'Rival Acknowledged by the Dragon', has begun its storytelling.]

[Story, 'the Sea God's Companion-in-Arms', has begun its storytelling.]

[Story, 'Goryeo's Number Two Sword', has begun its storytelling.]

And, there were some Stories that I didn't even know I had them.

All of my Stories were speaking up at the same time.

【Oh, 'Demon King of Salvation'. You can't destroy the <Star Stream>.】

Stars in the sky were flickering brightly. They were the same stars that I used to hate.

[Constellation, 'God of Wine and Ecstasy', is watching you.]

[Constellation, 'Father of the Rich Night', is watching you.]

Those who had been watching me, allowing me to get this far.

[Constellation, 'Queen of the Darkest Spring', is watching you.]

…My supposedly oldest enemies.

【…Because you do not hate the Constellations.】

Even as I listened to the 'Secretive Plotter', I couldn't say anything. I wanted to say that it wasn't true. I wanted to say that I hated Constellations. I wanted to say that bringing them down was still one of my goals.

However, I couldn't. Because goddammit, I…

[Constellation, 'Maritime War God', is watching you.]

…I knew now that not every star in the sky emitted the same sort of light as the others.

[Constellation, 'Bald General of Justice', is watching you.]

[Constellation, 'Goryeo's First Sword', is watching you.]

From the 'Absolute Throne' scenario, to the 'Demon Realm'…

Without the Probability they had gathered for us, I'd not be able to get this far.

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is watching you.]

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', is watching you.]

[Constellation, 'Most Ancient Liberator', is watching you.]

I had no choice but to acknowledge it.

All of my Stories were created together with them.

【You do not wish for any 'loss' to occur to this world-line. Because you grew to love this story. And that is why…】 As if he was putting a full-stop on the story, the 'Secretive Plotter' declared loudly. 【…You shall never witness this world's ■■.】

Thunders roared in the heavens.

The battle between the Great Sage and <Emperor> was intensifying.

[Many audience members are watching your battlefield.]

Constellations were looking down at us from above.

Some pitied me, while some got angry in my stead. Countless indirect messages flooded in endlessly.

Yoo Joonghyuk remained wordless. The raindrops falling on the Tongtian River substituted for any spoken words.

I wanted to say something, anything.

But before I could open my mouth, though, someone else stole the opportunity away.

"So? What is it that you're trying to say here?" It was Yoo Joonghyuk. "Since Kim Dokja doesn't have the qualification, you will see this world's ■■ in his stead, is that it?"

A faint crease formed on the forehead of the 'Secretive Plotter'. 【It seems that you can't think straight anymore. That man whom you thought of as your companion is no different to the Constellations that you hate. That bastard is…】

"…He's a pathetic fool, indeed." Yoo Joonghyuk cut him off in the middle. "He was just some contracted worker for a no-name game developer, and his hobby was reading novels."

His shabby self-introduction-like words reverberated around the sky.

Those were the things I told Yoo Joonghyuk some time ago.

"His specialty is to run his cocky mouth off, and he has this habit of throwing his life away so that we can overcome any and all impossible situations hindering us."

Yoo Joonghyuk was talking about me that even I didn't know about.

"Someone like that managed to lead his companions this far."

The [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] shoved the [Splitting the Sky Sword] along with a loud "Creaaaak!!". For the first time ever since the battle commenced, Yoo Joonghyuk was going on a concentrated offensive.

The Plotter's expression shook. Yoo Joonghyuk's sword strikes were now digging into the Outer God's defenses for the first time.

"Regardless of what the incoming conclusion is, this world wouldn't have come this far without him around."

【You don't know anyt…!!】

"It seems to me that you're the one who can't think straight here. Why are you interfering with this world-line, then?"

The wrathful [Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship] mowed the darkness down. The Plotter's figure wavered around greatly as he was pushed back.

Not missing that small opening, Yoo Joonghyuk's sword rained down like a raging storm.

"What is your goal, anyway? If you found Kim Dokja an eyesore, why didn't you kill him earlier? If you found him using your life to survive that disgusting, then…"

The [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] was now aiming at the neck of the 'Secretive Plotter'.

[Constellation, 'Secretive Plotter', is glaring at the Incarnation, 'Yoo Joonghyuk'.]

The moment when the two gazes collided, Yoo Joonghyuk asked again.

"Why are you still watching this story?"

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Why did the 'Secretive Plotter' watch our Story until now?

"Answer me."

He was the king of Outer Gods, and he had seen his 'Conclusion'. Meaning, if he wanted to eliminate me he'd have done so even if it cost a huge amount of Probability.

「However, he didn't do that.」

The 'Secretive Plotter' was now looking at Yoo Joonghyuk and me.

His consciousness was far too deep and extensive that I'd not be able to understand even if I used the [Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint] on him. That might've been the case, but at least in this moment, I thought that I could understand him.

– If I plagiarised the 'Ways of Survival' for my novel, then what were you plagiarised from?

Han Sooyoung of the 1863rd turn asked me that question.

Even though I knew the answer, I didn't give her one. Because I didn't want to admit it.

The world created by her during the 1863rd turn was, in a way, far more complete than the life I had led. Everyone from the original novel was alive, and Seoul possessed the necessary infrastructure to deal with the Final Scenario, too.

The only thing missing in that picture was 'Yoo Joonghyuk'.

I thought that was unfair. I thought that the world copied from the original with its main character excluded was wrong.

「Certain copies can surpass the original.」

Despite that, I couldn't take my eyes off the world that Han Sooyoung had created. Even when I thought it was wrong. Because her story contained the elements that I was also aiming for.

[Constellation, 'Secretive Plotter', is looking at you.]

Did copyright exist for one's life, too?

But, was it okay to describe one's life as a 'work of an author'?

【Demon King of Salvation.】

The one who offered up his life for the sake of another world-line's success was now looking straight at me. The only man in this world who possessed the 'right' to witness the 'Conclusion'.

Even then, he couldn't see the end he wanted to see. Such a man grabbed Yoo Joonghyuk's [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] with his bare hand and spoke up. 【Is a story with no proper 'Ending' a failed story?】

Stories flowed out from the fingers cut by the blade. Stories that I was intimately familiar with.

The story that I read for over ten years.

【Do you truly, honestly believe that a 'proper conclusion' exists in this world?】

Yoo Joonghyuk hurriedly swung the [Black Heavenly Demon Sword], causing the Plotter's figure to distance himself.

'Stay sharp, Kim Dokja. He's going to come at us seriously now'.

[Attribute, 'Demon King Slayer', is activating!]

[Attribute, 'Terror of Stars', is activating!]

The sword made to cut down Demon Kings and Constellation began crying out.

[Story, 'Hell of Eternity', is howling out!]

[Giant Story, 'Pilgrim of the Lonely Apocalypse', is continuing with its storytelling!]

A person who completed a 'Giant Story' through nothing but his own life was right before us.

Kka-gagagagack!!

We couldn't handle the approaching Story and were forced back. Like soaked cotton, the whole body felt heavy. The Tongtian's waters overturned and the bottom of the river got exposed.

We used the exposed bottom as our support and swung the sword towards the sky.

Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship.

Destruction Technique.

Breaking the Sky Meteor Strike.

The thunderbolt stabbing into the sky shot out from the tip of the [Black Heavenly Demon Sword]. The Statuses of a Demon King and a Constellation, as well as a Transcendent, were added on top of the multiple sword lights that hacked the sky like a falling meteor shower.

And the other side shifted his [Splitting the Sky Sword] as well.

Kwa-kwakwakwa!!

He also possessed the same techniques we possessed. Two identical meteor showers collided in the air and a massive explosion rang out.

When the technique was the same, what decided the outcome was the proficiency as well as the Status of the Story.

[Giant Story, 'Pilgrim of the Lonely Apocalypse', is remembering the story.]

Unfortunately, we couldn't claim an advantage in either of those aspects.

'Kim Dokja!'

That didn't mean we'd back off here, though.

I desperately unleashed other Stories while still operating the 「Hell of Eternity」.

[Story, 'One who Murdered the Outer God', has begun its storytelling!]

The reason why our opponent held the upper hand was due to the two attributes – 'Demon King Slayer' and 'Terror of Stars'. In that case, we needed to unshackle the Story that allowed us to fight against the 'Outer God'.

Ku-gugugugu!!

One Status collided with another. Blood trickled down Yoo Joonghyuk's nose. However, he didn't back away.

Not just him, but even the Stories seemed to understand it. They perhaps knew that, if they stopped telling their stories now, then all stories would stop right here.

【It's useless.】

The Plotter's Status moved. The Giant Story's aura that previously existed in vague ripples was rapidly changing. The 「Pilgrim of the Lonely Apocalypse」 morphed into a giant, and its huge palm began crushing down on us.

Yoo Joonghyuk roared out in opposition. "We too have Giant Stories!"

[Giant Story, 'Demon Realm's Spring', is continuing with its storytelling!]

[Giant Story, 'Torch that Swallowed the Myth', is continuing with its storytelling!]

The world of the Giant Stories streamed past before our eyes.

The 「Demon Realm's Spring」 that battled against Surya during the Demon King Selection.

The 「Torch that Swallowed the Myth」 we earned while experiencing the 'Gigantomachia'.

Two Giant Stories, one taking on the figure of a lion while the other, a dragon, began biting and tearing into the giant's palm, and resisted it.

[41st turn's 'Yoo Joonghyuk' is watching you.]

[666th turn's 'Yoo Joonghyuk' is watching you.]

[999th turn's 'Yoo Joonghyuk' is watching you.]

Countless Yoo Joonghyuks within the 'Secretive Plotter' were observing this battle.

I recalled the [666] and [999] in my mind. They should be in there somewhere. Along with the Plotter himself, they had been watching me from the beginning of this world-line.

They were watching the heated battle between two Yoo Joonghyuks and were growing agitated.

[The「Stage Transformation」is activating!]

The sky split open, then light and darkness began creating a new 'world'.

[Giant Story, 'Season of Light and Darkness', has begun its storytelling.]

The「Season of Light and Darkness」was our 'Giant Story'. But at the same time, it was the Plotter's Story, as well.

And even in this Giant Story, Yoo Joonghyuk still lost to the Plotter.

【You cannot win.】

The effects of the「Stage Transformation」were absolute.

The history of defeat would only go on to create yet another history of defeat.

「A man wearing a white coat was looking up at the sky. And the man wearing the black coat met that gaze.」

The Plotter's eyes trembled.

Without a doubt, this was the exact same battle against the same Yoo Joonghyuk as before. Yet, something was different. The Plotter looked down at his own coat.

It was black.

The colour of his coat was the opposite.

「Light and darkness were colliding. And one single watcher was observing the whole story.」

Incredible Status gathered on Yoo Joonghyuk's right arm. It was clear which technique he was planning to use.

The greatest technique the current him could call upon: the [Shooting Star Slash].

Back during the Apocalypse Dragon battle, Yoo Joonghyuk failed to defeat the 'Secretive Plotter' with this technique.

[Incarnation, 'Jung Heewon', has temporarily transferred her share of the Giant Story.]

Everyone from <Kim Dokja's Company> in the not-too-distant battlefield was adding their strength to us. Everyone who held shares in the Giant Story was now participating in this battle.

[Incarnation, 'Han Sooyoung', has temporarily transferred her share of the Giant Story.]

[Incarnation, 'Shin Yoosung', has temporarily transferred her share of the Giant Story.]

[Incarnation, 'Lee Gilyoung', has temporarily transferred his share of the Giant Story.]

Every Story of <Kim Dokja's Company> gathered on Yoo Joonghyuk's [Black Heavenly Demon Sword]. After seeing his Story balloon up like that, the 'Secretive Plotter' began pouring out his own Status as well.

They might be two identical Yoo Joonghyuks, but the Stories they created were completely different.

「Who is Yoo Joonghyuk?」

The Stories they possessed acted like that question's answer.

[Giant Story, 'Pilgrim of the Lonely Apocalypse', is continuing with its storytelling.]

The Story of the 'Secretive Plotter' was Yoo Joonghyuk from the 1st regression turn, 2nd, then 100th, and even the 1000th. A Story built up solely by one person's existence piling up on top of one another.

「All tragedies had become dull, and only one being's existence grew bloated.」

The sword light from the swung [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] opposed that very Story.

[Story, 'Life and Death Companions', is continuing with its storytelling.]

That was Yoo Joonghyuk's reply.

[Story, 'Child of the Past and Future', has begun its storytelling.]

Yoo Joonghyuk was Shin Yoosung.

[Story, 'Judge of Destruction', has begun its storytelling.]

He was Jung Heewon, and…

[Story, 'False Saviour', is continuing with its storytelling.]

He was also Han Sooyoung. And then…

[Story, 'Demon King of Salvation', is continuing with its storytelling!]

And, he was me.

Kwa-aaaaah!!

The [Shooting Star Slash] collided with the Plotter's Giant Story. This fight was quite literally at a deadlock, and a moment's carelessness could very well decide the victor. Every Story we possessed powerfully slammed forward. And then…

[666th turn's 'Yoo Joonghyuk' is…]

A very small change occurred in the midst of this battle.

[362nd turn's 'Yoo Joonghyuk' is…]

A deafening boom went off, and the exploding spray of the river water formed a curtain of grey fog. The river water then rushed down on us and swept Yoo

Joonghyuk's body away. His consciousness was fading.

I subbed for him and dragged the Incarnation Body towards some nearby floating debris to climb on top of it.

When I took a closer look, though, it wasn't some normal piece of debris, but a small island created out of the corpses of the 'Outer Gods', instead.

It was then that I heard a voice.

【There is only one difference between you and I.】

As the grey fog of river water rescinded, the figure of the 'Secretive Plotter' flopped down on the corpse island revealed itself.

【You simply got lucky, and I didn't.】

Tsu-chut, chuchuchut!

His black coat was in a tattered mess. Sparks were dancing all over his body.

[1562nd turn's 'Yoo Joonghyuk' is…]

[1321st turn's 'Yoo Joonghyuk' is…]

'Yoo Joonghyuks' inside him were now rebelling against him. They were refusing to heed the Plotter's will.

[999th turn's 'Yoo Joonghyuk' wishes to see the end of the 1864th turn.]

His Status was decreasing little by little. And his body was also gradually shrinking, as well. His bulging muscles were getting smaller, and his height decreased, too.

Soon, the 'Secretive Plotter' that lost his Status had morphed into the figure of a boy.

I staggered back to my – Yoo Joonghyuk's – feet.

"You…"

I wanted to say something, but no voice wanted to come out.

[The absolute majority of the audience are shivering at your battle!]

[A portion of the audience is…]

We won.

Countless indirect messages flooded in, but not one of them entered my head.

The 'Secretive Plotter' was sitting on his butt all alone on top of this island. The [Splitting the Sky Sword] stabbed into the floor was the only thing supporting him.

While gripping the [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] tightly, I cautiously approached him.

Even though he was the same Yoo Joonghyuk, why did he have to live such a different life? Why did this guy have to overcome all these tragedies by himself?

[Giant Story, 'Pilgrim of the Lonely Apocalypse', is faltering in its storytelling.]

Was it because he didn't have any companions?

Companions…

[41st turn's 'Yoo Joonghyuk' is staying vigilant of you.]

…No, he had.

He definitely had companions.

'Kkoma Yoo Joonghyuks' emerging out of his body were standing right there.

[Youcan'tYoucan'tYoucan'tYoucan'tYoucan't]

Kkoma Yoo Joonghyuks were now surrounding him protectively. And then, the 'Outer Gods' were surroundings those kkoma Yoo Joonghyuks.

[TheresonlyoneTheresonlyoneTheresonlyone]

The history that the 'Secretive Plotter' had lived through – every part of the 'Ways of Survival' he lived through was now protecting him.

[DontkillhimDontkillhimDontkillhimDontkillhim]

They were stories that got discarded because they failed to reach the 'Conclusion'.

I moved Yoo Joonghyuk's body again and lowered my posture towards them. When I reached out, one of the small Outer Gods bit the extended finger. Crimson blood formed on the tip of the bitten finger.

It was a lie that this world-line was a brand new story.

Even now, Yoo Joonghyuk's story – the 'Ways of Survival' – hadn't ended yet.

'Kim Dokja'.

He must've regained his consciousness, because Yoo Joonghyuk began talking to me.

I didn't reply immediately, and made my way past the Outer Gods to approach the 'Secretive Plotter'.

Now in the form of a boy, he was looking up at me while being surrounded by the Outer Gods.

Yoo Joonghyuk saw me holding the [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] tightly and spoke. 'You'll regret this'.

「No, I won't.」

I raised the sword only to slowly sheathe it back in its scabbard.

「Besides, you weren't going to kill him, anyway.」

Yoo Joonghyuk's retort came back a little later than usual. '…Even if we kill him, he'll simply regress again, anyway'.

Even if he was saying that, it was pretty clear what he was thinking of right now. We had enough of this tragedy already.

[Many Constellations are watching you.]

[Many Constellations can't understand your decision.]

I didn't make this decision for the sake of earning a Story. And I knew that this wouldn't even offer a tiny speck of solace to a life that lasted for 1864 lives.

But, even then…

"Secretive Plotter."

I called out and he looked up at me.

Even if this world had changed from the original story, even if this world was no longer a simple novel… If it wasn't for this guy's story, this world wouldn't have existed.

「Without him, the current Kim Dokja wouldn't be here.」

I definitely owed him a debt. A debt that nothing could possibly repay.

"You said that a sentence once written, can never be changed, right? I disagree with that."

Indeed, sentences could be changed. Just like how the revised versions of the 'Ways of Survival' existed.

【My Story has already come to an end.】

"…And then?"

【…There is no 'then'. That is what it means to end.】

"Some stories can only begin anew after coming to its end. Back in the world I lived in, there was this guy who repeatedly said that his story would end that year, but he kept it going for over ten years."

And that very story was what helped me to survive.

"I think I heard that the story was supposed end at around the 500th chapter, but before I knew it, it went past 1000th, and then, it shot past 2000 chapters."

【…What is it that you want to say?】

"That story was written up to the 3149th chapter… but the 3150th hasn't been written."

Even if a full stop had been laid down, as long as the next sentence was written, then the story would continue on.

The 'Secretive Plotter' should be well aware of this, too. Because he was a guy who had been telling his story far longer than anyone else out there.

I spoke with a grin on my face. "It feels like that story is still continuing on even right now. And maybe, it is really continuing on. I feel relieved, actually."

【You…】

"Because I'm a Constellation." As the Plotter's expression hardened, I added something else with a cold voice. "Constellations are creatures like that."

This was the answer I had chosen. This was the only way to not belittle him, even if it ends up hurting him.

The Secretive Plotter's eyes were glaring straight at me. 【…That story you bastard have seen…】 His seething voice was directed at me. 【…Will result in your death. It will show you the worst end result imaginable. And as for your Nebula…!】

"Doesn't matter."

I knew that what I was saying here could be seen as irresponsible. My petty attempt at atonement could bring upon untold misery and misfortune for everyone else. I knew that.

Even then, this was the best I could do right now.

"Every time that happens, I'll do my best to fight back."

The Plotter's expression was changing – to one that I couldn't make. An expression seemingly reserved for when analysing the ends of the distant universe. With that sort of expression, he scanned the battlefield.

The rain falling on the battlefield had stopped, and the storm clouds that the Great Sage Heaven's Equal had summoned were receding away.

The 'Great War Against the Heavenly Worlds' was drawing to a close.

<Emperor>'s fallen Constellations were looking up at the Great Sage and the Yogoes. The sense of defeat thickly drawn on their faces told me who today's winner was.

[Currently, the Story chamber 「I've become the retired SSSSS-grade Sun Wukong」 is in possession of the 'sacred texts'.]

[Scenario will automatically conclude if the sacred texts are guarded for one hour.]

[Ten seconds currently remaining until the conclusion of the scenario.]

Finally, the lengthy scenario was coming to a close.

I looked up at the blindingly bright skies of the <Star Stream>. The 'Great Dokkaebis' who'd control the Final Scenario were there, glaring at me.

[Scenario has concluded.!]

[Story chamber 「I've become the retired SSSSS-grade Sun Wukong」 has won the scenario!]

Bright messages announcing an incredible amount of reward payout and words of congratulations sent by the Constellations rained down and blanketed the sky above.

I spotted Shin Yoosung, with Biyoo riding on top of her head, hurriedly running towards me while waving around the 'sacred texts'.

The title of the texts was the following:

「I've Become the Retired SSSSS-Grade Sun Wukong」

"Ahjussi!"

[Shares for 'Outer God' in the applicable scenario is enormous!]

[<Star Stream> is acknowledging the existence of 'Outer God'.]

['Outer Gods' can now officially participate in the scenarios!]

(As the blinding rays of light accompanied them, the Yogoes all rose up to the air.)

(Yogoes gathering around Sun Wukong as their centre all howled towards the heavens like a single colony.)

I heard their cries.

(It sounded like a song from an unfamiliar foreign country.)

Next up, I spotted Jung Heewon carrying my Incarnation Body while waving her hand. I might have heard it wrong, but I thought I heard her say "I finally got you" or something like that.

Next up, I saw Yoo Sangah, now the 'Sakyamuni's Successor', and Jang Hayoung carrying the enervated Lee Gilyoung.

I looked to my side to discover the 'Secretive Plotter' witnessing the same spectacle as me.

(The 'Journey to the West' will end here.)

One scenario came to an end, yet the story continued on. However, even that story would have an end.

[You have acquired a new 'Great story'!]

[You have partially completed the fourth condition of the 'Hidden Scenario – A Single Story'!]

And so, ever so quietly…

[Your Giant Story has completed the first half of the 'Conclusion'!]

The message foretelling the end of this world could be heard.

[Your Nebula has acquired the qualification to enter the 'Final Scenario'.]

Chapter 449: Ep. 85 - The Final Wall, I

[95th Main Scenario has concluded!]

After the scenario ended, the Great Sage and the 'Outer Gods' gathered in the centre of the Tongtian River to celebrate.

[Those with the identity of 'extras' in the Giant Story「Journey to the West」has now been freed.]

Outer Gods that became the scenario's slaves under the <Bureau>'s and <Emperor>'s combined suppression were now being freed.

[OhOhOhOhOhOh]

[MonkeykingMonkeykingMonkeyking]

Some of them even happened to be the ones that followed the 'Secretive Plotter' and joined the scenario belatedly. And as his Status grew weaker, they naturally began gravitating towards the Great Sage Heaven's Equal after he emerged as a new Outer God.

[Reward distribution will now commence!]

Incarnations saw the 95th scenario's reward items descending from the sky and their lips stretched wide in huge grins. Unfortunately for them, though, their joy was short-lived. Their gazes soon drifted over to a certain group of Incarnations receiving that huge cache of rewards over yonder.

"Wow, that…"

"I should've joined that Story chamber…"

It was <Kim Dokja's Company>'s group. Each one of them received one million Coins as individual rewards, while some of them even acquired <Emperor>'s Star Relics, as well.

Since the rewards were being distributed according to the rules, none here could complain about this procedure, either.

[Nebula, <Emperor>, is protesting the scenario's fairness to the Bureau!]

No, there was someone who could – it was none other than the host themselves, <Emperor>.

Of course, they would feel wronged by the fact that the rewards of the large-scale scenario they organised for themselves had ended up in the hands of a small Nebula.

[<Star Stream> is ignoring the <Emperor>'s complaint.]

A portion of <Emperor>'s Constellations couldn't hold back their rage and were about to unleash their Statuses, but then, someone unexpected stopped them.

"Please, that's enough, everyone. We have lost." It was the greatest Incarnation of <Emperor>, Fei Hu. "What would our Myth-grade Constellations think if they witnessed our current actions?"

<Emperor>'s Myth-grade Constellations didn't participate in this 'Journey to the West' scenario. They were simply watching the proceedings from the Final

Scenario.

"Behave yourselves in a way that won't bring shame to our honour."

<Emperor>'s Constellations heard the resolute voice of their Incarnation and lowered their heads belatedly, their cheeks flushing.

A bit further away, Jung Heewon and Lee Jihye were observing that spectacle.

"…That's a surprise."

"You can say that again."

All the influential individuals from the large Nebulas they had run into so far didn't want to acknowledge their victory. But it was a different story this time.

Maybe he sensed their gazes, Fei Hu formed a sheepish grin and approached the two.

"Incarnation Jung Heewon."

Jung Heewon got tense and held the Steelsword tightly. He was easily one of the strongest enemies she had ever faced so far.

But he began speaking in a warm voice. "Incarnation Jung Heewon. Our battle this time left a deep impression on me."

"…Oh, okay."

"If an opportunity arises in the future, I'd love to invite you over to China and treat you to a hearty meal."

One could spot slightly flushed cheeks in between Fei Hu's sideboards. Lee Jihye definitely caught that, and through [Voice Projection], spoke up in pure admiration.

– …Wow. Even though the world went down the crapper, a guy like him still managed to survive.

Jung Heewon dazedly stared back at him. Meanwhile, he couldn't dare to meet her gaze and began fidgeting slightly.

Lee Jihye lightly elbowed Jung Heewon in the side.

– Eonni, what are you doing?? He's probably the best out of all the men we've seen so far, you know? Sure, he's far below my Master in the looks department, but still…

"I'm sorry, but…" Jung Heewon replied in a polite voice as if she was an expert from Murim. "I've decided to dedicate my life to the sword, so…"

"It's the same story for me."

"…Pardon?"

"I'd like to invite you to China and share our views on the ways of the sword for the whole night."

Fei Hu's eyes burned passionately as he began his long-winded speech, prompting Jung Heewon to feel a bit repulsed for a moment there. She glanced to her side and discovered Lee Jihye, who used to be cheering on with her sparkling eyes, now shaking her head in helplessness. If this whole thing was nothing more than their misunderstanding, fine, but if not, then something rather bothersome might happen in the future.

Tsu-chuchuchut…

Her Sponsor was unable to watch this anymore and the sounds of her making a move could be heard next.

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is…]

'It's fine, Uriel. Please be still'.

If Uriel unnecessarily stepped up here, then the dying embers of the war might light up again. If it was left up to her, though, she might just fight him one-on-one now and nip the bud right away, but the gazes of the Constellations nearby were fixed on them, so…

"I'm sorry, I'm already…"

Just as she got that far, the Steelsword she held suddenly began vibrating. Lee Hyunsung had transformed into this sword. For some reason, though, she felt just a little resentful.

Why couldn't this sword be a talking sword?

"What the heck is this? Get out of the way!"

The one to help her out was, surprisingly enough, Han Sooyoung. It was unknown when she entered the scenario, but regardless, she shoved Fei Hu away and made her entrance before throwing out a question, her eyes scanning the surroundings.

"Where is Kim Dokja?"

…Kim Dokja?

Jung Heewon shifted her gaze to a certain Incarnation Body slumped on her back.

Fei Hu glared at the uninvited guest Han Sooyoung with unhappy eyes. Jung Heewon alternated her gaze between him and Kim Dokja on her back and a nice idea suddenly popped up in her head.

"My liege!"

As if she was re-enacting the 'Flag Contest', she quickly embraced Kim Dokja and shouted out in an impassioned voice.

"My liege, are you alright??"

His pale Incarnation Body sagged limply in her arms and shook around a little.

"Oh, my king!"

Everyone was now looking at her. Lee Jihye's jaw dropped slightly, while Han Sooyoung looked dumbfounded.

As for Fei Hu…

"Ah…"

He looked as if he understood everything now.

"I see, Incarnation Jung Heewon. So, that's how it was…"

His gaze shifted from Jung Heewon, Han Sooyoung and to Lee Jihye, before eventually landing on Kim Dokja's face next. He sneakily bit his lip. Like a tragic extra feeling envious of the chosen protagonist, he slowly lowered his head and turned around to leave.

Lee Jihye watching that sent a [Voice Projection] to Jung Heewon again.

– It's alright now, eonni. He's gone. Looks like he's fallen into some kind of a weird misunderstanding, though.

However, Jung Heewon didn't stop.

"My liege! Wake up! My liege! If you don't wake up, I'll kill you!"

Slap! Slap! Slap! Slap!!

Kim Dokja's left cheek began swelling up after her palm kept hitting him there.

Han Sooyoung stared at her with a less-than-impressed expression and asked. "…What are you doing?"

"Revenge."

She nodded her head in acceptance, and took over from Jung Heewon to grab hold of Kim Dokja's neck and shook him around hard.

"Hey, you."

"…"

"I told you that I'd create your new Modifier, didn't I? But then, you couldn't wait and got yourself a new one anyway?"

"…"

"Were you listening to my narration? Did you hear that last part? How was it? It's fine to come out clean, you idiot. I know you were moved to tears. Weren't you?"

Kim Dokja still didn't reply. Han Sooyoung frowned deeply and began slapping the other cheek that wasn't swollen yet.

Shin Yoosung couldn't watch this sight any longer and hurriedly ran over. "What are you all doing?!"

"Don't worry, he's still breathing. He's not dead yet."

Despite all this ruckus, he showed no signs of waking up. That caused opinions to split up among the group.

"Most likely, he's deliberately not waking up here. He knows he's in the wrong."

"Makes sense. In that case, how about we let him taste pain so unbearable that he…"

"Aren't you all being a bit too much right now??"

Such a situation carried on for another five minutes. But, even after another ten minutes, he still showed no signs of regaining consciousness. That's when the expressions of the group grew serious as well.

"…What's going on here?"

Eventually, the group had to search for one person capable of explaining this situation for them. It was Yoo Joonghyuk lying unconscious next to Kim Dokja.

"Hey, Yoo Joonghyuk! Open your eyes! Why isn't this idiot Kim Dokja waking up??"

Slap! Slap! Slap! Slap!!

His firmer cheek didn't swell up as easily as Kim Dokja's. How long went by like this? Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes cracked open just a little.

"I am Yoo Joonghyuk…"

"Dammit, what's wrong with this guy now?"

Like a mental patient, he kept repeating the same thing over and over again.

Yoo Sangah belatedly made her entrance and stopped Han Sooyoung. "Please stop grilling Joonghyuk-ssi like that. His memories got jumbled by the Story so he's most likely not himself right now."

"Sangah eonni!"

The group belatedly came back to life with the joy of reunion and gathered around Yoo Sangah. A different type of vibe was now coming off from her newly-reincarnated body.

Han Sooyoung observed the change and asked a question with a smirk. "I heard that you're now the 'Sakyamuni's Successor', but you haven't shaved your head."

"Religions nowadays have gotten rather trendy, you know."

"Welcome back. You were a bit late, but still."

"It was difficult to return just in time before you caused us trouble, but I made it."

"…I'm not the one causing trouble. It's this guy."

Yoo Sangah shrugged her shoulders and extended her hand towards the unconscious Kim Dokja. The 'Constrictive Headband' on his head began emitting a bright glow just then.

Jung Heewon nodded her head in satisfaction. "That's a good idea. I guess he won't be able to run away now."

"…It's unfortunate, but he seems to have run away already."

"Eh?"

"His soul hasn't returned to his body."

A very thin thread was extending from the headband on Kim Dokja's head to the sky above. It seemed to be connected somewhere. Yoo Sangah observed the end of this thread and spoke up. "But, don't worry. He didn't go far. And it doesn't seem that he left on his own volition, either."

Didn't leave on his own volition – the meaning behind those words was clear.

Han Sooyoung hurriedly looked around the vicinity and asked. "Where did the 'Secretive Plotter' disappear to??"

The view of the dimensional portal was moving past me at a rapid pace.

Everything happened in the blink. The moment I deactivated [Omniscient Readers Viewpoint], something grabbed my soul, and by the time I regained my wits, I was already jumping through this portal alongside the 'Secretive Plotter'.

Now normally, something like this would've been impossible. But it was a special case this time.

[You failed to uphold the 'Existence Pledge'.]

[Your soul will be temporarily tied to the Existence Pledge's contract.]

[Your contractor will possess the rights to your soul for the next 24 hours.]

I looked at the messages rising up in the air and chuckled hollowly.

– I had no idea the [Existence Pledge] could be used this way.

The [Existence Pledge] – do not contact <Kim Dokja's Company> during the scenario's duration or reveal my identity.

That was the only thing I failed to uphold during the scenario.

Since the scenario's contents changed mid-way, I figured there was some room for differences in opinions, but it seemed the <Star Stream> had judged that I went against the pledge in the end.

– Are you going to kill me?

The 'Secretive Plotter', now in the form of a boy, was enveloped from head to toe in bursts of powerful sparks. I sensed countless Yoo Joonghyuks looking at me from inside his Story. But, I didn't sense any hostility from it.

He clearly wasn't planning to kill me.

Just like what Yoo Joonghyuk opined earlier, if this guy wanted me dead, there were several opportunities to do so already.

Not too long afterwards, the portal closed. Our destination was a familiar one. It was a forest covered in the overgrown darkness.

It was the N'Gai's Forest, the home of the 'Secretive Plotter'.

【Go inside.】

Along with those words, my soul got sucked into something.

I blinked, and my eyes moved. However, I had neither arms nor legs. I wondered what on earth was going on here and looked around, only to discover my reflection in the mirror on a nearby wall.

…I was now a small Murim dumpling.

Somehow, I got the feeling that it was the same figure that [999] was using before.

"How does it feel like to end up as a dumpling?!"

Not sure when they popped out, but well, a lynch mob of the kkoma Yoo Joonghyuks rushed at me and began kicking me around. Thankfully, it didn't hurt all that much due to them being all kkomas.

I hunkered down to stop the dumpling skin from tearing and shouted out.

– Not sure what you're trying to do here, but you can't stop me. In 24 hours, I'll return to my Incarnation body, you know. If you want to kill me, you better do so now.

Of course, I didn't really mean that he should kill me.

I asked the 'Secretive Plotter', perched up on the throne.

– Secretive Plotter, what's your real goal? Why are you keeping me alive?

My question caused the kkoma Yoo Joonghyuks to stop hitting me.

The 'Secretive Plotter' looked down at me. There he was, the strongest Outer God as well as the Constellation that I knew of. Also, the strongest Yoo Joonghyuk out of all Yoo Joonghyuks.

– I know that we'd have never won if you really went all out.

Even if Yoo Joonghyuk regained the memories of 1864 regression turns and combined his powers with mine, it was still impossible to surpass the Plotter through purely the Status of our Story.

Not only was he the total sum of the histories spanning from 0th turn all the way up to 1863, but he also endured an uncountable period of time afterwards, on top of that.

Even then, the 'Secretive Plotter' chose to lose rather than to kill us.

"Because you are a necessity, you fool." [41] listening to me yap on replied. "You possess the last fragment of the 'Final Wall', that's why."

Chapter 450: Ep. 85 - The Final Wall, II

Bihyung was in a very good mood. It couldn't be helped, since the Dokkaebi had witnessed the scenario playing out in the panel right before his eyes.

– Every time that happens, I'll do my best to fight back.

Accompanying Kim Dokja's voice was the scenario conclusion notice. Indirect messages from innumerable Constellations flooded in, and the whole of <Star Stream> was trembling grandly.

A new owner of the Giant Story 「Journey to the West」 had been decided.

'He did it. That Kim Dokja, he really pulled it off'.

A storyteller was supposed to remain neutral. The thing was, though, all judges secretly rooted for a team they liked. This was true for Bihyung as well.

Like a parent looking at his wonderfully-matured children, Bihyung stroked the faces appearing on the screen with a deeply moved expression.

[Congratulations, Bihyung Director-nim.]

The subordinate Dokkaebis around him offered their congratulations. They all knew that Bihyung had been watching <Kim Dokja's Company> for a long time.

[I just knew they would pull through.]

[M-me too. Me too…!]

Not only that, some of them had been cheering on the <Kim Dokja's Company> alongside him, too. Several carried expressions just as excited as Bihyung's.

For these Dokkaebis that only sought out new, potential stimulations in order to find the next story's objective, being this earnest about something was indeed an exceedingly rare thing.

[These kids are mine. Stop drooling over them.]

[Haha! Of course we wouldn't…]

It was then an urgent piece of news arrived for him.

[Director. The Great Dokkaebi, 'Baram' is…]

[You've been promoted!]

…A promotion?

[Bihyung Director-nim, truly, honestly, congratulations!]

[Looks like the Bureau is doing its job properly for once!]

Bihyung couldn't make heads nor tails while subjected to the outpouring of messages.

He was an 'upper-rank Dokkaebi', not to mention the director of the Seoul branch. He had already climbed to the highest-possible position through one's hard work alone.

However, getting a promotion here could only mean…

[…Director-nim?]

Without a doubt, this should be a good thing.

But why was he overcome with this ominous foreboding?

[Great Dokkaebi is waiting for you.]

Bihyung was guided by lower-ranked Dokkaebis to a portal, and entered it. Soon, the thick fog receded away to reveal the figure of a Great Dokkaebi waiting for him at the end of a grey-coloured passage.

[You've come, Bihyung.]

[Baram-nim.]

As if to imply that Bihyung had worked hard, Baram patted him on the shoulder and spoke up. [Congratulations. Your promotion has been decided.]

[…Pardon me?]

[We need to do something about your dazed expression. Don't you understand? It's been decided that you'll be chosen as the last one to become the 'Great Dokkaebi'.]

The Great Dokkaebi. The highest honour that all storytellers dreamed of reaching. Something that he only daydreamed about had now become a reality, leaving Bihyung utterly bewildered and lost.

[…Great Dokkaebi? You mean, I am?]

[That's right. This promotion is unprecedented in the history of <Star Stream>.]

Baran chuckled contently and took the lead. Bihyung didn't even know where they were going and simply chased after him. He had so many things he wanted to ask.

Just where was this place, and also…

[You'll soon become a Great Dokkaebi, so it's about time that you meet that 'person', no?]

Baram smiled as if he could see through Bihyung's thoughts.

[When you say 'that person', could you be…]

Even though he did ask, Bihyung could already guess the answer.

The surrounding air seemed to distort and faint traces of sparks bounced around in the atmosphere. When he took a closer look, those sparks were taking on the shapes of letters. Something was before him, a being that he had never seen before.

[We've arrived.]

They circled around the gallery and went past the fog-covered passageway to reach a massive hall.

No, could this place even be called a 'hall'?

It was so humongous that its dimensions couldn't even be estimated. And inside this place, there was a wide wall spanning across it. The length of this mysterious wall could also not be measured due to its sheer, immense size.

Letters engraved on the surface of the wall seemed to be burning; many cracks and various damages, both large and small, could be seen on its surface.

In that moment, Bihyung got the feeling that he had seen that wall from somewhere.

[…The Plate of Revelation?]

It was undoubtedly the Plate of Revelation. Although its shape was different, that 'wall' the Constellations received their revelations from possessed the similar overall vibe.

However, why was another 'Plate of Revelation' here? And also, what was up with its humongous size…?

[Everyone has gathered, I see.]

The moment he heard that voice, Bihyung prostrated on the floor even before he realized it. He might have dealt with countless Constellations until now, but at least this time, he couldn't control his nervousness.

He couldn't even guess the vastness of the Status felt from that voice.

He glanced to his side and saw that all the Great Dokkaebis, including Baram, were prostrating towards the front as well.

Someone was standing in front of the 'Plate of Revelation'.

Bihyung hid his shivering and slowly raised his head. And that's when he realized it.

So, that was it, then… Now, he understood it.

That creature was the absolute being that ruled the <Bureau> and controlled the <Star Stream>.

The 'King of Stories'.

The King extended his lengthy and pale hand to stroke the wall while slowly opening its mouth.

[The 'One Story' that decides the next world will now be chosen.]

"You saying that I have the last fragment of the 'Final Wall'?"

"That's right."

[41]'s words made me frown deeply.

I could guess more or less on what they were talking about. The 'Final Wall' – I tried to gather information on that thing during this regression turn, too. It was one of the things that never got fully explained in the original 'Ways of Survival'. I was pretty sure of this 'Wall' being the clue that would determine the end of this regression turn.

And as for this 'last fragment' thing they were talking about…

[Exclusive skill, 'The Fourth Wall', is powerfully activating!]

「Kim Dok ja」

Don't worry. I'll never hand you over to them.

I slowly blinked my eyes and focused. The 'Secretive Plotter' was staring at me. He might have lost a lot of his Status, but he was still the strongest Constellation I knew, and he was an 'Outer God' to boot.

I recalled the first day I arrived at the N'Gai's Forest and opened my mouth. "We talked about this before, didn't we. You said that I need to figure out why I had to be brought here before the 'Three Divine Questions and Answer' came to an end."

【I did.】

"You actually want to see the end of this world, don't you? You might be saying this and that, but you too have placed your hope on this world-line."

The Plotter's brows quivered ever so slightly.

No matter how hard he denied being Yoo Joonghyuk, he still failed to get rid of his old habits.

"And for that purpose, you need [the Fourth Wall] that I possess. That's why you're keeping me alive. Am I right?"

He didn't answer me. If he was planning to behave like that, I could think of a way to get him to talk.

Tsu-chuchuchut.

"I didn't get to hear that final answer to the Three Divine Questions."

['Three Divine Questions and Answers' has resumed!]

[You have one more right to ask a question.]

Back then, I asked the 'Secretive Plotter' this.

The「Three Ways to Survive a Ruined World.」

– 'Secretive Plotter'. Are you someone who knows the epilogue of that novel?

"'Secretive Plotter'. Just what did you see at the 'conclusion'?"

The 'Ways of Survival' I read ended with the 3149th chapter. However, the Plotter lived on past that, even though I didn't get to see it. He survived that unrecorded history and reached the conclusion reserved only for him.

Just what did he see in that place?

What was there that it prompted him to become an 'Outer God' and appear in this world-line?

[41] stepped forward first to answer my question. He shouted at me with a slightly angry face. "That question is…!!"

【41st.】

Kkoma Yoo Joonghyuks all shut their mouths up after the Plotter stopped them. The 'Yoo Joonghyuk' currently in the shape of a boy – the 'Secretive Plotter' – was looking straight at me.

For a moment there, I felt a bit weirded out. Yoo Joonghyuk's childhood years had never been fully explained in the 'Ways of Survival'. No, it just got a few brief passing mentions in the form of reminiscence.

Of course, not getting a proper explanation didn't mean he had no childhood to begin with.

It was kind of similar to the 3150th chapter of the 'Ways of Survival'. Yoo Joonghyuk was born in a place I didn't know of, and managed to survive until he became the story's protagonist.

【Just how much of my journey was described in that novel you read?】

The protagonist with a face I didn't know was asking me.

I hesitated slightly before replying. "…Up until when you were about to reach the Dokkaebi King."

I recalled the final moments of the 'Ways of Survival'.

He journeyed to kill the Dokkaebi King; wading past the 'Final Fog', Yoo Joonghyuk rushed into the final phase of the story. There was no further explanation on what happened afterwards or what he saw there.

That was also the reason why I got flustered back then while reading the last released chapter. I grew scared, wondering if it really was the end.

【What was I like during those last moments?】

Now that unexpected question got me truly flustered.

I didn't think he'd ask me about something like that.

"Why would you…?"

【Did it look like I succeeded? Did it look like I'd get to achieve my goal at the end of it all?】

The moment I heard his question, I was overcome with this unexplainable stifling feeling. I couldn't understand why the 'Secretive Plotter' asked me that. My thoughts regarding that were not important at all. Not even by a small speck…

…Wait, was it really not as important?

"You…"

My lips barely managed to bob up and down.

I wasn't prepared for that question. However, I still needed to answer it regardless of whether I was ready or not.

｢In that very moment, she realized that this world had completely left her hands.｣

Memories from [Peace Land] came bubbling up – the mangaka Asuka Ren's expression as she let go of the world she had created. The duty of the person who had created a new world…

I wasn't like her. I didn't write the 'Ways of Survival', but I was…

｢This story was able to see the light of the world all thanks to you, Dokja-nim.｣

…I was someone who had witnessed the story's end.

"You did succeed. Because you gave it your all."

Answering him was the duty of the one who had seen the story until its conclusion. I carefully and slowly recalled all the sentences I still remembered.

"Didn't matter which regression it was, you always made the best choice you could've made. I don't know what kind of a conclusion you reached, but you were not wrong."

All of Yoo Joonghyuk's regression turns brushed past my mind. Everything he earned, and then, all the things he had lost during them…

"I'm sure that your companions thought the same, too."

…And also, his lonely back as he reached the final page by himself.

"However…"

Did I possess the qualification to say this, though?

I couldn't tell.

"You didn't look all that happy for some reason during your final moments."

Even now, the scenes I read didn't want to leave my mind.

「Finally, Yoo Joonghyuk who had lost everything was looking at the fog. The hollow answer he'd been searching for was just beyond that fog.」

The face of the 'Secretive Plotter' that exactly matched the description from that scene, was now looking at me.

【I see.】

"…Why did you suddenly ask me that?"

【I was merely curious. You're the only one who had seen 'that' from the beginning until the end, after all.】

I couldn't say anything back to him.

【I was curious about what my life meant through the eyes of someone other than mine. That's all.】

Chapter 451: Ep. 85 - The Final Wall, III

What the 'Secretive Plotter' said felt as hollow as words coming from someone who had lost all meaning in his life.

I spoke up as if to rebel against that hollowness. "…Your life saved someone else's."

To someone who had lost so much, the truth of saving a kid whom he didn't even know the name of wouldn't be much of a consolation. The boy was someone completely unrelated to him, after all. That boy was not his companion or his family member.

I tried to open my lips several times, yet I still couldn't say anything else. The life I lived was no help whatsoever in the quest to save this guy.

The 'Secretive Plotter' looked at me struggling and spoke. 【When I first saw you, I believed that I needed to bring you under my wings.】

Bring me under his wings. For some reason, I recalled the moments I first encountered him.

<Sponsor Selection>

– Please select your Sponsor.

– The selected backer will become your dependable sponsor.

1. Abyssal Black Flame Dragon

2. Demon-like Judge of Fire

3. Secretive Plotter

4. Prisoner of the Golden Headband

…I remembered it.

That did happen. The 'Secretive Plotter' showed up during my first Sponsor Selection as my third potential choice. He really did try to become my Sponsor.

【After that, I continued to observe this world-line. Sometimes, I was surprised. I was just as surprised by the fact that I was surprised. Because I hadn't been surprised by anything for a long time.】

I knew that. During this world-line's story, he watched what we did and sent various indirect messages. If I dug through the indirect message logs, I should be able to read the ones he sent to me.

[Constellation, 'Secretive Plotter', is intrigued by your choice.]

[Constellation, 'Secretive Plotter', is impressed by the level of your stupidity.]

[Constellation, 'Secretive Plotter', is disappointed by your flippant declaration.]

[Eyes of the Constellation, 'Secretive Plotter', are sparkling after he heard your plan.]

[Constellation, 'Secretive Plotter', is curious about your scheme.]

…

Those messages made the first actual face-to-face with him rather awkward for me. I knew now that [666] and other Yoo Joonghyuks were responsible for those indirect messages, but still…

【I had to decide – whether to continue observing this distorted world, or to destroy it.】

"…Was that why you sent me to the 1863rd turn?"

The Plotter nodded his head. His choice led to the beginning of this 'world-line'.

He continued on. 【It was roughly a similar reason why I gave this turn's Yoo Joonghyuk the information on the 1863rd turn. I had a need to test you. To find out whether you or this turn's Yoo Joonghyuk was the more suitable candidate to witness the conclusion.】

"Okay, so your choice was?"

The 'Secretive Plotter' didn't reply and simply stared at me, before opening his mouth. 【There is a massive wall at the end of this world. It's the 'Final Wall' that can only be opened when all the keys have been gathered together.】

– You have acquired answers to all the questions.

– The 'Three Divine Questions and Answers' has ended.

I realized it then. That reply of his was the answer to my 'three questions'.

Sparks dancing around the 'Secretive Plotter' grew more vicious. Certain information would require the consumption of a great deal of Probability just by mentioning it. And if the info was related to the end of this world, then it was only obvious that the Probability cost would be enormous, too.

The 'Final Wall'.

That was the 'Conclusion' the Secretive Plotter had encountered in his epilogue.

【The 'fragment' you possess is the last key that I've been searching for.】

I got nervous and backed away. As I was in the shape of a [Murim dumpling], it was pretty hard to take backward steps, but whatever the case might have been, I simply had to create some distance between us.

If the Plotter's goal was [The Fourth Wall] in my possession, then he…

He, who was busy clenching and unfurling his fists, came across as rather terrifying for some reason.

Other kkoma Yoo Joonghyuks were also looking up at the Plotter with tense expressions.

【Far too many things had to be distorted to create this world-line. I can't decide whether leaving you alone is the right thing to do or not.】

The distorted world-line. The broken Probability.

I heard about those two things lots of times already.

"Okay, so what? What do you want, then?"

I just threw out whatever came to my mind. The important thing was to buy time. I needed to drag this out as long as possible and return to my original body. That was important.

"I don't really get what you're trying to say here. I don't get all this confusing mumbo-jumbo about the end result devouring the cause and whatnot. However, regardless of what, my companions and I did our absolute best to come this far. The conclusion is practically around the corner for us."

I could almost see it, the conclusion to this previously-unwritten story.

【Seeing the conclusion is not everything. The truly important thing is to witness the correct conclusion.】

"Correct conclusion? Deciding that would be…"

【A story with distorted Probability will always go on to create a calamity.】

I became dazed from that declaration, something that only a Dokkaebi would make.

"That's not like you. With something you haven't even seen yet…"

It was then an earthquake suddenly erupted out. Something collapsed with a loud 'Thud!!'

The wine glass on the circular table tumbled over; the whole forest was shaking around.

"…What's going on??"

This was definitely not a natural tremor.

The 'Secretive Plotter' slowly stood up from the throne and walked past me. His empty eyes were now peering deeply at the wide view of the forest.

The N'Gai's Forest was enveloped in the violent conflagration.

His forest was burning up.

[AhAhAhAhAhAh]

[SavemeSavemeSavemeSavemeSavemeSaveme]

All those trees, so tall that they might pierce the heavens above, were now burning away into ashes. 'Outer Gods' hidden within the forest screamed. The hall's temperature rapidly shot up from the incredible power of the flames. This couldn't have been a simple arson.

Even I could sense it.

Someone possessing incredible Status was attacking this place.

But, who could it be?

Something like this was impossible. This was the territory of none other than the 'Secretive Plotter'. So, who would dare to invade this place, then?

Could it be one of the large Nebulas?

<Vedas>? <Olympus>? Or… <Asgard>?

I quickly went through the list of all the Constellations related to 'fire' in my head. But I couldn't come up with any Modifiers.

This incredible flame that burned away the entirety of the expansive forest… Could it be that there was another existence possessing this much power back in the original story?

[MykingMykingMykingMykingMyking]

[EscapeEscapeEscapeEscapeEscape]

Small 'Outer Gods' quickly gathered around the Plotter. Many Outer Gods had left him by now, but still, there were quite a lot that chose to remain. They were like the citizens crowding around to protect their king, having sensed the imminent fall of their kingdom.

The 'Secretive Plotter' looking at his subjects spoke to me. 【'Demon King of Salvation'. I too made a mistake like you once before.】

His voice remained relaxed, even as he faced an urgent situation of his forest burning away. As if, he had predicted all of this beforehand.

【Rather foolishly, I tried to change what had already happened in the past.】

"…What are you suddenly on about? Are you talking about the events of the 41st turn?"

If that was the case, then I too knew what happened.

Yoo Joonghyuk from the 41st turn made a deal with the 'Devil of the Horizon' and sent Shin Yoosung to the 3rd turn. As a consequence, she ended up becoming the 3rd turn's calamity.

If the 'Secretive Plotter' was thinking about that particular 'calamity', then I wanted to tell him that there was nothing to worry about.

Unfortunately, [41] next to me was shaking his head. "This isn't from my regression turn."

"What? But then…"

[41] didn't reply and simply stared at the Plotter.

My head was in a mess. According to my knowledge, the only regression turn in the 'Ways of Survival' where he interfered with the past that had already happened was the 41st.

…But now, there was another turn besides that one?

When was that? Did it happen outside the original story?

A sun enveloped in pure flames was rising up high above the wide-open ceiling of the hall. However, this sun belonged to neither Surya nor Apollo. And in the centre of this exploding sun, ominous-looking sunspots were growing larger. No Constellations that I knew possessed a Sun that horrifying.

That was the power belonging to an existence I didn't know of.

[999th turn's 'Yoo Joonghyuk' is sighing in lamentation at the Sun.]

…999th turn??

Abruptly, I recalled something.

「Yoo Joonghyuk from the 999th regression turn. I respect the life you led. Excluding me, you were the only one who managed to get near the 'Conclusion'.」

One of them was what the 'Secretive Plotter' had said, and…

「"Even if I regress, this world will not vanish. Meaning, the world will not reset just because I died."」

…And, the other one was what Yoo Joonghyuk had said.

Even if he died, the world would not vanish. Even after he regressed, the world would still remain.

「What if it wasn't only the 'Secretive Plotter' who witnessed the Conclusion?」

「What if there was another story that didn't get a mention in the original storyline?」

「What if there was another being who, even after Yoo Joonghyuk had died, remained in that world and continued on through the scenarios? While fighting over and over again…」

The sun now enveloped in jet-black flames suddenly cracked like an eggshell and blinding rays of light exploded out.

「What if there was another being who reached the end of the world and witnessed his or her 'Conclusion'?」

The arsonist responsible for burning down the forest showed itself in the centre of the light. A silhouette simply too beautiful to labelled as a mere arsonist wavered about.

Another existence possessing power equalling the 'Secretive Plotter'. Such an existence was spreading out her purest-white wings right before my eyes.

The Plotter looked up at this creature and spoke.

【The 'Living Flame'.】

The 'Living Flame', he said.

There was such a name among the records written by the 'Recorder of Fear'.

「The 'Living Flame' that rises up from the east.」

One of the kings that ruled over the 'Outer Gods' alongside the 'Secretive Plotter'.

The thing was, I never thought about who the other kings could be, or where they might have come from.

What a stupid moron I was.

All the 'Outer Gods' were beings from the discarded regression turns from the 'Ways of Survival'. Since that was the case, I should've figured it out that their kings would also be other beings from the 'Ways of Survival', too.

Ku-gugugugu!

It felt as if my hands were trembling like crazy.

I didn't want to imagine the cause and effect. No, I didn't want to acknowledge it. Right now, I didn't want to accept that a world as horrifying as this one could actually exist.

With his trademark disinterested voice, the Plotter addressed me. 【Now do you understand? This is the consequence of distorting the world-line.】

As his words came to an end, a sword wrapped in the most brilliant, luminous flames began pointing in our direction.

It was the sword of an Archangel that I was intimately familiar with.

Why didn't I know it? Maybe, I didn't want to know in the first place?

That these flames could be this hot and this merciless?

That the flames meant to burn demons could also burn other beings, too?

The sword [Flames of Retribution], now completely covered in [Hellfire], was glowing brightly. The owner of the sword was smiling. And with an utterly terrifying expression that I had never witnessed before, she opened her mouth to speak.

【I've been searching for you for a very long time, Yoo Joonghyuk from the 1863rd turn.】

The eyes of the Archangel who judged everything now blazed in pitch-black flames.

【Oh, the Outer God who ruined my world.】

It was Uriel.

Chapter 452: Ep. 85 - The Final Wall, IV

That light in her eyes, that killing intent.

They were exactly the same as that of the Archangel I knew, yet they were also different.

This was Uriel's true appearance, the cold-blooded and cruel judge. She was the being that burned all the enemies caught by the [Flame of Retribution] for the sake of righteousness.

｢This Uriel had reached her own 'Conclusion', and…｣

[<Star Stream> is observing the entrance of the new 'Outer God'.]

[<Star Stream> is deciphering whether to allow the target's Probability or not!]

｢And, she came this far to kill the 'Secretive Plotter'.｣

[OhOhOhOhOhOh]

[TwokingsTwokingsTwokingTwokingTwokings]

The entrance of another Outer God possessing a similar level of Status as the Secretive Plotter caused confusion to spread among the small Outer Gods.

[Constellation, 'Goryeo's First Sword', is greatly stunned by the entrance of the new 'Outer God'!]

[Constellation, 'Bald General of Justice', is watching this battlefield while forgetting to polish his head.]

[Constellation, 'Lily Blooming in Aquarius', is opening her eyes wide!]

It seemed that Constellations were just as shocked as me.

…But, broadcasting from this place should've been impossible?

Maybe the barrier preventing the broadcast was undone after the forest went up in flames.

[<Bureau> is paying attention to the 'N'Gai's Forest'.]

The [Flames of Retribution] moved in Uriel's hands. The blade that melted the entirety of the forest flew in, but the Plotter lightly shifted his head out of the way. The weapon missed him by a hair's breadth and instead, blew away half of the hall and set it on fire.

[GahAhAhAhAhAh]

Outer Gods, shocked by the merciless destruction, screamed out loudly.

The [Flames of Retribution] moved again, this time with enough Status to blow the entire hall away. Every hair on my dumpling body rose up. Even Surya back in the original novel's 265th turn was not as powerful as this when he destroyed Earth.

Kwa-aaaaah!!

This time, a humongous meteor was descending from the tip of the [Flames of Retribution]. It contained enough power to blow away this forest and then, maybe even erase this entire dimension along the way, too.

I dragged out every ounce of power within my soul form. Unfortunately, there was no way I'd properly block such an attack without an Incarnation Body. Besides, to block an attack like that, you'd need…

[Giant Story, 'Pilgrim of the Lonely Apocalypse', has begun its storytelling!]

In the end, the 'Secretive Plotter' had to step forward. Pitch-black particles shot out as he swung the [Splitting the Sky Sword] vigorously. It was the power of a Giant Story. The dark Status spread out like a huge wall and defended against the meteor's impact.

Kwaaaa-boooom!!

Violent gusts of wind whipped about near the base of the forest, and the uprooted trees were flung up into the air. Whirlwinds made out of flames were completely annihilating everything in the vicinity.

Witnessing a clash of this calibre was indeed an exceedingly rare opportunity. Even the battle between Hades and Poseidon back in 'Gigantomachia' wasn't this hectic.

[Large Nebulas are paying close attention to the battle between these two beings.]

Tsu-chuchuchu…!

In the centre of where the two Statuses were colliding, sparks grew fiercer and heavier. The Plotter's [Splitting the Sky Sword] was trembling; he was being pushed back. It was all due to his Status being reduced after fighting me and Yoo Joonghyuk.

This was the power of Uriel who witnessed the 'Conclusion'.

At this rate, both the 'Secretive Plotter' and I would disappear from the <Star Stream> along with the N'Gai's Forest.

[Currently, your soul temporarily belongs to the 'Secretive Plotter'.]

[Time remaining until your soul can return: 20 hours, 31 minutes, 20 seconds]

I still had over twenty hours remaining until my soul could return. Simply dragging things out wouldn't help my situation at all. Because it didn't look as if the 'Secretive Plotter' would be able to hold out for too long.

[Exclusive skill, 'The Fourth Wall', is activating!]

I needed to stay calm in moments like this. I decided to get a better understanding of this situation first.

"Look, man! Why is Uriel attacking you??"

First of all, which world-line did that 'Uriel' come from? And why was she attacking the 'Secretive Plotter'?

[999th turn's 'Yoo Joonghyuk' is staring at the 'Living Flame' with a helpless expression.]

For a moment, I felt the inside of my head blank out.

…Could it be?

It was the regression turn that I liked the most. It was almost the perfect turn with just one blemish to its record – the regression turn that reached the Conclusion's doorstep.

Uriel began speaking again. 【Oh, I ask you, the Outer God. I hope that you haven't forgotten about the events of the 999th turn.】

【…I do remember.】

【That's good.】

The blade of the enraged Uriel contained the Story she had compiled so far.

[Giant Story, 'Flames of Eternity', has begun its storytelling!]

Her Giant Story burned fiercely. A story that I had never seen before was unfolding itself.

「"Master, we're almost there. We just have to go a little bit further, you know!"」

That was Lee Jihye's voice.

Words began telling their story.

「"Joonghyuk-ssi, just hold on for a little longer. We're almost there!"」

999th turn's Yoo Joonghyuk, having lost his left arm, right leg, and both of his eyes, was there. This Yoo Joonghyuk only lived for the sake of his companions.

His world was dyed in darkness, but one voice entered it like a ray of light.

「[Supreme King, you must stay with us.]」

That's right. Uriel was also accompanying them in the 999th turn.

She was Yoo Joonghyuk's companion. For the sake of a man who risked his everything to fight, the Archangel willingly became his ally.

「[The Conclusion to this world is just around the corner.]」

I recalled that the 999th turn was something of a miracle.

Even if their luck was good, to think that he managed to almost reach the Conclusion during only his 999th turn.

But the truth was, it wasn't all due purely to 'luck'.

「Yoo Joonghyuk of the 999th turn made a deal with an 'Outer God'.」

The reason why I didn't go for the [Absolute Throne], and tried not to do the 'Other World Pledge' if at all possible, was because I knew how the '999th turn' had ended.

「An unknown godly being, whose name was just as mysterious. The 'Other World Pledge' made with that godly being eventually took Yoo Joonghyuk's life.」

The original novel didn't specify who that 'Outer God' was. But it was a creature that spent its own Probability to grant the 999th turn's Yoo Joonghyuk incredible power and lucky opportunities.

Chills ran down my neck.

– 'Demon King of Salvation'. I too made a mistake like you once before.

– Rather foolishly, I tried to change what had already happened in the past.

That 'Outer God' was none other than the 'Secretive Plotter'.

– Now, do you understand? This is the consequence of distorting the world-line.

He had entered the past world-line belonging to the original storyline and tried to distort the Probability. And the result of that was Uriel who witnessed the Conclusion of the 999th regression turn, showing up here.

【I shall avenge my world-line in this place.】

She was here to avenge her companions' grudges against the 'Outer God' from then.

【Just like how you stole away all that's precious to me, I shall do the same to you.】

Her boundless and justified wrath filled her true voice. I felt all my strength abandoning me.

I could understand where Uriel was coming from. I too clearly remembered the moment that the 999th turn's Yoo Joonghyuk died.

– Author-nim. This can't be the end, can it? But, isn't Joonghyuk-ie just too pitiful to end up like this?

999th turn's Yoo Joonghyuk sacrificed his life to guide his companions towards the Conclusion. But his cost was to never see the conclusion of the world himself.

It was all because of the damn 'Other World Pledge'. The Probability flooding in cut his life off before the end.

– Can't he be revived somehow? Like, the Underworld, or through reincarnation. I mean, there are lots of different ways, right? Besides, just what was that 'Outer God' anyway…?

I resented the author, and resented that 'Outer God'. And I despaired while looking at the dying Yoo Joonghyuk with only a little bit left until the Conclusion.

The mental shock was so strong that I even ended up hesitating whether to read the next day's chapter or not.

Now, I was curious.

Why did the 'Secretive Plotter' do something like that back in the 999th turn?

【I wanted to change it.】

…What?

【I wanted to see a proper Conclusion. Even if that happened in a different world-line.】

The Plotter once told me this – that I had to be careful with the Probability, that I needed to create the right Conclusion. But even someone saying stuff like that had actually wished to change his past.

Just like how I wished to change this regression turn, he too had felt the same way once.

Regardless of whether the end result devoured the cause or not…

Even if the <Star Stream>'s Probability crumbled…

…He wanted to reach the proper Conclusion at least once. He wished to see himself reaching the Conclusion together with his companions.

However, it didn't work out that way.

【I'm sure you find me quite pathetic. That I made the same sort of mistake as you.】

The Plotter's Status was crumbling down. His body was getting even smaller. All Yoo Joonghyuks sleeping within him were now screaming. And as if to speak up for those screams…

【I wanted to find the one responsible for creating this tragedy,】 said the Plotter. 【The one who created this universe. The one that made me regress, and made me repeat the scenarios. My goal is to kill the one beyond the 'Wall'.】

That was his true goal.

Stopping the regressions, saving the Outer Gods, opening up the Final Wall…

All of these were centred around his main goal.

He waved his hand and my soul left the [Murim dumpling]. I got tense. I couldn't tell what he was thinking of.

I quickly spoke to him.

– The current you can't stop that Uriel. However, if my companions and I help out…

The Plotter shifted his gaze over to me. 【Do you understand what you're saying right now?】

– I do.

I was improvising on the fly, but I did genuinely feel that way. Since I heard his true end goal, it was time for me make my reply.

– From the get-go, the world that peeps on and greedily devours someone else's life is wrong.

The <Star Stream> was wrong. Yoo Joonghyuk's regressions were wrong, and the stories the scenarios created were unfair.

– That's why I won't sit still. I'll witness the Conclusion. You say I shouldn't, but I'll see it regardless. I'll definitely jump over that Wall you failed to cross along with my companions, and as for the being beyond it…

The Plotter was now waiting for me to finish my words.

– …I'll kill that guy. I'll end your 'Oldest Dream'.

Uriel's Status was growing even stronger.

The expansive hall began crumbling down. Like a world breaking apart, the N'Gai's Forest was disappearing.

Outer Gods moved closer to the 'Secretive Plotter', perhaps sensing that the end was nigh. Meanwhile, he opened his mouth. 【You said that you survived because of my story.】

"…"

【In that case, time to pay your debt.】

Just before I could ask him for clarification, Yoo Joonghyuk's Stories flooded out from him.

[Giant Story, 'Pilgrim of the Lonely Apocalypse', is howling out!]

[Giant Story, 'Hell of Eternity', has begun its storytelling!]

The Plotter's memories were now permeating into me – memories that I didn't know.

The information he gained after going through the 1863rd turn was now flooding into me.

– You…!

A portal was generated behind me, one created by the power of an 'Outer God'. It began to gradually suck me in.

– H-hey, hang on a minute! What are you trying to…!

【I'm not trying to leave this world's Conclusion in your hands.】

At that moment, he no longer looked like the 'Secretive Plotter'.

【I shall regress.】

Right now, he was 'Yoo Joonghyuk'.

【I shall live through the 1864th turn, and then, the 1865th. I'll survive that turn, witness the Conclusion and become the Outer God once more, and…】

Eventually, the hall collapsed. Everything was melting away under the bright light. Uriel's sword sliced through the thick history that totalled 1863rd regression turns, and flew towards the 'Secretive Plotter'.

【To see the Conclusion of this world-line, I shall return.】

His body was defenselessly pierced through. And I had to watch that, unable to do anything. He was cut down by the [Flames of Retribution] and his Story was scattering away.

[Constellation, 'Secretive Plotter', is activating Stigma, 'Regression Lv.??'!]

Even though he had become the 'Outer God', he was still a regressor.

The one thing he hadn't done in a long time, regressing, would start again. He'd wake up in the 1864th turn's subway once more, and go on to create yet another horrifying world-line.

「Kim Dokja thought to himself. 'I can't let that be'.」

Before I could unleash the Stories permeating in my soul form, though, Uriel made her move first.

【You shall not escape to the next turn.】

Her white hands grabbed the Plotter's neck. Black light pouring out from her hand stopped the Story's disintegration. The light spread out gradually and encased his entire body. Soon, the light formed a shape of small sphere.

I recognised what that was.

That was the [Sealing Sphere] used back in the 1863rd turn to seal away the 'Apocalypse Dragon'.

Why didn't I think of it before? Uriel was now an Outer God, too. So she should obviously be aware of the Plotter's, or Yoo Joonghyuk's, ability by now. She should know that he'd continue regressing and would never truly die.

Her hand tightened further and further. The jet-black Sealing Sphere soon emitted pale light.

【I shall seal you away for eternity.】

Chapter 453: Ep. 85 - The Final Wall, V

The sealing technique that utilised the [Sealing Sphere of the Apocalypse Dragon]. This was a similar plan to what the 1863rd turn's Han Sooyoung had devised.

「"It'll stop the time of this place, and Earth will be sealed along with the Apocalypse Dragon. Frozen forever in the 95th scenario."」

「"And that is the way you can kill Yoo Joonghyuk."」

It was the method of sealing Yoo Joonghyuk inside the perpetuity of time and stopping his regressions.

I reflexively looked at the 'Secretive Plotter'. I wanted to tell him that now would be a good time to run. Even if it was him, he'd not be able to escape from being sealed in that thing.

However, why are you… smiling?

[Constellation, 'Secretive Plotter', is looking at his own ■■.]

He was strong enough to survive 1863 lifetimes. But because of that, he was also exhausted enough to crumble at any given moment.

The eternal slumber. In a certain way, that was what he had been wishing for his entire life.

– H-hang on!! Uriel! Please stop!

My words prompted Uriel to look in my direction for the first time.

She seemed to be surprised by the fact that an insignificant being had called out her true name, and opened her mouth to speak.

【Who is this soul form? Is it an existence from this world-line?】

I wasn't sure what to say here.

Before I could, though, the 'Secretive Plotter' seized the initiative first. 【He's a nobody. Let him go.】

For a moment there, he was looking straight at me. Quite unlike his usual self, his eyes were displaying clear emotions.

He genuinely wished for me to make my escape from here.

However, the situation remained grim – the portal was being shut forcibly by Uriel.

She alternated her gaze filled with the 'Secretive Plotter' and me, her eyes remaining unreadable, before opening her mouth again.

【Even after you ruined your own turn and messed up someone else's world-line, you still have something you wish to protect?】

Her power extended out in an instant and captured me. This might be the worst possible situation.

【Very well. I shall seal this bastard away with you. Enjoy your eternal slumber alongside your companion, then.】

– H-hang on a minute! Shouldn't you be listening to my side of the story, too?!

Uriel glared at me as if I was speaking of nonsense.

I didn't back down and shouted back.

– I do understand where you are coming from. I know how wronged you feel after your world-line got distorted, and I get how angry you are. However, this is wrong. This isn't your world-line. What you're trying to do is exactly the same as the one you hate, the 'Secretive Plotter'!

As I urgently made my case, I began sensing this stinging pain on my forehead. My head with no actual physical form was hurting right now. The sensation from the constrictive headband was getting stronger.

– Why don't we stop this? I mean, it's already not enough to pool our strengths together to destroy the <Star Stream>, so why should we fight each other like this? Don't you know who the real enemy is? Don't you know where the true cause of all this tragedy…

【You want to destroy the <Star Stream>? Why do you wish to do something like that?】

Now that was an unexpected question.

– That's because the world of the <Star Stream> is…

【If the <Star Stream> disappears, the whole universe will fall into chaos.】

At that moment, a corner of my chest grew icy cold.

I secretly believed that all my companions wished to witness the same Conclusion as each other. However… what if that wasn't the case?

After Yoo Joonghyuk's death, the 999th turn's companions would have carried on to reach the Final Scenario, and cleared it.

What was the end of the world they had reached after all of that?

【Such a world-line must never be created. That is the way of Evil.】

Along with her declaration, her Status began to tighten around me.

– …In that case, it can't be helped. We can only fight, then.

【Fight? A creature without an Incarnation Body will…?】

– I'm not the one who'll fight you.

I looked up at the sky and smirked back at her.

– My companions will.

Powerful sparks exploded in front of my eyes. My head got squeezed tightly as if it'd shatter into pieces, and my vision fell apart. Something was getting closer.

「Prajna… Dokja… Don't-try… stay-put-sutra…」

…Here they come.

[Ba-aaht!]

Accompanied by Biyoo's cry, a new portal opened up in the mid-air. Almost right away, the Black Flame Dragon's pitch-black Breath poured out. Uriel quickly discarded me and retreated away from that powerful rush of hot flames.

At the same time, someone snatched away my soul form and flew up.

"Every-freaking-where you go, seriously man… And why do you look like this now?"

It was Han Sooyoung.

"I guess only the constrictive headband wasn't enough."

And then, Yoo Sangah.

She was carrying my Incarnation Body on her back, currently shackled by the headband. She seemed to have correctly guessed what my current condition was.

[Currently, the binding force of the 'Existence Pledge' is in a weakened state.]

I didn't hesitate and jumped back into my body. My vision crumbled again for a bit, and the sensations from my limbs returned. Although my Incarnation Body was not okay, it was still better than not having one.

I saw Uriel activating [Hellfire] through my blurry vision.

Han Sooyoung next to me had her eyes open up wide. "H-hey, what the heck is this…?!"

"No time to explain. We've got to get out of here, pronto."

Both Han Sooyoung and 'Sakyamuni's Successor', Yoo Sangah, were powerful beings. Unfortunately, our enemy this time was simply too strong. With only these two…

Kwa-aaaaaaah!!

As if waiting for that moment, [Hellfire]'s flames pounced on my companions.

"Goddammit!!"

The waves of incredible heat that couldn't be avoided no matter where you escaped to – its Status was so humongous that Han Sooyoung's [Black Flame] alone wasn't enough to fight back. It was then, a powerful burst of reddish flames exploded from the same portal Han Sooyoung had used. It had the exact same colouring as our enemy's flames. Two powerful sources of heat clashed and generated a violent storm of fire.

[What the ■ck? Which mother■cker is it?!]

A certain someone coughed her lungs out and appeared from thick, choking flames. An Archangel waved away the smoke with one hand and revealed herself.

Wearing a black dress and kitted out in a golden anklet, an Archangel I was intimately familiar with was standing there, soot on her cheeks and all.

[Huh? Which son of a bi■ dares to hurt my Kim Dok…]

Uriel shifted her gaze beyond the [Hellfire] and soon afterwards, her expression became dazed. Then her jaw slackened as she muttered out. [I… am the bi■?]

…I didn't expect her to be a part of the rescue team. The situation had gotten more complicated this way. Of all things, the two Uriels had to run into each other here.

【…And you are?】

It seemed that the Outer God Uriel was just as stunned by this.

【I see. You are this world-line's…】

The moment these two Uriels looked at each other, violent sparks exploded in the air.

It was rather obvious that our side was still in an overwhelmingly disadvantageous position. Our Uriel was strong, sure, but that Uriel was someone who had witnessed the end of a world-line.

If we don't find an opening quickly and escape, then…

Tsu-chuchuchut!!

An unexpected event happened next.

[<Star Stream> is intrigued by the encounter of these two beings.]

['Disconnected Film Theory' is activating!]

When two Stories met and intertwined with each other in the air, a gigantic backflow of memories occurred.

「[Get up, Yoo Joonghyuk! Hurry!]」

Memories from the 999th regression turn were coming through.

Uriel's eyes opened wider at this sudden intrusion of foreign memories. [W-what's this? What's going on?]

Waves of unfamiliar memories were flooding us. Uriel from the 999th turn was fighting with her back pressed against Yoo Joonghyuk's. Now that was a fine display of what being companion-in-arms looked like.

Our Uriel couldn't get a hold of herself from the rush of memories flooding in and staggered unsteadily.

That damn theory, again it's… Before I could complete my train of thought, though, I realized that the situation wasn't as bad as I expected. Because the exchange of Stories via that theory went both ways. The evidence of that was the 999th turn's Uriel, who not only staggered about, but she actually even plopped down on the ground.

「[Kim Dokja! Over here! Sit next to me!]」

Definitely.

「9158FOREVER」

「[One's ID shouldn't be too eye-catching, so… Right. Let me go with uri9158… Alright, it's not so obvious now.]」

「[…'Squid Kim Dokja's Leg' will be given away as a s-special bonus??]」

And there were a few Stories that might shock their viewers mixed in among them, too.

【T-this, this, what is…??】

999th turn's Uriel was frowning deeply as if she was in pain. Han Sooyoung didn't miss that opening and, while supporting our Uriel, shouted out. "I don't know what's going on here, but this is good. Let's bounce outta here. I mean, she looks seriously strong even at a glance, right?"

Her judgement was definitely correct. However, she forgot one small detail.

"Hang on. Let's take him with us, too."

I pointed at the 'Secretive Plotter' sagging on the ground.

Perhaps the memories of this world-line proved to be too shocking for her, the sealing sphere Uriel had been constructing had become quite badly tattered.

Han Sooyoung spoke in pure disbelief. "Are you stupid? Why should we take him with us?!"

"We need to bring him with us. Only then will we reach the correct 'Conclusion'."

"What bullshit are you…"

Indeed, it was a bullshit-like utterance. I was being obstinate, and my actions didn't make much sense. Even then, I continued to speak my piece. "That guy must not die here. He too has the right to see the Conclusion."

「All the worlds were simply blaming 'Yoo Joonghyuk'.」

Uriel from the 999th turn, everyone from that world-line, too – as the consequence of spending his entire life to reach his own 'Conclusion', he had to become the enemy of every world-line.

「Out of the 1863 regression turns, was there any turn where he got to be happy, at least once?」

When I regained my wits, I was already sprinting forward.

999th turn Uriel was slowly regaining her own wits too, and I saw her trying to reignite the [Hellfire].

Han Sooyoung shouted out. "You crazy fool!! We don't have the time!!"

I gave it my all to activate the [Way of the Wind]. Flames from [Hellfire] began flooding in once more. These dancing flames in the air somehow looked like ancient letters to me.

– …Author-nim. Wouldn't it be okay, just one time?

I couldn't quite remember how old this memory was.

– I mean, there are so many regression turns, so, just once wouldn't…

…Did I really say something like that? My memories weren't clear enough. However, just like back then, when all I could do was to type on the keyboard and press the space bar, I could only run forward like crazy right in this moment.

– Isn't it okay for him to be happy?

Maybe, that was me whining to a god responsible for creating this world.

– It seems that you weren't happy with what I have written.

Then, the 'god' replied.

– In that case, what kind of a conclusion would you like to see, Dokja-nim? Which conclusion would be a happy ending for the protagonist?

What did I say back then? I tried, but couldn't remember at all. And even now, I couldn't be sure of what the right answer was. I didn't have the right to speak about someone else's happiness, after all.

However, even if it was someone like me who had no right, there was this one thing I still understood.

「This is not a happy ending.」

The Secretive Plotter's body was getting sucked into the encroaching heat from the [Hellfire]. With no time to spare, I managed to grab hold of his wrist, and then, began running in the opposite direction.

Han Sooyoung's complexion grew pale and she hurriedly summoned the [X-grade Ferrarghini]. Meanwhile, Yoo Sangah shouted out. "Dokja-ssi! Faster!"

【You can't!】

I evaded the rushing flames and placed the Secretive Plotter on my back. The bottom of my feet was growing insanely hot now. I ran with all my might to escape from that crazy heat.

"Argh, screw this shit… I don't care anymore! Hurry up and get in!"

Han Sooyoung reached out to me, and I barely managed to jump inside the vehicle. I saw Uriel in the backseat, shivering away. Almost at the same time, a tsunami wave of reddish flames pounced on us.

【Stop!!】

I inwardly prayed towards the 'Mass Production Maker'. I prayed that this vehicle's performance wasn't 'mass-production' in the slightest.

[Constellation, 'Mass Production Maker', is grinning brightly.]

With an explosive turn of speed, the [X-grade Ferrarghini] accelerated forward. At the same time, Biyoo opened a portal, and we jumped into this dimensional passageway right away.

The horrifying howl made by 999th turn's Uriel chased us from behind. I was scared that she was actually chasing us down. Even if we managed to escape back to Earth unscathed like this, if that Uriel managed to follow us and went on a rampage…

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

The 999th turn's Uriel stopped giving chase as the sparks crazily whipped about. While shooting me a terrifying glare, no less.

[<Star Stream> is carefully observing the 'Living Flame'.]

It seemed that she couldn't use this portal. A powerful storm of Probability's aftermath was holding her back. But that made sense. A being possessing such a might actually enjoyed less freedom in the <Star Stream>, after all.

However, there was this one thing that kept nagging me. If she was that restrained, how could she appear in the 'N'Gai's Forest' with such good timing?

It was as if someone had instigated this whole thing.

…Instigating it?

[Great Dokkaebi, 'Heoju', is keeping a close eye on your whereabouts.]

At that moment, a faint little theory entered my head. What if that Uriel's appearance was not a coincidence?

[Great Dokkaebi, 'Heoche', is keeping a close eye on your whereabouts.]

[Great Dokkaebi, 'Baram', is keeping a close eye on your whereabouts.]

What if someone within the <Star Stream> wanted it to happen, and they summoned her to this world-line?

There was almost no organisation in this world capable of moving that much Probability.

[<Bureau>, is keeping a close eye on your whereabouts.]

The N'Gai's Forest could be seen through the vehicle's windows. 'Outer Gods' that came from the doomed world-lines were now being extinguished.

Citizens of a small kingdom were saying their goodbyes to their king.

[SurviveSurviveSurviveSurviveSurvive]

There was more than one Outer God king.

Just like how the 999th turn's Uriel had shown up here, other Kings would undoubtedly appear, too. Surely, the ones trying to interfere with the Conclusion I wanted to see would call them to this world.

[<Star Stream> is looking at you.]

I raised my head to find the world that I need to fight looking at me.

This would be a very tough and arduous fight.

Han Sooyoung looked at me through the rearview mirror and grumbled about something. Yoo Sangah sitting in the front passenger's seat was looking at me. I quietly nodded my head and gazed at the unconscious 'Secretive Plotter' and the still-dazed Uriel.

Quite likely, no one in this universe would stand on our side.

I saw the portal's exit in the distance.

[Your choice has left a profound impact on the ■■.]

[Your ■■ is leaning towards「eternity」.]

And so, the time to prepare for the final pages of the world had arrived.

Chapter 454: Ep. 86 - The square circle, I

While driving down the dimensional passageway, neither Han Sooyoung nor Yoo Sangah said much. Thanks to that, though, I was able to organise my thoughts while gazing outside the window – on what I need to do in the future, and the things I'd like to do.

Next to me, Uriel finally stopped muttering something with a serious face only to fall into a snore-filled slumber. Meanwhile, the 'Secretive Plotter' was half-leaning against her, also unconscious.

It kind of felt weird seeing two of the oldest viewers in my channel sleeping so defenselessly like that.

Han Sooyoung, checking me out through the rearview mirror, suddenly spoke up. "What are you grinning like that for? You should be getting ready to give us a proper explanation once we get back."

Explanation, was it? It was pretty clear what I needed to explain to them, of course.

"You only have one chance."

I found Yoo Sangah's bright smile rather terrifying.

"We've arrived."

Not too long after that, the Ferrarghini came to a stop.

We were back in Seoul.

* * *

A short while later, I was sitting in front of my companions.

The faces that I missed so much, the ones I wanted to see had gathered in one place. The <Kim Dokja's Company> that experienced the scenarios together with me, including Lee Gilyoung, Shin Yoosung, Jung Heewon, and Lee Jihye. And, Lee Seolhwa and Gong Pildu who guarded Seoul while I wasn't here. Finally, I could see my mother and the wanderers in the living room a bit further away.

I studied the faces of all my companions and lowered my head 90 degrees before opening my mouth. "I'm sorry."

"About what?"

"All the things I've done… I'm really sorry."

"H-mm… Well, sure."

…What's this? Weren't they furious at me?

I wasn't sure what's going on here, but well, I thought this was for the best. I had so many things to explain, after all.

"I'd like to explain a few things, starting from…"

"First of all, tell us whose child that is."

Gong Pildu threw out that question first. I chased after his gaze and saw the 'Secretive Plotter' floating inside a clear sphere near me.

[Currently, this individual's Story is unstable.]

Seeing that he still failed to regain his consciousness yet, it seemed that a serious problem had occurred after he used up far too much Probability. Meaning, it was impossible for him to clarify the situation by himself.

Meanwhile, rage began filling up Gong Pildu's eyes when I didn't answer back. "You said that you'd get rid of the scenarios so I protected Seoul for you, yet you dare to show yourself here with your child instead?!"

The grief of a man who spent his entire life as a 'Gireogi' dad could be felt in that voice.

"I see that you're under some sort of a misunderstanding, but…"

"Whose is it?" Gong Pildu glanced at Yoo Sangah with somewhat fearful eyes. "…Could it be?" He met her smiling eyes and shook his head. "…Right, there's no way. That means, it's with her, then?"

"You want to die?!"

Han Sooyoung growled angrily, prompting him to flinch grandly.

I didn't miss that opening and quickly jumped in. "Excuse me, isn't it a bit too much thinking that he's someone's kid? Besides, just where does he look like a newborn to you??"

"Han Myungoh's kid grew up in the blink of an eye, didn't she?"

Those words caused Han Myungoh's complexion to pale. "That kind of makes me uncomfortable."

"What bugs me more than that is the kid's face. It's exactly the same as that jerk-off's."

Gong Pildu shifted his gaze over to the corner of the living room while saying that.

That's where the cross-legged Yoo Joonghyuk and his glaring eyes were at, his entire body tightly wrapped in bandages. His trademark scary glare was locked on me.

– Kim Dokja, what is the meaning of this?

I could only sigh grandly. "It's only natural that he looks exactly the same as that 'jerk-off'. Because this kid is that jerk-off."

Silence descended on the living room in an instant. Gong Pildu was looking at me, his eyes asking what kind of rubbish I was spewing out this time.

It seemed that my tale was going to get a bit lengthier than initially planned.

"There are several Yoo Joonghyuks in this world… I guess I should start my explanation from there."

I started my in-depth explanation from the end of the 'Great War of Saints and Demons'.

From when I summoned the Outer God that destroyed the Demon Realm, the 'Nameless Mist', to stop the Apocalypse Dragon. (Gong Pildu: "Are you bloody insane?")

And then, encountering the 'Secretive Plotter' and him kidnapping me. (Lee Seolhwa: "Oh my goodness.")

Then, finding out that the Plotter was none other than Yoo Joonghyuk who had lived through 1863 regression turns. (Jang Hayoung: "…What the heck are you talking about?")

Forming a contract with him that also contained the 'Other World Pledge'. (Shin Yoosung: "…I knew something like that would happen, ahjussi.")

Entering the Giant Story「Journey to the West」without informing my companions. (Lee Jihye: "Ahjussi, you're definitely not cut out to be an actor, you know.")

The battle between two Yoo Joonghyuks, one from 1863rd turn and the other, from 999th turn. (Jung Heewon: "Just how many Yoo Joonghyuks are out there??")

Yoo Joonghyuk of this world-line, who thought that he was in the 3rd turn, realizing that it's actually the 1864th. (Han Myungoh: "Could it be that you yourself can't explain this and are just coming up with random stuff??")

Barely managing to clear the「Journey to the West」with my companions' help, but then, getting kidnapped by the Secretive Plotter again. (Yoo Sangah, wordlessly sighing.)

And finally, the event of encountering the 999th turn's Uriel in that place, who had become an Outer God herself.

When I got that far, even I began wondering what the hell I was talking about. I raised my head to discover that my companions were carrying roughly the similar expressions.

The first one to react was Han Myungoh. "Hmm, hmm. So that's what happened. I think I understand everything."

…But, that's plainly not possible?

Everyone was now looking at him. So, Han Myungoh added one more thing. "It seems to me that you actually enjoy dying or getting kidnapped."

"…Excuse me, I guess it's not just me who don't get it, right? Just what the heck are you talking about here? There are three of my Masters running around out there? And what's up with this 1864th turn and all…?"

Perhaps it was natural that they didn't understand.

From the get-go, the fact that the 1863rd turn had split into two was causing the complications.

Yoo Joonghyuk who lived through the original 1863rd turn went on to become the 'Secretive Plotter'. Meanwhile, Yoo Joonghyuk that lived through the altered 1863rd turn regressed once more and became the dude that we all knew.

Since I read the 'Ways of Survival', I could understand it fine, but it was natural that my companions would find this all rather mystifying.

Jung Heewon, massaging her head, asked me then. "Okay, so what are you saying? Is our Joonghyuk-ssi the 3rd turn, or the 1864th?"

That prompted Yoo Joonghyuk sitting on the corner of the bed to reply curtly. "I don't know."

"Eh?"

"I can't remember."

I activated the [Character List] and confirmed Yoo Joonghyuk's information.

<Character Summary>

Character: Yoo Joonghyuk

Exclusive Attributes: Regressor <3rd turn> (Myth)…

Surprisingly, his attribute had reverted back to '3rd turn'.

"My memories returned only during the time when I was borrowing Kim Dokja's Story for a little while. It was similar to watching someone else's history."

…I had no idea it was like that.

Yoo Joonghyuk continued on. "This is what I think. This is originally the 3rd turn, and I am definitely the 3rd turn Yoo Joonghyuk. Except that, during a certain point during the world-line, the memories from when I was living in the 1864th turn have covered up mine temporarily."

Lee Seolhwa, listening in, joined the conversation. "…But, that doesn't make any sense. You're saying that the 3rd turn has influenced the 1863rd turn, and in turn, the 1863rd has influenced the 3rd… That's logically impossible."

"Logically, no." Eventually, Han Sooyoung stepped in, too. "It can only be valid in the form of written words. What I'm saying is that, such a thing is only possible because this world used to be a 'novel' originally."

She then shifted her gaze over to the 'Secretive Plotter' surrounded by the transparent sphere. "It's the same thing as the 'square circle' or the 'triangle with the total of their interior angles coming at 720 degrees'."

Lee Seolhwa tilted her head and asked her. "But, something like that can't exist, right?"

"It's more correct to say that you can't even imagine it, actually. However, as texts, as paragraphs, they certainly can exist. What's happening right now is just like that. To us, it might be a time paradox, but as texts of a novel, it's completely possible, you know. I mean, you can just say, there it is, so deal with it. It's not the issue with understanding it, but rather, accepting it. So, let's look at it in a simpler way. We're currently stuck inside a crap novel. Since the original was crap, this is the end result."

I wanted to say something as a rebuttal, but since she spoke of truth, I couldn't think of anything.

"If I was this novel's writer, I'd have stopped doing the world-line distortion thing at once or twice. Readers seriously don't like this sort of complicated stories, you know? Even the Constellations probably can't figure out what's going on here."

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', says that his Incarnation is truly a smart cookie.]

"A world with broken Probability will collapse by itself. I know of quite a few stories that ended in that manner. Worlds that even their authors gave up on."

Han Sooyoung was an author herself so she could say these words. She might have abandoned such worlds in the past, and she might be regretting it 'till this day.

When I thought about that, something felt off to me.

The world created by the author of the 'Ways of Survival', tls123, had become a reality.

– In that case, what kind of a conclusion would you like to see, Dokja-nim? Which conclusion would be a happy ending for the protagonist?

Could it be that the author couldn't finish his story and was leaving it up to us?

Jung Heewon scratched her cheek and asked. "Okay, so what's your conclusion, Han Sooyoung?"

"We gotta fight those bastards that shoved us into this stupid world. Whether it's the author, the Outer Gods, or even the Dokkaebis."

"The same as it has always been, then."

"Doesn't matter what happened in the original, you can chuck that crap to the dogs for all I care. We have to see our own Conclusion, anyway. We simply can't remain stuck in the damn shithole scenarios forever."

She was right. Right about everything.

Whether it was the Outer God King or the <Bureau>, it didn't matter.

[Every star in Nebula <Kim Dokja's Company> is radiating light.]

No matter who our enemy was, we still had only one choice to make. We fight, win, and reach our answers in our own way.

"Dokja-ssi?"

Before I realized it, my companions were looking at me. They seemed to be waiting for me to say something.

Their expressions were asking me about what we need to do moving on, and what we need to make preparations for. Of course, I had been thinking about those, as well.

However, it wasn't that easy for me to say the first words.

Maybe it was because I felt nervous, knowing that the end was around the corner. It was fear that, although we reached this far with so much hardship, one wrong judgement from me and everything could go down the crapper, just like that. It was also a burden of knowing that I now had to walk on the path not seen in the 'original novel'.

My lips bobbed up and down several times, and eventually, I managed to eke out a word. "So…"

"That'll be enough for today." Yoo Sangah stepped in to stop me. "Let us rest for today, and carry on tomorrow. Everyone, we've returned from a tough scenario only just now, anyway."

I stayed up that night and made plans.

I was almost lured by the temptation to read the 'final revised' version of the 'Ways of Survival' several times, but in the end, I didn't. I wasn't sure why not, but then again I did have this hunch.

This gut feeling that, the moment I read the novel, I'd not be able to escape from its shackles.

"…"

I fell into a slumber so deep that I couldn't even remember when I succumbed to it. The last bits of the memories were a blur. I might have dozed off while reading a book, and I thought I drank a cup of warm tea that Lee Gilyoung had brought in. In any case, it was a rather sweet sleep.

And, I thought I had a happy dream, too.

The dream was about the chat I had with Yoo Sangah some time ago. Set in a world where all the scenarios had come to an end, my companions were busy talking about their daily lives. It was really peaceful. It was so peaceful, in fact, that it didn't feel like real 'peace' to me. And when I saw the bright smiles on Shin Yoosung and Lee Gilyoung's faces, somewhat mysteriously I realized the truth.

「This is a dream, isn't it.」

I bit down hard on my lip, and as if an earthquake had erupted out, the view of my dream rocked about. Still in the haziness of my consciousness, I slowly opened my eyes and tried to sit up.

…What's this?

My body didn't want to move.

Also, the faint earthquake I felt inside the dream continued on, too.

I managed to force my eyes open, and the surroundings revealed itself under the dim darkness. What greeted me was the sensation of plush leather enveloping my back and the head.

"Hey, Kim Dokja's trying to wake up."

"Put him to sleep again."

I felt someone smacking me in the head, and my consciousness dimmed again. And as I faded out, I heard a mischievous voice talking to me.

"This is the workers' revolt, you dumbass."

And when I opened my eyes again…

I was inside an unfamiliar mountainside.

1L9I2AA8UCL0IGJ

*

Chapter 455: Ep. 86 - The square circle, II

I began thinking about how this event came to be.

One, I was bound tightly.

Two, I was thrown inside an unfamiliar mountainside.

No matter how hard I analysed it, the end result always came back to 'kidnapping', but who would dare to infiltrate the <Kim Dokja's Company> and kidnap me? Which could only mean…

"…is…"

"…Dokja…Untie…?"

"Ack?…"

Faint voices could be heard coming from somewhere.

I grunted and struggled to free myself, and then, staggered towards where those voices were coming from. I brushed past the thickets and around 30 seconds later, ran into a fairly wide campsite manned by my companions.

"Ah, so he came on his own volition, then." Han Sooyoung snickered and waved her hand towards me. "What are you looking at? Haven't you seen an industrial strike action before?"

"Hang on a minute, this…"

"What a nice breeze. Dokja-ssi, why don't you come and lie down here?"

Jung Heewon was lying spread-eagled on the ground looking up at the sky right next to Han Sooyoung. She moved her arms as if they were her wings, causing the fragrant green blades of grass to fall and get back up again and again.

Han Sooyoung then began muttering in a reverential voice. "Grass lies down. Faster than wind, it lies down."

*

"Ohh."

"Jung Heewon too lies down. Faster than wind she lies down and before the gust comes she stands up first."

"Not bad?"

While looking at this sudden breakout of a poetry reading competition, as well as Jung Heewon providing timely support fire, I asked them in a dazed voice.

"Just what is going on…?"

"This is the workers' revolution, dumbass."

"Okay, you've been harping on about a revolution and whatnot for a while now, but…"

"Argh, I just want to take a damn break. Do I need to spell it out for you??"

I frowned after she berated me.

Taking a break?

"What are you talking about? Don't you know what era we're in right now?"

"What era are we in, then?"

I wasn't sure what to say when she retorted back like that. What did she mean by 'what' era we were in?

[Currently, the Nebula <Kim Dokja's Company> possesses the qualification to enter the Final Scenario.]

[Remaining time to enter the scenario is: 28 days, 12 hours, 15 minutes and 7 seconds.]

I calmly replied to ensure that I wouldn't get sucked into her pace. "We don't have the time for this. The Final Scenario is literally just around the corner."

"And that's why we need to take a breather now. If not, when can we be able to, like this?" said Han Sooyoung, while sighing out grandly. "Look around you. Don't spend your day buried in your smartphone, alright? You still wanna work even after coming to a place like this?"

After hearing her, I began scanning the surrounding terrain for the first time.

Indeed, we were in a fertile, green forest. I wasn't sure which mountain it was – Jirisan, Seoraksan, or Hallasan… In any case, it was a really beautiful mountain, alright. The sunlight wasn't too strong, while the wind blowing felt cool to the skin. It was perfect weather for camping, in other words.

I hesitated somewhat before speaking up. "Uhm, I'm not saying that we shouldn't take a break, but… Uh, it's good to rest, but what I'm saying is that we should finish what we need to do first. Right now, we're…"

"Holy cow. Dokja-ssi, you're really 'kkondae' minded, aren't you? Is every company representative out there like you?" Said Jung Heewon, while lightly tapping my shin. "Representative-nim? When you're taking a break, you're supposed to just do it."

My head became complicated.

Han Sooyoung glared at me when I didn't say a thing and addressed me in a sour tone of voice. "Sure, you're oh-so-right. Everyone shouldn't be resting at the same time, so at least one person should be in a scenario. Why don't you go ahead?"

"What?"

"I'm saying, why don't you do the scenario that you love so much?"

After hearing her, my gaze abruptly shifted up to the air to discover an actual scenario window floating up there.

[Sub Scenario – 'Workers' Off-day' has been generated!]

I had never even heard of such a scenario before so I quickly accessed the scenario window.

<Sub Scenario – Workers' Off-day>

Type: Sub

Difficulty: ???

Clear condition: You're the head representative of the Nebula <Kim Dokja's Company>. Due to your exploitation and harsh treatment, employees of <Kim Dokja's Company> are currently in a very fatigued state. They are greatly dissatisfied with you, the head of the Nebula, and are in the middle of a strike. As their boss, you must listen to their complaints and appease them. In consideration of your weak communication skill, the total goal for complaint resolution will be set at 5 people.

Time Limit: 12 hours

Reward: Trust from <Kim Dokja's Company>'s employees

Failure: Death (?)

Death?! What the hell, what kind of a scenario is this…?

I looked up at the sky, and Biyoo went "Baat" up there.

Han Sooyoung grumbled directly aimed at me. "Seriously, man. This guy needs to be told through a scenario just to understand it."

While feeling anxious, I looked around my surroundings.

My companions seemed to be enjoying themselves. Han Sooyoung was busy reciting parody poems, while Jung Heewon had fallen asleep among the grass.

Lee Gilyoung and Shin Yoosung were butting heads and growling at each other.

"Hey, Shin Yoosung. Let's make a bet. Let's see who can catch the bigger dinner today."

"What are we betting on?"

"The loser grants the winner one wish, okay?"

"Call."

The kids quickly sprinted towards the forest and Yoo Sangah called out to them. "Be careful."

There was a small valley with a flowing stream next to the campsite; Gong Pildu sat on the fishing chair he brought along, and while looking at his lure in the water, he yawned out relaxedly. Han Myungoh sitting next to him was muttering about this and that.

"If only we were out by the ocean, I'd have caught a seabream this big…"

I heard the refreshing sounds of water flowing in the valley as well as mountain birds chirping away. It felt as if the calming greenery of the overgrown mountainside was slowly collapsing on myself.

It was as if I was still dreaming.

This sort of affectionate behaviour felt uncomfortable to me, like some kind of ill-fitting clothes. Was it okay to be like this? Was it okay to experience moments like this already?

I searched for Yoo Joonghyuk.

Indeed, we shouldn't be like this. If it was him, he should agree with me. He must be standing around somewhere while glaring at the group. Along with that scary light in his eyes, he'd start lecturing everyone, beginning with "You fools…!"

I quickly located him.

I was about to raise my hand and call out to him, but then, stopped after realizing something was off there, too.

Chi-eeeik.

He was actually cooking over there. Standing before a large grille, his hands were moving around in a showy fashion to grill some meat. Vegetables were sizzling and shuddering inside the frying pan. The [Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship] capable of destroying the heavens was now used to chop vegetables and meat.

I even forgot to call out to him and stared at that spectacle in a pure daze.

…Just what in freaking hell was going on here?

In the next second, his eyes shifted over in my direction. He then silently conveyed his words with that trademark scary glare of his. I didn't need to resort to the [Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint] to tell what those eyes were saying – it was most definitely…

｢You can look all day long, but you aren't getting any of this food.｣

…That's what those eyes probably meant to say.

His sides were occupied by both Yoo Mia and Lee Jihye, their eyes filled with deep interest and anticipation.

"Now."

Yoo Mia opened her mouth, and Yoo Joonghyuk moved his chopsticks with an emotionless face. He was like a mother bird, picking up a piece of meat to place it in her mouth. She grinned brightly.

"It's really tasty."

Lee Jihye blankly standing around opened her mouth, too. He studied her for a moment or two, before placing more meat inside Yoo Mia's mouth, instead.

That carried on for four, maybe five more times, and eventually, Lee Jihye shut her mouth.

"Master, you're too heartless."

Unable to endure it any longer, she personally moved her chopsticks. However, his frying pan shifted according to the eye-catching trajectory of the [Red Phoenix Shunpo] to avoid her hands. She grew tearful first before getting rather stubborn about it.

"Oh, so you wanna have a go, is that it??"

I seriously couldn't tell whether I was inside the world of the 'Ways of Survival', or the 「Ice-cold Handsome Regressor Yoo Joonghyuk Shouldn't be Doing This」 world.

He continued evading Lee Jihye's chopsticks and fed his little sister Yoo Mia without twitching his eyebrows once, remaining utterly expressionless. However, there was something I could glean from that.

And I came to a realization, He was genuinely serious about being here.

「Even though we are in this sort of time frame, why did Yoo Joonghyuk let this event happen?」

I wasn't the only head representative of <Kim Dokja's Company>. In more ways that one, Yoo Joonghyuk was a far more obstinate person than I was, and also, boasted far greater experience in running a group such as this one.

Yet, such a person had willingly participated in this camping trip.

「Y ou re ally ca n't t ell, Kim Dok ja?」

Accompanying [The Fourth Wall]'s voice, several paragraphs unfolded themselves before my eyes.

「Author-nim, how about going to a beach during this regression turn?」

That was a comment I posted a long time ago.

Even though I remembered so much about the 'Ways of Survival', I had forgotten all about the comments I posted. Now that I thought about it, there was one event that Yoo Joonghyuk never missed during his countless repeated regressions.

「"Today, we take a break."」

That would be taking an off-day.

It happened during the original 'Ways of Survival', but hadn't happened so far in this world.

Every time they were about to encounter another important hurdle, he'd take his companions to a different planet's tourist attractions. Of course, he had the pretext of finding necessary items for the upcoming scenarios, but he didn't force his group to do the same things as him.

「"Master, come join us and have some fun!"」

「"Hey, Lee Jihye. Kekeke. Take a gander at my abs, will ya. Even my Black Flame Dragon praised m…"」

「"We're going to eat Joonghyuk-ssi's cooking today, right?"」

Even Yoo Joonghyuk was like that, yet what was I like?

「…We must get ready for the next scenario.」

We were always in a hurry as if we were being pursued. We never had any leeway. And as we got to the latter half of the scenarios, such tendency grew even stronger. Our goal was 'always' right in front of our eyes. I acted as if the scenario themselves would break down if we didn't solve whatever it was in time. But now that I began thinking deeply about it, the scenarios would've been just fine even if we didn't hurry up and do something about them.

"H-hey, Lee Gilyoung!! We agreed not to use any skills here, didn't we?!"

"When did I?! You gotta give it your best always!"

I heard the kids' voices as they were returning with hunted prey.

Soon after that, I heard Han Sooyoung's loud call that reverberated throughout the valley. "Alright, then. The treasure hunt event will now begin! The prize is a Star Relic from the Black Flame Dragon!"

"Whaa, really? From that Black Flame Dragon?"

"I've hidden it somewhere in the valley, so the first one to find it is the winner! Ah, right. You're forbidden from using your skills. Got that? Besides that, there are other prizes too, so…"

"That Star Relic is mine!"

Han Myungoh quickly discarded his fishing rod and jumped inside the stream, but a little while later, Jung Heewon grabbed hold of his head and threw him out of the water. In no time at all, Lee Jihye and the kids returning from their hunting trip all jumped into the valley's water, too.

"Yo, hold up, Jihye noona!! That's [Ghost Fleet]! You think I won't notice it just because they are tiny now??"

"Lee Gilyoung! Are you seriously taming water bugs? You cheater!?"

"Both of you, disqualified!"

How long had it been since all of my companions were smiling together like this? Maybe, this could be our first time. They were able to smile even though the scenarios hadn't ended yet. They were able to chat away in happiness like that, and share their stories.

「And while looking at that spectacle, Kim Dokja suddenly felt lonely for some reason.」

Could it be that I had failed to understand a single thing about the 'Ways of Survival' – no, wait, regarding my companions, instead? Maybe, because I was drunk in the fantasy of witnessing the Conclusion, I actually ended up missing all the countless words that had to be read in order to reach the true Conclusion?

[You have currently resolved 0 complaints.]

A scenario that previously felt like nothing important suddenly felt as imposing and difficult as a 'Giant Story' now.

I plopped down below a parasol and dazedly looked on. Someone lightly tapped me on the shoulder.

"How goes it with your scenario?"

Yoo Sangah grinned refreshingly.

I replied with a powerless grin of my own, and she addressed me again. "Well, Dokja-ssi, your communication skill has always been a little lacking, so it can't be helped, I guess. You were also like that back when we were working for the company."

"…I was?"

"You really didn't speak all that much to other people."

I became utterly speechless after she mercilessly carpet-bombed me with facts. But then again, after giving it a bit of thought, it made total sense. I grew up without a friend from a young age. I wasn't clued in on how to socialise with other people, and back then, I only thought about how to weasel myself out of the company meal get-together. I figured that, rather than wasting time doing that, I might as well read the 'Ways of Survival' one more time instead.

「Kim Dok ja y ou h ave a fri end no w」

And then, here was an inorganic 'substance' that tried to rile me up by saying that it was my friend.

Yoo Sangah settled down beneath the parasol too, and observed our companions with a relaxed gaze. Perhaps she was going for the camping look herself, because rather than the usual Buddhist robe, she was now wearing a casual one-piece with a wide-brimmed straw hat. She sure knew how to match the atmosphere regardless of where she was. She was someone too good to be kept in the <Kim Dokja's Company> run by a pretty useless leader, at the very least.

"Sangah-ssi, do you by any chance regret getting in the subway that day?"

I wasn't sure why I asked her that. Even now, the events of the very first scenario remained vivid in my mind.

「If only Yoo Sangah's bicycle didn't get stolen.」

If she got her start from somewhere else, then she might not have become <Olympus>'s Incarnation. Maybe, she wouldn't have to die, either. She wouldn't have to experience the pain of reincarnation, too…

"No, I don't."

I had never seen such a determined expression on her face before.

"So, Dokja-ssi. You mustn't regret anything, either."

"Pardon? Regarding what…?"

"I mean, everything."

I wasn't sure what to say to her. It felt as if I'd only sound like an ass just by thanking her or expressing my gratitude. The 'Ways of Survival' never taught me what I should say in moments like this.

As if she could read my mind, she grinned refreshingly and pointed to someone over yonder.

"I think it'll be for the best that you speak to that person first."

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* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)
* Promotional illustration (semi-canonical)

Chapter 456: Ep. 86 - The square circle, III

"My concerns?"

"Yes. Uhm, like… If you're unhappy about your work, or…"

The first person I went to speak to was Lee Seolhwa. She was wearing an outdoor scientist garb, and with a small magnifying glass, studied every nook and cranny of my face as if I was some sort of an unidentified herb. She then replied to my question. "Mm, well, I don't particularly have one."

She might be saying that, but there was no way that she didn't have any complaints.

"As the head representative of the company, I can only apologise to you. I'm aware that you have worked hard to protect Seoul during our absence."

"H-mm."

"It must've been very difficult to…"

"Do you really think so? And not like, staying back in Seoul must've been so much easier?"

Her voice sounded sharp, prompting my lips to close shut before I realized it.

"I knew it. That's what you were really thinking of. You were just being sarcastic, yes?"

"No, never. I wouldn't."

"I know that others had been entering dangerous scenarios. Even if that was the case, remaining in Seoul wasn't all plain sailing, you know." Lee Seolhwa lowered her gaze and began searching for something within the bushes once more. "It should be around here somewhere…"

「Lee Seolhwa has never taken a day off.」

Her Story began speaking up for her, instead.

「After the group departed from the [Industrial Complex], she operated its sickbay and looked after the patients. Every day, the injured suffering from similar types of wounds would rush in. She watched them die, and while looking at their passing, she thought about her companions.」

"I won't be much help in the latter half of the scenarios. I'm well aware of my own potential, and my Constellation is also only a Historical-grade as well. But, I still do my best every day."

For sure, the intensity of Status floating about her vicinity felt quite different from before. It wasn't as if her combat abilities had improved, but well, how should I put this? It was like her pool of knowledge in the skills had gotten even more profound.

"Whoever it is in the <Kim Dokja's Company>, I can save that person as long as he or she still breathes. I can ensure that no one will die."

It was true that Lee Seolhwa's current growth rate was unmatched in any of the regression turns from the original novel. If my guess was correct, then she should soon reach the pinnacle of 'Life and Death Miraculous Doctor'. Without a doubt, she was a necessary person to achieve my dream ending.

"What kind of a person was I in the novel you read, Dokja-ssi?"

I got flustered for a moment there by the unexpected question. "You were an important person."

"Okay, by how much?"

Lee Seolhwa was one of the heroines to appear in the 'Ways of Survival'. However, I couldn't come out and say that she was Yoo Joonghyuk's lover from the past. From the get-go, I thought that he wouldn't want that to be known… And most importantly, I wasn't sure if that would be an appropriate description offor the person called 'Lee Seolhwa'. Who was she, really?

"Well, that…"

Just before I could carry on, Lee Seolhwa's expression brightened and she shouted out. "Ack! Found it!"

Her hand was holding a small flower. That must be the herb she was searching for. I immediately recognised what that was.

「White Ghostly Flame Flower. The final ingredient for the 'Life and Death' pill.」

At a casual glance, it looked like an ordinary wildflower. Eating this herb alone had no effect whatsoever. However, the miraculous elixir that was the [Life and Death Pill] could never be concocted without this herb.

She began smiling like a little kid. This sense of life that couldn't be felt from the pages of the 'Ways of Survival' was emanating vividly right before my eyes.

「This is Lee Seolhwa.」

That's why I gave up on recalling the words from the novel altogether. And then, I said some lame things instead. "You're the best doctor that I know of."

Praise cooked up by a small kid might be better sounding than that.

Even so, Lee Seolhwa grinned back at me. "Thank you. Even if you didn't mean it."

"I did mean it, though…"

"Please wait for me. I will turn those empty words into reality soon."

I watched her leave in search of another herb, and came to a realization. What she was curious about earlier wasn't the 'Ways of Survival'. Unlike me, she didn't need such a novel in the first place.

[You have currently resolved 0 complaints.]

I hadn't made any headway into the scenario, but I didn't feel so bad.

"It's not that easy, right?"

I looked behind and found Yoo Sangah once more.

"…Yes, it's not easy."

"But, that's only natural. If you could finish up all the conversations you had been putting off as if it's some kind of an event, then that's something out of a novel, not reality."

"I guess so."

"Even then, you must carry on."

I nodded my head. "Who do you think I should speak to next?"

"It'd been better if you did it yourself, but I'll help you again this one last time."

She used her hand to shield her eyes and scanned our companions. It was then, a message entered my ear.

[Currently, <Kim Dokja's Company>'s contracted workers are feeling dissatisfied.]

…Contracted workers? Did our Nebula have people like that?

Yoo Sangah then pointed to a spot. "Why don't you head over there this time?"

The moment I looked there, I realized who the 'contracted workers' were.

A short while later, I was addressing three people standing before me.

"I have something to discuss with you."

"What is it? I'm really busy so hurry up. I must go and find that 'Black Flame Dragon's Star Relic', right now!!"

Han Myungoh raised his voice as if to urge me along. Gong Pildu and his disinterested face, and the pouting Jang Hayoung were standing next to him. I could easily tell that they weren't exactly happy about being summoned here like this.

Even though they had experienced scenarios together with us, they hadn't joined the <Kim Dokja's Company> properly yet.

"Everyone, there's something you should know first."

I decided to tell them something that they didn't know, a piece of information that <Kim Dokja's Company>'s companions already knew – the 'Ways of Survival'.

It was a big decision on my part to tell them about it, but rather contrary to my initial expectation, Gong Pildu's reaction was lukewarm at best.

"There was a time when I used to believe everything in the land price pamphlets. I guess you're still too naïve."

"Pardon?"

"Young people these days…"

It seemed that Gong Pildu didn't really get what I was saying.

On the other hand, Han Myungoh seemed to be under a great mental shock. "S-so you knew everything, yet you just left me to end up in that wretched state??"

Jang Hayoung also seemed to be surprised, albeit for different reasons. "So, that's how it was. That's why you knew so much back in the Demon Realm…"

Thankfully, their reactions weren't as bad as I thought. But then again, they had already met a regressor and plenty of reincarnators, so maybe, my story didn't sound so crazy to them by now.

I breathed a sigh of relief inwardly and continued on. "There's only one reason why I told you this information. I'd like to formally hire you into the <Kim Dokja's Company>."

My words caused the three to exchange glances with each other.

The first one to speak was Gong Pildu. "On whose authority?"

[Incarnation 'Gong Pildu', has joined <Kim Dokja's Company>.]

…Could it be that the term "being coy" was invented for this ahjussi?

Next up was Han Myungoh. "Are you going to retain my previous position as a department head?"

"Well, we don't have any ranks like that, but if you want, I can create one for you."

"Please make sure that you pay your wages on time. As for paternity leave and overtime…"

[Incarnation 'Han Myungoh', has joined <Kim Dokja's Company>.]

Finally, I shifted my gaze over to Jang Hayoung.

[Incarnation 'Jang Hayoung', has joined <Kim Dokja's Company>.]

"…Okay, so, Flame Dragon-ah, something happened just now, and it's…"

She was using her 'Wall' to send out messages of her employment to pretty much everywhere.

Congratulatory messages from her friends in the <Star Stream> continued to flood in. While looking at her being genuinely happy, I grew a lot more complicated in my head.

If I knew she'd be this happy, then I should've let her join us earlier.

"By the way Kim Dokja, why are you suddenly letting me join you?"

She waited for my answer with sparkling eyes.

I had several reasons why I didn't let Jang Hayoung join the <Kim Dokja's Company>. But at least for today, I didn't want to think about them. I definitely needed her. However, I didn't bring her into the Nebula simply because her presence was a must during the Conclusion.

"I wanted to witness the end of the scenario with you."

Jang Hayoung's eyes grew wider after she heard me.

I felt uncomfortable while watching her pale cheeks tremble like that. As expected of someone possessing looks that easily slapped Yoo Joonghyuk's cheeks at least two times in a row.

She blinked her large, clear eyes and energetically nodded her head. "I'll really work hard!"

She clenched her fists tightly and began typing away once more.

[Congratulations! You have resolved the complaint of the contracted worker!]

[You have currently resolved 1 complaint.]

I finally succeeded with one.

So, being the head representative was this tough, huh.

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', is asking you if the rumour is true.]

What rumour??

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', is asking you if you really confessed to Jang Hayoung.]

[Constellation, 'Most Ancient Liberator', is asking the maknae Sun Wukong…]

…Just what kind of a rumour was spreading around here?

I had no idea what she was so busily typing away there, but regardless, I could see Jang Hayoung diligently tapping on the imaginary keyboard in the air.

"Hey, you. Come and eat supper!"

Han Sooyoung's loud shout came from afar.

The delicious aroma wafting in from somewhere attracted the companions and we gathered around one by one. Then, Han Sooyoung stared at Yoo Joonghyuk as if it was the most obvious thing in the world.

"Well, then. Shall we taste your high-and-mighty cooking skill in action, then?"

"…And why should I share my cooking with you?" He glared at the rest of the group with a menacing glare, before turning around to leave while throwing these following words behind. "…There are leftovers that side, so why don't you eat that."

We looked over in the direction he was pointing at. And straight away, we became utterly speechless.

「They were now witnessing the essence of cooking.」

We all settled down quietly on the table like a bunch of mice that got entranced by the pied piper, and then, began rubbing our eyes in disbelief.

These were dishes created out of the monster that Lee Gilyoung and Shin Yoosung caught, as well as with the medicinal herbs Lee Seolhwa had found. No, hang on… How could he even come up with a feast of this scale with only those ingredients?

I was pretty certain that the dining table of 'Shi Huangdi who dreamed of Immortality' wouldn't be as flashy as this one.

"Wow. Master, you gotta come and cook during my funeral, okay?"

"Why your funeral, though? That's really an ominous declaration, you know."

The group began hurriedly chowing down the grub. Jung Heewon, Lee Jihye, Han Myungoh, Gong Pildu, even Jang Hayoung… They were all seriously focused on eating right now.

Even Han Sooyoung and Yoo Sangah, too.

"Hey, hold up. That's my share."

"There's enough to go around for everyone. Why are you being so greedy?"

Some even began fighting over the food, too.

"Ahjussi, please try this one!"

"Hyung, this one, too!"

Lee Gilyoung and Shin Yoosung sat on either side of me and shoved spoonfuls of food into my mouth without a moment's rest. My cheeks swelled up like a hamster as I chewed the rice, and of course, I didn't forget to feed the kids side dishes in the meantime. It was tasty. Seriously tasty. So tasty, in fact, I was almost thankful that the 'Ways of Survival' had become reality for a moment there.

Shin Yoosung's eyes rolled around as she chewed the meat, then she whispered in a small voice. "It's like we're on a school trip…"

When I heard her, I immediately wanted to kick myself to death for feeling thankful that the 'Ways of Survival' had become reality.

The school field trip – one of the things children had lost in this world.

I placed my hands on the heads of the kids and spoke to them. "You're right. It's like a field trip."

Although, the one learning from this trip wasn't the kids but me.

"Ahjussi, what would you like to do after the scenarios are over?"

"Hyung will live with me."

"I wasn't asking you!"

What I want to do after the scenarios were over… Normally, I'd have smiled and glossed over the topic, but for some reason, I… I ended up uttering out something without realizing it.

"I want to buy a really big house and live together with everyone."

When I raised my head, I noticed that the once-noisy surroundings had fallen into an eerily silence. Lee Jihye, Jung Heewon, Gong Pildu… even Han Sooyoung was looking at me, her mouth agape.

Jung Heewon was the first to fire the salvo. "…In that case, Dokja-ssi, you'll be paying for the house, yes?"

…Huh?

"Ahjussi, you're really loaded, so you might be able to get a house in Gangnam."

"I'll sell you my land."

"If it's possible, somewhere close to the kids' school…"

I had no idea that something I just threw out there would cause such a ripple.

And so, the group chatted about the potential house I'd buy throughout the supper. Stuff about how the interior should look like, or how many rooms it needed to have…

Washing the dishes was left to me and Jung Heewon, the two losers from the rock-paper-scissors. I could have won by using [Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint], but of course I wouldn't do that during this trip.

[You have acquired a new Story!]

[You have acquired the Story, 'the One who Yanked Out the Conscience's Fur'.]

…Also, it was nice to get a new Story, too.

As I was cleaning the dishes, I spotted something falling in the distant skies above. It was a shooting star. Falling stars that left behind lengthy trails.

Most likely, those were planets that were falling for real.

The <Star Stream> was marching towards its own oblivion.

Jung Heewon looking up at the sky next to me spoke up. "It's like back then in the [Cinema Dungeon]."

I nodded my head. For sure, it was kind of similar to that day. We were also together like this on the rooftop of the dungeon. We were looking at the falling stars and making our wishes.

"Dokja-ssi, you asked me to become your sword back then."

Indeed, I asked her to become my companion in that place. And after that, she had become the greatest ally anyone could ask for. Without her, I wouldn't have been able to arrive at this moment in time.

"…But, someone else became the literal sword instead of me."

Those words made me shift my gaze over to the [Steelsword] laying quietly on the ground. Even as everyone was taking their much-deserved break, the sole person to miss out on the festivities was right there. Lee Hyunsung with his heart not beating – he seemed to regain his consciousness sporadically, but he remained as a sword and didn't want to move.

"Please do not worry. Before we head off to the next scenario, I'll definitely wake up Hyunsung-ssi."

"You know of a way?"

I nodded my head.

Lee Hyunsung's issue wasn't the only one we need to deal with, though.

We now required much greater power. Because our goal didn't simply stop at clearing the scenarios, that's why.

To fight the <Bureau> as well as the entirety of the <Star Stream>, I needed to start gathering Constellations that would stand with us.

[Constellation, 'Master of Steel', is looking at you.]

And Lee Hyunsung's Constellation backer would be the first to join us.

Jung Heewon spoke up as if my confident expression left an impression on her. "By the way, Dokja-ssi?"

"Yes?"

"Will it be fine for you to stand around here trying to look cool? I mean, aren't you in the middle of a scenario? You really aren't a being-kidnapped-and-dying enthusiast, are you?"

"Uhm…"

Along with her words, the scenario window popped up before my eyes.

[The day is coming to a close.]

[You have currently resolved 1 complaint.]

I reconfirmed the failure penalty of the sub scenario once more.

Failure: Death (?)

I looked up at the shooting star in the sky.

"…Maybe, this might very well be my Final Scenario."

Chapter 457: Ep. 86 - The square circle, IV

The time limit for the scenario was until midnight today. It was already nine PM, so there were less than three hours remaining.

…How did the time fly by so quickly, anyway?

I heard that happy moments would pass you by really quickly. It must've been true.

「Four complaints still need to be answered. And only three hours remain.」

No matter what, I was cutting it real close. From the beginning, solving five of such difficult missions was clearly forcing it.

In the end, I decided to resort to 'that'.

"Biyoo-yah."

Dokkaebis had jurisdiction over sub scenarios, so she should be able to control one just fine.

Also, since the failure penalty was not 'death' but 'death(?)', I was thinking that they wouldn't kill me for real, and… Biyoo wasn't answering.

"Where are you, our cute little Biyoo?"

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', is cackling at your ill fortune.]

[Constellation, 'Queen of the Darkest Spring', is urging you to seriously carry this scenario out…]

Seeing that the channel was open, Biyoo must be nearby for sure, but…?

I decided to pull out the hidden trump card.

"Baat."

That caused the empty air to quiver a little, then a ball of cotton with a small horn attached on top rose out from there.

[Abaat.]

Biyoo popped out with a "Poof!" and began giggling away.

I didn't smile back, though. "Biyoo-yah. I'm sorry about this, but can you, like, cancel this scenario…?"

[Eh-oh-bah-aht.]

I couldn't tell whether she was trying to say 'eva' or 'over'.

[Constellations agreeing with the applicable scenario's Probability are rejecting the scenario cancellation.]

…Hang on, could this be a bounty scenario, instead?

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is arguing that this scenario is a necessity for you.]

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', is criticising you, telling you not to use a cowardly method.]

[Constellation, 'Bald General of Justice', is saying that if you're a true companion to them, then you should use your valour and tenacious spirit to…]

[Constellation, 'Goryeo's First Sword', is simply denying the cancellation.]

…They are in sync with each other only in times like this, aren't they?

"…Yes, yes. I get it now."

[Constellation, 'Most Ancient Liberator', is cheering on his maknae.]

I couldn't really get used to the new Modifier for the Great Sage Heaven's Equal. We parted ways right away after the 'Journey to the West' scenario came to an end, but I knew we'd get to see each other soon enough.

In any case… Who should it be? Who should I speak to next? It should be someone holding the highest amount of complaints towards me, right?

I studied my companions one by one, leisurely sitting around together after that fulfilling supper. That was when the [Midday Tryst] came flying in my way.

– What are you looking at?

Okay, let's skip Han Sooyoung for now. Her problems weren't on the level that I could fix anyway.

– You making fun of me?

I continued to search for the next candidate. The next two I spotted were Yoosung-ie and Gilyoung-ie. While looking at the two lying side by side and patting their slightly bulging tummies, it almost felt as if the [Fruit of Good and Evil] was whispering to me from deep inside my mind.

「If it's their troubles, can't I easily solve them?」

Even if I set aside the cowardly reason for now, I still needed to have a serious talk with Gilyoung-ie.

[Constellation Lee Gilyoung's Sponsor is staring at you.]

Although he looked the same on the outside as before, Lee Gilyoung's Status had a faint trace of demonic aura permeating it. Would it be okay to talk to him now? However, wasn't it too open here?

[Constellation, 'Master of Sky Walk', is observing your actions.]

[Constellation, 'Lily Blooming in Aquarius', is focusing her attention on you.]

Not only that, Constellations were watching us, too. I couldn't really imagine how the channel's Constellations would react if I went and carelessly got in touch with 'that side' now.

Even then, I should at least talk to him…

[Currently, 'Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint' 2nd Stage is in activation.]

…The inside of my head rang with a "Bzz!" and the skill was activated forcibly once more. This was happening rather often lately. I wasn't sure whether it was because I read the 'Ways of Survival' too much, or due to some other reason, but…

「Ba-dump, ba-dump, ba-dump, ba-dump」

Their voices soon entered my head.

「Dokja hyung will come and talk to me, right?」

「Is he coming over now?」

…Huh?

「I better tell him about a biiiig problem.」

「I must tell him something really shocking.」

「…What if Shin Yoosung talks about something bigger than mine?」

「I definitely must say something more shocking than Lee Gilyoung.」

My steps came to a halt.

…It was not because I was scared of the kids, though. Anyways. I shifted my gaze to the person crouching next to them, instead.

「…I miss them.」

Lee Jihye with a sad expression was looking at the distant sky. She was an energetic chatterbox usually, so it was rare to see her make such face.

I could guess who she was referring to when she said she missed them.

The first scenario would've been a nightmare to everyone, but it must've been especially worse for her. Even if the <Kim Dokja's Company> was here for her, one person couldn't really substitute for someone else.

I wordlessly approached her and lightly poked her on the shoulder. Lee Jihye looked behind at me. "Uht? what's this, ahjussi? You finished with the dishes?"

"Yeah."

"H-mm… Wait, did you come here because of the scenario?"

"It's not entirely about that. But…"

"I don't have any particular complaints, so you don't need to talk to me, though? Why don't you speak to others first?"

Even now, she was worried about others. No matter how badly she was hurting, she was still thinking of other people's pain first. Lee Jihye from Chungmuro grew up like that. And she grew up into an adult like that, too.

"You can talk to me any time. If you don't want to talk to me, then it'll be fine with someone else, too. But you don't have to huddle in a corner and let it fester inside you."

Maybe she didn't expect me to say something like that, because Lee Jihye began blinking her eyes next.

"Ahjussi, don't try to act cool, okay?"

She smirked and punched me in the shin with her sturdy fist. I thought my bone was broken or something.

[You have currently resolved 1 complaint.]

A simple chat on this level couldn't resolve Lee Jihye's troubles. Even then, I still had to speak to her.

She lightly shook her beer glass around and while standing up, spoke to me. "…Alright, then. Since I'm full, I should go and stretch my limbs for a bit."

"You shouldn't exercise after drinking, you know."

"I feel fine, though?"

Seeing her swing her sword about like that, she definitely was her master's student, alright.

…Hang on a bit. Now that I thought about it, there was one guy who should be the most dissatisfied by me around here, wasn't there?

I quickly scanned the campsite, but strangely enough, I couldn't locate that idiot no matter how hard I looked.

"Hey, you deaf?? When someone is calling you, you should…"

Along with a resounding 'Slap!' someone smacked me in the back of the head.

I looked behind and spoke to the culprit. "Hey, Han Sooyoung…"

"What now?"

"Where is Yoo Joonghyuk?"

"Yoo Joonghyuk? He was over th… Uh?"

Only then did she realize it, too. Honestly speaking, that guy usually acted on his own and often disappeared on us without warning, so this shouldn't come across as all that surprising. The problem had to with the fact that he didn't disappear alone this time.

Han Sooyoung looked into the wide-open rear door of the [X-grade Ferrarghini] and spoke up. "…The 'Secretive Plotter' is gone, too."

The 'Secretive Plotter' surrounded in the transparent Sealing Sphere landed on the ground with a thud and roughly rolled around in the dirt. He was still unconscious. Yoo Joonghyuk quietly looked down on him, then slowly unsheathed the [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] and addressed the Plotter.

"I know that you're already awake."

The Secretive Plotter slowly opened his eyes. Accompanied by faint sparks, energy from a Story surged throughout his body. For a moment there, his Stories were returning to him.

【You don't seem to know how to enjoy these brief moments of peace.】

"I don't have a habit of enjoying my peace with an enemy near me."

【Are you planning to kill me? That is indeed a wise move. However, you should know by now that you can't really kill me.】

That was true. The 'Secretive Plotter' was another Yoo Joonghyuk. Killing him simply meant the creation of another world-line.

Even then, Yoo Joonghyuk didn't let go of his [Black Heavenly Demon Sword]. "It'll be far better than watching you mess up this world-line."

The Plotter laughed. They were both Yoo Joonghyuks. They may have lived two different lives, but their nature as Yoo Joonghyuk was the same. And that was why they could understand each other's thought process the best.

【Do you believe that your power alone is enough to kill me? Without Kim Dokja's Story, the current you can't fight against an 'Outer God'.】

"That might be the case, but killing you will be rather simple. I only have to shatter that [Sealing Sphere]."

A faint trace of unrest flitted in and out of the Plotter's expression.

Currently, the 'Secretive Plotter' was inside the unstable [Apocalypse Dragon's Sealing Sphere] created by the 999th turn's Uriel.

"You're deliberately not removing the [Sealing Sphere]. If you break it, then the 'Hounds Chasing After the Abyss' will appear from the gap in space and time, that's why."

It only had been for a brief moment, but still, Yoo Joonghyuk got to steal a glance into the memories of the 1864 regression turns engraved into the 「Hell of Eternity」. That's where he got to learn partial information on 'Outer Gods'. The Hounds that chased after the Abyss – he learned about the Hounds of Tindalos during that time, too.

They were the cleaners capable of detecting the distortion in a world-line.

"They can only intrude from where angles below 90 degrees exist. The normal you wouldn't be troubled by something like a few Hounds, but with how weakened you are, the story should change greatly."

The flow of Status loaded onto the [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] grew thicker. Yoo Joonghyuk too hadn't fully recovered from his wounds, so fighting the Plotter head-on was impossible.

However, shattering the Sealing Sphere shouldn't pose a challenge.

The Plotter's expression changed, perhaps after figuring out Yoo Joonghyuk's intentions. It was the face of a man who had accepted 'something'.

And so, just as Yoo Joonghyuk's [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] was about to make a move…

"Oppa."

Someone's head poked out from the bushes.

"What are you doing?"

Yoo Joonghyuk was taken by surprise and while turning his head towards her, shouted out. "Yoo Mia! Don't come closer!"

Dismay brushed past his expression next. Because he had focused all of his perception on the 'Secretive Plotter', he ended up making such an egregious mistake.

"Go back to where our companions are! This place is dangerous!"

"Don't want to."

She replied in a cold voice, something she had never used before.

Yoo Joonghyuk replied in stupefaction. "…What?"

"You don't even come back to Earth all that often anyway, so stop nagging me. You promised to stay with me for a few days, didn't you? Both Sookyung ahjumma and Gyeong-Ran ahjumma are always busy, you know? And I'm tired of listening to Grandma Bok-Sun's stories of the past, too!"

Yoo Mia clearly enunciated every single word as she strode forward. Yoo Joonghyuk's judgement blurred for a moment then.

She seized that opening and quickly ran towards the front of the 'Secretive Plotter'.

"By the way, he looks exactly like you, oppa. Who are you exactly?"

Before long, she was within the touching distance of the Plotter. Yoo Joonghyuk grew anxious. He wanted to swing his sword right now and shatter the [Sealing Sphere], but his little sister might get swept up in the air current if he made the slightest mistake here.

As he began deliberating on his options, she placed her hand on the transparent [Sealing Sphere] and innocently asked the figure inside. "Are you trapped in this thing? You want me to help you get out of there?"

Yoo Joonghyuk dearly wanted to move and pull her away from there right now. But for some reason, he couldn't.

The 'Secretive Plotter' was staring at Yoo Mia.

His eyes were trembling from a very powerful agitation. Even Yoo Joonghyuk was surprised to see such an expression appear on the Plotter's face, someone who had lived through an untold amount of time.

Yoo Mia pressed him further in the meantime.

"Come on now, answer me."

Chapter 458: Ep. 86 - The square circle, V

Yoo Joonghyuk was prepared to swing his [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] if the 'Secretive Plotter' tried to do something foolish, but rather unexpectedly, the latter easily answered back. He didn't even use his true voice, either.

"You're right. I am trapped in here."

His real, pure voice was heard for the first time.

That prompted Yoo Mia to reply with a bright smile. "Ask my oppa to free you. He's super strong, you see?"

She spoke in an innocent voice, but he replied with a slow shake of his head. "…I can't leave this thing."

"What? Why not?"

The 'Secretive Plotter' didn't reply.

"Wait, did my oppa do something to you? He threatened you with scary words, didn't he??"

"…No, that's not it."

"It's not? What then?"

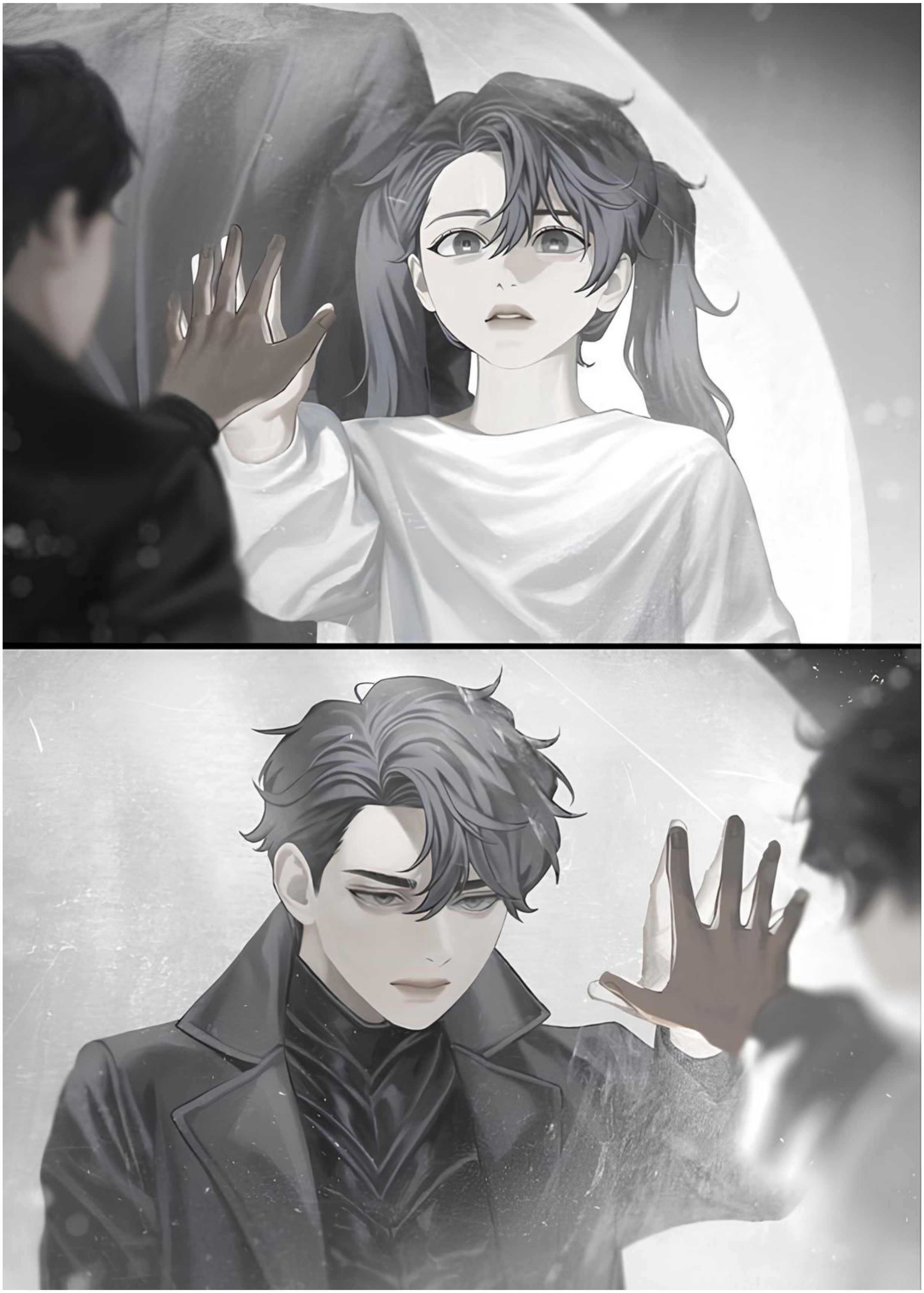
The Plotter didn't reply again. Without saying anything, he stared at Yoo Mia. He stared for a long time at the one person that no longer existed for him.

And for the first time ever, a faint smile formed on his lips.

"It's because I chose to be in here."

Yoo Joonghyuk saw that smile and couldn't say anything. Yoo Mia was busy asking what he meant, and meanwhile, the Plotter quietly stared back at her.

The latter slowly raised his hand, and his palm overlapped with hers through the thin transparent layer. Their hand sizes were fairly similar. These two palms may have overlapped after transcending time and space, but they could never truly meet.



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"Uh? Uhm…"

It was then, Yoo Mia blinked slowly and began faltering a little.

"Why am I so sleepy…?"

Her body slowly fell to the ground. Yoo Joonghyuk quickly dashed to her side and embraced her.

"You bastard, what have you done…?!"

【…I only helped her dream of nice things.】

Yoo Joonghyuk studied his little sister. For sure, her Incarnation Body showed no signs of any strange symptoms. No, she simply was in a deep slumber, softly murmuring indecipherable sleep-talk like "beach volleyball" and "squid party", etc.

He glared at the 'Secretive Plotter' with a complicated expression. No matter how weakened he was, by using Yoo Mia he would have been able to escape from this situation pretty easily. However, he didn't do that.

He simply stared longingly at the sleeping face of the girl, instead.

"…What happened to Mia in your world?"

【She survived.】

He answered immediately.

【And also died.】

That too was immediate.

"What does that even…"

Just as Yoo Joonghyuk opened his lips, he understood what those answers meant. So, he shut his mouth right away.

Seemingly-crying sparks ever so faintly danced around. Under the pretext of the [Disconnected Film Theory], the memories of these two beings trembled and their Stories shifted.

「In one world-line, Yoo Mia survived for a long time. Even after he died.」

The world of a man who lived 1864 lifetimes – just what kind of a world would that be?

「However, in another world-line, she died.」

A Regressor might have lived far more 'presents' than anyone out there, but in reality, he was nothing more than a ghost of the past. He was an existence that had to move onto the next turn because he failed to alter the past.

0th turn, 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th… and 1863rd.

This being was not a 'Yoo Joonghyuk' from any of those regression turns. But, he was the 'Yoo Joonghyuk' that belonged to all the worlds, the man who carried all the worlds as his burden.

And that was why he was more Yoo Joonghyuk than any other Yoo Joonghyuks.

【You're pitying me.】

"Who would do that to a…"

【Do you believe that my life was a misery?】

Yoo Joonghyuk couldn't tell if that was a form of sympathy directed at himself. The blade of the [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] he held tightly was faintly trembling.

Why was he hesitating now? He had come this far already, so what was left to hesitate? Just because he heard a bit of this bastard's past history…

The 'Secretive Plotter' opened his lips. 【Did you know? There was this young boy in the front-most subway car that always died during every regression turn.】

That question came out of nowhere. Yoo Joonghyuk naturally recalled the events of the subway train. The very first scenario, the very first encounter with Hell that he had to experience every single time.

However, Yoo Joonghyuk didn't know anything about such a boy. Because there were simply too many people who died in that manner back then.

【While regressing several times, I tried to prevent his death, but it was impossible.】

"…"

【He was really a young boy. Younger even than Lee Gilyoung. However, even such a child had to 'prove his credentials'. For all of the 1863 lives, that child couldn't even put up a proper fight and had to die. He died, and died, and died over and over again.】

Yoo Joonghyuk couldn't say a single word.

The Plotter asked him again. 【Between a man who regressed 1863 times, and a child who has to repeatedly die for 1863 times with no recollections of it, which one do you think is actually more miserable?】

"That is…"

The Plotter was implying this – that your pity had no meaning, no value whatsoever.

Even then, Yoo Joonghyuk couldn't readily accept that. Indeed, there was no meaning in comparing the importance of different miseries. However, that also didn't mean that 'misery' didn't exist.

【The <Star Stream> tries to make the lives of everyone into 'Gi-Seung-Jeon-Gyeol'. However, a life was never supposed to be that. No, it's an unreasonable thing that can end at any time, whether it's 'Gi(beginning)', 'Seung(development)', or even during 'Jeon(climax)'. And that's why, even if my life comes to an end here, it shouldn't come as a surprise.】

Did the boy from the subway make the same expression as this man? Yoo Joonghyuk couldn't tell.

The 'Secretive Plotter' stared back at him with a pair of quiet, still eyes.

Yoo Joonghyuk stared back into those eyes for the longest time, before averting his gaze away while lowering the [Black Heavenly Demon Sword].

"…You'll end up seeing that boy's death for the 1864th time if you regress again."

In the end, he returned his sword back to its scabbard. This could be the wrong decision. Even then, Yoo Joonghyuk had made up his mind.

Maybe he too didn't expect such a choice, because the 'Secretive Plotter' remained speechless for a long while.

【You've been greatly influenced by Kim Dokja, it seems.】

"Shut your mouth. I can kill someone like you at any…"

Multiple presences were drawing near. Voices were calling out to him. They were Kim Dokja and Han Sooyoung, plus those of the <Kim Dokja's Company>'s people.

【Although it irks me to admit this, let me say that one thing is for certain. This world-line is different from any that I have lived through so far. It's possible that you and your group can truly witness what's beyond that 'Wall'.】

"…"

【However, do not keep your hopes up, thinking that you'll see the Conclusion you desire. And also – even if that Conclusion wasn't what you initially wanted…】

The Plotter's true voice suddenly grew fainter. His eyelids were slowly closing up. He was falling into another bout of deep slumber.

Just as Kim Dokja emerged out from the thicket, the Plotter finished what he wanted to say.

【…Do not think of this world as a failed turn.】

* * *

"We played beach volleyball."

That was Yoo Mia's answer after I asked her about what happened here.

"I'm telling you, we grilled squids, and I played beach volleyball with my oppa. Could it be that one's power of comprehension is lower if you're ugly?"

I wanted to tell her that there were three things wrong in her statement. One, we were not near an ocean. Two, I wasn't ugly, and my power of comprehension was…

"…Well, I guess nothing serious has happened here."

Han Sooyoung muttered in relief.

Indeed, we couldn't see any traces of Yoo Joonghyuk causing an accident, and the 'Secretive Plotter' was still stuck in a deep slumber.

I put the Plotter back inside the [X-grade Ferrarghini]. There were a few things that didn't sit well with me, but now wasn't the time to grill the one responsible.

"Okay, everyone, please gather around! Let's start the campfire!"

The flames rose up thickly and brightened the darkness of the campsite. Time was approaching closer to midnight. Only then did I remember something important.

"H-hang on! My scenario hasn't…!"

Dammit, I forgot all about it because of Yoo Joonghyuk.

I could hear Biyoo humming "Baat, baat" just above my head.

[Scenario time limit has elapsed!]

Would I really get killed like this?

[Sub Scenario – 'Workers' Off-day' has ended!]

[You need to resolve a total of 5 complaints.]

[You have currently resolved 1 complaint.]

[You have resolved all of your employees' complaints.]

[New Story related to the <Kim Dokja's Company> is being generated.]

…Uh?

"Seriously, man. It's like you forgot your wits somewhere or some such…" muttered Han Sooyoung, as she stared at the side of my face.

Companions were giggling to themselves while looking at me.

It was then, I recalled their replies whenever I tried to talk to them.

– I don't have any particular complaints.

That was for real?

"No one here will blame you, you know."

Han Sooyoung's disinterested voice spread out. We sat around soaking in the bonfire without saying anything else. I thought I could sense their hearts contained in this silence and that caused my emotions to well up for some reason.

Jung Heewon added something on top. "Well, if you want me to find something to talk to you about, then I can think of one, but it's not a complaint, so…"

Even though the warm bonfire was before me, why did a chill creep down my back just then?

"In any case, we rested really well today. Someone didn't seem to have gotten any rest, though."

Yoo Sangah spoke, and Lee Jihye followed her up on that.

"But, is it over like this? Aren't we going to, like, light candles and start sobbing, or write stuff on a 'rolling paper'?"

"This ain't even a real school trip, so why should we? Besides, the paper…"

While listening to Han Sooyoung's retort, I began thinking.

'Rolling paper' written by her, was it… That might be quite interesting, indeed.

Han Sooyoung suddenly stopped talking there and looked at me before asking a question. "You want me to write one for you?"

"Not really. We aren't little kids anyway."

"Wait a minute. Didn't you say you never had any friends and didn't even go to 'membership trainings' either? I guess you've never received one before, then."

If the total reserve of my mental energy declined during this trip, then it was all Han Sooyoung's fault.

A few members of <Kim Dokja's Company> blessed with strong drive had already purchased pens and large papers from the [Dokkaebi Bundle]. Seriously, though, these greedy Dokkaebis even charged Coins for something like that…?

Yoo Joonghyuk sitting across me on the other side of the campfire seemed to be angry as well.

"I won't participate in something like this."

…Although, his reason for anger seemed to be different from mine.

Nevertheless, seeing my companions gathered around closely and scribbling on their papers gave me this fresh perspective on things. It's like this was a writing get-together for the poor, friend-less Kim Dokja.

While everyone was writing their names on the papers and passing it along, Lee Gilyoung suddenly raised his hand up. "Hyung, I bought this off the [Dokkaebi Bundle], so can I fire it?"

Shin Yoosung discovered the toy in the boy's hand and her expression brightened up instantly. "Uh? Isn't that the same thing people were firing around the Han River?"

"Yeah, I remembered that so I bought it."

"Let me try it, too!"

"No way. You buy your own. It's 2000 Coins, you know."

Lee Gilyoung was currently holding onto a 'Parachute Helicopter'. I had seen that a couple of times before, too. It was a toy that, when you pulled hard at the attached string and then let go, it'd fly up into the sky while emitting bright light.

His toy seemed a bit special though, as it featured four large wings shaped like a square.

…Besides all that, though, that thing cost 2000 Coins??

"Okay, I'm gonna fire it!"

Lee Gilyoung fired the 'parachute helicopter' into the air. The toy flew up and while spinning around vigorously, dyed the surroundings with bright light. The light scattered as if it was fireworks going off. Even though they should've been familiar with far more spectacular sights than this, the group still looked on genuinely impressed.

The square-shaped wings of the helicopter spun around quickly and formed a circle.

I thought it looked like a portal. A portal, that led to the world we used to live in. We might not be able to go back anymore, but still, I felt the nostalgia of that world from it.

It was around then that a system message resounded out.

[Incarnation, 'Lee Gilyoung', has used the item 'Parachute Helicopter (Extra-large optical screen)'!]

The spinning wings of the helicopter grew larger and larger, and eventually, changed shape to that of a huge screen.

Lee Jihye frowned deeply. "What the heck. It was a hologram panel? We now have to watch a scenario even in this place?"

"Lee Gilyoung, did you even read the user's manual before…"

"N-no, I thought it was just a helicopter, so I…"

Just as the boy tried to make his excuse, a small earthquake suddenly rocked the vicinity. The expressions on the companions hardened instantly.

"What kind of crap is it this time…?"

Accompanying Han Sooyoung's words, we all focused our attention on the screen in the air. And when we did, we understood the reason for the earthquake. First of all, it didn't belong to the Korean peninsula.

The 'optical screen' was now displaying the American continent. And right before our eyes, that large continent was disappearing in its entirety.

Because of a gigantic island rising up from the deepest part of the Earth.

Along with the entrance of that island, the American continent was being erased from the map itself.

[The applicable world-line has reached its critical point!]

[Elevation of the forgotten islands has begun!]

Yoo Joonghyuk, his expression hardened, quietly muttered out.

"The end has begun."

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* Official novel illustration (canonical)

싱숑 장편소설

전지적 독자 시점

Omniscient
Reader's
Viewpoint

PART 4

04

비채

*

Chapter 459: Ep. 87 - The Heart of Steel, I

We headed back to Seoul right away.

The first thing we confirmed was the safety of the [Industrial Complex].

"We haven't detected any other strange phenomena after that event," said Aileen, currently in charge of the central situation room.

The display panel in the room was showing the footage shot near the Pacific Ocean. A gigantic island was rising up from the part of the ocean close to the American continent. I had no doubt that this was one of the 'calamities' I knew of.

Back in the 'Ways of Survival', the master of that island was a very powerful upper-rank Outer God. Our issue now would be whether it was the same guy or not, "My mother?"

"She's currently at the Eastern coastline."

"…Eastern coastline?"

[The rise of the forgotten island has begun!]

As the system message resounded out, we witnessed the waves rushing in at the other side of the Pacific. An unprecedented scale of terrain alteration had occurred, so it was obvious that an equally-incredible volume of tsunami waves would crash into the various parts of the world pretty soon. Naturally, the one to bear the worst of it was the United States.

– Kwa-gagagagk!

Horrible screams of Incarnation Bodies resounded out and the streets of New York were being swept away. Tsunami waves weren't the end – using the waves themselves, the lower-ranked Outer Gods, the 'Nameless Ones' were rushing in, as well. These low-ranked creatures were flooding in unchecked to tear and devour the American mainland.

There was no time to ask for help, either. Almost half of the continent had disappeared in less than thirty minutes after the calamity began. One hour later, the whole of the USA was covered in a jet-black aura.

The scale of this calamity was so great that the [Dark Castle] or the [Disaster of Floods] couldn't even remotely compare in the scope.

"Could it be that my mother…"

Aileen nodded her head and added something else. "I'm not… entirely sure if it qualifies as a good thing, but."

Next up, the display panel switched to the eastern coastline of the Korean Peninsula. As expected, the tsunami wave had reached this far, as well. Although the height of the wave was much lower compared to the one that hit America, and there were no 'Nameless Ones' riding on it, a tsunami wave still presented an enormous natural disaster all on its own.

– Oh, the Wind God of the Heavens!

As soon as my mother's yell came to an end, powerful gusts of wind exploded out from the folding fan she was holding. Pungbaek who acted all stiff and uptight back in the 'Great War of Saints and Demons', was pulling his weight this time, it seemed.

Even Jo Yeong-Ran, who could be called my mother's right hand, was taking an active part in the event, as well.

[Giant Story, 'Shindansu', has begun its storytelling!]

<Hongik> must've been paying attention to this event, because the [Shindansu]'s Story had planted its roots deeply into the ocean and was blocking the disaster by using the Korean Peninsula's Probability.

While looking as if she just lost ten years of her life, Han Sooyoung muttered dazedly. "…Anyways, isn't that woman in the United States, too?"

There was only one person that Han Sooyoung would refer to as 'that woman'.

"Couldn't she have used her [Precognition] to predict that?"

"I was about to speak to you in regards to that matt…"

Even before Aileen could finish, the side door to the situation room opened up and a certain someone made her entrance. Confirming the visitor's identity, Yoo Joonghyuk immediately reached towards the [Black Heavenly Demon Sword].

"We didn't come to fight, so stay your sword, Supreme King."

Her [Eye of Great Demon] vibrated brightly.

They were the Prophet Anna Croft and the 'Zarathustras' she led.

"The alert has been issued five hours ago. Most have escaped to other parts of the world, but still, many failed to leave on time."

"Why didn't you ask us for help?"

"We simply didn't have the leeway. And also, we couldn't fully trust the information gleaned from the Precognition, too. It was the first time that such large-scale information on the future had gone through such a sudden change, so I…"

Anna Croft looked quite troubled just then.

A sudden change in the large-scale information on the future – that would be a pretty good indication that even her Precognition didn't possess any merit when it came to the 'Final Scenario'.

Han Sooyoung asked as if she wanted to nitpick. "What about <Asgard>? They finished the 'Great War of Saints and Demons' successfully, so they should've started supporting you once more."

Anna Croft bit her lip hard as her head dropped lower. She then muttered softly. "…They told me to abandon the USA."

The Final Scenario was about to begin. Most likely, not even <Asgard> would have the room to dwell on the fate of some continent from one of the many planets out there.

Because Earth wouldn't be the only planet experiencing the signs of the impending apocalypse.

The "Ku-gugugu!!" exploding noise came out of the display panel.

[GaGaGaGaGaGak]

[WeareWeareWeareWeareWeare]

The 'Outer Gods' that captured the American coastline began howling out.

I recalled the 95th scenario I experienced during the 1863rd turn. The invasion of the Outer Gods began sooner in that world-line than ours. And soon, we'd end up in a similar state. Because that's the story the stinking <Bureau> wanted to see, after all.

"…Does South Korea have any countermeasures?"

"Still thinking about it."

"I heard that you secretly contacted a King of Outer Gods."

It seemed that she was talking about the 'Secretive Plotter' here.

"Technically speaking, we have 'captured' him, actually."

Anna Croft's eyes visibly quaked when she heard me. She didn't seem to be aware of that.

"I-in that case… Can this calamity be stopped through him…?"

"He's exhausted a great deal of Probability so that's not going to work. Besides, he's unrelated to this calamity."

"You know something, don't you?"

I didn't reply right away and simply held Anna Croft's gaze.

One needed to offer up their information first if they wanted to learn something new from the others. That was the basics of information exchange.

She must've figured out what I wanted from her, because she suddenly sighed out softly and began telling her story. "I don't have a lot of info to give you."

"You can start with those."

"…Firstly, the current locations for the 'Great Apocalypse Scenario' are a portion of the Pacific and the American continent."

I already knew that.

[Applicable location is currently undergoing the 'Great Apocalypse'.]

I confirmed a transparent dome being generated over the American continent as well as the whole of the Pacific Ocean. The 'Nameless Ones' weren't allowed to leave outside the dome, it seemed. That was probably the extent of the Probability the Outer Gods had been permitted at the moment.

"Secondly, the 'Nameless Ones' can't be hunted down with regular weapons. Obviously, the weapons of the past don't work, and even the Star Relics from lower-graded scenarios are useless, as well."

Actually, the display panel did catch the sight of several Incarnations desperately struggling against the 'Nameless Ones'. One of them was the owner of a pretty well-known Star Relic, but his axe failed to cut the flesh of the 'Nameless Ones' properly.

– But, how…?!

The flesh of the Incarnation Body ripped apart by the sharp fangs splattered onto the screen, causing Lee Jihye to frown and turn her head away. I didn't look away but continued to observe the scene closely.

[Exclusive skill, 'Comprehension', is activating!]

On the surface of the 'Nameless Ones' carapaces, I spotted faint letters floating around.

Yoo Joonghyuk spoke up first. "It's a Stigma."

"It's not just any Stigma, either. If it can stay in an uninterrupted activation like that, then its already in the 'Visualised Story' stage."

The Visualised Story. Indeed, it was about time that such a level of Probability would be allowed.

Yoo Joonghyuk nodded his head in agreement. "Most likely, the king of those 'Nameless Ones' must be a being possessing incredible defensive capabilities."

The dependents of a king would naturally follow their boss's Story. Just like how the kkoma Yoo Joonghyuks, the dependents of the 'Secretive Plotter', had done so.

The 'Outer God' that raised the island in the middle of the Pacific was most likely one of the five kings mentioned in the book written by the Recorders of Fear.

「The calamity of the western world, the 'Master of the Sunken Island'.」

I spoke up as if to reassure my companions. "Please, you don't have to worry too much. Upper level Constellations should possess weapons that can kill them."

"However, no Constellations are participating in the battle."

For sure, I couldn't see any Constellations inside the display panel. Not even the common Historical-grades.

"We should start gathering them, then."

I glanced at Biyoo while getting ready to use my true voice. The channel was abnormally silent for some reason. Everyone must've seen that spectacle, yet there was not a single indirect message so far.

…It was possible that they were fearful of the 'king' that hadn't emerged from the deepest part of the ocean.

"Jang Hayoung."

Our gazes briefly met and she nodded her head. If it was difficult to talk to Constellations through the channel, then it'd be a good idea to borrow her powers. And a short while later…

"…No one's replying."

"Not even one?"

But, that was not possible. There were so many Constellations in the <Star Stream>, after all.

"The Black Flame Dragon was the only one that sent me a reply, but… even he said that he's too busy and can't talk…"

"Did you contact <Olympus>? What about the <Underworld>?"

"I called them first, but no reply either."

Something was wrong here.

I could somewhat understand if it's the <Olympus>, but <Underworld> should've replied for sure. Not only that, what about Uriel or the Great Sage Heaven's Equal…?

Han Sooyoung next to me clicked her tongue and spoke up. "It's obvious what happened. This is the true nature of the creatures called the Constellations."

Each and every Modifier of all the Constellations that cheered us on brushed past my head. There were so many of them, yet none wanted to help us?

Meanwhile, Han Sooyoung continued on. "Many Constellations watched out Stories. Some cheered us on, while some were jealous of us. There were variety of reactions, sure. And we earned lots of Coins, too. But, that's as far as it goes."

"…"

"You think the world was truly moved by our stories? Do you really think you have managed to change the <Star Stream>?"

"I'm not that naïve, but still…"

"Constellations only subscribe to the channels that meet their tastes. They are no longer entertained, so they simply moved onto other channels. That's all."

I couldn't be sure whether Han Sooyoung was right or not.

[Next location for the Great Apocalypse is 'North-East Asia'.]

[Time remaining until the start of the 'Great Apocalypse Scenario' is 14 days,12 hours, and 7 minutes.]

But, I was sure that the planet Earth would go down the drain if they continued to avoid us.

Jung Heewon asked a question. "What should we do?"

"…Well, it's not as if I didn't foresee something like this happening."

My words caused Han Sooyoung to narrow her eyes. "You got something?"

"If they are not willing to meet us, then we should go and speak to them, instead."

"Where will you go first, then? As I thought, it's the easiest of the lot, the <Underworld>, right?"

"I think you're probably the only person out there who calls the <Underworld> the easiest."

I ignored the smirking Han Sooyoung and looked at Jung Heewon.

Asking for <Underworld>'s aid was indeed a priority, but there was something else more urgent than that right now. We had about fourteen days left. With the minimum effort, we needed to get the maximum possible result.

"We should regain our lost companion first."

What I was looking at, was the Steelsword hanging on Jung Heewon's hips.

[Soul of the Character 'Lee Hyunsung' is in slumber.]

The after-effects of the Steel Transformation 5th stage was worse than I expected, it seemed.

"We'll go meet the 'Master of Steel'."

"The Master of Steel? Will someone like that help us?"

I nodded my head. "The Master of Steel is a powerful Constellation. Although he's not a Myth-grade, there's no doubt we need his powers far more urgently than any top tier Constellations out there."

"How come?"

"I don't have the time to give you a detailed explanation. For now, let's get ready to move."

We needed an emergency hotline, as well as the minimum level of defensive forces, so Jang Hayoung, Gong Pildu, and Lee Seolhwa were left behind in the Industrial Complex. I felt bad about leaving them behind again, but after seeing their expressions, I got the feeling that I was actually doing them a huge disservice by thinking that way. When I thought about it, Lee Seolhwa said something similar to that, didn't she?

"Come back soon. And leave this place to us."

Them being left behind in Seoul wasn't easier of the two jobs.

Just like how the 'story' continued on because there were things that hadn't been told yet.

We got in the [X-grade Ferrarghini] immediately and entered the dimensional road network.

Our coordinate was OZ-7611. Resplendent stars of the <Star Stream> brushed past us, and tension gradually dyed the expressions of my companions.

"You don't have to be that tense, everyone. Just think of it as going out for a fun outing… Take it as an extension of that workers' revolution or whatever you called it."

"…But, isn't it working hours right now?"

"I'm saying this because where we're headed off to isn't that scary."

"Where exactly are we going?"

"Mm, well, as I've told you, we're going to the stronghold of the 'Master of Steel'…"

"Just what the heck is that guy's real identity, anyway??" Han Sooyoung became too frustrated and shot me that question. "It's more or less possible to guess the identities of other Constellations through their Modifiers, right? The 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is Sun Wukong, while the 'God of Wine and Ecstasy' is Dionysus. But this guy, I just can't figure it out. And there was no info on him in the parts that I read, either."

"Well, if you're that curious, why don't you take a guess through the [Predictive Plagiarism]?"

"You want me to use my ability on something this small??"

I shrugged my shoulders.

I took a look at the faces of my companions, and not just Han Sooyoung but everyone seemed to be really curious about who this 'Master of Steel' could be.

Jung Heewon asked me. "Is he someone from a myth that we know?"

"He's not from a myth, but well, he's a really famous Constellation regardless. Actually, there's even a famous story that used his Story as its foundation. But, uh… I don't think the kids know about it all that well, though."

My words caused both Shin Yoosung and Lee Gilyoung to become dejected right away. Just before I could continue on, noises of explosions came from behind us.

"…Those sons of bitches!!"

Han Sooyoung steering the vehicle cried out in sheer astonishment.

Shadows of battleships were cast on the rearview mirror. And it wasn't just one or two, either. At a bare minimum, there were dozens of spaceships giving us chase while scattering Ether particles.

Shin Yoosung asked me. "Aren't they from a Nebula? Why are they attacking us?"

I couldn't be sure, but those things looked like Story weapons belonging to great Nebulas such as <Vedas> or <Papyrus>.

Lee Jihye frowned deeply and spoke up. "Should I just summon my Geobukseon?"

"No, don't. We don't have the time to fight them. Step on it, Han Sooyoung!"

We didn't have too much to go until our destination, anyway.

In the blink of an eye, the [X-grade Ferrarghini] shot forward and crossed the dimensional road in a shiver-inducing speed. And soon afterwards, a new message popped up in the air.

[You've arrived in the coordinate 'OZ-1900'!]

Along with the loud screech, the vehicle came to stop in mid-air. The place we arrived in was actually a train station of sorts. And that station was a small wooden house.

I shouted out. "Everyone, get out quickly! And enter that house!"

Almost at the same time as everyone filed into this house, the [X-grade Ferrarghini] exploded into bits.

…Goddammit, I hadn't even driven it that many times, too.

I confirmed that everyone was inside and closed the front door shut. Right after that, a powerful tornado was stirred up around the wooden house. The structure rose up in the air, before moving at a break-neck pace.

I shouted again. "Shut the windows and lock them!"

"You think closing the windows will actually help?!"

Han Sooyoung threw out a tackle, but she still diligently closed the windows. I spotted the mystery Nebula reloading their weapons in the far-off distance. It was indeed an impressive spectacle to witness dozens upon dozens of battleships charging their photon cannons at once. An attack of that magnitude could probably blow up the Korean Peninsula in one go.

Lee Jihye urgently shouted out. "Ahjussi, even if it's now…!"

"Don't worry. We're safe here."

Suddenly, the entire house went through a geometric transformation. Its interior expanded rapidly, and accompanied by loud metallic noises, steel pipes suddenly began growing throughout the house.

"What the heck? Wasn't this a wooden house??"

[Docking procedure will now commence!]

The house floating in the air was secured to something as the loud docking noises resounded out. And at the same time, the burst of gunfire rained down on us. The firepower on display here was enough to blow away a continent to oblivion.

But then, an unimaginably humongous steel barrier suddenly grew around the entirety of the planet as noisy exhaust sounds resounded out. Streams of gunfire flying in crashed into that barrier and were extinguished without a trace.

My companions carried this rather scared-silly look on their faces from the sheer scale of the barrier as they all turned to look at me.

The exterior of the planet we arrived at could be seen through the windows. It was a city glimmering in a silvery hue. The giant planet that reminded one of a contracting heart.

[Welcome to the Heart of Steel, <Oz>!]

The Heart of Steel, <Oz>.

This was the planet where the strongest metal found in the <Star Stream> 'grew'.

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* Official novel cover (canonical)

Chapter 460: Ep. 87 - The Heart of Steel, II

[The ship's hull will now enter the stabilisation process.]

[Please be on standby.]

While listening to the system messages, my companions dazedly looked out of the windows.

The house that got swept away by a tornado, and entering a brand-new world… Surely, some of them should've realized what exactly was going on here.

"…Ahjussi, this, this is 'that', right? That 'Wizard of Oz'?"

Rather unexpectedly, the one to ask me first was Lee Jihye.

"You heard about it?"

"Huh. An old friend of mine used to love a musical related to it."

Lee Jihye was bragging a bit, but then her expression suddenly became gloomy.

Jung Heewon noticed that and quickly took over from there. "By the way, isn't the 'Wizard of Oz' a relatively modern literary work?"

"If I remember correctly, it was created in the year 1900, I believe," said Yoo Sangah.

"As expected of Sangah eonni. You really do know everything."

Lee Jihye raised her thumb up.

Jung Heewon carried on. "But, that doesn't make sense, does it? This world is only around one hundred years old, but… I heard from Hyunsung-ssi that the 'Master of Steel' is a far older Constellation than that."

"You're correct, Heewon-ssi."

She was asking a valid question. All Stories would go on to construct 'existences' sooner or later. Yet the age of the Story in question that could've constructed an existence was too short, so it was only natural that questions would be raised.

"What do you think about the 'Journey to the West'?"

"Pardon?"

"Do you believe that the 'Journey' came about first, or the Great Sage was around way before that?"

That brought about the moment of realization to my companions.

"Does that mean the 'Master of Steel' existed before that story?"

"It might, or might not."

"What the heck?"

It was as I said.

The ages of those beings that became Stories would gradually get harder to distinguish as time went on. A Constellation would start from a source Story, but even such a Story would minutely change as time elapsed.

[The ship stabilisation process has concluded.]

[Exit will now open.]

"Well, we'll find out once we get there," said Han Sooyoung, as she lightly leaped out first. Lee Jihye and the two kids, looking clearly excited, quickly followed after her.

"Let's get going, as well," said I.

The remaining companions nodded their heads and exited from this 'ship'.

If my memory was correct, the scenario of <Oz> mirrored the original novel's adventure. The house flown away by the tornado would arrive in another world called <Oz>, and the unfortunate one that gets squashed flat would be the wicked witch…

"What the hell is this?!"

And that's when I heard Lee Jihye's yell. Yup, she must've discovered the witch below the house, then. However…

"…Hey, it's a fake?"

Something was indeed crushed under the house. However, it wasn't an actual witch, but a doll mocked up to look like one. Its state was so filthy and neglected that it would be hard to argue this thing was once a witch.

Han Sooyoung picked up the broken leg of the mannequin and asked me.
"What is this?"

I quietly studied the leg.

「The progression has changed from the original.」

The planet <Oz> from the 'Ways of Survival' was a type of theme park.

The visitors would follow the route of the original 'Wizard of Oz' which went along the lines of – encounter the Munchkins first, then after receiving different roles to play, travel towards the Emerald Castle.

However, something was wrong here.

「The dwarves, 'Munchkins', are nowhere to be found.」

Yoo Joonghyuk muttered quietly. "It's somewhat different from what my Master told me."

I agreed with him. What was up with this view? The silver city with bleak winds blowing through it, was showing almost no sign of life.

"Something feels really dreary. Isn't this world supposed to be a fairy tale…?"

Even I, a man who read the 'Ways of Survival' inside out, didn't possess a whole lot of info related to <Oz>.

It was introduced properly only once during the original novel – during Yoo Joonghyuk's 999th regression turn. (In the latter half of the 'Ways of Survival', the scene skips happened far more frequently, and stuff related to Oz got relegated to simple lines such as: "They went to Oz to get Story metal that could strengthen their weapons.")

「It's a sad place, isn't it? It'd have been nicer for a happier story to permeate in this place.」

Lee Hyunsung from the 999th turn said that. It still remained vividly in my head even now. This was where he awakened his powers and ended up inheriting the Status and the will of the 'Master of Steel'.

But no matter how hard I looked, our current view was completely different from the original novel. Why? Was it because we changed a lot of the original's storyline?

This was none other than <Oz>. It was not one of the planets strongly influenced by the changes <Kim Dokja's Company> caused.

"Shouldn't those fairy-like creatures gather around us to sing and dance while taking us somewhere? Forget about fairies, I can't even see a single fly," said Han Sooyoung.

The theme park's broken notice board was found discarded on the ground. It was as if we were looking at a closed-down amusement park.

Still, the kids seemed to be really excited regardless. They stuck close to my sides and began muttering away. "It's almost like a haunted house."

We decided to follow the yellow road marked on the ground for the time being. According to the original, the Emerald Castle should be waiting for us at the end of this road.

And sure enough, we did spot a tall green tower after walking for a bit. And a small city was built around that tower.

「An aged castle has been constructed at the place where all journeys come to an end, so」

「We wish for you to willingly pay us a visit and remember our story.」

Somewhat poignant words were written on the entrance to the city.

It was around then that Yoo Joonghyuk suddenly spoke up. "I shall act on my own from here."

"What? Why?"

"There is an excellent blacksmith living among the dwarves in this place."

I recalled a certain sentence after hearing him.

「The Oz's metal is permeated with the most ancient type of magic, so…」

Indeed, <Oz> was the place of origin for the metal permeated with the oldest Story in the <Star Stream>. Even Yoo Joonghyuk's weapon from the original was reinforced with the steel from this place.

The greatest supreme sword reborn as the Star Relic after the <Oz>'s metal and Yoo Joonghyuk's Story were intertwined – that was the Star Relic he used in the latter half of the novel, [Splitting the Sky Sword].

Of course, that was the story from the original, and the one to get reinforced this time around would be the [Black Heavenly Demon Sword], but still…

"Oz's steel is the strongest in the <Star Stream>. Securing suitable weapons is an utmost priority."

After declaring such, Yoo Joonghyuk didn't even wait for our permission and simply went on his way. Companions looked at me, silently asking if this was okay, and I replied with a simple shrug of my shoulders.

Since I had multiple reasons for coming to <Oz> anyway, there was a need to split the group here. Also, the whole group wasn't really necessary to save Lee Hyunsung.

I spoke to Lee Jihye and her brilliantly-sparkling eyes. "You should go after him, too. Don't you want to upgrade your battleship?"

"Hell yes!"

The clearly-happy Lee Jihye quickly trotted away.

Next up, I looked at Yoo Sangah. "Yoo Sangah-ssi, can you tail them for the time being? I'm kind of worried about sending those two alone. And also, the kids… I'm sure there are lots of things to sightsee around here."

"Let's go! Please hurry!"

The children held onto both hands of Yoo Sangah and they soon disappeared towards the high street. Now that the noisy group had been split up like this, I felt a bit hollow for some reason.

The remaining people were Jung Heewon, Han Sooyoung and me.

Han Sooyoung muttered out. "So, only Dorothy, the smart Scarecrow, and the Cowardly Lion remain."

There were four members in the Wizard of Oz's main group. They were the protagonists Dorothy, Tin Woodman, the Scarecrow, and the Cowardly Lion.

I spoke up. "Since you went ahead and said the 'smart' Scarecrow, I'm guessing that's you."

"Bingo."

"I won't ask you about the other two."

"You're the Cowardly Lion, obviously."

"Thanks."

While chatting and giggling away, we entered the centre of the city. If this place remained as a theme park, such a composition could've been rather fun. Jung Heewon shook her head while looking at us and strode forward without hesitation.

A handful of monkeys hidden in the nooks and crannies of the city were glancing at us.

It certainly didn't feel like a welcoming atmosphere. This world didn't welcome us or even bother to greet us. Forget about a fairy tale, the overall vibe suited a horror novel far better.

Not too long afterwards, we arrived before the Emerald Tower.

Han Sooyoung was the first to speak up. "It looks like a magic tower."

"Well, an actual wizard is living here, so…"

Although, I couldn't be sure if he was still alive even now.

We approached the entrance and knocked on the door, only to be greeted by a stiff, curt voice of a man.

– State your business.

"We seek an audience with the 'Master of Steel'."

No reply came back. The door remained resolutely shut.

It seemed that I made a slip of tongue somewhere. I quickly recalled the 'Ways of Survival'. What did they say in the 999th turn again?

While I remained engrossed in my thoughts, Jung Heewon suddenly unsheathed her sword and spoke up. "Return Hyunsung-ssi's soul before I split this damn tower in half."

The Status of an Archangel exploded out from her entire figure. And just as the intense flames of [Hellfire] started burning on the Steelsword's blade, the door hesitantly opened up.

[The Emerald Castle is welcoming all of you.]

I wondered if this was fine, but since we didn't have a lot of time, I figured might as well.

Han Sooyoung had found an ideal opportunity here so she muttered in an impressed voice. "As expected of our Dorothy."

"Shut up. I didn't come here to fool around."

Han Sooyoung sneaked closer to my side and whispered through the [Midday Tryst].

– Super scary. Is that the power of love?

Jung Heewon was marching forward while her Steelsword drew arcs in the air. She was originally a spirited person, to begin with, but seeing her like this, I couldn't help but admit that her current aura was indeed astonishing.

– I guess so.

The interior of the tower was rather plain and boring. There weren't any eye-catching decorations to speak of, and only the most necessary items were placed here and there. It was like the inside of Lee Hyunsung's military backpack.

We walked for another five minutes or so before a room resembling an audience chamber made its appearance. We opened its doors and entered immediately. Colourful spotlights came to life and a giant, silver-coloured mask floated up in the middle of the chamber. A pair of hollow eyes were now looking at us.

[The <Kim Dokja's Company>, is it.]

The Steel's true voice reverberated within the audience chamber.

I immediately realized that this guy was the 'Master of Steel', the Narrative-grade Constellation and Lee Hyunsung's backer. This mask was probably a symbolic item.

"That's correct. Pleasure to make your acquaintance."

[I'm guessing that you're the 'Demon King of Salvation'.]

I nodded my head. The silver mask looked at me as if this whole thing was rather annoying. [What is the purpose of your visit here?]

Going straight to the topic, is it? I thought that this was for the better.

"Please return Lee Hyunsung's soul to us. We know that you have the ownership over it."

[That's impossible.]

"Why not?"

[His soul is required to maintain this planet.]

That was completely unexpected. I glanced to my side, only to discover Jung Heewon glaring daggers in my direction.

I quickly followed up. "I'm well aware that sponsorship contracts are usually like this, but regardless of what, Hyunsung-ssi is our companion. I was under the impression that you liked our story so far?"

[…]

"Besides, doesn't <Oz> possess more than enough Giant Stories? Surely, there isn't a reason to use Hyunsung-ssi's soul as the power source?"

The Story of「Wizard of Oz」was famous enough to be well-known back on Earth, too. Sure, the fame had cooled down a little in recent times, but this story managed to generate a shocking level of popularity throughout the planet once upon a time.

It was that famous on Earth, so how popular would it have been in the <Star Stream>? So, the lack of a power source simply didn't make any sense at all.

Even then, the 'Master of Steel' remained resolutely stubborn.

[Go back. I can't return his soul.]

Chapter 461: Ep. 87 - The Heart of Steel, III

"If you really require a power source, then why don't we exchange Stories? We can supply you with Stories that can serve as useful replacements."

[I told you to go back.]

As I thought, something was off here. If it was simply about using Lee Hyunsung as a power source, then there shouldn't be a reason to say no to my offer.

"I'm sorry, but we must take his soul back with us. The Final Scenario will soon begin. Meaning, this is no time for us to worry about your well-being."

[Story, 'Demon King of Salvation', has begun its storytelling!]

I unleashed my Status, causing the 'Master of Steel' to speak in a bit of a fluster. [You dare to oppose me inside <Oz>??]

Accompanied by a 'Tsu-chuchuchut!' noise, sparks exploded inside the audience chamber. The 'Master of Steel' was a Narrative-grade Constellation, but when in <Oz>, his Status would…

[I've been generous by receiving you lot, yet you…!]

…Be almost on the same level as a Myth-grade Constellation.

Ku-dudududu!!

The whole planet seemingly writhed about violently like a heart repeating the actions of contracting and relaxing.

Han Sooyoung stared at me with a pale complexion.

– Are you insane, Kim Dokja?! Why are you trying to fight insi…

I began unleashing the Stories next.

[Giant Story, 'Demon Realm's Spring', has begun its storytelling!]

[Giant Story, 'Torch that Swallowed the Myth', has begun its storytelling!]

The main Giant Stories started their storytelling and the audience chamber quaked as if it'd collapse at any given moment.

I stepped across the violently-rocking floor and walked forward. The 'Master of Steel' shouted out. [Step back! If you don't, I shall…!]

Yup, thought as much.

There were plenty of opportunities to subdue me, yet this 'Master of Steel' only issued warnings repeatedly without actually doing anything.

It was like dealing with the Cowardly Lion.

I walked straight through the mask and advanced forward to reach the rear-most wall of the audience chamber. The 'Master of Steel' was shouting something at me, but I ignored it all and simply punched the wall, hard.

In the next moment, the silver mask floating around like a hologram disappeared.

"Listen here, monkey."

And I could see a monkey through the wide-open hole in the wall, shivering away in pure fear.

"Where is the real 'Master of Steel'?"

A short while later, we managed to get some useful info from the monkey.

Han Sooyoung spoke first. "Okay, so. The 'Master of Steel' isn't here."

[I-if you do this, the 'Master of Steel' will…]

"Switch off the true voice, now. It doesn't even sound like a proper true voice, anyway."

"…probably forgive you," said the now-dejected monkey.

It was likely that this monkey was a henchman of the real 'Master of Steel'. I wasn't sure why, but this little guy was acting like a Constellation in this place for some reason.

"Hang on, was it you who sent all those indirect messages until now, then?"

"Y-yes, that's right. However, I was accurately conveying the Master of Steel-nim's intentions."

"You were 'conveying' his intentions?"

My question prompted the monkey's gaze to shift towards a corner of the audience chamber. That was where we could see an altar with a Steelsword stabbed into its surface to resemble a cross.

I took an especially closer look at the exterior of the sword.

"Now normally, I can hear the Master's intentions through that altar. But lately, messages from him have stopped arriving, and…"

I reached out to the Steelsword. I felt a certain flinching jolt when I touched it. I had experienced a sensation like this one before.

Although very faint, it was the same sensation I felt back when I came in contact with a different world-line.

Which meant that the 'Master of Steel' was an existence from another world-line.

…But, that was not possible. As far as I knew, the 'Master of Steel' was Tin Woodman from the 「Wizard of Oz」… Could it be that someone else had appropriated that Constellation Modifier?

While I was stewing inside my thoughts, Han Sooyoung asked the monkey. "Does the wretched state of your planet have something to do with that?"

"…Well, some part of it, yes. But neglecting maintenance also contributed to the issue, as well. Every Story is bound to stagnate, after all. It has been a really long time since magic has disappeared from <Oz>. Do you actually know how old the Story of this place is?"

"Don't know."

"Tourists don't come to <Oz> anymore. It's already been over three years since the last time the monthly average visitor numbers reached double digits."

The monkey's eyes were dyed in the light of vague reminiscence. As if he was recalling the glory days of yore or something.

"Once upon a time, <Oz> was the number one theme park in the <Star Stream>…"

Jung Heewon frowned deeply. "I don't want to hear about stuff like that. So, are you going to return Hyunsung-ssi's soul or not??"

"W-well, that is a bit…"

"Why not?!"

"The whole reason why we managed to maintain double-digit attendance numbers is due to 'Lee Hyunsung', that's why."

"What are you talking about?"

The monkey hesitated greatly before answering her. "Have you heard the news that lately, the powers of all Giant Stories are in decline?"

"Powers of the Giant Stories are declining…?"

"It's not just <Oz>. Many Stories that constitute Giant Stories have all entered the path of stagnation similar to <Oz>'s situation."

"But, why?"

"A certain Story that has appeared in recent times has begun eating into the percentages of other Stories."

The monkey raised its head and with eyes full of resentment, began glaring at me.

"I'm talking about you people's Story."

In conclusion, we did get something out from the visit to the Emerald Castle. The monkey told us this:

– You can take Lee Hyunsung away. In return, please help us with advertising <Oz>.

We asked how we could do that, and he replied like this.

– You'll find out when you get to where Lee Hyunsung currently is.

And that was the reason why us, this trio, were standing in this particular place. At some distance away, we could see a Ferris wheel that no longer functioned as well as an ancient, decrepit carousel. It was the stereotypical sight of a run-down, bankrupt theme park.

<<There is no Wizard in Oz>>

It seemed that was the name of this theme park. In a way, it sounded rather cool.

My problem was with what was written below it.

<<However, we have Lee Hyunsung>>

– Lee Hyunsung 'Memory Experience Centre' now open!

– Find Lee Hyunsung's soul hidden somewhere in the Experience Centre to win a cool, pre-selected prize.

…What the hell was the meaning of this?

We headed to the ticket booth to find a list of prices waiting for us.

* Entrance ticket 4000 Coins

* Free Pass (50% discount) 3000 Coins

This was basically telling us to buy the free pass.

The ticket booth employee asked us.

– How many?

"Three."

– 3000 Coins per Incarnation. 60000 for a Constellation.

…Did I hear him wrong just now?

I became dazed after being on the receiving end of such cruel discrimination for the first time in my life. But then, Jung Heewon suddenly extended her hand in my direction. "This counts as company expenses, right? We're on the clock, after all."

"…Of course."

"Give me one for Incarnation."

She unhesitantly swiped with the company expenses card and entered the 'Memory Experience Centre' right away. I remained dazed, while Han Sooyoung stepped past me.

"Excuse me, one more Incar…"

"Hang on."

"What is it now?"

"There is a special discount category."

I pointed at the small notice attached next to the price list.

* Constellation X Incarnation Couple Discount Coupon, now available!

* This is a special couple's discount coupon designed for those Sponsors visiting along with their Incarnations! Make beautiful new memories with your Incarnation and enjoy sweet, relaxing time together!

Han Sooyoung finished reading the notice and turned to look at me. I nodded my head. Which prompted her to ask a question.

"Have you finally lost it?"

"Even if we have enough Coins, I don't have enough to spend in this place."

She glared at me with seething eyes, and as if calculating something in her head, she counted with her fingers for a bit, and finally alternated her gaze between the price list and me.

Eventually, she sighed grandly and asked. "Fine. What will you give me in return?"

"…What are you two doing??"

Jung Heewon discovered Han Sooyoung and I, and said that in dismay. But, that was understandable. Because… both of us were sporting an identical pair of wolf-ear headbands right now.

[Applicable item can't be taken off while inside the 'Memory Experience Centre'.]

[Please show off the close bond you share with your Incarnation to other Constellations!]

Han Sooyoung replied to her in a shameless voice. "I'm working part-time in the dating industry."

"Let's search for Hyunsung-ssi first, shall we?"

According to the monkey, Lee Hyunsung's soul should be wandering around somewhere in this 'Memory Experience Centre'. Not sure why he was roaming around in this place, but…

We had a little bit of time on our hands, so we walked around the 'Memory Experience Centre' with calm minds. I was wondering what exactly this place was, and we soon got to find out.

[Lee Hyunsung, born as a healthy and big baby weighing in at 5.4 kg!]

[Lee Hyunsung, five years old – rescues a friend from bullies!]

This was where we would get to 'experience' his life.

[Only those holding the 'Free Pass' can enter.]

[The chamber's experience will begin once you enter. Will you enter?]

"Does this mean we will get to experience the feelings of a newborn? Who the heck would want to pay money to experience something like that??"

This theme park seemed to be similar in nature to a generalised amusement park. We could enter individual 'Experience Centres' to experience Lee Hyunsung's life through either his eyes or someone near him.

Jung Heewon spoke up. "I guess we really have become famous lately. Someone even came up with a thing like this, too."

"…I'm kinda curious about that one over there."

We became totally entranced and studied the various parts of Lee Hyunsung's life. It felt as if I had really become a Constellation… Hang on, I really was a Constellation, wasn't I?

[Lee Hyunsung, 17 years old – fails in his quest for his first love!]

Jung Heewon stared at this particular 'centre' without saying anything.

So, I naturally had to ask. "…Are you planning to go in?"

"No."

We continued to search for Lee Hyunsung. His soul gave off a unique Story reaction. And we could definitely sense that particular reaction nearby, but…

[Lee Hyunsung, encountering the Judge that destroys evil!]

After walking about for a while, we discovered several 'Experience Centres' related to the <Kim Dokja's Company>.

[Pure Steel Lee Hyunsung! With Judge that destroys evil, he…]

Jung Heewon's steps gradually gained pace. We diligently followed after her. However, we still couldn't sense Lee Hyunsung's presence. We looked through a row of the Experience Centres and turned around to leave, but found someone unexpected behind us. It wasn't the guy we were looking for, though.

"Uh? Ahjussi?"

It was Lee Jihye wearing a fox-ear headband.

"…And why are you here?"

Lee Jihye provided a short explanation after I asked her.

The first part of the tale was about Yoo Joonghyuk, Yoo Sangah, the kids, and her heading to the blacksmith only to be told that the supply of Story metal had run out.

The second part was about how they walked around disappointed only to coincidentally discover this place.

And finally, the last part regarding how they just couldn't win against the kids pestering them so they bought a family discount to enter… Eh? Family discount?

"What are you fools doing here?"

@1L9l2Aa8UCL0IG

*

I looked back and sure enough, Yoo Joonghyuk and his fox ears were standing there. He alternated his gaze between me and Han Sooyoung before throwing out a question. "Have you regained Lee Hyunsung's soul yet?"

"We came here to find it. Besides, what are you doing here instead of searching for the Story metal?"

"The blacksmith was temporarily closed. Apparently, their supply of Story metal had run out."

I could guess why something like that had happened. Perhaps it was related to the weakening of <Oz>'s Giant Story.

I saw Yoo Sangah waving her hand from afar. I also spotted Shin Yoosung and Lee Gilyoung wearing headbands that reminded me of a dragonfly's wings.

"Eonni! Let's go inside that one next! That one!"

"Oh my, that one's for over 18s, you know."

Somehow, the whole gang had assembled once more.

I figured this was for the best. Since it had come to this, searching for Lee Hyunsung together could save us from further trouble.

It was then that Jung Heewon's voice came from a bit of distance away. "Everyone, please come over here!"

We hurriedly went over to her side. And that's where we discovered a certain Experience Centre with an especially large number of warning signs posted outside compared to the others we've seen so far.

* This Experience Centre can only be entered by persons older than 18 years of age.

* After experiencing the possession, you might suffer from mental anguish due to the severe, harsh treatment.

* Caution should be exercised if South Korean male Incarnations wish to use this centre.

I looked up at the title card for the 'Memory Experience Centre' and spoke to the others. "…Looks like we found him."

There was no doubt about it. The dull-and-slow-moving Story unique to Lee Hyunsung could definitely be felt from this particular Experience Centre.

He was inside this thing.

I reconfirmed the name of this Experience Centre one more time.

[I lost a shell by mistake.]

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* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)

Chapter 462: Ep. 87 - The Heart of Steel, IV

"Hyunsung-ie will do it right."

"Hey, it's still not too late. Tie the PET bottles to your legs and jump from the third floor."

"Others eventually all serve, anyway. So it's fine. Come back after becoming a man."

Those were pretty common advice given to someone about to be drafted, just like his life. A life too busy chasing after what everyone else was doing.

Just like everyone else, he had to sing 'Private's Letter', and without a best friend nor a girlfriend to bid him goodbye, walked into the recruit training centre.

"53rd trainee."

"53rd trainee Lee Hyunsung, here!"

Lee Hyunsung's early military life wasn't so bad. Thanks to his naturally-tall height and well-built muscles, he even got recommended to become a commander-in-training, too. He would've even graduated the training course with citations were it not for messing up the commander's pledge repeatedly.

"Trainee, do you think the words of your training supervisor are a joke??"

He realized it from an early age that he was rather slow-witted. Didn't matter what it was, he learned it later than everyone else, and he was also rather slow in analysing his situations, too.

Even then, he managed to live on relatively fine all because there were some people who appreciated his relaxed and honest personality. Unfortunately, there were no such people to be found in the army.

"Just why do I have to be paired with him in the buddy system…"

"A big freaking body and nothing much besides…"

Lee Hyunsung endured the trainee life even as he was subjected to various insults and ridicules.

By the time he completed the training course, he became someone who could finish showering in five minutes or pack his sleeping gear in less than one minute.

Not too long afterwards, the moment he'd be dispatched to a base had arrived. This was the moment he had been waiting forever since he got drafted.

– Giving away sweet tips to those about to join the army. Follow these instructions after you get to a base. (HOT!) [812]

From the shoe inserts to use during prolonged marching, to being loved by his seniors after he got assigned to a base – the so-called 'sweet tips' on the internet he diligently studied the day before joining the military was his only hope.

His fellow trainees left one by one.

He was the last one remaining. And the person to come fetch him was a person named 'Sergeant first class Jung'. A steel hat deeply pressed on this person's head obscured their face.

"You, come with me."

While he rode on the noisy military truck headed to somewhere, Lee Hyunsung thought about his life one more time. He thought about the next couple of years ahead, as well as the trials and tribulations waiting for him.

His new army base was in the middle of a small mountain. And so, this would be where his army life would begin proper. He finished the simple registration process for a new recruit with the aid of a manager and headed off to the barracks.

And the moment he opened the building's door wide…

– You must definitely do this.

Lee Hyunsung did exactly what the internet tip said he should do.

"Accept your newbie-!!"

If this was a regular army, his army life would've come to an end right there. That was, if this was the regular army base.

As his duffel bag was flung in the air, everything around him slowed down to a crawl, like a slow-motion video. The bag slowly came undone mid-air; unwashed army-issue underwears, toilet papers, and soap he used back in the boot camp very slowly scattered in the air. Also, Lee Hyunsung's own triumphant, confident face, filled with the hope of his upcoming army life…

As this scene resembling a tragedy-filled movie played out, someone suddenly asked a question.

– …What should we do?

That elicited a reply from someone else.

– Nothing much. This is who Hyunsung-ssi is. In any case, let's accept this reality. The hardcore treatment last time didn't work, so this time, let's go with the promised 'progressive army' concept…

– Stop being noisy and get it started already, Kim Dokja.

– …Well then, let's start over again!

And then, the scene began moving forward again.

Splat!

His duffel bag shooting forward seemingly out of a cannon crashed on the floor like a real cannon shell.

The atmosphere became icy in an instant as if someone poured cold water. And the glares of his seniors belatedly stabbed into Lee Hyunsung. Cold sweat trickled down his back. Could it be… that he made a mistake?

Right next moment.

Sergeant first class Jung grinned brightly and clapped hands. "Begin your smile exercise, now! Hahahaha! Wow, now that was funny! My first time seeing such a refreshing debut!"

That prompted the seniors in the barracks to give him a standing ovation as if they were waiting for this moment.

"Rookie-nim, really well done!"

"Wonderful job."

As the sounds of hands clapping resounded out, Lee Hyunsung grew even more puzzled, but still, his triumphant air returned. The 'sweet' tip had been right.

Sergeant first class Jung spoke towards the soldiers. "Joonghyuk-ie, you're his direct senior, so take good care of this guy."

"…Understood."

The noisy atmosphere continued on. In the meantime, Lee Hyunsung discovered a senior tidying up his scattered belongings on the floor for him.

His uniform was perfectly straight, the light in his eyes sharp and fierce, and his face was like a fine sculpture. His chest was home to the army service ribbon of Private first class, and the name tag of 'Yoo Joonghyuk'.

'Ah, so this person is my direct senior'.

It was then, this senior's scary eyes landed on Lee Hyunsung.

"I, I'm Private second class, Lee Hyunsung!!"

"Your spot is this way."

His stuff had been gathered up in the blink of an eye and was placed in the locker. Other seniors looked impressed as if they were expecting it.

"Newbie, watch and learn from him. Joonghyuk-ie is our base's ace, you see?"

Just from looking at the atmosphere of his seniors, he could already tell what kind of a being his direct senior was. That perfectly-set beret, that perfectly-set bedding – it was as if everywhere this person touched sparkled brightly. If he could carry on his army life just like this senior…

"What's this? We have a newbie?"

It was at this moment that a cheerful voice came from the entrance. A man's face caked in sweat as if he was returning from a hard day's work was there.

Lee Hyunsung confirmed the rank of sergeant as the man brushed past him and he quickly performed a military salute. "Loyalty!"

"Ah, ah. Don't be so tense. It's fine." The sergeant studied Lee Hyunsung's face before breaking out in a grin. He then shifted his gaze towards Private first-class Yoo Joonghyuk. "Looks like our Joonghyuk-ie's military life is about to get a whole lot easier now? He's already got himself a direct junior and all."

The complexion of the man snickering away was far too pale for a soldier. But, why was this? The moment he saw this man, Lee Hyunsung felt this sensation of the deepest corner of his heart ache a little.

Soldiers confirmed the face of the man and shouted out.

"Sergeant Kim Dokja-nim! Good to see you back from your hard day's work!"

"Alright, men. By the way, why isn't Joonghyuk-ie greeting me?"

"…Wel…come… back…"

Private first-class Yoo Joonghyuk trembled visibly, his complexion ashen-white. It felt as his scowl didn't form out of fear, but more like out of sheer rage, instead

Sergeant Kim Dokja shrugged his shoulders after observing his reaction, then spoke up. "Welcome to our squad, Lee Hyunsung."

"I'm Private second class, Lee Hyunsung! Sir!"

This was the first meeting between Lee Hyunsung and the squad leader Kim Dokja.

…As far as the former's memories were concerned, that was.

About two weeks went by since he was shipped out.

During that time, Lee Hyunsung got to learn various things about this base. For instance, about Sergeant Kim Dokja, the de facto authority in the squad he belonged to.

"Got it? If that fool Yoo Joonghyuk does something out of line, you must tell me right away."

"P-Private second class, Lee Hyunsung!! There's no such thing!"

"Nope, listen. Such a thing will happen. You already suffered plenty of times."

"…I think I misheard you, sir?"

And then, Private first class Yoo Joonghyuk who always stayed by his side and led by example, and also glared at Sergeant Kim Dokja every single chance he got.

"Polish your military boots this way."

"P-private second class, Lee Hyunsung! I'll work hard!!"

"Working hard has no meaning. The important thing is doing it right."

Also, medical officer Lieutenant Yoo, who periodically showed up to do health check-ups.

"Mm, you have a bruising on your leg… Should I just have you discharged for health reasons?"

"P-Private second class Lee Hyunsung!! I'll be fine!"

"Then, should I stitch you up? I'm pretty good with needles."

Then, Sergeant first class Jung who seemed to be disinterested yet also meticulous, and sometimes looking at Lee Hyunsung with a saddened expression.

"…How is it? You good?"

"P-Private second class, Lee Hyunsung!! I'll do my utmost best!!"

"It's fine if you don't. You always try your best anyway."

…Everyone here, they all had something weird about them.

"For the sake of establishing the culture of progressive army environment!"

However, if he were to pick the strangest person out of them all, then…

"All soldiers must read webnovels during their downtime. Reading webnovels is the alpha and omega of a productive downtime."

…It was none other than the squad commander, Captain Han.

"That's enough! It's your downtime now! All of you, read webnovels."

"Lo! Yalty!"

That's how Lee Hyunsung's dream-like soldier life began. However, he had no idea.

[Currently, <Kim Dokja's Company> is challenging the Memory Experience Centre's 'I lost a shell by mistake'.]

[Applicable Experience Centre's difficulty is rated hardest.]

[Number of attempts to clear it is currently 3.]

He had no idea that this soldier life wasn't his first time.

It didn't really need to be explained, but the total number of people participating in this scenario was five. Yoo Joonghyuk, Yoo Sangah, Jung Heewon, Han Sooyoung, and myself.

On a side note, the hidden scenario we got was this.

<Hidden scenario – I lost a shell by mistake>

Type: Hidden

Difficulty: ???

> Clear condition: Incarnation 'Lee Hyunsung' is trapped in his own memories. Resolve his trauma and rescue him from his memories.
>
> Time limit: ???
>
> Reward: Lee Hyunsung's return, possibility of acquiring main prize item related to strengthening of <Oz>'s profile.
>
> Failure: Acceleration of <Oz>'s destruction.

What a nonsensical scenario it was. The time limit shown as question marks already put us in a bit of spot, yet the clear condition and the failure penalty were even more disconcerting.

Sergeant first class Jung Heewon-nim… no, hang on, just Jung Heewon, asked a question. "Sergeant Kim Dokja."

"Yes?"

"Let's forget about the rest for now. But this, why would <Oz> be destroyed if we fail?"

"There are two possible theories. One, that's how low the <Oz>'s profile has fallen, and… two, it could mean some kind of physical danger."

Along with a 'Boom!!' a slender ripple-like thing spread from the far side of the skies. I recalled the Nebulas that chased us to this place. It was possible that they had begun their invasion in earnest. If that was the case, then we didn't have all that much time.

Maybe he heard the rippling noise, Lee Hyunsung and his pale-white complexion quickly ran towards us from afar.

"Sergeant Kim!!"

"Yeah, Hyunsung-ah."

"Looks like North Korea is attacking us!!"

"Nah, it's alright. Go take a break."

"Loyalty!"

Lee Hyunsung seemed lost as to what to do next, but eventually headed off to the corner of the base and began practising national military gymnastics exercise he hadn't mastered yet.

Jung Heewon watched him and muttered to me. "Can Hyunsung-ssi really return to us?"

"I'm not sure. But we must try."

This was already our third attempt.

The first try was a failure as many of my companions didn't know much about the army (I was the only person who served among our group, actually) and the second try ended up as another failure all thanks to Yoo Joonghyuk's hardcore treatment.

Yoo Joonghyuk forming a scowl next to us piped up. "Frustrating. Lee Hyunsung must be put through his paces so that he can wake up faster. Have you forgotten about the events of Kaizenix?"

"We already tried that during our second try."

"I can do better given another chance."

"You should know better than anyone that's not true."

"…"

"You know that saving someone else is never that easy."

This Yoo Joonghyuk had gone through the third regression turn… or, possibly even the 1864th turn. So, he should know it even if I didn't bring it up.

"Lee Hyunsung! The order of your exercise is wrong!"

*

…Or, it's possible that he didn't know.

Yoo Joonghyuk strode towards the frightened Lee Hyunsung in big steps.

I watched the two of them doing the military gymnastics exercise side by side and murmured to Jung Heewon. "I think staying here for too long will be bad for us. Even Yoo Joonghyuk's acting strange."

"…He is?"

"He's never served in the army, yet he's adapting to it just too well."

I watched Yoo Joonghyuk perform the gymnastics exercise with near-religious zeal. There was an event during the 144th regression turn where he wrongly received a transfusion of Lee Hyunsung's 'Military Story' and went insane.

If more time went by inside here and yet another Story like 「Mad Soldier Yoo Joonghyuk」 was created in the process, then…

Jung Heewon replied. "Isn't it a good thing that he's adapting really well?"

"Yes, he's adapting well, but the problem is with how poorly he's treating me, his senior in rank. The military nowadays have become really soft, I have to say. Back when I was in the army…"

"Dokja-ssi, you're just sour that Joonghyuk-ssi never served, right? I mean, he was exempted, wasn't he?"

I replied to her in a calm manner. "…In any case, the situation isn't so bad if we exclude that part. Just by us being here, the planet <Oz>'s profile is rising up, after all."

[Currently, a large number of Constellations are paying attention to the applicable scenario!]

Maybe the rumour of <Kim Dokja's Company> creating yet another bizarre Story had made rounds out there because visitors to Biyoo's channel had increased.

I couldn't be sure, but those Nebulas targetting us right outside the planet were probably watching us right now. If they couldn't attack us immediately, then taking advantage of the situation would be a smart thing to do.

[Many Constellations have entered the applicable channel!]

[Planet <Oz>'s fame is spreading far and wide!]

[Brand new Story related to Incarnation 'Lee Hyunsung' is germinating!]

The strange thing was, the newly-entering Constellations weren't the people that I knew of. Uriel, the Great Sage, the Abyssal Black Flame Dragon, Goreyo's First Sword… as if they were the tidewater receding away, all the Modifiers I was glad to see were nowhere to be found.

An ominous foreboding crept up in my mind. Did something happen to them?

[Portion of Constellations are eagerly waiting for Incarnation 'Lee Hyunsung's return!]

I need to conclude this scenario quickly so that I may get to find out what's going on, but…

"Is there really a need to clear it, though?"

"Pardon?"

Jung Heewon didn't reply and stared in Lee Hyunsung's direction. While under the guidance of Yoo Joonghyuk, he was continuing to perform the exercise routine as sweat trickled down his face. Maybe he got the order right this time because Yoo Joonghyuk could be seen nodding his head. Lee Hyunsung looked elated.

[Character 'Lee Hyunsung' is feeling happy!]

"Because he always harped on about manual this and manual that, I thought that Hyunsung-ssi was a natural-born soldier."

I agreed with her assessment, so I ended up nodding along.

Lee Hyunsung's backstory wasn't discussed in-depth within the Ways of Survival.

The man named Lee Hyunsung, who lived and died by the rules of the field manual. But such a man was in reality, as far removed from those manuals than anything else out there.

This world was where Lee Hyunsung's manual had come to life.

[Character 'Lee Hyunsung' likes this place.]

Jung Heewon smiled powerlessly and spoke in a sorrowful voice. "In a way, taking him away from here could be us being greedy."

Certainly, Lee Hyunsung might be happier by remaining in <Oz>. Instead of wandering inside the hellish scenarios, spending simple, comfortable time within his memories could be a better life for him.

Ku-gugugu…

It was then, we heard yet another deafening boom.

Just as I was about to exchange glances with Jung Heewon, several channel messages floated up one after the other.

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' has entered the channel!]

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' has entered the channel!]

[Constellation, 'Goreyo's First Sword' has entered the channel!]

All those vanished Constellations had returned to the channel at once. Just before I could ask what happened, though…

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is trying to warn you of…!]

Tsu-chuchuchut!

[All indirect messaging within the channel has been restricted.]

…The indirect message was cut off.

I raised my head to discover Biyoo forming a surprised expression. Obviously, this wasn't her doing, so… In that case, who?

Another boom spread out from the skies. Accompanying the noise akin to a giant drum being torn apart, the heavens far away began cracking up.

Craaaaack.

"…Dokja-ssi."

Something was going wrong here.

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* Official novel illustration (canonical)

Chapter 463: Ep. 88 - Myth-grade Constellation, I

Uriel's mood wasn't so good.

– Where are you, our Biyoo?

The previous Stories of <Kim Dokja's Company> were currently on the Star Stream's broadcasts, yet she couldn't pay attention to them. That couldn't be helped, though.

The thoughts of previously-laid-back Uriel had become rather complicated what with everything that happened recently. The deciding factor was her running into the version of herself from the 999th worldline and receiving a portion of her memories.

「I'm your only ally, Yoo Joonghyuk. I shall definitely end the scenarios and avenge you.」

She knew that versions of herself existed in other worldlines. But, she didn't expect the experiences of knowing it and meeting one would be this different.

The 999th regression turn's worldline.

Just what exactly did she do in that world?

[…Urgh, so irritating. I'm not curious about the stories of another worldline. Trying to follow the stories of my kids alone is plenty hard enough already.]

Uriel grumbled while hugging her head.

Besides, the <Star Stream>'s atmosphere seemed rather unsettled lately. As the Final Scenario approached, this vague, strange sense of tension circulated among all the Constellations. So much so that a groundless rumour of the Bureau abandoning this worldline was doing the rounds, too.

[<Bureau> has summoned the Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire'-nim!]

[Will you answer the summon?]

Uriel's head shot up after hearing that sudden message.

…Why, with such a timing?

She pondered for a moment, before tapping on the 'confirm' button. When she did, she was transported to another location along with blinding rays of light.

[Transmission is complete.]

The place she arrived in was an unfamiliar empty field. Besides her, other Constellations had arrived there before her.

[What's this, Gabriel? You're also here?]

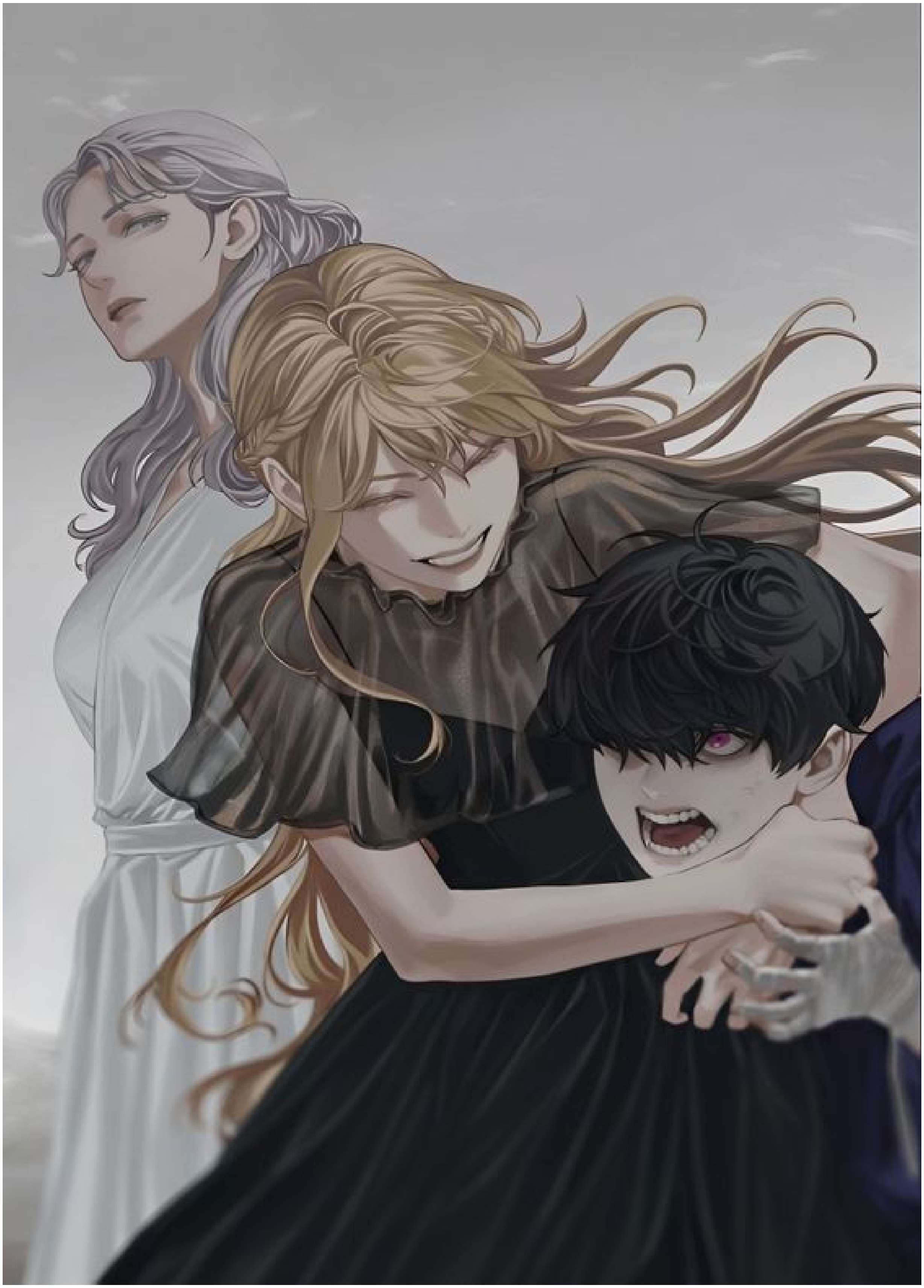
[The Bureau will spam you with messages if you refuse their call, after all.]

She looked around and spotted several dozen Constellations gathering here. Just like her, many seemed to be curious about why they had been summoned. Even if the Bureau was a bunch of thugs, they wouldn't summon them here without a reason.

Not only that, she recognised a few familiar faces, too. Such as a short height with bandages tightly wrapped around in one arm…

[Oh my gosh, oh my gosh! Isn't this our little Flame Dragon?!]

Uriel dashed towards the figure of the Abyssal Black Flame Dragon and performed a head-lock.



*

[Keuk! An enemy's sneak attack?!]

[It's me, your Archangel noonim.]

[Release me at once!]

Abyssal Dragon freaked out and struggled inside Uriel's 'embrace'.

While watching that spectacle unfold, Gabriel muttered out. […Uriel, that guy is an 'Absolute Evil', you know.]

[Who cares. <Eden> is destroyed, anyway. We should be friends with one another.]

The Nebula <Eden> was almost completely wiped out at the end of the prior 'Great War of Saints and Demons'. Most of the once-powerful Archangel army was decimated, and the only Archangels that could move were Uriel and Gabriel.

The former stopped thinking about the bitter matters and scanned her vicinity. [Hey, that's the Goryeo's First Sword, isn't he?]

Not only him, but also the Korean Peninsula's Constellations that included 'Bald General of Justice', 'First Sorcerer of Joseon', and even 'Last Hero of Hwangsanbeol'; Nebulas such as <Olympus>, plus a host of Constellations and even Surya could be seen.

Uriel's eyes moved about even more urgently than before.

The more she spotted familiar Constellations, the greater the foreboding grew. Every Constellation gathered here, they all had one thing in common.

The Abyssal Dragon finally managed to extract himself from her grasp and muttered loudly. […Everyone here is from Kim Dokja's channel.]

He was right; Everyone gathered here, they…

…Pah-chuchut!

Right then, Uriel's perception picked up on the movement of a threatening Status. Beings were surrounding this empty field. Each and every one of them possessed more than enough Status to almost rival a Narrative-grade Constellation.

Uriel and her quick wits immediately saw through their identity. […<Papyrus>, <Vedas>, and even <Emperor>. What is the meaning of this? To think that you lot with plenty of bad blood between you would unite like this.]

Uriel spoke up, feeling slightly tense. Even if it was her, fighting off against this many Narrative-grade Constellations was asking for too much. Not only that…

[Even a bum-heavy geezer, too… What brings an existence from the 'Final Scenario' here?]

She was sure of it; the goosebumps rising up on her arms were proof of the incredibly powerful being's existence hiding nearby.

Even if <Star Stream> was vast, there were only a handful of beings possessing this level of Status. She glanced to the side and noticed that even the 'Abyssal Dragon' was making a visibly hardened expression.

There was no doubt – this creature, it was…

[Is everyone here?]

…A true Myth-grade Constellation.

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

The moment that true voice rang out, the surrounding air suddenly changed. It felt as if the oxygen floating around was ignited instantly.

The sensation was so strong that the Constellations near her wobbled unsteadily, while even Uriel, renowned for her high resistance to fire, couldn't help but frown deeply for a moment there.

…Why was a 'Myth-grade Constellation' here?

With the very rare exceptions like the King of the Underworld, Metatron or the Great Sage, the majority of 'Myth-grade Constellations' didn't interfere with the matters of lower-ranked scenarios. Because they were beings that had already completed their 'Conclusion' and placed their names on the candidate list for the 'One Single Story'.

They had already reached the Final Scenario, and their Stories had been guaranteed.

[Looks like the monkey bastard and the King of the Underworld are the only absentees. However, it's not possible to delay any further, so I shall start with the explanation.]

[Hold up!]

[Constellation, 'Midday Sun' is looking at 'Demon-like Judge of Fire'.]

The moment she met that gaze, Uriel realized who the owner of that true voice was.

There were many 'suns' to be found within the <Star Stream>. However, suns that occupied the centre of the universe were extremely rare even among them. Especially so, if it was an existence that occupied the 'midday' smack-bang in the middle of time itself…

[God of the Sun, Ra. Did you summon us here?]

He was none other than Ra, the top Constellation of the great Nebula, <Papyrus>.

[Correct.]

[How odd. I thought that the 'Bureau' called us here?]

Ra didn't reply to her.

Actually, Uriel could sense a presence of Great Dokkaebi among all the others surrounding her. She decided to calmly respond for now. If that side really chose to align themselves with the Bureau even at the exorbitant loss of their Probability, then this situation couldn't be described as good at all.

[Okay, so. Shall we hear what's so important that you're even willing to expose your cosy relationship with the Bureau?]

[I've summoned you here because of the 'Final Scenario'. Soon, the 'One Single Story' will be chosen. Meaning, the story that will represent this worldline will be decided.]

The One Single Story.

There was not one Constellation present that didn't know what that was. Even the <Kim Dokja's Company> they had been watching until now was a Nebula creating their own One Single Story, after all.

[Okay? What's that got to do with us?]

[Most of you have not earned the right of the 'Final Scenario'. However, it'll be a different story if you side with me. I shall take you to the 'Final Scenario'. Meaning, I shall give you an opportunity to place your Modifiers on the 'One Single Story'.]

That proposition caused the eyes of a few Constellations to rock visibly. Most of them were unaffiliated Historical-grades.

Uriel observed Ra for a moment there before breaking out in a smirk. [What the hell, that's it? It wasn't anything important, so if you're done talking, I'm leaving.]

She turned around, but couldn't take another step. An incredibly powerful Status had rooted her to the spot.

[…What's the meaning of this?]

[I haven't finished talking yet.]

[But, I can already guess what you're about to say without hearing it?]

Uriel's true voice carried a sharp edge. Only the Constellations from the channel BY-9158 and not any others were brought here. And the one who gathered them was none other than the top Constellation of <Papyrus>.

[You're about to propose that we attack the <Kim Dokja's Company>, right?]

For a very short moment there, silence dominated the proceedings.

[…Why do you think that?]

[Because they earned the qualification of the 'Final Scenario', that's why. And eliminating them naturally would lead to one of the strongest candidates for the 'One Single Story' exiting the picture.]

Visible turmoil spread among the Constellations. Uriel sensed the Statuses of the Constellations surrounding them get agitated as well.

She snorted derisively. [Really now, you lot called Constellations just don't change even until the end, no? And also, Ra. You have already reached the Final Scenario, so interfering in the lower scenario like this is really petty, you know. Zeus, and even you…]

[…]

[Are you by any chance worried about your kids? You angry that your offsprings that inherited your Story couldn't win against fledgling Nebula and failed to become the candidates of the 'One Final Story', and…]

There was an incredible explosion, and Uriel's figure was buried deep into the ground. As she spat out a slew of expletives, Ra's true voice entered her ears.

[Fu■, what the hell…]

[Indeed, you're correct. This is the rage of a parent who didn't educate his children properly. This is the righteous rage of a parent who couldn't sit still and watch his children's future go astray because of pathetic losers who gave up on their Conclusions, and a little Nebula not even a decade old.]

As if she was already expecting that, Uriel shouted back. [And you finally reveal your true colours. Sorry, but there are no Constellations here who will side with your kids. Looks like you don't know whose channel we're subscribers of.]

The Abyssal Dragon and Gabriel reached out and helped Uriel out of the crater. Behind them, the Korean Peninsula's Constellations, including Goryeo's First Sword and Bald General, were nodding their heads.

Uriel felt this inexplicable sense of contentment after meeting their gazes. Right now, here in this place, folks that cheered on someone's Story in one heart had gathered.

From the start of the first scenario, the 'proof of credentials', all the way to the 'Final Scenario' where the fate of the worldline was to be decided.

Uriel couldn't be certain that everyone here thought the same as her. However, without a doubt, someone among these people must've loved <Kim Dokja's Company>'s Story more than their own. Just like she did.

[And that is why you're all losers.]

[What?]

[Have you all lost yourselves to voyeurism and forgotten that you are also a part of the scenario?]

In the next moment, a powerful storm of Probability's aftermath whipped about and a certain figure made an entrance.

Tsu-chuchuchut!

It was a doll with an exterior of steel. A Narrative-grade Constellation riddled with wounds was bound by the sturdy ring of light.

[This fool had been supporting a stupid Story, just like you have.]

Uriel dazedly stared at this Constellation. She had never met this guy before, yet the moment he appeared, she could tell who he might be. Not only that, she had exchanged several indirect messages with him in the past, too.

[Constellation, 'Master of Steel', is shrinking back from pain.]

The Master of Steel. He was the Incarnation 'Lee Hyunsung's' Sponsor.

Ra's laughter could be heard next. [He would have been safe if he remained quietly back in <Oz>, yet this fool got in touch with an existence from another worldline, hoping to aid that stupid Story.]

[Just what the hell are you…!]

[You all do not have a choice. Either you help us put an end to <Kim Dokja's Company>'s Story, or…]

Along with those words, the rings of light binding the Master of Steel's body began tightening. He thrashed in pain but still stared straight at Uriel.

[Constellation, 'Master of Steel', says that his death today has no meaning.]

[Constellation, 'Master of Steel', announces that his Story and Modifier have been succeeded by someone else!]

The ring was getting tighter and tighter. Uriel hurriedly moved.

And then…

[Constellation, 'Master of Steel', asks you not to give up on that story.]

Squeeze!!

The Master of Steel's body got crushed without any resistance whatsoever, and Stories exploded out from his body. It was truly a meaningless death of a Narrative-grade Constellation.

Everyone from the same channel watched that spectacle as if they were frozen to the spot.

In front of a planet's death, Ra continued to speak. [Or, die like this one.]

Along with a madness-filled roar, Uriel unleashed her Status in full.

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* Official novel illustration (canonical)

Chapter 464: Ep. 88 - Myth-grade Constellation, II

Ku-gugugugu!

Like a breaking glass, the sky above cracked apart with black lines running through it.

Lee Hyunsung stared at the heavens filling up with rifts and asked me. "Sergeant Kim Dokja-nim? Are we really going to be alright?"

"…"

I too had to look up after listening to him. The world seemed to be crumbling down.

The reason for that was clear – someone was attacking <Oz> from the outside. Not just anyone, but incredibly powerful beings, no less.

I turned back and discovered my companions looking at me; Yoo Joonghyuk, Han Sooyoung, Yoo Sangah, Jung Heewon…

I didn't have to say it, but we already knew what our choice would be.

"It'll be fine. Do you think I'm a sergeant just for a show? Don't worry about a thing."

The sky was breaking down. Yet, how could he say it was all fine?

Lee Hyunsung couldn't quite understand it. Was the military originally like this?

「Kim Dokja simply smiled quietly.」

A calm, collected smile floated upon his face.

Sergeant Kim Dokja would only say this. "Even the squad leader will tell you it's fine."

Indeed, the squad leader really did gather the soldiers in the training ground a short while later and began her speech.

She might be small-statured, but still, was overflowing with charisma. With an unreadable expression on her face, she scanned the rest of the troops and opened her mouth. "Your squad leader, me, is really disappointed in you."

That unexpected opening caused the soldiers to tense up.

"You have not read webnovels during your downtime."

Lee Hyunsung inwardly flinched. It was true. Even yesterday, he didn't read webnovels during his break but practised the military gymnastics routine with Yoo Joonghyuk.

"And so, this squad leader is planning to leave this base."

Lee Hyunsung became stupefied by that unexpected declaration.

…She was leaving? Hushed murmurs could be heard coming from here and there.

"And Lee Hyunsung."

When he regained his wits, she was already beside him, her hand resting on his shoulder.

"Private second class Lee Hyunsung, ma'am!"

This would be his first time seeing her up close. Her name and rank could be seen on top of her neatly arranged uniform.

Captain Han Sooyoung – that was her rank, and her name.

「"How long are you planning to stay dazed? You better start moving! You wish to see Kim Dokja kicking the bucket?"」

Why was this? For a moment there, a stinging pain accompanied a set of strange memories brushing past his mind.

What was that just now…?

"Look, you're stupefied again."

"P-Private second class Lee Hyunsung!"

The squad leader stared at him with unreadable eyes before lightly patted him on his cheek. "You better read more books, okay? You're slow, so you simply have to read lots more books. You'll survive for longer that way."

Squad leader Han Sooyoung left behind indecipherable words and left the base.

Two days after Captain Han Sooyoung left.

The cracks in the skies were growing larger. It was like seeing the first signs of a world coming to an end.

"Lee Hyunsung, have you memorised the exercise routine yet?"

He looked behind to discover Private first-class Yoo Joonghyuk.

"Private second class Lee Hyunsung! I've memorised everything!"

"You've filled up the army-issue canteen, too?"

"I've filled it up with exactly two litres!"

Lee Hyunsung felt a bit scared by that pair of sharp, angry eyes. He hadn't made any mistakes, yet they remained critical.

"What about the barracks code of conduct?"

"P-Private second class Lee Hyunsung!! T-that, I haven't…!"

The moment he said that, he inwardly went, oops, I'll get scolded again. He swallowed nervously and just as he tried to squeeze his eyes shut, heard Yoo Joonghyuk's voice.

"You should be able to memorise it soon. It's not that long, anyway."

"…Pardon? Ah, you must've heard me wrong. No, I have not…!"

What on earth was going on here? He made two consecutive mistakes just now, yet Yoo Joonghyuk didn't criticise him.

Not only that, those scary eyes were no longer angry when looking back at Lee Hyunsung.

"I will be shipping out tomorrow."

"…I don't quite follow, senior?"

"Lee Hyunsung, you can't refer to the field manual on everything. You won't find a senior willing to aid you every single time."

Why was this?

Why did Private first-class Yoo Joonghyuk's back turning around to leave feel so familiar to him?

"There will come a time when you must make a choice not found within the manual."

Those were the last words left behind by the Private first-class Yoo Joonghyuk.

Members of the squad began disappearing one by one. First, it was Captain Han Sooyoung, Private first class Yoo Joonghyuk, followed by Lieutenant Yoo Sangah. When he regained his wits, the non-commissioned officer, Sergeant first class Jung Heewon had become the squad's top presiding commander. (Even though the situation made no sense, Lee Hyunsung told himself it couldn't be helped because it was emergency.)

Lee Hyunsung's daily tasks after performing the morning and evening roll call were to check the base's infrastructure or accompany Sergeant Kim Dokja to the barracks' library.

"The military nowadays even stock wuxia novels? Wow, this is a really old book, too."

Kim Dokja loved books. Actually, it went beyond a simple love affair – he was the kind of a man who spent the whole day reading books.

Lee Hyunsung would sit next to him and quietly observe him excitedly flip the pages.

"Don't you want to read, too?"

"Uh, no, I, I'm…"

Before Lee Hyunsung could reply, yet another boom spread out from the sky.

Kim Dokja's expression faintly hardened.

When the boom was heard for the first time four days ago, Captain Han Sooyoung went away, and after the second boom two days ago, Private first class Yoo Joonghyuk disappeared next.

Lee Hyunsung grew restless.

"Kim Dokja Sergeant-nim."

"Huh?"

"By any chance, are you also leaving, sir?"

People were leaving him behind. He was continuously losing something.

Kim Dokja smirked softly. "Probably. I'm a sergeant already. I gotta get discharged soon. I'm definitely not planning to make a career out of this place."

"…I see."

"You also want to get out of here as soon as possible, right?"

Lee Hyunsung was about to reply with, "Yes, I do", but then, his eyes suddenly caught the sight of barbed-wire fences outside the windows. They looked so sturdy and intimidating.

Why did he feel this, though? He felt fearful of going outside those fences.

"I…"

If he carelessly went beyond the fences, he'd definitely get hurt. However, they would become barriers protecting him as long as he stayed inside.

When he thought like that, he felt his heart calm down.

The skies were falling. There was an unknown world outside where code of conduct for living in barracks or the military gymnastics exercise held no meaning.

He shifted his gaze back to discover Kim Dokja staring at him. The sergeant's lips bobbed up and down as if he wanted to say something, but then, a sly grin suddenly formed on his lips. "Hey, if you wish to leave, you better read more books, man."

"…Will reading lots of books reduce the period of active service?"

Kim Dokja's lips twitched after hearing that question. "Reading a book and writing a report on it might be enough to get you a vacation."

A book report?

"See, there will be a book report contest being held within our division. Read that and apply for it. If yours get picked, you'll get time-off as a prize."

The noticeboard Kim Dokja pointed at had a poster advertising the army's book report contest. Lee Hyunsung learned for the first time that such a thing existed.

Ah, so it was true, this book report thing. If he wrote that, he'd be able to earn some time off the base.

"When you're finished, you gotta let me read it, okay?"

It was after the following morning's roll call that sergeant Kim Dokja had vanished.

"It's only us two remaining, so who cares about daily tasks?"

Sergeant first class Jung Heewon grumbled loudly.

Lee Hyunsung smiled sheepishly and pulled out weeds growing near the base. "Well, we don't know what might happen, ma'am. The squad leader might suddenly return, and…"

Jung Heewon sat on a bench and while resting her chins on her hands, watched Lee Hyunsung as if he was a mysterious new lifeform.

"Do you like this place?"

The usual Sergeant first class wouldn't have used such a tone of voice. However, her voice still managed to elicit this inexplicable sense of longing in him.

Maybe it was that longing allowing him to reply honestly right away.

"It's neither like or dislike, ma'am."

A place that he neither liked or disliked. That was exactly what Lee Hyunsung's impression on the 'military' was.

"Except that, I don't have to think about anything while I'm here."

That's right – that was the reason why he chose the army.

While he was here, he could forget about the outside world. Employment, enrolment, gazes of others, issues of the outside world, family affairs, dilemmas he could never solve no matter what he did.

"…But then, I've been thinking lately that I kind of like it here."

What did he exactly like about this place, anyway? He couldn't describe it properly.

「"I like you."」

And why did his heart ache so much?

Sergeant first class Jung Heewon looking straight at him suddenly spoke up. "In that case, you stay here, Lee Hyunsung. Wait for us until we come back."

He couldn't reply with "I didn't quite catch you".

Because he simply couldn't mishear what she was saying.

"We'll protect your world."

The moment he wanted to say something, blinding rays of light poured down from the sky, and the Sergeant first class Jung Heewon disappeared from his view.

Ku-dududu…

Before anyone had noticed it, the cracks in the skies had already swallowed up half of the heavens.

And so, Lee Hyunsung became alone.

Just what am I doing?

Is this place really an army base?

The army that I knew is…

Lee Hyunsung repeated his daily tasks and continued to protect the base with no one in it. He woke up at the fixed time, did his roll call, and did the military gymnastics routine. After that, he finished disciplining his mind and began his daily tasks.

However, he had no more things to do now. He even finished pulling out all the weeds found in the base yesterday.

"…The book report."

He belatedly recalled Kim Dokja's words.

He was told to write a report. To read a book, and write his report on it.

Lee Hyunsung went up to the barracks' library. As if to let the world know that Kim Dokja used to be here, there was a pile of books gathered up on that spot.

He reached out to the book on top of that pile, all the while sensing this strange feeling. The book itself was a familiar one.

「The Wizard of Oz, ver. 999」

Even he had heard of this book's name from somewhere. However, he had never read it before. Lee Hyunsung flipped the cover open and began reading the first sentence.

「The tin soldier was scared of having a heart.」

A tin soldier, was it? It must've been the Wizard of Oz's protagonist. He continued to flip through the pages.

「The first companion the tin soldier met was a really scary man. The tin soldier called him 'Captain'.」

The moment he read that line, his head pulsed in pain. Captain?

「The tin soldier then became companions with a beautiful angel. When that angel became angry, she'd often morph into a devil.」

For some reason, his heart ached when he read those lines.

「The tin soldier became companions with a warrior wearing thick armour. The warrior used his own sword to test out the tin soldier's strength now and then.」

Why, why did it feel like this description would come to life right before his eyes at any second?

「The tin soldier became companions with a dragon spitting out fearsome flames. The dragon sometimes acted like a nuisance, too.」

But, I've never met an existence like that before?

「And then, a demon king coming from another world stole away what was most precious to them.」

Every time he read a sentence, all sorts of chaotic scenes and screams flitted in and out of his vision. He was unfamiliar with those spectacles. Even then, Lee Hyunsung's entire body shivered.

He couldn't understand it. He didn't get what this story was about.

He simply didn't get what the author was trying to convey.

Worse still, he couldn't understand why tears were welling up in his eyes.

「And at the end of this story, the tin soldier realized what the aching in his heart was.」

「That aching eventually became his heart.」

As soon as he read that line, Lee Hyunsung recalled it.

I too once had companions like them.

「"I'd love to hear your story, Hyunsung-ssi, when all these tragedies come to an end and our stories are no longer treated as scenarios."」

The first companion was a polite and warm person. Everyone followed his lead.

「"Until then, everyone being safe is the utmost priority."」

The second companion was a kind person. Everyone believed her words to be correct.

「"No, hang on. It's more important that everyone survives, even at the cost of one person. Of course, that 'one person' must be Kim Dokja. That fool knows how to come back from being dead, anyway."」

The third companion was a wise person. Everyone thought that the strategies she cooked up will succeed.

「"No one will die. Leave this place to me and go."」

The fourth companion was a powerful person. Everyone could entrust their backs to him.

「"You know, Hyunsung-ssi. If I ever forget about you, then…"」

And, the fifth companion was…

「"…Then, please kill me."」

His memories were coming back to him. Slowly, so very slowly, his heart began beating. So slowly, yet with a distinctive feeling, each beat did its very best to emphasize that they were hurting this way, that this was where such ache existed.

How could he have ever forgotten about them?

Lee Hyunsung clenched his fists, his body shivering away. He shouldn't be in this place.

He looked up at the skies outside the windows. The cracks of the skies had covered the entirety of the heavens by now. It became rather clear where his companions had gone off to.

They went away to protect this world he was stuck in. All the while facing off against the calamities that measly North Korea couldn't even compare to.

「Lee Hyunsung thought to himself. 'Do I possess such powers?'」

[Constellation, 'Master of Steel', is looking at you.]

His Sponsor was now looking at him.

Tsu-chut, tsu-chuchuchut!!

However, something felt different from before. It must've been his Sponsor, yet there was a slight, vague difference in the gaze he sensed.

[Constellation, 'Master of Steel' asks if you're hurting.]

Lee Hyunsung nodded his head.

「This emotion, this heart, I wish to protect it.」

He was scared. Scared of forgetting this moment again, scared of his heart stop beating again. Scared of everything freezing up within the cold silvery light.

It was then, his Sponsor spoke to him. 【You can protect it.】

His voice resembled forged steel, tempered for tens of thousands of years.

【However, you may end up in agony for all eternity as the consequences of failing to protect it.】

"Even then, it's fine. It's better than not even having a chance to protect them."

He was only familiar with the things he had lost already. The important part was about not losing them again.

【Your name is the Emperor of Steelsword.】

He saw the barbed wire fences in the distance crumble away. The world of manuals he had been protecting was disappearing.

Lee Hyunsung stepped forward, towards his own story.

* * *

"Dokja-ssi."

We were currently protecting the crumbling <Oz>.

With the decline of the Stories of the Master of Steel, and the 「the Wizard of Oz」, <Oz>'s anti-air defense system was crumbling down.

I could see hundreds of battleships surrounding Oz. We shared our strength and protected the planet with a hole in it from that armada.

Even then, we were reaching our limit.

The other side relied mainly on the long-range attacks from their ships. The only methods we had of defending against that effectively were Lee Jihye's [Turtle Dragon], and Shin Yoosung's [Chimera Dragon].

The problem here was that neither Lee Jihye's vessel and Shin Yoosung's dragon had fully recovered from the damages incurred during the 'Great War of Saints and Demons'.

We originally came here to address that issue, but this…

"The anti-air defense will be rendered powerless soon!"

We got ready for the final showdown.

Jung Heewon asked. "Still can't contact any other Constellations?"

"Something bad must've happened."

It was likely that these guys attacking us were involved in that.

Han Sooyoung grumbled loudly. "You really aren't going to regret this? Should we really be doing this?"

I nodded my head. "Lee Hyunsung always fought for us in the frontlines. It's our turn to repay that debt."

My companions agreed with me.

Yoo Joonghyuk was currently on top of the tallest building on the planet, while Jung Heewon was emitting powerful Status that didn't lose out to anyone, her resolve firm, unwavering.

「We'll believe in Lee Hyunsung.」

I wasn't sure exactly how much time we could buy here. Just that, I could only pray it was enough for Lee Hyunsung.

"Incoming!"

Ka-boooooom!!

Hundreds of battleships in the distance spat out flames simultaneously. Magical shells, their numbers more than enough to utterly decimate a planet in its entirety, rained down.

We unleashed all of our Statuses. We needed to withstand this wave of attack no matter what.

After gathering all of our magical…

Right next moment.

A vast silvery light suddenly enveloped the whole world.

The enormous protective barrier made out of Story metal spread out among the heavens. Through the semi-transparent barrier, I saw the shells of the battleships powerlessly explode on the outside.

"Being left alone in a place like that was not a happy experience, you know."

This was not the Story of「the Wizard of Oz」. No, it was a new type of Story, with a somewhat different origin.

「In that world, he was referred to as the Emperor of Steelsword.」

Kwa-kwakwakwa!!

Chills ran down my spine.

Steam covered the entire planet. Metals spreading out like a giant tree's branches began blanketing the surface of the planet itself.

This was the hardest material found in <Star Stream>, the only Story metal capable of dealing with the Myth-grade Constellation's frightening weapons.

[A large number of Constellations are astonished by the scale of this Story!]

And here it was, the Stigma powerful enough to completely envelop a planet with that metal. That was the anti-air defense system that the planet <Oz> proudly boasted, the [Last Steel].

"Captain Lee Hyunsung from the Giant Monsters Special Command, reporting."

The man I was familiar with, blessed a height taller than Yoo Joonghyuk's, and boasting the sturdiest body.

"I have been discharged from the active service today."

Stars of the skies could be seen staggering back now.

[Constellations from Nebula <Papyrus> are astonished by the revival of the 'Master of Steel'!]

And now, it was the time for the counterattack.

Chapter 465: Ep. 88 - Myth-grade Constellation, III

[You have become a Great Dokkaebi.]

[You can now participate in the Great Dokkaebi's 'Final Ballot'.]

Bihyung looked at the messages and slowly blinked. His appearance had changed a lot since meeting the Dokkaebi King. He was now in a complete humanoid figure like Baram, with the white tiger leather draped over his shoulders and three yellow horns emanating the powers of Story on his head.

He had now become a full-on 'Great Dokkaebi'.

[I shall be on my way now, Baram-nim.]

[Are you planning to go to them?]

Bihyung didn't reply.

But Baram continued on, anyway. [All Dokkaebis must select their own final stories when the end of times draws near. Even if they could die telling that particular story.]

[…]

[The story you're about to select has very low odds of victory.]

[I'm aware.]

[Not only that, they have made enemies of the Bureau and quite a number of other Great Dokkaebis, too.]

[I'm also aware of that.]

There was no Dokkaebi alive who didn't know what it meant to become enemies with the Bureau in <Star Stream>.

[Even still, I'd like to see the end of this world with that story.]

Bihyung had chosen his last Story.

"Dokja-ssi."

"Have you come out to enjoy your vacation?"

"Don't be like that. I told you, it's not a vacation but a discharge."

"A real discharge, then?"

"Yes." Lee Hyunsung smiled brightly. "I won't be a soldier anymore."

I observed the silvery Story leaking out from his entire figure. When reading the opening sentences of some novels, you'd get a certain sense of what they are like, and Stories were similar in that regard.

「That resolute silver hue. The unwavering will, tempered through a lengthy period of time.」

Back in the 'Isle of Reincarnators', the One Invincible Fist Yoo Hoseong said this – in order to rule over certain Stories, you needed to understand it first. However, just like how it was impossible to fully understand another human being, it was also impossible to fully understand a Story.

「What we can do instead, is to come up with an interpretation of our own.」

In that case, this was the answer Lee Hyunsung had come up with.

[Story, 'Ruler of Steel', has begun its storytelling!]

That was the core Story possessed by the 'Master of Steel'. The fact that he could finally wield it meant that Lee Hyunsung had reached the last phase in the [Steel Transformation].

"I didn't get to write a report, but I still understood why you asked me to read that book, Dokja-ssi," said Lee Hyunsung before reverting to a more cautious voice. "Was that perhaps the story from the 999th regression turn world-line?"

I was somewhat surprised. Didn't expect that he'd think that far ahead.

"I believe that might be the case."

"But then, why was that story transformed into 「the Wizard of Oz」...?"

From my own knowledge base, <Oz>'s founding Story was 「the Wizard of Oz」. However, the Story forming its foundation had been altered.

Not only that, to a story from the 999th turn, no less.

I wasn't sure what all this meant yet, but still, I could think of something. The meaning of altering the basis of a Story was quite clear, after all.

[Sponsor of Incarnation 'Lee Hyunsung' is now looking at you.]

I might have not noticed the faintly altered gaze if it was in the past. It was not the same aura of the 'Master of Steel' I knew of. I shifted my gaze towards the Emerald Tower where that altar was located at. And then, recalled the large steel sword I saw in the audience chamber.

"Hyunsung ahjussi!"

Our companions preparing for the enemy's attacks below the tower rushed towards us.

"Hyunsung ahjussi! Are you alright?"

Shin Yoosung and Lee Gilyoung jumping around grasped the tall, sturdy man's hands tightly.

Yoo Joonghyuk arriving a step later muttered out. "Looks like you were safely discharged."

Both Yoo Sangah and Han Sooyoung decided to chime in, too.

"Congratulations on your discharge."

"If you need your squad leader again, just give me a shout."

The last person to rush in was Jung Heewon, who was getting ready to fend off the enemy's attacks in the farthest location. She stopped about a dozen metres or so away, and while her lips twitched, she kept staring in this direction.

Lee Hyunsung smiled at her. "Heewon-ssi."

I began wondering if I should make my exit from here about now. But the person who solved that dilemma was a completely unexpected person.

"Hey, you lot! Do your emotional reunion later! It's not over yet, you know!"

Lee Jihye shouted out as she summoned the [Turtle Dragon] in the air.

She was right. The Nebulas outside the planet hadn't withdrawn their battle line yet. No, rather than retreating, an even higher number of battleships were actually showing up now. Among them were dreadnoughts exclusively designed for destroying planets and inter-Nebula warfare.

"Do not worry. I won't leave them alone." said our trustworthy Lee Hyunsung as he stepped forward.

For sure, they were still bombarding us on the outside, but <Oz>'s barrier was holding firm. Like I said before, the strength of Master of Steel's Story inside <Oz> would almost match a Myth-grade Constellation's…

Chiieeeek…

A rather ominous-sounding noise could be heard coming from somewhere. A foul smell akin to something burning wafted out.

I raised my head to discover that a side of the opaque barrier was being ignited in the shower of blinding sparks as if it was being welded open.

Something was melting down Lee Hyunsung's forged steel.

[Constellation, 'Midday Sun', is staring at the planet <Oz>.]

Right then, I sensed Lee Hyunsung's body stiffen up greatly. He had covered the whole planet for us, so no doubt he was currently fully exposed to the Status of that gaze. Even if he was almost on the level of a Myth-grade Constellation, that still didn't mean he was equal to one.

I placed my hand on his shoulder. His trembling lessened a little after receiving a share of the Nebula's Probability. One shouldn't fight alone just because he had gotten a little bit stronger. Because we were a Nebula, just like them.

"…Looks like a real bigshot has personally made an entrance."

I knew of the Modifier of 'Midday Sun'. Now normally, that guy should never be able to come here.

It was the top Constellation of the Nebula, <Papyrus>. And the meaning of him coming here personally could only be…

[Constellation, 'Midday Sun', has revealed its intention to <Star Stream>.]

…That he no longer wished to hide their true intentions.

[Nebula <Papyrus>, has revealed their animosity towards Nebula <Kim Dokja's Company>.]

[Two Nebulas recorded as the candidates for 'One Single Story' are clashing!]

The expressions of the companions hardened after receiving that never-before-seen message. Something was about to get underway.

[Nebula <Papyrus> has declared inter-Nebula warfare against Nebula <Kim Dokja's Company>.]

It was exceedingly rare in <Star Stream> for a great Nebula to officially declare war against another. Because inter-Nebula warfare would never lead to a good result for all sides involved. There must've been a reason for them declaring one right now even though they knew the truth.

[Conditions to activate the restricted main scenario has been satisfied!]

[Applicable scenario will be issued only to the Nebulas recorded as the candidates of 'One Single Story'.]

<Main Scenario #98 – Candidate Selection War (restricted)>

Type: Main

Difficulty: ???

Clear condition: All Nebulas recorded in the 'One Single Story' can now freely engage in inter-Nebula warfare. It's possible to declare war without any penalties, and alliances and request for support between other Nebulas are now fully allowed.

Emerging victorious in the Candidate Selection War will ensure that you receive <Star Stream>'s attention, and your odds of being selected as the 'One Single Story' will improve.

Time limit: -

Reward: Increase in the Nebula's profile. Acquisition of Myth-grade Story related to inter-Nebula warfare.

Failure: Reduction in the Nebula's profile. Qualification for the Final Scenario rescinded.

…I knew it.

[Currently, your Nebula is in war with <Papyrus>!]

[Please defeat the enemy camp's leader.]

[You will be accredited with victory points if you win the applicable warfare.]

Visibly-tense companions quickly gathered around me. Hostility incomparably heavier than any other we felt in the past was enveloping the whole planet.

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation' is glaring at Nebula <Papyrus>.]

We had fought large Nebulas a couple of times in the past.

Back in <Gigantomachia>, we fought against <Olympus>, and during the 「Journey to the West Remake」, against <Emperor>.

However, the story this time was completely different.

The restrictions on the Probability during <Gigantomachia> were so great that Constellations couldn't really exercise their full powers, while during 「Journey to the West Remake」, the Great Sage Heaven's Equal and the members of judging panel lent us their powers and their Probability.

So, what about now?

[Story, 'Demon King of Salvation', has begun its storytelling.]

Was there any Nebula that might help us now?

[Giant Story, 'Demon Realm's Spring', has begun its storytelling.]

Companions were now looking at me.

They all looked to have made up their minds. Their eyes were proof that they knew what was about to happen and where our new battlefield was.

"Let's go."

No one would come to help us.

I looked up at the sky and spoke. "We're not weaklings anymore. Please open the sky, Hyunsung-ssi."

Lee Hyunsung nodded his head.

[Incarnation 'Jung Heewon' is requesting the activation of 'Hour of Judgement!]

Jung Heewon unsheathed her sword first. The [Judge's Sword] was enveloped in the auras of God Slaying.

[Incarnation, 'Lee Hyunsung', has agreed with the judgement.]

Lee Hyunsung's forged steel was placed on top of the companions' equipment. This was the world's toughest 'oath' to protect his precious companions.

[Incarnation, 'Lee Jihye', has agreed with the judgement.]

The silver-coloured Story metal settled down on Lee Jihye's [Turtle Dragon].

[Incarnation, 'Shin Yoosung', has agreed with the judgement.]

[Incarnation, 'Lee Gilyoung', has agreed with the judgement.]

The Chimera Dragon too was dyed in the silvery hue; the monster roared out and carried the two kids into flight.

[Incarnation, 'Yoo Sangah', has agreed with the judgement.]

Lotus pedestals also reinforced by silver-coloured steel began rotating all around Yoo Sangah.

[Incarnation, 'Han Sooyoung', has agreed with the judgement.]

Han Sooyoung had unwrapped the bandages off her arm before anyone noticed it, and tied her hair with the very same bandages.

[Incarnation, 'Yoo Joonghyuk', has agreed with the judgement.]

Yoo Joonghyuk's [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] carrying the Status of a Transcendent began emitting cold sword light next. And…

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation', has agreed with the judgement.]

And I unsheathed the Unbroken Faith.

['Hour of Judgement' will now activate!]

The moment the pitch-black night sky opened up, we all boarded Lee Jihye's vessel and leapt towards the heavens above.

The enemy's armada grew closer. We grasped our individual weapons as we faced off against an armada at least 600 ships strong.

「This was the spectacle that Kim Dokja had been longing to see for a very long time.」

Jung Heewon was the first to dash out and her sword attack rained down. The strongest swordswoman of Chaos that I know of was Jung Heewon the Judge of Destruction.

Ku-gugugugu!

A dreadnought was penetrated cleanly through from its cockpit right down to its engine bay, and explosion noises resounded out. Soon, explosions both large and small erupted out from all over its hull as cracks spreading all over it. We got to see the Constellations riding on it hurriedly make their escape.

Not missing that opening, Lee Jihye's [Turtle Dragon] began its violent assault.

BOOOOOM!

Our vessel broke through the explosions, emerging unscathed. Lee Hyunsung's Story metal had protected everyone.

Lee Jihye stepped forward. She was the greatest Incarnation there was when it came to large scale warfare, capable of destroying hundred-plus enemy ships with only one vessel.

The Naval Admiral Lee Jihye ordered the shelling to commence.

"Ahjussi, we're going, too!"

Following on the cannon fires, Shin Yoosung's [Chimera Dragon] also took flight, as well.

The leader had to be brought down first to end this warfare. So, as we had a small number of participants, there was only one choice we could make, really – an all-out blitzkrieg.

Shin Yoosung the Beast Lord, and Lee Gilyoung the Insect King. Two of the most complete tamers that I knew of carved out a path for us. [Chimera Dragon] under Shin Yoosung's control fired the Breath to accurately strike down mid-sized enemy ships, while Lee Gilyoung's insects crawled through any open gaps found to deal with dozens of smaller vessels trying to rush in at us.

"Stop right there!"

Insects crawled into the engines of smaller vessels and caused a series of huge explosions, thrusting the battlefield into pure chaos instantly.

Perhaps thinking that this couldn't go on anymore, Narrative-grade Constellations began crawling out from the battleships one by one.

[Incarnation, 'Yoo Sangah', is unleashing her Status!]

[Story, 'Hour of Mandala' is activating!]

The moment Yoo Sangah activated her Story, the movements of the enemy Constellations slowed down visibly.

That shocked me. I was already aware of her inheriting a portion of Sakyamuni's powers, but didn't expect her to wield this much of an authority over it… An ability to control the flow of time itself?

"I can't continue this for long," said Yoo Sangah.

"It won't take that long."

Taking advantage of the time she bought for us, Yoo Joonghyuk, Han Sooyoung and I ran on the night sky.

[Giant Story, 'Demon Realm's Spring' is continuing on with its storytelling!]

[Giant Story, 'Torch that Swallowed the Myth' has begun its storytelling!]

The two Giant Stories that protected <Kim Dokja's Company> until now; we had been using these two as our main attack power so far. The aura of the Stories stretched on like the tail of a meteor. The space we flew past was engraved with sparkling stars.

We had already broken past countless battleships, yet hundreds of Constellations were still blocking our path. If we cowered even for a moment here, their Status would force us back and crush us to death with sheer pressure.

[Nebula 'Papyrus' is unleashing the Giant Story's Status!]

And so, this was the fight between two Nebulas.

"It's my turn now."

Originally, the Delusion Demon Kim Namwoon should have been where Han Sooyoung was now. However, not only had she performed that guy's role admirably, she had become an existence far surpassing him.

[Giant Story, 'Season of Light and Darkness' has begun its storytelling.]

Finally, our third Giant Story began telling its story, as well. The distant cry of the Apocalypse Dragon could be heard like an auditory hallucination. We saw the <Papyrus>'s Constellations that participated in the Great War of Saints and Demons tremble in fear.

[T-this is…!]

The heavens split into two, one in light and the other in darkness, as 「Stage Transformation」 was activated. Han Sooyoung's figure soared higher as she stepped on the blurred boundary between the light and darkness. The wings of 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' spread out wide behind her back.

Just like back when she swooped in to rescue me, purple-coloured [Black Flames] were raging on both of her fists.

Kwa-aaaaaaah!

We rode on the storm of the Story and advanced forward. This was the overwhelming splendour of a Giant Story that not even the Narrative-grade Constellations could contend with.

We advanced forward like the Apocalypse Dragon's shockwave. But then, a gigantic sun stepped in to block us.

[Constellation, 'Midday Sun', is staring at <Kim Dokja's Company>.]

A lone pitch-black figure stood in the centre of the blinding ball of light. That was the Sun God Ra's true body.

[You shall all die here today.]

Yoo Joonghyuk's [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] roared on with a vicious howl.

Every Story we possessed also howled and roared on. Even if it was just us two fighting together, facing off against a true Myth-grade Constellation was still asking a lot.

After all, we were only in the 3rd turn, so… Hang on, 3rd turn?

[Story, 'Hell of Eternity' has begun its storytelling!]

It was like that once upon a time.

['Reading together' has begun.]

Afterimages of pages flipping past entered my eyes. As the hellish landscape filled up the surroundings, my story began. On the road created out of countless letters – Yoo Joonghyuk ran on his lengthy lifetime.

「The 41st turn's Yoo Joonghyuk threw a spear, and」

「The 362nd turn's Yoo Joonghyuk extended his sceptre.」

「The 999th turn's Yoo Joonghyuk wielded his Demon Sword.」

Tsu-chuchuchut!

Violent sparks began digging into my body.

[Your Status can't handle your Reading Comprehension!]

For a brief moment during the 'Journey to the West', I managed to read up to the 1863rd turn. But that was only possible because the Great Sage and Outer Gods lent me their Probability.

[This is the true myth.]

Even after taking on Yoo Joonghyuk's falling [Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship], Ra didn't even budge.

[You cannot surpass the true myth.]

The minimum regression turn of Yoo Joonghyuk needed to bring down a Myth-grade Constellation was 1700th.

I lacked power and lacked in Status. However, I didn't back down. "No, we can surpass it."

Because we still had one more Story up our sleeve. The fourth Giant Story we earned by clearing「the Journey to the West Remake」.

[Giant Story, 'Liberator of the Forgotten Ones' has begun its storytelling!]

In the next moment, an abundant amount of a Story's Probability permeated into my entire being. The Story that the Great Sage and Outer Gods worked together to create was now roiling about over the contexts of my star and <Kim Dokja's Company>.

[<Star Stream> is greatly surprised by your Status.]

[<Star Stream> is currently reassessing your Status.]

Stinging bloody odour stabbed into my nose. The Tongtian River dyed in red from the corpses of Outer Gods appeared around us.

The sparks trying to drown me gradually lessened. The pages of the Hellscape began flipping past once more.

…1321st turn.

…1582nd turn.

…

…

And eventually, 1701st turn.

Yoo Joonghyuk moved, his [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] now loaded with the power from the 1701st regression turn.

The 'Yoo Joonghyuk' from then that cut the oceans apart, destroyed the sun, and carved out the Myth-grade Constellation Poseidon's heart, was now opening his eyes.

「And this is the sight Kim Dokja longed to see for a very long time.」

We could see Ra freak out and belatedly unleash his own Giant Story. I stared straight into Ra's eyes. That bastard's lips were mouthing, "But, how?"

I laughed.

"What do you mean, how?"

In order to kill a Myth-grade Constellation, you needed a power that equalled one.

The Myth-grade Constellation – existences that started their 'One Single Story' and had earned their 'Conclusion', or compiled their own incredible Giant Stories and reached the cusps of their 'Conclusion' that way.

[Absolute majority of Constellations are greatly shocked by your Status!]

[Your Status has caused the Constellations from great Nebulas to…!]

Just like me right now, in other words.

[<Star Stream> has announced your new Status.]

[Your Status is Myth-grade.]

A stupendous boom resounded out as Yoo Joonghyuk's [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] cut Ra's sun down.

Chapter 466: Ep. 88 - Myth-grade Constellation, IV

[A large number of Nebulas are freaking out at your Status!]

[Portion of Nebulas are freaking out at the sudden appearance of a new Myth-grade Constellation!]

[Portion of Constellations are requesting the 「Probability Suitability Evaluation」 to the 'Bureau'!]

Tsu-chuchuchut!

[Requests for the Probability Suitability Evaluation have been denied.]

[<Bureau> cannot interfere at will during the applicable scenario.]

The spectacle of the blinding sunlight crumbling down – I couldn't even breathe properly as I focused solely on the battle itself. Ra's torso, cut by [Black Heavenly Demon Sword], began emitting bright light.

Ku-gugugugu!

Accompanied by an intense storm of heat, our vision was clouded by thick steam. A ploy to buy time, no doubt.

"Yoo Joonghyuk! Don't stop!"

I shouted out and desperately continued to read the Story.

[Story, 'Hell of Eternity', is continuing on with its storytelling!]

[Story, 'Life and Death Companions', is amplifying the effects of other Stories!]

I recalled the 1701st regression turn of Yoo Joonghyuk that I read in the past. Yoo Joonghyuk had fought against Poseidon one on one in that turn.

「On the border where the ocean's boundaries meet, Iron Blood Supreme King unsheathed his sword.」

「"Poseidon. Today, you shall die."」

「A life that carried on for 1700 lifetimes. The swordsmanship borne out of this life now shone brilliantly.」

Yoo Joonghyuk's blade moved as if to recreate that very battle. His sword gradually became faster and faster to utterly destroy Ra's sun.

[Constellation, 'Midday Sun', is enraged from the pain!]

Kwa-gagagagaga!!

Yoo Joonghyuk's blade continued to dance on the stage I read into reality. An incredible storm of Probability's aftermath tried to crush me, but four Giant Stories responded to each other and allowed me to endure the after-effects.

I still tasted iron in my mouth, though. My Incarnation Body was failing to cope with the sudden, abrupt increase in my Status.

[Nebula, <Vedas>, is observing your battlefield.]

[Nebula, <Tamna>, is observing your battlefield.]

[Nebula, <Olympus>, is observing your battlefield.]

[Nebula, <Asgard>, is observing your battlefield.]

Look all you want.

This battle was meant for all of you to see, anyway.

[Channel's indirect message restriction has been lifted!]

Even now, many Constellations would still be dismissive of our strength. They were probably thinking that we reached this far because of our luck and perhaps due to other Constellations lending their aid to us.

[A large number of additional Constellations are entering the channel!]

[Absolute majority of Constellations are observing your battle!]

However, this was now time to prove ourselves.

[Giant Story, 'Season of Light and Darkness', roaring out!]

Time to prove that <Kim Dokja's Company> was not some poor sobs needing your sponsorships but your actual competitors, and that we were a Nebula capable of bringing down a large Nebula with our own powers.

Kwa-dududuk!!

Yoo Joonghyuk's sword slashes continued to corner Ra. The sunlight falling away made noises similar to actual flesh being ripped apart.

It was then, I sensed a sharp glare coming from the empty air.

[Great Dokkaebi, 'Noksu', is glaring at you.]

Great Dokkaebi Noksu – not even a mid or low-grade, but a 'Great' Dokkaebi. For someone like that, making the scenario rather inconvenient for us wouldn't be that difficult. However, even they couldn't intervene carelessly in the 98th scenario.

Tsu-chuchuchut…

Because the scenarios from now on would be of utmost importance to the Great Dokkaebis, as well.

[Great Dokkaebi and the Nebula are participating in the applicable scenario together.]

[All Dokkaebis can select the 'candidate' and its story they wish to tell.]

[Great Dokkaebi 'Noksu' has currently selected <Papyrus>.]

I recalled the moment when Great Dokkaebis Heoju and Heoche came to see us just before the climax of the 'Great War of Saints and Demons' got underway. Back then, those Dokkaebis said this:

「You must decide now. Die in this place, or head off to the Final Scenario with us.」

Those words were suggestions meant for this very moment.

Great Dokkaebis facing the end times must risk their reputation, their insight, and their own Stories to select the candidates for the 'One Final Story'. And that bastard named Noksu must've chosen <Papyrus> as its candidate.

[According to the legend, there are three suns in <Papyrus>.]

I spoke in true voice as Yoo Joonghyuk's Incarnation body moved again.

With the speed faster than anyone in this universe, he swung his sword filled with the eternity's curse. Sharp strikes from the [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] dug deeply into Ra's skin. The deity's temperature, reputed to be capable of melting any metal, was being ably resisted by Lee Hyunsung's Story metal.

With a loud rupture, Ra's heart spewed out a Story. That noble and lofty Myth-grade Constellation was being destroyed by our hands.

[If you were really planning to cut us down, then you should've descended with all of your selves first.]

The Myth-grade Constellation, Ra. A Constellation who had reached his own 'Conclusion', and had been hibernating within the Final Scenario's stage for a very long time.

[You think that someone like you, stuck inside a freezer until now, can win against us with just a single sun?]

[Constellation, 'Midday Sun', is screaming in pain!]

[Constellation, 'Midday Sun', is urgently scanning his vicinity!]

[Just how long will you sit back and watch?!]

Ra's shouting caused the stars of the sky to sparkle.

[Vedas! Olympus! Did you not all agree to participate together?!]

…What?!

At the end of those words, ominous auras began rushing in from the distance.

The skies thrashed about and the sounds of crashing waves could be heard. The middle of pitch-black sky split up and an enormous current of water flooded out.

We quickly moved out of the way and dodged the waves of that Status.

[Someone has announced his support to the Nebula, <Papyrus>.]

[Someone is incarnating into the scenario!]

It was a possessor of a Status powerful enough to send shivers down my spine. Someone who could equal Ra before us was now descending into this world.

[How pathetic, 'Ra'. Did you not declare that you alone would be sufficient for this matter?]

A voice reminding me of violent tidal waves resounded out. Quite surprisingly, the existence that descended to this place was the very enemy Yoo Joonghyuk of the 1701st turn fought off desperately.

[Constellation, 'the Spear that draws the Boundaries of the Oceans' is incarnating to this scenario!]

Accompanying Poseidon's entrance were the stars of the heavens rushing in like storm clouds. They were Narrative-grade Constellations from <Vedas> and <Lokapala>. To make matters worse, among them were individuals known to be almost on the level of Myth-grade Constellations, as well.

[Nebula, <Tamna>, is condemning <Vedas>'s intervention!]

[Nebula, <Hongik>, is condemning <Olympus>'s intervention!]

Condemnation rained down. Completely not caring about that, Poseidon simply pointed his trident, 'Triaina', in our direction. [How dare measly beings such as yourselves try to witness the end of this <Star Stream>?]

The end of <Star Stream>, the epilogue that determined the conclusion of all the worlds. Right, I had been waiting for a long time to witness it.

That was true.

[I don't simply wish to see the 'end', actually.]

In all honesty, what I really wanted to see was…

"Ahjussi!"

My companions had gathered around me even before I had noticed it – Jung Heewon, Yoo Sangah, Lee Jihye, Lee Hyunsung, Lee Gilyoung, and Shin Yoosung.

The Stories we had created together were shining brightly in the empty night sky. I saw the trajectory of the Stories we've used beyond the galaxy in the far distance.

No matter how wide and expansive this universe was, I was confident of locating that very set of constellations regardless of where I was.

[Story, 'Demon King of Salvation', is shining brightly.]

[Story, 'King of a Kingless World', is shining brightly.]

[Giant Story, 'Torch that Swallowed the Myth', is shining brightly.]

I hid all signs of emotions welling up in my heart and looked at my companions.

「That was where the Story he longed for could be found.」

Poseidon emitting powerful Status extended his hand towards us. [What a noisy little full stop you are. Now, disappear.]

<Vedas>'s army rushed in.

My companions tensed up and gathered around me. I addressed them. [I love the Story I managed to create with all of you. Although we encountered many painful, sad things, we…]

Even then, I loved this story so much so that I wished for it to continue on forever.

"…That's not your final wish, now is it?"

Jung Heewon asked after seeing my expression. She probably sensed something ominous from it.

I simply smiled back at her before staring at the empty skies beyond the Nebula's army rushing in at us.

My mother once told me this. A person who watched a certain story for a long time would eventually grow to resemble that story.

Perhaps that logic also applied to these stars, too.

[Die!]

Just before the tsunami wave of <Vedas>'s army pounced on us, though…

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is incarnating into the scenario!]

The night sky split up and the waterfall made out of hellish flames flooded out. A lone Constellation riding on the fiery waves started massacring other Constellations with her sword burning in flames.

The Archangel that I liked the best was right there.

[■ck you! You ■cking bastards!]

The true voices of Constellations freaking out could be heard over that torrent of expletives.

[…But, how?! You were definitely…!]

[■ck, man! I'm Uriel! You think you can kill me with such measly little numbers??]

Right after her, purple-coloured intense flames burned the heavens.

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', is incarnating into the scenario!]

[…Kekeke, to think you'd make me use both of my hands. You did well, <Papyrus>.]

The wings of a massive flying dragon tore and crushed through the Constellations.

<Vedas>'s battleships took aim at the Black Flame Dragon and got ready to fire. And in the following moment, dozens of vessels began exploding one after another along with loud booms.

One could spy the golden-coloured Ruyi Jingu Bang flitting in between the explosions.

[You're really making it so annoying, aren't you.]

Once the smoke cleared, a platinum-haired man could be seen standing there, digging his ear as if he was quite bored right now.

[Constellation, 'Most Ancient Liberator', is incarnating into the scenario!]

Uriel, Black Flame Dragon, and the Great Sage, Heaven's Equal. These three's entrance caused unrest to spread out.

*

[…Great Sage! What is the meaning of this??]

[This is inter-Nebula warfare! Do you understand what you're trying to do…!]

Even before the enraged true voices of the Constellations could finish, someone else announced their support to our cause. [Just like you, we also have a Story we wish to support, that's all.]

I knew whose voice that was.

Pitch-black yet gentle darkness wrapped around us, and a loving hand touched my shoulder.

[Constellation, 'Queen of the Darkest Spring', is incarnating into the scenario!]

And if she was here, then that meant…

[Constellation, 'Father of the Rich Night', is incarnating into the scenario!]

The King of Underworld's cold eyes scanned the battlefield. Here he was, the grim reaper of death capable of making all the stars shiver in fear.

First, it was the Great Sage, and now, the King of Underworld, too – the constant appearances of Myth-grade Constellations caused the enemy Constellations to hesitate and retreat.

[Nebula <Underworld> is supporting <Kim Dokja's Company>.]

The two camps emitted powerful Statuses and confronted each other as if to goad the other side to attack first. I could see the crumpled expressions of Poseidon and Ra in the distance. And how long went by like this? Constellations from one camp began retreating without saying anything.

[Constellation, 'Spear that Draws the Boundaries of the Oceans' is exiting from this scenario.]

The enemy Constellations began disappearing one by one. Their rate of exit grew faster now that a Myth-grade Constellation they placed so much faith in had left the scene. The panicking <Papyrus>'s Constellations looked around in confusion all the while cautiously studying Ra's reaction. And eventually…

[Nebula <Papyrus> has announced the withdrawal of its Constellations.]

Not too long after, only the half-crushed sun remained. Ra gritted its teeth noisily and glared at us, but before long, the sounds of a star scattering away could be heard.

[Constellation, 'Midday Sun', is exiting from the scenario.]

The glow of setting sun filled the sky and the bright ball of fire disappeared below the horizon. Finally, this scenario's victors had been decided.

「And this is the sight Kim Dokja longed to see for a very long time.」

Within the sunset's soft glow, I looked back to my companions.

「Some things didn't work out as he had been hoping.」

While staring at the disappearing sunlight, Yoo Joonghyuk was still gripping the [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] tightly.

「Meanwhile, some things went better than he expected.」

Han Sooyoung, her lips twitching slightly, hurriedly wrapped the bandages around her arm while going, "Ouch, ouch, ouch!"

「There were moments where they got lucky irrelevant of their intentions.」

Yoo Sangah sighed gently and smiled back at me.

「However, all those events came together to create this very moment in time.」

[Nebula <Kim Dokja's Company> has won the inter-Nebula warfare!]

[Reward payout is being prepared.]

Both the companions and I didn't say anything.

This wasn't our first victory, but in a certain sense, it was indeed our first victory. For a long time there, we didn't say a word and stared at each other's faces.

We won.

We really emerged victorious against another 'Nebula'.

[Great Dokkaebi 'Heoju' is gasping after seeing your Story.]

[Great Dokkaebi 'Garang' wishes to vote for your Story.]

[Great Dokkaebi 'Haesol' wishes to…]

Only the system messages floated up in the empty air now.

[Great Dokkaebi 'Bihyung' has voted for your Story.]

[Mid-rank Dokkaebi 'Biyoo' likes your story very much.]

I watched the shadows of two Dokkaebis cast by the setting sun and began thinking to myself.

We were almost there.

I turned my head towards the companions once more. I wanted to say something to them while looking at them. But, they all carried expressions of already knowing what I wanted to say.

Jung Heewon spoke up instead of me. "Let's go and witness the conclusion of this world. Together."

I nodded my head.

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* Promotional illustration (semi-canonical)

Chapter 467: Ep. 89 - Great Apocalypse, I

[Your ■■ is getting nearer.]

The system message whispered in my ear. It had been repeating itself over and over again for the past few days.

"It seems that it won't be long now."

"Yes."

My mother and I were sitting face to face over a table, drinking tea together. We were watching the display panel installed in the [Industrial Complex]'s reception room.

– The American continent, annihilated! What's the next target for these Outer Gods?

– Emergency evacuation order issued in North-East Asia!

– Nebulas have abandoned Earth. "There is no place left to run."

The last place the news program showed was the Korean Peninsula. Refugees streaming in from all over the world ensured that the whole peninsula was bucking raucously even now.

I was well aware of what they were hoping for by coming here.

[Next Great Apocalypse scenario location is 'North-East Asia'.]

[6 days, 8 hours and 24 minutes remaining until the start of the Great Apocalypse scenario.]

My mother inside the panel was making an announcement in my stead as the representative of the [Industrial Complex].

– The [Industrial Complex] won't stop accepting new citizens. However…

My mother smiled bitterly and spoke. "It's quite embarrassing to watch, isn't it."

"But, it suits you well. You're like the President, actually."

In all honesty, it was fine to think of my mother as the current master of the [Industrial Complex], not me. The citizens of this place would rather listen to her more than me, at any rate.

"You should show your face to Seoul's residents at least once before leaving, son. Even a simple greeting from you will become a great source of strength to them."

For sure, I could hear the reporters using megaphones to shout their questions from outside the [Industrial Complex].

– Demon King of Salvation-nim!! Is it true that you have returned?

– Demon King of Salvation-nim! Please tell us your plan to stop the Apocalypse!

…My plan, is it.

I smiled bitterly just like my mother. "If that's the duty of the mascot, then well."

We quietly sipped the tea.

The skies were dark and gloomy. So gloomy, in fact, it'd not be strange to see a thunderbolt fall from the sky out of the blue and shatter the Peninsula in half.

"It's so peacefully, isn't it?"

"I guess so, mother."

Even so, we said those things.

The tea leaf inside the cup gently trembled. To think, I'd enjoy such a leisurely tea time. This would be the first time in our 30-something years of relationship as a mother and son.

The event I so wanted to experience only came knocking on my doorstep as the apocalypse of everything approached us.

My mother, she didn't ask me anything. Not a thing about what I would do from now on, what I would gain at the end of this story, nothing. I knew that was how she operated, though.

"Well, I'll be on my way now."

"The Heavenly Wind God was searching for you. Before you embark, please do make sure to speak to him first."

…Pungbaek? Why was he looking for me this time?

I couldn't help but recall that unpleasant incident back in the Great War of Saints and Demons. Was he thinking of doing something uncouth again just before the Final Scenario? I lightly nodded my head and exited the room.

There was someone waiting for me there.

[And here we are. You somehow managed to get this far, Kim Dokja.]

It was none other than Bihyung, looking so much better than before after becoming a Great Dokkaebi. The long coat fashioned out of a white tiger's fur really suited him well.

I spoke in a sarcastic tone of voice. "You were actually waiting for me?"

[The reunion of you and your mother is a pretty popular Story among your subscribers. So, I just couldn't bear to interrupt the flow.]

Bihyung shrugged his shoulders and spoke up.

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is dabbing her eyes away.]

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', is grumbling while handing over a handkerchief.]

This damn guy, sending that out as another broadcast.

[And so. The Final Scenario is literally just around the corner.]

"I know."

[How reliable you are. I'm sure you already know this, but the Final Scenario is…]

"Bihyung."

My quiet call stopped the Dokkaebi from talking anymore. He stared at me.

"Why did you select us?"

A faint ripple spread within Bihyung's eyes.

I already knew what was written on the scenario window that popped up before his eyes.

<Main Scenario #98 – Candidate Ballot>

Type: Main

Difficulty: ???

Clear condition: Please choose the final candidate for the 'One Single Story'.

Time limit: -

Reward: ???

Failure: Death

<Star Stream>'s scenarios didn't only apply to Constellations and Incarnations, but to the storytellers like Dokkaebies, too. And the 'Candidate Ballot' that would decide the end of all scenarios was an incredibly important scenario for all Dokkaebis. It was a scenario where they had to bet their own existence.

And in such a scenario, Bihyung had chosen us.

[Great Dokkaebi 'Bihyung' has currently cast his vote with <Kim Dokja's Company>.]

When I first met this guy, he was no bigger than a soccer ball.

He was a true Dokkaebi who indiscriminately massacred people for the sake of increasing the number of subscribers in the channel, and he mass-produced horrifying scenarios on the fly.

That very Dokkaebi who grew up by devouring the Stories we created had eventually morphed into a human-like being. He was as tall as a human, he wore clothes like a human, and he was making expressions of a human, too.

That very Dokkaebi, he was looking at me on a similar eye level as he spoke up. [Sign the contract with me. I shall make you the next Dokkaebi King.]

"…?"

[That's what you said to me inside that fish-dragon's mouth.]

Indeed, I did say something like that in the past. "Hang on, could it be that you selected us while believing in that rubbish? There are very low odds of us winning, you know."

[It's not like that anymore. I see that you still have no idea how big of a deal what you did was.]

Bihyung shifted his gaze outside the window.

The plaza of the [Industrial Complex] was filled with the Constellations that fought with us in the battle against Papyrus.

The Black Flame Dragon got subdued by Uriel and was currently acting as her cushion. Persephone and Hades were quietly sipping tea on a prepared table. The Great Sage, meanwhile, had borrowed a pipe-like cigarette from the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint and was busy puffing away.

They were watching the Star Stream broadcasts unfolding in real-time.

– A brand new list naming '12 Nebulas' are making rounds among the gossipers of <Star Stream>…

– A portion of Narrative-grade Constellations estimate that <Kim Dokja's Company> could very well be the 3rd strongest…

…Third strongest, was it. It seemed that the ripples from the last battle were larger than I thought. I was thankful for the generous assessment, but it was still too early to let our guard down. Because the war for the Candidate Ballot hadn't ended yet.

However, Bihyung's thoughts seemed to be a bit different from mine.

[I think it'll be fine for a little while. It's been two days since you defeated <Papyrus>. Did any other Nebula request <Kim Dokja's Company> for inter-Nebula warfare since then?]

"…No. No one."

[A Nebula that achieves a big win during the Candidate Ballot battles will enjoy much higher odds of being selected as the 'One Single Story'.]

Just like how one battle helped up climb up to the 'third strongest' position, other Nebulas could also participate in the inter-Nebula warfare and alter the rankings. So, messages of declarations of war or announcements of one soon to take place should be raining down on us by now.

However, forget about a declaration, not a single Nebula tried to provoke us. The planet Earth was surprisingly peaceful.

"But, why? It's not as if our Story is that shocking, now was it?"

[That's because you're going to be annihilated even if they leave you alone. That's why.]

I felt my heart cool down in an instant. I could see the footage playing on the Constellations' panels.

[Constellations know that you simply can't forsake Earth.]

Separate from the 'Candidate Ballot battles', Earth had entered the Great Apocalypse sequence. The North American continent was already no more, and next up was North-east Asia.

Back in the original story's Final Scenario, Outer Gods and the rulers of other worlds also began invading this world.

[The ascension of the forgotten islands are still ongoing!]

「At the end of the world-line, the corrosion of the forgotten beings will begin.」

According to the original storyline, Nebulas and I should've been fighting together here. But now, they had made a different decision. They gave up on Earth, and to eliminate <Kim Dokja's Company>. That was the decision made by the Nebulas facing the 'Final Scenario'.

"Those sons of bitches…"

[A portion of Nebulas are mocking your decision.]

You could say that this was the worst possible situation.

To make matters worse, the Outer Gods flooding into this world were different from the ones that I knew of from the original storyline.

I recalled Uriel from the 999th regression turn I met in the N'Gai's Forest some time ago.

「Once the Great Apocalypse scenario begins, the attacks from the Kings will commence.」

If my predictions were correct, then the Kings showing up for the Great Apocalypse soon to get underway should be the existences that witnessed the 'Conclusion' during the 999th regression turn. And <Kim Dokja's Company> needed to fight against them.

"Who summoned the Kings? Was it your people from the Bureau?"

[I can't reveal any information to you. Except that…] Bihyung formed an expression showing his firm resolve and finished what he wanted to say. [Until the moment I breathe my last, I shall tell my story with you.]

"If you don't wish to participate, it's fine to leave now."

Funnily enough, this was the first thing I said to my companions.

"The next scenario is incomparably horrifying than any other battles we've been through so far. It's not too late. If any of you wish to leave the Nebula, then…"

A couple of them began yawning as if they were listening to a boring Sunday mass. But, that was obvious. These people right before my eyes had survived dozens of life-threatening events together to get this far. To them, there was no difference to dying in this or that event. If they want to leave, they would've done so already. I too knew this.

Even then, the reason why I had to ask the obvious question was…

"Excuse me."

…Because there was someone who did want to leave for real.

"I'd like to sit out this one."

And it was none other than Han Myungoh. It wasn't as if I didn't expect this.

He carried on. "I'm not saying I'll completely leave the Nebula. However, there is a place I wish to visit for one last time."

Lee Jihye next to him retorted unhappily. "Eh-whew, ahjussi, why don't you just leave? You aren't much of a help, anyway. You'll just run away like your ass is on fire once the fighting starts, right?"

"…I might be like this, but back in my heyday when I was a Count in the Demon Realm…"

Originally, the words 'Demon Realm' and 'Count' in that sentence should've been replaced by 'Mino Soft Director'.

Watching them go back and forth brought about a wry grin on my face. Actually, I knew where Han Myungoh wished to go.

"Are you thinking of going to where the 'Isle of Reincarnators' used to be?"

My question caused Han Myungoh's expression to harden visibly.

I carried on. "Even if the area's been sealed, the aftereffects of the Apocalypse Dragon and 'Indescribable Distance' still linger there. That place will still be considerably dangerous."

"Even then, I'd like to go and take a look."

The Isle of Reincarnators, where the Great War of Saints and Demons took place. Even now, corpses of dead stars and Outer Gods should be floating around aimlessly near the vicinity of the dark dimension. Those beings that failed to get on the Ark and got killed in the process.

…Perhaps the Demon King 'Asmodeus' was among them.

"That child is everything I've earned in this world."

The light of determination shone within Han Myungoh's eyes.

Post-Great War, he diligently participated in the main scenarios with us. He was working incomparably harder than back when he used to steal certain projects away from his subordinates for the sake of advancing his career.

And he got to taste the fruit of his labour, too – although small, he still earned a share of a Giant Story, and even acquired several useful Star Relics in the process, too.

All of that was to help him search for his daughter.

The current him might be able to withstand the chaos's aftereffects lingering around Isle of Reincarnator for a few days.

"Please, be careful out there."

Han Myungoh nodded his head, finished his preparations, and stood up. Looked to me he had already made up his mind before coming here. Companions all bade him good luck.

Not receiving the 'One Single Story' scenario didn't automatically mean there would be no 'One Single Story' – it existed for everyone. Just like how anyone could embark on a journey to search for their own ■■.

I watched him tremble in fear as he stepped foot inside the portal and began thinking about something.

[Your ■■ is getting nearer.]

It wasn't <Star Stream> that decided where your 'Conclusion' might be.

I looked back to discover that my companions were waiting for me.

"I shall continue with the meeting."

* * *

[11 hours and 8 minutes until the start of the Great Apocalypse scenario.]

Only about half a day remained before the Great Apocalypse. If we managed to withstand this apocalyptic event, we'd be able to enter the Final Scenario.

In the meantime, I went through all the information in the original story, and requested for the acquisition of every useful remaining Star Relic and skill found not just in the Korean Peninsula, but the rest of the planet as well. Companions easily okayed my request.

Han Sooyoung asked. "And what will you do?"

Of course, I too had something to do. For instance, thinking up of a new sure-kill technique with this uptight dude.

"You fool must surely know this by now. There is only one way for us to fight against the Great Apocalypse," said Yoo Joonghyuk, while polishing the edges of the [Black Heavenly Demon Sword].

Uriel, the Black Flame Dragon, the Great Sage and other Constellations promised to lend us their aid, but we couldn't rely on them all the time.

Even after excluding the 'Secretive Plotter', there were four more King-level Outer Gods still to appear. If all of them decided to attack simultaneously, then we wouldn't be able to win even if the Myth-grade Constellations such as the Great Sage and the King of Underworld were with us.

However, we did have one method we could use to fight back.

The 「Hell of Eternity.」

The reward of the 1863rd regression turn, the Myth-grade Story I earned through the 'Secretive Plotter'. With this Story, I could recreate Yoo Joonghyuk's memories, and he could rouse up the powers of the 1863rd turn and use it by sharing that stage of memories with me.

The only problem was…

[Reading has failed!]

[The highest Yoo Joonghyuk's regression turn you can read currently is '978th'.]

[Story, 'Hell of Eternity', is looking at you with criticising eyes.]

…Something had gone wrong with my reading ability.

[Reading has failed!]

[The highest Yoo Joonghyuk's regression turn you can read currently is '778th'.]

[Story, 'Hell of Eternity', is wondering if you have dyslexia.]

And now, even the Story was beginning to mock me.

This thing continued on for several days now, and Yoo Joonghyuk, unable to hold it back anymore, finally blew his top. "How pathetic. Did you not say you've been reading books for all your life?"

"…It's not all my life, you know. In any case, this is a different sort of problem."

I also had no idea. Why was this happening only now?

"If this problem persists, you better hand over the Story to me. It'll be simpler if I use it myself."

"I'd have given you already if only I could."

I had already asked the 'Secretive Plotter' about it. He simply ignored me, though.

"In that case, use that possession skill from the last time. Use that, then activate the Story. The rate of assimilation goes higher if you do."

He must've been talking about the [Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint] here.

"I'd like not to rely on that if I can."

For sure, activating [Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint] would make using the Story so much simpler. That skill's effect was similar to a Sponsor taking over the control of an Incarnation. However…

"Using that skill leaves my Incarnation body defenseless. So, it's for the best to win without resorting to it if possible."

"How laughable. This is the result of neglecting your training every day."

"…Do you honestly think everyone can train to a ridiculous degree like you?"

Yoo Joonghyuk glared at me for a short while before focusing on the Story once more without saying anything else.

He probably already knew the truth – that the reason for my unwillingness to rely on [Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint] was actually something else.

「For a while now, [Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint] stopped listening to Kim Dokja's commands.」

Not only that, the skill would activate when I least wanted it to and start reading people's minds. I wasn't sure why such a thing was happening.

It was possible that I got too used to looking inside someone's head. I had gotten too used to reading nicely-laid out sentences of their inner thoughts rather than listening to their actual words.

[Reading has failed.]

Maybe, me suddenly developing an inability to read was an obvious consequence.

"Focus properly, Kim Dokja."

I reactivated the Story after hearing Yoo Joonghyuk's rebuke. I slowed down my breathing and collected my thoughts.

[Story, 'Hell of Eternity', has begun its storytelling!]

I should forget about all the info I knew on Yoo Joonghyuk.

I knew nothing about him.

This guy, he was a complete stranger to me.

Yoo Joonghyuk was not some crazed psychopath, nor was he an impregnable stubborn idiot, either.

When I thought like that, it felt as if the inside of my head was clearing up just a little.

Right, I should start from there. Just like back at that moment when I read the 'Ways of Survival' for the first time.

Tsu-chuchuchut!

It was right then that something strange occurred.

[A problem has occurred during your reading attempt!]

Suddenly, Yoo Joonghyuk's complexion paled greatly. "Kim Dokja! You fool, what have you…!"

Those were his last words, as the light disappeared from within his eyes.

I was taken by surprise and hurriedly asked him. "Hey, are you alright??"

There was no answer.

[Character 'Yoo Joonghyuk's' egos are colliding!]

Egos were… colliding??

Growing even more urgent now, I tried to confirm his current status, but then…

['Character List' has failed to activate.]

The text that appeared afterwards was a sentence that I heard quite a long time ago.

[Applicable individual is not a 'Character'.]

Chapter 468: Ep. 89 - Great Apocalypse, II

The unconscious Yoo Joonghyuk didn't want to wake up even after four hours passed by.

"Hey, you crazy idiot! Wake up!"

Han Sooyoung and I took turns slapping his cheeks. Unfortunately, he still showed no signs of waking up at all.

Slap! Slap! Slap! Slap!!

Also, his damn cheeks were so hard that even the concerted slapping from both of us failed to puff them up. Our palms went numb from pain, instead.

Han Sooyoung spoke in a genuinely impressed tone of voice. "You know, this is kind of fun?"

"…This is no time to crack jokes like that."

[5 hours and 12 minutes remaining until the start of the Great Apocalypse Scenario.]

We really didn't have much time left. Soon, the 'Great Apocalypse' will commence, and the Outer Gods would start invading us due to the expanding Probability.

But now, Yoo Joonghyuk was in this state.

I couldn't even begin to guess what went wrong where. Was this related to my [Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint] somehow?

['Character List' has failed to activate.]

[Applicable individual is not a 'Character'.]

I tried using [Character List] one more time, but the resulting message was the same.

There were a lot of 'Yoo Joonghyuks' in this universe, but that message only ever appeared with just one. That Yoo Joonghyuk of the 1863rd regression turn, disappearing towards his own story…

When I got that far, I began thinking of something. But… could it really be?

Lee Seolhwa watching on from the side asked a question. "Should we feed him the [Life and Death Pill]?"

Not too long ago, she finally managed to perfect the ultimate recovery medicine, the [Life and Death Pill]. This elixir could apparently cure any and all fatal wounds when ingested.

"Have you already reached the level of mass-producing it?"

"No, not yet. I was only able to concoct a few. Didn't have enough ingredients…"

I could only sigh. Since we didn't know what might happen, we couldn't afford to carelessly waste the [Life and Death Pill].

[Character 'Yoo Joonghyuk's' egos are colliding!]

On top of that, we weren't sure if the problem of one's ego could be solved by the [Life and Death Pill], either. It was then, a slight vibration reverberated throughout the Industrial Complex.

"Dokja-ssi, we've detected movement."

Lee Hyunsung opened the sick bay's door and hurriedly entered.

Han Sooyoung and I looked at each other at the same time. I urgently switched the display panel on and the Pacific Ocean's situation soon filled it up.

Ku-gugugugu!

The wave that swallowed up the American continent revealed itself once more. Transparent dome walls had stopped the wave, and it was steadily increasing its water level, instead.

The Probability was still restricting it, that was why.

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

However, that Probability's wall was being pushed back bit by bit. The border that crossed the vast Pacific was gradually widening its diameter. We could also see the 'Outer Gods' wiggling about in between the rising waves.

In five hours' time, that border would reach the Korean Peninsula, and this land would disappear from the face of this Earth.

"…Kim Dokja. A plan?"

"I do have one," said I, before glancing at the unconscious Yoo Joonghyuk and adding something else. "Although, it looks like I'll have modify it a bit now."

"Stop making me worried, alright? How did that thing get stopped back in the original storyline?"

"Nebulas all desperately fought together. Most of the Constellations were ground down to fine dust trying to stop that."

"Where are those oh-so-mighty Constellations, then?"

"What do you mean, where?"

[Many Constellations are watching your judgement.]

Most likely, they were busy spectating on our apocalypse.

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is criticising other Constellations, asking them if the ideals of righteousness in <Star Stream> have all withered away.]

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', is crossing his arms and shaking his head.]

[Constellation, 'Most Ancient Liberator', finds the Constellations of the large Nebulas quite pathetic.]

Even though Constellations from our side provoked them, they remained composed in their replies.

[A portion of Constellations argue that all of this was brought upon by <Kim Dokja's Company> themselves.]

Some of them even began arguing that it was our fault, too.

[A small number of Constellations argues that it's <Kim Dokja's Company> that stole away their shares first.]

Now normally, such an argument was utter drivel with no leg to stand on, but for some reason, my mind remained calm even after hearing them. Because I roughly knew why they were acting like this.

Back when we went to visit <Oz>, the monkey told me this.

– Many Stories that constitute Giant Stories have all entered the path of stagnation similar to <Oz>'s situation. A certain Story that has appeared in recent times have begun eating into the percentages of other Stories, you see… I'm talking about you people's Story.

Originally, the main actors leading this stage should've been the Nebulas that had been compiling their myths for a long time. However, several of them either lost the important Stories to us or got destroyed in the process. In the midst of all this, <Star Stream> even decided to grandly label us as the 'third strongest' Nebula, so the sense of deprivation the existing stars felt must've been indescribable.

…Of course, it didn't mean that what these stars were doing right now was correct or justified.

Han Sooyoung chewing on her nails asked. "Isn't it better to give up on Earth? How about we come up with the way to reach the 'Final Scenario' with everyone, instead…?"

"You know that's not going to happen."

Only the ones permitted could reach the Final Scenario.

Even if everyone on Earth was inducted into <Kim Dokja's Company>, the aftermath of the Probability's storm caused by the nonsensical scenario jump would ensure our complete destruction.

"Goddammit."

I could sense [Predictive Plagiarism] spinning its gears vigorously inside her head.

"You said that these Outer God Kings are beings from the 999th turn. How many are there, anyway?"

"From what I know, there are four excluding the 'Secretive Plotter'."

"…Are we going to fight all four of them at the same time??"

I shook my head and recalled the list of the 'Outer God Kings' I memorised back then.

「The 'Living Flame' that rises up from the east.」

「The 'Master of the Sunken Island', the calamity of the world in the west.」

「The 'Monarch of the Great Abyss', the ruler of the northern universe.」

「The 'King of the Silver Heart', the ruler of the interstellar space in the south.」

The beings that became the 'Outer God Kings' after witnessing the 'Conclusion' of the 999th regression turn.

However, Even if this was the <Bureau> we were talking about, I wasn't convinced that they'd insert every King into this scenario. They didn't really like the scenarios that they couldn't control, after all. Which meant…

"One has appeared in the Pacific Ocean. And when all of our forces start moving, one more should show up. That would make two Kings."

"Okay, so one is the Pacific Ocean bastard, and the other will be Uriel from the 999th turn?"

"Correct."

"How strong are they? I only saw for a brief moment back then…"

"Well, Uriel from the 999th turn is responsible for leaving the 'Secretive Plotter' in that state, so yeah."

"…Son of a bitch. And something like that is going to show up with underlings, too??"

Han Sooyoung clearly witnessed the power of 'Secretive Plotter' during the battle against the Apocalypse Dragon. So, her reaction couldn't be seen as over the top.

"Constellations of our channel will definitely help us, right?"

"Even if they help us, there is no guarantee of our victory. Most importantly, we won't be at our full combat strength with Yoo Joonghyuk missing."

My original plan was to split the companions in two to divide and conquer the Outer God Kings. However, if the main combatant Yoo Joonghyuk were to go missing from the picture, then we won't be able to rely on the 1863rd turn's power to survive.

Kwa-kwakwakwa!

We saw the 'wave' gradually widening its area of influence through the display panel. It'd be too late if we started defending ourselves when the boundaries of the Great Apocalypse reached the Korean Peninsula.

I quickly came to a new decision.

"Let's get moving. I'll tell you what you must do."

Five hours remained.

We needed to finish our preparation within this time frame.

While Han Sooyoung was busy conveying my new plan to our companions, I went to talk to Lee Gilyoung. After hearing my summons, the boy quickly rushed into the reception room with a bright expression.

"Hyung! You called for me? What's up?"

I nodded my head. "Please sit over here."

He quickly sat down on the couch and looked up at me with his sparkling eyes as if he couldn't wait to hear what I had to say.

I stared deeply into his eyes.

｢The child who used to think of this world as a game.｣

Even now, the memories of the moments I first met Lee Gilyoung remained fresh in my head. It was a nightmare filled with the flickering overhead lights of the subway and grasshoppers all leaping up into the air simultaneously. If Lee Gilyoung hadn't caught any insects that day, the one to die would've been me.

「The insect-collecting boy without a mother was now old enough to be a middle-school student.」

I didn't save his mother that day. What would've happened if I made a different choice back then?

For instance, what if my disgust towards humans was less intense? What if I didn't notice the injuries on the boy's arm while grabbing the grasshoppers? What if I didn't have a habit of hastily guessing a person's history with just a few circumstantial evidence?

What if I hadn't read the 'Ways of Survival'?

What if I… wasn't Kim Dokja…?

"…Sorry."

Huh?

"…I'm sorry, hyung."

Lee Gilyoung had his head lowered, his shoulders trembling from trepidation like a child about to be handed down a scary punishment.

Was it because I looked scary? Or, was it because of some other reason?

Lee Gilyoung continued on. "But, but, I didn't have a choice… If I hadn't signed the contract, Shin Yoosung might have…"

Only then did I realize what he was trying to say.

「And this boy signed the contract with the devil in order to protect his precious something.」

A certain moment from the 「Journey to the West」 brushed past my view. Right, I witnessed it clearly, didn't I – the yellowish storm erupting out from the boy's figure while being surrounded by the Nine Stars.

Lee Gilyoung was talking about that time.

"I, I do remember you telling me to never use my Sponsor's powers! I swear, I didn't deliberately break our promise! I, I really…"

As the boy spoke incoherently, I placed my hand on his head. "You did well."

"Eh?"

The boy's eyes grew wider, so I spoke with more conviction in my voice. "You did well. Without you, we'd have all died back then."

I was aware of how tough it had been for this boy. Because I also knew only too well the sorrow of watching your companions die before your eyes and unable to do anything about it. Lee Gilyoung must've felt the same.

"However, doing it again is going to be troublesome. You know this, don't you? With your powers…"

"…I don't want to."

"What's that?"

"If the same things happen again, I'll make the same choice. I'll rely on that power again. I'll… I'll protect Shin Yoosung and my companions."

"But, Gilyoung-ah."

He hesitated slightly before avoiding my hand. He raised his head, and I saw several complicated emotions swirling within his eyes.

It seemed that I wasn't the only one who had made up his mind.

"I know you called me here to scold me. But, I came here to tell you this, too. I'm not a little kid anymore, hyung. I'm also qualified, you know. Just like everyone else, I reached this far by beating back all the scenarios."

I inwardly swallowed back my gasps.

I knew this already. I did, but…

[The Fourth Wall]'s voice could be heard next, sounding thoroughly unimpressed by my thoughts.

「D on't tre at him l ike a kid you are mo re l ike a k id.」

'Gilyoung-ie is still a kid'.

「Y ou ca n't fig ht wi thout hi m an yway.」

「Kim Dok ja, ac ting l ike a ni ce per son do esn't suit y ou.」

I knew that. But still, that didn't mean…

「D on't wo rry, my fr iend will he lp.」

…Your friend?

It was then, a transparent wall-like something wavered around Lee Gilyoung accompanied by 'Tsu-chuchut' noise.

['The Fourth Wall' is responding to its friend.]

I cautiously reached out towards the empty air.

Something was there. This sensation of touching a wall – I was familiar with it. However, this 'wall' was still incomplete.

I finally understood several things just then.

…So, that's how it was. That 'wall' was now with this child…

"H-hyung, even if you say no, I…!"

He must've felt scared by my hand reaching out to the empty air, because he started shouting in a shaky voice. I quickly lowered my hand and held his. I remained still while holding his hands tightly, until his shivering gradually calmed down.

"You're right, Gilyoung-ah."

"…Hyung?"

"I… We, can't see the Conclusion without your help. We need you during the scenario we are about to enter."

I slowly blinked my eyes.

I couldn't help it now. I had to acknowledge our current situation where I had no choice but to rely on a hurting child. I had to treat preciously the boy's heart that had to mature far too quickly for his age, and his courage he had to display first.

And to reward that courage, I too had to become honest here.

"Even if that's true, I won't let you fight all alone. This is my desire, and I won't ever back down from this. Can you understand that, Gilyoung-ah?"

Lee Gilyoung slowly nodded his head. He wiped his tears and smiled happily. My heart ached thinking about how I had to go to war with this child in tow.

Unfortunately, it was now time to cross 'that' bridge.

"I want to speak to your Sponsor."

My words caused Lee Gilyoung's eyes to quake quite noticeably.

"…B-but, hyung. T-that guy, it's…"

"Don't worry."

The reason why I didn't want to use his Sponsor was because that guy was simply too dangerous.

「"…Will you truly not come with me? You'll become stronger much faster if you stick with me instead of him. Even then, you wish to stay behind?"」

Yoo Joonghyuk must've known this too and that's why he tried to take Lee Gilyoung away. What a fox-like sly bastard.

I gently grasped the shoulders of worried Lee Gilyoung and spoke. "Your hyung is now a Myth-grade Constellation, you know."

If it was a few days ago, I'd have avoided making this choice if at all possible. But the story was different now.

I lightly sucked in my breath, and while looking up, spoke in my true voice. [I know you're watching, so come out.]

The moment the tone of my voice changed, a heavy reverberation spread out around us. Sparks completely inundated the reception room and Lee Gilyoung's expression changed. As his brows furrowed in pain, his eyes became white next. I realized what was happening here so I quickly broke past the Probability's storm and tightly grasped the boy's shoulder.

[I don't remember telling you to descend.]

Tsu-chuchuchut!

The after-effects from the Probability's storm lessened significantly and all sorts of pain rushed into my arm. But, I ably endured it. If I didn't go with this much showmanship, then I'd not be able to negotiate properly with this guy.

[Your Status is suppressing the after-effects of a localised Probability's storm!]

Lee Gilyoung's expression regained its calm rapidly.

And right in the next instance, sounds akin to the beatings of insect wings came out from his mouth, currently looking as if empty darkness had taken over.

[I'm familiar with waiting, yet you have taken far too long.]

This voice sounded as if millions of locusts were crashing in at the same time.

Chapter 469: Ep. 89 - Great Apocalypse, III

It had become dark outside the windows. I wondered if the sun had set already, but when I took a closer look, I realized that insects were sticking to the glasses. Locusts were glaring at me while scurrying around, their antennae swaying threateningly about.

I glanced at the plague of locusts and spoke up. [Compared to how long you had to endure, your waiting this time wouldn't have been all that much. So stop exaggerating.]

[You… what do you know… about waiting?]

The creature's words kept being cut off. Its true voice sounded like an echo spreading out from beneath the emptiness that I couldn't even fathom. The surrounding air was bubbling with pitch-black Status. I adjusted my own aura and continued to speak.

[I know that you are the 'forgotten evil', at least.]

It was here that the brows above Lee Gilyoung's white eyes quivered just a little. It felt as if bitterly cold air suddenly was blanketing us. I endured it and spoke again.

[The 'evil' that all the other stars have forgotten after too much time has passed by. The 'evil' that was even ostracised by other 'evil', and was sealed away within the Demon Realm's deepest underground.]

Quite often, it was told that the deepest part of Hell was the dwelling of the 'Apocalypse Dragon'. The reason why the 'Great War of Saints and Demons' was so famous was because of the <Harmagedon> burning in the flames of this terrifying dragon.

The truth was, though, the Apocalypse Dragon wasn't the only calamity found in the early days of the 'Great War of Saints and Demons'.

The calamity of the stars that swept across the worlds with yellow-coloured storm clouds of insects – amongst all the names that had disappeared, there definitely existed a calamity with this title.

[Oh, the King of Locusts, the 'Ruler of the Deepest Pit'.]

My words prompted a vicious storm to whip about in the air as a new message revealed itself.

[Character 'Lee Gilyoung's' Sponsor has revealed its Modifier.]

[Constellation, 'Ruler of the Deepest Pit', is now looking at you.]

The Ruler of the Deepest Pit, Abaddon.

Just like the other 'main characters' of the Great War of Saints and Demons, it too was an existence on the level of Myth-grade.

However, the masters of the 'Wall Dividing Good and Evil' didn't acknowledge it as 'evil' for the sake of their own battles, and to make matters worse, didn't even let it enter the ranks of the '72 Demon Kings' of the Demon Realm.

And so, this being was more like an 'Outer God' now. Even though it was the 'Great Evil' that dyed the galaxy with locust plague once upon a time, this being had to spend tens of thousands of years locked away within the prison of forgotten memories.

This being was even betrayed by its own kins, the demons, while believing in the empty promise of others waking it up during the age of calamities.

「That was, until one human used 'grasshoppers' as the method to clear the scenario one day.」

[Story, 'Grasshopper Catcher' has begun its storytelling!]

Lee Gilyoung's Story that sprouted from our scenario had managed to awaken the ancient demon from its slumber.

[State your reason… for summoning me, oh the arrogant… Constellation.]

I could easily sense this demon's hidden pain from its voice filled with boundless hatred. It was ignored by its enemy, the 'Good', while it was betrayed by its supposed ally, the 'Evil'.

[What do you think? I called you here to make you stop exploiting a little kid after you forced him into signing a contract with you.]

[…]

[If you want to sign a contract with someone, then do it with me, instead. Wouldn't that be fairer?]

[I only… forgive… your insolence… because… you… wrecked the… Great War of Saints and Demons…]

Lee Gilyoung's lips twisted ever so slightly to form a grin. This guy, it possessed the qualification of Great Evil, yet it decided not to participate in the 'Great War of Saints and Demons' right till its conclusion. Hell, it even acted as if it didn't exist in the first place.

I kind of understood why, though. That particular Giant Story was no longer a festival meant for this creature.

[The Apocalypse Dragon and Eden… the Demon Realm… Watching them being destroyed was… gratifying.]

[Is that so? But, is it over with only that?]

[Over…?]

[Abaddon. You're still 'Evil'.]

My words caused Lee Gilyoung's brows to quiver. [The Great War… of Saints and Demons… is already… over…]

[Yeah, it has ended. But, it'll start again in the future. And the scenario where you're the calamity might get created during then. Where everyone remembers your Modifier, where everyone trembles from fear in front of your name.]

[Why… are you… saying such things?]

Abaddon smiled as if it heard rather sweet-sounding remarks.

I went straight to the topic. [Let me not beat around the bush. You've saved up enough of your strength. Now, lend us your aid.]

[And… why… should I?]

[Because even you would be annihilated if you don't. You already know very well that other Constellations will never give you the time of day after we're all gone.]

[…I am… the ancient… Evil…]

[Constellations on the side of 'Absolute Evil' will never acknowledge you as the Oldest Evil. No one will stand on your side. And I guess you must've forgotten it, but there is that monster, 'Baal', waiting in the 'Final Scenario', too.]

[Ba-al…!]

Abaddon's voice trembled as if it was having a seizure.

Baal – the Demon King ranked number one in the pecking order. The sole existence from the Demon Realm that had entered the 'Final Scenario's' area, and also the Demon King who had imprisoned Abaddon in the deepest pit, as well.

[You help us and stop the 'Great Apocalypse', then we shall grant you an opportunity to take your revenge on that guy.]

The surrounding air was trembling viciously.

I continued to withstand the Status tumbling within the air current and spoke up. [Oh, the Ruler of the Deepest Pit. Become the Oldest Evil in the world we wish to create.]

When choosing to get in bed with the devil, you need to offer up a bait of this scale, at the least. I definitely needed Abaddon's powers in order to stop this calamity.

[One hour and 5 minutes remaining until the start of the Great Apocalypse.]

Finally, all the preparations were complete.

I looked at my companions waiting on the side of the plaza and asked them. "Has Yoo Joonghyuk woken up yet?"

"…No, not yet."

Lee Seolhwa replied, and I nodded my head.

If he hadn't woken up yet, then we had to go with Plan B.

"I'll believe in you, everyone. We have no other choice now."

The Plan B was actually the same with A – split into two groups and each fight an 'Outer God King'. The only thing different would be the composition of each group.

"The 'Outer God' the first team will fight is the 'Living Flame'."

The Living Flame – the 'god name' of Uriel who lived during the 999th turn.

"The one appearing in the Pacific Ocean is the 'Master of the Sunken Island', but once the Great Apocalypse begins, the 'Living Flame' will definitely make her appearance. She's targeting the 'Secretive Plotter', after all." I glanced at the sleeping 'Secretive Plotter' still trapped within the sealing sphere and continued on. "For the time being, this is the list of the participants."

Companions stared at me with tense eyes.

"Jung Heewon, Lee Gilyoung, Shin Yoosung, Lee Seolhwa, Gong Pildu, Yoo Sangah, Han Sooyoung…"

The main damage dealer of this group was Jung Heewon. The one possessing the strongest space restricting power was Yoo Sangah, while no one even came close to Han Sooyoung's ability to conduct the battles. These three were going to form the 'mains' of the team.

Of course, that wasn't the end.

"Uriel, Abyssal Black Flame Dragon, the Great Sage…"

Sparks began dancing wildly in the air as soon as I said that.

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is nodding her head.]

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', grumbles that it doesn't wish to be ordered around.]

[Constellation, 'Most Ancient Liberator', is guessing your intentions.]

Since our opponent was going to be Uriel from the 999th turn, we definitely had to send out our own Uriel. If luck was on our side, we might be able to see the [Disconnected Film Theory]'s effects once more. The Black Flame Dragon would no doubt be a great help here, and there was no need to even mention the Great Sage now that he had become a Myth-grade Constellation himself.

"I'd like Breaking the Sky Sword Saint, Kyrgios, Jang Hayoung, and… the rest of the Transcendents to be their back-up, please."

"Leave it to us!"

The clearly-excited Jang Hayoung shouted out after she finally got a proper mission of her own. However, her enthusiasm should take a turn for the worse once she gets there.

Both the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint and Kyrgios nodded their heads, so I continued on. "Finally… Hades, Persephone, I'd like you two to accompany the first team, please."

[Constellation, 'Father of the Rich Night' is silently nodding his head.]

[Constellation, 'Queen of the Darkest Spring' is looking at you worriedly.]

The expressions of my companions quietly listening until then finally began changing somewhat.

The first one to open her lips was Jung Heewon. "Hang on a minute. Is there a need to focus all the combat personnel on the first team? Basically, everyone is in the first team, isn't it? Who will be in the second team?"

"Lee Jihye, Lee Hyunsung-ssi, and I will form the second team."

"What about other Constellations?"

I didn't reply to her, prompting her eyes to narrow to a slit.

"Yet another nice-sounding suicidal plan…"

I spied Yoo Sangah next to her smiling gently just then. R-right, if it's her, then she might side with me on this one.

[Someone is reciting the Constrictive Sutra…]

Her gentle lips began reciting something truly terrifying. I then spotted Han Sooyoung in the distance with her hand massaging her temples while shaking her head.

'I told you, it's not going to work'.

I urgently shouted out. "H-hang on! It's not a suicidal plan. It really is a proper plan. That's why I'm bringing along both Jihye and Hyunsung-ssi."

"H-mm…"

"I'm a Myth-grade Constellation now. You all saw how strong I've become earlier, didn't you?"

"Sure, we saw you hiding behind Joonghyuk-ssi and cheering him on."

"Please trust me. You all know what kind of an existence a Myth-grade Constellation is. It's none other than a Myth-grade! Poseidon! Zeus! The Great Sage, Heaven's Equal! The Demon King of Salvation!"

"Sounds like something weird is mixed up in there, though…"

My companions seemed to have fallen into the trap of uncertainty after I repeated the Myth-grade several more times. Indeed, the best brainwashing method was to repeat yourself.

It was then a thunderclap exploded in the sky.

[Constellation, 'Most Ancient Liberator', is glaring at you.]

The Great Sage spent his own Probability to materialise his Incarnation body and made his grand entrance along with the flashy lightning show. His majestic platinum-hued hair danced above the Somersault Cloud.

[Maknae, have you lost your mind?]

"I-it's fine to send an indirect message, you know… You need to conserve your Probability…"

[Not all Myth-grades are equal 'myths'. You're just a hatchling who has stepped into this domain only recently.]

This was my first time seeing the Great Sage come out this forcefully, and that flustered me somewhat. I deliberated on my options, before sighing out grandly and told everyone the truth.

"…I too don't believe the combined strengths of the second team will be enough to kill a King."

"Then, what were you planning to do?!"

"The core of our plan this time is 'blitzkrieg'."

Currently, we didn't have Yoo Joonghyuk, the core of the second team, with us. If we couldn't borrow the powers of the 1863rd regression turn, then didn't matter how the teams were split up, we still didn't have any guarantee of victory.

Just one mistake, then forget about dividing and conquering our enemies, we'd get conquered, instead. In that case, there was only one way remaining to ensure everyone's survival.

"The survival of the second team is dependent on the first. You must defeat the 'Living Flame' as speedily as possible and head to the Pacific Ocean. The goal of my team, Jihye, Hyunsung-ssi, and I, is to endure until all of you come and join us."

This was the first stage in the plan that I came up with.

---

30 minutes later, Lee Jihye, Lee Hyunsung, and myself disembarked to the Pacific Ocean. Right up until our departure, my companions were trying to change my mind, but I simply shook my head at them.

The 'Master of the Sunken Island' managed to destroy the American continent simply by rising up. If we waited for that guy to get closer to the Korean Peninsula, then every single nearby island would be destroyed even before the battle got underway.

Going out to face our enemy head-on was the right call even when considering the accompanying risk.

[Constellation, 'Maritime War God', is reading the water route with a deeply meaningful stare.]

Both Lee Jihye and Lee Hyunsung looked quite tense. Especially the latter, as he was returning to scenarios after a period of absence. His expression was far more solemn than before.

[Constellation, 'Bald General of Justice', is busy polishing his head.]

[Constellation, 'King Heungmu', is saddened by the fate of the Korean Peninsula.]

The [Turtle Dragon] scythed past the ocean waves to go past the islands of Ulleundo and Dokdo.

Perhaps the sights of the latter left an impression on him, because Lee Hyunsung suddenly placed his hand on his chest and shouted out. "…We shall protect our motherland!"

[Constellation, 'Last Hero of Hwangsanbeol' is nodding his head.]

I found it a bit hard to watch such a serious declaration, so I promptly went for a tackle. "…Hyunsung-Ssi, you said you quit being a soldier, didn't you?"

"It's not just soldiers that protect our nation, you know."

He muttered his reply and looked down at his dog tags with sorrowful eyes. Before we parted ways from the rest of the companions, Jung Heewon fidgeted around with those tags for a long time before letting him go.

– You must stay alive, no matter what. Understand?

Lee Hyunsung, now with a face of an innocent little bull, looked up into the sky and nodded his head.

Lee Jihye watched this spectacle unfold and whispered something in my ear. "Ahjussi, why does this feel like our death flag?"

"…We'll be fine. If anyone's dying today, it'll be Hyunsung-ssi only."

"By the way, will just us two, me and Hyunsung ahjussi, really be alright?"

"Huh."

I spread out a sheet on the ship's deck while explaining myself. This sheet was a DIY item I bought just now from the [Dokkaebi Bundle]. My new goal was to complete this thing before we encounter our new enemy.

"I don't get it, though? Sure, I get why with Hyunsung ahjussi, but me? Is it because we're on the sea?"

"Something like that."

"But, my Sponsor is a Historical… No, a Narrative-grade. But, you clearly said that even a Myth-grade can't stop the guy about to show up, didn't you?"

For sure, what she said was correct. The Maritime War God was an excellent Constellation, sure, but he was a long way off from being referred to as <Star Stream>'s greatest Constellation.

"It's not the General, but you that I believe in."

"…Eh?"

"The Constellation being a Narrative-grade doesn't mean his Incarnation is also a Narrative-grade."

Lee Jihye blinked her eyes as if she didn't really get it, but eventually, a smirk formed on her lips. "What are you on about? I'm not even a Constellation, you know."

Well, true, you aren't one now.

Lee Jihye had no idea of her own potential. She had no clue just how far she reached back in the original story.

[Constellation, 'Maritime War God', nods his head after hearing your words.]

Perhaps the General was already well aware of it.

Lee Hyunsung finished shooting the solo performance of Romeo and Juliet, and approached us. "By the way, Dokja-ssi? What have you been making until now?"

"Ah, this?"

I showed him the item I'd been making. Its explanation immediately popped up when I did.

<Item Information>

Name: The White Flag of Complete Surrender

Grade: SSS

Explanation: It's a surprising item that allows the enemy to see your surrender from very far away. Be careful to not let your allies discover you using it.

Lee Hyunsung formed a disbelieving expression as if he had seen something weird and rubbed his eyes a few times before he looked at me.

I grinned back. "I told you, I'm not planning to die this time."

"B-but, this, isn't this…"

"The moment you see them, we must surrender. Then we try to talk to them. Understand? Fighting won't buy us any time whatsoever. As soon as they show up…"

"Ahjussi! Something's coming!"

Almost at the same time with Lee Jihye's cry, we all spotted a ginormous wall approaching us from the horizon. It was a wall of waves reaching hundreds of metres high. That wall was steadily encroaching upon us.

[You have entered the 'Great Apocalypse Scenario' area prematurely!]

[You're recommended to exit the scenario area immediately!]

[If you fail to exit, the 'Great Apocalypse Scenario' will begin!]

Of course, I wasn't planning to leave.

[Hidden Scenario – 'Great Apocalypse' has begun!]

[The invasion of 'Outer Gods' has commenced!]

[Please survive this calamity!]

The moment the scenario explanation ended, the gigantic waves of Status crashed into us. This Status was so great that all the hair on my body was standing up real high, even though I was supposed to be a 'Myth-grade Constellation' now.

「The calamity that not even stars can't survive. This is the 'Great Apocalypse'.」

The march of the 'Outer Gods', for the annihilation of a world.

[Story, 'Demon King of Salvation', has begun its storytelling.]

I unleashed the appropriate Story to protect my companions and looked up at the wall of waves. The howl of the 'Outer God' resounded out from somewhere.

The 'Outer Gods' were piled up like layers in between the waves.

And a lone battleship rode on top of this wall as if to reign over it. The vessel was an intimately familiar shape. The dragon-shaped figurehead spat out a violent lick of flames.

The [Turtle Dragon].

That was definitely the Turtle Dragon. If one wanted to point out the obvious difference between that one and our own Turtle Dragon, then the enemy's was at least twenty times larger.

"A-ahjussi…"

The frightened Lee Jihye was now staring at me, her expression asking me if I knew this already.

I nodded my head. I wasn't 100% sure, but did expect this to happen. I knew the list of survivors from the 999th turn better than anyone, after all.

「The calamity of the western world, the 'Master of the Sunken Island'.」

Beyond the waves splitting up, we could hear the voice of a certain girl who had witnessed the 999th turn's 'Conclusion'.

【Load the cannons.】

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The moment the shelling began, I grabbed Lee Jihye. It felt as if the entire world had us in its crosshairs. Our ship quickly turned its heading. I could only pray that she wasn't too late.

【Fire.】

Kwa-aaaaaaaah!!

The ear-rending cacophony of cannon firing noises filled up the entire great ocean. Foams around us evaporated into steam. With almost no room left, the [Turtle Dragon] managed to turn around in time. Even then, we couldn't dodge everything.

"Hyunsung-ssi!"

As the acrid burning smell filled up our noses, the Story metal quickly branched out and covered up the entirety of the deck. Soon, it covered the entire hull and started glowing in white-hot heat. So hot, in fact, one's skin would be cooked instantly. As the impact force on the outer layer of the metal decreased, Lee Hyunsung undid the [Steel Transformation].

When we saw the sky again, we realized that our ship was falling to the bottom as if the ground beneath had disappeared. I quickly activated [Demon King Transformation], spread out my wings, and shouted out.

"Lee Jihye!!"

She hurriedly grabbed the helm and controlled the movement of the ship. Flames lit up below the hull and the [Turtle Dragon] began flying.

Only after securing our balance were we able to take stock of our surroundings. Just what the hell happened here…?

｢And then, Kim Dokja couldn't close his slack jaw.｣

A ship in the middle of the ocean suddenly fell to the ground – meaning, the water supporting that ship had disappeared.

Ku-gugugugu!

The great ocean had been split in half and its deep, dark bottom was now fully exposed. Aquatic creatures were flapping around painfully down there, and we could see the horde of 'Outer Gods' gleefully tearing into those helpless creatures.

[Gyahaaaaaah!]

The swarm of Outer Gods were running on the bottom of the ocean, their bodies wriggling like worms. From either side of the now-dry ocean, the huge tsunami waves were flooding in.

"Move! Hurry!"

I shouted out and Lee Jihye urgently turned the ship around again.

【Load the cannons】.

It was then that we heard the noises of cannons being loaded for the second time. Just hearing that true voice alone instilled fear deep into the very marrows of our bones.

I raised my head and saw Lee Hyunsung sweating buckets as well. Even if it was the [Story metal], it wouldn't be able to withstand attacks of such calibre too many times.

"Ahjussi! Do something!"

I was planning to act, anyway.

I finished my crappy construction effort on the [The White Flag of Complete Surrender] and raised it up high.

[Item, 'The White Flag of Complete Surrender', is activating!]

[Now your enemies should be able to spot your complete surrender from even afar!]

[A portion of Constellations are shocked by your action!]

[A small number of Constellations are pointing accusatory fingers at your cowardice!]

Cowardice, my foot. You haven't even bothered to show up here.

I used all of my strength to wave this white flag around.

"Lee Jihye! Over here!"

I called out, yet no reply came back my way.

No, the one to tackle me down figuratively was our own Lee Jihye, instead. "Ahjussi, have you gone insane??"

"It might not look it, but this item is an SSS-grade."

"There's no guarantee of us surviving just because we surrendered, you know!"

"Well, Lee Jihye on that side could be a kind girl. Let's believe in that."

"How can you crack jokes in this kind of situation??"

Unfortunately, I wasn't joking.

The cannons finished reloading and just as they began emitting light, I diligently waved my white flag and shouted out my prepared speech. "Oiii, Lee Jihye! Did your master teach you to attack the opponents waving white flags??"

Ku-gu…

And then, that side stopped moving for the first time ever. The fully-loaded cannons had stopped just before they could fire. The thick, grey steam dissipated to reveal a lone figure standing on the deck.

It was the Outer God, the 'Master of the Sunken Island'.

*

Lee Jihye from the 999th turn was standing there, her long hair dancing in the wind.

Even though she had lived an unaccountable amount of time, her looks were still in the 20s. It was as if her time had frozen still in the moments of the 999th regression turn's 'Conclusion'.

As if she wanted to count the emptiness of that time, her lips began parting slowly.

【Flag…】

"That's right, this flag. You remember it?"

Old pages were flipping past within me. Scenes from the 999th turn were being replayed – the intense stench of blood, the eerie darkness of the subway…

[Exclusive skill, 'Reading Comprehension', is activating!]

[Attribute, 'Scenario Interpreter', is activating!]

[Your words have awoken the ancient Story within your opponent!]

「Within that darkness stood Yoo Joonghyuk.」

Sparks burst out from the shattered, broken headlights of the train; the light flickering intermittently illuminated Yoo Joonghyuk's sword slaughtering the monsters.

「On that day, the wounded Sword Demon met the Supreme King.」

The Sword Demon shuddered after seeing his sword easily rip through the enemies she had so much trouble fighting until then. Lee Jihye shouted out, her eyes chasing after the sword's trajectory that seemed to disappear in pure disinterest.

「"If I follow after you, can I become stronger, too? Then, will I be able to survive in this stinking world?!"」

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

Sparks danced violently before my eyes. The vicious storm of Probability's aftermath was so powerful that I couldn't even see my front properly.

The incoming aquatic creatures and 'Outer Gods' targeting us got sucked into the sparks and writhed in pain.

[Whatsthiswhatsthiswhatsthiswhatsthis]

'Outer Gods' turned to look at their 'King'. However, their king was no longer standing there. As if she was lost within the distant memories, the 999th turn's Lee Jihye was reaching out towards the empty air.

【Mas… ter…】

As I thought.

I got this impression the first time I met the 'Secretive Plotter' as well as 999th turn's Uriel, that… These people, they were clearly out of their minds.

[Character, 'Master of the Sunken Island', is painfully baring her teeth.]

When an existence became an 'Outer God', normally this being would end up as a completely different existence. It'd lose the memories of the life it lived and be reborn as a brand new creature.

However, that was the story reserved for the regular 'Outer Gods'; 'Kings' played by different rules. They retained the memories and emotions of their previous lives.

The 'Secretive Plotter' divided his Story into different regression turns and stored them that way, while the 'Living Flame' shoved her own sense of self into her vengeful obsession.

In that case, what was it like for the 'Master of the Sunken Island'?

Was she able to remember who she used to be?

"Lee Jihye! Please remember who you once were!"

I wasn't sure why the 999th turn's Lee Jihye became an 'Outer God'. However, I could think of one possibility.

"Don't destroy this 'worldline', please! This place is the same as the world you used to live in! Yoo Joonghyuk is here, so is Lee Hyunsung, and so are you, Lee Jihye!"

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

[<Star Stream> is closely observing your actions.]

[A portion of Great Dokkaebis are frowning at your actions.]

Stories from the 999th turn began flowing in front of my eyes.

"Don't close your eyes! Make sure you see who you're about to kill!"

「"Don't close your eyes. Make sure to remember who your sword is about to kill.」

Yoo Joonghyuk as how the 999th turn's Lee Jihye remembered him stood there, the man who taught her the ways of the sword and how to survive. The [Struggle for the Flag] began, and after taking over the Chungmuro Station, he said this to her.

「"Remember the deaths of those you've killed. This might hurt you, but that way, you'll avoid becoming a Sword Demon."」

Yoo Joonghyuk's flag, still white and untainted, slowly wavered in that place. It'd become red, then black, later. Lee Jihye looked at the flag proudly gleaning on that man's back and thought to herself.

「I wish to become someone like him.」

*

That was something I also thought about often.

[Character, 'Master of the Sunken Island's' Story is violently shaking!]

I didn't miss this opening and continued to fire my salvo like a machine gun. I spat out the events of the 999th turn that I remembered without a shred of hesitation. "Have you forgotten everything that Yoo Joonghyuk taught you back then? Let the ones surrendering early go! Those who scheme behind your back are usually the smart ones! We're short on manpower, so we need to utilise even such people, too!"

Lee Jihye's jaw fell as she watched me from the side. She must've had no clue that I'd come out and persuade our enemy in this manner. Didn't really matter if they slagged me off for being a coward as I simply had no choice. I had to resort to stimulating the memories from the original novel since buying time was the utmost priority for us. I didn't have any guarantee that this method would work, anyway.

【Fire】.

…Goddammit, so that little wasn't enough, huh.

Kwa-aaaaaah!

The second shelling commenced.

Although the firepower this time was weaker, the destructive power behind the attack was still too much for us to meet it head-on. The only saving grace was that, rather than 'one big shot', the attack was in the form of scattered rounds, instead.

I watched the shells cross the vast ocean and bit my lips, hard. "Hyunsung-ssi!"

"…I'm not finished with my preparations!"

Was it because he had to lend the [Story metal] to our companions, too? Lee Hyunsung's magical energy recovery rate was extremely slow. The forged steel covering the vessel was only about half compared to before.

Meaning, we need to withstand this 'turn' without the help from the [Steel Transformation].

The [Turtle Dragon] began retreating with every ounce of energy in order to dodge the scattered shells. However, Lee Jihye moved in contrast to the ship's direction and stood in front to protect both Lee Hyunsung and me.

"Ahjussis, stand behind me. I'll do whatever I can about this."

Her unexpected words made me take another look at her. With an unfamiliar light in her eyes, she was studying the frontline.

"This fight… It's my fight."

I didn't know what made her move, but one thing's for certain – Lee Jihye had chosen her battlefield.

"I don't know what the hell this 999th turn is nor what happened in that place. However, if there is another 'me' trying to destroy this world with the pretext of tragedy from another regression turn…" Ghostly flames burned fiercely within her eyes after she had made up her mind. "I will never forgive another 'me'."

[Constellation, 'Maritime War God', is unleashing his Status!]

I quietly stared at her.

The oceans were the most optimal battlefield for her.

The only things I could trust right now were Lee Jihye and her battleship.

[Nebula <Kim Dokja's Company>'s Probability is permeating within the Incarnation, 'Lee Jihye'!]

The Giant Stories I possessed poured in all of their Status into her. Blinding golden aura enveloped her body.

She opened her eyes wide, before smiling refreshingly at me. "Thanks, ahjussi."

Lee Jihye's battleship dashed forward.

The [Turtle Dragon] evaded the arcs of the incoming scattered shells and spat out flames from its figurehead.

"All troops, advance!"

[Giant Story, 'Torch that Swallowed the Myth', has begun talking a big game!]

The flames spat out by the small dragon figurehead collided with the shell fired from the other side and evaporated. The history we lived together became the Story and was colliding against the 999th turn's Story.

[Giant Story, 'Demon Realm's Spring', is aiding the Incarnation 'Lee Jihye'.]

[Giant Story, 'Season of Light and Darkness', has begun its storytelling!]

If one looked at the destructive power of Giant Stories alone, then our side shouldn't get pushed around by your run-of-the-mill Nebulas.

[Constellation, 'Maritime War God', has ceded his command to his Incarnation.]

[Character 'Lee Jihye' is activating 'Ghost Fleet Lv.???'!]

Her speciality, the Ghost Fleet, finally revealed themselves above the great ocean's waters. Each of these vessels had grown past the size of a cruiser and were now almost reaching that of an aircraft carrier. They escorted the [Turtle Dragon] and spat out flames in synch with each other.

"Load the cannons!"

Lee Jihye's Ghost Fleet started their speedy forward march. Unfortunately, that side started firing first.

Waves of flames rushed in over the vast expanse of the ocean. The fleet headed straight into the wave. The gigantic wall of water blocked our front, but her eyes were focused only on a single point.

"Fire!"

The concentrated firing caused one side of the wave to explode. The fleet dug into that small opening and continued to advance. Her fleet, now in the straight-line formation, then opened fire in all directions.

Outer Gods struck down by the cannons cried out in pain. Lee Jihye trampled on those screams and continued to advance forward again and again.

She even vomited out blood after using an excessive amount of magical energy, yet she never let go of the helm.

「Even if it's just one shot.」

Lee Jihye's eyes emitting chilling glow were still fixed on one point. On a certain battleship waiting beyond the thick wall of waves.

【Load the cannons.】

"Load the cannons!"

[Constellation, 'Bald General of Justice', is cheering on the Incarnation, 'Lee Jihye'.]

[Constellation, 'King Heungmu', is cheering on the Incarnation, 'Lee Jihye'.]

[Constellation, 'Joseon's First Sorcerer', is cheering on the Incarnation, 'Lee Jihye'.]

[Constellation, 'Last Hero of Hwangsanbeol', is cheering on the Incarnation, 'Lee Jihye'.]

[Constellation, 'One-eyed Maitreya', is cheering on the Incarnation, 'Lee Jihye'.]

[Constellation, 'Seo-Ae Single Stroke of Brush', is cheering on the Incarnation, 'Lee Jihye'.]

The Korean Peninsula's Constellations were now looking at her.

While watching her pierce her way through this overwhelmingly disadvantageous combat situation, I began recalling a certain page from the now-ancient original novel.

[Character 'Lee Jihye's' attribute evolution is imminent!]

Her final attribute evolution, something she also experienced during the original, was about to occur right before my eyes. Such a thing was possible only because of the current situation.

The Probabilities lent to her by the Korean Peninsula's Constellations, her own Story that she had accumulated with abnormal speed, and finally, Lee Jihye's determination to even risk death all combined to create this miracle.

[Constellation, 'Maritime War God', is looking at his Incarnation.]

From the distant skies, Lee Jihye's Sponsor, the 'Maritime War God', was looking down at her. He was the Constellation that protected and advised her for the longest time.

I knew what he was thinking right now; I could sense it, because I was also a star like him. He was currently experiencing an event that only the smallest number of Constellations would ever encounter.

「The event of an Incarnation exceeding the Status of her Sponsor.」

This should be what the Maritime War God must've realized – that the time had come for him to acknowledge the truth; that now was the time to let go of his own Incarnation from his embrace.

「And so – the oceans desired one Monarch to rule over the violent storms.」

The Maritime War God recited the Story as if he was sending the congratulatory message to a young bird taking to the skies for the first time.

「Therefore, there is no need for two Monarchs in this great ocean.」

[Character 'Lee Jihye's' attribute is evolving!]

[Character 'Lee Jihye' has acquired the legendary-grade attribute!]

Finally, the wounded Sword Demon was advancing towards her own ocean.

[Character 'Lee Jihye's' attribute has evolved to the 'Monarch of the Great Sea'!]

【Fire.】

"Fire!!"

As the ear-deafening cannon firing resounded out, everything before our eyes was enveloped by the blinding flash of light.

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* Official novel illustration (canonical)
* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)

Chapter 471: Ep. 89 - Great Apocalypse, V

【Mari… time War… God…】

The 999th turn's Lee Jihye showed some reaction as if she had finally remembered her Sponsor.

「During the 999th regression turn, the 'Maritime War God' sacrificed himself to save Lee Jihye.」

Perhaps to deny everything that happened during this turn, the powerful naval bombardment continued on. However, our own Lee Jihye also responded in kind.

「All of the Korean Peninsula's Constellations were with Lee Jihye.」

The Monarch of the Great Sea – the realm Lee Jihye reached only during the extreme-latter part of the 'Ways of Survival', well past the 1800th regression turns.

She reached the highest position that a human could ever reach and leapfrogged her own Sponsor to eventually become a god of the oceans.

「At least when on water, she was confident of not being pushed around by any Myth-grade Constellations.」

She actually said those words, and they even became reality later, too – during the original storyline, she fought the Myth-grade Constellation Poseidon on an equal footing, at least when they were on the sea.

"Fire!!"

[Attribute 'Monarch of the Great Sea's' effects are activating!]

The storm whipped up from behind Lee Jihye. Waves split up and firestorm raged on the path she scythed through. It was as if these violent winds were trying to escort her ship. She stood at the forefront of these winds and carried on with the shelling.

[Exclusive skill, 'Ghost Fleet Lv.???' is continuing to fight back!]

And then, the giant wall of waves gradually split up.

[Mo nar ch of the Gre at Sea]

[Twotwotwotwotwotwo]

Even the 'Outer Gods' following that side looked to be flustered now.

「The Monarch of the Great Sea will never be defeated on water.」

That was the accepted rule within the 'Ways of Survival'. I believed in those words and that allowed us to come this far. However…

"Keuk…"

Along with 'Pu-shu-shuk!' noise, streams of blood shot out from Lee Jihye's nose and mouth. Her excessively-boiling magical energy had begun flowing backwards. Not only that…

[Attribute 'Monarch of the Great Sea's' effects are activating!]

That message wasn't caused by the Status from our side.

I thought something was rushing in at us, and in the blink of an eye, powerful headwinds completely flipped our vision. The [Ghost Fleet] and [Turtle Dragon] were sucked into the humongous wave and flailed about within the rising foams.

"Jihye-yah!"

Lee Jihye was flung away like a kite with its strings cut. I reached out and grasped her wrist. My magical energy helped her to regain her consciousness, and she somersaulted in the air before landing back on the deck.

She gritted her teeth and while grabbing the helm, shouted out. "I told you to run away!"

"I can't do that."

For the current Lee Jihye alone, this was asking for too much. Even if she had become the 'Monarch of the Great Sea', our opponent had already attained the Status of that very title a long time ago and now was even an Outer God, as well.

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

Due to the blessings from the Great Apocalypse scenario, this calamity had exceeded even the Myth-grade Constellations. That was precisely who we were confronting right now.

[Giant Story, 'Demon Realm's Spring', is crying out as if in pain!]

[Giant Story, 'Torch that Swallowed the Myth', is resisting against the myth!]

[Giant Story, 'Season of Light and Darkness', is revealing itself.]

Three 'Giant Stories' began telling their stories at the same time.

Since a portion of the Giant Stories' shares was being used by the first team, we couldn't utilise their full powers here. However, we still had enough to provoke our opponent.

【You are…】

Was my goal of using the white flag to stimulate her memories finally paying off? Certain aspects of emotions carried within her true voice were different from before.

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

[Character, 'Master of the Sunken Island', is staring at the Giant Story.]

['Disconnected Film Theory' is activating!]

Finally, the moments I was waiting for had come. Stories built up by two different Lee Jihyes collided and the disconnected film threads began connecting to each other.

If everything goes well, we should be able to buy ourselves a bit of time through this phenomenon. It was then that the scenery before us suddenly changed.

[Giant Story, 'Demon Realm's Spring', has begun its storytelling.]

「This is the Story of Dokja (only son).」

「[Please survive.]」

「"Ahjussi!! Don't! Stop it! I said, stop…!"」

These were the memories from when we fought off the 'Indescribable Distance' for the first time. As if simply recalling them was too painful for her, Lee Jihye quickly averted her gaze.

…Ah, so she made such an expression back then.

I too could vividly recall those memories.

In order to transport the entirety of the [Industrial Complex], I made a deal with the 'Secretive Plotter' and fought against that calamity.

【You are…】

However, the expression of the 999th turn's Lee Jihye was crumpling as well. Another Story unfolded itself before our eyes next.

[Giant Story, 'Wanderer of the Eternal Horizon', has begun its storytelling.]

That was the Story belonging to the 999th turn's Lee Jihye.

The scenery of Seoul, destroyed by Nebulas sneak attacking it, appeared before us. Next up was the unconscious companions, and finally, the crumbling outer wall of the castle.

On top of this wall, the one-eyed Yoo Joonghyuk and his lone arm were staring at the battlefield.

*

「"…This is the only way."」

The jet-black aura of Chaos began rising up from his figure.

「"Master! Stop! I said, stop!!"」

I knew exactly which scene this was. This was where 999th turn's Yoo Joonghyuk died.

His soul, now in tatters after the 'Outer World Pledge' he signed with the Outer God was repeatedly invoked, was making his very last trade.

Seoul was now sinking into the deepest bowels of the ocean.

Yoo Joonghyuk spoke. 「"You must survive."」

And then… the 999th turn's memories were scattering away beyond the misty, grey foams. From the two eyes of the expression girl, the 'Master of the Sunken Island', something began trickling down. Certain Stories wouldn't disappear even when subjected to the untold amount of time. Such a Story made her come this far.

"Ahjussi, isn't that…"

I looked to my side and saw our Lee Jihye also crying.

"Isn't it… too similar…?"

[Two 'Giant Stories' are responding to each other.]

Of course, the stories had to be similar.

「Kim Dokja believed that the most perfect regression turn was the '999th'. And…」

And, I took that turn as my motif, after all.

「That regression turn was the closest out of all the others that came close to the correct conclusion.」

It was the only regression turn where everyone survived and got to witness the Conclusion.

Tsu-chuchuchut!

As the storm of aftermath raged on, the 999th turn's Lee Jihye was approaching us. The distance closed in with each step taken. I was getting a bad vibe from this.

"Ahjussi, hurry and fall back!"

Our Lee Jihye also sensed the incoming danger and unsheathed the Twin Dragon Sword before dashing forward.

The [Instant Kill] – it was the best anti-human combat skill she possessed. Unfortunately, the streak of swordlight slicing forward was deflected away in the empty air as the harsh, screeching noise resounded out. And our Lee Jihye was flung away across the deck, arcs of her blood scattering about.

"Jihye-yah!!"

Lee Hyunsung on standby quickly caught her.

Just as I sighed in relief, the 999th turn's Lee Jihye stopped right before my nose. Even before I could unshackle my Story and unleash my Status, her pale yet strong right hand grabbed hold of my collars.

【You… Who are you?】

…Yup, like master, like disciple.

I could only smile wryly.

In any case, the fact that we could now converse wasn't such a bad development.

"My name is Kim Dokja. Your master's best friend."

【…Best friend??】

The 999th turn's Lee Jihye now formed a confused expression. She then began staring at the Story circling around me.

「"Before you start fighting them, you must search the left-side wall. Then, you'll immediately realize what I'm trying to say to you."」

「"I'm telling you this now so that you can fight against the 'Sasquatch' during the 28th scenario."」

My Story was now left wide open for her to read.

【But, how did you…?】

「"I'm Yoo Joonghyuk."」

【…Master?】

She must've been beset with confusion, as she used her left hand to massage her temples. Her eyes were burning with ominous aura.

Ku-dududu…!

Her grip on my collars was getting stronger. Ripples of her Status tightened around my body and I began having trouble breathing.

"H-hang on second. Why don't you let me go and…!"

【Mastermastermastermastermaster】

Outer Gods flooding in parroted her words. With the most sorrowful language known to man, they cried out instead of the 999th turn's Lee Jihye. They sounded as if their vocal cords were tearing apart, as if their whole existence was crumbling away.

[Exclusive skill, 'Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint', is activating!]

[All of your Stories are sympathising with the applicable individual.]

[Your degree of understanding on the applicable individual is increasing rapidly!]

Her eyes now reflected the moments we had lived in the past.

From the <Demon King Selection Battle>, to <Gigantomachia>; from the <Great War of Saints and Demons> to the <Journey to the West>. And then…

[Story, 'Square Circle', has begun its storytelling.]

「"You can talk to me any time. If you don't want to talk to me, then it'll be fine with someone else, too. But you don't have to huddle in a corner and let it fester inside you."」

I now could see the face of the 999th turn's Lee Jihye distorting in great sorrow. Why did that remind me of the 'Secretive Plotter'?

「【Why, why is it not me, but you??】」

To the 999th turn's Lee Jihye, the 'Master of the Sunken Island', what did this story mean to her?

Would she also hate me?

To the lives of this world-line, built upon the history of her and her companions that I read…

「I'm envious.」

…What?

Tsu-chuchuchut!

As if she was looking at something she had been longing for all eternity, the 999th turn's Lee Jihye slowly reached out and placed her palm on my cheek.

Even if it was the same story, the impression one got after reading it would be different from people to people. Some might despair after seeing the story he had failed to achieve, while someone else might feel consoled having seen the sorrow that closely resembled hers. The only issue here would be with where that consolation effort might go next.

「I want to have it.」

Her eyes soaked in ancient sorrow suddenly were filled with streaks of madness. The 999th turn's Lee Jihye slowly turned her head. Her gaze was now locked firmly on the unconscious Lee Jihye.

「I too, want to live this kind of life.」

Only then did I realize what this girl was thinking of in her head.

The [Disconnected Film Theory] was writhing violently. The 999th turn's Lee Jihye reached out, and the vicious air current flew out to envelop our unconscious Lee Jihye. This was dangerous.

[The Stories of two beings are starting to resonate!]

Accompanied by the 'Euh-jeo-jeok!' noise, the 999th turn's Story began moving. That Story was now devouring the Story from our world-line. I freaked out and hurriedly unleashed my Status.

I needed to stop this. No matter what, I must never let the 999th turn's Lee Jihye devour…

Kwa-dudududu!

Forged steel broke out from the ship's deck and extended in the blink to protect both me and our Lee Jihye. It was Lee Hyunsung's doing. However, I sensed that something was different about the Story's aura coming from the steel barrier. I shifted my gaze towards him.

Lee Hyunsung was there, but it was not him. Someone had borrowed his body to unleash his powers.

[Incarnation 'Lee Hyunsung's' Sponsor is protecting you!]

This Status was strong enough to evenly match the 'Master of the Sunken Island'.

The steel wall was ripped apart with loud tearing noises and the 999th turn's Lee Jihye poked her head through. As if she had been doused by cold water, her expression was hardened to a frightening degree.

The first one to open his lips was Lee Hyunsung's Sponsor.

【Jihye-yah. Our story had come to an end a long time ago already.】

That was the true voice of an Outer God.

And I realized whose it was instantly.

At the same time.

Han Myungoh, having purchased another [X-grade Ferrarghini] with Coins he borrowed from Kim Dokja, was hurriedly driving on the dimensional road. His destination was the sealed-off 'Isle of Reincarnators'.

"Dareum-ah! If you can hear my voice, please answer me! Dareum-ah!"

Han Dareum – that was the name he had given to his daughter. He continued to wander around all corners of the Dark Stratum and called out that name.

"Dareum-ah!!!"

And eventually, he discovered a familiar hand poking out from in between the distorted darkness.

He couldn't not recognise that hand. He had never let go of that hand, right up until she was snatched away by the Demon King.

Han Myungoh held it tightly. And then, he began extracting his daughter's body from the layers of darkness. It wasn't an easy job, but he couldn't give up on it.

[Giant Story, 'Liberator of the Forgotten Ones', has begun its storytelling!]

The <Kim Dokja's Company>'s Story he borrowed in order to find his daughter began to tell its story. And he managed to extract her body bit by bit from the layer.

Fortunately, her Incarnation Body was intact. Not so fortunately, though, her heart wasn't beating. However, he had in his possession a single [Life and Death Pill] he got from Lee Seolhwa.

"Dareum-ah! Please wake up! It's your dad! Your dad's here for you!"

Han Myungoh called out while crying. And so – how long passed by like this? Finally, Han Dareum opened her eyes. Reddish light leaked out from her irises, however.

[…You did well, my dependent.]

What opened its eyes wasn't Han Dareum.

[…The 'Guidance of the End' almost came to an end itself during the Great War of Saints and Demons.]

The ominous Status of a Demon King could be felt now. Asmodeus formed a crazed smile, causing Han Myungoh to fall on his butt.

"G-give my daughter back to me! My daughter…!"

[Daughter? H-mm… My apologies, but that will be too difficult. I definitely need this Incarnation Body. However, allow me to gift you with a nice present, instead.]

Asmodeus spoke up to there and pulled out a pitch-black eye patch from its inner pocket.

[The qualification to watch the end of this world-line with me, that is.]

This was an ancient item that had been passed down among the 'Guiders of the End'. An item that could be used only when the Final Scenario was just around the corner.

[Item, 'Relic of the Abyss', is activating!]

The 'Other World Incantation' meant to summon the Outer God dyed in the abyss, the 'Demon of 999'. Asmodeus exploded in a fit of maniacal laughter as it watched the dimension distort visibly. [Metatron! Agares! Demon King of Salvation!! This story won't end the way you think it will! This story, it will-!"

【What the hell is this?】

Since when did this happen? There was a man standing behind Asmodeus. He was enveloped in the jet-black aura, while bandages were wrapped around in one of his arms.

Han Myungoh watching this scene unfold five, six steps away began trembling uncontrollably. He recognised the face of this unknown man.

This mysterious man met his gaze and smiled. 【…Oh, so you have summoned me? Hmm… what's this? There's a Demon King here, too? Aha, I get it. This Demon King was busy bullying you, and you summoned me to save you, right?】

[Oh, the End! That's not true! It is I, Asmodeus, that have summoned you to…]

Swiiiish!

The man's translucent hand reached out and grabbed the back of Asmodeus's neck. And a second later, the Demon King's soul form was captured by the man.

[Keo-heok…??]

【I don't trust the words of those hiding in other people's bodies.】

Asmodeus's soul was then torn to shreds along with the loud 'Pu-hwa-hack!' noise. The attack didn't even give the Demon King a chance to resist. The man licked the tattered Story of a demon and grinned brightly.

【I hate Demon Kings the most. They always try to imitate me. I mean, look! This bastard, he even had the eye patch that I misplaced somewhere, you know?】

The man muttered to himself and pulled the eye patch off Asmodeus's former Incarnation Body before putting it on himself. He grinned brightly as if he was satisfied by his own appearance now. Meanwhile, the trembling Han Myungoh hurriedly hugged the fallen body of his daughter and looked up at this man.

【Oii, oii, don't worry, man. I may look a bit scary, but once you get to know me better, you'll learn that I'm actually a nice guy inside.】 The man vigorously tapped on his bandages and spoke up. 【Well, then… Shall I go and find my Jihye now?】

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* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)

Chapter 472: Ep. 90 - One Person, I

The forged steel expanded and protected both me and Lee Jihye.

[Constellation, 'Master of Steel' is revealing his Status.]

Lee Hyunsung's Sponsor was the original 'Master of Steel'. However, he was killed off during the <Oz> incident the last time. Before that, though, he managed to successfully hand his Modifier over to someone else.

【King of the Silver Heart.】

The King of the Silver Heart, that was the new 'Master of Steel'. He was yet another existence who witnessed the 999th turn's Conclusion, alongside the 'Master of the Sunken Island'.

And it was none other than Lee Hyunsung from the 999th turn.

【Stop with your ridiculous charade as a Sponsor. What do you think you're doing?】

Was it because she was facing another 'King' like her? The 999th turn's Lee Jihye was rapidly regaining her reasoning.

【You kept silent when we were calling for you, so why are you appearing like this now?】

The 'Master of the Sunken Island' continued on.

【It was you who suggested that we follow the rules. We promised to find our stories again even if that meant we'd become the apocalypse of another world. To get our scenarios back from the <Star Stream>… That's what you suggested, right?】

The Stories flowing near them helped me to guess what their lives had been like.

「Jihye-yah. We must stick to the rules. Even if we become the 'Outer Gods', do not forget that rule.」

「Only that rule will protect you when the world tries to inflict you with pain.」

「It'll speak up for you – that you are not wrong.」

Just like how Lee Jihyes from different regression turns were still Lee Jihye, Lee Hyunsungs found in the same turns were also undoubtedly, Lee Hyunsung. Even after he became an Outer God, his original nature didn't change.

The 'King of the Silver Heart' stared at me next. I couldn't decipher the emotions contained within his gaze.

【This is my rule, Jihye-yah. To prevent the re-enactment of the 999th turn's tragedy.】

【What rubbish are you talking about? Is 'rules' something you can easily change on a whim like flipping your hand around??】

【I've heard several stories from my Sponsor who used to live this world-line. In some ways… this world-line could very well be the one we've been searching for.】 The 'King of the Silver Heart' was glowing coldly as he spoke. 【The world-line where the 'end' of everything could be witnessed.】

Those words caused the 999th turn's Lee Jihye to hesitate. 【Such a world-line can't exist. Besides, this world-line is about to end, anyway. Even if you interfere, even if I stop…】

It seemed that the 'King of the Silver Heart' chose not to become the calamity of the 'Great Apocalypse'. I expected something like that, though. If he really was thinking of harming us, then he'd have done so back in the <Oz>.

And since I knew that, I decided to bring our Lee Hyunsung here. As a final hidden card prepared for that one off-chance.

【These people aren't that weak. Uriel alone won't make it.】

The 'King of the Silver Heart' ended his words there. The 'Master of the Sunken Island' then replied, her empty, wandering eyes staring at the distant horizon. But then, life returned to her eyes right next moment, with an expression of someone who saw something quite unpleasant.

【What if she's not alone?】

And then, pitch-black darkness blanketed the world beyond the horizon.

Something we failed to foresee was revealing itself over yonder.

The rest of <Kim Dokja's Company>'s companions were camping out near Dokdo Island, waiting for 'something' to show up.

A short while after Kim Dokja had disappeared towards the Pacific Ocean, they started hearing the drumbeat-like noises bellowing out from there every so often. They flinched every time they heard those noises. No one said anything about their intermittent flinching movement, but they all knew what it meant, anyway.

'I want to go and help Kim Dokja'.

However, they endured it. This was all part of their strategy. If they carelessly made a move here, then forget about saving Kim Dokja, they might end up losing everything, instead. They simply had to stick to the plan. According to the plan, this place was…

Ku-gugugugu.

It was right then they felt the heat coming from the sky. Powerful heatwaves completely blanketed the entirety of the ocean. When they reflexively raised their heads, they were treated to a truly unbelievable spectacle.

Kim Dokja was right.

「The burning, seething sun was falling towards the middle of the ocean.」

Han Sooyoung in charge of the control tower shouted out from the top of Gong Pildu's fortress. "Get ready for battle!!"

This heat was so intense that it felt like even their souls were melting. And within the solar flames, the bewinged 999th turn's Uriel floated silently.

【Where is the 'Secretive Plotter'?】

「The Outer God King, the 'Living Flame' that rises up from the east.」

Han Sooyoung swallowed back her saliva after sensing the enormous Status wafting in front of her. More correctly, she tried to. However, she couldn't sense any moisture within her mouth as if all of her salivae had evaporated. She forced her parched throat to speak up.

"And now, we commence with the 'flame extinguishment'."

The flame extinguishment – that was the mission the first team was tasked with. Han Sooyoung recalled the last words Kim Dokja said to her before he disembarked.

– Don't kill her. She's also 'Uriel'.

…That damn Kim Dokja. He wanted them to subdue such a thing without killing it??

The silence continued and the 'Living Flame' narrowed her eyes. 【If you aren't going to answer…】

"Yoo Sangah!"

The signal was given and Yoo Sangah extended her arms out. As her Buddhist robe wavered gently, a gigantic Mandala spun around behind her and it shot towards the sun. The strongest debuff skill <Kim Dokja's Company> currently possessed was activated.

[Story, 'Hour of Mandala', is activating!]

It was really negligible, but the movement of the sun had become just a little slower.

The 999th turn's Uriel muttered out. 【…Interfering with time and space? Is Sakyamuni in this place? I haven't sensed his aura, though?】

Ku-dudududu!

She clenched her fist and the space-time of the surrounding world shook powerfully as if it'd shatter at any moment.

Blood leaked out of Yoo Sangah's lips. "This is the best I can do!"

"Jung Heewon! Shin Yoosung!"

Two of them dashed forward after hearing Han Sooyoung's order.

The first one the 999th turn's Uriel discovered was Shin Yoosung. The shadow of a huge Dragon was cast on the ocean's surface. And then, the Poison Breath blanketed the sun's destructive conflagration.

【So, you're this world-line's 'Beast Lord'?】

A portion of Uriel's Incarnation Body touched by the Breath changed colour, but that lasted only for a short while. Her skin reverted back to normal in the blink of an eye.

"Why don't you try to block this, too!"

That voice came from right beside her, and the 999th turn's Uriel reflexively swung her sword.

Claaaaaaaang!!

[Flames of Retribution] and [Judge's Sword] collided.

Just one collision and Jung Heewon had to retreat while vomiting out blood.

[Incarnation 'Jung Heewon' is currently activating 'Hour of Judgement'!]

【The Hour of Judgement? How are you using that technique against me?】

"Who knows?"

The [Hellfire] covered Jung Heewon's sword, and the wings of Archangel spread out from behind her back. The 999th turn's Uriel confirmed them and her expression hardened as she unleashed her Status.

【…So, you are my Incarnation.】

As if to oppose that statement, the power of the Constellation emanated from Jung Heewon's body as well.

[Heewon-ie is my Incarnation, not yours!]

Two Uriels unleashed their Statuses at each other and began colliding.

The first exchange, then the second; as the collision increased in frequency, Jung Heewon's expression quickly grew more and more agitated.

"What kind of power is…!"

【I won't get fooled by those ridiculous memories again like the last time.】

Jung Heewon was forced to go on the defensive in an instant, leading Uriel to urgently shout out. [■ck! Are you just going to watch and do nothing?!]

Almost at the same time, jet-black flames sneak-attacked the 999th turn's Uriel on her back. The 'Living Flame' frowned heavily and spoke up. 【The Black Flame Dragon.】

The Black Flame Dragon shouted out triumphantly, the bandages unwrapped from both of his arms now. [Kekeke. How did that feel, you stinking Angel!]

The Absolute Good and the Absolute Evil. Two Narrative-grade Constellations who used to be sworn enemies once upon a time were fighting together in order to stop this calamity.

The [Hellfire] and [Black Flame] bore down on the army of the sun. And as she was bathed in the storm of blinding light rays, Han Sooyoung quietly shuddered.

'…So strong'.

With just one hand, the 'Living Flame' was fighting against those two powerful Constellations. This opponent couldn't be pushed back even when the two of them combined their strengths.

【Me of this turn only amounts to this much? Where is <Eden>? Why are you fighting alongside these people?】

[■ck, Eden has been destroyed already!!]

【…<Eden> is no more? And you wish to confront me without the blessing of the Nebula?】

The Living Flame then turned her head away as if to indicate that she had no more reason to fight these two. The sun's rays seemed to grow even stronger, then some things began crawling out from the intense heat. They were 'Outer Gods' that followed her. An army numbering several thousand was waiting for her command.

【Go. Find the 'Secretive Plotter'.】

Their march began. Countless 'Nameless Ones' possessing burning wings began descending to the world below. At this rate, the whole of the Korean Peninsula might get swept aside in an instant.

[Incarnation 'Shin Yoosung' is activating 'Superlative Diverse Communication Lv.???'!]

Shin Yoosung made her move.

Countless aquatic creatures burst out of the ocean's surface and leapt up to bite the ankles of the 'Nameless Ones' before dragging them down.

Then, the Master of the Armed Fortress, Gong Pildu joined her as well. Automated turrets installed atop the defensive walls began spitting out licks of flames, and the Nameless Ones turning into Swiss cheese all screamed in pain.

The 999th turn's Uriel spoke up. 【You even accepted such an evil man as your companion? How pathetic.】

The 'Nameless Ones' continued to march towards unfazed towards Gong Pildu's fortress. And just as one of the outer walls was about to be destroyed by the constant attacks of the Outer Gods, Han Sooyoung cried out.

"Lee Gilyoung!"

As if he was waiting for that, Lee Gilyoung immediately appeared above the wall. Jet-black Status was tightly wrapped around the boy as he roared out to the sky. When he did, yellowish clouds rushed in from somewhere and covered up the heavens above. It was only for a moment, but this new army was vast enough to hide that white-hot star.

[Constellation, 'Ruler of the Deepest Pit', is baring its white fangs.]

【…Demon God Abaddon? Why is a bastard like you here??】

Surprised by an unexpected enemy's entrance, the 999th turn's Uriel growled menacingly.

With Shin Yoosung and Gong Pildu, and now also Lee Gilyoung added to the mix, the battle had finally become evenly-matched. Abaddon's yellow locust swarm threw themselves at the 'Nameless Ones' and blocked them.

[Gah-aaaaaah!!]

The Nameless Ones writhed in pain. The 999th Uriel furrowed her brows. While easily defending against the Archangel Uriel and the Black Flame Dragon's combined assault with only one hand, she began concentrating magical energy on the other. She was planning to break through the encirclement with her own [Hellfire].

However, there was someone here capable of reading her thoughts first.

"Now! Attack!"

Han Sooyoung's signal prompted a lengthy scythe to leap out from the surface of the deep ocean.

Accompanied by the slicing noise, a huge wound was inflicted on the former Archangel's wing. White feathers scattered alongside the Story of the other world.

【King of the <Underworld>…!】

For the first time ever, the expression of the 999th turn's Uriel had completely stiffened.

[Nebula, <Underworld>, is releasing the stored-up Story!]

Hades and the portion of <Underworld>'s elite forces crossed over using a portal. Which included the three Judges as well as Persephone.

The 'Nameless Ones' guarding the sun were brought down, and the <Underworld>'s Status began pressuring the 999th turn's Uriel. However, she steadfastly withstood it.

The Incarnations of Sakyamuni and the Archangel Uriel, as well as the Abyssal Black Flame Dragon. And on top of that, the Myth-grade Constellation Hades, too. Even though one of her wings was torn from a sneak attack, and she was currently subjected under the combat force of a fairly-strong Nebula as well, she was not being pushed back at all.

No, it seemed that she was actually searching for an opportunity to overturn this situation, instead.

"What are you waiting for?! Hurry up and join them!"

[Constellation, 'Most Ancient Liberator', lazily makes his move as if he finds this whole affair bothersome.]

Ku-gugugugu!

Gloomy clouds rolled in just above the yellow-coloured clouds. Lightning emitting an ominous bluish glow suddenly crashed down to the ocean below without holding back.

The heavens breathlessly flickered; a figure of an aloof Constellation was revealed in between the lightning flares brushing by – a Myth-grade Constellation blessed with dancing platinum hair and a rather uniquely-arrogant grin stood there.

The moment the 999th turn's Uriel opened her eyes wide, the Ruyi Jingu Bang filling up her view powerfully smashed her entire body down.

She failed to withstand the impact force and her Incarnation Body slammed into the ocean with a deafening explosion noise.

Chapter 473: Ep. 90 - One Person, II

"Nice work, Sun Wukong!!"

The clearly-excited Han Sooyoung cried out.

Along with the 'ku-ru-ruk' noise, bloody foams rose up above the ocean. Not too long after, 999th turn's Uriel revealed herself on the water's surface. She must've ripped apart the surrounding aquatic creatures before rising up, because her entire figure was bathed in a crimson hue.

Rather than betrayal, it was the sense of wonderment filling up her expression.

【…I can't believe it. Great Sage, even you're taking their side?】

Eventually, that wonderment changed into a longing.

The Great Sage detected that change and asked her. [Who might you be, acting as if you know me?]

【I'm simply recalling a companion-in-arms I lost in the past. I don't have any desire to fight against you. Get out of the way. All I want is the 'Secretive

Plotter'.】

For sure, no will to battle could be felt from her voice.

However, the Great Sage still shook his head. [I also dislike that dour bastard, but…]

As he smiled indifferently, incredible aura exploded forth from his entire figure.

[Our maknae will be troubled if that guy dies.]

[Constellation, 'Most Ancient Liberator', is revealing his Status!]

He was the existence who finally liberated his Status previously restricted by the headband, and he even acquired the powers of an Outer God after a partial 'Outer God Transformation' had taken place.

Yogoes that fought together with him during the「Journey to the West Remake」were exiting from the portal to descend on the Pacific Ocean.

[Monkeykingmonkeykingmonkeyking]

'Outer Gods' worshipping different kings got into scuffles with one another. The ocean soaked in blood tumbled over violently, and the 999th turn's Uriel began gasping out.

And finally, the taut equilibrium began tilting to one side.

"It's working! Keep pushing!"

Along with Han Sooyoung's voice, <Kim Dokja's Company>'s great Stories began telling their stories at the same time.

[Giant Story, 'Demon Realm's Spring', has begun its storytelling!]

[Giant Story, 'Torch that Swallowed the Myth', has begun its storytelling!]

[Giant Story, 'Season of Light and Darkness', has begun its storytelling!]

[Giant Story, 'Liberator of the Forgotten Ones', has begun its storytelling!]

Although the main shareholders Kim Dokja and Yoo Joonghyuk were missing, other members still possessed not-too-shabby percentages of the Giant Stories' shares. And also, there were some others who had finished getting ready and were itching to unleash the final strike.

[Only one sun in the sky is enough.]

First, it was Surya appearing along with his train. And then…

[Cutting down Outer Gods have become quite a habit now.]

[Let us combine our strengths, Breaking the Sky Saint.]

"I'm also coming!"

The Breaking the Sky Sword Saint and Kyrgios, plus Jang Hayoung, all joined in.

And so, the 999th turn's Uriel was pushed on her back foot. Her expression was gradually being dyed in confusion.

【How… How can all of you be together? What kind of a world-line is this…??】

She was panicking at the Giant Stories rushing in; their sizes were quite large, but their contents proved to be even more problematic. Just how was it possible that such a Story existed?

Just how…?

Three Transcendents riding on the train penetrated past the sun's heat barrier. Then, an attack containing the outrageous amount of power that combined [Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship], [Electrification], and even [Breaking the Sky Force Punch] shot out.

Just as that strike was about to sneak in through Uriel's opening and land on her…

A chilling sensation suddenly enveloped the nape of Han Sooyoung's neck.

"No, stop!"

[Story, 'Predictive Plagiarism', is urgently revising the story!]

The powerful sensation only she could feel in this whole world arrested her. And right next second, the noise akin to the time/space of the surrounding dimension being squeezed dry rang out loudly.

Ka-dudududuk.

Han Sooyoung couldn't tell what was going on before her eyes.

【What's this? Where is 'me' in this regression turn? Could I have been killed already?】

That rebellious voice sounded as if a portion of the abyss had been taken away to mould it into reality.

The Transcendents approaching the rear of the Outer God to land the final strike were falling to earth along with the destroyed train. Indescribably dark [Black Flames] were burning on the ends of their clothing.

A lone man was standing amidst the gloomy, dark clouds in the sky. He was someone Han Sooyoung also knew. She knew him so well that goosebumps were breaking out on her skin.

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', is warning you of danger!]

The man slowly opened his mouth. 【Chet. I thought it was Jihye, what with this much rampaging Status and all. Made a mistake since it's been so long and all.】

The sun of the 'Living Flame' emitted blinding rays of light. However, the darkness belonging to the man grew even thicker in response, just like the shadow lengthening against the light.

The 999th turn's Uriel spoke. 【'The Monarch of the Great Abyss'. Just who summoned a bastard like you to this world-line?】

The nape of Han Sooyoung's neck grew icy; she remembered what Kim Dokja told her about the ruler of the northern universe, the 'Monarch of the Great Abyss'.

【Hahah. You finally called me with that title. Besides all that, you look like you're in a bit of trouble? Should I help you out?】

The sun's corona flared up as if it was convulsing.

【I don't need it. Help from a scoundrel like you is…】

【Don't be like that. We're 'companions' from the same regression turn, after all.】

The man cackled insidiously.

He was none other than the Delusion Demon Kim Namwoon who also witnessed the 999th turn's 'Conclusion'.

And the moment his gaze moved, Han Sooyoung felt a chill run down her entire body.

【I also wanna see the Black Dragon's face, since it's been a while.】

Kim Namwoon was already right by her face and he began studying her with a nefarious gaze.

When his eyes slowly opened up, Yoo Joonghyuk realized that he was wandering within the darkness alone.

The last thing he could remember was him researching the sure-kill attack with Kim Dokja. Something went wrong in the middle of that, and he lost his consciousness…

[Your soul form is currently in an unstable condition!]

[Story, 'Hell of Eternity', is currently in an illegible state.]

「When is that idiot Yoo Joonghyuk's birthday, again?」

Fragmented memories occasionally drifted in. He heard a voice in between his blurry consciousness. No, rather than a voice, it was far closer to letters, instead.

Yoo Joonghyuk quickly recognised whose speech pattern it belonged to.

「…The regression turn mentioned for the first time is…」

That silly manner of speech capable of irritating a person to no end – only Kim Dokja spoke like that in the entire world.

「Ee-yah~, this part was really entertaining, wasn't it?」

Sentences on the pages Kim Dokja was reading brushed past his eyes. Yoo Joonghyuk saw himself fighting against Constellations right there.

「The 1st regression turn, 41st, 666th…」

Kim Dokja's fingers tracing the letters suddenly stopped. The information on a certain regression turn could be spied in between his fingers lingering on for the longest time.

「The 999th turn.」

Even Yoo Joonghyuk was aware of the events that happened during that regression turn. The 「Hell of Eternity」 was informing him of the time he couldn't remember through all the texts Kim Dokja had read.

The latter seemed to be muttering softly while reading about that regression turn.

「"I'm Yoo Joonghyuk…"」

The real Yoo Joonghyuk didn't know anything about the life supported by that lame declaration.

'Yoo Joonghyuk' as read by Kim Dokja; his history remained like soot in between the flow of the pages. Ostracised within school, tormented in his part-time workplace by a boss busy stealing his wages, and going on a forced march until soles of his feet became a bloodied mess during his army days – Kim Dokja endured them all by calling himself Yoo Joonghyuk.

The latter simply couldn't understand the former.

He had no idea what it meant for the time he had to endure ending up saving someone else living in a completely different world. He just didn't know what it meant for a person to become more courageous by reading about someone else's battles.

Not only that, Yoo Joonghyuk even found his own self as seen through those texts utterly unfamiliar.

「"I can still fight."」

Did he really say that?

「"Doesn't matter whether it's a hundred times or thousand, I shall continue to be reborn to kill you all."」

Was he really the kind of a person to say something like this?

The voices of the companions that trusted him could be found among the countless texts.

「Captain.」

「I only trust you.」

「You must save the world in the next turn.」

The world-lines kept vanishing, the only things left behind being those sentences. And as the volume of the words that tormented him increased, the value of life itself became cheaper.

Just what did they see in him to fight alongside him?

'Who am I?'

Yoo Joonghyuk was overcome with emptiness as he stared at the words outside his ability to comprehend.

1864 lifetimes.

He already knew what sort of a world he had to cross to get here.

However, he couldn't understand it at all.

「Is this really everything of me, these memories?」

Yoo Joonghyuk grew curious. If he was really nothing more than a 'character' just as Kim Dokja said, then what happened to the 'time' he couldn't remember?

Where was himself not among the pages that Kim Dokja had read?

Or, did he not exist from the get-go?

[Your Sponsor is looking closely at you.]

Could he really be able to say from where his life had 'existed' and where it ended?

Tsu-chuchuchut…

He reflexively looked back at the emptiness as soon as he felt the chilling sensation. He found someone else other than him there.

【Are you doing an introspection of yourself? You don't have the time to waste like this.】

Yoo Joonghyuk immediately recognised who it was.

'You shouldn't be able to move still'.

He glared at the 'Secretive Plotter'. He instinctively reached out towards his [Black Heavenly Demon Sword], but the familiar hilt was nowhere to be found.

This place was his imagined world. Items didn't exist here.

The 'Secretive Plotter' stared back at him and shook his head in disappointment. 【At this rate, all of your companions will be annihilated.】

'Annihilated?'

Cold sensation crept down his back.

His companions were about to enter a dangerous battle against the 'Outer God King'. He could definitely sense the ominous aura flowing around in the surroundings.

He needed to wake up at once. He needed to get out of here, and…

【There's no point in going with your current state. If you can't utilise the power of the 1863rd turn, then you won't prove to be any help whatsoever.】

'So what? What are you saying?'

Yoo Joonghyuk growled menacingly, yet the Secretive Plotter remained unruffled. 【You have another way of utilising the power of the 1863rd turn.】

Right away, he deciphered the meaning behind those words.

The only reason why he could regain the power of the 1863rd turn for a short moment was due to Kim Dokja's Story, 「Hell of Eternity」. And the one who gave that fool his Story was…

Yoo Joonghyuk gritted his teeth and asked.

'You expect me to trust you? And why are you trying to help us?'

【I was asked for a favour.】

'…A favour?'

【I'll lend you my powers just this once. I hope that you learn something from this.】

The 'Secretive Plotter' reached out from the darkness. There was no time to dodge, and the cold palm of a boy touched Yoo Joonghyuk's forehead. And then…

['Disconnected Film Theory' is activating!]

Accompanied by pain severe enough to blank out the inside of his head, a humongous Story flooded in. These were memories he already knew. However, they were also the ones he failed to understand. Every Story of 'Secretive Plotter' coursed within his bloodstreams while emitting white-hot heat.

The 1st turn, 2nd, 3rd, 4th… and then, 1863rd.

Countless Yoo Joonghyuks were waking up within him.

All of them were Yoo Joonghyuk. Each of them was Yoo Joonghyuk. But at the same time, Yoo Joonghyuk was just one person.

The one person, who managed to live through 1864 lifetimes.

He began remembering things one by one.

Such as, who he was.

What he lived for.

Stories were circling around his vicinity. Within the Story, someone was asking this.

「"By the way, when is Captain's birthday?"」

That prompted Kim Dokja to reply.

「Ah, I found it. It was over here. Third of August.」

Right. He was born in the summer. A hellishly hot and humid summer, when horrible storms were lashing out.

He could remember everything so vividly now.

His birthday that no one celebrated or congratulated him for. All those anniversaries that lost their meanings as he went through 1864 lifetimes.

Yoo Joonghyuk slowly opened his eyes. The energy of Story completely saturated his whole body. This feeling was something he had not felt before during this '3rd' turn.

He raised his head and sensed the hot rays of the sun.

Even so far away, he could still clearly sense it – the 'Outer God's' presence calling out to him from beyond the faraway horizon. However, he didn't feel scared.

He slowly raised his body up and confirmed the condition of his Incarnation Body. Every single part of it was operating at a near-perfection.

Stories he had compiled so far were permeating within every fibre of his being.

「In that very moment, Yoo Joonghyuk felt as if he was reborn.」

[Giant Story, 'Pilgrim of the Lonely Apocalypse', has recovered its complete Status.]

This was the true power he originally possessed, the Status of a being who reached the final turn of the world and witnessed the 'Wall' by himself alone.

['Disconnected Film Theory' is currently activating in an abnormal manner.]

[Connection between films is incomplete.]

[The entire film may cease to exist if this connection is forcibly maintained.]

He could only rely on this power for a brief time. However, it was more than enough for him. Yoo Joonghyuk raised his head and looked up at the sky.

The heavens were screaming out. The flashes of lightning strikes vividly illuminated the scars engraved on his face every so often.

[Story, 'Hell of Eternity', has begun its storytelling!]

[Attribute, 'Terror of the Stars', is activating!]

His glare caused the stars to run away in fear.

Yoo Joonghyuk stared at them for a moment, before his figure flashed towards the distant sun.

Chapter 474: Ep. 90 - One Person, III

Han Sooyoung just couldn't believe what was happening before her eyes. The Transcendents fell in an instant, and Underworld's Judges were also defeated one after the other.

"Get back, Han Sooyoung!"

As the loud 'Clang!!' resounded out, Jung Heewon standing before her was flung away. The Story mushroomed out from the man grinning mischievously as if he was playing around.

[Giant Story, 'Delusional Design', has begun its storytelling!]

The entire body of the Monarch of the Great Abyss, the 999th turn's Kim Namwoon, began emitting the [Black Flame]'s aura. That aura soon became a silhouette of a dragon with several heads. Its maws split wide open, and soon after, destructive air currents blanketed everything in the surroundings.

Kwa-aaaaaaaah!!

"Yoosung-ah! Gilyoung-ah!"

The exploding chain of the [Black Flame] swallowed the kids.

Yoo Sangah left the battlefield in order to rush out and save them, causing the time/space debuff restraining the 999th turn's Uriel to weaken.

Go-oooooh!

She was regaining her original strength after a short period of it shrinking back.

The 999th turn's Kim Namwoon cackled after witnessing that sight. 【Well, now. What would've happened without my help, I wonder?】

【Shut your mouth. Once I find the 'Secretive Plotter', you're next.】

She shot Kim Namwoon a terrifying glare and then swung her [Flames of Retribution] towards the battlefield.

The one opposing her was the Great Sage. The Ruyi Jingu Bang dancing around stylishly blocked off her sword strikes. Kim Namwoon watched the Great Sage match up evenly to an 'Outer God King' and was thoroughly impressed by this sight.

What caught his attention even more, was the pitch-black aura oozing out from the Great Sage's entire figure.

【The Status of Chaos? Did this guy also become an 'Outer God', too?】

【…More correctly, it seems that one of his entities have become one.】

【Hahaha, what the hell. What's up with this world-line?】

【I shall take care of him, so you bastard, go and take care of the small fries plus the King of the Underworld.】

【Chet, I also wanted to have a go at the Great Sage just like someone else, you know.】

Perhaps enraged by the garbage he just heard, the Great Sage roared on and poured out his magical energy. The golden aura blanketed the entire sky and for a moment there, forced back the [Black Flame]'s attacks.

Unfortunately, he had to suffer quite severe aftermaths all over his body as his price.

[…Goddammit, Meihouwang! Get a grip, man!]

It seemed that the Great Sage's Stories, combined temporarily for this event, were colliding with each other. And now, he was being slowly pushed back from the barrage of the 999th turn's Uriel.

The Myth-grade Constellations acting as the final redoubt were being forced back, as well; the situation on Hades's side was even worse.

Kwa-gwagwagwagwa!!

It was unknown whether <Olympus> holding him back or the internal issue within the <Underworld> itself was to blame, but for some reason, Hades's battle came across as rather stifling, unsatisfactory.

【Hahaha! The 'King of the Underworld', one of the three Gods of Olympus, amount to only this much?】

Hades frowned and continued to silently wield his scythe, but he was still pushed back, forcing Persephone behind telling the Giant Story to step forward as well.

[Did you know? Your soul is currently trapped in the Underworld in this world-line.]

【What rubbish are you talking about? Why am I locked up in there?】

The 999th turn's Kim Namwoon grew irritated and suddenly poured out a huge amount of [Black Flame]. Hades was struck by the attack capable of melting the space itself and his gigantic frame crashed into the ocean.

Han Sooyoung shuddered; that was definitely a type of the [Black Flame] she was familiar with. But just how long did anyone have to train in order to control it to such a degree?

【This is so weird. You telling me that the Black Flame has chosen someone like you as his Incarnation?】

When she raised her head, the 999th turn's Kim Namwoon was already right in front of her eyes.

Han Sooyoung flinched, but before she could shrink back, his hand approached her. The moment she realized it was too late to dodge, sparks danced in the air and his hand was deflected away.

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', is growling.]

【…Oiii, what's this? I'm the real one, Black Flame Dragon-ah.】

Kim Namwoon's eyes gently arced as if he was dealing with a cute puppy.

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', declares that "you, bastard, aren't my Incarnation".]

【Aha. So you got yourself a shiny new car in this place, is that it?】 A streak of chilling madness flashed by Kim Namwoon's eyes. 【In that case, I guess I should turn it into a scrap heap first.】

Kaaaa-booooom!

An explosion going off right in front of her nose caused Han Sooyoung's body to fly backwards. She tried to minimise the impact force by shrinking herself, but even then, she still vomited out a mouthful of blood. She had her Sponsor to thank for not getting killed in that attack.

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', is shouting at you to run away!]

The Abyssal Black Flame Dragon personally incarnated into the skies and wrapped around her as if to protect her. A giant dragon seemingly sculptured out from a slab of obsidian angrily roared out into the world, its eyes seemingly carved out from a pair of rubies burning brightly.

【Hahahaha! This is it! Now this is more like my Black Flame Dragon!】

The two existences commenced with their fierce battle, causing the ocean to buckle as if it was being relentlessly bombarded. Shattered fragments of islands flew about, and the Black Flame Dragon's Breath enveloped the entire sea.

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', is revealing his Status!]

Unfortunately, it was difficult to stop Kim Namwoon after he had become an Outer God, even if it was the Black Flame Dragon doing the fighting.

From the get-go, this opponent was an existence descending to the world as a calamity; the total amount of Probability he was allowed to use was on another scale.

Han Sooyoung began thinking. What should they do in order to stop this utterly nonsensical creature?

「If it was Kim Dokja, what could he have done?」

[Story, 'Predictive Plagiarism', has begun its storytelling!]

It was right then that faint sparks danced around her as a sharp pang of pain rang inside her head.

「How disappointing. Even in this situation, you're still relying on him?」

That was a voice she heard before in the past. In a dream she had, when she was still progressing through the 'Isle of Reincarnators'.

Inside that dream where a man wearing the white coat was killed by another wearing the black coat, Han Sooyoung definitely heard that voice.

「It's because you're like this that that fool was so full of himself in my regression turn.」

The Story was actually talking to her.

'You are…'

「I wasn't planning to interfere anymore, but… I'm going to help you one more time.」

The voice sounded as if it was being very generous to her. Along with the sensation of time slowing down greatly, her cognitive ability expanded as well. Countless Han Sooyoungs woke up inside her head and opened their mouths at the same time.

「Everything that happens in the world has already happened. There's nothing to be surprised about.」

A visceral sensation seemingly hardwired to the future completely took hold of her brain. An ability that could create a world she didn't know previously by combining numerous cliches, patterns, and given information, went to work. The memories of the 'Ways of Survival' she read, the info she heard from Kim Dokja, and the info she gleamed herself, were pieced together logically to write a new story.

Someone was laughing now.

「That's right. Now that is the true [Predictive Plagiarism].」

And Han Sooyoung realized what she needed to do now.

[Story, 'Predictive Plagiarism', is continuing on with its storytelling!]

She couldn't tell if it'd work or not. However…

'…If it's Kim Dokja, he'd have done it'.

「Again, again you…!」

The Black Flame Dragon's loud, rough roar covered up the entire sky. The battle had been going on only for a brief while, yet the creature's proud figure was riddled with wounds both large and small. Just as the dragon spread open its torn wings to pour out a Breath…

"That's enough, Flame Dragon-ah."

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', is…]

"Let me take care of this, so believe in me and take a step back."

The Black Flame Dragon's eyes were quickly dyed in confusion after seeing Han Sooyoung step forward as if to protect her Sponsor. Rather than explaining herself to the dragon, she took yet another step forward.

【Hoh-oh, so you want to fight me personally? With that chestnut-sized body of yours?】

The 999th turn's Kim Namwoon emitted an incredible amount of aura. The Giant Story「Delusional Design」wielded grinder-like sharp blades, already fully prepared to cut and slice Han Sooyoung up at any given moment. However, she didn't seem to be fazed at all.

"Kim Namwoon. You haven't changed even after becoming an Outer God."

【What's this? You sound like you know about me?】

"Right, I know a lot about you. You, the idiot who failed to fulfil his unrequited love and even after becoming an Outer God, is still chasing after a girl."

The 999th turn's Kim Namwoon's jaw slowly dropped.

「All Outer Gods have lost their memories. Or, what little remains are unstable.」

「In that case, how did 'Kings' retain their memories?」

「Could it be that those memories are far too precious to them?」

"The dude who couldn't even confess properly when good opportunities presented themselves, yet still puts on underwear with giant robots on them just in case."

【…You, you! What the hell are you?! How do you know something that not even my captain knew…?!】

"The reason why you always bandage your hand is probably to hide that self-inflicted wound on your wrist, right? You didn't want Lee Jihye to discover that."

Kim Namwoon was momentarily overcome by fluster, but he managed to quickly fix his expression.

"Why do you like Lee Jihye?"

[Story, 'Forty-Thousand-Year-Old Crush', is getting agitated.]

【…T-that is, because Jihye is pretty…】

"Nope. You might be trash, but you don't have the setting of lusting after women."

【Setting? What the hell are you talking about…】

"The reason why you like Lee Jihye so much is because she trusts and follows Yoo Joonghyuk."

【What dogshit is…】

"You wanted to be acknowledged by her. That you're good enough to replace Yoo Joonghyuk."

[Giant Story, 'Delusional Design', is getting greatly agitated!]

"Actually, you just wished to become like Yoo Joonghyuk."

Han Sooyoung stared deeply into the eyes of the 999th turn's Kim Namwoon that were getting colder and harder.

【What an entertaining… story. However, I don't have much time left, you see? I ain't gonna listen to your bull…】

Han Sooyoung didn't know whether saying these things were a right move or not. No, in truth, she knew it wasn't one. Even then, she simply had to say them. In order to save this world, she must…

"And by doing that, you… want to be forgiven by Lee Jihye."

…Must ruthlessly dig into the old wounds from another world.

"If it weren't for your mistake, the 999th turn's Yoo Joonghyuk wouldn't have died, after all."

Tsu-chuchuchut!

Almost instantly, sparks exploded forth from the entire figure of the 999th turn's Kim Namwoon. Sounds of something creaking could be heard next. The foundational Stories that formed his core were cracking apart. Those were noises of his memories breaking down.

【You…】

The enraged Kim Namwoon hurriedly gathered up his Stories now swimming in confusion and roared out. The light in his eyes faded in and out repeatedly.

Han Sooyoung quietly observed him in the meantime.

「Even [Predictive Plagiarism] can't know everything.」

Her overheating head felt hot as if it was burning in flames.

She hadn't read the entirety of the 'Ways of Survival' like Kim Dokja had done, nor did she live through the 999th turn for real like Yoo Joonghyuk.

However, there were certain things she could still tell without having to hear or see them. That was the power of imagination – the power to infer the context even though she didn't know the finer details of a particular story.

As long as there was a situation, its development pre-arranged, and with the 'Probability' existing in this world…

Her 'Predictive Plagiarism' could exercise a near-omniscient level of power.

"Kim Namwoon."

Han Sooyoung walked in the sky one step at a time. He staggered about, hugging his Stories while growling like a wounded beast.

「Han Sooyoung stared at such Kim Namwoon's Story.」

It was the same for Yoo Joonghyuk as well as the Constellations.

All creatures that lived for a long time were the same; just as their strengths were reflected in their history, so did their weaknesses, also reflected in their past. That was the fate of the ones telling such stories, the ones being told in those stories.

Like an author using a pen to scribble out unnecessary parts, Han Sooyoung reached out towards Kim Namwoon.

「Just like when Kim Dokja made the 1863rd turn's Yoo Joonghyuk give in.」

"You probably want to go back to those times. However, you must've despaired at the fact that you can never go back."

【Y-you, if you keep running your mouth…!】

"However, you need to know this. The world-line you lived in is over, and the people you loved aren't going to come back. And the likes of you can never become Yoo Joonghyuk. You can never save anyone nor can you atone for your sins."

Kim Namwoon's cheeks were trembling. The foundation of a being who witnessed the 'Conclusion' of the 999th regression turn and became an 'Outer God King', was unsteadily shaking about. He made an expression of a man whose every Story had been lost. In that moment, his face was of a seventeen-year-old boy thrown into the world for the first time. His Story that existed for tens of thousands of years, his unshakeable delusions he had built up all this time, were crumbling apart with just a few well-placed words.

【N-no, that's not true. I, I am…】

Han Sooyoung spoke as if she was putting the full stop on that small crack. "You are simply an eternal prisoner trapped in this stinking <Star Stream>, that's all."

Pah-chuchuchut!

【Kim Namwoon!!】

The 999th turn's Uriel roared out in her true voice, and Kim Namwoon's fading consciousness woke back up.

[Story, 'Companion of Desperate Spirit', has begun its storytelling!]

The only thing capable of rebuilding a broken Story was another Story. Kim Namwoon's Story that she worked so hard to disrupt was regaining its original shape. Light was returning to his eyes, too. Han Sooyoung could only smile wryly.

'Goddammit, I thought it was going well. Still, did I hurt him at least a little bit?'

Soon, great rage filled up Kim Namwoon's eyes.

【…Haha, I almost got done in there. I see, so there was a reason why the Black Flame Dragon had chosen you.】

A powerful premonition of death washed over her. The [Predictive Plagiarism] tautly spinning around suddenly sagged like a snapped tape. The tragic premonition of death being unavoidable no matter where she ran off to.

It was then, she heard that voice again alongside the 'Tsu-chut!'

「This should be enough. Because the protagonist is here.」

Her senses seemingly connected to the future rapidly grew murky. Kim Namwoon's fist raised up high towards the sky froze still. Everyone within the battlefield could sense it. Something incredible was approaching them.

Ku-gugugugu!

A 'Status' that simply by its existence alone could lead a world to its annihilation.

The first one to react was the 999th turn's Uriel. 【It's him!!】

She roared out a horrifying howl towards the skies and quickly left the battle, before flinging herself towards the direction of that Status.

Kim Namwoon too stared in that direction. 【You… You got really lucky this time. Next time we meet, I will…】

He alternated his gaze between Han Sooyoung and the Black Flame Dragon and hesitated, before disappearing in the direction of where Uriel had gone off to. Having lost all sense of tension, she plopped down on her butt on top of the Dragon's body. She stared beyond the horizon where those two had disappeared and recalled the last thing Kim Dokja said to her.

– Han Sooyoung, if in the one-in-a-million chance that something goes wrong…

– Will you stop planting those ominous foreshadows already??

She thought that such things wouldn't happen.

– No matter what, you gotta endure until that guy shows up.

"That bastard. Making such a cool entrance and stuff."

She could hear thunderclaps going off in the distant night sky, stained by the auras of the [Hellfire] and [Black Flame].

A man with an ancient face was descending on the heavens of end times.

Chapter 475: Ep. 90 - One Person, IV

The coat dancing against the strong winds, that indescribable Status leaking out nonstop from the [Black Heavenly Demon Sword].

Han Sooyoung definitely knew that guy. But even then, why was this? At least in this very moment, he seemed like a completely different existence to her.

"…Are you really Yoo Joonghyuk?"

He glanced in her direction, before spinning around towards the Pacific Ocean with a loud boom. She panicked and cried out.

"Hey, you! Where are you going?!"

【After him!!】

The 999th turn's Uriel and Kim Namwoon chased after him next.

Han Sooyoung only then realized what his intentions were. Yoo Joonghyuk was trying to lure these Outer Gods away from the companions.

"That crazy idiot…"

"Sooyoung-ssi, are you alright?"

Yoo Sangah came closer and supported her. The moment she leaned against her shoulders, Han Sooyoung ended up vomiting all the blood flowing backwards inside her.

"Bleeergh-!"

Her head felt hot as if every blood vessel in it was burning up. Sparks went wild as if to scorch her frontal lobe. She endured the pain and shouted out. "Great Sage! Hades! Uriel! You must hurry and chase after Yoo Joonghyuk! The rest of us will take care of this place, so please hurry! You mustn't let that guy fight alone!"

[<Star Stream> has noticed your Story.]

[You have used a power that went against the Probability!]

"Keok…"

Her vision dizzily spun around; her internals hurt as if they had completely overturned.

[Your Incarnation Body is being swept up in the storm of aftermaths!]

Han Sooyoung detected a powerful force about to explode within her body and hurriedly shouted out. "Yoo Sangah! Get away!"

However, Yoo Sangah held Han Sooyoung's shoulders even tighter and shook her head. The power of Sakyamuni she had inherited was being transmitted through the hand touching the latter's shoulder. The time and space twisted, slowing down the growth of the aftermaths' storm. "Fight it. You can do it. I also fought it off and survived in the past, too."

"Goddammit."

Muscles all over her body were moaning out. Faint terror seeped inside her amongst all the horrifying pain. She had been habitually muttering out about being careful around the Probability, yet here she was, making a critical mistake like this. She mistakenly thought that, since a fool like Kim Dokja managed to survive until now, she'd somehow make it through this one, too.

Tsu-chuchuchut!

…Was she going to die? So meaninglessly like this?

[Story, 'Predictive Plagiarism', has begun its storytelling!]

It was around here that the signs of the aftermath's storm gradually softened.

Han Sooyoung witnessed letters covering up her Incarnation Body. Those were words she wrote in the past – words she secretly wrote in the note pad so that neither Kim Dokja nor Yoo Joonghyuk could find out later. And now, those words were leaking out from the flapping pages of the note pad to wrap around her body.

However, there were some sentences she hadn't written before mixed in among them.

「You're indeed me, so your writing skill isn't too shabby, I guess.」

The voice sounded half-mocking and half-satisfied.

[Story, 'Predictive Plagiarism', is bearing the aftermath's storm in your stead.]

Tsu-chut, chuchuchut…

As the storm of Probability's aftermaths weakened, the letters began scattering away gradually faster and faster.

Han Sooyoung wanted to ask. About these sentences, about what they actually were. Unfortunately, she didn't have enough energy left to even ask a question anymore.

「…This is probably as far as I can go. Send the word out to Kim Dokja.」

[The vestige of another world-line permeating within your Story has begun dissipating.]

As her consciousness faded out, her Story continued to speak to her.

「What waits for him in the 'Conclusion' he wishes for is…」

* * *

While supporting Lee Jihye, I stared at the two 'Outer God Kings'.

They had lived in the same regression turn, and they also saw the same end of the world, yet they became two different beings.

[Giant Story, 'Wanderer of the Eternal Horizon', has begun its storytelling.]

[Giant Story, 'Heart Sealing the Sorrow', has begun its storytelling!]

I could see the cross-section of the Story laid bare within the sparks dancing in the air. The story they compiled together line by every line with their blood – this was the story from the regression turn that I loved the most. The one that I had read many times over.

「"Captain Yoo Joonghyuk. It's a relief that you are a regressor."」

The 'King of the Silver Heart' glanced in my direction.

The 999th turn's Lee Hyunsung – the sorrow contained within his Story was being transmitted to me through my [Reading Comprehension].

「"It'll be okay for me to stop being sad, yes? You're going to die, anyway. Even if you die, we'll be able to meet again in the next turn. And you'll continue your story in that place… And, you'll get to restart this journey once more, won't you?"」

The Story of Steel was crying.

「"I'm sorry, Lee Hyunsung."」

The forged steel expanded with loud noises and swallowed up his words. Tears that should've flowed out remained frozen within his eyes, dyed in the silvery light.

「"There's no need to apologise. We'll be seeing the Conclusion before you, after all. The end you wanted to see, the promises you couldn't keep, all of them, I'll carry them all without missing a single one."」

The 999th turn's Lee Hyunsung was looking at me. He was not the 'Lee Hyunsung' I knew, but even then, he was definitely 'Lee Hyunsung'.

– You resemble that person greatly. Even more so than what I heard from my Sponsor.

The voice of the 999th turn's Lee Hyunsung entered my head. He even smiled gently, as if he knew what I was thinking about already.

How could this be? How could a man who had to endure such tragedies, be able to form that kind of expression?

– And that's why I won't let you die.

I knew that he didn't hold any hostilities towards us. But I didn't think he'd go this far to side with us, either. Just what kind of a Story did the 'Master of Steel' hand over to him as he died?

【Hyunsung ahjussi.】

The one to cut the flow was the 999th turn's Lee Jihye.

【It's been a long time since you called me that.】

【I have no plans of hurting you. Get out of the way.】

Two neverending Stories intertwined with each other.

Lee Hyunsung spoke, sounding as if he was reminiscing about an ancient memory. 【I'm sorry, but I can't do that.】

【Why are you stopping me? Ahjussi, you refused to be summoned as the 'calamity', didn't you? It was us who negotiated with the Bureau of this world-line, not you.】

…So, I guess it really was the Bureau who summoned the 999th turn's beings as calamities.

Lee Hyunsung maintained his silence for a bit before replying coldly. 【Never negotiate with the <Star Stream>. That was our promise.】

【So? What happened to us as the result of that promise?】

【…】

【We destroyed the Bureau, we fought the Dokkaebi King. Then, after we clashed against the 'Final Wall'… I'm asking you, what happened to us after that?】

The Final Wall – it seemed that they had witnessed that wall, as well. The 'Wall' that the 'Yoo Joonghyuk' of the original had eventually reached, too.

The 999th turn's Lee Jihye shuddered before continuing on. 【Just like you said, our story has ended. The world-line we used to live in was destroyed, and it's just us four that became 'Outer Gods' after surviving that destruction.】

【We promised to overcome the 'Final Wall' even if we become the existences outside the scenarios.】

【That wall isn't something we can overcome. You also know this.】

【In this world-line…】

【Stop it with 'this world-line' nonsense! What's so special about this world-line, anyway? This place is exactly the same as the one we used to live in. It's a world-line that's going to end soon.】

Lee Jihye of this world-line staggered as I supported her. Her lips were trembling ever so slightly.

The 'Master of the Sunken Island' continued on. 【The Great Dokkaebis that got in contact with us said this, that they were going to abandon this world-line. That they are planning to recycle it and use it as the start of a new story.】

Those words caused the 'King of the Silver Heart' to change his expression. The previously-warm aura dissipated and the sensation of cold metal spread out.

A chilling voice came out from the forged steel's lips. 【…What kind of a deal did you make with the Bureau?】

【If this world is about to sink underneath the ocean, it's fine for us to destroy it personally, right?】

【Jihye-yah.】

The 999th turn's Lee Jihye was smiling, but I wasn't sure whether I could truly describe that expression of 'smiling' or not.

【The 'Dokkaebi King' of this world promised us that if we destroyed this world-line, then he'd revive our own world-line. He'd get in touch with the 'Oldest Dream' and allow us to start our stories again.】

Lee Jihye's shoulders were trembling. I too was also sharing in that shuddering.

That was the reason for the 999th turn's beings to cross into this world. Even at the cost of destroying another world, they wished to regain theirs.

The 'King of the Silver Heart' replied. 【Our goal wasn't to regain our world, but to find the true culprit of all these tragedies.】

【What will change even if we did?】

【If we wish to carry out our captain's wishes, we…】

【Even if we eliminate the source of the tragedies, the time we lost won't come back. Our dead companions won't come back to us. The world we lived in, it's not going to come back… The 999th turn's Yoo Joonghyuk who died there, he's never coming back.】

Ku-gugugugu.

Something was approaching this location from afar while tearing through the horizon.

The 'Master of the Sunken Island' spoke again. 【That's why we don't have a choice but to end it all and start again.】

The tsunami waves that lost its vigour began rising up once more.

The 999th turn's Lee Hyunsung hurriedly started the [Steel Transformation] and protected us with his metal. However, the force behind the waves was stronger and faster than the metal's growth speed.

【You can't stop me. I told you this before that I'm not the only one here.】

Kwa-kwakwakwakwa!

The crimson sunset cast from behind us was burning up the heavens. That was the power of the 'Living Flame', the 999th turn's Uriel.

And the meaning of her approaching here meant…

"Ahjussi, it can't be…?!"

Lee Jihye grasped my sleeve.

I looked into her eyes and reassured her. "Don't worry. Things you're worried about will not happen."

I was also saying to that myself.

"Our story, it's not as weak as you fear."

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation', is revealing his Status.]

[Constellation, 'Watcher of Light and Darkness', is revealing his Status.]

[Constellation, 'Prisoner of the Constrictive Headband', is revealing his Status.]

The 'Demon King of Salvation', the 'Watcher of Light and Darkness', plus the third Modifier I earned by putting on the constrictive headband – all of my Stories were emitting light at the same time.

I walked over to Lee Hyunsung standing before us. "Thank you for helping us out. However, it's alright not to push yourself."

【It's dangerous. You must hide behind m…】

"This isn't the 999th turn."

In front, the 'Master of the Sunken Island'. And at the back, the 'Living Flame'. There was no place to run now.

The shadow cast by the massive battleship dawned upon us. And while standing on the top of that huge wave, the 999th turn's Lee Jihye muttered out as if she was mocking someone.

【Everything will go back. Just like what the captain told us, we'll also regress. We'll go back to the past, and start everything from scratch. When we do…】

The waves rolled in and crashed into us. I used the power of the 'Giant Story' to deal with that Status. I felt searing pain from both of my hands defending against the wave.

I saw the horizon where the sun and the ocean met just beyond the rumbling walls of the foams. The boundary that we could never reach no matter how far we run.

Kwa-aaaaaah!

And then, that boundary split apart right before my eyes. A single blade was actually cutting that boundary down.

As she fell hard from the wave's highest-spot, the 999th turn's Lee Jihye was looking at us.

More correctly, at a man standing next to me.

"You can't change anything with regression. I needed a very long time to realize this."

Chapter 476: Ep. 90 - One Person, V

I sensed the power of a vast Story oozing out from Yoo Joonghyuk's entire frame.

[<Star Stream> can't take its eyes away from the Incarnation, 'Yoo Joonghyuk'!]

The will of the entire world was now paying attention to him.

[Absolute majority of Constellations watching the scenario have raised their wariness due to the existence of Incarnation, 'Yoo Joonghyuk'.]

[Constellations of the 'Final Scenario' are stunned by the Story of Incarnation, 'Yoo Joonghyuk'.]

[Portion of the Bureau's Great Dokkaebis are demanding a 「Probability Suitability Evaluation」!]

[The 'King of Stories' has rejected the demand.]

[The 「Probability Suitability Evaluation」 is restricted within the applicable scenario.]

Every single Yoo Joonghyuk's Story that I knew felt 'complete' now. This feeling couldn't simply be described as him merely becoming stronger. This 'Yoo Joonghyuk' before my eyes was a different existence to the one I became familiar with.

I got a little tense as I asked him. "Our companions?"

"Safe."

"You being here means the 'Secretive Plotter' has decided to do me that favour, right?"

My final alternative plan in case even the plan B failed was to awake the sleeping Yoo Joonghyuk.

[Incarnation 'Yoo Joonghyuk' currently has abnormally activated the 'Disconnected Film Theory'.]

Tsu-chut…

[Film's connection is incomplete!]

[The entire film may cease to exist if this connection is forcibly maintained.]

The last-ditch method that I didn't want to resort to if at all possible, yet simply had to when left with no other options – the greatest ace up our sleeve we currently possessed.

['Yoo Joonghyuks' of all the regression turns are now looking at you.]

And I felt distant, numerous gazes coming from within him. Suddenly, I had this ominous foreboding. What if this Yoo Joonghyuk wasn't the 'Yoo Joonghyuk' that I knew of…?

"Excuse me, but which regression turn Yoo Joonghyuk are you?"

He then stared at me. I could see the thick scar on his cheek, a wound the 3rd turn Yoo Joonghyuk didn't possess. I was about to ask something else, but then, several sentences flowed out from his body as if to shut my mouth.

「Terror of All Stars」

「Strongest Incarnation in Star Stream's history」

「The Iron-blooded Supreme King」

「The Usurper of the Scenarios」

The history he had lived so far was floating up as the crude, coarse sentences from the 'Ways of Survival'. The sentences gathered to become a Story, and that story soon became the man standing before my eyes, the existence that waded past 1864 lives.

"I am Yoo Joonghyuk."

He was not Yoo Joonghyuk from any of the regression turns. Not from the 0th turn, not from the 1st, and not even from the 1863rd.

He was simply Yoo Joonghyuk from all regression turns.

【…Captain??】

The 999th turn's Lee Jihye dazedly looked at us, her eyes wide open in disbelief.

And then, another Lee Jihye shouted out at that girl. "Master! Hurry! Take care of her! She's trying to destroy our world-line!"

She yelled out with so much anger.

I was thinking of adding something there. However, such thoughts scattered away the moment I saw Yoo Joonghyuk's side profile. He didn't bother to assume the attacking stance and simple stared at the two 'Outer Gods' present here.

[Character, 'Master of the Sunken Island', is looking at the character, 'Yoo Joonghyuk'.]

[Character, 'King of the Silver Heart', is looking at the character, 'Yoo Joonghyuk'.]

And the two people from the 999th turn was staring back at him in return.

Lee Hyunsung looked quite agitated at the moment. 【This story… But, it can't… Could it be, really…?】

Just like how I was searching for the 'Yoo Joonghyuk' I knew from this particular Yoo Joonghyuk, they were now looking for the 'Yoo Joonghyuk' they recognised.

[3rd turn's 'Yoo Joonghyuk' is remaining silent.]

[41st turn's 'Yoo Joonghyuk' is remaining silent.]

[362nd turn's 'Yoo Joonghyuk' is remaining silent.]

[666th turn's 'Yoo Joonghyuk' is remaining silent.]

There was no point in becoming one anymore as Yoo Joonghyuks were being torn apart within those gazes. They were searching for the 'Yoo Joonghyuk' they recognised and were shoving away other 'Yoo Joonghyuks' in the process. They eliminated those they couldn't understand and tried so hard to find that one 'Yoo Joonghyuk' they recognised.

And so, how long passed by like that?

[999th turn's 'Yoo Joonghyuk' is slowly opening his eyes.]

And one of them finally discovered something among the patchwork of 'Yoo Joonghyuks'.

【Capt…!]

Just before the 'Master of the Sunken Island' could take a large stride forward, the air before her split apart with a single ray of light. Accompanied by choking heat, a blinding beam of light crashed down like a lightning bolt.

Yoo Joonghyuk lightly swung his [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] to deflect that beam of light.

【That man is not the 'Yoo Joonghyuk' that you remember.】

There was no need to ask who it could be.

【He's simply the 'Outer God' who stole the 'Yoo Joonghyuk' we know of!】

The 'Living Flame', 999th turn's Uriel, cried out.

She lived only for the purpose of killing the 'Secretive Plotter'. And she came this far to finally have her vengeance. The conflagration became even more vicious on her [Flames of Retribution].

The one to try and stop her was the 'Master of the Sunken Island'.

【H-hold on. Stop, Uriel. That 'Captain' is…!】

【Don't be fooled. The 'Secretive Plotter' is permeating within him. Meaning, he's the sworn enemy we've been searching for after all this time!】

And right next moment…

【Holy shit, so that's the captain from this world-line? Been a while, but still, he's so damn scary…】

Finally, even the last 'King' arrived in the location.

He took a look around the battlefield, then spoke with his eyes almost bulging out of his face. 【T-there are two Jihyes here?!】

…It was the 'Monarch of the Great Abyss', the 999th turn's Kim Namwoon.

[All 'Outer God Kings' have gathered in one place!]

[Every Constellation in <Star Stream> is paying close attention to this battlefield!]

[Every Nebula in <Star Stream> is fearful of the advent of the fallen beings.]

[A large number of Constellations are revealing their animosity!]

They simply ignored whatever the stars were saying and quietly studied each other.

「The 'Living Flame' that rises up from the east.」

「The 'Master of the Sunken Island', the calamity of the world in the west.」

「The 'Monarch of the Great Abyss', the ruler of the northern universe.」

「The 'King of the Silver Heart', the ruler of the interstellar space in the south.」

「And the 'Great Plotter' that crawls from the place of nothing.」

The plan I began cooking up bit by bit ever since I discovered their names within the book written by the 'Recorder of Fear' and deduced their identities…

I sneaked a glance at Yoo Joonghyuk. The original plan A was actually supposed to begin from here.

– Yoo Joonghyuk.

My signal prompted him to step forward.

The Chaotic aura of an Outer God enveloped him, and he spoke in the true voice. 【Everyone has gathered, I see.】

Those words contained emotions that I couldn't even fathom. However, someone present here still managed to do just that.

【Captain. I knew it. It is you, right? But how…】

【You dare to use yet another underhanded method…!!】

The [Flames of Retribution] scythed past the air and flew in. The [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] containing the power of the Transcendent rose up to deflect the flames.

As the friction noises loudly tangled up with waves of magical energy, Yoo Joonghyuk raised his voice. 【Been a while, Uriel. My old companion-in-arms.】

【Shut up! You are not Yoo Joonghyuk! You are…!!】 The 999th turn's Uriel shouted out as if she had been made fun of just now. Conflagration of destruction spread out everywhere and ignited the oxygen in the air. Within this hell of choking, hard-to-breathe dry heat, she continued to speak. 【The Yoo Joonghyuk I knew died in that place.】

Her Stories growled like a wounded wolf. Her expression could only be made by someone who lost something far too precious to her. And while carrying such an expression, she pointed her sword at us.

【And it was you bastard who killed him.】

Her Story was crying out now.

「[I'll kill him. I'll definitely kill him. Without a doubt, I shall make sure to kill him.]」

The 999th turn's Uriel held onto Yoo Joonghyuk's Incarnation Body wasting away due to the 'Other World Pledge' and cried in sorrow.

「[Regardless of what needs to be done, even if that means crossing world-lines, I will definitely avenge you. Even if I end up leaving the side of Good to become Evil!!]」

And so, the 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' became the 'Living Flame'. She was an Archangel who chose to become an 'Outer God' for the sake of her vengeance. That was her reason for being here.

【'Yoo Joonghyuk' doesn't die. Only the regression waits.】

【Shut up! Such words won't…!】

Yoo Joonghyuk deflected some more flames tinged with boundless rage and continued on. 【He awoke again, and lived through the 1000th turn. He then died, only to move onto the 1001st. And so, he continued to live on and on. And on.】

I too know of that life. A life that no one remembered, a life that he couldn't share with anyone else. Yoo Joonghyuk continued to live such a life all alone.

【And eventually, he became me.】

Uriel pounced, looking as if she had heard something she shouldn't have. She swung her [Flames of Retribution] in desperation, cutting his side, then slicing into his stomach. And in a blink, her blade circled around and took aim at his neck. He didn't try to stop her, as if this was the just punishment he'd been waiting for. And then…

Like magic, Uriel's blade came to a halt.

【You, you, you… are…】

Uriel probably knew this, too – that her vengeance could never be fulfilled. Because the one who stole away her most precious companion-in-arms happened to be the very same companion, that's why.

Yoo Joonghyuk spoke to her. 【If you want, go ahead and kill me. The 'Secretive Plotter' who took your world-line away is none other than me, after all.】

Uriel howled out in anguish, then cried out loudly.

Just as her sword moved again, the ocean exploded along with the loud 'Ka-boom!!'

Her sword was flung in the air. The Flames of Retribution stabbed into the ocean, and slowly sank beneath the waves while vaporising the water.

Yoo Joonghyuk wasn't responsible for that.

Shu-wuuuu…

The cannon smoke rose up from the other side of the waves. It was the 999th turn's Lee Jihye who fired a shell.

【That's enough, Uriel.】 Her voice was thickly tinged with joy and madness as she carried on. 【Yes, we know it, too. We already knew it all too well…】

She staggered across the ocean's surface and approached this side. Yoo Joonghyuk didn't avoid her pale hand.

【Captain. You're inside somewhere, right? You've become something else now, but you as you are definitely inside, right? You're still alive, right??】

Rather than tears, Chaos flooded out from Lee Jihye's eyes like fine powder seemingly made out from the pitch-black darkness. He looked at her and nodded his head.

[999th turn's 'Yoo Joonghyuk' is looking at his old companion-in-arms.]

The 999th turn's Lee Jihye grasped onto his sleeve and slowly crumbled.

I could only look at his back. His back, where I couldn't read his expressions at all.

｢It was the trickery of the world-line that caused Yoo Joonghyuk to become many.｣

Yoo Joonghyuk who lived during the 0th turn became the 1st turn's Yoo Joonghyuk, then he became the 2nd turn's. And the 2nd turn went on to become the 3rd – and then, the 4th.

Abnormal events of the past and future interfering with each other ran rampant and made everyone forget that crucial fact, but this was the undeniable truth.

｢A regressor actually doesn't regress. What actually regresses isn't him, but everything else excluding him.｣

The time for everyone else would rewind, but his own time would continue to march forward.

Even though the world-lines had split up and some became the 1864th turn's Yoo Joonghyuk while someone else became the 'Secretive Plotter', but still…

「From the beginning, he was just 'one person' who kept walking on one continuous, unbroken path.」

However, could these people be able to handle the truth?

「Someone only lived on for the sake of her revenge.」

Uriel, still raising her flames.

「Someone only lived on for the sake of continuing on with his will.」

Lee Hyunsung, who couldn't shed tears anymore.

「Someone only lived on for the sake of fighting him one more time.」

Kim Namwoon, standing askew in the air and glaring daggers in this direction.

「And someone only lived on for the sake of reviving those times she lived alongside him.」

Lee Jihye, currently crumpled, looking vacant.

Yoo Joonghyuk told them that 'regression couldn't change anything'. However, his regression did change someone's life. The 'Yoo Joonghyuk' was the world to these people. A world that helped them live on even after their own world-line was annihilated.

「Kim Dokja's plan was precisely about this 'world'.」

If, by any chance, these people still remembered their world even now…

And, if they accepted this 'Yoo Joonghyuk' once more as their captain, then…

「If so, then there might not be a reason to continue with this battle.」

【If you're really the captain, then… You must know what I want, then.】 The 999th turn's Lee Jihye smiled brightly. 【Let's go back, captain. Let's start from the beginning again.】 She held onto his wrist and spoke. 【Let's destroy this world-line together. Huh? We made a deal with the Dokkaebi King, you see? If we destroy this world-line, he will send us back. He will get in touch with your Sponsor, the 'Oldest Dream', and…】

I hurriedly looked at him.

– Yoo Joonghyuk.

He must never stimulate them negatively here. No, he definitely needed to use the most suitable words to win them over. Even if he had to lie, he needed to agree, before it was too…

"Lee Jihye."

Yoo Joonghyuk looked at her and spoke. Not through his true voice, but with his physical voice.

The 999th turn's Lee Jihye shrunk her shoulders when subjected under his gaze. Just like on that day when she first learned to wield her sword from her master.

"Is that what you really want?"

【…】

"Do you believe that you'll become happy if everything reverts to how it was back then?"

【The captain I knew, he… He'd never say things like that.】 The 999th turn's Lee Jihye bit her lip and let go of his hand. 【He's someone who regressed 999 times. He didn't falter even when living through that inordinate amount of time. That man, he'd never say something so weak, and…】

"A man who regressed 999 times can grow tired by the 1000th," said Yoo Joonghyuk in a voice so honest that even I was left stunned. "Even if one endured 1000 lifetimes, one can still give up during the 1001st."

The voice was so thick with boundless fatigue that even I became dazed by it.

【There's no way… That's not possible. The captain I remember is…!】

"He would not give up. Indeed. However, if that's everything you remember about 'Yoo Joonghyuk', then…"

I needed to say something. I need to tell him that he must not say these things. But I couldn't.

"…Then, that Yoo Joonghyuk is dead."

That was his heart laid bare. A man who lived 1864 lifetimes, a man who had never truly expressed himself, had finally bared his soul.

Lee Jihye cried out, sounding more like a shriek. 【Not true! That can't be true!!】

"He shall not regress anymore."

I saw some things sparkle in the distant sky – they were stars.

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is scanning the vicinity with an anxious face!]

[Constellation, 'Most Ancient Liberator', is asking about his maknae's well-being!]

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', declares that he will use both of his hands this time!]

Stars that watched our stories from a very long time ago were approaching this side. And beyond them, our companions were also rushing towards us.

Han Sooyoung, Yoo Sangah, Jung Heewon… The people from <Kim Dokja's Company> who had lived with us in this world. Within the darkness brought on by the fading sunset, they looked like one giant constellation.

Yoo Joonghyuk, now as one person, took in that sight and raised his voice.

"I can't go back. My final regression turn is this one."

Chapter 477: Ep. 91 - One Single Story, I

「He took a very long time to get to that decision.」

I stared at Yoo Joonghyuk making that declaration.

The original plan wasn't like this. He was supposed to use the memories from the 999th turn and buy as much time as possible. He was to stimulate the 'Outer Gods' appropriately and persuade them.

"There will be no next regression for me."

Even though I was looking at a guy completely, utterly trashing my plan to bits, for some reason I didn't get angry.

「"Yoo Joonghyuk, a former regressor."」

Only now could I truly comprehend what he said back then.

I had been thinking that the reason for the rapid growth of this turn's Yoo Joonghyuk was down to the information I provided and the interference from other variables. However, now I couldn't say that anymore.

The proof was the Stories rising up from Yoo Joonghyuk's entire frame. Stories that contained not the desperation, but the will of a lifetime.

「Yoo Joonghyuk had bet everything on this regression.」

Just like a locomotive dashing forward by exhausting every ounce of its fuel, Yoo Joonghyuk was doing everything he possibly could to live this life.

This regression turn was not the base material for his next life.

【…Captain, you're lying, right? Huh? You're kidding, right??】

Lee Jihye's expression creaked and distorted. It wasn't merely an expression of someone betrayed by the belief she held onto. No, that was the face of a person whose world had crumbled.

She then reached out towards that last straw she had been chasing after all this time. Unfortunately, Yoo Joonghyuk didn't grab that hand.

"Lee Jihye. Have I ever lied to you before?"

【…Why?】

Explosive auras were leaking out from her entire body now. I sensed the 999th's turn's history going violently out of control.

【Why, whywhywhywhywhywhywhywhywhywhywhywhywhywhy】

Stories were asking why it was not the 999th turn but us – why was it not the world they lived in, but this one?

I was about to take a step forward, but Yoo Joonghyuk stopped me.

"Stay back."

His cheeks were trembling painfully. No matter how hard he tried to hide his emotions, he still couldn't erase his unique behaviour. I sighed softly and replied.

– We can't retreat anymore, anyway.

– Apologies.

– It's fine. This is your choice, after all.

At a casual glance, Yoo Joonghyuk might seem like a realist, but actually, he was far more of an idealist than anyone out there. From the get-go, there was no way someone would repeatedly regress unless he doggedly held onto his ideals. And in order to protect such a dude's ideals, someone had to take on the role of a realist.

I took another step forward while looking at the waves of 'Outer Gods', about to rush in full of indignation.

[Yoo Joonghyuk did not choose to forsake your worldline.]

I used every ounce of my energy to use that true voice, causing the 'Outer God Kings' to look at me. The 999th turn's Lee Jihye, Lee Hyunsung, Kim Namwoon, Uriel…

[Have you all forgotten? He was never in a position to choose, but always had it chosen for him.]

He had repeatedly regressed, but Yoo Joonghyuk had never regressed because he really wanted to. Even when he had to discard the 3rd turn and regressed to the 4th, and when he gave up on the 4th and chose to go to the 5th, it wasn't out of his will, his desire.

The regression wasn't his choice, but his fate; what chose 'it' wasn't him, but the 'story' that desired his regression.

[We have no need to fight each other. Why must one tragedy compete against another one?] I had no idea whether these words would work or not, but even then, I simply had to say them. [We won't forsake you. We do not wish to remember you all as calamities. We want to…]

I looked up at the sky. I felt dizzy for a moment there from all the boundless gazes I hadn't seen before bearing down on me, but I didn't avoid meeting them head-on.

Just like how Yoo Joonghyuk was not the same Yoo Joonghyuk from the 0th turn, I too wasn't Kim Dokja of the 1st scenario.

[We want to fight against that sky together with all of you.]

Beyond the skies, the stars began illuminating in sheer madness.

[The absolute majority of the Constellations can't understand your declaration!]

[Great Dokkaebis from the Bureau are shocked by your intentions!]

Indirect messages rained down like starlight. If it was before, I'd been too busy reading those messages, but now, I knew the truth.

The reality was, all those starlights in the sky were nothing more than ornaments to hide the fact that the darkness existed there.

[The 'King of Stories' is now looking at you.]

It was then I heard a very faint chuckle.

【Oii, do you even know what you're talking about? Are you saying that you want to destroy <Star Stream>?】 The snide voice belonged to the 999th turn's Kim Namwoon. 【You think we haven't tried that before?】

The depths of emotions contained within his voice was unfathomable.

He was smiling, but he wasn't really smiling.

That exaggerated smile hid the sense of resignation deep within.

【We already tried that. We shot down all the Constellations, and we even killed the Dokkaebi King of our world-line, too. You know what happened when we did?】

Kim Namwoon walked on the ocean's surface and stood right before me.

And as if to transmit the sweetest despair known to men, he whispered to me next. 【The world just vanished.】

I silently listened to his words.

【We definitely cleared the scenarios properly. We even completed all the conditions, yet… We lost everything we loved. There was no miracle, no reward at the end of the line.】

I recalled the words uttered out by the 999th turn's Uriel.

「If the <Star Stream> disappears, the whole universe will fall into chaos. Such a world-line must never be created. That is the way of Evil.」

That's what she said when I mentioned my goal of destroying the <Star Stream>.

Kim Namwoon continued on. 【You know what we saw at the end of the world?】

[You probably saw a massive wall. A great wall that surrounds all of the worlds, the one where you can't even see its beginning or the end.]

【…And how do you even know that?】

[Because that's where our true goal is, too. What we want to achieve isn't simply the destruction of <Star Stream>.] I repeated with my own voice what the 'Secretive Plotter' told me earlier. [And it's to eliminate the ringleader of all these tragedies hiding behind that 'Final Wall'.]

The 999th turn's Kim Namwoon stared at me as if he was greatly shocked by this revelation.

His lips bobbed up and down many times before he finally roared out. 【No one can go past the 'Final Wall'! That's…】

【Namwoon-ah. These people, they possess the 'Final Key' that might allow them to go over the 'Final Wall'.】

Lee Hyunsung raised his voice.

Kim Namwoon alternated his gaze between Lee Hyunsung and me, looking utterly confused. I simply nodded my head towards him.

[The 'Outer God Kings' are getting agitated by your announcement!]

[Your declaration is causing a rapid change in the '98th scenario'!]

[A large number of Constellations are indignant of your choice!]

It was fine if the stars didn't want to side with us. It was also fine if other Nebulas didn't want to join us, either.

However, if these four decided to stand on our side…

If these 'Kings' that lived through the 999th turn remained in this world-line and fought alongside us, then…

【…Let's say that you possess such a 'key'.】

The moment I heard that voice, I felt a chill run down my spine.

【In that case, is there a reason for me not to snatch that key away from you?】

The moment Kim Namwoon's shortsword got closer in the blink of an eye and took aim at my neck…

Claaang!

The sword's trajectory streaming before my eyes deflected his shortsword.

As the heavy impact force resounded out, both Yoo Joonghyuk and Kim Namwoon were forced back a couple of steps.

【[Hahaha! This is it! This is that feeling!]】

Blood trickled down the 'Monarch of the Great Abyss's' hand after that collision against the [Black Heavenly Demon Sword].

【Do you have any idea how long I've been waiting for this? Do you know how long I had to wander aimlessly just for a chance to fight against you?!】

The 'Monarch of the Great Abyss', the being who travelled through the inordinate amount of time just to revive that one opponent he had been idolising.

[Giant Story, 'Delusional Design', has begun its storytelling!]

The 999th turn's Uriel supported the wobbling Lee Jihye and got into the battle stance as well. 【You told me this once before. If, by any chance, you've become another existence that's not you, you wanted me to kill you personally.】

Along with the blinding explosion, the sun in the air began emitting light once more.

【Looks like that time is now.】

What blocked the outpouring of the heatwave was the forged steel completely filling up our view.

– You must escape. I can't stop them by myself.

The 999th turn's Lee Hyunsung was different from the others as he wasn't summoned as the 'calamity'. Meaning, unlike them, he didn't enjoy the 'grace of the scenario'.

"Kim Dokja!"

Almost at the same time, my companions arrived on site.

Han Sooyoung flying on the back of the Black Flame Dragon was the first to ask. "What happened here??"

"As you can see."

She bit down on her lip, hard.

I didn't say anything else and instead, looked at my companions. At Jung Heewon, Shin Yoosung, Lee Gilyoung, Lee Jihye, and Yoo Sangah…

"This is the final hurdle."

They should also probably guessed it.

"I ask of you this. Please, make sure not to die."

At least during this fight, even I was helpless to protect my companions.

Kwa-aaaaah!

Along with the impact force akin to heaven and earth upending, violent tsunami waves and sunlight intermingled. Blades clashing against each other could be spied within the rising white foams trying to blind our view.

The blackish light sliced into the ocean.

Yoo Joonghyuk was fighting – while enduring against the combined assaults of the 999th turn's Kim Namwoon and Uriel, he was displaying a shocking level of martial prowess.

[Giant Story, 'Pilgrim of the Lonely Apocalypse', has begun its storytelling!]

[Story, 'Hell of Eternity', has begun its storytelling!]

The hidden, shored-up power strong enough to contend with two 'Kings', now that was Yoo Joonghyuk's true strength. Every Story he had built up all this time was exploding forth simultaneously.

['Disconnected Film Theory's' connection is incomplete!]

[Cracks are developing in the Story's continuity!]

Unfortunately, the balance couldn't be maintained forever.

"Dokja-ssi."

I shifted my head to find Jung Heewon there. The Archangel's blinding wings were spreading out from her back.

The Beast Lord Shin Yoosung, the Naval Admiral Lee Jihye, and the Emperor of Steelsword, Lee Hyunsung. My companions who lived a different life compared to the original storyline, and thus were currently marching towards a different resolution.

We glanced at each other and nodded.

"I'll help Joonghyuk-ssi, so the rest of you, please take care of that side!"

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is unleashing her Status!]

Jung Heewon spread her wings wide and flew towards Yoo Joonghyuk under the blessing of Uriel. It seemed that that was the Archangel's choice. She now knew that the 'Outer God King' happened to be herself from the far-flung distant future, so…

【I told you this before. Without the Nebula's grace, you can't oppose me.】

The [Flames of Retribution] soaring through the sky as if to puncture it was now crashing back down towards the ocean.

However, we had no time to worry about Jung Heewon. Because there was yet another existence pouring out her boundless Status in our direction at the moment.

Among the parting, exploding waves, the 999th turn's Lee Jihye was staring at us with her hollow eyes.

"Everyone, please evade!"

Yoo Sangah stepped forward and distorted the time and space. Unfortunately, Sakyamuni's ability was useless when facing the true might of that 'Outer God King'.

Along with the loud ripping noise, the distorted time/space was forcibly spread open.

The battleship of the 999th turn's Lee Jihye was now rising up from the depths of the ocean. The [Turtle Dragon] of the 'Master of the Sunken Island' resembled more of an island rather than a ship at this stage.

"Ahjussi!"

Sensing the danger, Shin Yoosung had her [Chimera Dragon] spew out its Breath. And when she did, all aquatic creatures hiding below the water's surface rushed out, as well.

Gyaaaah-ooooh!

Monsters screeching out viciously pounced on the battleship's hull. However, the island was simply far too large for them to stop. The loud noises of monsters being crushed could be heard next. The wide expanse of the ocean vibrated heavily and the tsunami wave rolled out.

"Hyung, take a step back! Hurry!"

"Kim Dokja, disappear to the back already, will ya?!"

My companions surrounded me as if to protect me and began desperately fighting back.

I was aware of why they were doing this, of course. And I also knew what they were scared of, too.

【I, I only have to erase everything.】 The 999th turn's Lee Jihye was crying out beyond the tidal waves. 【Everything, it can be made anew. It's nothing at all. Then, captain will realize it, too! He will know that this world can be destroyed at any time. That it's possible, that the world we lived in was the real deal…!!】

Kwa-kwakwakwakwa!

A huge tsunami crashed in, accompanied by the round of cannon shelling vicious enough to blow up the entire ocean. The wave's scale was the largest we had ever seen.

If that thing continued on its way, then even if my mother was there, the Korean Peninsula was as good as finished.

[Story, 'Demon King of Salvation', has begun its storytelling!]

Han Sooyoung's expression changed for the worse as she shouted out. "Kim Dokja! If you do anything stupid…!"

"Don't worry."

I lightly patted her shoulder and stepped forward. The scenes of the scenarios we experienced together flitted in and out of my view.

[Giant Story, 'Demon Realm's Spring', has begun its storytelling!]

[Giant Story, 'Torch that Swallowed the Myth', has begun its storytelling!]

[Giant Story, 'Season of Light and Darkness', has begun its storytelling!]

Every time a new Giant Story was created, I had to risk certain death. I believed that was the only way, and thought that was the correct way.

[Giant Story, 'Liberator of the Forgotten Ones', is looking at you.]

The constrictive headband, this shackle that my companions personally placed on me, tightened on my head. When I was earning that Giant Story, I didn't die. I knew very well that this was their intentions.

Kwa-aaaaaah!!

The tsunami wave got closer and closer. This power wasn't something even a Myth-grade could stop.

「However, Kim Dokja knew a way to deal with this tsunami wave.」

Back during the last scenario of the original storyline, when Yoo Joonghyuk was waging the final war against the 'Outer Gods', there was a similar moment to this one.

At that time, there was a certain Constellation beside Yoo Joonghyuk.

[Constellation. 'Most Ancient Liberator', is now looking at you.]

A single 'Myth-grade Constellation' couldn't deal with the 'great apocalypse'. However, what if there were two?

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation', is looking at the 'Most Ancient Liberator'.]

I would never sacrifice myself ever again. I'd not leave my companions behind. Just like how Yoo Joonghyuk didn't want to give up on this life, I shall not give up even until the end.

[Giant Story, 'Liberator of the Forgotten Ones', has begun its storytelling!]

The sole 'Giant Story' that I possessed that could become the power to fight off against the 'Outer God King' – however, I wasn't the one possessing the greatest share of this Giant Story.

"Great Sage!"

I sensed four rings connecting with each other inside my head.

['Meihouwang' is agreeing to your request.]

['Bimawen' is agreeing to your request.]

['Douzhanshengfo' is agreeing to your request.]

The overflowing Story began transforming my Incarnation Body.

['Great Sage Heaven's Equal' is agreeing to your request.]

My hair grew in an instant and changed to platinum colour. The aura of boundless Story flowed like rapid torrents within all of my veins. And then, I felt the fulfilling sensation of the Ruyi Jingu Bang's grip in my hand.

[The power of five 'Sun Wukongs' have incarnated into your Incarnation Body!]

The golden-hued Status settled on top of my coat. The battlefield of the Tongtian was being recreated above the surrounding ocean.

Just as the lightning bolt struck, I heard the familiar voice.

[Let's go, maknae-yah.]

I nodded my head.

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* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)

Chapter 478: Ep. 91 - One Single Story, II

Kwa-aaaaah!

The Great Sage's Status enveloping my entire body now concentrated on the [Ruyi Jingu Bang] held in my right hand. Just like that day on the Tongtian, when we were fighting against the Constellations.

If there was one thing different, then I was now using the complete power of that 'Sun Wukong'.

[Giant Story, 'Liberator of the Forgotten Ones' has completely permeated in you!]

"I shall open up a path."

I swung the [Ruyi Jingu Bang] and a huge hole opened up in the centre of the tsunami wave. However, it was filled back up in an instant.

[Youcantyoucantyoucantyoucantyoucant]

From the island that the 999th turn's Lee Jihye had brought up, the 'Nameless Ones' began crawling out. Their number was so great that fighting them seemed impossible, but even then, the Great Sage didn't panic at all.

[Destroy them.]

I felt this jolt from the arm raised up in the air, and thick, gloomy clouds suddenly filled up the sky. Somersault clouds carrying thunderbolts rang around within the heavens above. Then, blinding blue rays of light crashed on the ocean.

Kwa-booooom!!

Several strands of lightning smacked into the sea and tore through everything there to carve out a path. These bolts of lightning continued to smash down many more times. What an enormous amount of Status that was.

This was the power of the one who had reached the last scenario, the Great Sage, Heaven's Equal, often referred to as the strongest Constellation ever was.

[Gah-gahk, gagagagagahk?]

However, there were several creatures that managed to withstand the storm of lightning bolts. They were slightly larger than the previous Outer Gods.

[We ki ll the Con stel lat ions]

[End of sta rs dra ws ne ar]

These 'Outer Gods' could string along more concise words. These upper rank creatures travelled through the underwater tunnel and rose up to the ocean's surface.

"Son of a…!"

Han Sooyoung next to us cried out.

Ku-gugugugu!

The ground beneath the ocean rocked and lava began boiling up to the surface.

"Everyone, get away!"

We quickly climbed aboard Lee Jihye's [Turtle Dragon] and rose up to the sky. The hazy surface of the ocean was soon filled up with wiggling creatures.

[De stru cti on of the wor ldli ne is co ming]

The 'Outer Gods' descended to this world while spewing out some ominous-sounding lines. We had encountered a creature like that before – during the earlier days of the scenario, on the battlefield of the [Dark Castle].

['The Fourth Wall' is faintly stirring.]

Perhaps, the [Devourer of Dreams], now acting as a librarian inside the wall, was watching this spectacle as well.

"How are we supposed to kill those things??"

Han Sooyoung gritted her teeth and emitted [Black Flame] from both of her hands. Tentacles several kilometres long rose up above the ocean at the same time, causing the tidal waves messily mixed in with magma to rise up even taller than mountain ranges.

For some reason, I recalled a certain sentence from the 'Ways of Survival'.

「The calamity flooding out from the rising island eventually covered up everything on the surface of the planet.」

If this went on, then the Earth of this worldline would end up exactly in that state, too.

"Great Sage!"

I borrowed the power of the Great Sage and faced off against the incoming tidal waves.

The Ruyi Jingu Bang grew in size in the blink and began smacking away the 'Nameless Ones' trying to get closer. I destroyed a building-sized wave and smashed apart a tentacle flying in. However, there was no end in sight.

「The tidal wave simply grew larger and larger.」

If I managed to beat back one wave, then the second showed up. When I destroyed that, the third one pounced on us. And at the centre of all these waves were the 'Master of the Sunken Island' and other 'Outer God Kings'.

[…It's not going to be easy this time.]

Even the Great Sage was saying something like that.

At this rate, we'd be finished even before our enemies get here.

"Is there any other way to break past that?"

[Need more time.]

After leaving those words, the Great Sage began gathering more Status. My heart rapidly grew warmer and the Story in my veins circulated quickly. Since I knew what he was preparing for, I didn't bother to ask anymore. If my thoughts were correct, then he was getting ready to use that skill from the final pages of the 'Ways of the Survival'.

The question was, could my companions and me last until then?

「In order to buy time, we need to combine our strengths.」

No matter how excellent both Uriel and the Abyssal Black Flame Dragon were as Constellations, it was still too difficult for them to endure. Not to mention, there were four 'Kings' that side.

…Wait, four?

Kwa-rururururu!

The shield of steel slapped away several tentacles flying in.

I looked at those huge shoulders standing before me and spoke. "Hyunsung-ssi."

The 999th turn's Lee Hyunsung looked back at me, half of his expression filled with worry, and the other half, confusion.

"We need your help. Please, help us stop the calamity."

He quietly stared at me before asking a question. 【Can you promise me?】

I didn't ask what that promise was, because I felt like I already knew.

"I don't know if I can protect it, but I'll do my best."

He stared at me for a bit longer, then his eyes blinked slowly. And right next moment, his eyes shone in the silvery light.

【I shall believe in you Story.】

Kwa-kwakwakwakwa!

Massive branches of steel sprouted from the sides of our ship. They grew in an instant and became walls on four sides. While crashing into the waves and the 'Nameless Ones', they continued their rapid expansion.

A short while later, a square pathway with an open centre was created before our eyes. It was a tunnel created by the advancing walls of steel.

【Please go ahead.】

I nodded and began running on the tunnel.

How long did we run like that? I spotted a familiar face at the end of the tunnel.

"Heewon-ssi!"

Jung Heewon was busy swinging her sword in the middle of the 'Nameless Ones'. Companions and I quickly crossed the tunnel and aided her.

"I'm sorry, I couldn't break past them."

She bit her lower lip and muttered out in bitterness. Her voice was thick with despair.

She couldn't even get near the 999th turn's Uriel and ended up too preoccupied with cutting down these 'Nameless Ones' pouncing on her from the sky.

[Gyah-ahahahah]

The steel walls shook heavily while emitting crunching noises. 'Outer Gods' were frantically pouncing on them as if they'd devour us in an instant.

If we took just one step outside these walls, then they'd really rip us apart like piranhas, that's for sure.

Crunch, cruuuunch…

The sounds of the 'Nameless Ones' gnawing on the metal walls could be heard next.

"Danger…!"

And then, the 'Nameless Ones' rushed towards us from the exit of the tunnel. They pounced on us like rabid dogs, their slobbering tongues wildly wagging.

[Ah, aaaaaah!]

In the next second, though, something akin to bright light fell from the sky and sliced apart every single one of them before our eyes. Someone had carved up the tunnel we were standing in from the outside.

We were treated to the sight of the great apocalypse's battlefield outside the sliced-open tunnel.

The dead 'Nameless Ones' created huge islands of corpses. While looking at this horrible sight of forgotten Stories dying meaningless deaths, the children began retching uncontrollably.

I too became speechless and looked at this battlefield.

Someone murmured in a tearful voice.

"Just why, to go this far…"

This was the 'great apocalypse'. The scenario that Yoo Joonghyuk from the original storyline had to fight through. And even now, that very Yoo Joonghyuk was fighting against the 'Outer God Kings' in the middle of this great battlefield.

Boooom!!

There seemed to be flashes of light on one side of the empty sky, only for an echo of explosion noise to reverberate all the way to the other side. Some things moved with speed that my eyes could barely chase after. The ones that sliced apart the tunnel we stood in were engaged in a bitter battle.

I even forgot that we were in a battlefield and was lost in that scene for a little while.

[Giant Story, 'Delusional Design', is loudly yapping on!]

[Giant Story, 'Hell of Eternity', is continuing on with its storytelling!]

The strongest beings from the forgotten worldline were busy competing with the Stories. The torrents of [Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship] and the [Hellfire] resisting it, and then the remnants of the [Black Flame] mixed in to create a massive tornado.

Strong winds generated from the sword images collided among the gloomy clouds, and ancient Stories howled on like aged dragons. Stories were screaming as if to tear the sky apart.

The living histories were colliding and extinguishing right before our eyes. And at the centre of all the stories was Yoo Joonghyuk's [Black Heavenly Demon Sword].

We couldn't afford to waste the precious time he had bought for us. I pointed to our front and spoke. "The cause of these waves is the 'Sunken Island' itself."

The 'Nameless Ones' flooded in like dust clouds. Then, upper-rank Outer Gods raising up even more waves behind them. And finally, the 'Sunken Island' in the centre of them all.

Most likely, the 999th turn's Lee Jihye was in the middle of that island.

"Our priority is to demolish that island. The most optimal course of action is to subdue the 999th turn's Lee Jihye, but…"

I took a look beyond the encroaching waves. If the culprit behind this 'great apocalypse' event, the 'Master of the Sunken Island' Lee Jihye, was subdued, the disaster itself should peter out, but the problem was with how to get there.

Han Sooyoung spoke up.

"Don't forget, the 999th turn's Kim Namwoon and Uriel is over there, too. Even if Yoo Joonghyuk is facing off against Uriel, what will you do about Kim Namwoon?"

"Don't worry. I have a plan."

Even now, we were at a disadvantage in our combat strength. Well, we had already exhausted a considerable amount of energy during the earlier fights, after all. However, we weren't completely on the back foot, either.

"Gilyoung-ah, Yoosung-ah. Release the insects and monsters to stop the movements of the Outer Gods as much as possible. Yoo Sangah-ssi, if you see an opening, try to cast one more debuff on that Lee Jihye, please. Han Sooyoung, you take care of the 'Nameless Ones' showing up in our rear."

"What about you?"

"I'll create a path. Heewon-ssi, please come with me."

The moment Jung Heewon nodded her head, I unleashed my Status.

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation', is unleashing his Status!]

With excellent timing, I sensed Lee Hyunsung's Story enveloping my body next. The outer layer created through the [Steel Transformation] sprouted above my skin. We certainly made the right call to go to <Oz> first. We definitely needed his [Story metal] in order to efficiently destroy the outer layers of those 'Nameless Ones'.

"Now, everyone!"

We leapt above the steel walls in the air simultaneously and then, descended towards the tidal wave.

'Outer Gods' noticed our movements and howled out at the same time.

Du-dudududu!

Gong Pildu's shells, now coated with the [Story metal], flew in from afar to penetrate cleanly through the outer layers of the 'Nameless Ones'. Using the sounds of the cannons as our interludes, we ran on top of the waves.

Tentacles flew in at us with no gaps in between them, but Han Sooyoung burned them away.

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is roaring out!]

The [Black Flame]'s fires caused the Outer Gods to scream in pain.

Jung Heewon and I continued to run on this path. We felt the time/space surrounding the island faintly distort. Yoo Sangah was activating her powers now.

"Dokja-ssi, over there!"

We saw the gigantic [Turtle Dragon] taking up the highest location of the island in the distance. The 999th turn's Lee Jihye was standing on top of the ship's figurehead to command the 'Outer Gods'.

【Hahaha, where do you think you're going?!】 As if he was waiting for us, the 999th turn's Kim Namwoon revealed himself. 【I shall protect our Jihye!】

Even though he was in the middle of fighting Yoo Joonghyuk, he must've had enough leeway to interfere with us. Maybe, Yoo Joonghyuk was in some kind of danger right now. I gave the signal to Jung Heewon.

"Don't worry about me and go help Yoo Joonghyuk first. I'm sure he's slowly reaching his limit by now."

"Don't get killed. Understand?"

Jung Heewon spread open her wings and disappeared in order to aid Yoo Joonghyuk.

【Isn't that so sweet? But, don't you worry. I'll send both of you away in an instant!】

Kim Namwoon's figure seemed to melt. His shadow split apart into hundreds and countless figures leapt out from them.

「Kim Dokja thought to himself. He couldn't dodge this.」

Hundreds, no, thousands of daggers were unilaterally aiming for my body. They moved as if they were alive. The peak of 'knife fighting' Kim Namwoon had comprehended was permeating within each and every one of those blade tips. And each attack was strong enough to leave a fatal wound. Even then, I quietly smiled.

"When I met you for the first time, you also wielded your knife at me."

【But, it's my first time meeting you?】

"Kim Namwoon, aren't you curious how you of this world died?"

One of Kim Namwoon's clones frowned after hearing me. 【Who cares how that weakling got killed??】

I used the [Ruyi Jingu Bang] to deflect the incoming daggers. A few of them still managed to leave behind deep cuts on my thigh and shoulder, but thankfully, Lee Hyunsung's [Story metal] defended against the attacks in my stead.

Unfortunately, even his forged steel began developing cracks at the vicious barrage of attacks raining down.

As if to fully recreate a certain memory, I started evading the incoming attacks.

「Waist, right side.」

「Right eye.」

「Left thigh.」

Tsu-chut, chuchuchut…

Faint sparks danced about. I took a step back after getting hit by two more daggers.

"You were trash in this worldline. A thug who killed a powerless old man just to clear the first scenario."

【That's what the first scenario was about, anyway. I ain't curious about such shit…!】

"You wielded the dagger just like now, until you ended up on your knees begging for your life like a pathetic loser. And then, died miserably after your head exploded."

For the first time ever, his movement came to a stop. His previous mischievous expression was nowhere to be found, only his glare aimed at me remaining.

"Aren't you curious about who killed you like that?"

The dagger was now aiming for my left eye.

"Oh the sword forged to cut down the sleeping giants. Descend to this place, now!"

Kwa-aaaaaah!

Everything before my eyes seemed to wane as the massive storm of aftermath raged on. A steel giant was summoned through the dimensions and it now stood there imposingly.

The greatest Story weapon in [Tartarus], Pluto. A bright voice belonging to Kim Namwoon came out from its cockpit.

[Hahaha! Hey, Grasshopper man, been a while…]

However, I couldn't smile back to him. Because what I was about to do should prove to be very inhumane to this guy.

[Huh? What's this?]

Kim Namwoon discovered something small floating before his nose and tilted his head. Almost at the same time, the other Kim Namwoon muttered in sheer dumbfoundedness.

【…A giant robot???】

[Uwaaaaahk?!]

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!!

[Same existences from different worldlines have met for the first time!]

The 999th turn's Kim Namwoon didn't possess a Story of fighting against me. However, what about now?

['Disconnected Film Theory' is activating!]

Memories were connecting; as the two existences from different worldlines met each other, the unconnected Story momentarily would become one.

The 999th turn's Kim Namwoon, the 'Monarch of the Great Abyss', glared at me with his brows arched up high. It seemed that he had realized everything.

【You…】

"That's right. The one who killed you in this worldline is…"

The surrounding time and space transformed. Into that of the subway from the first scenario. To the place where I killed Kim Namwoon.

I grinned and continued on.

['Stage Transformation' is activating!]

"It was none other than me."

Chapter 479: Ep. 91 - One Single Story, III

[Story, 'Master of Steel', has begun its storytelling!]

The walls of steel created by 999th turn's Lee Hyunsung blanketed the surroundings and expanded rapidly. This power was strong enough to even defend the entire planet when deployed within <Oz>.

Kwa-kwakwakwakwa!

The expanding steel intertwined with the「Stage Transformation」and began creating the partitions of the subway.

This stage was utterly familiar to me. Even now, just by closing my eyes I'd be able to vividly recall this cabin from the first scenario.

[A Myth-grade Constellation's 'Stage' has been generated!]

Tsu-chuchuchut!

Now originally,「Stage Transformation」was quite similar to augmented reality. In other words, the surrounding topography wouldn't change simply because it had been transformed into a stage.

However, the case this time was slightly different.

[<Star Stream> is paying close attention to your 'Stage'.]

[The absolute majority of Constellations are watching the 'Stage'.]

[Great Dokkaebis are jealous of your 'Stage'.]

[Due to the large number of gazes, the stage grade of the 'Stage Transformation' is increasing!]

<Star Stream>'s Probability was directly linked to the number of gazes watching on. A scenario that a large number of beings watched was able to generate a powerful Story, and a stage watched by many could generate sizeable impact in return.

The anticipation carried within those countless gazes could shift the Probability, in other words.

「On that day, the Delusion Demon and the Demon King of Salvation met for the first time in that place.」

And the shifting Probability could sometimes turn 'fake' into 'reality'.

[Due to the effects of the 'Disconnected Film Theory', the materialisation of the 'Stage Transformation' is incomplete!]

[Within the applicable stage, the Characters 'Kim Namwoon' and the 'Monarch of the Great Abyss' will be treated as the same individual.]

[The 'Monarch of the Great Abyss's' stage compatibility is 87.351%!]

[The possibility of a sudden end exists.]

The fake becoming real on stage could only occur for a brief period of time. While everyone was focusing here, before the mysteriousness of this stage came undone – I had to finish everything.

【You…!!】

I unhesitantly approached Kim Namwoon. I didn't sense myself growing any stronger from the effects of the Stage Transformation. However, I was filled with confidence, instead. The kind that a wolf might feel when hunting down a rabbit.

【What kind of dogshit is this?!】

The enraged 999th turn's Kim Namwoon pounced on me. Since he was under the influence of the「Stage Transformation」, his mobility had become quite sluggish, as if he was that Kim Namwoon from the first scenario whose average stat points didn't even reach 10.

The problem was, my own body was no different from back then during the first scenario, too.

Swiiish!

I lowered my head and dodged the dagger. I was reading the direction of his attacks through the [Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint] so evading him wasn't that difficult.

[The rules of the 'first scenario' will apply to the applicable 'Stage'!]

[Incarnation Bodies within the 'Stage' will grow stronger by killing another life.]

Memories continued to resurface.

Right. We fought like this back in the first scenario. Just for the sake of 100 Coins as our survival fee, people had to die.

Just for those 100 Coins, people killed each other.

We managed to survive such a world.

[Many Constellations are recalling their 'first scenarios'.]

The 999th turn's Kim Namwoon pressed down on his temples as if he was suffering from migraine, then began cackling at me. 【Haha… So, this is how you want to play it? Quite interesting.】

"But, you don't look like you're enjoying yourself at all?"

His glare was filled with the prickly killing intent.

[The 'Monarch of the Great Abyss's' stage compatibility has decreased slightly!]

Even if the effects of the「Stage Transformation」was absolute, this particular stage was recreated through a simple trick. The longer I took, the weaker the connection between the 999th turn's Kim Namwoon to his 3rd turn counterpart would become.

[What the hell, grasshopper man! What's going on here? What's happening?!]

The 3rd turn's Kim Namwoon raised himself up in the corner. He had been altered into a small toy robot due to the effects of the「Stage Transformation」. He awkwardly clung onto my leg.

The 999th turn's Kim Namwoon saw this scene and muttered out. 【How disappointing. To think that I'd get killed by a bastard like him and end up as a trashcan robot.】

[What the hell are you talking about? You wanna die, buddy?? Hey, grasshopper man! Kill that son of a bitch!]

[If there is no killing taking place in the next five minutes, all Incarnation Bodies within the cabin will be exterminated!]

This would be my first time seeing the「Stage Transformation」imposing such a strict restriction.

Wasn't this almost at the level of an actual main scenario?

【Die!】

The dagger sliced the air and flew right in. I used the surrounding objects to dodge the attacks. The movements of my body might have become dull, but I was not the same Kim Dokja as I used to be back then.

Kim Namwoon's attacks scratched the subway's steel doors and floors. The power behind each of his thudding attacks was gradually getting stronger.

The aura of Chaos was faintly swirling around him. The effects of the「Stage Transformation」on him was already declining. The odds of victory would tilt towards his favour if this continued on.

However, the 999th turn's Kim Namwoon seemed to be getting more and more anxious, instead.

[Character, 'Monarch of the Great Abyss', is getting agitated.]

[Character, 'Monarch of the Great Abyss', is urgently surveying his surroundings.]

Why was this? Why did his complexion look so poor? I took a closer look to find his cheeks and neck soaked in cold sweat.

[Character, 'Monarch of the Great Abyss', detests this space.]

【You rat-like bastard…!!】

[A portion of Constellations are suspicious of the 'Outer God King's' Status.]

[A small number of Constellations are scorning the small fry-like utterance.]

The movements of the 999th turn's Kim Namwoon were getting simpler perhaps due to his increasing anxiety.

[If there is no killing taking place in the next three minutes, all Incarnation Bodies within the cabin will be exterminated!]

Three minutes remained.

"Dokja-ssi? What's going on here…?"

And that was when I heard a certain voice. Kim Namwoon and I both turned our heads in the direction of where that voice came from.

And immediately, chills ran down on my spine.

「There was another who bore witness to their fight in that place.」

I had forgotten about it.

「The most righteous person in the carriage number 3807 on that day.」

…That I and Kim Namwoon weren't the only people riding in that subway that day.

【Hahahahaha!!!】

Kim Namwoon exploded in the fit of maddened laughter, abandoned me, and rushed towards Yoo Sangah.

Perhaps due to the effects of the 「Stage Transformation」, she was now kitted out in the uncomfortable outfit she had on during the first scenario.

He closed the distance in an instant and his dagger was swung towards her.

As the blade scythed the air with a sharp swish…

Slice-!

Sliced strands of hair danced in the air. Yoo Sangah and her hardened expression were using agile movements to evade Kim Namwoon's attacks. As a matter of fact, she was far more agile than I was.

【Not bad!】

[Character, 'Monarch of the Great Abyss', has received the effects of 'Blackening'!]

However, his movements should grow faster and faster with passing time.

「On that day, the Delusion Demon came to understand his new world.」

The effects of the Stage Transformation was getting stronger.

「…That a new set of rules was needed in a brand new world.」

I could see Yoo Sangah's complexion getting paler and paler.

There was no time. I needed to find a way. Somehow I…

"Hyung."

A small hand tugged at my clothes.

「If that boy didn't catch any insects that day…」

Lee Gilyoung was also here, with a babyish face of a young boy. He looked exactly like how I remembered during the first scenario.

The boy in despair after losing his parent was extending his palm out with a determined expression.

[Constellation, 'Ruler of the Deepest Pit', is laughing ominously.]

Several bright-yellow grasshoppers rested on the boy's palm.

"Thanks."

I grabbed the grasshoppers and started running. The insects were then crushed along with crunching noises.

[You killed a lifeform.]

[Your Incarnation Body has been strengthened due to the effects of the Stage Transformation!]

[You killed a lifeform.]

[Your Incarnation Body has been strengthened due to the effects of the Stage Transformation!]

…

My physical strength increased explosively as I ran inside the cabin.

The back of Kim Namwoon's head, currently cackling away like a madman, was now right before my nose.

【Die! Die!! Die! Dieeee!】

I simply grabbed the nape of his neck and slammed the bastard down on the subway's floor. His legs trembled like an insect being crushed.

【You son of a…!】

He swiftly jumped out from my grasp and swung his dagger in my direction. I didn't bother to dodge that.

Kah-gagagagak!

Because there was no need to.

「The knife continued to leave behind scratches. Although blood did trickle down, the blade failed to gouge out the flesh beneath the skin.」

The final scenes of the first scenario flitted past my view as if it was overlapping with reality.

Kim Namwoon's attacks continued to get faster, but he failed to break past Lee Hyunsung's strengthened [Steel Transformation].

【This, just what the hell is this…】

The 999th turn's Kim Namwoon spat out expletives and wielded his dagger. However, no matter how many times he swung it, there was no use.

Because the end of this 'Stage' was already set in stone.

"Looks like you only have two minutes remaining."

【Uwaaaaaah!!】

Kim Namwoon and his distorted expression swung his dagger indiscriminately. Only his poor blade ended up breaking, however, and it fell to the ground. One minute thirty seconds, then one minute twenty… As time continued to tick down, Kim Namwoon's figure slowly crumbled to the ground.

It wasn't because he simply lost all his strength. What attacked him was a sin far more fundamental in nature.

「The foundational Story of Kim Namwoon, the Demon of Delusion.」

The surrounding space began distorting; the pool of blood was now spreading on the once-empty floor of the cabin. It was not the blood we had shed.

【There's, there's just no way…!】

The shivering 999th turn's Kim Namwoon plopped down on the spot.

[Giant Story, 'Delusional Design', is losing control!]

Right here in this place was where his Story, 'Delusional Design' had germinated.

Kim Namwoon relied on [Abnormal Adaptability] to forge a new world he had to live in – but what about the version of him who had witnessed the end of that 'world'? What kind of meaning did that world hold for him?

【C-crap like t-this, won't…!】

Corpses on the floor were glaring at us, their eyes wide open.

Those that I failed to protect – those with their heads missing or their hearts pierced through. Those dying while vomiting blood were now looking at us.

Kim Namwoon's face shook hard as if he was having a seizure. It was an expression that didn't suit him.

"Are you feeling the guilt after having come this far?"

The 999th turn's Kim Namwoon trembled and looked up at me, his lips bobbing up and down.

「"You're right, I'm trash. So what??"」

Kim Namwoon from the initial regression turns would've definitely said that. However, even such a guy had said something different during the 999th turn.

「"…I've been thinking about this sometimes. Maybe I should've been the one to die that day. Captain, you also think that way, don't you?"」

The psychopath, Kim Namwoon, the Demon of Delusion.

Even after I finished reading the entirety of the original novel, my opinion on that guy hadn't changed.

[Exclusive skill, 'Reading Comprehension', is activating!]

However, that couldn't have been Kim Namwoon's everything. The 'Ways of Survival' I read was no doubt nothing more than just the tip of an iceberg called this world.

And so, the 'Kim Namwoon' I didn't know must have existed somewhere, too.

Kim Namwoon, who ended up seeing a world's end for someone's sake.

Kim Namwoon, capable of wandering aimlessly for forty thousand years out of his love for someone.

Kim Namwoon, carrying on the sake of protecting his loyalty to his companions.

What if such a Kim Namwoon existed in the world somewhere…?

And what if such a Kim Namwoon was the one who saw the end of the 999th turn…?

【I, I… I…】

His delusion was being eaten away.

That was the history he endured on by exchanging away his personality; the ego of the Kim Namwoon, a second-year student from Cheongil High School, was now leaking out from its hidden spot beneath his mask.

[*](#)

【I… I killed… them… That's right, I…】

The shivering Kim Namwoon held his broken dagger and began sobbing away.

"Right. You did kill them."

As I said that, I took a look at the rear of the subway.

I saw Lee Hyunsung's steel tunnel, now merged with the「Stage Transformation」. And this near-endless tunnel was overflowing with corpses.

The 'Nameless Ones', their names now long forgotten, were crying out.

"And they are the people I didn't save."

「A new world requires a new story.」

That was the price for completing the 'One Single Story'.

We lived for the purpose of completing this petty 'gi-seung-jeon-gyeol'.

[Your 'hidden scenario' is on the verge of completion!]

[All of your Stories are desiring your 'Conclusion'!]

[Every Constellation in <Star Stream> can sense that your 'Conclusion' is drawing near!]

And now, I had to see the end of this damn story.

【Ah, aaah, aaaah…!】

The focus in Kim Namwoon's eyes blurred and he brought the tip of the broken blade closer to his neck.

[15 seconds remaining until the application of the 'Stage Transformation's' rules.]

[Once the time limit has been reached, all Incarnations who didn't obey the rules will be killed instantly.]

Yoo Sangah and Lee Gilyoung were looking at this side. Even the 3rd turn's Kim Namwoon, currently in the figure of a toy robot, was looking at me also.

If the time limit elapsed in this fashion, then the 999th turn's Kim Namwoon would die for sure on this stage. The stage itself might be fake, but his Story infused to this place was all real.

He'd die in this place. Just like those he had killed. Or, like how it was for him in the 3rd turn.

He'd die a miserable death while accepting his 'life'.

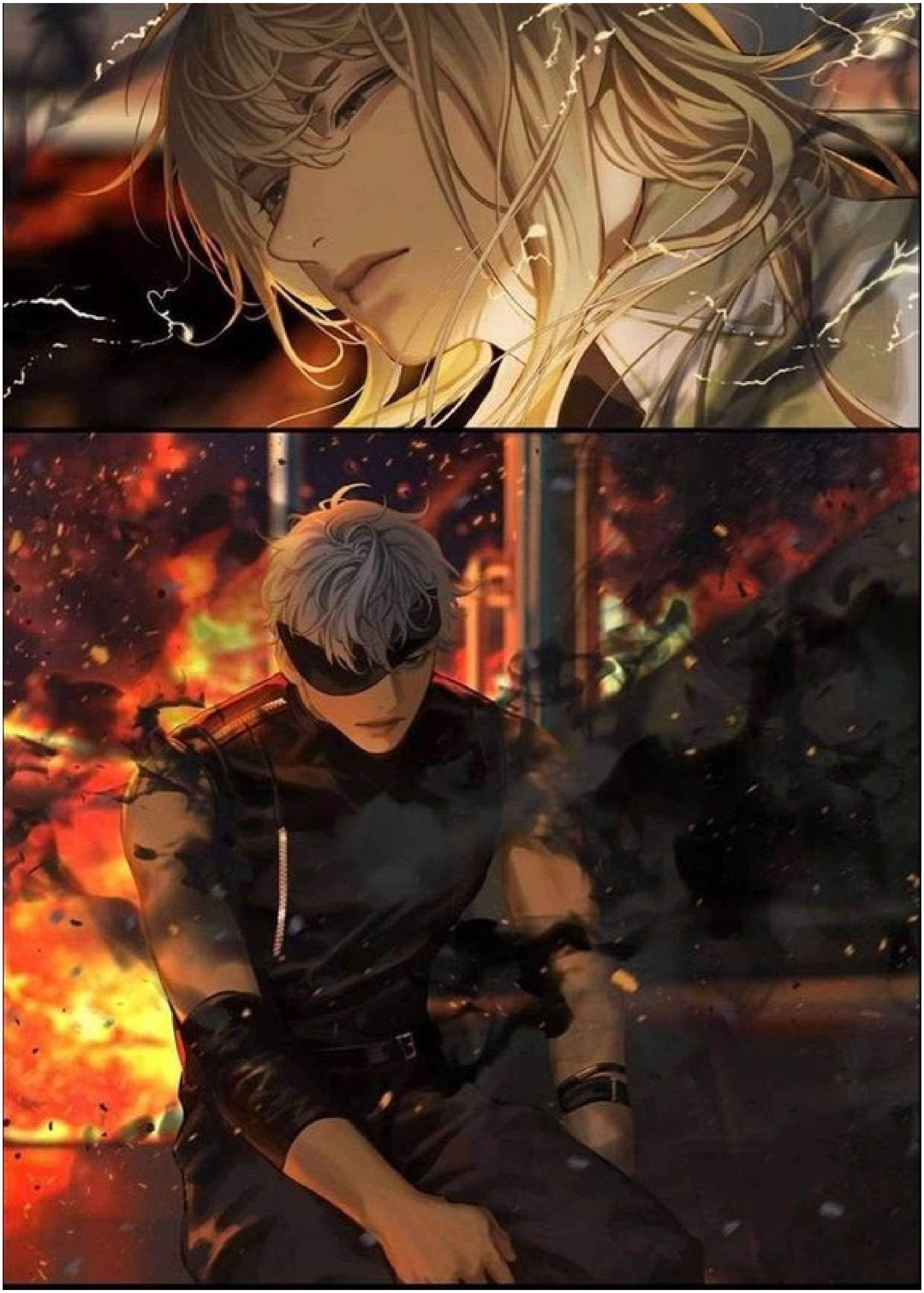
The problem, however, was with the 3rd turn's Kim Namwoon. He'd also perish due to the fact that he was connected to his 999th turn counterpart through the 'Disconnected Film Theory'.

I couldn't let that happen.

[The 'Stage Transformation' has been cancelled!]

The surrounding landscape changed and the stage disappeared. The memories connected through the [Disconnected Film Theory] were fading away. The subway scattered away, and all the actors involved also returned to their previous positions.

However, the 999th turn's Kim Namwoon remained on his knees.



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Certain stories, despite being fake, possessed power as if they were real deal. The stage might be gone now, but the original sin didn't go away.

His ruined and frayed Story was scattering away. I quietly stared at him and his lowered head, before lightly kicking away the dagger he was still holding.

"Kim Namwoon, you can't be saved."

Then, I pulled out the Unbroken Faith. The gleaming white swordlight seemed to screech out from the blade. I deliberately raised the sword up high so that everyone could see me. And then…

[Every Constellation of <Star Stream> is waiting expectantly of the 'Outer God King's' death!]

【No!!】

Along with a horrifying, desperate cry coming from somewhere, my Unbroken Faith cut something down.

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* Unofficial illustration, not specifically of Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint, but fitting (non-canonical)
* Official novel illustration (canonical)

Chapter 480: Ep. 91 - One Single Story, IV

Pah-su-sut.

The traces of a Story stained the Unbroken Faith. Thick smoke arose from this burning Story.

What used to be someone's history was now scattering away as ashes.

Kim Namwoon's blood-soaked white hair strands were hooked on the edge of the sword.

「This was Kim Dokja's choice.」

I watched his hair scatter away within this ash-grey smoke and opened my mouth. "When I was young, I really hated you."

When I was still absorbed in reading the 'Ways of Survival', Kim Namwoon was the only character that I couldn't sympathise with. If every person appearing in that novel was my hyung, my father, my dongsaeng, and my noona, then…

…Then, the character 'Kim Namwoon' was the cautionary tale for me.

"Your so-called justice had no dignity, and your killings were indiscriminate."

The 18-year-old boy adapted to this abnormal world faster than anyone else. He was the Incarnation who wielded his knife with reckless abandon and sheer arrogance, while throwing himself fully to the darkness.

Unhesitantly carrying out acts of evil, while spewing out one corny line after another. Such traits were so vividly drawn out and my younger self could unabashedly hate this guy as a result.

「The evil fashioned just so that one could hate and detest it without holding back.」

That was Kim Namwoon.

"You are a villain. It's the same story back then and even now."

I muttered out as if I was talking to myself. Stories staining the blade dripped down like blood.

「Kim Dokja, now an adult, was looking at Kim Namwoon once more.」

Just like how the characters from the 'Ways of Survival' changed inside the scenarios, the person reading that story, me, also changed too.

I was now old enough to figure out why he had to become a villain.

「Perhaps it was Kim Dokja's fault that Kim Namwoon had to become a villain.」

…Because I read the 'Ways of Survival' back then.

Because I offered my opinions to the author, and just like how Constellations would do, I evaluated and judged him.

– Dear Author-nim, does Kim Namwoon have to become the companion again this time?

Because I believed that he was merely a 'character' the author had created, not a living, breathing person.

When I thought about it, the reason why I hated Kim Namwoon was pretty simple in nature.

"Yoo Joonghyuk always took you in as his companion."

Out of everyone from the 'Ways of Survival', Kim Namwoon most closely resembled me.

"Even though he knew that you are an evil bastard, even though he knew that you did evil things… Even then, he took you in."

If I was him, how would I have turned out?

Cheongil High School second-year Kim Namwoon.

A regular high school student living under the stress of the studying and at odds with his parents.

What would happen if such a high schooler was thrust all alone in an extreme environment where he couldn't survive without taking the life of another, and no one was there to protect him?

"At first, I thought that Yoo Joonghyuk was thinking of practical benefits. Because you as an Incarnation held a high potential, that's why. But when I thought some more about it, there were other people with just as much potential as you. Even then, Yoo Joonghyuk always accepted you as his companion every single regression turn."

If it was me, would I have been able to make a different choice?

While repeating the 1st turn, the 2nd, then the 3rd… then even the 999th, would I have survived by making a different choice than the 'Kim Namwoon' from that time?

"…When I think about it again now, maybe it was not Yoo Joonghyuk chasing after practical benefits, but me."

From when I started reading the 'Ways of Survival', Yoo Joonghyuk's age remained '28' years old. He was an adult back then, and even now, too. Maybe he had already known the truth – that life was an accumulation of one's choices, that those countless choices piled up to eventually become a Story worth a single person.

That no one was designed to be 'evil' from his birth.

Just as how the 1st turn was different from the 2nd, the 998th turn was also different from the 999th. And that might be the real reason why he repeated his regressions after all this time.

The blade stopped mid-air.

The Unbroken Faith had faintly dug into the dazed Kim Namwoon's carotid artery and stopped right there.

I spoke in a half-sighing tone of voice. "That doesn't mean you can be forgiven for what you've done, though. What I wanted to say to you, though, was…"

【Kim Namwoon!!】

An incredible surge of Status rushed in from behind me. Someone was running towards this side like a tank while breaking past the vicious barrage of shelling.

It was the 999th turn's Lee Jihye.

All because Kim Namwoon found himself in danger, she abandoned her 'island', broke past the shelling, and was hurriedly approaching here – even at the cost of her entire figure turning into tatters by facing <Kim Dokja's Company>'s attacks directly.

"You're blessed, aren't you. You even have a 'companion' who worries about you to that extent."

The word 'companion' caused Kim Namwoon's empty eyes to tremble.

It wasn't just Lee Jihye rushing towards this place, either. I thought that my back was growing hot, which was followed by the threatening sensation encroaching upon the nape of my neck.

It was the [Flames of Retribution].

【What are you scheming now?】

The 999th turn's Uriel, who had been engaged in a battle against Yoo Joonghyuk only a second ago, was standing right behind me even before I had noticed it. I slowly shifted my head towards her.

She must've escaped from the battle in a great hurry, because her pure-white wings were all torn to shreds, with deep wounds visible all over her figure. Just a casual glance told me that she was grievously injured.

She had disregarded all of her resentment and hatred, even her desire to win, and chose to fly over here all because of the danger to Kim Namwoon's life.

There were some things that wouldn't change even after becoming an Outer God.

Companions willing to risk their lives for the sake of just 'one person' – because they were such people, they got to see the end of the 999th turn without Yoo Joonghyuk's presence.

"My scheme, is it. That's what I want to ask you."

Along with a soft landing noise, Yoo Joonghyuk appeared behind the 999th turn's Uriel. His [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] was aiming at her neck.

The emotions in his eyes were clearly complicated. His expressions seemed to be criticising me, but at the same time, also sympathising with my choice, too. Maybe it was both. His eyes seemed to imply that, now that things had turned out this way, I should do what I wanted here.

I was going to do that without someone giving me his permission, anyway.

"You and other 'Outer God Kings' could have easily destroyed Earth if you really wanted to."

My words caused the eyes of the 999th turn's Uriel to faintly tremble.

[The 'Great Apocalypse Scenario' is currently in progress!]

We weren't talking about any other scenario, but the 'Great Apocalypse' taking place within the 98th scenario. A scenario that not even the Constellations of the distant skies dared to participate in, out of fear of their complete, eternal destruction.

At a bare minimum, the descending 'Outer Gods' in this scenario wielded absolute power to easily scorn every single Constellation.

「With just a flick of one hand, every island on the Pacific Ocean was annihilated.」

I could still vividly remember that sentence from the original novel. These 'Kings' could even summon an asteroid from the outer space and have it collide with the planet if they wanted to. They were existences that, after descending to this world as calamities, could drag in much larger Probability and use it at will.

"Why haven't you done that from the beginning?"

And all of my plans began from this very question: why didn't they try to destroy Earth right out of the gate, so to speak?

The 999th turn's Uriel didn't say anything for the longest time.

【…That is…】

Actually, I already had guessed what her reply would be.

Because these people weren't the 'Outer Gods' that appeared in the original novel.

「Even if they were from another world-line, they were individuals who started from 'Earth' and managed to clear the scenarios.」

Earth was their home, the place where their Story began, and where their lives had ended, too.

But they survived as tragedies. They lost their precious one to an Outer God from another world-line. Meaning, they were already sick and tired of this thing about the invasion of another world-line.

And so… Could such people bring about the destruction of an entire world-line just for the sake of their goals?

"You never had any intentions to truly kill us."

The 999th turn's Lee Jihye said this, that they would use this world-line as a sacrifice to revive their own scenarios.

However, was that the truth?

She was already full of mistrust towards <Star Stream>, so could she really have believed in the promise with the Great Dokkaebis word-for-word and acted like this?

And would the 999th turn's Uriel really agree to go along with that?

"From the very beginning, all of you weren't capable of doing that. This fight was your loss from the very start."

That was the answer I had arrived at.

[The absolute majority of the Constellations are greatly shocked by your judgement.]

The way to protect our regression turn without denying the 999th turn.

My confident declaration caused the 999th turn's Uriel to glare at me with complicated eyes. Lee Jihye from the same turn staggered towards her side and quietly placed her hand on Kim Namwoon's head.

He was staring at me dazedly, before shifting his head away.

Kim Namwoon was crying. He must've felt sad about something, because he was sobbing away uncontrollably. The 999th turn's Uriel couldn't do anything and simply watched this scene play on.

【…Why don't we stop it here?】

Lee Hyunsung walking in closer voiced his opinion.

【And what should we stop?】

【Uriel, you already know this too, don't you? This isn't what we want. We will solve nothing with this type of…】

【In that case, what should we do to 'solve' it, then?】

Uriel's voice sounded flat – a voice filled with despair worn down by innumerable expanse of time.

【I always gave it my all. As I promised, I saw to the end of the world. Even then, I couldn't save anyone. I became an Outer God, and carried on while dreaming of my vengeance. Even when I knew that my vengeance had no real point, I denied that fact and came this far. Yet, you are now telling me to give up on something else, having come this far? Speak, 'King of the Silver Heart'.】

【I don't know the answer to that. Just that, I believe the story of these people will show 'something' to us.】

【'Something'? Are you saying that, even after we came this far, there is still something else left that we need to see?】

【I also do not know that. However, I have a certain feeling. This feeling that, the reason why we from the 999th turn became 'Outer Gods' and survived this long was all for this moment… Don't you feel that way, too?】

The 999th Uriel looked up to the sky.

The heavens were crying; stars up there were thoughtlessly blinking away.

[<Star Stream> is urging for the conclusion of the Story it had waited for the longest time.]

I looked around to discover our companions had already arrived here. Han Sooyoung, Yoo Sangah, Jung Heewon, Lee Jihye, Shin Yoosung, Lee Gilyoung…

They encircled the 'Outer Gods' as if to surround them, and waited for my signal while remaining ready to take action at any second.

The 999th turn's Uriel asked out aloud. 【Why is it possible for these people, but not us?】

The [Flames of the Retribution] burning viciously cried out, too.

【…Why, why did we fail?】

It was then, someone dared to open his mouth. "Why do you think that you have failed?"

It was Yoo Joonghyuk.

He asked while his [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] was still trained on Uriel's neck.

"Is the conclusion you didn't want to see a failure of an ending?"

Perhaps surprisingly, I knew exactly who those words belonged to.

「"Even if the end of this world is a tragedy… Do not think that you have all failed."」

That was what the 999th turn's Yoo Joonghyuk told his companions just before his death.

The 999th turn's Uriel shuddered. Among her boundless frustration, the faintest trace of joy leaked out. She walked closer to him while speaking in a trembling voice. 【Are you really… the 'Yoo Joonghyuk' that I know?】

Yoo Joonghyuk didn't reply to her.

【I wish to speak to him! Please, call him to the surface! Even if it's just once, I wish to meet him again. I want to ask him. And, I…】

The 999th turn's Uriel held onto his hand as if to plead with him. By now, she too must've felt it – that inside this 'Yoo Joonghyuk' was the 999th turn's version of him that she fell in love with.

Actually, I did ask the 'Secretive Plotter' to summon out the 999th turn's Yoo Joonghyuk while I was busy cooking up this plan earlier.

What these 'Outer God Kings' were relying on was that version of Yoo Joonghyuk. So I thought that I might be able to persuade these people if I managed to get his help.

– I'm sorry, but that's impossible.

However, the 'Secretive Plotter' refused my request. Just like how the current Yoo Joonghyuk was saying his piece.

"What will you do after that guy has been summoned here?"

【That is…】

"If he tells you to surrender, will you do exactly that? If he tells you to listen to our demands, then are you going to follow his orders again?"

The complexion of the 999th turn's Uriel grew paler and paler with every word spoken. I wanted to tell him that was enough – too bad, he didn't stop there. His words poured out like merciless sword strikes. And from a certain point on, I realized something else.

What refused my request was neither 'Yoo Joonghyuk' nor the 'Secretive Plotter'.

[999th turn's 'Yoo Joonghyuk' is keeping his silence.]

It was 999th turn's Yoo Joonghyuk himself who refused to show up. In that moment, a belated realization washed over me.

"So much time has passed by already, yet you still can't decide on anything without his presence?"

Only now did it feel like I could understand everything – like, on why he refused to heed my request.

Like, why the 999th turn's Yoo Joonghyuk chose not to appear before his companions.

「The 999th turn's story was completed through Yoo Joonghyuk's absence.」

His companions lived on for the purposes of reviving him, to meet him again, and to avenge his death. They endured while using those goals as the reason for their lives.

「In that case, what would happen to their lives after their reason no longer existed?」

Foams created by the waves rolled over our feet. The great ocean was sinking. This sea seemed so unfamiliar, like foreigners drifting in from a very distant place. And in the centre of this ocean, the 'Outer Gods' forming an island held their breaths and stared at their kings.

And one of those Kings was saying her piece.

【…So, that's how it was.】

Like a ship that finally discovered its destination after roaming the endless, boundless ocean for an innumerable period of time…

【So, that is what you wanted, Yoo Joonghyuk.】

The shuddering of the 999th turn's Uriel slowly came to a stop.

Chapter 481: Ep. 91 - One Single Story, V

Those were Uriel's last words to us. She didn't say anything else afterwards. And while not saying anything, the 'Outer God Kings' exchanged glances with each other.

I didn't miss that opening and spoke up. "We don't have any intentions to fight against you, just like how you don't truly wish to destroy this world. You are just as familiar with tragedies as I am. There is no need to create more sorrow in this world-line."

[The scenario has entered a temporary state of lull!]

[<Star Stream> is surprised by the unexpected development of this scenario!]

I grew tense while observing their response. The 'Outer Gods' still didn't say anything. I couldn't even tell whether they heard my words or not.

「So far, things had unfolded according to Kim Dokja's plan.」

Using the 999th turn's memories, and arousing their memories of 'Yoo Joonghyuk'.

「From the beginning, it was impossible to win this fight with a frontal assault.」

If they got serious and activated the calamity's Probability with everything they had, then this scenario would've ended just as it started. Back in the original novel, there were a few planets that responded naively to their 'Great Apocalypse' and ended up getting destroyed, instead.

[A large number of Constellations that dislike you are dissatisfied with the current situation!]

[A portion of Constellations are opposing against the scenario's illogical development!]

The Constellations were probably anticipating a spectacle of their hated <Kim Dokja's Company> meeting a tragic end alongside Earth.

Unfortunately, the 'Outer God Kings' didn't do that.

At least, not for now, anyway.

– Kim Dokja, what's next?

Han Sooyoung sidled up to my right and asked in a tense voice.

– To be honest, even I don't know.

– Wha??

– This is as far as my plan goes.

As if to imply her thoughts of 'What crap are you talking about', her face was dyed in the colours of pure astonishment.

– Hey, you. You can't be…

– Right now, we can only believe.

That must've come across as irresponsible. However, there was no other choice. This was the best plan I could come up with, and it also happened to be the only way to lead this event towards the correct conclusion.

I abruptly recalled what the 1863rd turn's Han Sooyoung had told me.

「"I believe in the characters I've created. That's all."」

I could just about understand where she was coming from now. And that's why I replied like this.

– I thought that I can only believe in these people who were like teachers to me – these individuals that I had read about.

I trusted the 'Ways of Survival'. Not the author responsible, no, but the characters that appeared within its pages.

[The 'Living Flame' is looking at you.]

Uriel, more righteous than anyone else out there.

[The 'King of the Silver Heart' is looking at you.]

The kind and honest Lee Hyunsung.

[The 'Master of the Sunken Island' is looking at you.]

Lee Jihye possessing a lot of affection.

[Constellation, 'Secretive Plotter', is looking at you.]

Yoo Joonghyuk, who never knelt down in defeat no matter how unfair things became.

I believed in them. I believed in their histories that helped the young me grow.

I believed that their worth would never be tarnished no matter how much time had passed by.

The 999th turn's Uriel opened her mouth. Although, she wasn't talking to me.
【Lee Hyunsung, you said that we might get to see the end in this world-line, the one we failed to see before.】

【That's correct, Uriel.】

【And your opinion hasn't changed even now?】

Lee Hyunsung nodded. Uriel then slowly turned her head towards me. Her irises were burning brightly just like the corona of the sun.

【…Did you say you're the 'Demon King of Salvation'?】

Against that gaze seemingly testing my righteousness, I subconsciously swallowed back my saliva and nodded my head.

【Through this world-line's version of myself, I have seen the Stories related to you.】

It was then Jung Heewon standing nearby flinched a little. Technically, though, it wasn't her but probably Uriel, instead.

I was getting a somewhat-ominous vibe here.

What the 'Living Flame' said next was completely out of my expectations, though.

【Your Stories were quite similar to those of 'Yoo Joonghyuk's' that I'm familiar with. From the way you cleared the scenarios to how you looked after your companions.】

"…"

【This world-line resembles ours quite closely.】

The expression on the 999th turn's Lee Jihye was rather complicated. I realized why they stood around looking at each other for such a long time the moment I saw her face.

They weren't agitated simply because this world just so happened to be their home planet.

【Are you aware of the events that took place in our world-line?】

I hesitated on what to say. This wasn't something that I could explain away easily. Instead of my lacking communication skills, though, my Stories began speaking up in my stead.

[Story, 'Demon King of Salvation', has begun its storytelling.]

A portion of the Stories I possessed travelled towards the beings from the 999th turn via the tip of my hand.

[Story, 'One Who Opposes the Miracle', has begun its storytelling.]

[Story, 'One Who Hunted the King of Disasters', has begun its storytelling.]

I observed them reading my Stories. Diverse, colourful expressions filled their faces. It was quite clear what overlapped with my Story while they were reading it.

…Did I also make such an expression while reading the 'Ways of Survival' for the first time?

That was something I'd never find out.

【…But, how could such a thing…】

It was around then that an unexpected event occurred; the Status of the 999th turn's Uriel, reading my Story silently until then, travelled over the Story itself and invaded into the sea of my consciousness.

As if, she wanted to find out the origin of my existence.

[Exclusive skill, 'The Fourth Wall', is activating!]

Tsu-chuchuchut!

Just as I expected, the 'Wall' made a move as the blinding sparks danced in the air.

['The Fourth Wall' is glaring at the 'Living Flame'!]

The Living Flame's left hand was deflected away as if being rejected, a faint trace of burn marks visible on her skin. She looked at me in pure shock, then the faint hints of understanding began permeating in the lights of her eyes.

【I see. So, that's how it was. You are…】 Her voice sounded even more surprised compared to when she was reading my memories. 【The last fragment of the 'Final Wall', is it… Is that why the 'Secretive Plotter' was so obsessed over you?】

"Please make your decision. There isn't much time left until the scenario's end."

[The 'Great Apocalypse Scenario' has entered a temporary state of lull!]

[If the current situation persists, the distortion of the world will accelerate.]

Since they had descended as 'calamities', this scenario now had to have a conclusion without exception. The best method for everyone involved was for them to give up on being the 'calamities'.

The 'Living Flame' opened her lips again. 【I acknowledge the potential you possess. Although vexing, I can even agree to forestall my vengeance. However…】

Countless emotions brushed past her expression just then.

【…However, I don't believe that you'll successfully reach the end of this world-line. I don't believe that an existence that merely imitated another world-line's Story can witness a proper conclusion.】

"H-hang on a…"

【You'll probably reach your 'Conclusion' when this scenario comes to an end.】

The last part of 'One Single Story', the Conclusion (結).

A gob-smacking heat storm began condensing with the 999th turn's Uriel as its centre. Salty air circulated around my nose as the seawater evaporated into the rushing winds.

I reflexively cried out at this outrageous transformation of Status.

"Yoo Joonghyuk!!"

At the same time, he stepped up before me and cut down the rushing hot air with his [Black Heavenly Demon Sword]. However, the heat still managed to cook the backs of his hands.

His breathing became irregular. The [Disconnected Film Theory]'s effect had almost run its course.

Ku-gugugugu!

The 999th turn's Giant Stories were activating simultaneously. For some reason, even the 999th turn's Lee Hyunsung didn't try to stop Uriel.

I urgently shouted out. "But why…! There's no need to do this! We-!!"

The 999th turn's Uriel wordlessly strode over to us. Companions grew tense and began unleashing their own Statuses.

[Giant Story, 'Demon Realm's Spring', is continuing on with its storytelling!]

[Giant Story, 'Torch that Swallowed the Myth', is continuing on with its storytelling!]

The 'Living Flame' simply took a glance at our Stories and continued to approach us. After every 'Outer God' handed over their Status to her, she raised her [Flames of Retribution] up high.

I bit down hard on my lip.

[The absolute majority of the Constellations are scared of the 'Outer God's' power.]

[Many Dokkaebis are repulsed by the Story of the 'Outer God'.]

Everything within <Star Stream> would soon become stories.

However, why was a story both the Constellations and Dokkaebis didn't want to see deemed necessary?

Just what was the reason for a story to exist in this world when it was only good for plunging everyone into endless sorrow?

【Do you always seek to create a Story to tell someone else?】

The 999th turn's Uriel was talking to us.

The [Flames of Retribution] refined to the stunning degree was now talking about the time outside of the scenarios.

【Who does it exist for, this Story you have compiled so far?】

While listening to her true voice, I realized what her intentions were.

A story nobody supported. Even then, she wished to see the end of this particular scenario.

「And that is the answer the 'Living Flame' had chosen.」

The reason why she wanted to continue on with this scenario wasn't because she agreed with the Constellations, nor did she want to side with <Star Stream>.

【Show me your 'Conclusion'. Prove it to me that your group can reach an end different from any other world-lines.】

Stars in the skies were looking at us. Stars that had been watching this story for a very long time. I imagined those countless starlights, and then, end of all the worlds waiting beyond that.

I imagined the end of this story, the one I'd been building up to for a long time.

"Kim Dokja!"

The waves of heat completely filled up my view. The [Hellfire] of the 999th turn's Uriel, intermingling with the odour of burning sulphur, created the tsunami wave of lava. It was the moving wall of enormous Status capable of immediately melting everything that it touched.

The victory would be decided with one attack.

Block that, and we'd emerge as the victors.

"Focus your Giant Stories, everyone!"

Petty tricks were rendered useless in the face of a calamity. My companions helped me with the mobilisation of the Giant Stories, rather than focusing on their own specialities.

Shin Yoosung, Lee Gilyoung, and even Yoo Sangah, too – everyone raised their hands up in the air and added their share of the Giant Stories.

[Giant Story, 'Season of Light and Darkness', has begun its storytelling!]

Accompanying the noises of the heavens splitting apart, the roars of the Apocalypse Dragon could be heard. Right next second, yet another loud howl exploded out from Han Sooyoung's direction.

Ku-ooooooh!

The former candidate for the Apocalypse Dragon, the 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' was firing its Breath.

Jung Heewon dashed forward while riding on the vicious storm of the [Black Flame].

[Constellation, 'Lily Blooming in Aquarius', is unleashing her Status!]

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is unleashing her Status!]

Two Archangels were working together with Jung Heewon. Her [Judge's Sword] raised up high was now cutting down the tsunami wave.

Kwa-aaaaaah!

Was it because of the two Archangels' combined attack? For a moment there, the tsunami wave's movement grew sluggish.

Yoo Joonghyuk didn't miss that opening.

[Story, 'Hell of Eternity', is continuing with its storytelling!]

Traces of numerous regression turns branched out from his [Black Heavenly Demon Sword]. His Status spread out and began destroying the rushing wave.

– It's not enough.

Unfortunately, his desperate resistance couldn't last for long; the sparks dancing all over his body were getting fiercer and fiercer. The [Disconnected Film Theory]'s effect had finally run out, in other words.

The moment his Status began declining sharply, he let rip one powerful attack at the centre of the wave.

Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship(破天劍道).

Inner Mysteries(奧義).

Split the Dark Ocean(暗海斬).

A minute opening was created by the attack from his Inner Mysteries. I didn't miss that.

[Maknae-yah, preparations are complete.]

Also, the voice I had been waiting for entered my ears just then, too.

Surrounding clouds gathered around me as if to envelop me – somersault clouds, filled to the brim with cracking thunderbolts, completely encircled me. My body was buzzing as if every lightning found in the heavens had been hoovered up here.

[We can use this only once.]

I kicked off the clouds and dashed into the gap within the lava.

My wings generated through the 'Demon King Transformation' were lit on fire and it felt like my eyeballs were being cooked by this horrifying heat. However, I didn't stop.

I had a duty to protect this path my companions opened up for me.

「The one single story that can stand as the testament to our lives.」

My feet moved faster and faster until they became streaks of light. I used the powers of [Electrification] to hold together my Incarnation Body threatening to explode at any second.

Faster and stronger, as if I had become a single streak of lightning.

Ku-rururururu!

The lightning charged fully in both of my hands boiled vigorously. This lightning, capable of smashing apart countless stars found in <Star Stream>, the one that half-destroyed <Emperor>'s Heavenly Palace…

I used up every ounce of my strength to throw the Ruyi Jingu Bang.

「Stars in the skies boiled over, and Nebulas shrunk back. The thick dark clouds rolling in the heavens alluded to their despair.」

This single attack carried all the condensed power of the Great Sage Heaven's Equal.

「Just like what he did during the final battle.」

The lightning bolt broke past the incoming lava and advanced forward.

Kwa-kwakwakwak!

The tsunami wave of lava exploded grandly and evaporated right there and then. The streaks of electricity branching out created a path above the splitting wave.

It was the path of the Story we had been walking on. And I ran on it.

[Giant Story, 'Demon Realm's Spring', is arranging your 'Conclusion'.]

The Demon Realm's 'Beginning/Gi(起)'.

[Giant Story, 'Torch that Swallowed the Myth', is proudly guiding you.]

Olympus's 'Development/Seung(承)'.

[Giant Story, 'Season of Light and Darkness', is right by your side.]

The Great War of Saints and Demons' 'Climax/Jeon(轉)'. And then…

[Giant Story, 'Liberator of the Forgotten Ones', is dreaming of the Final Story.]

…The last dot that hadn't been filled yet.

Kwa-aaaaaah!!

All the Stories we experienced together merged into one and emitted blinding rays of light. The explosion of light so bright that it seared my eyes, blanketed everything.

When I raised my head again, the volcanic ashes from the lava were scattering away in the air. The sky looked desolate after everything had come to an end. The dust blocking the gazes of the stars fell like snow and covered the ocean's surface.

Someone was plopped down on her butt in front of the Unbroken Faith.

I could see the broken wings of an Archangel. From the beginning, she wasn't planning to win against us. I quietly stared into her eyes.

I didn't know whether this was enough proof or not. Just that, this was the best I could show as the current me.

The 999th turn's Uriel stared at my blade for a long time. It was as if she was repeatedly mulling over the last line of text – as if this pointy tip of the blade was the full stop putting an end to all of her Stories.

Then, her gaze slowly shifted along towards where that tip of the blade was now pointing at.

It was beyond the horizon where the distant sky and the ocean met.

「That's where the end of this world-line was.」

A faint trembling flickered past her expressions.

The 999th turn's Lee Jihye, Lee Hyunsung, and even the still-dazed Kim Namwoon were all staring in the same direction as her.

Beyond the falling grey ashes, something blurry could be seen.

Fear began clouding the expressions of the 'Outer Gods'.

I instantly realized what they were staring at. At the place where they arrived once before during the 999th turn. At the 'Final Wall' that could never be overcome if one insisted on living within this world of 'Stories'.

[Calamities of the 'Great Apocalypse Scenario' are giving up on the positions of calamity.]

[The 'Great Apocalypse' is entering the termination sequence!]

[Your last 'Giant Story' is blossoming!]

[Absolute majority of the Constellations are witnessing the moment of your last Story's awakening!]

I could now hear that 'Wall' calling out to me.

[Hidden Scenario – 'One Single Story', has reached the 'Conclusion'!]

[<Star Stream> is carefully considering the name of your last Story.]

[You accomplished a feat that every star in <Star Stream> will revere you for.]

[You have arrived at an epic that only an extremely few stars have ever reached!]

And finally, the message I had been waiting for the longest time could be heard next.

[You and your Nebula have earned the qualification to witness the '■■ of everything'.]

[The 'King of Stories' is summoning you.]

Chapter 482: Ep. 92 - Final Scenario, I

Two days after the 'Great Apocalypse Scenario's conclusion.

During these two days, the 98th scenario meandering nowhere fast also ended, as well.

[98th scenario – 'Candidate Selection' has automatically ended.]

[No one has challenged your Nebula.]

[Number of victories: 1]

[Contents of your reward is currently being finalised.]

[Clearing of the 'Great Apocalypse Scenario' has been linked to your reward, and the contents are still being discussed.]

Perhaps that was inevitable. While Nebulas were busy fighting each other, we actually were victorious in the 'Great Apocalypse Scenario'. We fought off the ancient 'Outer Gods' and protected Earth. Not only that, with only the strength of our Nebula alone, too.

[A large number of Constellations respect you and your Nebula.]

[Nebula <Kim Dokja's Company>'s fame is spreading far and wide in <Star Stream>.]

[Every Constellation in the Final Scenario is now aware of your Nebula.]

[Every Constellation in the Final Scenario is curious of your 'Conclusion'.]

And now, everyone in this <Star Stream> knew of us.

– Representative-nim! Representative Kim Dokja! Please say something!

Voices from the megaphones came from outside the [Industrial Complex].

Whether it was the hologram panel or the regular TV – didn't matter where or what, our story dominated them all. Every broadcasting station, including terrestrial and cable, was showing the front yard of the [Industrial Complex] in real-time.

Also, the interview footages of the Complex's residents were being repeated ad nauseam, too.

– 'Judge of Destruction'-nim! Can you tell us the future plans of <Kim Dokja's Company>…

– Call me by my name when in public, please. Han Sooyoung likes that stuff. I don't.

– Hey, Jung Heewon. Wanna die?!

…I couldn't remember just how many times I had heard that "Wanna die" by now.

– The true influence behind the 'Kim Dokja's Company', 'Han Sooyoung the Black Flame Demon Empress'. It is now revealed that, before the apocalypse, she was a famous author…

Reading the ticker proclaiming [Genius author's insight demolishes the Final Scenario!], I could seriously re-appreciate the fact that I had indeed reached this far.

–We heard that your representative-nim has become a 'Myth-grade Constellation' after defeating the 'Midday Sun'. Does that mean our South Korea now has a Myth-grade Constellation that can step up to the limelight?

– Incarnations are currently locked in a fierce debate after witnessing the footages of the battle's final moments. Just what are the true identities of the 'Outer Gods'?

– Why did representative Kim Dokja-nim suddenly become a blonde?

The battles we fought were broadcast not only on <Star Stream>, but throughout Earth as well – from Yoo Joonghyuk kicking 'Ra's' butt, all the way to us fighting against the lava wave created by the 999th turn's Outer Gods.

[Constellation. 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is quite proud of herself.]

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', is turning its nose up.]

[Constellation, 'Most Ancient Liberator's', lips are twitching.]

And every one of those scenes was accompanied by an interview with someone.

– You see, me? I recognised that friend's greatness even back when we were working in the same company. Huh? Just which new employee tries to be the first to go home as soon as time's up…

Department head Han Myungoh? I definitely told him not to do any interviews, though?

He was smiling brightly, his left hand holding onto his daughter's. It seemed that he had managed to safely rescue his child.

– He was just a regular friend. Mm, well, you know, those types of kids? There's always someone like that in a class, that type of a person.

Now that some time had passed by, even a person claiming to be my school mate popped up. I began thinking that maybe some managed to survive until now.

…Those faces that I couldn't even place a name on.

– Kind, quiet, likes to read a book by himself…

Although not technically wrong, that explanation wasn't right, either.

Some words were quite convenient to use. And those words usually couldn't explain anything because of that convenience.

The school mate muttered on about the obvious stuff for a while, before excusing himself with a stutter as if he found the camera a bit too much. He probably ran out of things to say.

– About Earth's saviour, the 'Demon King of Salvation'.

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October 2019
"Demon King of Salvation"
KIM
DOK-JA
그의 화려한 데뷔부터
전성기까지
INTRODUCING
"KIM DOK-JA COMPANY"
공동 대표가 밝히는
그들만의 창업 노하우!
COVER
"STAR"
김독자 컴퍼니의 대표, 김독자.
SAVIOR?
JOIN
THE
SCENARIO
마지막 시나리오?
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*

Another program started after that with a piece of rather sad-sounding music. It was a specially-compiled documentary.

[Constellation. 'Goryeo's First Sword', is nodding his head.]

[Constellation, 'Maritime War God', is proud of you.]

While watching the footages, I began recalling the time before the apocalypse. The dreams I had, the things I thought were important, etc.

The fact that all these things came across as distant memories felt very alien to me. Of course, not everything was totally alien, though.

– He endured a painful youth stained by domestic violence, and…

Someone suddenly switched the TV off.

"Dokja-yah."

My mother was standing by the entrance of the reception room.

I smiled nonchalantly while staring at her. "You're here."

She nodded as a bout of silence filled the room. I stared at the TV within this silence. The darkened screen reflected both my mother and myself.

A faint aroma of perfume wafted past my nose, making me feel rather strange in the process. Once upon a time, she was the one person I just couldn't understand.

But now, I didn't even need to resort to [Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint] to figure out what she was thinking about.

"I'm fine, mother. Please don't worry."

A soft sigh could be heard next.

"I'm sorry, son."

"But, you haven't done anything."

"This time, it…"

"There's been a lot of interview requests, hasn't it?"

"They have been declined. There's no need for you to personally step up. You saving this world or destroying it, it matters not to them."

The voices from the megaphones were still coming from afar.

I knew very well what my mother was worried about, and what she was apologising for.

"I'm not the 'Kim Dokja' from back then."

I pulled the curtains back on the window, and the cameras pointing at the plaza all shifted towards in my direction.

In the past, I was scared of the cameras; scared of someone looking at me, and terrified of strangers yapping about me in strange languages.

"I'll do an interview."

"…Are you sure about this, son? How about giving it another thought…?"

"They also have the right to know."

I switched the TV on again. I saw the news headline pop up on the upper part of the screen.

– What is <Kim Dokja's Company>'s goal?

– [Industrial Complex] hasn't revealed the Final Scenario's contents yet…

[A portion of Nebulas are focusing on your next course of action!]

[<Star Stream> wishes to tell the story of your 'Conclusion'!]

[Great Dokkaebis are summoning you to the 'Final Scenario' location.]

[A portion of Nebulas wish to form an alliance with your…]

"At 8 o'clock tonight. Please contact both the Dokkaebis as well as the Constellations."

Been a while, but I found and read the first version of the 'Ways of Survival'; the pure, unsullied version, before the author decided to alter it.

[Currently, both you and your Nebula have acquired the qualification of the 'Final Scenario'.]

[You can enter the 'Final Scenario' location at any time.]

The Final Scenario from the 'Ways of Survival' was actually a great war against the 'Outer Gods'.

Yoo Joonghyuk from the original cut the Outer God King's head off during that scenario and completed his own 'Conclusion' that way.

In a certain way, it was rather similar to the 'Great Apocalypse Scenario' we had experienced already. Actually, if we were unsuccessful in our quest to stop the Great Apocalypse, then it'd probably go on to become the prelude to the Final Scenario, instead.

「The 'Outer Gods' that were supposed to become the Final Scenario's calamities have been sealed away.」

I looked at the three sealing spheres located in the middle of the [Factory]. That's where the 'Kings' that descended to this world was currently asleep. The 'Living Flame', the 'Master of the Sunken Island', and even the 'Monarch of the Great Abyss' – all three of them.

The only one not sealed away was the 'King of the Silver Heart' who didn't appear as a calamity.

– We shall watch your Story until its end.

The 999th turn's Uriel said that to me during the final moments before sealing herself and her companions within the [Apocalypse Dragon Sealing Sphere]. She estimated that an incredible aftermath's storm would ravage them after they willingly went against the agreement with the Bureau and gave up on the positions of the calamities.

[You have concluded the 'Great Apocalypse Scenario' in an abnormal manner.]

[A portion of Constellations are expressing their dissatisfaction at your manner of progressing the scenario!]

[A portion of Great Dokkaebis hold inexplicable animosity towards you.]

[A small number of Great Dokkaebis acknowledge your achievement of convincing the 'Outer Gods'.]

[Currently, a number of the Wennys hold a favourable view of you.]

Countless messages continued to rise up in the air even now.

[Hidden scenario – 'One Single Story's' completion is imminent.]

[A satisfactory 'Giant Story' has been completed due to the latter half of the 'Conclusion(結)'.]

[<Star Stream> is recommending possible names for your final Story.]

[Please select the Giant Story's name.]

[Depending on your selection, your 'Conclusion' will be decided.]

I still hadn't picked a name from among the <Star Stream>'s recommendations.

"Kim Dokja."

Han Sooyoung entered while pushing open the creaking door.

"How are our companions feeling?"

"About the same. Yoo Joonghyuk's a bit injured, but it's not so bad. The [Life and Death Pill]'s effects are seriously no joke, you know."

She then proudly boasted that she got herself another pill – which wasn't like her – before placing that very pill on my palm.

"Eat it if you think you're about to croak, okay?"

"If only you sounded nicer. I'd have been moved to tears."

Han Sooyoung stared at my face with unreadable light in her eyes. This soft darkness was scattering away like a screen of fog between us.

A faint trace of light leaked out from the sealing sphere trapping the 999th turn's Uriel. Han Sooyoung's face glowed warmly under that light.

"I guess this really is the end."

I nodded my head.

"What was it like, back in the original? The Final Scenario, it… No, never mind. Things have changed completely from the original, anyway."

She was right.

We had already ended the war against the 'Outer Gods' that's supposed to be the original novel's Final Scenario. So, the 'Final Scenario' we were about to face should be very different from the original.

"What happens when you complete the 'Conclusion'?"

"Probably a meeting with the King of Stories."

"You mean, the Dokkaebi King?" asked Han Sooyoung. She pondered something for a bit, then continued on. "Are you going to meet that guy?"

"I will. Not right away, but still."

"What do you mean? Don't make me worried here."

There was the sound of knocking, and a faint wind blew across us. One of the Complex's residents peeked his head through the open gap of the door Han Sooyoung had left behind.

"Representative-nim? We have a guest, sir."

A guest?

[It's been a while, descendant.]

An old-fashioned tone of voice greeted me. An unexpected existence came to visit, as it turned out.

"…Pungbaek?"

Heaven's wind god, 'Pungbaek'.

Only then did I remember what my mother told me earlier. She said that I should meet up with Pungbaek before I entered the 'Final Scenario', didn't she?

[Descendant, your choice was reckless. Letting the 'Outer Gods' live is no different than you embracing the calamity itself.]

…Did he show up here to spout more kkondae-like rubbish?

Pungbaek must've found my actions not to his liking, because he began a lengthy sermon at my expense. Such as, the young ones looking down on scenarios nowadays, us not being serious about the scenarios, etc, etc…

"Excuse me, grandpa?"

[I don't have the time to waste, so I shall get right to the point. Descendant, you might find yourself in great danger once you enter the Final Scenario.]

"Great danger?"

[I say this because I've been observing your methods for a very long time.]

He spoke as if he knew just about everything I was planning to do in my future. Han Sooyoung next to me cackled as if she was greatly amused by this. I shot her a glare and asked Pungbaek.

"Just what is it that you came here to tell me?"

[<Hongik> can lend you aid, descendant.]

I ended up frowning without realizing it. I now could figure out why he was here. This dude, even until the end…

"I don't need it. You probably will demand some kind of nonsensical payment, anyw…"

[We don't need things like that. Witnessing the birth of a 'Myth-grade Constellation' from the Korean Peninsula is more than enough for us.]

I couldn't help but doubt my own hearing just then.

[You'll find <Hongik>'s founding gods among the Myth-grade Constellations in the Final Scenario. If your situation turns for the worse, ask them for their aid. If you're genuine in your request, they should be compelled to make a move.]

"…Have you come here to tell me that?"

Pungbaek expressionlessly stroked his beard and replied. [Correct.]

"I'm a bit moved, actually."

Pungbake lightly coughed to clear his throat, then his body scattered away in winds.

[I've conveyed everything I wished to say. Let us meet again in the Final Scenario.]

Less than a blink later, only the chilly wind remained there.

Han Sooyoung piped up, sounding somewhat bemused. "He's really coy, isn't he? How adorable."

"Well, he was a good Constellation back in the original, so."

"I guess we do have some allies, then. Your life wasn't in vain, man."

I'd be happy if that was truly the case.

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', says she's also here.]

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', argues that only the bad companions can be true companions, and…]

[Constellation. 'Most Ancient Liberator', is…]

I looked up at the sky and smirked a little.

Han Sooyoung spoke up. "You, you grinning that unlucky grin again. It's almost 8, so get ready. People are waiting for you."

I nodded before heading to the upper levels of the [Factory]. I could hear the murmurs coming from the interior. All manners of media houses, Dokkaebis, and Constellations were waiting for me.

Before I could make my entrance to the press conference venue, though, one of the Complex's residents stopped me.

"Excuse me, representative-nim. Preparations aren't finished yet."

…Now that I thought about it, since when did people of the [Industrial Complex] start calling me with that title?

Didn't they used to call me the 'Demon King' all this time?

"I ordered them to call you that. You being called Demon King-nim every single time kinda made me feel like we're this world's enemies or something."

"Well, sure, I guess… But, uh, Seolhwa-ssi, is this really necessary?"

Before I knew it, I was pushed down on a chair. And then, my lips began quivering from the sensation of a soft brush tickling my cheek.

The focused Lee Seolhwa replied seriously while painting my face. "You're supposed to be our representative, so we must ensure that you look presentable first."

"Your words hurt in a variety of ways, you know."

My companions were watching us from nearby as if they had found something quite entertaining. I felt like a monkey in a zoo.

Han Sooyoung fidgeted around with my hair from behind and asked me. "By the way, will you remain as a blondie forever?"

"No, it's because of the Great Sage's Status seeping into me. I should go back to normal in a little while."

"Your hair is really soft, though."

[Constellation. 'Most Ancient Liberator' says that his hair is the result of an extensive, arduous training regime…]

"It's finished."

Lee Seolhwa finished painting me in an instant and spoke while placing a mirror before me. Although it was a bit embarrassing to say this myself, a man handsome enough to ponder whether to slap Yoo Joonghyuk's cheeks or not was staring back at me in the reflection.

I sneaked a glance to my side, but my companions weren't saying anything. Several steps away, Yoo Joonghyuk was glaring at me with eyes implying how unimpressed he was.

"Kim Dokja."

I nodded, put my coat on, and placed the Unbroken Faith on my hips. With the exception of the formal business suit underneath, this was my regular combat outfit, through and through.

"Let's go."

We entered the press conference venue. Countless stars and cameras were now looking at me in this wide-open outdoor venue.

Near-blinding rays came down from the spotlights above. My companions and I were being projected on a giant holographic panel.

Loud cheerings came from the residents of the Industrial Complex. What accompanied the outpouring of their cheering were the stories of those waiting for me.

[The absolute majority of Constellations are focusing their attention on your decision!]

[The absolute majority of Constellations are curious about the name of your final Story!]

Those that worry about the safety of the Korean Peninsula, and Constellations that were curious about this planet's future.

Those who were scared of what lay waiting in the Final Scenario, and those who worried about their own survival.

Beings who were concerned about the power we possessed and were trying to take it away.

Those saying why we chose to appear only now, and the Incarnations pleading with us to take them to the 'Final Scenario'…

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation', is starting his story.]

As the countless questions flooded in, my Story made a move. The skies wavered and the ground quaked – when the Status of a Myth-grade

Constellation was unleashed, the entirety of the Peninsula seemed to sink into a pit of silence. Every single one waiting for my answer looked at me.

I slowly opened my lips.

[Everyone.]

And then, I began my story.

[I have no thoughts of saving you.]

@1L9|2Aa8UCL0IGJ

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* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)
* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)

Chapter 483: Ep. 92 - Final Scenario, II

My declaration caused unrest among the crowd. Reporters ceaselessly snapped away with their cameras; lower- and mid-rank Dokkaebis reporting the situation on their own channels were now carrying astonished expressions on their faces.

[Many Constellations find your statement quite interesting!]

[Great Dokkaebis are closely listening to your statement.]

[Every Dokkaebi from the <Bureau> is focusing on your words and actions!]

– What do you mean by that?!

– Representative Kim Dokja-nim!

It was truly something else to witness the Constellations, Incarnations, and even the Dokkaebis carrying the exact same expressions.

With a friendly little smile on my face, I opened my mouth once more. [It's exactly as I said. I simply can't see the reason to save you all.]

– Are you saying you will throw away Korea?

– In that case, what will happen to all the Incarnations that supported you until now?!

Support, was it?

[How did they support us, then?]

Agitation spread out in an instant. My quizzical tone of voice caused the reporters to shoot up from their seats and start yelling at me. As expected, the power of media seemed to be mighty enough to even oppose a Myth-grade Constellation's Status.

– Who do you think has been overlooking the <Kim Dokja's Company>'s tyranny?!

– Didn't everyone go along with your wishes until now?!

Overlooking the tyranny, was it…?

Before I could respond, though, Constellations chimed in first.

[A portion of Constellations are mocking the reporters' statements.]

[Korean Peninsula's ancient Constellations are in lamentation!]

[Constellation, 'Goryeo's First Sword', is glaring at the descendants.]

Never mind whether it was a tyranny or not, I didn't even know what exactly they had been 'overlooking' so far. Wasn't there demonstrations against <Kim Dokja's Company> taking place every single day on the devastated Yeouido even now?

I quietly stared at the various shouting reporters, before asking them. [And what exactly were my wishes?]

– That is…!

[Have I ever asked any one of you to do something for me?]

Right there and then, the reporters shut their mouths and glanced at each other. Dokkaebis were now forming expressions of genuine interest. To them, even things like this should prove to be an entertaining Story. Well, it was an event of the 'Demon King of Salvation' forsaking his own land, after all.

What rescued the reporters falling into the pit of confusion was a group of Incarnations biding their time on the side of the [Industrial Complex].

– It's only natural for the one possessing great power to shoulder the responsibility. And you are abandoning that responsibility right now.

An old man wearing a shabby hat suddenly stepped forward and said that out aloud. Shady, cunning glare in his eyes could be seen beneath the crooked rim of his headgear. I couldn't immediately remember who it was, but that line, it also appeared in the 'Ways of Survival'. I heard Lee Jihye's voice coming from behind.

"What the hell. That geezer also showed up here?"

It seemed that the group belonged to the alliance down in Busan. The hidden movers that took over the alliance while we were away from the Peninsula had finally revealed themselves, in other words.

Behind them, the clearly-visible flags of the veteran's association waved by the ones wearing blue headbands. And then, alliance members from the countryside stood left and right of this group and angrily raised their voices.

– Demon King of Salvation, you must uphold the duty of the strong. Are you not the sole 'Myth-grade Constellation' active within the Korean Peninsula?

Some emphasized what my duty was, while…

– I beg of you, do not abandon the Korean Peninsula! If you behave like this, what will the poor citizens of this land do in turn??

…Some tried to appeal to my sympathy.

– Please, take us with you to the Final Scenario! Everyone who managed to survive until now has the right to be rewarded properly!

– No one among us wanted to become a part of the 'scenario'! Are you planning to abandon all these innocent people? Can you even claim to be this Peninsula's Constellation, then?!

In a certain way, they were right. No one among us wanted to be a part of the scenarios. Not initially, anyway.

[I see that the various heads of the alliances are present as well. That's good.]

However, was the story still the same even now?

[I wanted to ask you all something. Just what exactly have you been doing until now, when the 'Final Scenario' is just around the corner?]

The alliance members all looked at each other when they heard me.

– We, we… protected the Peninsula while you were away…!

– Are you looking down on all the hard work the alliances have performed?! It was us that protected our Peninsula during your absence!

I already knew what they had been doing, anyway. Meanwhile, I spotted a few alliance members exchanging glances with reporters.

「Publish the article – let everyone know that the 'Demon King of Salvation' is giving up on the Korean Peninsula.」

Most likely, they were inciting the mass media.

「The 'Demon King of Salvation', revealing his true colours of a demon king.」

I could imagine the headlines already without even asking them. I knew why they were willing to go this far, of course.

「No need to be scared. The Demon King of Salvation is still a human in the end. He's just another Korean, okay?」

「As long as he's born in this land, there are some things he can't go against.」

「Even if he now possesses great power and fame…」

They still believed in the system. They believed in the story of「democracy」 upheld by humanity for a long time, the Stories like「rationalism」 and 「institution」, or even something like「majority decision」.

[Ancient Stories are now looking at you.]

I could see it now; everyone believed they held a share in these Stories, but in reality, no one did. Even before <Star Stream> arrived on Earth, this place had been under the rule of a Giant Story. And those believing in this Giant Story were under the impression that they couldn't be wrong. The alliance members continued to shout.

– Didn't <Kim Dokja's Company> monopolise the scenarios from the very start?! What can we be expected to achieve under such unfair competitive conditions?!

[But, the Industrial Complex's door is always open to you? All the skills and Stories we acquired are all publicly available, aren't they?]

– No, but, because you people entered the scenarios first…!

[There are plenty of people from other countries who entered the scenarios belatedly. Divisions led by Fei Hu or Ranvir Khan are home to many who have joined only a few months ago, but now find themselves in the latter half of the scenarios.]

– That's the story for other countries! Our situation isn't the same!

[They don't have the 'Industrial Complex'. Their support structure is focused on extremely few individuals, too. However, what is it like for Seoul?]

I snapped my fingers and Biyoo created a panel in the empty air above. A shot of the [Industrial Complex]'s interior was displayed on it.

[We publicly made available the methods to clear the lower-ranked scenarios, and even released the list of 'Giant Story scenarios' as well. And we didn't hold back with our support to those willing to diligently enter the scenarios, too. We didn't place any restrictions on sex, age, race – none of those. Because what we were looking for were brave people willing to fight alongside us.]

The panel now displayed Incarnations going through repeated harsh training regimes, and my mother commanding them. The faces of both Jo Yeong-Ran and Lee Bok-Sun working as instructors could be seen next.

And so, they reached this far after going through hellish training and earned their own Stories.

[I'm talking about these people right before you.]

There were Incarnations possessing indomitable air and vigorous Statuses guarding the centre of the conference venue. They were none other than the 'wanderers' my mother had raised. The heroes that helped my mother stop the tsunami waves by the eastern shoreline were these very people.

[Is there anyone among you present today that received worse support than these people?]

No one replied. They were all overwhelmed by the fighting spirit emanating from the 'wanderers' right before their noses.

People faltering and biting their lips started shouting again.

– It's not like we kicked back and enjoyed ourselves all this time! We, we've been preparing for various things! Maintaining the systems and infrastructures, and getting ready to rebuild our nation once you finish the scenario and come back…

[But, why are you getting ready for that? Do you even know what kind of 'Conclusion' is waiting at the end?]

– What??

[Why do you believe that this world's 'Conclusion' will be peaceful?]

This world had changed a lot from the one found in the 'Ways of Survival'. Yoo Joonghyuk, Lee Hyunsung, Lee Jihye, Shin Yoosung – everyone had changed somewhat from what I used to remember.

However, some things didn't change.

「Everyone Yoo Joonghyuk had met all wished for things to go back to how they were.」

Fluster was quickly dyeing the people's expressions. Expressions of being betrayed by that one hope they had been holding onto. I knew very well what they wanted, of course.

「However, there were none among them that truly desired for 'everything' to go back to how they were.」

What this crowd wanted wasn't peace for everyone, but for 'individuals'.

They had experienced hellish scenarios and managed to survive. And those who experienced such ordeals definitely didn't want to see everything go back to 'how it used to be'.

Because the hell they lived through had become a part of their stories now.

「…It'll be fine as long as the Final Scenario is over. I now possess power. At the bare minimum, I'm now in a position to act like a boss among the Incarnations.」

「I can't go back to how it was. Just how hard did I struggle to get this far…」

「If only the <Kim Dokja's Company> wasn't around…」

As the countless desires seethed under the surface, I slowly turned my head and looked at the outer edges of the conference venue.

The alliance members, and certain folks standing even further away than the reporters, were looking up at this side. Ordinary Incarnations covered in dust and wearing shabby, dirty clothes and equipment were standing there.

Among them, I saw a young girl. She was only as tall as Shin Yoosung during the initial stages of the scenarios. She was so young that it must've been a miracle for her to survive this far. And while standing in that place that cameras and channels didn't even pay any attention to, she whispered to herself in a voice that only I could hear.

「Does that mean… we are all going to die?」

The cameras and their shutter flashes continued to go off, but I only stared at that girl for a long time.

And eventually, I opened my mouth.

[I'm not a hero. From the beginning, I never planned to save any of you, and I'm not planning on doing that in the future, as well. However…]

I slowly looked behind to find…

[…It's possible that the other 'representative' might be holding a different opinion than mine.]

…Yoo Joonghyuk standing there.

A little while later, me and Han Sooyoung were listening to Yoo Joonghyuk's speech from behind the stage.

– I also don't know what the Conclusion that guy had been thinking about is like. However, even I too think about the world's Conclusion that I wish to see.

In normal times, the extent of his vocabulary would be limited to "I'll kill you Kim Dokja", but once he got going, he knew how to make a cool-sounding speech. He wasn't the protagonist for nothing, after all.

Han Sooyoung wordlessly stared at me while sucking on a lemon candy.

I spoke as if to make an excuse. "It's not like I can step up to the front and command everyone forever, you know. Yoo Joonghyuk suits such things better than me. Even back in the original, too."

She began grinning, so I added something else.

"We need a much more trusty pivotal figure. And that's not my role."

"But, you could do it, though?"

"It's time that we revert back to how things should be. I'm not a protagonist but a reader, remember?"

"Oh, my? Really? After coming this far?"

I hid my hands behind me and continued to clench and unfurl my fists. Indeed, even if this Kim Dokja had become a Myth-grade Constellation, I was still 'Kim Dokja' at the core. My palms were still soaked in sweat. Standing before the cameras was never an easy thing no matter the occasion.

"Is that the 'proper conclusion' you've been thinking about?"

"It's the beginning."

"What comes after this, then?"

I didn't answer her.

"Hey, you."

She strode closer, lifted herself up on the tiptoes, and grabbed hold of my collars.

"You haven't forgotten about the promise to read my novel, have you?"

"Huh?"

"We promised. You forgot?"

I looked into her blazing eyes, and finally recalled the conversation we had in the past. Right, while exiting from the 'Kaizenix Archipelago', Han Sooyoung did tell me that.

She said that she wanted to write a novel once all the scenarios had ended, and when the time came, she wanted me to read it.

"You were being serious back then?"

"You think I'll lie about something like that?!"

I could only grin wryly. "I've got a high standard, so will it be okay with you?"

"Oh, a dude with a high standard kept reading trash like Ways of Survival for ten years straight??"

"I might end up writing a bad review, though? Pointing out that it's got no probability, and say stuff like I'll be dropping this series in my comments, you know?"

"Go ahead. You'll see what happens next."

I quietly stared at Han Sooyoung's face. She looked back at me with a serious face, not a hint of backing down visible on that expression. Right, she was originally like this, wasn't she?

"…I might end up nagging you for more chapter uploads."

"Not a problem. I've written ten chapters in a single day before, so it's fine."

My sense of reality seemed to weaken after I continued this tit-for-tat with her still holding my collars. The first time I met her, I never imagined that we'd end up as companions like this. Han Sooyoung who was once the 'king of the prophets'.

– Once upon a time, I discriminated between those that needed to survive and people whose death didn't mean anything.

We could hear Yoo Joonghyuk's voice drifting in.

– I always believed that some had to die, while some needed to carry on. I believed that was a necessity for the sake of this world. But now, I…

Both Han Sooyoung and I stopped yapping while listening to his speech. Here was Yoo Joonghyuk's inner thoughts that he had never revealed to anyone directly. His inner side that even the 'Ways of Survival' failed to shed a light on could be heard now.

– But now, I'm not sure anymore.

The protagonist of the 'Ways of Survival' was speaking his heart.

Behind his back, the Stories of the regression turn we lived through flowed out.

He was the sole existence in this world who couldn't forget the previous world – the protagonist wounded and hurt by betrayals from the distant past.

– I received help from those I believed to be evil in my previous lives.

We could see Yoo Joonghyuk battling against Asmodeus next.

He then met his end after a fierce battle during the 2nd regression turn.

– Then, I fought on the same battlefield with the one who betrayed me before.

Anna Croft, helping us fight off the Apocalypse Dragon.

Yoo Joonghyuk stared at those Stories for a long time before continuing on.

– I haven't forgiven them. But that doesn't mean I wish to seek revenge on them during this lifetime. Because my life this time is not the one I had lived before. Just like how this world is no longer the world that you used to know.

People were listening to Yoo Joonghyuk's story.

They were neither regressors nor protagonists. Even then, they all carried expressions of certain understanding.

– You surviving this far doesn't mean everything will be permitted to you. No, it simply means you now have more responsibility. The sin of living on, the sin of surviving by trampling on someone else's stories, the sin of using others' Stories as your fertiliser and daring to spread your branches and sprouting new buds – so, if you're alive, then be responsible for those sins.

Everyone that understood him, and even those who didn't, they all looked completely absorbed in his speech.

These were the words of a human who lived his life cutting down Constellations in the battlefields. He spoke neither the friendly words of consolation nor of encouragement, but without a doubt, he was still reaching them.

His voice sounded far more sincere than the true voice coming from a Constellation like myself.

– I can't make a promise of saving everyone. I merely try to survive the scenarios, and I certainly can't live through them instead of you. So, there is only one thing I can tell you right now.

This was undoubtedly where Yoo Joonghyuk should be.

– Until the scenario for every one of you ends, I shall promise not to die or regress.

Chapter 484: Ep. 92 - Final Scenario, III

Yoo Joonghyuk's massive announcement caused the crowd to go silent.

The movers of the alliances, not won over by his speech, continued to exchange knowing glances with each other, but the crowd was no longer within their ability to control.

"Supreme King…"

Someone softly muttered. Soon after that, reporters began dreaming up of potential headlines all on their own.

「Supreme King Yoo Joonghyuk, declares his desperate resistance!」

BLA BOX
October 2019
2019 SUPER MATCH
독자가 직접 꼽은
최고의 전투 TOP 3
ALL ABOUT THE STARSTREAM
그들은 누구이며
어디에서 왔는가?
"THE MOST PERFECT INCARNATION ON EARTH"
"OVERLORD"
YOU JOONGHYUK
'왜'
지구는
이 남자에게
열광하는가
HERO
INTRODUCING
"KIM DOK-JA COMPANY"
공동 대표가 밝히는
그들만의 창업 노하우!
vs Secretive Plotter
1864-03YJH(0803)

*

「<Kim Dokja's Company>'s joint top representative Yoo Joonghyuk, "won't give up on the scenario till the end."」

Incarnations who heard about him being a regressor seemed to be even more excited than ever before. Some shouted out loudly, and the [Industrial Complex] was immediately filled up with the roars of cheering.

"Supreme King Yoo Joonghyuk!"

"Yoo Joonghyuk!! Yoo Joonghyuk!"

Everyone was now chanting his name.

Even those making snide remarks against <Kim Dokja's Company> earlier had been swept up in the flow and were staring at him now.

Things wouldn't suddenly improve with this, but at a bare minimum, the foundation had been laid today. The 'world after the scenarios' should now form with Yoo Joonghyuk as its centre.

Even if I said the exact same things, I wouldn't receive a similar level of cheering. Probably.

Han Sooyoung finally released my collars and while looking in Yoo Joonghyuk's direction, opened her mouth. "If only he acts like that every day."

I agreed with her. However, that was his personality, so…

Now that it got going, the chanting showed no sign of stopping any time soon. The cheering that began with Yoo Joonghyuk's name soon moved onto Jung Heewon, then Lee Hyunsung, and even over to Lee Jihye.

And as every name except the 'Demon King of Salvation' was being chanted out, my companions shifted their gaze in my direction, looking clearly uncomfortable. I waved my hand at them to indicate that it was alright. They deserved to be cheered on, anyway.

Eventually, the chanting reached Han Sooyoung's name, too.

"Black Flame Demon Empress, Han Sooyoung!!"

The crowd in the audience gallery was now searching for Han Sooyoung hiding behind the stage.

I spoke to her. "It's your turn. Go ahead."

But she shook her head, instead. "I hate stuff like that."

"I thought you liked being the centre of attention? Was I wrong?"

"That's as a writer, not as Han Sooyoung, you know."

While lightly tapping on the ground with her heel, she lowered her gaze and frowned a little. When she didn't show up, the chanting naturally shifted over to Shin Yoosung's name.

The companions waving their hands on the venue as seen beyond the curtains came across as famous movie stars in my eyes.

[Korean Peninsula's Constellations are proud of <Kim Dokja's Company>!]

While watching them carry on, I spoke up as if to voice my thoughts. "Han Sooyoung?"

"What is it?"

"If this world was a novel, which volume do you think we are in right now?"

She seemed to ponder this quandary for a bit before making her reply. "Not sure. Depends on who wrote it, I guess."

But, of course.

Some might write a whole book out of what had happened during a single day, but some would condense everything that happened in 100 years into a single sentence.

Han Sooyoung continued on. "If it was me, we should be past at least the 20th volume."

"…That's a lot."

"It should be. Lots of things happened, right?"

Indeed, lots. Without a doubt, it had been a long journey.

If it was twenty volumes-long, then just from the quantity alone, this book should be on the scale of a proper epic.

Dusk was settling in from the skies above the conference venue. Not sure why, but it felt as if the sun was setting much sooner than usual today.

Han Sooyoung spoke as if she understood how I felt. "But then again, there are some people who can read all twenty volumes in one sitting."

Suddenly, a corner of my chest grew cold.

I wanted to ask her – have I been reading every story that I found at a suitable pace?

Could I say that I've read the stories of everyone precious to me thoroughly and didn't miss a single thing?

"Kim Dokja."

"What is it?"

"You may not be this world's protagonist nor a really cool side character."

"…"

"However, you have read it with all of your heart. I know that."

I didn't know what to say.

"And everyone you've read, they are standing there now."

Han Sooyoung looked at the people by the press conference venue.

I too stared at them. Companions I cared about were standing on a spot almost within reach, just beyond the curtains.

They existed beyond the curtains, alive and moving.

Yoo Joonghyuk glaring at the crowd, Jung Heewon grinning back at them, Lee Jihye jumping up and down in fluster, Shin Yoosung waving her hand towards me…

Someone had written their stories. And I had read them.

Every story started off from there.

While waving my hand back at Shin Yoosung, I opened my mouth.

"Tomorrow morning, we leave for the Final Scenario's location."

After the press conference came to an end, the companions gathered in the reception room.

Jung Heewon massaged her shoulder while looking at the rebroadcast of the conference.

"Eii… Cameras just aren't my friends, it seems."

It wasn't just the Korean Peninsula, but the entire <Star Stream> was set abuzz by the <Kim Dokja's Company>'s press conference.

– I have no thoughts of saving you.

Jung Heewon tutted after watching Kim Dokja and his bright face making that declaration within the display panel. "Seriously, though. He can't help himself with things people will hate him for."

"Still, doesn't he look more presentable now that his face has been fixed up properly?"

Lee Seolhwa, in charge of Kim Dokja's make-up, nodded her head in satisfaction.

Lee Jihye added something else. "Now that I think about it, doesn't Dokja ahjussi's features come across a bit manlier now? I mean, he used to be on the paler side, and kinda felt like a piece of stretched dough, you know?"

"Uht? I was thinking the same, too."

A few among them nodded their heads in agreement.

For sure, Kim Dokja of now had changed a lot compared to when they first met him. It wasn't just the impression he gave off, either.

Jung Heewon muttered as if she was recalling the distant past. "Honestly, I thought he was a bit of slick-tongued miser the first time I saw him."

Just how different was Kim Dokja of the first scenario to that of a man about to face the Final Scenario?

While listening to others chat on, Jung Heewon stared at Kim Dokja's face in the screen – at his eyes, sparkling when he was reading the prepared script, or the corners of his lips that moved mysteriously when he smirked.

Every little thing like that was serving as proof that he definitely exited in that place.

While feeling those expressions loom closer than before, Jung Heewon began pondering Kim Dokja's Stories. Could it be possible that the Stories they had created together was changing him just a little? If so, that would be nice. What if their story had changed him like how he had changed them?

"By the way, where is Dokja-ssi?"

"I think he's making preparations for the Final Scenario."

"Wait, that ahjussi isn't cooking up yet another weird thing all by himself, right?"

Lee Jihye's words caused a flitting shadow to cast over everyone's expression.

The person who lifted the mood up was the smiling Yoo Sangah hugging the two kids with both of her arms. "He promised not to do that, so let us believe in him."

Kim Dokja inside the screen was busy saying something only to be subjected to a barrage of insults. Jung Heewon watched that for a long time before placing her hand on the panel. She felt this lukewarm sensation.

*

"…Can I really trust him?"

She whispered in a really quiet voice, yet everyone present caught that. Even then, no one among the group looked at her strangely.

Shin Yoosung muttered out. "Ahjussi's skin looks so nice."

They thought that they had grown closer to him by now, yet Kim Dokja's face seemed as distant as ever.

Throughout the night, I had been thinking about the Final Scenario.

I read the excerpts taken from the 'Ways of Survival' that I found essential, and also spoke to Han Sooyoung through [Midday Tryst] as well. It was to use her [Predictive Plagiarism] to predict what might happen to us in the future. When I thought that alone wasn't going to be enough, I exchanged opinions with the 'Secretive Plotter' through Yoo Joonghyuk.

Unfortunately, it was as if the Plotter was trying to be as obtuse as possible when it came to the matter of Conclusion.

【The path you're about to walk on hasn't been trodden by anyone. Taking cues from other world-lines could become poison for the current you, instead.】

Since I understood what he was saying here, I decided not to query him any further.

"What about Anna Croft?"

"She has withdrawn from the Peninsula along with 'Zarathustras' yesterday."

It'd been nice to get the help from her 'Precognition', but unfortunately, I seemed to have lost that chance.

Swiiiish!

The blade of the [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] scythed past the air. About a dozen or so steps away, Yoo Joonghyuk was currently focused on his training. He seemed to be swinging in the exact same pose as before, yet he treated every and each movement with care as if they contained profound meanings. Maybe it was possible for him to repeat all those lives because he was capable of doing something like that.

"Goddammit. What kind of a crappy development is this…"

Han Sooyoung was also racking her brain trying to guess how the Final Scenario might unfold. However, even she seemed to be stuck, going nowhere fast.

Even if her [Predictive Plagiarism] was powerful, it wasn't truly omniscient. If that was the case, the 1863rd turn's Han Sooyoung wouldn't have run into so much trouble.

I studied her for a little while before switching on my smartphone. Files appeared on the screen – from the original version of the 'Ways of Survival', to its final revised version.

– Three Ways to Survive a Ruined World (final revision).txt

I quietly stared at that file for a long time, before turning the phone off. I didn't want to break the resolution I had been sticking to until now.

「Kim Dok ja.」

I raised my head as [the Fourth Wall] called out to me.

'What's up?'

「Ha ving a ha rd ti me?」

I smirked a little at that unexpected line of text.

I had forgotten about this guy. The one who had stayed the longest with me so far was probably this 'wall', wasn't it?

'It's fine. I have you'.

It was all thanks to [The Fourth Wall] that I managed to come this far.

If this guy didn't alleviate my mental shock during the first scenario, and if it didn't mitigate the physical pain I suffered during the countless life-threatening situations, then I'd have ended up as the wandering ghost of the scenarios a long time ago.

Tsu-chut, chuchuchut.

Sparks danced in the air reminiscent of a small child's figure excitedly quivering about. For a very brief moment there, I thought I saw a triumphant face of a little kid above the dancing sparks.

「Eh hem, you wa nna see yo ur att rib ute win dow?」

This guy, does he think I want to see the attribute window every time I have a chance?

'Nah, it's fine. I don't need it right now'.

Seeing it might help me out. However, there was something else even more important than that right now.

'Actually, there's something I'm even more curious about'.

「Wh at is it?」

It was a question I should've asked a long time ago. However, since I couldn't get any straight answers to begin with, I ended up coming up with all sorts of theories by myself concerning this very question.

'Just why is the 'Final Wall' exactly?'

[The Fourth Wall] remained silent for a bit. I began thinking that it might try to change the topic or filtering might get thrown in my face here. Just how long passed by like that?

「It's a wa ll wh ere every st ory is writt en on.」

…Was it because the 'Final Scenario' was literally around the corner?

Although the answer remained just as puzzling, it seemed that [The Fourth Wall] didn't want to hide the information anymore. So, I asked again.

'Let me change the question. What are you exactly? And why do the fragments of the Wall exist?'

「Gu ard ing the pre cious themes, th at is the Wall's du ty.」

Suddenly, I thought of something. The 'Wall of Impossible Communication' Jang Hayoung possessed – when I thought about it, it wasn't just her, was it?

The important individuals from the 'Ways of Survival' all possessed similar walls. Sakyamuni possessed the 'Wall of Samsara', while Agares and Metatron possessed the 'Wall that Divides Good and Evil'.

「Be cau se, the re is more th an one theme.」

「A st ory is a col lec tion of nar rati ves.」

[The Fourth Wall] was a fragment of the 'Final Wall'. And the 'fragment' meant that it could potentially be slotted back in its original position.

In that moment I felt clarity wash over me. If it was as I suspected – if this 'Wall' was the existence protecting the 'Story', then…

Tsu-chuchuchu…

[The Fourth Wall]'s figure seemed to waver before my eyes in the air. Then, a library filled with countless bookshelves seemed to glimmer beyond it. I reached out into the air, causing the texts from the books to scatter away.

What replaced them, though, was an incredibly ancient and worn-down wall. This thing that reminded me of a prehistoric cave wall, was the 'First Wall'.

I extended my hand towards this wall that protected me from the cold, the pain, and from various trauma.

From ancient times, walls were created to protect something.

「You mu st pre pare the last sto ry, Kim Dok ja.」

And starting from an unknown era, humans began writing something on that wall.

That eventually became the Story.

「You are its last.」

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* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)
* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)

Chapter 485: Ep. 92 - Final Scenario, IV

"Are you all finished with your preparations?"

It was a regular morning like any other. The air was clean and fresh, and the complexion on the companions' faces wasn't gloomy, either. If it weren't for their current combat attire, I'd have totally believed that we were on our way to a picnic from their expressions alone.

「And that's why Kim Dokja was truly happy.」

"Preparations were done a while ago. Besides all that, it seems like you have something to say to us, Dokja-ssi?"

When I snapped awake from my thoughts, I discovered Jung Heewon pressing her face closer to me. As I momentarily remained at a loss with my lips bobbing a little, Lee Jihye quickly butted in.

"I don't want to hear it, though. He's going to say some stuff about it's too dangerous so we don't have to go etc, etc, right?"

"Right. Since when was it not dangerous?"

"This time, it's serious! It'll really be dangerous~!…"

Lee Jihye mildly raised her voice while mimicking my speech pattern.

Hang on a sec, since when did I ever speak like that…? I frowned deeply and opened my mouth. "No, that's not it. This time really is…"

"See? I knew it. Cough up the 100 Coins, eonni."

Jung Heewon pushed the Coins to Lee Jihye with a dejected face.

Han Sooyoung watched this spectacle unfold and shook her head before addressing me. "You better start learning, man."

"Learn what?"

"You can only make your companions promise you the same thing so many times. If you persist with this, what will they start thinking next? Ah, this guy, he thinks our pledge is some kind of a joke. He sees every promise we made is a pack of lies!"

"That wasn't my intention at all. Everyone, I genuinely apologise if you misundersto…"

Having finished the hand-over of her 100 Coins to Lee Jihye, Jung Heewon suddenly asked a question. "By the way, what's our plan this time? It looked like you were thinking up of one with Sooyoung yesterday?"

"There isn't one, actually."

Perhaps finding my answer suspicions, she pressed her head closer once more. "Really?"

"It'll be different from how things had been so far. Even I don't know what will happen during the Final Scenario."

"That's weird. You aren't hiding anything, right?"

"No, not at all."

[Character 'Jung Heewon' is activating 'Lie Detection Lv.5'!]

[Your statement has been confirmed as a lie.]

"Wowsers, you now even lie with a straight face?"

…Just when did she learn [Lie Detection]? Dammit.

I hastily made my excuse. "It's difficult to give you a detailed story right now. Things might change later if I tell you something. Regardless of what the scenario is, please choose what you believe to be the right decision. If we succeed, we will be able to survive together."

"And that 'we' also includes you, Dokja-ssi?"

I quietly stared at Yoo Sangah before nodding my head.

"Yes."

"And we can all live together in a big house with everyone?"

"That's correct."

"I haven't even graduated yet, so everyone will come to my graduation ceremony, right?"

"That's right."

"Hyung! In that case, can we go to a PC Bang…?!"

"We can."

[Character 'Jung Heewon' is activating 'Lie Detection Lv.5'!]

[Your statement has been confirmed as truth.]

Only then the hints of relief brushed past their expressions.

I took a look at their faces one at a time – Yoo Sangah, Jung Heewon, Lee Hyunsung, Lee Jihye, Lee Gilyoung, Shin Yoosung, Lee Seolhwa, Gong Pildu, Jang Hayoung, Han Sooyoung…

"If we're done here, let's get going."

…And even Yoo Joonghyuk, too.

Different stories existed for each individual. The stories that I hadn't had the chance to finish reading yet.

"Let's get going, ahjussi! We haven't even entered the scenario yet, so there's no need to make the heroic determination and stuff now, right?"

I agreed with Lee Jihye's opinion. The Final Scenario hadn't even begun yet. I slowly breathed in and out deeply, and raised my head to find a portal appearing on a spot high up in the air.

[Portal leading to '99th scenario' has been generated!]

Bihyung had created that portal.

"Let's go."

We stepped through the portal. The surrounding view crumbled away in an instant, only to be resurrected just as quickly.

Behind us was the wide, expansive view of <Star Stream>, while the front was dominated by the sight of Dokkaebis waiting for us.

"Uh? Didn't we come here before?"

Here was the 'Gate of Star Stream', the very last gateway that led to the final gate, and home to the <Bureau>, the headquarters of all Dokkaebis.

[<Kim Dokja's Company>, your entry qualification has been confirmed.]

"…It's a straight pass this time."

Dokkaebis didn't bother with any complicated procedures and let us pass without a fuss.

[The absolute majority of Constellations are watching your entry into the 'Final Scenario'!]

[Many Nebulas are envious of your collective achievements!]

I sensed the Constellations and Nebulas watching us from among the darkness of the universe.

[Constellations within the 'Final Scenario' are growing tense at <Kim Dokja's Company>'s entrance!]

[You and your Nebula have entered the Final Scenario's location!]

When I opened my eyes again, I was treated to the sight of the galaxy swirling around in a vortex. Countless stars were continuously circulating around while generating auroras.

They were Final Scenario's Constellations. Stars that had reached the Myth-grade a long time ago, or those that were receiving the graces of such beings.

However, rather than approaching us, those stars remained circulating on the skies high above an ancient castle.

"Isn't that…"

And beyond the massive, ancient castle where the stars were dancing around, was a wall so vast that we couldn't even see its ends.

"Is that the 'Final Wall'?"

I quietly stared at that wall.

It was as if that wall spread out within the entire landscape to arrogantly proclaim that this here was the end of this world-line.

「Everything within this world exists to be recorded on it.」

['King of Stories' is now looking at you.]

['King of Stories' has summoned you.]

I was greeted by this jolting sensation that caused all the hair on my body to stand up. I could definitely sense it; a creature that moved the ginormous Story called <Star Stream> was waiting by the centre of that 'wall'.

My companions must've sensed it too, since they all looked tense.

Only Yoo Joonghyuk maintained that preternaturally calm expression of his. "I don't see any Constellations."

It was as he said; although we could see the stars spinning around in the skies, not a single Constellation was walking around in their incarnated form. It was as if they knew we were coming so they had all run off to somewhere.

It was the Great Dokkaebis welcoming us, instead.

[Great Dokkaebi 'Heoche' is incarnating into the scenario!]

[Great Dokkaebi 'Harong' is incarnating into the scenario!]

[Great Dokkaebi 'Haram' is incarnating into the scenario!]

[Great Dokkaebi 'Horong' is incarnating into the scenario!]

[Great Dokkaebi 'Noksu' is incarnating into the scenario!]

When Dokkaebis possessing mighty Statuses appeared all at once, even I couldn't help but feel the oppressive weight from their combined aura.

[You've come, <Kim Dokja's Company>.]

The Great Dokkaebi Heoche, the dude who intruded upon the <Great War of Saints and Demons> in order to recruit us, spoke up. He continued on with eyes of disdain squarely locked on us.

[You have all earned the qualifications of the 'Final Scenario'. Since there is no need to test you, it'll be fine to simply enter the 'Ark'. A detailed explanation will be provided afterwards.]

"…The Ark?"

Even before my question could end, a loud, visceral boom resounded out from the centre of the ancient castle. Its middle section opened up, and something began rising up from the castle's foundation.

｢And it was a massive ship.｣

The moment I saw that ship, deja vu brushed past my brain.

｢It was the ship first seen during the Great War of Saints and Demons.｣

Indeed, its shape was of the vessel that saved us during the <Great War of Saints and Demons>. It looked uncannily similar to the <Eden>'s Ark that evacuated us away from the fierce battle between the Apocalypse Dragon and the Indescribable Distance.

The only difference being, this one was much, much bigger and sturdier-looking than the Ark from that time. Its hull, seemingly carved out from the broken fragment of the wall, emitted both the contrasting white and dark rays of light.

Great Dokkaebi Heoche continued on as he looked at that hull.

[Originally, this world-line was earmarked as the 'Final World-line'. However, things started becoming distorted during the process, and the world-line's distortion is now well beyond salvageable. The Conclusion of this world can't unlock the 'Final Wall'. Meaning, the epic tale that could satisfy the 'Oldest Dream' cannot be completed anymore.]

"What rubbish are you talking about??"

[You all shall become the 'seeds'.]

The seeds. I had heard of that term even back in the 'Ways of Survival'. A term that denoted all the candidates of the 'One Single Story'.

Violent sparks intermittently exploded in the distant darkness of the universe; they were ominous noises that seemed to imply the end of the distorted world-line.

A portion of stars got sucked into those deafening booms and were scattered away in flames before falling to the ground as shooting stars.

The Dokkaebi continued on while looking at the falling stars.

[Think of it as a great honour. It was the will of the 'King of Stories' that you were chosen as the 'seeds' when you are responsible for ruining this world-line. You shall ride on the 'Ark' and move onto a new world-line. And you shall be reborn as the core 'Story' that will become the next worldview. Just like how those crossing over from the previous world have done.]

Only then did the things he was saying make sense. Basically, he was telling us to escape from this world.

"You… Are you really going to give up on this world that easily? You want to abandon this world-line and leave with everyone here? You think such a suggestion even makes sense???"

[Surely, there's no need to be that surprised? It shouldn't be such a bad suggestion for you people, too. Your goal is to reach the conclusion where 'no one has been sacrificed', isn't it?]

For a moment there, I became speechless.

[You have succeeded, 'Demon King of Salvation'. You and your companions can now leave this world-line and survive together.]

Explosion noises, mixed in with cracking thunderclaps, reverberated from the other side of the distant sky. It was the noise of the Probability the <Bureau> had been protecting crumbling away.

As I heard those noises, I belatedly began to understand several things.

Such as, why there were no Constellations to be seen nearby; or, how could the <Bureau> possess such a powerful influence even from the very start of the worlds.

"…Just how many times have you been repeating this?"

[Is that really important?]

"What happens to those who can't ride on the Ark? Those who didn't get selected – what will happen to them?"

[You probably have guessed it already without asking us.]

Heoche used his chin to point behind us. That's where the [Turtle Dragon] Lee Jihye had summoned earlier just in case was. And on top of that ship's deck, four sealing spheres emitting sparkling light could be seen – the Outer Gods, including the 'Secretive Plotter'.

I stared at the characters from the original novel, currently sleeping within the spheres. Those that got excluded by the scenarios would either die or become Outer Gods, instead.

[New Main Scenario has arrived!]

<Main Scenario #99 – Escape>

Type: Main

Difficulty: ??

Clear condition: Enter the 'Ark' together with the companions from your Nebula.

Time limit: 2 hours

Reward: You can cross over to a different world-line by riding on the 'Ark'. Your 'Story' will start anew in that place, and the Stories you have compiled so far will be recorded on <Star Stream>'s 'Final Wall' to be passed down for all eternity.

Failure: You will remain in the world being destroyed and die.

Chapter 486: Ep. 92 - Final Scenario, V

Companions all looked dumbfounded after confirming the scenario's details. It was such an incredibly simple clear condition. As a matter of fact, it had to be the easiest out of all the scenarios we experienced so far.

All we had to do was follow the Great Dokkaebi's words and climb aboard the Ark and then, leave this world-line.

"Dokja-ssi…"

[What are you waiting for? There can't be a better scenario than this one for you.]

I heard the voices of the Great Dokkaebis floating in the air.

[Know that many Constellations opposed you lot being chosen as the 'seeds'. We chose you even if we had to go against the flow of those stars.]

Bihyung, his lips pale-blue, was lowering his head amongst his peers.

My head became complicated. Why did the 'King of Stories' suddenly suggest such a scenario? The me currently couldn't figure it out.

One thing's for sure, though – by listening to their suggestion, the survival of my companions would be guaranteed.

「<Kim Dokja's Company>'s Story would be recorded on the 'Final Wall'. Along with all the other Stories he hated.」

I turned around to find my companions staring at me.

"Everyone."

I tried to say something, but it wasn't easy.

A truly easy path was now available before eyes. If we choose this method, then we might not even need to resort to our plan.

None of my companions would die, too. And they wouldn't become 'Outer Gods', as well.

We simply had to get on that ship and cross over to another world-line, and then, live our new stories as if nothing had ever happened. We just had to become the rulers of the new world-line with our Stories.

Just like the top gods of <Olympus> and <Asgard>, we'd simply live on while enjoying all the pleasures the scenario offered in sheer comfort.

"Dokja-ssi."

My gaze met Yoo Sangah's as she looked squarely at me.

「However, would we be able to happily live in a big house in that place?」

Lee Jihye was grasping the key ring attached to [Twin Dragon Sword] tightly, and…

「Would we be able to congratulate Jihye's graduation with genuine smiles?」

…Shin Yoosung and Lee Gilyoung were holding onto the ends of each other's clothes.

「Would I be able to go to a PC Bang with Gilyoung-ie and play games with him, and…」

「And, go to the Han River with Yoosung-ie and share a pizza with her?」

Finally, Yoo Joonghyuk was glaring at me.

「Just like erasing the graffiti scribbled on the Final Wall, could we really pretend that everything that happened to us meant nothing at all?」

The apocalypse had begun, and that couldn't be turned back.

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is waiting for your decision.]

Just like how the dead pair of Agares and Metatron couldn't come back.

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', is observing your decision.]

[Constellation, 'Secretive Plotter', is observing your decision.]

We couldn't erase the Apocalypse Dragon's second coming as if it had never happened, and just like how we couldn't change Yoo Joonghyuk's past regression turns…

「Everything that happened in this world was already a part of us.」

Han Sooyoung opened her mouth. "Kim Dokja, what are you hesitating for? You already know what needs to be done, don't you?"

Lee Hyunsung approached me even before I realized it and placed his hand on my shoulder. As if he knew what I was about to say.

"My thoughts are the same as you, Dokja-ssi."

The Stories we've earned together, and the things that might get left behind, were all telling our story.

People back on Earth. My mother and the 'wanderers'. Those who shared the story with us, but not here with us right now.

[Every Story of the Nebula <Kim Dokja's Company> is now looking at you.]

['The Fourth Wall' is strongly vibrating!]

Some time ago, the 'Secretive Plotter' said to me this:

【When we meet again, I hope you've become the proper master of that 'wall'.】

Jang Hayoung possessed the 'Wall of Impossible Communication', while Yoo Sangah possessed the 'Wall of Samsara' she inherited from Sakyamuni. Agares and Metatron possessed the 'Wall that Divides Good and Evil'.

And all these 'walls' each possessed a Story that would be written on that particular wall.

「In that case, what is the Story that should be written on [The Fourth Wall]?」

[The Fourth Wall] said this to me earlier – that I was the 'last' of that 'Final Wall'.

「The finale of all these Stories.」

For the last time, I looked at my companions before I spoke my piece. I was trying to confirm whether we were making the wrong choice or not.

I couldn't tell. There was no sure-fire way to figure out the truth. However…

「Do what you believe is the best, Dokja-ssi.」

「Ahjussi, we'll die together when the time comes. Got that?」

「Rather than the shameful survival, I much prefer the righteous end, actually.」

Their voices gave me courage.

The Story boiling up from the deepest part of my body permitted my true voice to come out.

[We shall not be boarding the Ark.]

It felt as if I could just about see the full stop to a story I had been pondering for the longest time.

The Great Dokkaebis were staring at me with frozen expressions. Every Constellation within this world-line was focusing their gazes only on me.

As I felt each and every one of those gazes, this indescribable sense of freedom washed over me, too.

「And at that moment, Kim Dokja realized what the story not written yet in the 'Ways of Survival' was.」

I had read every regression turn found in the 'Ways of Survival'. I still remembered them all. However, there was one part that even I had failed to read.

「The Epilogue.」

From the 0th turn to the 1863rd. Every Story that I read was now gathering in one spot.

The stories from the nebulas flowing within the heavens were being integrated into this world-line. I sensed the Constellations in the distance making their moves behind the scenes, too.

Something was approaching here.

[Do you understand the brevity of what you just said?]

The Great Dokkaebis were asking me.

Some carried expressions implying that they already expected this outcome, while some looked quite flustered, instead. Actually, neither should matter to them – after all, everything was simply 'Story' to these creatures.

Everything was the will of <Star Stream> to them, after all.

[<Star Stream> is proposing the names for your final Giant Story.]

[You can now choose between two proposed 'Conclusions'.]

1. Vagabond of the Destroyed World-line
2. Ruler of the Despairing Starlight

…

The names of the last 'Giant Story' we had completed floated up. I stared at the choices of 'Conclusion' given to me. Both of them sounded rather grandiose.

「And both of them couldn't contain their story in its entirety.」

[I won't be accepting the Story names you have proposed.]

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation', has rejected all the choices proposed by <Star Stream>.]

Tsu-chuchuchut!

[I shall not be completing the 'Conclusion' you're talking about.]

I slowly unsheathed the Unbroken Faith from my waist. Most likely, this moment in time had been set in stone as soon as I first grasped this sword.

[Every Story of the Nebula, <Kim Dokja's Company> has begun their storytelling!]

Yoo Joonghyuk unsheathed the [Black Heavenly Demon Sword], while Han Sooyoung undid the bandages off her left hand.

Jung Heewon raised her [Judge's Sword], followed up by Lee Jihye grasping the [Twin Dragon Sword] with both of her hands.

Yoo Sangah spread out her lotus pedestal, and Shin Yoosung's Chimera Dragon began roaring on.

Gong Pildu installed the [Armed Fortress] faster than anyone, and I spotted Jang Hayoung standing at the very top of this fortress while releasing the Status of a Transcendent.

And finally, Lee Hyunsung stepped forward as if to protect everyone.

They were speaking through their actions. That's why I could tell my story as well.

[I shall not let any one of you abandon this world-line. Properly witness the end of the story you have created. Witness with your own eyes… what kind of an end awaits for the world of your creation.]

The Status of the Story exploding forth from my entire body travelled on the Unbroken Faith and extended forward.

[Stop this!]

The startled Great Dokkaebis also made a move and withstood my Status. I unhesitantly shot out the second, then the third, shockwaves from the Stories.

[<Star Stream> is responding to your group's action!]

[<Bureau> is activating the Probability!]

Even as the vicious storm of sparks tightened around my body, I didn't step back. All the Stories we had created together were roaring on under the pain akin to our Incarnation Bodies being torn apart.

[Giant Story, 'Demon Realm's Spring', has begun its storytelling!]

[Giant Story, 'Torch that Swallowed the Myth', has begun its storytelling!]

[Giant Story, 'Season of Light and Darkness', has begun its storytelling!]

[Giant Story, 'Liberator of the Forgotten Ones', has begun its storytelling!]

[Your Giant Story without a name has begun its storytelling!]

What determined a story's 'Conclusion' were the Beginning, the Development, and finally, the Climax that had come before it. Nothing else besides could determine what the 'Conclusion' would be like.

I swung my fist towards the sparks before me over and over again. I even threw the Unbroken Faith into the ripples of the blinding aftermath's storm.

[Your action has caused <Star Stream> to…]

[The possibility of the predetermined 'Conclusion' is…]

[■?■■…■?■■?]

The predetermined texts were shattering right before my eyes. The once-legible words were changing to something illegible as if cloudy dust had settled down on them.

And when that dust eventually cleared, what I saw next was the utterly wrecked front hull of the Ark.

Kwa-aaaaaah!

I was aware of what would happen by doing something like this.

['King of Stories' is now looking at you.]

[The Wenny King is greatly pleased by your action.]

Even then, this was the best answer I could come up with.

「The method of finding the 'Conclusion' not seen before in the original.」

「The method of saving everyone while resolving the distorted Probability.」

Reaching the end of this world through the predetermined 'gi-seung-jeon-gyeol' was impossible. Because it was simply the template for the predetermined 'Conclusion'.

Meaning, this story wouldn't be able to cross the 'Final Wall'.

「And that is why Kim Dokja refused the 'Conclusion' handed out to him.」

A giant rupture was being generated in the world.

[Your actions have crumbled the predetermined rules of the 'scenario'.]

[A portion of <Star Stream>'s plot is crumbling away!]

[<Star Stream>'s emergency sequence is activating!]

The surrounding view suddenly began changing. I sensed the <Star Stream> trying its best to shoe-horn me into its own 'Conclusion'.

「In the end, everything will become a scenario.」

Maybe, the Great Dokkaebis didn't know. Or, maybe they did know, yet had no choice but to simply carry on. Within this great 'scenario', even the storytellers would form a part of the scenario itself.

[<Star Stream> happily accepts your actions.]

[<Star Stream>'s Final Story is waking up!]

Just like how a scenario happening outside of scenarios would still remain a scenario in the end; however, if everything would end as a scenario anyway, then I should be the one to decide which scenario to live in.

So… take a good look.

[Main scenario has been updated!]

"…Dokja-ssi!"

Companions standing in my near vicinity all stared at me with dazed eyes.

My Incarnation Body was changing along with tingling sensation. And also, the ominous aura of exclusion rose up above my body, too.

I knew exactly what sort of a scenario this was.

[Mak-nae-yah.]

The landscape of war spread out before our eyes.

And opposite us, Constellations were being summoned. Our enemies, and companions we once fought together, they were all there.

Anna Croft, China's Fei Hu, India's Ranvir Khan, Japanese Alliance's Asuka Ren, <Olympus> and <Asgard>, and other Constellations from not just <Emperor> but other large Nebulas were all incarnating under the <Star Stream>'s Probability.

「Every Constellation of <Star Stream> was gathering here.」

Stars that kept amassing were burning brightly enough to illuminate the entirety of the universe. They were illuminating me as if they'd not permit even a single speck of darkness to exist in the cosmos.

「This was the <Star Stream>'s final battlefield.」

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

This was none other than the 'stage' the 1863rd turn's Yoo Joonghyuk had fought on – the place where he had faced off against the seething Outer Gods and their 'Outer God Kings'.

If there was one thing different from back then and now…

The enemy to be fought this time wasn't the 'Outer God King'.

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is…!]

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', is…!]

[Constellation, 'Goryeo's First Sword', is…!]

Indirect messages flooded in among the blinking stars.

I heard Uriel and Black Flame Dragon's true voices, as well as my companions calling out to me.

The sensation of chaos completely filling up my view caused dizziness to nearly overtake me. I blocked my ringing, deafened ears while slowly blinking my eyes.

[Main scenario has been updated!]

<Main Scenario #99 – Enemy of the Story>

Type: Main

Difficulty: Indeterminable?■

■?■?■?!■?■?■■■■■■…

The scenario message was being restructured in real-time.

Although its content couldn't be seen, everyone instinctively knew.

They knew that, if this scenario ended in failure, the <Star Stream> would be destroyed.

A short while later, the 'clear condition' everyone's been waiting for finally showed up. For some reason, I couldn't help but recall a certain sentence from the 'Ways of Survival' when I read the condition slowly rising up before my eyes.

「There are three ways of surviving a destroyed world.」

Companions were shouting something while looking at me.

The author of the Ways of Survival did say this – there were three ways of surviving this horrible world. Three ways.

I began thinking.

「Three ways didn't mean that only three people would survive in the end.」

I looked back at my companions and grinned brightly.

Clear condition: You must kill the 'Enemy of the Story', Outer God King Kim Dokja.

Finally, this world's epilogue had begun.

싱숑 장편소설

전지적 독자 시점

Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint

PART 5 01

비채

*

Chapter 487: Ep. 93 - Omniscient Author's Viewpoint, I

"I'm a writer."

Not too long after her novel got published, Han Sooyoung began introducing herself like that.

It was the same story during the blind dates she begrudgingly attended after her friend pleaded her to go.

"Ah! You're a writer!"

Her date must've heard about it before showing up here, so what was up with this fuss? The man quickly rolled his eyes around a little before asking her with a smile.

"Did you start your career through something like the annual literary contest in spring?"

"No."

"Pardon? In that case…?"

"I write webnovels."

"Webnovels?"

The problem always came after this bit.

She spotted the man's eyes sneakily scanning her worn, cheap-looking T-shirt.

"Aha, so, like… It's that, isn't it? Internet novels? Those with a lot of emojis in them…?"

"Ah, yes~. Exactly like that."

"You know, there are lots of strange jobs to be found these days. Youtubers, internet authors…"

The man grinned and sipped the Americano resting right before himself. The watch attached to his wrist came from a pretty high-end brand.

…Hadn't she experienced a similar situation to this one plenty of times before?

"It's like everyone is trying to make easy money nowadays. Don't you think so?" said the man.

"Is there anyone who'd want to make money the hard way deliberately?"

"I make about ₩100,000,000 a year, but it's just not easy. So, like, whenever I see those types of people, I can only sigh, you know? Trying to pilfer other people's money the easy way…"

He must've already forgotten that this was a blind date judging from the tone of his voice. With just a hint of anger in his eyes, his gaze shifted over to the car keys resting on the table. Looked like they belonged to a foreign brand, perhaps a bit too expensive considering his age.

While letting the man's words go straight out of one ear, Han Sooyoung switched on her smartphone. Alerts for new comments were clogging her inbox.

– Dear author-nim, isn't this too sweet-potato-like?

– Hmm… The next chapter will start with a cider moment, right? If not, I'll be exiting right about now.

"People who never studied hard once when they were young, just stumbled into some random luck…" said the man.

Suddenly, it felt as if she could figure out why people read webnovels.

And she could also figure out why her friend introduced this sort of jerk-off to her, too. Apparently, she'd find out once she got here, and now, she could clearly see what that friend of hers was thinking about when setting her up with this 'meeting'.

Now normally, she'd let this slide because it was just too bothersome, but…

"So, like… Were you listening?"

"Ah, yes, of course. Your annual salary was…?"

Only then did the man's eyes sparkle. His shoulders perked up as if he just knew she'd ask him about that subject again.

"It's ₩100,000,000 after tax."

"Hmm. It's similar to mine."

"Pardon?" The man smirked. "You're a writer, but your annual salary is ₩100,000,000?"

Han Sooyoung shrugged her shoulders and pulled out her own car keys. It was the newest model from Porsche. More specifically, it was exactly three times more expensive than the man's own ride. Although, since she couldn't be bothered to, she rarely drove around in it.

The man's eyes shook in sync with the shaking keys. And an awkward smile floated up on his face next.

"Haha, but, uh… a writer's income is inconsistent so it can't really be called 'annual salary', am I right? I mean, your wage can't be fixed, right?"

The man's lips ceaselessly bobbed up and down to yap on about the cliched stuff. It was just about adequate enough to be used as some line muttered out by a throwaway villain during the next chapter or some such. In that case, the protagonist would reply like this.

"But, I never said it's the annual salary?"

"Pardon? Ah, in that case, is it what you amassed so far?"

"No, I made ₩100,000,000 for the first half of this month, and hmm… since there are two more weeks left in this month…"

"…Excuse me?"

Only then the man seemed to have realized something, because his expression had changed quite drastically.

In the end, this whole thing had unfolded in the way her friend wanted to. If this was a novel, it'd have been a cider moment, but in reality, she didn't feel all that good about it.

The man was now hurriedly sending messages to someone. He was probably asking her friend that set this blind date up all sorts of questions.

"Excuse me, can you tell me the name of the novel you wrote…?"

Just as she began thinking that she didn't want this guy to know the title, Han Sooyoung's smartphone issued an alarm tone.

– Hello there, author-nim. I'm just a reader who enjoys reading webnovels. I coincidentally ran across your novel and got to read it…

She wondered what sort of a long-winded message this was. She then tapped on the message without thinking too much about it. The tone of it was polite but old-fashioned, and on top of that, she felt just a tiny hint of naivete, too.

– The novel you have written is far too similar to a novel that I really treasure, the 'Three Ways of Surviving a Destroyed World'.

…What the hell was up with this bastard??

「And that was Han Sooyoung's first encounter with Kim Dokja.」

Kim Dokja.

「Han Sooyoung watched the spectacle unfold before her eyes and ruminated on the memories of that time.」

She lost a portion of her memories while creating avatars and she couldn't clearly remember what happened back then. What was certain, though, was that she had indeed read the novel called the 'Ways of Survival'.

All because of a fool with a username Kim 'Dokja', no less.

– Author-nim! It was also a very enjoyable read today as well.

Someone on the level of Han Sooyoung could tell whether the novel would do well or not after reading only a couple of chapters. However, in her eyes, this 'Ways of Survival' would never make it even if the sky collapsed on itself.

– This, it's a really interesting beginning.

From the beginning, it was definitely dogshit.

– Author-nim, does this mean Yoo Joonghyuk remembers all those things? Then, back in the 72th regression turn…

It was far too obsessed with lengthy expositions, and…

– Keuh, how unfortunate! I hope Joonghyuk-ie will get his act together in the next regression. Today was dope, too.

As for its protagonist, it was just a pretty boy devoid of personality that seemingly wasted all of his available skill points on his outer appearance. Not only that…

– Author-nim! Congratulations on reaching the 2000th chapter! Since you've come this far, how about another 1000 chapters…

Its chapter count was excessive, as well.

'…This is entertaining? Seriously? Is he a nutcase?"

She got royally irritated and began following after this fool's comments. She even clicked on 'downvote' too. Like a bewitched person, Han Sooyoung read only Kim Dokja's comments and not the novel itself.

– Will Jihye finally awaken next chapter?

– Author-nim! I've discovered a typo on page 7! With my lacking opinion, I think the spelling here should be… Ah, I looked into it and it's actually my mistake. My apologies. I've learned something new today.

– Please, just smack that fool Joonghyuk-ie in the back of his head…

This guy, he never once missed writing a comment on all those thousands of chapters. And every single one contained understanding and love for the world created by this author.

「Han Sooyoung was envious of that.」

She believed that there was simply no way anyone would be reading a novel as bad as this, that it had to be the author himself busy blowing his own trumpet. She thought that the author had created two separate IDs and wrote the novel with one while with the other one, wrote all those comments and uploaded recommendations, too.

– Isn't recommending one's own work prohibited?

「Just like how Yoo Joonghyuk was an imagined character to Kim Dokja, Kim Dokja was exactly like that to Han Sooyoung.」

She thought that such a person wouldn't be real, but…

That very person within the texts was standing right before Han Sooyoung's eyes.

"Dokja-ssi!!"

A loud ringing in the ear rang out, accompanied by explosions going off in all directions.

Han Sooyoung could see Kim Dokja in the centre of the battlefield swirling like a thunderstorm, busy breaking past the intense outpourings from the stars. Incarnations were screaming out while the stars were roaring loudly. And in the meantime, Dokkaebis in the sky were laughing.

【■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■!!】

Kim Dokja was shouting out. However, Han Sooyoung couldn't tell whether he was screaming, proclaiming, or even crying in sorrow. Now that he had been transformed into an Outer God, even his voice had been completely excluded from the scenarios. Didn't matter what he said, the contents were deemed unimportant now.

Gyah-aaaaah!

However, there were more Outer Gods following him now. Vestiges cast away by the innumerable world-lines were now gathering near Kim Dokja's side. And then, there were Myth-grade Constellations waiting for him above the skies of the scenario.

[So, it has finally begun.]

The king of <Olympus> and the ruler of the 12 gods, the 'Lightning Throne', Zeus was there.

[This world-line's 'Final Scenario' has begun!]

[Every existence has acquired the scenario entry qualification for the Final Scenario!]

[Please kill the 'Enemy of the Story', Kim Dokja.]

The scenario messages popped up soon afterwards. Everyone present understood the current situation. Zeus was the first to open his mouth.

[Sweep them away.]

Along with heaven-collapsing noises, arcs of lightning belonging to Zeus rained down. With a 'pow!' noise of something exploding, blood splat onto Han Sooyoung's cheek. The Nameless Ones were dying as black blood spurted out from them.

[Sparemesparemesparemesparemespareme…]

Even the frightening 'Outer Gods' came across as mere water balloons in front of the combined Status emitted by the Myth-grade Constellations. The 'Outer Gods' vomited out discarded Stories as they exploded en masse.

Blindingly brilliant shower of lightning rained down. And in the centre of the devastated landscape, Kim Dokja was enduring against Zeus's electrical attacks.

Why did he make that kind of a choice?

[Tear his wings off! Surround him from all sides!]

Along with the roars from the Constellations, a massive army rushed in. Incarnations and Constellations that had broken past the hellish scenarios to get this far, were flooding in, all of them united as one under the single goal of eliminating 'Kim Dokja'.

The one to come to his aid was the Great Sage, now one soul and body with him.

[Constellation, 'Most Ancient Liberator', is unveiling his Status!]

Another electrical arc haughtily flowed in the air. The Great Sage's own lightning pushed away Zeus', and tore through the sky as if it was paper.

For a moment there, the Constellations' spirit seemed to wane, but a voice of encouragement resounded out next.

[It's the Great Sage, Heaven's Equal!]

[Do not back away! Kill him, and the scenario will end!]

[This is the Final Scenario of this world-line!]

This expectation that they would finally be freed from everything. Among them were faces of Constellations and Incarnations she had seen in passing before.

"No need to feel guilty here! He chose this for himself!"

<Olympus>, <Vedas>, <Papyrus>, <Guardian Tree>, <Twelve Earthly Branches>, <Emperor>…

Constellations and Incarnations from those Nebulas she had heard of at least once before were all here now. Every one of them knew who Kim Dokja was.

「Every single one of them raised their swords in order to kill Kim Dokja.」

Through the torn black coat, the white coat underneath could be seen. Kim Dokja taking on a role that didn't suit him was there.

The tattered Kim Dokja with a demon king's horn, and his black and white wings spread open wide.

Kim Dokja standing in front of the Outer Gods and swinging his sword towards the enemies.

She thought that her vision suddenly grew blurry, then Kim Dokja's figure began 'erasing'.

The strange light in the eye unique to the cephalopod, and the exterior giving off the dark, damp impression; where Kim Dokja used to stand was now dominated by a giant Outer God King that seemed to be a mixture of all the traits found in every monster of this world.

「The Enemy of the Story.」

As a writer herself, Han Sooyoung could instinctively tell. If this world was a novel, then Kim Dokja was the 'final boss'. And this story would only end with the death of that 'Kim Dokja'.

"Han Sooyoung!"

Someone pulled her back. Almost right away, a rapid arc of electricity flew past in front of her nose.

"Step back! Hurry!"

It was Yoo Sangah. Only she seemed to have maintained her wits within this scene of pure anarchy and confusion. But, how could she?

"Everyone, you must regain yourselves! Dokja-ssi is, right now…!"

Kim Dokja would die at this rate.

"We made a promise with Dokja-ssi! Have you all forgotten it?!"

Kim Dokja was a liar.

"Dokja-ssi really wouldn't do the same thing again…!"

Always believing in the goodness of a person – that was Yoo Sangah. And because she was like that, because she could believe in the others, she managed to be not shaken up by this situation. And that was precisely why she always clashed with Han Sooyoung until now.

Even with Yoo Sangah's shouts, the companions still carried empty expressions. With dazed eyes, they were each submerged in their own thoughts. The same question was grabbing hold of them.

「Why did Kim Dokja make that kind of choice?」

But, they made a promise; he swore that he'd not sacrifice himself in this manner ever again.

「Just why?」

"This story is not over yet."

Yoo Sangah was wrong, though. The direction of this story had been chosen already. Kim Dokja had become the 'Enemy of the Story', and this stinking scenario would end only when he was dead. The author responsible for writing this tragedy had chosen it that way.

…The author?

【■■■■■■■■■!!】

Kim Dokja's voice sorrowfully reverberated out. That voice returned to her as memories from a certain moment in the past.

– Han Sooyoung, you're a writer, right?

Her brain kicked into gear.

– What are you going to piss me off with this time?

– I wanted to ask you about something.

– What is it?

– Are writers truly omniscient within the stories they write?

– What's up with this totally out of the blue utterance?

– No, well, it's just that I'm kinda curious. While you were writing, were you in control of everything? Like, this person would act like this, and that person would behave in this way…

– That, obviously…

Han Sooyoung oh-so-confidently made her declaration.

– Can't be controlled.

– Why not? Aren't you the author?

– You think an author is a real god or something?

– Doesn't the author create everything within a story? Situations, characters…

Han Sooyoung muttered, you don't know anything, and carried on.

– All the characters would start acting on their own the moment they are created. Authors simply provide them with stages, that's all. It's all up to the characters themselves on how they would respond to the situation and make their moves.

– Not as a figure of speech, but for real?

– Yeah, really.

– You know, that's a really lazy way to write, don't you agree?

– Wanna die?!

Kim Dokja got bent in half when she punched him in the guts.

What was he thinking about back then?

– Interesting. Even an author isn't the god of the stories… In that case, just who determines the 'scenarios', then?

From the tip of her toes, this incredible chill crept up all over her body. Maybe, just maybe, Kim Dokja over there right now was the answer to that exact question.

Tsu-chuchuchut!

Perhaps, he was thinking about that one method to change the conclusion of this stubborn world of scenarios.

[Great Dokkaebis are panicking from the deluge of the Probability!]

[<Star Stream> is paying attention at the course of the shaking Probability!]

'Scenario' wasn't perfect.

['Final Scenario' is going through a rapid change!]

It was definitely the author who created the story. However, it was the characters that lived within that very story. And the one that determined their fate was…

[Korean Peninsula's Constellations are cheering on the 'Demon King of Salvation!]

[<Eden>'s Constellations are cheering on the 'Demon King of Salvation!]

[<Underworld>'s Constellations are cheering on the 'Demon King of Salvation!]

[Constellations of planets with unknown names are cheering on the 'Demon King of Salvation'!]

[Countless Constellations are donating Coins!]

[The absolute majority of the Constellations are watching the 'Demon King of Salvation's' last battle!]

…The ones watching that story.

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

[Many Constellations don't wish for the 'Demon King of Salvation's' death!]

The only beings that could change the 'scenarios'.

Kim Dokja hadn't become the 'Enemy of the Story' to die. And he certainly didn't choose sacrifice in order to betray his companions, either.

「The 'Ways of Survival' was Yoo Joonghyuk's story. In that case, whose story was this world?」

Han Sooyoung watched the world's Probability shake unsteadily and bitterly muttered to herself. "…That's right. No reader would want to see the protagonist get killed."

Kim Dokja's and <Kim Dokja's Company>'s influence had grown incredibly in this world. The proof of that was him becoming the subject of the Final Scenario.

Constellations, whether they liked it or not, all watched Kim Dokja's Story, and they either sympathised with it or were jealous of him. Every star in this world was watching his story regardless of whether he wanted it or not. And most likely, Kim Dokja himself was aware of that.

Perhaps, he could've been thinking about it for a long time.

「This was the last gamble Kim Dokja made after becoming the 'Character'.」

She sensed Kim Dokja glancing in her direction from afar. As if to say, she should be able to understand since it was her. As if to say, she should be able to start a brand new story that no one knew from this moment on.

「He was sacrificing himself not to sacrifice himself.」

It could very much be an impossible task. The conclusion could be forever out of their reach. However, this was the only 'no one will be sacrificed' method Kim Dokja could come up with.

So, the things Han Sooyoung had to do now was pretty clear.

'That guy alone can't do it'.

Han Sooyoung looked behind her. She needed to let her companions know what exactly Kim Dokja wanted to achieve here.

Unfortunately, there was something that Han Sooyoung, absorbed in her own attempt at understanding, failed to realize.

[Story, 'Predictive Plagiarism', is predicting the character's mentality.]

And that was the fact that not everyone here was an author. Meaning, not everyone could see this situation in an objective manner like her.

Even before Han Sooyoung could open her mouth, someone among the companions dashed forward first.

The clear-cut animosity was permeating within the unsheathed blade. Han Sooyoung realized the direction this sword light was aimed at and cried out in pure shock. "Wait!! Hold on!! That guy, he's trying to-!!"

She knew whose sword it was, and that's why she couldn't believe it.

「Right in this moment, this one person grew to deeply resent Kim Dokja.」

The strongest sword of Kim Dokja that had been protecting him for a very long time. And that sword was making a move to end this scenario.

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* Official novel cover (canonical)

Chapter 488: Ep. 93 - Omniscient Author's Viewpoint, II

[Your ■■ is ■■.]

When Jung Heewon first heard that message, she felt a bit weirded out. She recalled what Kim Dokja told her some time ago. He said that each individual had a specific ending reserved for them. So, she believed that she too would have something like that as well.

However… it was ■■?

Jung Heewon knew someone that suited such description far better than her.

The person she fought alongside the closest than anyone.

The person she wouldn't hesitate to become a sword for.

The person who treated his companions preciously. The person who always sacrificed himself first.

「That's why, a person she couldn't help but resent.」

Jung Heewon broke past the waves of 'Nameless Ones' and ran. Venomous liquid exploded nearby and splashed onto her thigh, boiling her flesh dark. She urgently pulled out the internal healing salve Lee Seolhwa gave her earlier and applied it on the wound, then started running again. She shook off the Constellations trying to interfere with their outpouring of attacks, and leapt up by stepping on the Nameless Ones surrounding Kim Dokja as if to protect him.

She could see 'something' far away. Something that used to be 'Kim Dokja'.

【■■■■■■!!】

And now, the being that had become the 「Enemy of the Story」.

"Heewon-ssi!"

Lee Hyunsung managed to get to her and grabbed her shoulders.

"Hold on-!"

Even before he could continue with his words, a message popped up first, instead.

[The Final Scenario's streaming to all locations will begin!]

Every channel within <Star Stream> was now opening up.

Tsu-chut, chuchuchut…!

The scenario message flickered about unstably.

[Everyone, don't panic and just focus on the scenario. This scenario will be the final one for you. Once you hunt down the Outer God King, your long journey will come to an end as well.]

[This story shall be recorded on the 'Final Wall', and the journeys of the stars will become the 'epic tale' that shall be handed down for all eternity!]

Great Dokkaebis greedily shouted out. Their eyes were burning with naked desire to record the Story they had guided till here on the Final Wall.

[Giant Story, 'Brilliance of the Ancient Dawn', dreams of the final story!]

[Giant Story, 'Master of Asgard', dreams of the final story!]

Giant Stories were writhing viciously now. To remain as the 'One Single Story', these Giant Stories were urging on the Constellations and Incarnations.

[Constellation, 'Spear that Draws the Borders of the Oceans', is pulling out his weapon!]

[Constellation, 'Master of Abydos', is incarnating into the scenario!]

[Constellation, 'River Nile's Monster Bird', is roaring out viciously!]

However, not everyone was being led around by that urging.

Despite the orders from the first-seat god Zeus, several gods from <Olympus>, including Dionysus, were hesitating to attack. It was the same story for the Incarnations, as well.

"…Do we really need to kill that person?"

The one to say that was the Japanese Incarnation, 'Asuka Ren'.

"The 'Kim Dokja' I met was not a villain."

"She's right! Kim Dogeza is not a bad person!"

They were people who received help from Kim Dokja's companions during the fight against other Japanese that chose to become the calamities of the [Peace Land].

Besides them, several Incarnations affiliated with <Emperor> and <Olympus> agreed with them.

[Quite a few Constellations agree with the opinions of the Incarnations!]

[<Star Stream>'s Probability is falling into unrest!]

Once they detected the Probability moving towards a suspicious direction, the Great Dokkaebis quickly stepped forward to rectify that.

[Do not forget, everyone. He's the 'Enemy of the Scenario'.]

[You may not be aware of this, but from the beginning, 'Kim Dokja' had been clearing the scenarios with the purpose of ruining this world-line.]

Quite unlike themselves, these usually-arrogant Great Dokkaebis began speaking in a polite tone of voice. And as the footages of Stories began playing in the vast skies above, the Dokkaebis' speciality began as well.

[He betrayed this world-line and made deals with the 'Outer Gods'.]

Inside the screen, Kim Dokja was making a deal with the 'Secretive Plotter'. Since there was no voice being transmitted, his expression came across as especially sinister.

That wasn't all. Everything he had done so far was now being laid bare to the rest of the world. From when he released the grasshoppers in the subway and didn't try to save anyone else, to when he didn't do anything back in the Geumho station even though he could've saved many others…

This collection of only the worst moments of someone was trying to create a brand new Kim Dokja in this world.

[If he achieves his goal, then only the pure destruction awaits this world.]

Soon, the screen changed to that from the「Journey to the West」.

The Giant Story「Liberator of the Forgotten Ones」.

It was the scene of him, surrounded by the Outer Gods, liberating the 'Nameless Ones' trapped inside the scenario. Unfortunately, perhaps due to the Dokkaebis' interference, him inside the Story no longer looked saintly. No, he truly looked like the leader of a cult freeing demons in order to really destroy this world.

[He acquired the knowledge of the future through uncommon means, and he used that for his own benefit.]

Kim Dokja holding onto his smartphone was now ordering his companions around.

[Him becoming the 'Demon King of Salvation', then the 'Watcher of Light and Darkness', they were all simply part of his plan.]

The storytellers worked together to drag Kim Dokja's position down from 'protagonist' to the villain. They were changing his Story into a sly and cowardly one.

[<Star Stream>'s Probability is mobilising!]

This action definitely went against the nature of the storytellers themselves. Even then, these Great Dokkaebis didn't hesitate one second. Because these storytellers also desired their own ■■, as well.

[And now, he has become the 'Outer God' Monarch to destroy this world.]

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

The public sentiment within <Star Stream> was rapidly changing.

Asuka Ren's complexion paled greatly. Anna Croft and her unreadable expression walked past the Japanese woman's side and muttered to the latter.

"It's too late now."

'Zarathustras' began advancing forward, and those Constellations greatly hesitating also joined in the battle.

Gah-aaaaaaah!

The 'Nameless Ones' screaming in pain collided against the front of the Constellations.

「All the creatures related to Kim Dokja were pointing their blades at each other.」

And Jung Heewon found herself in the middle of this battlefield, watching Kim Dokja's fight.

Even if she didn't help him out, there were plenty of 'Outer Gods' fighting alongside him next to him. They were huge cephalopod-type monsters, Outer Gods with baby-like bodies yet with heads of giant flowers, etc.

Even if Jung Heewon borrowed Uriel's powers and went all out, she'd not be able to win. Standing among them, Kim Dokja truly looked like the great calamity trying to end this world-line.

「Jung Heewon thought that she understood Kim Dokja.」

She didn't know the conclusion Kim Dokja truly wanted. However, she believed that she knew without being told what it was. She thought that the end of the world she wanted was the same as what he wanted.

「However, could this be the end he truly wished for?」

Maybe, there was no such thing as companions to him?

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is…!]

She knew. Jung Heewon knew better than anyone what Uriel was trying to say. She also knew that Kim Dokja treasured his companions. Perhaps too much, and that's why he was capable of doing something like this.

Kim Dokja, he was planning to sacrifice himself and allow his companions to see the end of this world.

「No matter how far she reaches out, she just couldn't touch him.」

It was as if a huge wall was standing before her eyes. And this wall was preventing her from getting nearer to him.

"Just how…"

Perhaps, Jung Heewon was too exhausted now to long for the desired conclusion.

「Kim Dokja is a type of person who didn't listen to anyone.」

The grip of the sword in her hand felt cold. This sword that Kim Dokja had personally crafted for her and placed in her grasp. This sword that remained as the symbol of her beliefs from the [Paradise] all the way to here.

['Judge's Sword' is crying out!]

The sword that should react only in the vicinity of 'evil' was now crying out.

The Great Dokkaebis declared as if to make a mockery out of her.

[This is the hidden truth regarding the Enemy of the Story, 'Kim Dokja'.]

She wanted to confirm it.

If you are truly the 'Kim Dokja' that I know.

And, if what you want isn't the same as what I want, then…

「…Then, whether it'd be alright to end him with her own hands.」

"Heewon-ssi."

As if he understood her heart, Lee Hyunsung remained next to her side.

"I shall go with you."

He literally became a shield of forged steel and ran forward while creating a path. He pierced through the waves of the stars and storms of the Nameless Ones. Just as Jung Heewon had something to confirm, so did Lee Hyunsung.

Something that needed to be confirmed over and over again.

Kwa-kwakwakwakwa!

As if riding on the wave itself, the two of them flew up and landed near Kim Dokja's rear in an instant. Such a thing was only possible because the other Outer Gods were all concentrated on his front.

"Heewon-ssi!"

Was it because of the Ring of Chaos drawn on the back of her hand? The 'Nameless Ones' ignored her even after discovering her presence and simply rushed forward.

Kim Dokja standing tall like a huge skyscraper was now before her. Thick, pitch-black liquid dripped from that massive body.

Without even realizing it, Jung Heewon reached out and touched that exterior.

It was unfamiliar.

In the past, she got to hold the sleeping Kim Dokja's hand tightly. It was after he returned from another world, passed out for the whole day in a room the companions had prepared for him. What did his hand feel like back then?

Perhaps he sensed her presence, because the large head of the Outer God King shifted and looked behind himself.

Ku-gugugugu…

White breath leaked out from that huge head.

"Kim Dok…"

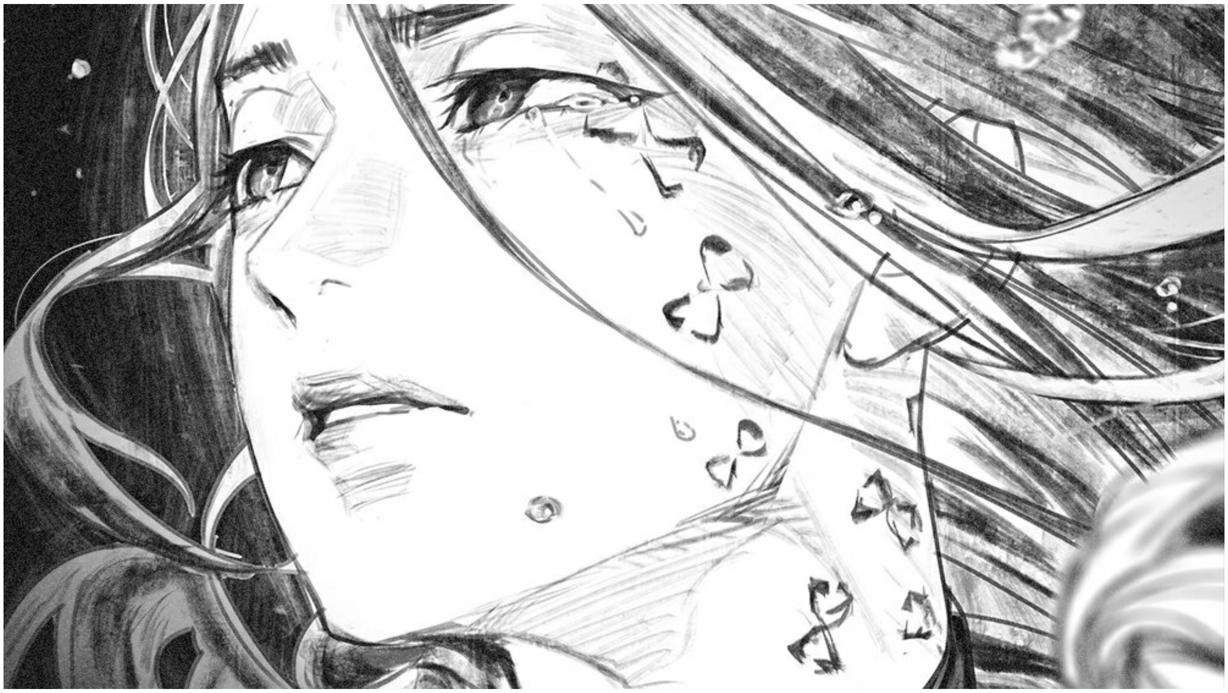
Even though she knew she shouldn't, Jung Heewon still ended up taking several steps back. His huge jaw was opening towards her.

[Scenario's Probability is activating!]

[All of your Stories are warning you!]

The Outer God King's large black eye reflected her current expression.

She didn't want to make that kind of a face. She didn't want to look at Kim Dokja with that sort of eyes. Unfortunately, her hands were already moving, independent of her will.



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"Aaaaaaaah!!"

The [Judge's Sword] cut down the tentacle reaching out to her. As if they were now irreconcilable enemies, her sword moved uncontrollably.

The tentacle burst open noisily and Story leaked out from it.

「"Dokja-ssi, we're happier now compared to back then, right?"

"…If you mean now is better than before, then yes, you're right."」

It was a Story even she knew well.

「"I think so, too."」

She listened to that story while staggering unsteadily no her feet. The story that only Kim Dokja and Jung Heewon remembered managed to grab hold of her mind.

After getting rid of her blurred vision, she got to see the surrounding view. She thought that she managed to cut down quite a number of tentacles so far, yet there didn't seem like any noticeable wound on his body. And in the meantime, Kim Dokja's size had ballooned up even more, to an extent that it became hard to believe this used to be a single person.

He now resembled a massive wall standing tall all by himself.

【■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■…】

A wall that would never be filled up no matter what was written on it. And as she stood in front of this wall, Jung Heewon despaired.

Who cared about the [Final Wall]? She couldn't even manage to overcome a wall of just one person.

She then spotted Han Sooyoung shouting at her in the distance while trying to get here. If it was her, could she be able to cross this wall?

– It must be nice, being a writer and all.

During the <Kim Dokja's Company>'s vacation, Jung Heewon lying on the middle of a mountainside said that to Han Sooyoung.

– What do you mean, nice?

– No, well, a person who can write well also knows how to speak eloquently too, right? I wish I could be like that, too.

– What, so you can write a love letter to Lee Hyunsung?

– No, not that.

Jung Heewon wordlessly stared in Kim Dokja's direction. Just from that stare alone, Han Sooyoung seemed to have figured out what her conversation partner wanted to say.

Kim Dokja, struggling so hard in front of his own companions. The fool that was idiotically trying to carry out a joke-like scenario of [Workers' day-off] – Han Sooyoung saw him and replied like this.

– Anyone can write a story.

Jung Heewon raised her head and looked at this creature that used to be Kim Dokja.

She was not a writer like Han Sooyoung. On the other hand, she was also not an avid reader like Kim Dokja. So, she could neither write like Han Sooyoung nor read like Kim Dokja.

However, that still didn't mean she couldn't write or read anything.

– Who cares if you can't write well? Just like you said, you aren't a novelist, right?

For sure, this world could be inside of the novel, the 'Ways of Survival'. It could very well be a story written by an author living somewhere, and read by someone else.

However, this 'novel' was her life.

「And that was why she too had the right to write this world's next sentence.」

Jung Heewon slowly lowered her sword and asked. "…Dokja-ssi. Do you remember that time?"

She didn't know if he was listening or not. Despite that, she still placed her hand on the very small knick she created on this massive, expansive wall. The scenes she experienced together with Kim Dokja leaked out from that knick. There they were, climbing up the heaven's stairs while kitted out in formal attire.

"I was really happy back then. When we went to the department store together to buy new clothes and visited <Eden> like a bunch of celebs."

She liked this world. Everything was being destroyed and all she could see was extensive devastation, yet because this was such a world, she got to find her true worth.

"…You said this, didn't you? That this world is preferable. We're people like that, aren't we?"

Kim Dokja's answer didn't arrive.

Jung Heewon widened the wound on the tentacle. As if to say, don't forget this wound, please remember her just as he'd remember this wound.

"That's why, you are someone who can only do this, right?"

Jung Heewon understood Kim Dokja.

「If she doesn't kill Kim Dokja, this world will perish.」

The eye of the massive Outer God King was now looking at her. And it seemed like he was expressing his agreement from the way his head was moving. Jung Heewon looked straight into that eye and spoke.

"How can I even kill you…"

Her vision blurred again, her body shivering.

Kim Dokja's salvation was cruel. Like rescuing a drowning person with a blade, those saved by him were inflicted an unhealable wound.

"Don't make me laugh… This is no salvation…"

Jung Heewon tottered as if she was about to lean against the wall.

A world where no one tried to save another. In this world where only victims existed, no, a world where the wounds of the victims were in full display, here was the lone hand full of scars extending out to her.

「Kim Dokja was already extending his hand out from there.」

It wasn't just the person reaching out, but the one grasping that hand also required courage to do so.

Courage to hold that scarred hand, courage not to give up.

Even if she knew this wouldn't heal her, even if she knew that holding that hand would only inflict her with a greater wound – courage to hold that hand in order to live for one more time.

「Some salvations aren't completed by the one giving them out, but by those receiving them.」

Jung Heewon's palm left a deep imprint on the tightly-held Outer God's skin. She stared at that imprint for a very long time, then slowly raised her head, her hand grasping the sword tightly.

And when she did, a certain message resounded out within her ears.

[Completion of the Incarnation 'Jung Heewon's' ■■ is imminent!]

Just like holding the hand tightly, she strengthened her grip on the sword.

[Your ■■ is 'Salvation'.]

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* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)

Chapter 489: Ep. 93 - Omniscient Author's Viewpoint, III

The sight of Jung Heewon running forward could be seen.

She slid among the 'Nameless Ones' like the moonlight sliding off the blade.

The answer she was searching for was there.

[Incarnation Jung Heewon's ■■ is 'Salvation'.]

Everyone had their own ■■. Finally, the moment of choosing their own conclusions had arrived for the <Kim Dokja's Company>'s companions.

"Jung Heewon!"

Her [Judge's Sword] drew a spectacular trajectory. The companions watched that sword trajectory and hurriedly chased after her.

Lee Gilyoung was about to leap into the air along with Yoo Sangah, but had to stop because of a girl was about to be left behind.

"Shin Yoosung…"

Shin Yoosung standing there all alone, was crying. Standing in the exact same location as before, her feet not going anywhere, and her gaze fixed on one spot – it was quite clear what she was looking at right now.

[Story, 'Saviour of a Star', is continuing on with its storytelling.]

It was the Story that only Shin Yoosung possessed.

A Constellation and an Incarnation, connected through that radiating starlight. The light emitted by the Story was so beautiful and radiant that Lee Gilyoung unknowingly reached out towards Shin Yoosung.

「Lee Gilyoung was envious of Shin Yoosung.」

Just what was it like for one person to understand another?

He was too young to truly understand the meaning of the word 'understand' itself. Sometimes he'd feel this sense of deprivation because of that, but on the other hand, he actually liked the fact that his age could be used as an excuse.

「It's possible for you to not get it yet. But, that's okay.」

「You don't need to do this, but I'm sorry that we have to rely on you, Gilyoung-ah…」

「Hey, kid, stop showing off and get back.」

He was relieved. He even thought that it was a fortunate thing.

It was fortunate that he got to meet such people in a world like this one. People that he could rely on and act like a child, yet still could remind him with the fact that he was indeed a child.

「However, Shin Yoosung was here, too」

There was another child with them who didn't act like one. It was a girl who always looked up at a star. Lee Gilyoung also looked up at the same star – the star he liked. He knew very well the sorrowful light that star emitted, and how its colour would change when it tried to hide its true intentions or tried to lie.

「However, he didn't know as well as Shin Yoosung did.」

"How long are you going to stand around dazed like that? Let's go."

Shin Yoosung absentmindedly turned her head towards him. While meeting her gaze, Lee Gilyoung snatched up her hand. Then, the two kids began running. Sweat filled the tightly-held small hand.

'I don't understand Dokja-hyung as much as Shin Yoosung'.

She was the Incarnation of the Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation'. No one could pry them apart or get in between them.

"You think you're the only one worried about hyung? You think you're the only one feeling sad?"

Lee Gilyoung shouted without even looking back and continued to drag Shin Yoosung. He hated the idea of looking younger than her. But for at least today, he wanted to behave like a child.

"I don't like the Han River. I like oceans better. And I don't like pizza but prefer fried chicken."

He too had been saved by that star, that's why.

"Going to the PC Bang! Playing phone games! And…!"

The star he liked so much could be seen in the distance. However, it didn't look like a star now.

"And, also…"

The star, the subject of jealousy and envy from the Constellations that ruled the heavens, was now…

【■■■■■■■■■■■…】

…Now looked like a scary great demon from the webtoons the boy enjoyed reading so much.

The moment that huge head with tentacles wiggling about turned in his direction, Lee Gilyoung's running legs froze still.

The king of another world, now grown to a height even taller than a skyscraper.

The 'Enemy of the Story'.

The villain who would destroy this world.

「Did that demon look like Kim Dokja to Shin Yoosung?」

"I…"

Lee Gilyoung muttered while trying to fight against his body's trembling. Against the fear that that thing might not be Kim Dokja he used to know.

[Do not get fooled!]

[That creature will destroy this world!]

[He's a being that only cares about himself. To him, your survival holds no meaning at all.]

Actually, the Kim Dokja he had been looking at was wrong.

「"Hyung, are you a god?"

"…Wha?"

"Or, are you the 'protagonist'?"」

The fear that the words spoken by the Dokkaebis turned out to be correct.

「"I'm not a god nor am I a protagonist. In fact, I've been always envious of the real protagonist."」

Lee Gilyoung finally managed to stop the trembling and worked up his courage to look up. The vast Outer God's eye was now looking straight at the boy.

Kim Dokja's heart couldn't be seen; not a single thing about that Outer God felt like Kim Dokja.

The only thing remaining was belief.

– Gilyoung-ah. There is more than one way to form relationships.

Some time ago, he had a chat with Yoo Sangah regarding his dilemma related to Shin Yoosung. At the time, she answered like this after closing shut the book she was reading.

– It's similar to how different people interpret the same sentence differently. So…

Lee Gilyoung wasn't much of an avid reader so that comparison didn't resonate with him. Still…

– I think I understand.

He too had his own skill of conversing with the others.

– It kinda feels different when talking to a praying mantis and a cockroach.

The [Diverse Communication] was such a skill, that allowed him to communicate with species different than his. However, the boy lacked a skill to understand other human beings.

What kind of a person was Kim Dokja? He wasn't sure.

However, there was this one image that popped into his head first when trying to think of the person called Kim Dokja – the sight of people with their heads or bodies blown up.

「"I'm going to trouble you for a bit."」

And then, the face of Kim Dokja as he placed a grasshopper within the boy's grasp.

[Story, 'Insect King', has begun its storytelling!]

Suddenly, the surrounding view shook and a Story began waking up within the boy.

[Constellation, 'Ruler of the Deepest Pit', is grinning insidiously.]

A swarm of yellow locusts buzzing in from somewhere swirled like a tornado and began enveloping the entire world.

「On that day, Lee Gilyoung thought to himself that it'd been nicer for the whole subway train to be flipped on its head. Just like the grasshopper that died in his hands.」

This incredible feast of Status caused the 'Outer Gods' to scream.

Constellations of <Star Stream> began pouring out their messages.

[Constellations leaning on the Absolute Evil spectrum are warning the 'Ruler of the Deepest Pit'!]

[Portion of Demon Kings are greatly astonished by the Incarnation's power!]

The Story flowing vigorously ignored the gazes of the Constellations and continued on with its storytelling. This story was something the boy hadn't told any adults yet.

And it was a story that Shin Yoosung, also a possessor of the [Diverse Communication], knew a little bit of.

「"You didn't even have enough money so why did you go and have a kid…"」

This intense stink of the brown coal, the sight of his father and mother lying on the ground like dead cockroaches – memories of him poking on the cold, unmoving flesh. A funeral without portraits came to an end, and the fatigued eyes of his relatives looking at him.

「"That girl Yeong-Mi, I knew she'd do something like this. She was told that that bastard wasn't good for her, yet she…"」

「"So, who's going to take that boy in? What about the eldest brother's…"」

「"We can't. There are three kids in our place already."」

Lee Gilyoung didn't know the proper words to describe his life that had been rejected from a very young age. He didn't have any ability to explain or express how big of a wound that was. And that wound continued to fester, unable to be healed or discovered.

「"Look for an organisation. There are places that look after kids like him."」

Lee Gilyoung got dragged by his aunt's hand and climbed on the Seoul-bound train. And he felt dizzy while looking at the map of ant tunnel-like Seoul's subway network.

There were so many tunnels here, and he didn't know where he was heading off to.

The grasshoppers inside the insect catcher cried like a lost child.

「"This boy, really now! Throw them away! Hurry! They don't live all that long, anyway. So disgusting!"」

What would've happened to him if the scenarios didn't start on that day?

"Dokja hyung!"

What if he didn't get to meet these people?

"Dokja hyung! I'm over here!"

Lee Gilyoung cried out loudly enough to tear out his vocal cords.

It was fine if his voice couldn't reach its target. It was fine if he wasn't Kim Dokja's Incarnation.

「"Gilyoung-ah. If you can't say it, then it's okay to not say anything. However, you must remember this one thing, okay?"」

The boy wanted to say this to him.

「"When you wish to say something, this hyung will be by your side to listen."」

…That, Dokja hyung wasn't a villain.

…That, he was a just regular person who happened to rescue the boy from other regular people.

[Kill him! We only have to push a little bit harder!]

[They are failures from a different world-line! Do not mind it and push harder! Killing them now will end this!]

The ranks of the 'Outer Gods' fighting out in the front were crumbling now. One of the sides seemed to break down completely, then a group of Incarnations led by the Myth-grade Constellations began advancing towards Kim Dokja. He needed to stop them somehow.

Tsu-chuchuchut!

[Applicable action is prohibited by the 「Bureau」's Probability.]

[The target you wish to protect is the 「Enemy of the Story」.]

He needed to convince them that Dokja hyung wasn't a person like that. But, how should he…

Ku-gugugugu…

Even as his enemies rushed in, Kim Dokja simply stood there like a wall. He seemed to be saying something every so often, yet those words couldn't be understood. Lee Gilyoung wanted to understand them, though. He hated leaning against the wall, all powerless and helpless. He wanted to stand on Kim Dokja's side.

He didn't care if this sort of world was destroyed or not. If Kim Dokja was the enemy of a story, then he'd also become this 'Enemy of the Story', too.

However, Kim Dokja was too difficult to understand for him.

He hated the fact that he was a little kid. If only he was an adult. If only he was Han Sooyoung, Yoo Joonghyuk, or Jung Heewon…

…If only he was Shin Yoosung.

He felt the sensation of the tightly-held hand. Shin Yoosung was still there.

"…You idiot. Wake up."

The swarm of locusts flying around settled down.

Shin Yoosung spoke up. "I can't understand ahjussi, either."

[Exclusive skill, 'Superlative Diverse Communication', is activating!]

"I'm just doing my best trying to understand."

The skill of these two kids that allowed them to control the Chimera Dragon activated simultaneously. And now, they were in the most optimum state to understand each other.

Lee Gilyoung couldn't read Kim Dokja. However, Shin Yoosung seemed to know how, at least just a little bit.

The Story these two read together began rocking the world. And it was as if Kim Dokja's face could be seen ever so faintly now. It seemed like the figure of Kim Dokja they knew was almost within reach.

[Story, 'Saviour of the Star', is having a chat with the Story, 'Insect King!]

"Hey, kids."

Han Sooyoung stood next to them as if to provide protection. And Lee Hyunsung, Jung Heewon, and Yoo Sangah stood nearby to protect them in turn.

「Adults looking at the world together with the kids were here.」

Lee Jihye's battleship cast a shadow from the air. Both Gong Pildu and Lee Seolhwa could be seen near the cannons of the vessel. Lee Jihye then unsheathed her sword as if to imply that she was ready to fire at any time she wanted to.

That prompted the Great Dokkaebi Onsae to ask them.

[Are you trying to protect him? Even though you know what kind of existence he is? He's no longer the 'Kim Dokja' that you know. The truth has been exposed to the rest of the world…!]

"Don't make me laugh. That ain't the truth. You think truth is that simple? What you've shown is simply edited footage. And that's how you've all been creating scenarios so far, right?" Han Sooyoung spoke to the approaching Constellations as if to issue a warning. "Don't care whether he's become the 'Enemy of the Story' or whatever, he's still our companion. So, don't you dare touch him. Got that?"

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', is roaring out!]

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is exposing her Status!]

[Constellation, 'Most Ancient Liberator', is charging up his lightning!]

"You touch him, and we'll kill you all."

The moment the Constellations protecting <Kim Dokja's Company> made a move, the powerful momentum of the opposing Constellations froze still for a moment there.

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

[A portion of Constellations agree with Incarnation 'Han Sooyoung's' words, and…!]

Great Dokkaebi Harong detected the tremor within the Probability and promptly cut the messages off.

[How laughable. You want to protect him? You lot who can't even understand what he's saying?]

[<Star Stream> is warning the Great Dokkaebis for their interference in the scenario!]

Frustrated by how the scenario wasn't unfolding in the way they desired, a Great Dokkaebi enduring the aftermath's storm asked them.

[Can you not see his current appearance?]

Incarnations that got near Kim Dokja shrunk back and began retreating away. It was the same story whether they were Incarnations hostile towards him or carrying a favourable impression of him.

The Outer God, now reaching high up into the heavens. The moment everyone looked into his eye containing the abyss itself, they shuddered and collapsed on their butts.

[None of you know what he feels, what he desires, and what he thinks about. Because you are all measly humans. Because you are creatures that can never understand another existence even if you devote your entire lifetime to it.]

Everyone from <Kim Dokja's Company> looked up at Kim Dokja. What the Great Dokkaebi said was true. They couldn't understand him.

[The target you wish to protect is the 「Enemy of the Story」.]

As if to wake up the characters that had forgotten their roles, the Great Dokkaebi shouted out loudly. [None of you have a choice in this matter! Kill him. If you don't, this scenario will not end!]

['King of the Stories' is observing the direction of the Final Scenario.]

The oldest storyteller in this world was also watching the unfolding events.

Along with her companions, Han Sooyoung raised her head, and looked at the place where the 'King of the Stories' was – the being that summarised all the scenarios. She looked at the endlessly-stretching [Final Wall].

「That wall is where their story would be recorded.」

"The scenario won't end? Nice. Is that not what every reader wishes for?"

[Incarnation 'Han Sooyoung' has gotten much closer to her ■■.]

Han Sooyoung then looked up at Kim Dokja. When she glared continuously at the giant head of the cephalopod, she thought that it began to resemble Kim Dokja's face just a little bit.

"The story I'm writing definitely requires that idiot Kim Dokja's presence."

Han Sooyoung roughly unfurled the bandages like an author ripping up the manuscript she didn't like. Her Story dyed in the [Black Flame] spread out in the air like pitch-black ink.

As if to imply that she could write as long as she wanted to.

[<Star Stream> is surprised by the Incarnation 'Han Sooyoung's' decision!]

[Many Constellations are astonished by the Incarnation 'Han Sooyoung's' ■■, and…]

[The target you wish to protect is the「Enemy of the Story」.]

[Applicable action is prohibited by the「Bureau」's Probab…]

Tsu-chuchuchuchu…!

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', is proud of his Incarnation.]

Han Sooyoung smirked. "Let's not end the scenario, forever."

[Incarnation Han Sooyoung's ■■ is 'Neverending Story'.]

Chapter 490: Ep. 93 - Omniscient Author's Viewpoint, IV

Every Dokkaebi dreamed of becoming the 'Great Dokkaebi'. That was the peak of one's tale that a <Star Stream>'s Dokkaebi could reach.

Yet, those that did reach the top continued to dream.

Bihyung stared at the [Final Wall] utterly filling up the view out from the front of the Ark. Even though so many stories existed, most of the wall was still empty.

[…Is there a reason to go this far??]

Bihyung's anger caused the Great Dokkaebis' communication line to go silent. He then continued to observe the <Kim Dokja's Company>'s companions from the skies of the Final Scenario. And at the figure of Kim Dokja as the Outer God.

Starting from the subway that day, all the way up to the Final Scenario; while Kim Dokja became the Demon King of Salvation, then became the 'Watcher of Light and Darkness', Bihyung also became a higher class Dokkaebi, before eventually ending up as a Great Dokkaebi himself.

「The biggest mistake a storyteller can make is excessively interfering in a scenario.」

Dokkaebis' mission was to attract as much attention of the Constellations and create stories that would be recorded on the 'Final Wall'.

That was why Dokkaebis should never be dragged around by the scenarios themselves. They must never be seduced by the Stories blooming from within the scenarios, and especially should not empathise with the Incarnations' pain.

But, Bihyung made that very blunder.

While looking at their Story, several of the feelings he had forgotten in the past woke back up again – that flutter of one's heart when one scenario ended and the next one came around; that sense of fulfilment after seeing the Constellations rejoice or wallow from the scenario he had cooked up.

Bihyung learned about 'scenario' from Kim Dokja.

[They are not carrying out the scenario incorrectly. From the beginning, 'scenario' flows in a reversible, malleable way. Meaning, it flows in the direction that many stars wish to see. Other Constellations of <Star Stream> are…]

[Looks like you care greatly about this Story since you helped to foster it, but listen well. There is something called the flow of the bigger story.]

Bihyung was about to raise his voice only to hold himself back. He had to, as every other Great Dokkaebi was now focusing on him. Although vexing, he had no choice as the youngest in this group.

Great Dokkaebi 'Garang' finally broke the silence it had been maintaining until now. [A young Great Dokkaebi such as yourself probably finds such Conclusions quite fresh. However, I've witnessed Stories like that many times before. Do you honestly think that, in its immense history, there had been no one else who resented <Star Stream> and tried to destroy it?]

The Great Dokkaebi Garang, one of the oldest Dokkaebis in existence, and also the closest aid to the 'Dokkaebi King', too.

[There have been countless destructions before.]

Bihyung simply couldn't unpack the remorse faintly discernible from that tone of voice.

[Not all destruction is the same,] replied Bihyung.

A few Great Dokkaebis glared at him as a warning. However, he tried his best not to shrink back and held Garang's gaze. The latter stared at the former with mysterious, profound eyes and only after a lengthy amount of time, opened its mouth. [Indeed, the ■■ they dream of is slightly different from other Stories.]

Perhaps that statement got on its nerves, the Great Dokkaebi Onsae stopped observing and tried to intervene. Garang raised its hand first and stopped its colleague while continuing on with its words.

[But, that difference is the threat itself. Not every Story will become a foundation for the next one.]

[What do you mean by that?]

[There are certain Stories that will completely break the scenario.]

Gah-aaaaaaah!!

The screams from the 'Nameless Ones'.

Once upon a time, they too were beings that participated in different scenarios. They cried out in despair and attacked the Constellations. And in their centre was the Outer God King Kim Dokja leading these godly beings from the other worlds.

「The Enemy of the Story.」

To Bihyung's knowledge, no other calamity was given that title. He hadn't even heard of the plan to give that title in the first place.

Garang continued on while watching Kim Dokja's resistance.

[At the beginning of every scenario, the protagonists will always experience the deviation from the normal world. They will fight against the enemies appearing before them, experience dilemmas, and sacrifice something in order to emerge victorious before returning to their original world to receive their deserved rewards.]

Bihyung knew of that theory. The first thing the lower-ranked Dokkaebis would hear about was that ancient rule of the scenario.

[Although outdated, that is still the focal point of the scenario. This cycle has to be protected so that the next scenario can be created, and the next world-line can open up. Conflicts will be mended, wounds will be healed; the world must remain in one piece as if nothing had happened to it.]

The distant foot of a mountain range collapsed before exploding spectacularly. The number of Constellations gathering was constantly increasing.

Bihyung knew the truth. This very 'Final Scenario' had been planned from the get-go.

「The end of the world will come, and then, it'll be defeated.」

That imaginary enemy called the 'Outer God King' only existed for that sole purpose. Stars that once used to be at odds with each other would unite against the advent of a powerful enemy and fight together; some may die and some may survive, but they would still get to resolve all the old conflicts. The world would regain its peace. The gossipers would sing about this history and pass it down through the generations.

「And nothing will change. <Star Stream> will continue on.」

And that was the truth of the 'scenario' that the Dokkaebis pursued.

The scenario must cycle back and repeat itself.

[The absolute majority of Constellations are excited by the 'Final Scenario'!]

To ensure that no one realized what the <Star Stream> actually was, and why the scenario had to be repeated, brand new stories had to be supplied to the

Constellations. However, there were a few that resisted against this.

[Giant Story, 'Demon Realm's Spring', is continuing with its storytelling!]

[Giant Story, 'Torch that Swallowed the Myth', is rejecting the predetermined development.]

Those that resisted against the scenarios predetermined for them, and they wished to bring down the existence of the <Star Stream> itself.

[Incarnation 'Han Sooyoung's' ■■ is 'Neverending Story'!]

The 「Neverending Story」.

The contradicting ■■ that didn't acknowledge the end as an end, was glowing brightly over yonder. That was the conclusion an author, not a storyteller of the universe, had decided on.

They were existences that rejected the <Star Stream>'s cycle and chose to fight on forever.

Kwa-aaaaaaah!

As the explosion roared on, the Great Dokkaebi Garang finally made its declaration. [Let us close the lid on this world-line here.]

The Great Dokkaebis keeping silent, and those that were observing the responses of their peers until then, all nodded their heads in unison.

Even before Bihyung could say something, Baram next to him spoke up first. [Bihyung, I'm sorry, but things have come down to this. It seems that you'll have to overlook it this time.]

The moment Bihyung saw Baram's expression, he realized the truth. Every single Great Dokkaebi gathered here was the universe's best storytellers. They were the rulers that lorded over the scenarios and manipulated the stars while controlling this world-line.

Even then, for the first time ever, they had grown fearful of the 'story' they had created.

[We will use up the remaining Probability in order to forcibly execute the main scenario.]

'Forcibly executing' the scenario was the last trump card up their sleeve that the Dokkaebis could resort to. It was kind of a 'deus ex machina' that could forcefully restrict the flow of <Star Stream> at the cost of the truly nonsensical amount of Probability.

Especially so when trying to use it during the Final Scenario – the amount required simply defied one's imaginations.

Tsu-chuchuchuchu!

When the Bureau's Probability began moving, the skies over the whole of <Star Stream> was blanketed by blinding explosion of sparks. There didn't seem to be any spot left for darkness to hide within this world-line.

[They must end as 'evil'.]

As if to agree with the will of the Great Dokkaebis, Giant Stories began supporting them.

[Giant Story, 'Temple of the Destroyed Myth', is complying with the Bureau's will!]

[Giant Story, 'Advent of the New Dawn', is agreeing with the flow!]

[Giant Story, 'Eternal Olympus', respects the Bureau's will!]

Bihyung watched the final pages being written by the Great Dokkaebis from a step away.

[Other Great Dokkaebis are strongly urging you to make your decision!]

He was yet to agree with this conclusion.

[Bihyung!]

Even though Baram called out to him, he didn't reply.

[<Star Stream> is resisting against the Great Dokkaebis' interference!]

The sparks in the skies soon reached the Great Dokkaebis. An incredible storm of aftermaths was rushing in. Even if they were Great Dokkaebis, trying to intervene in a scenario still required this much price to pay.

[I, 'Great Dokkaebi Garang', declare my intention to officially participate in the scenario!]

Garam's declaration prompted other Great Dokkaebis to make theirs as well.

[I, 'Great Dokkaebi Noksu', declare my intention to…]

[I, 'Great Dokkaebi Haram', declare…]

Over ten Great Dokkaebis were hardening their resolve. The meaning of officially participating in the scenario meant they were giving up on the positions of neutral bystanders.

A short while later, a message could be heard in the empty air.

[<Star Stream>'s Probability is experiencing a massive and sudden change!]

[<Star Stream> permits the meta-like intervention.]

[From here onwards, 'storytellers' will no longer be the scenario's bystanders.]

[Many Constellations are greatly stunned by the Great Dokkaebis' decision!]

[A portion of Constellations are denouncing the Great Dokkaebis' act of brutality…!]

Bihyung stared at those Great Dokkaebis. He stared at their desire to end this world, even going as far as to ignore the Constellations and their messages of opposition.

It could be that they had been writing the 'scenario' for far too long.

There was another gaze from afar staring at these Great Dokkaebis. Bihyung met this gaze.

It was from Kim Dokja, who had become an Outer God and then, the 「Enemy of the Story」. After he became an existence outside of the scenario, not even Bihyung could understand him now.

Even then, why? Bihyung thought that, in that very moment, Kim Dokja seemed to be smiling. It could very well be that these Great Dokkaebis still didn't understand anything about that guy. Still failing to understand what kind of a person Kim Dokja was.

Failing to realize what it meant to officially participate in the scenario, and to become its characters.

Bihyung silently received that gaze, and took a step forward.

[Your ■■ is calling out to you.]

And so, it was now Bihyung's turn to choose his ■■.

The intervention from the Great Dokkaebis caused the scenario's balance to tilt the other way.

[The target you wish to protect is the 「Enemy of the Story」.]

[Your actions are restricted by the 「Bureau」's Probability!]

Not just Han Sooyoung, but the rest of the companions were being sucked into the storm of the Probability's aftermaths as well. Pale-blue sparks tightly wrapped around their bodies like binding ropes.

"Sooyoung-ssi, this!"

"Those sons of bitches… They are planning to end the scenario in this way."

[Giant Story, 'Season of Light and Darkness', is quietly seething in anger.]

[Giant Story, 'Liberator of the Forgotten Ones', has begun its storytelling!]

The <Kim Dokja's Company>'s Giant Stories did absolutely everything in order to resist the Bureau. However, it wasn't enough. Their enemy this time was the strongest 'Giant Story' in this world.

[Now! Attack its head!!]

Constellations managed to pry open the gap among the Nameless Ones and advanced forward, before finally firing their weapons at Kim Dokja.

"Kim Dokja!"

Han Sooyoung cried out, but her voice couldn't reach him.

[You can't protect the target.]

[Target you wish to protect is an existence you don't know.]

"…Screw you, don't give me that crap."

She recalled what the Great Dokkaebis said as if it was some kind of a curse.

A human couldn't understand another even after devoting one's lifetime.

「However, they weren't just one person.」

Han Sooyoung looked around her. Lee Hyunsung, Jung, Heewon, Lee Jihye, and then, Shin Yoosung and Lee Gilyoung; finally, her companions riding on the battleship were looking back at her.

Perhaps, there was none among them who weren't 'Kim Dokja'. Everyone here, they held at least one handful of share in Kim Dokja's life.

However, there was one person missing from this picture.

'Where did that guy disappear to??'

Han Sooyoung bit her lip. Unfortunately, she couldn't wait any longer.

"Aaaaaah!"

Jung Heewon screamed as if her body was being torn apart while moving forward. The storm of aftermath was shattering her muscles and blowing up her blood vessels. Still, she forged ahead even as her tattered, bloodied body tottered unsteadily. She took one step at a time towards Kim Dokja while gripping the [Judge's Sword] tightly. It wasn't to cut him down, though.

Claaaaang!

Jung Heewon deflected a blade of a Constellation flying in only to vomit out a mouthful of blood. Lee Hyunsung was right behind her.

Ku-dudududu!

The Outer God-ified Kim Dokja was fighting against the Constellations from within the storm of aftermath. And his companions were protecting him even as they were left in tatters by the exploding sparks.

"…There are this many people here, yet we can't protect Kim Dokja?"

[Story, 'Predictive Plagiarism', has begun its storytelling!]

[Story, 'Saviour of the Star', is searching for the 'Demon King of Salvation'.]

[Story, 'Insect King', is searching for the 'Demon King of Salvation'.]

[Story, 'Judge of the Apocalypse', is searching for the 'Demon King of Salvation'.]

Every Story they owned was searching for Kim Dokja. They were crying out towards the man they used to know.

[Story, 'Predictive Plagiarism', is continuing with its storytelling!]

If they couldn't fight together because they couldn't understand him, and if that's why they couldn't protect him, then…

[Many Constellations are sighing in lamentation at the <Kim Dokja's Company>'s tragedy.]

[A Portion of Constellations are lodging a protest at the Bureau's treachery and…!]

Blood trickled down Han Sooyoung's lips. Dizziness assaulted her overheating head and her consciousness was wavering. It was also right then that someone grasped her shoulder.

She thought that curly blonde locks were dancing past her eyes, only for something to start protecting her and the companions. It felt like a transparent wall was enveloping them.

['Wall of Impossible Communication' is protecting <Kim Dokja's Company>!]

Jang Hayoung materialised her wall, and while supporting Han Sooyoung, began walking towards Kim Dokja.

"Is there anyone here who likes the 'Demon King of Salvation' more than me?"

Tsu-chuchuchut!

「Dokja-ssi, I'll stop telling you about that story of the lost things. It feels like you're fed up…」

「Hyung, I'm right here. I have something I want to tell you.」

「Don't worry. I won't go anywhere without you, ahjussi.」

Sentences were scattering away.

Stories that <Kim Dokja's Company> had compiled so far were now intertwining into one theme.

[A fragment of the 'Final Wall' has been revealed to the world!]

[Great Dokkaebis are greatly astonished!]

['Wall of Impossible Communication' is placing its fragment into its place.]

While being supported by Jang Hayoung, Han Sooyoung reached out to the 'Outer God King' Kim Dokja. She felt the sensation of touching a wall. A cold and uncaring wall.

[Nebula, <Kim Dokja's Company>'s first 'theme' has been publicly unveiled!]

This wall existed in order to let others know that someone was beyond it. To let them know there was a person requiring a wall in this world.

To let them know one could converse with another without hurting each other.

Han Sooyoung wrote her very first words on that impossible wall.

「You idiot.」

She couldn't believe that she wrote something that stupid. However, she didn't have any energy left to write a follow-up.

It was then that the wall began shaking.

Accompanied by a light knocking noise, a new sentence she didn't write appeared above the wall.

「■■■… Han Sooyoung.」

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That was Kim Dokja. That sentence, it definitely came from him. She didn't need to hear his voice to know that.

Han Sooyoung wrote the next sentence.

「What's this, you were alright?」

Being an author didn't mean you were in control of every word you write. And also, she was the type of person who could only write stuff like that. However, Kim Dokja should be able to read that fine. Because he was the greatest reader she knew.

Knock.

Along with a slight knocking noise, she heard his laughter. Sounds of weapons clashing coming from everywhere hurt her ears. Her companions were still bitterly fighting. No time to leisurely waste time, in other words.

「You knew this would happen from the get-go, didn't you?」

「…■■■■■」

She couldn't clearly see the sentence written on the wall. As if, the communication earlier was just a pure fluke of really low odds.

「Hey, you! Write legibly, will ya?!」

Even though Jang Hayoung was helping out here, Kim Dokja's message still couldn't be seen.

['Wall of Impossible Communication' is unleashing its power!]

Tsu-chuchuchut!

Far too many sentences were aimlessly floating above the wall.

Every single one of them happened to be what she and the rest of the companions said to Kim Dokja. Some of them were clear to see, while some were indistinct.

"Sooyoung-ah."

"…I know."

While listening to Jang Hayoung's voice, Han Sooyoung reached out to the wall one more time. She tried really hard to find Kim Dokja's message by combining the floating sentences.

[Story, 'Predictive Plagiarism', has begun its storytelling!]

[Target is an existence you can't understand!]

What connected each letter was context. Letters cast out in the sea without context were akin to a book that had been created to be unreadable.

「"I'm going home now."」

「"You'll lend me a spare battery when we go camping?"」

All she could do now was to connect those context-less sentences somehow. Inject context into these nonsensical sentences to give them meaning. Shuffle those that weren't plot development so that they looked like it.

However, it was not enough. No matter how she connected them, there would always be some part without meaning.

"Kim Dokja! Say something! What is the plan?! Just what do you want us to do here?!"

No reply came back to her. The roaring Outer God King was still battling the Constellations. The heavily-bleeding companions were collapsing within the storm of aftermaths.

Han Sooyoung gritted her teeth. It was fine if Kim Dokja didn't want to say it. The important part was reading his intentions. His intentions of making such a move without letting his companions know of his plans.

It was to figure out his thought process on choosing to become the Outer God King.

It was then words began gathering one by one.

「If the Ways of Survival was behind a paywall, just how much have I used it so far?」

「If I had ₩20,000,000 in my bank account, what would I feel?」

「If there are two rooms, then how does the remaining one get filled up, usually?」

"…If I had met you back in the normal world, I would never ever have become your friend."

Those words seemed randomly thrown out like a memo. She still collected those words and sentences, anyway.

An excellent writer had to be an excellent reader first. And Han Sooyoung knew a way to read such things.

「How does one go about making money?」

One had to accept that sometimes, you'll run into a sentence you can't comprehend yet and flip the page over. Just so that, one day, you'd able to read that sentence when you did return to the very same page later.

[Target is an existence you can't understand!]

There was no choice but to desperately flip the pages over and over again, and then some more, to gather as many clues on those impossible sentences.

「Doesn't my life have money-making Probability or something?」

Tsu-chuchuchu…!

She saw Jung Heewon kneeling down in the distance. Lee Seolhwa ran over and supported her, while Yoo Sangah and Lee Hyunsung blocked the weapons flying in her direction.

[Bureau's Probability is restricting your interference in the scenario!]

Kim Dokja was right. Probability was to blame for everything.

The reason why he was poor, why they ended up in this state.

[Bureau's Probability is confining your body!]

Tsu-chuchuchut!

Probability in this world was basically power. The scenario would flow towards those possessing more plausible Probability.

[Your Nebula has violated far too much Probability.]

Han Sooyoung knew that. This storm of aftermath was the reward for overcoming many dangerous situations through sheer luck. They had so many companions yet none were lost on their way to the Final Scenario.

On the other hand, other Incarnations had to sacrifice so much more trying to get this far.

「Why only they…」

「This is unfair.」

「Do you know how hard we had to struggle to get this far?」

<Kim Dokja's Company> had violated far too much Probability. No one was sacrificed when one was needed. Or, more correctly, only one person got continuously sacrificed.

"Kim Dokja."

He died multiple times and got resurrected again.

He even revived someone that should've died. While using the revival attribute, or even visiting the Underworld, and going so far as to alter the future.

「And that's why Kim Dokja had to become the Enemy of the Story.」

Because all the Giant Stories <Kim Dokja's Company> had compiled didn't have enough Probability.

Han Sooyoung grasped at the sentences as if she was scratching the wall. It was then a new sentence suddenly floated up.

「"For the time being, you take over the Nebula's safe."」

This was a conversation she had with Kim Dokja not too long ago.

「"…What's this? I might end up spending it all, you know?"」

She received the authority to manage the safe via the system. She wondered what possessed Mister Miser Kim Dokja to do this. Back then, she figured that he was simply too lazy to manage the finances and dumped the job on her shoulders, instead.

[Would you like to confirm the current balance?]

However, would that Kim Dokja really hand over the 'safe' to someone else with that reasoning?

As if she had been entranced, Han Sooyoung opened the safe.

「"Wow, you saved up a lot, haven't you. What a miserly guy you are. What are you planning to do by saving up this much, though?"」

「"They have their uses."」

There was a humongous amount of Coins saved up in the safe. More than enough treasure to tempt any star was hidden inside there. And this was the most basic currency of sponsorship, and the power source to move the scenario.

「One of the most powerful Stories in this world is [Coins].」

However, there weren't all that many things one could do with Coins now, whether that was reinforcing the Incarnation Bodies or purchasing stuff from the [Dokkaebi Bunble].

That's why she was quite curious. What was the point of so obsessively hoarding all these Coins?

[Will you spend these Coins for the growth of the 'Giant Story'?]

And then, Han Sooyoung finally realized that very reason.

"I will."

[Nebula's cache of 143,245,199 Coins will be paid to the Probability!]

Ku-gugugugu!

The moment her declaration came to an end, Stories rushed in like wild predators lusting after fresh meat. Entrancing golden light blanketed the companions.

[Giant Story, 'Demon Realm's Spring', is greedily gorging on the Coin's Story!]

[Giant Story Torch that Swallowed the Myth's figure is ballooning up!]

[Giant Story Season of Light and Darkness's contrast is getting even clearer!]

The Giant Stories would grow to possess even more power by devouring the available funds. The Story's details would be realized more faithfully, viscerally, and also more colourfully.

Ku-gugugugu!

When the strengths of the Giant Stories began resisting the Bureau's Probability, both the Great Dokkaebis and Constellations began panicking.

Jung Heewon's sword grew lighter and lighter, while Lee Hyunsung's shield was getting sturdier and sturdier. Monstrous beasts and insect kings Shin Yoosung and Lee Gilyoung summoned began tearing into the Constellations in the back.

"Fire!!"

Lee Jihye's battleship began firing its cannons and the Incarnations in the frontlines dissipated without a trace.

Unfortunately, their higher odds of victory lasted only for a brief while.

[Bureau's Probability has increased its level of restriction!]

The jet-black rifts began spreading in the heavens from the excessive usage of the Probability. The entire stage for the scenario was shaking unsteadily.

Stories began leaking out from the mouths of several Great Dokkaebis. They had bet their lives on this must-win battle. In order to create the conclusion they wanted to see, these Dokkaebis personally jumped into the scenario and willingly became the part of the story.

Tsu-chuchuchut!

"Black Flame Dragon!"

Powerful [Black Flame] wrapped around Han Sooyoung. While filtering away attacks coming in at her, more [Black Flames] were fired out. Right next to her, Jan Hayoung was relying on the Murim's skills to guard her back.

Why did Kim Dokja entrust her with this role?

There was someone better suited for this job, the protagonist of a certain story. However, Kim Dokja still entrusted this job to her.

Su-susususu…

Jang Hayoung's wall was scattering away again. It was going away after exhausting all its powers.

The Bureau's restrictions made it harder to even breathe.

Kim Dokja, momentarily within reach, grew distant again. The flow of the story was once more going over to the Great Dokkaebis. Han Sooyoung cried out.

[Your ■■ is 'Neverending Story'.]

A story where none would be lost.

A story, where everyone would live together in a huge house at the end of all the scenarios.

The companions were fighting for that simple dream. However, their Probability wasn't enough and that dream couldn't become reality.

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', is now looking at his own Incarnation.]

It was right then, a lightbulb flashed brightly in her head.

Not enough Probability?

「The reason why Kim Dokja entrusted this role to Han Sooyoung and not Yoo Joonghyuk.」

[Constellation, 'Maritime War God', is looking at Incarnation 'Han Sooyoung'.]

Drip, drip…

Blood dripped down from her wounded shoulder. Han Sooyoung haphazardly wrapped some bandages around the injury and looked up at the sky.

There they were, distant stars of <Star Stream>, visible among the storm of sparks raining down. Far, far more Constellations than ever before were watching the last moments of this world.

[Many Constellations are dissatisfied with this scenario's development!]

[Quite a number of Constellations are criticising the tyranny of the Bureau and the Myth-grade Constellations…!]

Han Sooyoung suddenly smiled insidiously. "That's right. You were all Constellations…"

Kim Dokja should've known this. Because he too was a Constellation.

He was a reader who knew better than anyone on how to make a scenario more entertaining and even tenser than before.

「And that's why Kim Dokja hadn't said anything to his companions.」

Han Sooyoung clenched her hand tightly. Since she had spent all the Coins, she was now literally empty-handed.

However, Kim Dokja hadn't just left her with Coins only.

"…When the first scenario started, you all said this to us. That we had been living for free. So, we should start paying the price for that."

What Kim Dokja had left behind was…

[Constellation, 'Bald General of Justice', is focusing on Incarnation Han Sooyoung's words.]

[Constellation, 'One-eyed Maitreya', is focusing on Incarnation Han Sooyoung's words.]

…The entirety of their lives lived so far.

"What you said back then, I'm returning it in full back to you."

Along with Han Sooyoung's signal, Biyoo shut the channel off as if she was waiting for that.

And then, the Constellations' channel went dark.

[Channel BY-9158's all broadcast screens have been blocked.]

[Constellation, 'Heavenly Wind God', is panicking at the sudden blackout!]

[Constellation, 'Joseon's Number One Sorcerer', wishes to see what happens next!]

After the world had fallen into darkness, the panicky voices of Constellations from other scenario locations watching the channel could be heard resounding out.

Every subscriber had to go through Biyoo's channel to watch the <Kim Dokja's Company>'s story. Even those subscribing to other channels had no choice but to see this world through Biyoo's, at least at this moment.

"From now on, our story will be a paid service."

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The announcement of the paywall brought about a deep silence in the channel.

Only Han Sooyoung's heavy breathing could be heard within the pitch-black darkness of the stage.

"If you wish to continue watching this tragedy…"

What <Kim Dokja's Company> lacked right now was 'Probability'.

Probability. The thing that made the story flow naturally and in a plausible manner. The set of rules that could only be changed by the gazes of countless Constellations, and the Coins they sponsored.

"…It's time you guys pay, too."

Only then did she figure out Kim Dokja's plan in its entirety. And because she did, she could say this out aloud now.

Selling off the tragedy of his life lived solely for the purpose of saving his companions, just like how his mother did once upon a time; Kim Dokja wanted to change this scenario by selling the tragedy <Kim Dokja's Company> had created.

[The absolute majority of Constellations are greatly shocked!]

Han Sooyoung's declaration caused the Constellations to grow hesitant.

She recalled the memories from back when her novel went behind the paywall for the first time ever.

「Author-nim, it'll start from tomorrow.」

She felt the exact same emotion back then as today. The feeling of not knowing what would happen in the future.

How many people would end up reading my writing?

How long would I be able to live on by selling off this story?

'You stinking Kim Dokja. So, you slapped me with this kind of role, is that it??'

What she needed to do right now wasn't selling some novels.

[Giant Story, 'Demon Realm's Spring', wishes to tell the next part of the story!]

[Giant Story, 'Torch That Swallowed the Myth', wishes to tell the next part of the story!]

[Giant Story, 'Season of Light and Darkness', wishes to tell the next part of the story!]

[Giant Story, 'Liberator of the Forgotten Ones', wishes to tell the next part of the story!]

…The words written by <Kim Dokja's Company>'s blood and tears.

What she needed to sell was their life story. Stories that she couldn't carelessly change or tell in a jokey manner. Even then, she offered up these Stories for sale to the Constellations.

Biyoo and her concerned eyes were looking at her from the sky. Han Sooyoung smiled as if to say, don't worry.

"There's no one? That's too bad. Things are about to get really interesting from now on."

Only she could do this job. Only Han Sooyoung, designated as the baddie among <Kim Dokja's Company>, could sell this story.

As if to sympathise with her, the movements of the Outer God King was getting duller. Maybe, he was wallowing in sorrow.

[How laughable. Who do you think will be interested in your measly little story?]

The one to shatter this silence was the Myth-grade Constellation, Poseidon. The figures of other Myth-grade Constellations could be seen in the distance as well. They were all mocking Han Sooyoung.

[Do you really believe that your 'Story' is worth that much?]

It was the same with the Great Dokkaebis; they all seemed to be thinking that Han Sooyoung's choice was an error in judgement, one made while under the weight of the encroaching end.

Tsu-chuchuchut!

Once the Constellations left, the channel's size shrunk down. Some channels even tried to butt in using this opportunity. Channels that belonged to Dokkaebis hostile towards <Kim Dokja's Company>.

[Finish them.]

Constellations manning their positions at the back made their moves. They were mostly Myth-grade, or those top-ranked Narrative-grade Constellations that almost equalled them in power.

[Constellation, 'One Responsible for the Universe's Cycle', is surveying the scenario's battlefield!]

[Constellation, 'Mirror that Emits Smoke', is incarnating into the scenario's battlefield!]

[Constellation, 'Master of Thunder and War', is incarnating into the scenario's battlefield!]

Indian myth's Brahma.

Aztec myth's Tezcatlipoca.

Even Slavic myth's Perun.

The Constellations from the different large-scale Nebulas that never showed themselves in the lower scenarios until now – their movement alone was 'Story' in itself.

And when the Giant Stories began their actions, the flow pressuring the battlefield intensified even more.

Gah-aaaaaah, Puh-guh-guk!!

The 'Nameless Ones' desperately blocking the Constellations approaching Kim Dokja were blown up indiscriminately.

Myth-grade Constellations possessed the largest shares of the 'Giant Story' of each Nebula. Once they began moving their Probability, the balance of the engagement tilted in their favour in an instant.

Han Sooyoung watched the incoming wave of the stars and muttered out.
"Even in places you didn't bother to look, we managed to eke out a living."

The screens might be blacked out, but the sounds still continued to be transmitted. And probably, her voice was being heard by every Constellation in the channel.

「Han Sooyoung also knew. Not every Constellation liked them.」

<Kim Dokja's Company> had a lot of enemies. Some cheered their Story on, but some others either were jealous of them, or in some cases, even hated them. At times, malice with no basis could be found, too.

However, there was one common denominator among that gamut of emotions. And that was the fact that they had been watching a certain Story for a very long time.

「A story that you spent a very long time with will eventually become a part of you.」

Just like Kim Dokja and the 'Ways of Survival'.

"However, the moment you close your eyes, this story you've been watching will end right here."

Her words didn't target any particular listener; meaning, it was a declaration aimed at everyone.

Eventually, Constellations annihilated the front ranks of the 'Outer Gods' and rushed in. The <Kim Dokja's Company>'s companions stepped up to block them.

Kwa-aaaaaah!

A baptism of Status in the form of Poseidon's wave with Zeus's lightning added on top, crashed in. Outer Gods burning away like meat being grilled by electricity died in their droves. Even those from <Kim Dokja's Company> wouldn't be able to receive that wave with their current body conditions. Even then, Han Sooyoung believed in her companions.

"Even if I die, I will never stop moving."

Han Sooyoung fired [Black Flame] with every ounce of her energy. However, its power was less than a quarter after being suppressed by the Probability.

And just as Poseidon's wave reached the front of their nose and began pouncing on them…

「For a very brief moment there, it felt as if the world came to a standstill.」

Also, it felt like a fundamental something that created this world seemed to have changed, as if a thin brush was painting over it. And then in the following moment, the frozen world began moving forward again.

[A fatal error has occurred in the Final Scenario!]

Poseidon's wave and Zeus's lightning pounced on her and <Kim Dokja's Company>.

Kwa-dudududu!!

More correctly, pounced on the protective barrier in front of them.

It was the sturdy, vast wall of forged steel. Which was Lee Hyunsung's Story. His Story that blanketed the entire planet back in <Oz> was now protecting his companions.

But, he should still be under the restrictions by the Bureau. So how could he?

"Sooyoung-ssi."

A terrifying amount of sparks was streaming all over Lee Hyunsung's body. But, it wasn't only him. Everyone from <Kim Dokja's Company>, wasting away under the Bureau's restrictions, were now enveloped in the dancing blue-hued sparks. Their once-imprisoned muscles regained their freedom, and the arrested magical energy was being freed as well.

[The error in the channel's donation payout has been normalised.]

The message entered their ears in the next moment.

[Delayed donation amounts will now be paid out!]

Biyoo could be seen crying softly in the air next. At the same time, an incredible amount of indirect messages smacked Han Sooyoung in her ear.

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', happily donates half of the Coins she owns!]

Just how much was the half of Coins amassed by a Constellation at the cusp of reaching the Myth-grade? Han Sooyoung couldn't even estimate the amount.

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', is paying an incredible amount of Coins while grumbling unhappily!]

[Constellation, 'Most Ancient Liberator', is…]

So, so many stars began glowing brightly.

The Nebula's safe started filling up rapidly with wealth.

[Nebula safe total balance: 83,112,540 C]

[Nebula safe total balance: 162,423,800 C]

…

…

[Nebula safe total balance: 1,041,512,080 C]

The total Coins surpassed 100 million in no time, before breaking past a billion mark.

That pretty much determined what Han Sooyoung should do next. Which was to spend every single cent of that donated amount into the Probability.

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!!

"Everyone, hold on!"

[Constellation, 'Mass Production Maker', is grinning brightly.]

[Constellation, 'Mass Production Maker', has donated the number of Coins that exceeds the upper donation limit!]

The geezer wearing the pineapple-themed T-shirt.

Back when Han Sooyoung went to shoot a commercial for the [Ferrarghini], she had a chance to chat to him for a brief spell.

「You really think such adverts will sell your car?」

When Han Sooyoung asked, the Mass Production Maker replied in a somewhat obtuse manner.

「I'm not advertising to sell, but advertising the product about to be sold.」

And now, she thought she could understand that answer just a bit.

[Constellation, 'Joseon's Number One Sorcerer', is donating 5,000 Coins!]

[Constellation, 'Meirangong Marquis Zhuangmou', is donating 5,100 Coins!]

[Constellation, 'Father of the Rich Night', is donating everything in his secret stash!]

[Constellation, 'Mother of the Darkest Spring', is donating half of the Underworld's balance!]

[Constellation, 'Supreme God of Light', is donating 2,100,000 Coins!]

[Constellation, 'Lily Blooming in Aquarius', is donating 1,500,000 Coins!]

Constellations of familiar Modifiers.

[Constellation, 'Lame Trickster', is donating 15,000 Coins.]

[Constellation, 'Monarch of Small Fries', is donating 450,000 Coins.]

[Constellation, 'Adventurer that Stands up an Egg', is donating 18,000 Coins!]

[Constellation, 'Master of the Niten Ichu-ryu', is donating 4,000 Coins!]

[All the stars in the Big Dipper are donating 300,000 Coins!]

[A small Constellation from a small planet is donating 300 Coins!]

Constellations that were familiar, but not counted on.

[A great number of Constellations staying anonymous have added their strength to the Nebula <Kim Dokja's Company>'s Probability!]

And finally, even the Constellations they didn't know.

Every Constellation that came along for the ride with <Kim Dokja's Company>'s Story was now sponsoring their story.

Light returned to the once-darkened channel, and the broadcast began once more.

[Channel BY-9158's broadcast will begin again!]

The story was starting again. All these Coins contained the wills of the Constellations.

「Their desire to see the end of this Story.」

Han Sooyoung too understood this desire. However, there were some who failed to do so.

[What are you all doing?! Could it be that you're sympathising with those Incarnations?? With the 「Enemies of the Story」?? Everyone, you must wake up!! Have you all forgotten who you are?! Oh, dear Constellations, don't let your eyes be stolen away by a demeaning story like that!]

The Great Dokkaebi roared out. That prompted someone to answer back.

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', says she's more clear-headed than ever before.]

Tsu-chuchuchu…!

An incredible storm of Probability was pushed back, and Poseidon's wave sunk back to the ground.

Han Sooyoung slowly closed her eyes. A breeze was blowing in.

[Will of <Star Stream> accepts the new flow of Probability.]

Something was changing.

[<Star Stream> is considering an alteration to the scenario's rules.]

All Probability from the Bureau ruthlessly suppressing her and her companions were dissipating away. The scenario's balance that had been heavily tilted out of equilibrium was regaining itself.

[You still can't understand 'Enemy of the Story'.]

Kim Dokja remained difficult. However…

['Enemy of the Story' wishes to be understood by you.]

…However, it wasn't as if nothing had changed.

[Scenario's rules are changing.]

[From here on, all Constellations can choose a camp to side with during the Final Scenario!]

Han Sooyoung slowly looked around her.

The surrounding view began changing as if a layer of the world had been peeled back.

【■■■■■■… Go!! Fight on! This is our battlefield!】

A man astride a horse brushed past Han Sooyoung's side. Without a doubt, he used to be an Outer God only until a second ago. An existence that used to be a 'Nameless One'. The strange monsters covered in tentacles and sticky fluids, and caused one to feel instinctive fear simply by looking at them.

【We can win this! Do not give up until the end!】

Their figures were changing. Some changed into people, some into dwarves – they were from all sorts of different species, but regardless of what, they were no longer the existences of unknown.

【Beomgak! Move! This is the Final Scenario we've been dreaming of!】

【Mark!】

All those 'Nameless Ones' now had names in this place.

[You have sided with the 'Enemy of the Story'.]

These beings rushed towards the Constellations as dusk fell on the battlefield. They formed ranks and advanced towards the Constellations.

【I shall accompany you!】

Among them was a man who resembled Lee Hyunsung, and also a child resembling Shin Yoosung. Even some that resembled Jung Heewon, Lee Gilyoung, and Lee Jihye.

【Not bad. So, then. This world-line has reached this far?】

For a brief moment there, Han Sooyoung saw a girl who seemed to resemble her, too. And all of them were fighting as the ally of the 「Enemy of the Story」.

Her dazed eyes chased after their backs.

「Every abandoned world-line was converging here.」

The world that she couldn't express with mere words. The world that the [Predictive Plagiarism] couldn't read, because it could only be imagined by a reader.

「This was the world Kim Dokja had been dreaming of.」

Han Sooyoung slowly turned around towards the spot where the Outer God King was only until a moment ago. And a certain man stood on that very spot where a deep abyss cast by the massive creature's size used to exist.

「"Han Sooyoung, what should an extra do in order to garner attention?"」

The white coat revealed itself fleetingly underneath the tattered and torn black coat.

「"You're an extra because no one pays you attention."」

Han Sooyoung staggered towards that spot.

「"Well, there isn't any clear solution. Normally, you grab some attention by sacrificing yourself, or…"」

She walked and walked some more, and eventually, reached the front of that man.

「"…Or, you give them stories of their own."」

The man quietly stood there and waited for her.

Han Sooyoung stood up straight in front of Kim Dokja. Quite unlike her usual self, she thought she might start crying now. Her vision blurred and couldn't see his face properly.

"You did well."

And Kim Dokja was standing there.

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* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)

Chapter 493: Ep. 94 - Beginning of the end, I

Seeing him smile with such a thick skin, she suddenly felt compelled to hurl several choice words at him. She wanted to say, she'll definitely kill him if he went ahead and did something like this again.

Just like how it had been. She really wanted to do that, but…

"Han Sooyoung."

…She couldn't.

When she lowered her head, she saw Kim Dokja's ankles. The battle-ready formal suit crafted by the Mass Production Maker was now in tatters.

His entire body, having fought Constellations as an Outer God King earlier, was riddled full with wounds, so much so that it'd not be strange for him to keel over right now.

"…Are you alright?"

And him worrying about her instead of himself only made Han Sooyoung unable to figure out how to digest her current emotions.

[Constellation, 'Father of the Rich Night', is looking at you.]

[Constellation, 'Queen of the Darkest Spring', is satisfied with your reply.]

[Constellation, 'Maritime War God', is nodding his head.]

…

The gazes of the stars shone from the sky. Even though the indirect messages continued to rain down, Han Sooyoung's back remained cold. The blacked-out channel of a few moments ago still remained vivid in her mind.

「If she had made even the slightest mistake…」

Constellations might not have lent their help. Probability might not have flowed in a way she planned. Her companions might not have endured.

What had been entrusted to her up until a few moments ago was not some simple manuscript that could be revised at will.

This burden of knowing that one misstep would bring down everything they had built up together – Kim Dokja had been completing the scenarios while constantly feeling that emotion.

He supported Han Sooyoung tottering unsteadily. She was about to slap his hand away, but instead, sighed and spoke up. "Don't ever make me do that again."

"Only you could've done this."

She bit her lip the moment she heard him.

"You know better than anyone what the readers want, right?"

「What was the 'end' Kim Dokja wanted?」

What Han Sooyoung thought about even when she found herself in a desperate situation of making the whole world her enemy, was that very question.

And perhaps, the current her should be able to reach the answer.

"Is this the end you've been thinking about?"

"Well, it's the beginning of that end."

There were many creatures brushing past them to enter the battlefield. Only until a few moments ago, they had been the 'Outer Gods', but now, they were existences with faces and their own names.

【Attack them!!】

【Those Constellation dogs!!】

Some faces they almost recognised, some others they couldn't. Someone resembled Kim Namwoon, while a face resembling Lee Jihye could be seen, too. However, they weren't Kim Namwoon nor Lee Jihye; no, they were simply extras from those stories that ended a while ago.

「And every single one of these existences was fighting to change this world-line's conclusion.」

Everyone from the abandoned world-lines, from the 0th turn to the 1863rd, had gathered here.

【Go!! Everyone!!】

Han Sooyoung felt emotions swell up in her chest after watching their march. These people gathering here to resist the pre-determined conclusion were all <Kim Dokja's Company>'s allies.

[Nebula, <Kim Dokja's Company>'s entire roster has become the 'Enemies of the Story'!]

Companions approached them in their unsteady steps. They too, could finally see Kim Dokja's world.

[Story, 'Predictive Plagiarism', is sharing its understanding with the rest of <Kim Dokja's Company>'s members!]

[Story, 'Saviour of the Star', is sharing its thoughts with the rest of <Kim Dokja's Company>'s members.]

All the Stories were talking to each other now.

Companions scanned their surroundings with dazed expressions. They too were witnessing the sight of the horrifying masks covering up the Outer Gods slipping away.

Han Sooyoung observed each and every one of her companions, before abruptly realizing something.

One of them was still nowhere to be seen.

"Where did that guy disappear to?"

When she thought about it, she found it really odd.

That guy hated the Constellations more than anyone out there. That guy, who fought the hardest among the companions, was nowhere to be seen within the battlefield for a while now.

Kim Dokja promptly answered her.

"Over there."

"Wha?"

Han Sooyoung hurriedly scanned her surroundings.

KWA-BOOOOM!

An explosion occurred in the frontline and thick dust cloud was kicked up. Constellations from Asgard were busy crushing the Outer Gods.

[…You disgusting bastards.]

Dozens upon dozens of 'Nameless Ones' died every time Constellations crossed the battlefield.

If it was before, this scene would've been one of monsters dying; but now, it depicted the deaths of actual persons. 'Nameless Ones' lost their arms, their legs were torn off, and their guts were spilt.

They couldn't even mount a proper challenge. Most of the 'Outer Gods' that heeded Kim Dokja's call and showed up here were the lower-ranked variety. Although there were a few higher-ranked creatures mixed within, they had already been felled after being subjected to a concentrated barrage of attacks from the Myth-grade Constellations. Defending against the concerted attacks of the Constellations with the remaining forces was impossible.

However, something was wrong.

「Even when there was such an overwhelming difference in combat capability, they were still ably holding on.」

Upon closer inspection, she realized that there was 'something' at the very front of the Outer Gods' ranks.

Tsu-chuchuchut!

Darkish-blue sword light swept across the battlefield.

Golden afterimages scattered in the air where the sword's trajectory scythed by.

[Kuwaaaaahk!!]

The head of a Constellation stomping on an 'Outer God' just now flew away without warning. And then, another one. Then, yet another one. A pitch-black figure, currently bathed in the baptism of spewing Stories rather than blood, was continuously wielding his sword.

"Isn't that…?!"

She was well aware of the fact that there was a seriously powerful individual among the 'Outer Gods' fighting out in the furthest front. Initially, she thought that, 'since this is the Final Scenario, the really strong ones have come out of the woodwork'.

This 'Outer God' continued to cut down Constellations like pieces of papers, its sharp tail wagging this way and that.

But now that she took a closer look, that was no tail at all but a pitch-black sword, instead.

[Attribute, 'Iron-Blooded Supreme King', is activating!]

Corpses of Constellations formed a mountain. And on top of this very mountain was a throne of blood. The master of this throne was arrogantly looking down on all the stars of the world.

"This swordsmanship… you, you're Yoo Joonghyuk."

Anna Croft gritted her teeth and emitted her sword aura.

The greatest Incarnation in America, Anna Croft, reputedly strong enough to never lose in a tactical battle.

"I'm the strongest on the continent!"

Soon after, Fei Hu's long spear stabbed through the air and flew right in.

China's number one Incarnation, Fei Hu – master of one on one combat.

"This will be my first time fighting you. However, I shall emerge victorious nevertheless."

And lastly, Ranvir Khan's palms made their move; his palms left behind clear shadows like Kali's hands, while pouring out around hundred or so ripples.

Kwa-aaaaaaah!!

The battlefield was rocked by yet another loud explosion. Stories continued to tell their stories beyond that explosion noise, however.

[Story, 'Life and Death Companions', is continuing on with its storytelling.]

[A portion of Stories are being shared due to the special effect of 'Life and Death Companions'.]

[Story, 'Hell of Eternity', is continuing on with its storytelling.]

While witnessing this spectacle of swords slicing down indiscriminately and both Constellations and Outer Gods dying with their bellies cut wide open, Han Sooyoung abruptly recalled a certain old question that circulated among the gossipers.

Who was the strongest Incarnation in the world?

[Everyone, kill that guy! We can break through as long as that man is dead!]

Now, she could answer it without a shred of hesitation. There couldn't be differences in opinion on this one.

「The world's strongest Incarnation was Yoo Joonghyuk.」

Constellations that had long discarded any semblance of their pride pounced on him. Even though his shoulder split open and his thigh ruptured, Yoo Joonghyuk's expression remained calm as he blocked the Constellation army rushing in at the frontlines.

Such a battle was only possible because he had regained a portion of his past memories. However, there was one thing she still couldn't figure it out.

[Incarnation Yoo Joonghyuk is currently the 'Enemy of the Story'.]

"How can that guy be the first…??"

How did Yoo Joonghyuk join Kim Dokja even before Han Sooyoung or the rest of the companions could?

Yoo Joonghyuk's battlefield was steadily being pushed back after the Myth-grade Constellations pitched in. The closer he got, the more visible the murky aura of Chaos surrounding him became. It was the power of Chaos usually seen from the 'Outer Gods'.

「Yoo Joonghyuk had become one with 'Secretive Plotter' once upon a time.」

Only then she understood it – the reason why he could become Kim Dokja's ally faster than everyone else.

Han Sooyoung immediately flew off her handle. "You sons of bitches, not even saying a single thing to me…!"

「Yoo Joonghyuk was well aware of Kim Dokja's intention.」

Sometimes, rage would be accompanied by deep understanding.

「This tragedy could only be established when the characters deceived each other.」

Because Yoo Joonghyuk hated Constellations more than anyone, he was able to read Kim Dokja's intentions. And that was how he could make his move without hesitation.

「That was the only way to hide the fact that this was simply a 'story' from the Constellations watching on.」

Pah-chuchuchut!

Yoo Joonghyuk had arrived in their vicinity before long; he sheathed his sword and spoke up.

"It'll be hard to continue defending like this."

He looked back with disinterested eyes, only to meet Han Sooyoung's glare.

He opened his mouth first. "You were late."

"Shut the hell up."

Three of them lined up side by side.

Yoo Joonghyuk's [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] roared out a keen, vicious cry, while Kim Dokja's pair of black wings spread wide open as if to protect the two people next to him.

Han Sooyoung clenched and unfurled her fist currently enveloped in [Black Flame] and spoke up. "…I can't figure out why this feels like it's been a really long time."

Their companions finally reached their rear.

"Dokja-ssi! Sooyoung-ssi!"

"Hyung-!!"

Lee Hyunsung knelt down and protected everyone with his shield, while Jung Heewon stood next to him and held her sword upright.

The Chimera Dragon carrying Shin Yoosung and Lee Gilyoung roared out. Yoo Sangah's lotus pedestal spun around and surrounded the companions' sides. And lastly, Lee Jihye's battleship protected the sky above them.

"Load the cannons!"

Cannons were shoring up their strengths at the ends of the vessel.

Gong Pildu established his fortress atop the battleship and aimed his own cannons at the ground as if to imply that he could take care of everything here.

[Every star in Nebula, <Kim Dokja's Company>, is shining brightly!]

Biyoo was shining like a blue sun amidst the dancing sparks; she was sweating profusely while receiving the Coins pouring in the <Kim Dokja's Company>'s direction.

Probability gleaming richly was now giving them blessings.

Kim Dokja then spoke to his quiet companions manning his sides.

"Everyone, thank you."

Their expressions faintly trembled when he said that.

Jung Heewon bit down on her lip, while Lee Hyunsung wiped tears welling up in his eyes.

Han Sooyoung could feel it.

「From the start, Kim Dokja didn't plan on sacrificing himself.」

Maybe, he had thought about it over and over again – the way to make everyone happy at the end of this world.

He should know fully about the wound his companions suffered when he sacrificed himself, and then, he must've foreseen the destruction they might suffer as the price for fighting together.

And that was why he chose this scenario.

A scenario that changed scenarios. A scenario that didn't stick to the pre-determined conclusion. A scenario where everyone could reach the end together.

Han Sooyoung thought that it'd be nice for this story to end right here.

Every emotion permeating within the words got transmitted vividly. She felt as if she now knew what Kim Dokja was thinking about, and what he truly wanted here.

Only after reaching the end of everything did he finally open up his heart.

「And that was precisely why Han Sooyoung thought that things must not end here.」

"Let's talk about that later."

Jang Hayoung opened her mouth first, and…

"Everyone, fight to your heart's content. I won't let anyone die."

…Lee Seolhwa ended the conversation.

"Here they come!"

The march of the Constellations commenced once more.

[Do not panic! Their numbers have grown a little bit, that's all!]

[They are nothing more than a small Nebula!]

The story that couldn't find its bearing continued to flow within the rapidly-changing scenario.

Han Sooyoung swung her fist; [Black Flame] shooting out from her knuckles pierced through the heads of the Incarnations. Yoo Joonghyuk's [Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship] deflected both Anna Croft's and Fei Hu's blades, while Jang Hayoung's [Breaking the Sky Force Punch] shoved away the group of Constellations trying to rush in from the side.

['Hour of Judgement' is activating!]

Jung Heewon's [Hellfire] burned away the stars rushing in from the front. And Lee Hyunsung's forged-steel shield blocked the unseen weapons cutting through the air.

"Everyone, get down!"

Lee Jihye's turtle ship finished loading its cannons and began spitting flames out. Along with blinding flashes of explosions, the enemies in the frontlines were swept away.

"Bring down that ship first!"

Incarnations waiting for their chance all leapt up into the sky. That prompted Gong Pildu's turrets to spit out fire and noise, as well.

"Kuwaaaahk!"

[You pathetic fools!]

A handful of Constellations used the falling Incarnations as their footholds to fly up. They flew up higher than the turtle ship and began firing their charged-up magical attacks.

[Die…?!]

Even before the Constellation could finish its words, its body was torn apart in half. The Chimera Dragon roared out and ripped the Constellation's body to pieces with its massive maw.

"Hyung! Behind you!"

Lee Gilyoung's locusts stopped the Constellations trying to fly in.

The companions advanced forward bit by bit. Just like the time they had tread so far, they inched forward on the road where the starlight couldn't reach.

Han Sooyoung began thinking.

In the eyes of other Constellations, they must've looked like monsters trying to destroy this world. However, that didn't matter – because that was the more exciting alternative, after all.

"Kim Dokja! Destroy that ark!"

They could see the ark beyond the Constellations rushing in like storm clouds to protect it. And even now, more Constellations were rushing out from the hull of the broken ark.

They were actually stars asleep within the [Ark], waiting to depart from this world-line.

['Enemy of the Story' is approaching the ark.]

['Enemy of the Story' will destroy all Stories in this world!]

That ark had to be destroyed in order to end the influx of the Constellations.

"Hurry!"

[Collision of Probability has caused the rapid change to the scenario!]

[<Star Stream> has begun revising the Final Scenario's condition!]

But then, there were certain Constellations standing before the ark.

[Constellation, 'One Responsible for the Universe's Cycle', is intervening in the battlefield!]

[Constellation, 'Mirror that Emits Smoke', is intervening in the scenario!]

[Constellation, 'Master of Thunder and War', is intervening in the scenario!]

These Myth-grade Constellations had been observing the unfolding situation until now. Only by defeating them could the ark be within reach.

Each individual combat power was more than enough, but they still lost out in the overall combat force.

[Constellation, 'Spear that Draws the Borders in the Oceans', is greatly enraged!]

Poseidon and Zeus busy slaughtering the 'Nameless Ones' out by the frontlines joined in, leaving the companions stuck in a boxed-in position.

Ku-dudududu!

Yoo Joonghyuk watched the spear slice past the ocean of corpses and return to its wielder, and spat out venomously. "…Poseidon."

Even if this was <Kim Dokja's Company>, they still wouldn't be able to cope with these enemies all at once. There was some leeway still left to be found on the expressions of the Great Dokkaebis.

Han Sooyoung was angry; they possessed this much Probability, yet why couldn't they surpass those creatures?

She cried out. "Hey!! When will our own Constellations show up?!"

Those that were supposed to come hadn't appeared yet. Uriel, her own sponsor, the Underworld's couple, and…

But then, Kim Dokja asked back. "Does it have to be Constellations, though?"

"What was that?"

Kim Dokja grinned. Han Sooyoung really detested that smile.

"It isn't just the Constellations that can participate in this battle now. Because there's enough Probability here thanks to a certain someone."

At that moment, Han Sooyoung felt the back of her neck grow cold. The enormous amount of Probability that had been injected to <Kim Dokja's Company> was suddenly emptying out at once. Something that could only be summoned after using up that much Probability was arriving here.

「The existences that all Constellations feared.」

The licks of flames belonging to the conflagration burned on the ground. A sun that burned away the Story of eternity was rising up from the east.

「No star would dare to compare itself to her brightness – the 'Living Flame'.」

And on the opposite side of the burning, screaming stars, a pure-blue ocean was crashing in. A tsunami wave flooded in from the west, as the 'Sunken Island' rose up once more.

「The calamity of the western world, 'Master of the Sunken Island'.」

[Kuwaaaahk!!]

Constellations got swept away by the wave and dissolved away as sacks of Stories in an instant.

Soon afterwards, the northern skies grew jet-black, and Constellations there began crashing to the ground like falling raindrops.

「The ruler of the northern universe, 'Monarch of the Great Abyss'.」

The 'Outer God King' smiled as he began bursting the heads of the stars like a rampaging hooligan.

And the existence incarnating into Lee Hyunsung blocked the storm of aftermaths they had created.

「The 'King of the Silver Heart', the ruler of the interstellar space in the south.」

And then, an existence approached them from a place of nothing.

With every step he took, the gigantic [Splitting the Sky Sword] clawed the night sky and brought down many stars shining up there.

【It's been a while, Poseidon.】

It was a man with the exact same face as Yoo Joonghyuk, replete with a long scar on the cheek, too.

The 'Secretive Plotter' nonchalantly strode over and grabbed Poseidon by the latter's neck, before grinning brightly.

【This will be my 26th time killing you.】

Chapter 494: Ep. 94 - Beginning of the end, II

I thought that 'it' had finally happened when I became the Outer God King.

[You have become the 'Enemy of the Story'.]

This wouldn't be my first time experiencing the sensation of Story in my entire body shattering into tiny little pieces. A similar thing happened back when I was booted out of the scenario and fell in the 'story's horizon'.

If there was one thing different between then and now, it would be me not getting expelled from the scenario even after becoming an altered existence. No, it was the exact opposite.

[You have become the boss monster of the last scenario.]

[You will be alone forever.]

[No one will understand you in this worldview.]

I memorised the loneliness I felt in that moment. This feeling of being cast away all alone in this universe. The feeling of becoming a monster that no one could understand for all eternity.

However, this also wasn't my first time experiencing such a feeling either.

「"I'm XX Time's reporter. Do you have some time to speak with me?"」

「"It's him. The son of the murderer."」

That was why I needed to take up this role. Only I could perform it to its fullest, after all. That was the price to pay for reading the story called 'Ways of Survival' to its conclusion.

「【Your companions will never understand your decision.】」

The 'Secretive Plotter' told me that as if he already knew what my plan was. And I understood why he had no choice but to say those words.

「"We'll find out later, won't we?"」

Neither he nor I were wrong. Just that the Stories we compiled were different, that's all.

Kwa-kwakwakwakwa!!

The tsunami wave of Stories unfolded right before my eyes. And the blinding sparks of Probability spread out above this wave. And on top of them all, the gazes from the Constellations were streaming in.

[Constellation, 'Queen of the Darkest Spring', is watching your Story.]

[Constellation, 'Father of the Rich Night', is watching your Story.]

[Constellation, 'Mass Production Maker', is watching your Story.]

…

This wasn't a gamble that I alone could realize. Me becoming an Outer God King was merely the beginning of the final pages.

Yoo Joonghyuk fought hard, my companions held on bravely, and Han Sooyoung gamely attracted the Constellations.

And the Constellations believing in us made their choices.

「The plan was a success.」

The 'Living Flame' that rises up from the east.

The 'Master of the Sunken Island', the calamity of the world in the west.

The 'Monarch of the Great Abyss', the ruler of the northern universe.

The 'King of the Silver Heart', the ruler of the interstellar space in the south.

And finally, the 'Great Plotter' that crawls from the place of nothing.

The scenario's volume began expanding rapidly with the gathering of all five 'kings'. Historical-grade Constellations failed to deal with their combined Statuses and began vomiting out Stories on their knees.

These kings had been excluded from the scenario until now. After escaping from the reaches of the 'Hounds chasing after the Abyss' through the abundant Probability, they had personally descended to the scenario.

The 'Secretive Plotter' was looking in my direction. I nodded my head in return.

「And now, it was time for their stage to open.」

[U-uwuuuuh-!]

Several terror-stricken Constellations forgot their stations and began hastily running away. The 'Monarch of the Great Abyss' grabbed the nape of one of those Constellations. The 999th turn's Kim Namwoon began laughing.

【Now, now. You leaving so soon makes it a wee bit troublesome. It only just began, after all.】

He must've recovered some of his energy through the Probability's overflow. He glanced at me and muttered out.

【And you, don't get ahead of yourself. We didn't come here to help you out.】

But then, the 'King of the Silver Heart' stood next to me and spoke up.

【We came to aid you.】

"I know. Thanks."

As expected, Lee Hyunsung remained a trustworthy person regardless of the number of regressions he lived.

The 'Master of the Sunken Island', 999th turn's Lee Jihye, also made her move. Narrative-grade Constellations hurriedly rushed in from both sides and tried to block them somehow, but it was a waste of time.

[T-the island, it's, it's moving-!]

From the front of the island covered in verdant moss, silvery cannons shone brightly. The biggest warship in the world-line, the perfected [Turtle Dragon], spat out flames towards the rest of the world.

Kwa-aaaaaah!!

The overwhelming spectacle of an entire corner of the battlefield being blowing away without a trace caused me, Han Sooyoung, and even Yoo Joonghyuk to become utterly dazed.

And at the furthest front of the battlefield, two 'Kings' were facing off against the Myth-grade Constellations.

「Two people who fought together a really long time ago were there.」

The 999th turn's Uriel was wrapped around in the [Hellfire]'s corona. And the other was Yoo Joonghyuk who had survived the 1863 hellscapes to eventually become an 'Outer God'.

「In that moment, Kim Dokja recalled a certain ancient battlefield.」

It was from Yoo Joonghyuk's 999th turn.

Yoo Joonghyuk and Uriel entrusted their backs to each other and fought together during the great war against Constellations. Yoo Joonghyuk, blind in both eyes and roaring out, and Uriel protecting him – it was one of the scenes that I loved the most from the entirety of the 'Ways of Survival'. And that scene was being re-enacted right before my eyes.

[Story, 'Battlefield of a Hero and Flame', is waking up from its prolonged slumber!]

A Story that had disappeared a really long time ago was now connecting the two kings.

【…I shall leave <Olympus> to you.】

The 999th turn's Uriel spread open her wings wide first. Just as she unleashed her Status, Constellations pounced on her as if they were waiting for that moment.

They were the top Constellations from <Papyrus> and <Vedas>, as well as some other lower-ranked Constellations that fought against us in the 'Demon King Selection' – the 'Last Pharaoh', and the 'Bird that Eats the Thunder'.

[Story, 'Flame of Annihilation', has begun its storytelling!]

The moment the 999th turn's Uriel wielded her sword, the first lines of the Historical-grade Constellations rushing in at her turned into powder and scattered away. Incarnations with pale complexions hurriedly turned around to run, while Narrative-grade Constellations shouted out venomously.

[Stop that sword! Stop her from swinging it, no matter what!!]

Uriel's sword carved out a burning path, and the 'Secretive Plotter' ran on it. It felt as if the history of the universe flowed within every step he took. His steps seemed neither too fast nor too slow, yet no one dared to stop him.

[Story, 'Hell of Eternity', has begun its storytelling.]

The most dreadful Story in all of the world-lines began telling its story.

[Giant Story, 'Pilgrim of the Lonely Apocalypse', has begun its storytelling.]

Everywhere his foot landed resounded with the cries of a destroyed world. The original sin of the worlds stuck to him like a shadow and continued to chase after him.

「No Constellation could stand in his way, and no Story could save him.」

Didn't matter whether one was an enemy or an ally, as long as one was a Constellation, one couldn't help but get seduced by his story.

When I abruptly regained my wits from that vast sorrow stained in wonderment, he was already grabbing at Poseidon's neck.

The latter managed to recover himself in time as well, and hurriedly shoved the 'Secretive Plotter's' hand away all the while unleashing his own Status.

[Constellation, 'Spear that Draws the Borders in the Oceans', is greatly enraged!]

<Olympus>'s Giant Story began making its move. Poseidon's [Traiana] bared its fangs while enveloped in a powerful Story. This was the might of a Myth-grade Constellation that anyone should quake in fear from.

However, I too was a Myth-grade now and I was perceiving his actions differently.

「Poseidon is terrified.」

His spear uselessly cut through the air, and it was no longer as sharp as before. It was a mistake unbecoming of an arrogant Constellation, and Zeus next to him roared out in alarm.

However, it was too late by then.

Sliiiice!

Something cut Poseidon's torso down, and on his chest covered in blue scales, the lengthy and black wound could be seen. From this wound, Giant Stories began flooding out nonstop.

[Keo-heo-uhk…!]

Poseidon tried to press down on his chest while swinging his [Traiana] all over the place.

The spear that drew the borders in the oceans – wherever his [Traiana] drew a line, that place would become an ocean. However, such a thing didn't happen this time. For the first time ever, the spear's blade that feared no one couldn't find what to aim at and simply trembled helplessly.

「The place where his ocean couldn't reach.」

Both of Poseidon's eyes were soon dyed in the pitch-black abyss.

Most likely, he was watching the darkest Story known in this world right now. The one about the outer space, where both the ground and the sky held no meaning as effects of gravity didn't reach there. A complete devastation with not one precious thing remaining after everything was destroyed.

And the master of that devastation was looking up at the <Olympus>'s constellations.

【Doesn't matter which world-line it is, you don't seem to change at all.】

He didn't sound sad. If anything, he sounded relieved, actually.

Along with the cold metallic noise, the blades of the [Splitting the Sky Sword] extended out to the night sky.

[Shut your mouth-!!]

Poseidon managed to beat back the fear and hurriedly swung his [Traiana] once more, But in that exact moment, the [Splitting the Sky Sword] also made its move, as well.

I remembered seeing Yoo Joonghyuk use a similar skill to that once before. It was a skill to cut down the stars designed by a Transcendent who had surpassed his own limit through incredible dedication and hard work.

However, something felt different. That attack, as if…

「As if, it was a sword technique created so that one man could face off against the entire world.」

Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship.

Transcending the Inner Mysteries.

The Universe Slash.

Only then did it hit home. The power the 'Secretive Plotter' displayed back then, during the battle of「Journey to the West」, was only a portion of what he could produce.

This sword trajectory was the most beautiful I had ever seen.

His blade caused the world to split apart.

Kwa-dudududu!

The sword strike cracked apart a nebula in its entirety and scattered stardust away. And at the end of that magic-like rays of light was Poseidon. Along with 'puh-ga-gak!' noise, his arm and leg got cut off simultaneously.

[Poseidon!!]

Zeus freaked out and shouted loudly.

Stories exploding forth from the 'Secretive Plotter' were swallowing up the battlefield. The emptiness he felt while living through the scenarios was expanding.

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

Poseidon vomited out Stories and fell on his knees, prompting the <Olympus>'s 12 gods to rush in. Ares and Hephaistus roared out and swung their sword and hammer. Unfortunately for them, however, they were smacked away by the [Splitting the Sky Sword]'s blade like a bunch of children.

Zeus yelled out in pure anger.

[Oh, the great schemer! Do not get too full of yourself! You haven't even witnessed a fragment of the myth that created <Olympus> yet!]

Even as he was saying that, Zeus's figure was beating a hasty retreat.

It was so obvious – the ark was waiting in the direction he was heading to.

[Father!]

The <Olympus>'s Constellations abandoned by him spewed out Stories from their whole bodies as the Nameless Ones gnawed on them. Dionysus carried a resentful expression as he roared in anger towards his father.

I quietly stared at those Constellations before speaking to Han Sooyoung and Yoo Joonghyuk. "We need to stop Zeus."

Inside of the ark Zeus headed to was filled with sleeping Giant Stories not just belonging to <Olympus> but countless other myths, as well. If we let him be, this scenario would become disadvantageous for us once more.

We quickly began running with everything we had on the stage currently covered in Stories from the dead stars and gods.

Han Sooyoung, meanwhile, muttered in a puzzled voice.

"By the way, that guy…"

After cutting Poseidon down, the 'Secretive Plotter' was just standing around, dazedly looking up in a certain direction. I shifted my head towards where he was staring at.

The reason why he didn't chase after Zeus was simple. From the beginning, his purpose wasn't the annihilation of <Olympus> nor the destruction of the ark itself.

No, what he stared at was a certain something located much, much further away.

The ｢Final Wall.｣

Endless pages were flipping within his eyes as if he was utterly determined to see what was beyond that thing this time.

[<Star Stream>'s Probability is experiencing a rapid change!]

Great Dokkaebis began shouting out at the unexpected distortion of the Probability.

[Hang on! This, this is…!]

[Oh, the 'Oldest Dream', this…!]

[Due to the <Star Stream>'s rapid change, the scenario content has been revised!]

[Clear condition for the applicable scenario will change depending on the camp you have chosen to side with.]

I confirmed the revised scenario detail.

<Main Scenario #99 - ■■■>

For the first time ever, the title of the main scenario was gone.

A scenario that had never happened before.

A scenario that not even the Great Dokkaebis heard of had begun.

Type: Main

Difficulty: ???

Clear condition: Please destroy the ark and put a stop to Great Dokkaebis' plan.

I heard the freaked-out voices of the Great Dokkaebis next. With this, they were about to pay the price for giving up on being the 'storytellers' to become characters in this world.

Also, the facade surrounding us began changing, as well. As if, the world had finally permitted our existence.

"It's you…!"

The clearly-astonished Asuka Ren was looking at me. It seemed that even she could now see my true appearance, at least faintly.

As the sparks wildly danced about, the creatures of fear and disgust, 'Outer Gods' were revealing their true appearances. They were no longer the beings outside of the scenario.

[The absolute majority of the Constellations are watching your Story.]

The scenario we had created was now being officially birthed into this world.

['Oldest Dream' is now looking at your existence.]

Quite likely, the 'Secretive Plotter' also heard these messages. More specifically, the messages popping up before my eyes.

Reward: Final Wall

Chapter 495: Ep. 94 - Beginning of the end, III

"…Hyung, it says that the reward is the 'Final Wall'."

Lee Gilyoung catching up to us spoke in a puzzled voice. However, I too had no idea about this.

The reward was the [Final Wall]…?

I wasn't sure of what that vague description could mean – was us reaching the Final Wall the reward itself, or after the scenario ended, we'd be given the ownership of the wall?

Besides, could someone even claim ownership of the concept of the Wall in the first place?

Nothing was certain at the current juncture. But, it was a certainty that we'd reach the truth of this world when this scenario comes to an end.

【Please, go ahead.】

Under the 999th turn's Lee Hyunsung's protection, the companions ran forward. As for the Constellations trying to chase us down, the 'Secretive Plotter' and the other Outer Gods blocked them.

The ark was right before us. Destroying it would take us to the end of all scenarios.

[Stop them-!!]

Starlight descended from the night sky once more. It was shocking to see that there were so many stars left still. It was also hard to tell just where these Constellations had been hiding all this time.

[It's the Outer God King! Kill him!]

Constellations pointed their weapons at me and jumped in. Even though they lived like puppets of large Nebulas and never truly cleared scenarios until now, they still managed to acquire the qualifications to enter the 'Final Scenario'.

Surprisingly enough, some of them were either former or the current subscribers of my channel. Ones that donated something every now and then to urge me on – ones that desired powerful sources of cider, and asked me for more stimulating plot development.

And now, they were standing against me.

[Kill him!]

A few of my companions seemed to be surprised by their hostility towards us.

Han Sooyoung couldn't hold it back in and opened her mouth. "You guys still hadn't exited yet?"

What popped up in my head just then was the words the 'Mandala's Guardian' said to me back in the Isle of Reincarnators.

「No matter how shoddy a story is, an existence hearing and watching it for a long time will grow to love it.」

Back then, I didn't understand what he meant by that. I only thought that the 'Mandala's Guardian' saw the tragedy of the scenario called [Great War of Saints and Demons] in such a light, that's all.

However, after I mulled over it some more, I realized that that statement probably didn't only apply to the [Great War].

The Constellations originating from Japan and fought against us during [Peace Land] were incarnating before our eyes one by one. I even saw the 'Eight Pieces of Fire' Kagu-tsuchi and 'Controller of High and Low tides', the Water Dragon Ryujin.

The one confronting them among our companions was the protector of the skies.

[Incarnation, 'Lee Jihye', is unleashing her Status!]

[Constellation, 'Maritime War God', is unleashing his Status!]

Along with the sensation of a boundless ocean spreading out, the surrounding stage was submerged in abundant Status. The opponents may be Narrative-grade Constellations, but the current Lee Jihye would never be pushed around by them.

However, she didn't fire away and took a look in my direction instead.

"Ahjussi."

I too knew why she was hesitating like this.

[Go! If you can't be of any use, then go and blow yourselves up!]

Constellations were pushing the backs of the Incarnations forward. These Incarnations from the Japanese side, their eyes blank, staggered towards us.

Just before we could unsheathe our weapons, someone cried out from a nearby location.

"Everyone, please wake up! Please, you must take a good look at who you're trying to fight against!"

That was a voice I definitely recognised.

"Izumi is dead, and Hiroshi also died. Just how many more must die before we all wake up? Have you all forgotten the tragedy back in the [Peace Land]?"

It was Asuka Ren.

[Incarnation, 'Asuka Ren', has become the 'Enemy of the Story'.]

Surprisingly enough, she had already chosen to side with us.

[Incarnation, 'Asuka Ren's', attribute, 'Mangaka' is activating!]

Her sword moved like a pen.

The moment her attribute came to life, Stories of not just me but the surrounding 'Nameless Ones' began shifting. Our broken Stories, the scattered phrases, were being woven into a single piece of footage.

When I thought about it, it wasn't just Han Sooyoung who possessed 'author'-type attributes. Although different in some ways, Asuka Ren's attribute was also rather similar in other ways to hers.

"Please, stop this. You know who these people are. You yearned to be more like these people, didn't you?"

「That was the beginning.」

Incarnations half-controlled by their sponsors were about to attack us, but then, began dropping their weapons one by one. With terror-stricken expressions, they either plopped down on the ground or cried out in sorrow.

"Can't… do this… I, I can't do this anymore…"

Incarnations knelt down and muttered out while holding their heads. Meanwhile, the Constellations were exposed to danger in an instant after their puppets stopped listening to their commands. They hurriedly shouted out.

[G-get up! Hurry!]

Incarnations understood the pain of fellow Incarnations very well. Meaning, they were different from the Constellations that fell into the dime-a-dozen villainous roles after carrying out the scenarios for far too long.

"Jihye-yah."

Even before I could finish, the turtle ship fired its cannons.

Kwa-aaaaaah!

The group of the Constellations were swept away as the percussion noises resounded out. Some managed to endure, though, and soon collided with my companions.

[Uwaaaah!!]

A faint light leaked out from the hull of the ark.

We couldn't afford to let more Myth-grade Constellations wake up from their slumber within the vessel.

Fortunately, our advancing speed was not slow at all. Yoo Joonghyuk's [Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship] and Han Sooyoung's [Black Flame] continued to assist me from the side and we made good headway.

If there was one thing tugging at my mind, it'd be the Probability.

Tsu-chuchuchu…

The Probability created out of the Coins donated by the Constellations…

I looked up to find Biyoo controlling the channel with a pained grimace on her face. It hadn't been that long since she hatched as a Dokkaebi, so it was taking a lot out of her to exchange that many Coins into Probability. Stories began dripping out from her lips now.

"We're almost there!"

The unexpected event happened at the same time as Han Sooyoung's voice resounded out.

[The Bureau is exercising the authority to restrict the channel BY-9158!]

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

At that moment, my heart grew cold.

Originally, individual channels belonged to each Dokkaebi. However, the system called [channel] was a power founded upon the 'Giant Story' in the Bureau's possession.

[The Bureau is restricting the Coin donations to the channel BY-9158!]

Suddenly, my movements became sluggish. It was the same for my companions. The tailwind pushing us from the back was swiftly changing into the headwind, instead.

In the distance, I spotted the ten Great Dokkaebis raising their hands together at the heavens.

"Those stinking sons of bitches…!"

It seemed that Han Sooyoung had realized what was going on here.

[Baaaaaaht!]

Biyoo let out a painful cry as if she got electrocuted and fell from the sky. Yoo Sangah dashed out way before I could and carefully caught the small falling figure.

[Constellation, 'Father of the Rich Night', is protesting against the cowardly action of the Bureau, and…!]

[Constellation, 'Queen of the Darkest Spring', is greatly enraged by the unfair treatment from the Bureau, and…!]

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is shouting out "Those ■tty Dokkaebi sons of bit■s should…!!"]

…

Our channel was breaking down.

The Great Dokkaebi Garang spoke up. [Your Story cannot be permitted. We simply cannot present such a Story to the 'Oldest Dream'.]

I failed to understand it. They had already become a part of the scenario, so they would be met with an incredible storm of aftermath simply by trying to exercise the Bureau's Giant Story.

[Horong, Noksu, we shall remember your sacrifices.]

Two Great Dokkaebis were being extinguished in the middle of the sky. Debris of Story were falling off from Garang's figure, as well.

I felt a chill run down my whole body. Only now did I realize how determined those damnable Great Dokkaebis were.

[<Star Stream>'s Probability is going through another rapid change!]

The number of 'Nameless Ones' flooding the surroundings rapidly declined. Their faces, back to their original selves through the grace of the Probability, were reverting back to the heads of the monsters once more.

【…Hounds are coming.】

Along with the 'Secretive Plotter's' declaration, all the kings from the 999th turns gathered in the centre. Those needing to exhaust an inordinate amount of Probability would invariably suffer greatly from the suspension of the donation.

The 'hounds chasing after the abyss' appeared amidst the incoming storm of aftermath and began biting into the kings' legs and arms.

【Hey, it freaking hurts, you sons of bitches!】

The 999th turn's Kim Namwoon roared out.

Meanwhile, Yoo Joonghyuk cut down the Constellations rushing in at us and shouted out. "Kim Dokja!"

I looked up to the sky. The atmosphere up there was suspicious. This change wasn't as simple as a Myth-grade Constellation controlling the weather. Something incredibly horrific that I had never experienced before was about to unfold here.

[Onsae, Heoche. Thank you for all your hard work until now.]

Two more Great Dokkaebis were being extinguished now.

「Great Dokkaebis were trying to end their story in this place.」

Hair rose up on my arms. I had never felt fear on this level during my time carrying out the scenario.

[Oh, the 'Oldest Dream'!]

The sky was opening up. I took a closer look before realizing that it actually wasn't the sky, but the wall – the [Final Wall] that surrounded the entire universe.

And now, something was crossing over the gap in the Wall resembling a torn page.

「In that moment, Kim Dokja intuitively foresaw the destruction of this world.」

My vocabulary was not good enough to adequately describe what that was. Just what was that?

It was like seeing a shoddy doodling drawn by a child and his pencil. That thing was at once a gigantic sword, maybe a spear, or maybe even a missile.

What I knew for certain, though, was that an unknown something was falling in this direction.

Tsu-chuchuchuchu!

For the briefest moment there, I thought I saw something like someone's 'hand' within the gap where that formless mass fell out from.

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is…!]

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', is…!]

And now, only one thing was for certain – getting hit by that would kill us all.

「Kim Dokja unleashed all of his Status.」

Every 'Giant Story' in my possession began their storytelling simultaneously. I quickly looked back at my companions.

"Everyone, we…!"

And right next second, my vision was dyed in pure white as a massive explosion of Probability blew up before our eyes.

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

Bihyung quietly stared at the Great Dokkaebis melting into the scenario one by one.

Storytellers were becoming a part of the last scenario. As he stood there watching, both big and small lower-ranked Dokkaebis quickly rushed around him.

[Bihyung-nim! Just what is the meaning of…?]

The Bureau that had been maintaining a neutral stance until now began changing the entire aspect of the scenario through force.

As a consequence, the topography of the Bureau was changing. The storages that contained Stories all broke down at the same time, and those infamous Constellations currently under arrest by the Bureau's security force were being freed as well.

Bihyung stared at a certain Constellation right in the middle of this chaotic scene.

「The fool who never thought of himself as the protagonist.」

It had been the same story from the moment they first met. Even with a physical stat totalling less than 10, this guy didn't cower against a Dokkaebi like him. This guy, he often smiled to imply that he had plenty of leeway, and often carelessly got himself killed, too.

「The fool who knew the next part of the Story even better than himself, the storyteller.」

Thanks to this guy's Story, Bihyung got to grow his channel faster than anyone, and got to enjoy favourable assessments every time ranking evaluation came around.

「His Story was now facing an end.」

Kwa-kwakwakwakwa!

Having become a Great Dokkaebi, Bihyung could now tell what that heaven-splitting thing was. That thing had come from beyond the 'Wall'. That was the fragment of immeasurable delusion flying in from beyond the Wall that divided this world – the Wall that was both the First and the Final.

The ark could be seen now getting ready to soar. It seemed that the remaining Great Dokkaebis were planning to board the ark and escape from here.

Meanwhile, this stage would be annihilated with the descent of that fragment.

「In that moment, Dokkaebi Bihyung made up his mind.」

The remaining Great Dokkaebis, gathered in one place to perform the ceremony, realized Bihyung's intention and cried out. The first one to grab him was Baram.

[Bihyung! What do you think you're doing?!]

Bihyung didn't reply and stared at the ground below. The ones he'd been watching until now were down there.

Incarnations he sent his clone to speak with. And now, they were in the same place as he was. Bihyung looked at his own hands. His palms that used to be so small back then, were now as big as a grown adult male's.

[I've been observing that Story for a very long time.]

Their first encounter wasn't all that positive; one of them was the culprit selling the tragedies called the scenarios, while the other had no choice but to carry those scenarios out while risking his life.

That was why Bihyung had to make a move now.

He had to do this one thing, since he had opened this tragic stage with his own two hands. This action had to be done if he wanted to remain as the 'storyteller' right until the end.

[Baram. You told me that there will come a time for every Dokkaebi to choose their own 'One Single Story'.]

[You must listen to me, Bihyung! You're wrong this time! That Story isn't right! That Story, it's…]

Bihyung let go of Baram's hands and smiled.

He knew of a guy who always smirked just before dying. He couldn't understand it before, but now he thought he could figure it out. That guy must've been feeling this way, too.

[It's likely that I have grown to love that story.]

Bihyung then unleashed his own Status towards the Bureau's Great Dokkaebis.

Puh-gur-guhk!

The horn of Garang, working as the representative of the Great Dokkaebis and abusing the Bureau's powers of interference, broke off.

The Probability controlled by the Bureau scattered away in an instant and a ripple effect suddenly occurred.

That storm of aftermaths came back to Bihyung in full. He turned around to leave while vomiting out his Story that was changed to a pitch-black colour.

[Bihyung!! You dare to…!!]

More specifically, he stood in the way of the delusion's fragment falling towards the ground.

All the Stories he had recorded until now began crying. Every Constellation watching this storyteller added their own Probability to his action.

Bihyung began thinking as horrifying pain of the aftermath's storm tore into his body. The protagonist of the Story he had been reading wouldn't welcome his actions at all. Because that dude wanted to save everyone's life.

Even then, there was a certain rule that you couldn't go against.

「There is no story where no one was sacrificed.」

To protect the story, to guard the Probability, and to become the 'One Single Story' reaching the 「Final Wall」, this action had to be performed.

「Dokkaebi Bihyung had finally decided on his full stop.」

The 'Pah-su-sut' noise of something being pierced could be heard next.

He looked back and for a second there, he thought he saw Kim Dokja's face.

[Your ■■ is 'sacrifice'.]

Chapter 496: Ep. 94 - Beginning of the end, IV

The moment that dark, sinister irregular mass exploded in the sky, I grabbed the kids nearby and went down flat on the ground. Lee Hyunsung spread out his steel wall, and the rough screeching metallic noises coming from above assaulted our ears.

How long passed by like that? Both the sounds and sensation of touch all disappeared.

[Transmission has been completed.]

And then, a puzzling message entered my head.

Muscles in my entire body ached as if I had been beaten up. Lee Hyunsung's defensive barrier covering the sky was also gone, too.

…What on earth happened here?

I couldn't properly understand the current situation.

Scanning my vicinity revealed the fact that I was all alone. Not the kids I had been shielding, Lee Hyunsung and Jung Heewon enveloping us, even Yoo Joonghyuk leaping into the air to wield his sword – none of them could be seen.

What I could see, though, was a wide-open plain. I looked behind to discover a dense forest with trees reaching high into the heavens, and opposite it, a land filled with stinking sulphur.

「Great Dokkaebis exercised the Bureau's powers and interfered with the scenario.」

I could clearly remember that much. After that, the Bureau began restricting our Coin donations, and realizing that that wasn't enough, they even summoned a strange missile-like thing, too.

And then, after that…

「[Ah, ah. Can you hear me now? Well, deary me. I ended up working extra because the Korean patch wasn't installed yet.]」

I felt this chilling sensation and quickly took a look around. A Story could be heard coming from somewhere. And it was something I was intimately familiar with.

「[This is not a film shoot.]」

Something else popped up in the air right after that. It was a small shadow covering the sky the moment that dark, sinister summoned thing exploded.

I hurriedly scanned my surroundings.

「[This isn't a dream, it's not a novel, nor is it 'reality' that you people used to know. You get it now? So everyone, shut your mouths and listen to me.]」

Definitely nearby. He was somewhere nearby, for sure.

Just how long did I wander around this plain for?

Eventually, I spotted him collapsed on the field of reeds.

"Bihyung."

I carefully picked him up. He used to be as big as a grown adult male after becoming a Great Dokkaebi, but now, he had shrunken back down to the size of a baby.

Just like on the first day that I met him.

"Bihyung!"

The starting point of all my tragedies.

If I hadn't met this guy, I'd have probably remained as a regular contracted worker for Mino Soft even now.

「[Hold on. Are you saying that you want to sign the <Stream Contract> with me??]」

If I hadn't signed the damn contract with this guy, I'd not have been able to come this far.

Crumbs of Story fell from Bihyung's body. Their falling speed got progressively faster and faster.

「"Just what have you contributed to the <Kim Dokja's Company>'s Story? Why are you shamelessly involving yourselves in their Coin compensations?"」

「"Aren't you fed up with such a story by now? For how long are you going to seek out Stories that conform only to the Bureau's standards?"」

Bihyung's Stories that I didn't know of were crumbling away.

I shook him again, trying to wake him up. I even resorted to smacking him in his cheeks, too. That prompted a frail voice to enter my ears.

"…That hurts. I'm beginning to pity Bawul you smacked around back then."

Bihyung opened his eyes and smiled bitterly.

He spoke not in the true voice, but in a trembling, faltering regular voice. It was Dokkaebi Bihyung's real voice, heard for the first time after such a long while.

A voice that I hated.

This bastard was responsible for turning people into Incarnations and spreading scenarios everywhere, changing this world into a kingdom of voyeurism. And that was precisely why I had to ask him.

"Why did you save me?"

The reason why Bihyung ended up in this state was because he touched the Probability he shouldn't have.

Just like those Great Dokkaebis being extinguished after forcibly interfering with the scenario, Bihyung too ended up in this miserable state by jumping headlong into the aftermath's storm he couldn't handle.

「Bihyung would die in this place.」

Stories I possessed began trembling.

This wasn't my plan. This wasn't the Story I longed for.

['The Fourth Wall' is violently shaking!]

Instead of a reply, Bihyung vomited out a mouthful of pitch-black Story. His body was getting smaller and smaller.

"…I'd like to sit up for a minute."

I helped Bihyung up.

The flights of stars could be seen in the cold night sky. Stars that went along this way and that according to the flow of the scenario. The flow of the distant stream of stars…

Bihyung was staring at the ｢Star Stream｣.

"I've transferred all of your companions. And the majority of the Constellations, as well as the Incarnations near you, should've survived as well. This place is safe from the external shocks."

"You…"

"You'll soon figure out the details yourself. You're a smart cookie, after all."

Several stars were falling in the sky. While I searched for words to say, the number of falling stars gradually increased.

Stars were dying in the distant 'context of constellations'.

Bihyung should have lived his life while dreaming the dreams of those stars.

"Kim Dokja. You and I aren't companions."

He must've enjoyed the stars' Stories, and must've watched their tragicomedies together. He must've witnessed the deaths of countless stars. And, on one hand…

"You are an Incarnation of the scenario, and I'm just a storyteller."

…He must've thought that those deaths looked quite beautiful.

It was true that I hated Bihyung. I tried so hard to stoke the flames of that emotion.

[Story, 'King of a Kingless World', is looking at its storyteller.]

[Story, 'One Who Opposes the Miracle', grieves for its storyteller.]

[Story, 'One Who Hunted the King of Disasters', mourns for its storyteller.]

My Stories scattered like fading screams and spoke to Bihyung.

He chuckled. With a proud face, no less.

"I actually wanted to witness your Story till its end, though."

Beyond the skies he was looking at, was the ｢Final Wall｣. The dream Bihyung had been dreaming. The place where the king of all scenarios, the 'Dokkaebi King', resided.

I wanted to say something. I wanted to ask if he really was giving up here. Ask him if he had forgotten about the promise we made back then.

｢"Dokkaebi Bihyung, sign the contract with me. If you do, I shall make you the king of all Dokkaebis.｣

I still hadn't fulfilled that promise yet.

｢He was the first reader of the Story Kim Dokja had compiled.｣

My hands grew lighter. I slowly lowered my head, but Bihyung wasn't there anymore. As befitting a damn storyteller, he made sure to leave behind his story even as he died.

I staggered back up to my feet.

｢He wanted to create a Story where no one had to be sacrificed.｣

[Your great epic has encountered an opportunity to change!!]

Blood seeped out from my tightly clenched fists. All of my Stories were wailing out. They screamed towards <Star Stream> and at the [Final Wall].

｢This story hasn't ended yet, Kim Dokja.｣

That was the dead Bihyung's Story talking. The Story he left behind moments before his death circled around me and was exhausting its own paragraphs.

Bihyung was dead, yet the Story he left behind was still alive.

I somehow managed to get a grip on myself. Bihyung was right; the end I wanted to see had only just begun. I needed to find out where he had sent me, and where my companions had ended up in. And then…

Tsu-chuchuchut…!

The Probability's sparks were raining down in the middle of skies above the vast plains. And the scenes of the outside faintly revealed themselves beyond the storm of sparks.

The devastated stage of the final pages, the battlefield I was in only a few moments ago, was now filled to the brim with corpses of unmoving Constellations and Incarnations.

The moment I saw that, I figured out where I was.

[Welcome to the 'Final Ark'.]

This was inside of the 'ship' I was supposed to destroy.

[The 'Final Ark' is currently in the middle of the takeoff procedure.]

[Final scenario has been revised!]

<Main Scenario #99 - ■■■■>

Type: Main

Difficulty: ???

Clear condition: Destroy the Story Core that powers the ark, and stop the world-line migration plan of the Great Dokkaebis and Myth-grade Constellations.

Time limit: 24 hours

Reward: Final Wall

Failure: Destruction of the world-line.

…So, that's how it was.

If this was indeed inside the ship called 'Final Ark', then it made sense to see such a world hiding within the craft.

This place I was standing in, it was the land of the beginning where countless myths were born. The myths that were currently asleep inside this very ark.

Ku-gugugugu…

Rough vibration could be felt coming from the opposite side of this land. Something was approaching here.

「Run, Kim Dokja.」

The existences that recovered their original powers while carrying their worldviews on their backs – the Myth-grade Constellations were flooding in this way.

「The ark is a type of a 'Giant Story weapon'. In order to completely wreck the ark, you must destroy the Story core deep inside it somewhere.」

I read the Story Bihyung had left behind while running within the interior of the ark.

[You have currently infiltrated the residential cabin D-21.]

[The influence of another myth is far too strong within the applicable area.]

[Your Nebula's members can't be contacted currently.]

Maybe the abnormally higher influence of another Giant Story was to blame, because I couldn't get in touch with my companions. Fortunately enough, though, one other person from my group had been transferred into the same cabin as me.

[The influence of the same Nebula can be felt strongly!]

"Kim Dokja!"

Just before I reached out and said something, Han Sooyoung shouted out first.

"Shut up and run! Don't come this way!!"

The thicket behind her was cleanly sliced through right then. Something was chasing after her. She hurriedly yanked an item out from her inner pocket and threw that thing behind her – which was a smoke grenade.

['Mass-production SSS-grade smoke grenade' is activating its effects!]

[For next 20 seconds, the surrounding field of vision will be screened off!]

While the Constellations falling into confusion raised a noisy ruckus, we hurriedly escaped from the thickets. Han Sooyoung seemed to have finished analysing the situation by now, too.

"Did that guy die?"

I didn't reply.

The heavily-panting Han Sooyoung spat on the ground.

"That stinking Dokkaebi bastard. How could he even call this his final parting gift?"

Indeed, could anyone even call this a gift at all?

I looked up at the ark's ceiling. There should be countless owners of 'Giant Stories' besides us still sleeping inside this ship.

"Kim Dokja."

"According to Bihyung's Story, the Story core is at the centre of the ark. We should be near its front section."

The moment I finished saying that, the true voices of Constellations rang out from the rising smoke screen.

[After them!!]

[They are still nearby! We can't head to the next world-line with them!]

Han Sooyoung used the [Midday Tryst] to speak to me.

– Should we just kill them all?

That was an option, sure. However, the current battlefield wasn't ideal. This part of the cabin was actually another Nebula's worldview. Meaning, their own「Stage Transformation」was active in this location.

[The residential cabin D-21 is the location of the Universe Tree Yggdrasil's roots.]

Han Sooyoung frowned deeply.

– Son of a gun. Why did it have to be <Asgard>?

[Constellation, 'God of Harp and Horn', is performing the requiem of the apocalypse.]

[Constellation, 'One who Lost His Arm to the Wolf of Apocalypse', is searching for his disappeared arm.]

[Constellation, 'Thursday's Thunder', is overly emphasizing his mightiness.]

Constellations were flying around in the air searching for us. Most of them were Narrative-grade, but…

– …Since when was Thor that powerful?

The 'Thursday's Thunder' condensed lightning on Mjolnir and stared at the sky, his eyes now in the shade of eerie blue. Thor was a Narrative-grade Constellation. On this stage, however, he could unleash Status rivalling that of Zeus.

I addressed Han Sooyoung.

– We need to find a stage that's advantageous to us.

– Will there be such a thing in this place, though?

Unlike them, <Kim Dokja's Company> didn't really have anything in particular to call its worldview.

– There is one.

Even then, there should be one stage here where we could fight on equal footing. If my thoughts were correct, that was. If it was that place, then all of our other companions should also be able to exercise their full power, too.

The problem was with how to get there.

[Story, 'Pebble and I', has begun its storytelling!]

Of course, there was that method, too. Han Sooyoung's eyes grew wider.

[Story, 'Pebble and I', is telling the story of 'We're just pebbles'!]

– What the heck is this?

I grasped her wrist and cautiously stepped in front of the Constellations like small pebbles rolling on the ground. As expected, they couldn't locate us at all.

[Constellation, 'Goddess of Love and Cats', is forming a depressed expression.]

[Constellation, 'Guardian of the Great Horn Bridge', is searching for someone.]

Han Sooyoung saw all these Constellations failing to find us even though we were walking right past them, and her jaw dropped nearly to the floor.

– This is madness. What kinda dogshit cheat is this?

Sure, it was a cheat, alright. At a bare minimum, you wouldn't spot a 'pebble' unless you actually acknowledged the fact that there were some of them lying on the ground.

[A Constellation that likes to change gender is giggling away.]

It was then, a bad premonition entered my head. Even Han Sooyoung was making a similar expression to mine.

However, we were almost there. Even if Loki had discovered our existences, the main forces of <Asgard> were far away now, so…

"Are you thinking of using that same method to escape this time?"

The Story 「Pebble and I」 didn't work on those who had detected the actual form of the Story itself. And unfortunately for us, I had used this Story on a certain someone once before.

I slowly turned around to find an eye swirling in crimson light staring at us,

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[Currently, BY-9158's picture transmission is in a temporary suspended state.]

Biyoo must've done that voluntarily. It might be because of Bihyung's death, or maybe there was a problem trying to transmit from within the ark itself. Whatever the case might have been, it was a good thing for us.

It'd been so much nicer if only the person before our eyes wasn't there, though.

"Anna Croft."

I stared at the prophet's blonde hair fluttering in the wind. I also sensed additional presences within the dense forest. They probably were the squad under her direct supervision, the 'Zarathustra'.

– Why isn't this pebble or rock or whatever not working on her?

I didn't reply to Han Sooyoung. Didn't have enough time now to explain everything that happened in the 'Isle of Reincarnators', anyhow.

Rather than patiently wait for my answer, though, Han Sooyoung simply gripped my wrist hard. And then, she pointed at Anna Croft with her free hand. Vicious licks of [Black Flame] danced on the tip of her pointing finger.

"Move outta way or die."

Their gazes collided in the air.

Eerie, bluish ghostly aura permeated within Han Sooyoung's irises as she activated [Predictive Plagiarism]. At the same time, the eyes of Anna Croft, wielder of [Great Demon's Eye], also swirled in a crimson aura. Faint sparks danced in the air as the gazes of these two capable of reading the future collided.

The latter maintained this tense stand-off for a bit before opening her mouth. "Kim Dokja, do you want to escape from this floor?"

Han Sooyoung's complexion changed colours and she growled unhappily. "Hey, you. You ignoring me now?"

"I can help you."

"Weren't you trying your hardest to kill us not too long ago?"

As Han Sooyoung's words came to an end, I sensed the movements of the Constellations in the surroundings. I even noticed a few that began destroying the terrain indiscriminately in order to locate us.

It would be hard to buy more time here.

"I didn't have a choice. If we sided with you back then, we'd all have been wiped away."

"And the current situation is different how?"

"Are you really going to waste your time this way? I'm pretty sure it's you people feeling the urgency, not me."

"Do we have a reason to trust you?"

"Are you the type to trust someone even with a good enough reason?"

In any other circumstances, I'd have gladly accepted her help. However, Anna Croft was someone who signed a direct contract with the whole Nebula.

"You're the Nebula <Asgard>'s Incarnation."

[Nebula, <Asgard>'s Giant Stories are waking up from their ancient slumber!]

And the current floor just so happened to be the cabin where <Asgard>'s Constellations resided.

Anna Croft readily admitted to that and nodded her head. "True. I'm their Incarnation. In that case, don't you find this even more strange? I'm right here, looking at you both, yet why haven't they rushed here yet?"

I too had been keeping an eye on the Constellations loitering around our vicinity. It looked as if they couldn't even hear our conversation. Quite likely, she resorted to some kind of an unknown method to block their gazes somehow.

"What are you scheming?"

I stared into Anna Croft's deep, mysterious eyes.

[Exclusive skill, 'Reading Comprehension', is activating!]

「More than anyone out there, the Incarnation Anna Croft places importance in realistic causes.」

In a certain sense, this world's most righteous person could be none other than Anna Croft. If Yoo Joonghyuk's cause was built upon rage and hatred, then Anna Croft's was built upon the foundation of righteousness.

The survival of the absolute majority.

Her aim was to safely preserve the city of her birth, Las Vegas, the United States of America, and on top of that, Earth itself during the hell of scenarios.

「However, America was destroyed during this world-line.」

Her home vanished on the same day that the great apocalypse began. All that remained were the small number of 'Zarathustras' following after her. Even then, her complexion wasn't as gloomy. No, her expression seemed to be filled with a certain fervour, instead. It was an expression of a person getting nearer to the world she wanted to see.

While feeling the gentle vibration spreading within the entirety of the ship, I opened my mouth. "You're thinking of taking over this ark, aren't you."

Right then, Han Sooyoung next to me gasped out as if she had reached the same conclusion as me.

Anna Croft grinned refreshingly. "How wonderful it is that you're so quick on the uptake."

"It won't be easy to drive out the Constellations and take over the ark."

"However, it is the last chance given to humanity."

Her plan was quite clear.

The 'Final Ark' was a Giant Story weapon designed to transport Story seeds to another world-line. If she managed to defeat the Constellations and acquire the controlling authority of this ark, then she should be able to transport humanity to a brand new world-line.

And everything would begin anew in that place.

"Not one Constellation can be left alive. Even if that includes you."

While listening to her, I recalled an ancient text from the 'Ways of Survival'.

「Anna Croft's ■■ is 'Perfect Night'.」

A world of darkness where not one starlight shined – Anna Croft wished for humanity to live freely again under that darkness. If it was the world she dreamed of, then my companions should be able to survive as well. I felt slightly lonely as I opened my mouth again.

"In that case, we'll be temporary allies. We'll work together until we reach the ark's core."

"Until then, I shall lend you the power of my [Precognition]."

Han Sooyoung next to me sent a message in my direction.

– I've been checking her through Lie Detection, and she hasn't been lying. Doesn't look like she's been using Pokerface, either.

I nodded my head. "Alright. Let's work together."

* * *

While going through the Story Bihyung had left behind, I read the surrounding topography.

「The exit at the outside of the forested area is towards the branch reaching out to the heavens.」

One thing I realized while following after Anna Croft was that our current area was not a plain, but a 'floor' above a certain tree.

– Gotta admit, their worldview setting is pretty slick.

Han Sooyoung muttered out, evidently impressed by the sight.

Seeing such a detailed recreation of <Asgard>'s worldview, I began to fully realize just how long they had been preparing this Final Ark.

This shouldn't be the whole Universe Tree Yggdrasil. It was probably a mock-up. Even then, this tree was more than wide and expansive enough already. Most likely, the <Asgard>'s Constellations would live on while enjoying the vested rights founded upon this Story in the next world-line.

Anna Croft quietly stared at such Constellations, before shifting her head away and focused on the way ahead instead. Han Sooyoung observed her and spoke to me.

– By the way, will she be alright? The price of betraying a Nebula should be huge, though?

Before I could answer, though, Anna Croft opened her mouth first. "My situation is not something you should be concerned about."

"…What the hell. You can even eavesdrop on this?

"I only guessed that you were using Midday Tryst since you two haven't said anything for a while."

"Sounds like you have a trusty backer or something?"

Han Sooyoung's words caused Anna Croft's expression to harden for the first time. "What do you mean?"

"I was wondering if it's logically possible for a measly little Incarnation to block off the gazes from an entire 'Nebula', that's all."

Han Sooyoung's right; no Incarnation could've pulled that off, regardless of who you were.

I quietly glared at the back of Anna Croft's head.

[Exclusive skill, 'Reading Comprehension's', concentration level is rising up even higher!]

I did have my suspicions. The aura of chaos gently crumbled away behind her. And beyond that, I thought I glimpsed a pair of crimson eyes not too dissimilar to Anna Croft's.

From the get-go, there were only two existences in this world capable of interfering with the channels Constellations watched.

Ku-gugugugu!

It was right then that lightning suddenly went off in the air. The ground split apart and the surrounding atmosphere began quaking ominously. The sounds of incoming storm could be heard next.

[Constellation, 'One-eyed Father', is slowly blinking its remaining eye.]

Tsu-chuchuchut!

Anna Croft's complexion paled instantly.

Even the god of creation 'Ra' we fought back in the 98th scenario didn't possess might of this calibre. As for the Status, it easily exceeded Thor's we encountered earlier by a huge margin.

This worldview's most powerful being had just woken up from his slumber, in other words.

"…Odin."

We began running.

Even if <Kim Dokja's Company> had grown stronger, it was an act of utter stupidity to fight the Myth-grade Constellation Odin in <Asgard>'s turf.

[Constellation, 'One-eyed Father', is now looking at his world.]

A terrifying gaze was sweeping across the entire world. And not too long after that, I felt something was looking at us.

"It's this way! Hurry!"

There was a tree branch leading up to higher floors of Yggdrasil in the place Anna Croft was pointing at. We quickly ran on that branch and almost at the same time, the ground beneath our feet lost strength and began collapsing.

"Faster!"

I squeezed out every ounce of my energy and ran, and also activated the wind, as well.

[Exclusive skill, 'Way of the Wind Lv.???', is activating!]

All the Giant Stories I've collected so far strengthened the Way of the Wind even more and it added greater momentum to our travelling speed. I wanted to activate [Demon King Transformation] as well and spread out my wings if it was possible, but one of the wings was wounded just before the transmission and I couldn't do that.

Du-dudududu!

Some things was busy chasing us down.

[Constellation, 'God of Harp and Horn', is heeding the father's order.]

[Constellation, 'Goddess of Love and Cats', is answering the father's order.]

[Constellation, 'One Who Lost His Arm to the Wolf of Apocalypse', is howling out!]

[Constellation, 'Guardian of the Great Horn Bridge', has detected someone's presence!]

"We're almost there!"

Anna Croft turned around while saying that, and extended her hands out. Suddenly, the surrounding view changed and the field before her seemed to disappear. It was her speciality, [Phantom Barrier]. Constellations got lost in the darkness suddenly enveloping them and roared in surprise.

Tsu-chuchuchut!

Anna Croft's eyes became bloodshot, before blood trickled down from her mouth and ears. It was the cost of going against her own Nebula. Even then, she didn't back down and shouted out.

"Iris! Selena! Lead the allies away!"

The two people running way ahead of us took 'Zarathustras' and ran towards the end of the branch.

"Run! Hurry! It's right in front of us!"

Anna Croft went down on one knee while bleeding profusely. She was in no shape to run by herself now.

"Han Sooyoung."

Even before I was finished, Han Sooyoung picked Anna Croft up and ran. It didn't take too long for us to reach the end of the branch. What waited for us there was a mysterious bridge emitting a rainbow of colours.

「It's the rainbow bridge leading to other floors, the [Bifrost].」

The fantastical bridge only seen within the myth was now laid out before my eyes. Selena and Iris were already halfway across this very bridge.

I decided to activate [Electrification] and cross this thing in one go using the momentum. But then…

KWA-BOOOOM!!

I thought I saw a light flash in the heavens, and then, the centre of [Bifrost] was abruptly cut off. A massive spear that carved up the sky was being summoned back.

I instantly recognised what that spear was: the God-king Odin's weapon, Gungnir.

He chose to eliminate us here by cutting off the bridge leading to another world. I looked back at the group of Constellations hot on our heels and bit my lip.

We'd definitely be defeated if we choose to fight Odin in this place.

Ku-gugugugu!

In the end, the only answer here was to cross the bridge.

However, the width of the broken-off section was far too wide, and the storm generated by Odin was madly whipping about in the open gap. Even if I activated both [Way of the Wind] and [Electrification] to their fullest, there was no guarantee of us crossing it safely.

Han Sooyoung shouted out in frustration. "Hurry! Isn't there another way?!"

She forcibly shook Anna Croft, prompting the latter to reply helplessly while vomiting out blood.

"My Precognition… isn't perfect… But this time, I… saw clearly. Four people… crossing this bridge…"

Four people? I want to ask for clarification, but she had bled far too much and stopped speaking altogether.

But then, a certain scene popped up in my head.

「Kim Dokja began thinking. 'Will it work?'」

However, there was no other path remaining. I looked up to the sky and was greeted by the deluge of indirect messages from the Constellations panicking from the channel's sudden upheavals.

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', wishes to see the channel's broadcast!]

[Constellation, 'King Heungmu', complains about the channel's blackout!]

[Constellation, 'Bald General of Justice', is searching for the disappeared Kim Dokja!]

"Biyoo! Start the broadcast!"

"Wha?? Are you mad?!"

If we opened the channel now, every Constellation in the ark would learn of my current location. However, the thing I was planning to do would only work with the channel open.

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

[Many Constellations are surprised by the screen spreading wide open!]

[A portion of Constellations realize that you're in danger and are freaking out!]

[A small number of Constellations feel an odd sense of deja vu at the current situation.]

I knew all too well what that deja vu the Constellations were talking about.

「A long time ago, there was an event where they had to cross a cut-off bridge.」

The 'deux ex machina' that activated on the broken Dongho bridge.

[The absolute majority of Constellations remember the situation from back then!]

[Nebula, 'Kim Dokja's Company's' Giant Stories are shifting!]

Along with the gazes from the Constellations, the Probability began writhing wildly.

['Stage Transformation' is activating!]

Tsu-chuchuchuchu…!

['Deus ex Machina' is activating!]

The bridge that the Constellations created back then was being recreated right before our eyes.

> [Deus ex Machina – Even-numbered bridge]
>
> Description: A bridge of light created by the blessing of a Constellation. Only the 'even' number of people can cross it. When an odd number of

people try to cross it, the bridge will be extinguished immediately.

The even-numbered bridge – been a really long time since I last heard that name.

"Han Sooyoung! Take Anna with you and run!"

"What???"

"Hurry up!"

I activated [Way of the Wind] on Han Sooyoung and made her cross the bridge forcefully.

– Hey, you!! Eiii, shit! I don't know anymore…

I confirmed the distancing back of Han Sooyoung before turning around. Constellations had begun emerging from Anna Croft's [Phantom Barrier] one by one already.

I unleashed my Status towards them while thinking to myself.

「The even-numbered bridge can only be crossed by an even number of people.」

The distant Han Sooyoung's voice and Odin's enraged roar entered my ear one after the other.

I unsheathed the Unbroken Faith; I wasn't planning on dying in this place.

「Anna Croft said 'four people'.」

Just before I was about to unleash the electricity from the [Electrification] on the incoming Constellations, a loud explosion occurred at the back of the attacking group.

Someone was ramming through the Constellations like a tank while running towards this way.

It was a familiar Story; there was this one particular guy who got summoned to this floor only about a moment ago. His face revealed itself from beyond the rising murky fog of the Story.

– Keep running, Kim Dokja.

The dude busy smacking all the enemies away and smashing the skulls of the Constellations, was busy dashing in this direction while carrying a scary light in his eyes.

I could only grin wryly. I didn't mind anyone else, but would've preferred not crossing the bridge with that guy.

– Hey, don't you throw me to the river this time, you bastard.

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Yoo Joonghyuk was running towards the bridge, while <Asgard>'s Constellations were chasing after him.

The Bald General of Justice shouted out. [Do your best, descendants!]

That prompted the One-eyed Maitreya to retort. [Your bald head is caked in sweat.]

[Worry about your own head first.]

[Aren't you going to help them?]

[I don't have an Incarnation, so how can I?]

[You can simply incarnate directly.]

[You must've lost your mind after being trapped here for too long. With the remaining Coins, it's impossible even to send a symbolic form down there.]

The Bald General grumbled unhappily and while wiping his head, looked behind him. That's where the boring monotone-coloured training hall lied in wait.

The 92nd floor scenario location, the 'Infinite Sanctum'.

One could only escape from this place after clearing a total of ten separate trials. And several Historical-grade Constellations, including the 'Bald General of Justice', have been trapped in here for many decades.

The One-eyed Maitreya complained bitterly. [That damn Cheok family fool. What a terrible hardship this is all because of that man.]

The first one to sniff out this <Infinite Sanctum> was Goryeo's First Sword.

「If you're a true martial art practitioner, then you simply have to go there. The challenges are very easy, so you could say that place is more like an undiscovered, hidden candy.」

The next person to clear this scenario after Cheok Jungyeong, the Maritime War God, said this:

「Indeed it is quite doable. You'll be accomplishing a great achievement by clearing it.」

The Historical-grade Constellations that longed to reach the level of martial prowess attained by Cheok Jungyeong and Lee Sun-Shin all headed to the 'Infinite Sanctum' after hearing those words.

And then, this was their sad state after several decades of failure.

[We've all momentarily forgotten that we are not the same as Cheok Jungyeong or Lee Sun-Shin.]

Regardless of where or what, talent would always pose an issue.

The Bald General spat out one sigh after another.

The collision noises of weapons repeatedly rang out from the centre of the training hall.

[Are those idiots still fighting?]

The One-eyed Maitreya's lone eye shifted over to the location where two old men were still duking it out. One was a tiger-like man with massive, rippling muscles, while his opponent was a fox-like man who enjoyed slim yet firm muscles himself.

Blinding shower of sparks exploded as two swords clashed in the air.

[Kim Yoo-Shin! I'll definitely defeat you today!]

[Gyebaek, you're still no match for me.]

The 「Stage Transformation」 suddenly activated around them and the Hwangsanbeol's battlefield spread out. It was none other than the very same battlefield Kim Dokja had recreated in the past via [Ganpyeongui]

Kim Yoo-Shin's Fragrant Dragon Flower Unit attacked Gyebaek, and the latter also unleashed his grandiose Status and crisscrossed the battlefield like a phantom.

It was indeed an amazing battle, but the other Historical-grade Constellations simply looked on with bored expression on their faces. The 'Slumbering Lady of Fine Brocade' shook her head helplessly, while 'Founder of Hannamgun' tutted disapprovingly.

The One-eyed Maitreya sneered. [Even though they are showing off like that, they know the truth. They know that this isn't Hwangsanbeol.]

There should have been a time when they fought earnestly. There was this deep-seated grudge, the resentment that couldn't be resolved even with one's death, after all.

These two betted everything of themselves and fought in Hwangsanbeol. Such a thing definitely did happen.

[Story, 'Sun Setting on Hwangsanbeol', is continuing with its storytelling every now and then.]

The fastest thing to get shaved away after becoming a Constellation was their own 'Story'. The more a Constellation depleted its story, the weaker its power would get. They would grow bored, disinterested, fall into depression, or lose themselves in tedium.

Constellations would desperately seek out other Stories in order to escape from such a quagmire. In other words, they would search for a new tragedy to escape from this horrible eternal cycle, even if it was only for a brief moment.

Claaaang!

As the sounds of the weapons clashing got faster, 'Seo Ae Il Pil' spoke. [Still, aren't they fighting a bit more spiritedly than before?]

[It seems that the fire's been rekindled after the 'Demon King of Salvation' summoned them back then.]

What the 'Slumbering Lady of Fine Brocade' said caused the Constellations to simultaneously shift their eyes over to the scenario channel. There they were, Kim Dokja and Yoo Joonghyuk crossing the bridge.

Han Sooyoung had arrived on the other side and was busy shouting out.

– Kim Dokja!! Faster!

The noisy clashings of weapons also ceased. Both Kim Yoo-Shin and Gyebaek stopped recreating Hwangsanbeol before anyone had noticed it and began holding their breaths. One by one, beings gathered around the display panel out of curiosity.

Several of them saw the bridge Kim Dokja was crossing and pretended to know what it was.

[Hold on, isn't that the 'Even-numbered bridge'? How nostalgic.]

[What rubbish are you spewing now? You weren't even a subscriber back then.]

[Hmph…]

Odin was chasing after the fleeing Kim Dokja and Yoo Joonghyuk. The godly spear Gungnir, famed for never missing its target, was now taking aim at the former's back. Not only that, the storm was growing stronger, gradually slowing down the duo's fleeing speed.

The One-eyed Maitreya shouted out. [What's this?! Odin, that guy is a Myth-grade Constellation, so what about saving his face…]

[Dokja-gun is also a Myth-grade Constellation.]

[Are all Myth-grades the same?? Our Kim Dokja is a still weak wet-behind-the-ears Myth-grade!]

As if to say their fight earlier was a lie, Kim Yoo-Shin and Gyebaek sat side by side before the screen and shouted at the same time.

[It seems that the descendant was negligent in his training.]

[He might summon me again through Ganpyeongui. I should prepare for…]

[You think he'll call you, Gyebaek?? Obviously, he'll summon me when in that sort of a situation.]

When the hint of Hwangsanbeol being recreated showed itself again, the One-Eyed Maitreya quickly issued a stern warning. [Both of you, shut your traps and just focus on the screen.]

[Anyways, that man isn't going to throw Kim Dokja again, I hope?]

Sparks were dancing around Yoo Joonghyuk's right arm as he ran on the bridge. Just as Constellations began worrying, he suddenly grabbed Kim Dokja by his collars with that arm.

[I knew it!! I bloody knew it…!!]

Yoo Joonghyuk then powerfully threw Kim Dokja forward, but also stepped onto the latter's back – and they began scything past the storm as if he was surfing the waves.

Right next second, the Gungnir thrown by Odin caused a massive explosion along with the blinding wall of light.

Kwa-aaaaaaah!!

When the light rescinded, only the debris of the destroyed bridge, [Bifrost], remained there.

[…What happened? Did they make it?]

The screen changed to display Kim Dokja's group safely entering the next cabin.

[…Oh, oh. They made it!]

As if this event also concerned them too, the Korean Peninsula's Constellations looked at each other and celebrated. Even Gyebaek and Kim Yoo-Shin awkwardly glanced at each other before lightly bumping fists. Unfortunately, their happiness couldn't last for long.

– Chase after them.

Because the <Asgard>'s Constellations began moving after the enraged Odin issued the order.

「<Kim Dokja's Company> will not be able to escape for long.」

Everyone here understood this fact. Even if this was Kim Dokja they were talking about, he still shouldn't be able to escape for long from the large Nebulas in such a disadvantageous stage.

Not only that, the channel had been opened publicly again, so other Nebulas in the ark should start aiming at <Kim Dokja's Company> as well.

As a heavy silence descended on the group, someone muttered out in resignation.

[I guess it'll be difficult this time…]

[Honestly, that friend should've died a long, long time ago.]

That prompted several Constellations to nod their heads.

Kim Dokja's life so far had been a series of miracles. Back when he fell below the Dongho bridge, back when he destroyed the [Absolute Throne], when he became the 'Demon King of Salvation', or even when he went to the 1863rd turn – he should've died many times over.

When he appeared as the 'Outer God King', every single Constellation thought that he'd definitely die for real this time.

「The Incarnation who was stuck in a much lower scenario than them only a few years ago.」

And now, Constellations were watching the back of Kim Dokja striding forward in the scenario way ahead of theirs. Some watched with envious eyes, while some, contempt at themselves. Everyone wanted to say something, but no one dared to open their mouth.

The first one to speak was Gyebaek. [I once overheard the Shindansu's prophecy in the past. This world-line can supposedly become the final world-line.]

No one could predict how far <Kim Dokja's Company> could go.

No one knew just where they would end up, or what kind of ■■ they would witness. Maybe, they might not even reach the end of this world like so many had predicted, and come to a dead stop.

Gyebaek grasped his greatsword and slowly got up from the spot. His glare was now locked on the portal in the centre of the training hall. That was where the final trial of the 'Infinite Sanctum' was.

Kim Yoo-Shin asked him. [Could you perhaps be planning to challenge it? You might really die this time.]

[If I die, then this place is my ■■.]

Gyebaek's reply caused Kim Yoo-Shin to grin. [Our ■■ is Hwangsanbeol.]

While cracking his neck muscles, Kim Yoo-Shin also stood up from his spot.

The third person to stand up was the Bald General of Justice. [I shall challenge it again as well.]

His eyes containing his resolution seemed to shine brightly.

That prompted several other Constellations to stand up as well – the 'Slumbering Lady of Fine Brocade', 'Founder of Hannamgun', 'Seo Ae Il Pil', and…

[I hope that you all haven't forgotten that time when we almost got slaughtered while attempting it as a party.]

The One-eyed Maitreya's words caused everyone's complexion to grow gloomy. They kept failing to break past the last gateway of this scenario until now.

[However, we can't go and aid them if we don't break through that trial.]

The thing was, the final pages of the 'Infinite Sanctum' couldn't be cleared with so few participants. It was just that the one-man-army Cheok Jungyeong and Lee Sun-Shin leading an armada were freaks of nature, that was all. If only there were handful more Constellations here…

It was then, a bright light exploded in the corner of the sanctum.

[Someone is entering the 'Infinite Sanctum's' tenth floor!]

The One-eyed Maitreya's complexion brightened as he shouted out. [Oh?! There are newbies incoming?]

Two beings revealed themselves from the receding light.

A short while later, the One-eyed Maitreya's jaw dazedly slackened after realizing who these two were. One was a very big person, while the other was very small.

The first one to speak was the smaller figure.

[It's just as Cheok Jungyeong has said. You all are still stuck here? What a bunch of pathetic fools.] Kyrgios spat out as vicious fighting spirit oozed out from his body. [My disciple might die because you lot have been meandering about.]

* * *

As the rays of light shattered simultaneously, both Yoo Joonghyuk and I got sucked into the worldview's exit. When I regained my wits, I found myself being trampled by his feet.

"I told you not to throw me!!"

He must've found stepping on my back rather unsanitary, because he began lightly dusting his combat boots.

Han Sooyoung waiting for us quickly approached us. Judging from her expression, she must've been planning to give me another earful. Whether it was a fortunate thing or not, though, Anna Croft opened her mouth first, instead.

"I had no idea you'd utilise the Stage Transformation in that manner. Honestly, I'm somewhat impressed, Demon King of Salvation."

Han Sooyoung shifted her glare to Anna next. "Didn't you see all this through your [Precognition]?"

"I did see people crossing the bridge, but I had no idea that it'd be that kind of a bridge."

"What a complete rip-off you are."

I ignored these two's bickering and scanned our new surroundings. The corridors resembling a tree branch's vascular bundle stretched out in all directions.

It seemed that this was the corridor of the 'Final Ark'. I couldn't see the 'Zarathustras' that entered here before us anywhere, though.

Anna Croft closed her eyes and felt for something for a bit, before opening her mouth. "It seems that everyone has scattered in different passageways. Fortunately, no one has lost their lives yet."

"Our companions seem to be safe too," said Yoo Joonghyuk, and I nodded my head.

[Influences of other myths will be weaker in the applicable location.]

[Nebula, <Kim Dokja's Company>'s connection is being established again!]

Now that we were outside the <Asgard>'s worldview, I could start detecting the Stories of my companions a little bit. I sensed that they had been scattered here and there.

[Story, 'Demon King of Salvation', is letting its existence known!]

I strongly emitted my Story in order to gather my companions in one place. If it was them, they should be able to locate me without too much fuss.

Boooom!!

Meanwhile, a chain of explosions rocked out from the <Asgard>'s exit we closed shut behind us. Some people were trying to open the door and come out. It was obvious who they were.

"Let's continue moving."

Chapter 499: Ep. 95 - Gaecheon/開天, III

We avoided the <Asgard>'s Constellations and ran in the complicated network of the passageways.

[Constellation, 'One Who Lost His Arm to the Wolf of Apocalypse', is sniffing out the scent of blood.]

[The constellation 'God of Harp and Horn's' musical notes are hovering near your ears.]

[Constellation, 'Progenitor of the Reincarnators', is tracing your soul!]

[Constellation, 'Master of Abydos', declares that you won't get lucky the second time!]

While some Constellations cheered us on through the channel, there were others chasing us down through the view from the channel, too. These stars bared their murderous intentions from beyond the tall walls of their own worldview the moment our location had been revealed.

There was a reason why we hadn't been caught yet, and that would be because our group consisted of us four.

"We should not go to the right. I'm getting a bad premonition from there."

We trusted in Anna Croft's hunch and changed our direction. She might be our enemy, but in times like this, she also happened to be the most reliable ally, as well.

Forks in the road continued to appear.

[Story, 'Predictive Plagiarism', has begun its storytelling!]

"Odds of death going to the right, 92%. 44% to the left. Keep going forward!"

Han Sooyoung shouted out while reading through countless cliches in her head.

"What are the odds of survival when going forward?"

"I don't know!"

She shot me a glare and ran in front of us.

"Coming from above."

This hunch was coming from none other than the protagonist himself. Yoo Joonghyuk continuously fired off [Breaking the Sky Sword Aura]; Constellations screamed as they were struck by the pre-emptive attacks and collapsed on the passage's floor. I thought I could hear intermittent noises of [Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship] cutting down some things.

"Continue running."

I abruptly realized the reason why the four of us had been gathered like this.

「These four were most likely to clear this scenario safely.」

One of us was a prophet, the other one was a writer, and another one was a regressor. As for the last person…

"Stop here."

My words caused the companions to stop immediately. All three of them were looking at me; I glanced back at them and slowly approached the cabin before us.

Anna Croft grabbed my shoulder. "…You aren't planning to enter this cabin, I hope."

Yoo Joonghyuk didn't say anything.

I looked back at my companions and addressed them. "Passing through here is the only way."

"Can't you see what's written on the door of that cabin??"

No, I could see it very well. And at the same time, I could also very well sense the enormous Statuses of the Constellations right behind us, too.

<Olympus>.

「In order to reach the location I want, we must cross <Olympus>'s worldview.」

According to the Story left behind by Bihyung, we had no choice in the matter. It was rather obvious that Zeus, having tasted humiliation outside, would never let us pass.

"Odin behind, and Zeus in front," said Yoo Joonghyuk as he stepped forward. "If we break through here, we'll have a method to fight against them?"

"Yes, definitely."

We sensed Odin's Status right behind us now.

Han Sooyoung shouted out. "Dammit, in that case, hurry up and open it! Those bastards are almost here!"

We kicked the <Olympus>'s door down and jumped in. Felt as if something was powerfully sucking us in, and when I regained my wits, we were busy walking in the skies above <Olympus> itself.

The immense sky castle of <Olympus> could be seen in the distance.

[Nebula, <Olympus>'s Constellations have confirmed the identities of the intruders!]

The atmosphere grew stifling; thunderclouds gathered in no time at all and covered up the sky.

[Constellation, 'Throne of Lightning', is exercising his influence on the entirety of <Olympus>!]

<Olympus>'s king was now waiting for us. As well as the 12 gods guarding his sides, too.

[Constellation, 'Almighty Sun', is mobilising his chariot!]

[Constellation, 'Atrocious War God', is lifting his sword!]

[Constellation, 'Pure Hunter of the Moonlight', is nocking an arrow!]

Below us on the ocean, we could see the mythical monsters waiting for us, too.

[Constellation, 'Monster of the Labyrinth', is howling in your direction!]

[Constellation, 'Fairy that Sings About Death', is singing about your death!]

Everything in this worldview was our enemy.

Ku-rururururu!

"Move!!"

My [Way of the Wind] and Yoo Joonghyuk's [Air Walk] activated simultaneously.

Anna Croft's [Way of the Storm Winds] and Han Sooyoung's [Dark Clouds Big Dipper] followed us right afterwards. We crossed the sky with the fastest speed we could bring out.

Meanwhile, the thunderclouds took on an even more ominous vibe.

[Demon King of Salvation!!]

The 12 gods stuck very close to our rear.

Ares's greatsword sliced the air and descended upon us. I swung my Unbroken Faith and blocked the attack just in time. Along with the noise of 'Kwa-du-duk!', it felt as if every joint in my body was collapsing; it was like being crushed by a tank, actually. This was the true might of the 12 gods now carrying their own worldview on their backs.

I unleashed Status from my entire body and spoke in true voice. [Do not take us lightly, Ares.]

[Giant Story, 'Torch that Swallowed the Myth', is screeching out!]

I wasn't sure about anyone else, but at the least, I'd not lose to Ares. Because I already possessed a Story of winning against him.

[Story, 'One Who Defeated the God of War', has begun its storytelling!]

Unfortunately, our situation had already run into serious problems.

The 'Pure Hunter of Moonlight' Artemis was pouncing on Han Sooyoung wrapped in [Black Flame], while Yoo Joonghyuk flying in the air was already engaged in an intense battle against 'Spokesperson of Justice and Wisdom' Athena.

Anna Croft, situated at the lowest place among us, was beset by <Olympus>'s lower-ranked Constellations.

[I used to cheer you on, Kim Dokja.]

A voice came from behind me.

That was from the fastest Constellation in this sky. The motifs of wings could be seen on his shoes.

[Unfortunately, you shouldn't have come here.]

It was the 'Master of Skywalk', Hermes.

He looked at me with a genuinely rueful expression and spoke. [My father, he's been truly angered.]

And then, the thunderclouds glowing brightly until then finally exploded; everything seemed to enter slow motion. It felt like the view of the sky was melting down slowly.

The lightning seemed to blanket the entire world. None living within this worldview would be able to dodge Zeus's wrath.

Han Sooyoung was looking in this direction, shouting something. I silently mouthed the following to her.

'It's alright'.

I slowly sucked my breath in and focused my mind. Ares was smiling triumphantly as if the battle had been decided already. I ignored him and raised my sword up high like a lightning rod.

KWA-BOOM!!

The thunderclap of the sky gathered towards me. This Status threatened burst all of my Story veins in one go. However, I endured it. More specifically, the darkness wavering about near the tip of my hand was sucking in Zeus's thunderbolt.

An indescribable scream exploded out from my mouth.

[Giant Story, 'Torch that Swallowed the Myth', is growling!]

My vision was dyed in red, and Story began flooding out from my mouth.

Pah-chuchuchuchu…!

Zeus then unleashed an even greater amount of Status.

I couldn't endure anymore. My powerless body began falling from the air.

「And now, it's done.」

[This is the end, Demon King of Salvation. Even if it's you, in our 'worldview', you are-!]

My helplessly falling body after being struck by the thunderbolt suddenly stopped in the air. The Unbroken Faith almost slipping out of my grasp was gaining some strength. Next up, Ares's frozen-stiff expression could be seen. The expression of the God of War, who'd never submit to fear, was filled with emotions of terror.

「Someone was holding Kim Dokja's sword together with him.」

It was a very large and sturdy hand. A true voice akin to the noble night being carved rang out vividly.

[Why do you think this worldview is yours alone?]

The gentle yet deep darkness embraced my falling body.

[How boundlessly arrogant you are, Ares.]

The night swallowing up the thunderbolt began spreading in the heavens.

[Constellation, 'Father of the Rich Night', is incarnating into the 'Final Ark'!]

[Constellation, 'Queen of the Darkest Spring', is incarnating into the 'Final Ark'!]

Indeed, <Olympus>'s myths weren't Zeus's alone. The reason why their shining daylight could become 'myths' in the first place was because the night existed to call them the day.

['Underworld' is manifesting onto the ground above!]

A world sleeping in the deepest part of the underground was now waking up.

[Hades…!]

The King of Underworld set me down on the ground and spoke calmly towards the sky. [It's time to settle this, my ancient brothers.]

Hades's scythe raised up to the sky screeched out, causing the darkness of the underground to pour out towards the heavens like the waterfall flowing in reverse.

It was the Underworld's army. When the Judges issued the order to advance, the guardian of <Tartarus>'s underbelly, Cerberus, roared out viciously.

[You lowly creatures from the underground dare to-!]

Heroes of this worldview crossed their swords. More heroes aboard the Argos entered the battlefield next.

The great army belonging to Zeus and the 12 gods was truly immense. Judge Aeacus collided against Hephaistus, while Cerberus and Minotaur began ripping into each other.

Soldiers from the forest symbolising Artemis rushed in. The 'Wise Astrologer' Chiron's hooves trampled on the Underworld's army.

[No matter how deep your night is-!]

It was then, Chiron's head flew off into the sky.

Monsters crawling out from the underground used their huge fingers to rip off his head and began chewing on it.

[Ze-u-s-!!]

Voices of unfathomable sorrow and resentment resounded out. I knew their owners pretty well.

「And so, <Olympus>'s final <Gigantomachia> began in this fashion.」

The titans, Gigantes; every single titan, having spent all those sorrowful years huddled underground, started revealing their figures under <Olympus>'s night.

Not only that, monsters boasting physiques several times larger than these Gigantes rose up as well. They were beings that I ran into some time ago back in the <Underworld>'s prison.

[All titans of purgatory are looking up at <Olympus>'s sky.]

The three brothers of Hecatoncheires – the hundred-hander titan Briareus that fought alongside me back in the <Gigantomachia> spoke to me.

[We have finally come this far, child.]

One of Briareus's hands lightly brushed past my head.

[This battlefield is for you.]

The titans challenging the heaven's authority stood up while stepping on the night. Their roars shook the skies of <Olympus>, their Statuses mighty enough to threaten Zeus's throne.

And in the centre of this battlefield, Zeus was fighting fiercely against Hades. The collision of these two Myth-grade Constellations caused the pitch-black night and day to intermingle, and the world's time and space collapsed.

Persephone commanding the Underworld's army addressed me directly.

[Now, go. Do not ever look back. Go, and witness the end you wish to see.]

I nodded and raised my tottering body up. I swallowed the [Life and Death Pill] Lee Seolhwa gave me, and all of my fried nerves began recovering bit by bit. I unsteadily walked forward in the battlefield where flesh got torn apart and blood was raining down.

Han Sooyoung and Yoo Joonghyuk, plus Anna Croft, stood there waiting for me, having broken past this scene of pure pandemonium earlier.

Han Sooyoung ran up to me and supported my figure. I looked behind and saw the corpses of heroes, their eyes still wide open; the stars that fell from the skies; Stories that would not be told anymore, were now looking at me with resentful eyes.

「This was the path I had chosen.」

I knew this would happen from the beginning. It was obvious that the Underworld would make their move if I came here.

For the sake of ■■ that I desired, I used all of their Stories.

[Giant Story, 'Torch that Swallowed the Myth', is crying out!]

We could see the exit of <Olympus> in the distance. That was where we had to go. However, there was a Constellation blocking our path.

I had to ask him why. "Dionysus, are you going to stop us?"

The 'God of Wine and Ecstasy', Dionysus leading his congregation was looking straight back at me. He must've downed several bottles of booze already, because his cheeks were quite obviously flushed red.

He stared at me with drunken, unfocused eyes, before opening his mouth while gripping the wine bottle. [All of you, step aside.]

The words of the master prompted the Bacchus's fanatic believers to make way. And we walked on that path. The Siren's song and Orpheus's musical performance could be heard wafting in from somewhere. Also, I heard the sound of someone I knew dying among them, too.

「Kim Dokja didn't look back.」

My view shook as if I was intoxicated, too.

Yet, we walked and walked some more. Eventually, we reached <Olympus>'s exit.

Dionysus was right behind us. If I look back, I should be able to see his expression filled with sorrow. He was a Constellation who really liked our story.

[Kim Dokja. My <Olympus> has no place in the conclusion you're heading to, right?]

I couldn't reply.

「"That's because I like your story."」

The one who had been watching my Story for a very long time, and rescued me many, many times in the past.

「"Several Constellations including me believe that you're the one capable of reaching ■■."」

I was about to look back, but Dionysus spoke to me first.

[It's been fun, oh the great, noble star.]

I heard the sound of a world closing behind me.

My feet didn't want to move. I stood there for a long time without saying anything, and eventually, someone addressed me.

"It's not over yet."

We began walking towards the darkness of the ark.

Our destination was right before us.

Chapter 500: Ep. 95 - Gaecheon/開天, IV

After exiting from <Olympus>, we remained silent for a long while. We either ran or walked; we ran, and then ran some more. Only the hollow screams could be heard in the starless emptiness.

Would those screams be recorded as Stories, too? And would someone else listen to them later? Just how many more Stories need to repeat themselves before this world came to an end?

"Kim Dokja."

"I know."

The voice coming from Han Sooyoung still supporting me helped me to get a grip on myself.

Eventually, the doorway to the cabin I was searching for could be seen in the distance. Even this far, the door looked much smaller and shabbier compared to other cabin's.

The corridor we went past earlier was getting noisier. Constellations from different factions were colliding and making those noises. I didn't hesitate and pushed the door open.

[You have entered 'Prop Storage'.]

"What's this? What's this shabby…"

Han Sooyoung's utterances came to an immediate stop after she clapped her eyes on the room's interior.

The room so big that eyes couldn't see the end of, white sheets covering many places within it; if one were to designate this place as the 'prop storage', then it'd surely be biggest in the known universe.

「The cabin where 'scenario's everything' had been gathered.」

Bihyung's Story could be heard next.

「All the props that had been used in various scenarios are displayed there. From consumable items to the scenario's main rewards, and even Star Relics from the Nebulas that lost their power.」

The 'mucus of the Hammer Seahorse' and the 'thorn of the Stonehawk' I used to hunt the water dragon were also in here.

Back then, I thought I was really going to die, but… Seeing them like this made me reminisce about my past.

"Not bad. Some of them are still fairly useful."

Yoo Joonghyuk had strode over to the props even before I had noticed it and began exchanging his equipment. He sprayed the Story metal coating on his [Black Heavenly Demon Sword]'s blade, swapped out his coat with a new one, and even chucked away his ancient combat boots for a new pair before picking up several Star Relics.

Seeing how his eyes were sparkling so dangerously like that, he must be feeling very pleased with himself right now.

"Wha? 'Still fairly useful'?? I haven't even seen some of these before! Let's quickly grab some and bounce."

Han Sooyoung too had dived into the piles of items by then, and hurriedly picked the stuff she could use. Even Anna Croft, lucky enough to be supported by a wealthy Nebula until recently, bent down and carefully went through the items on display.

Like a group of unremarkable Incarnations that stumbled onto the scenario's hidden piece, we sought out items, exchanged our equipment, and shared happy grins with one another.

「They all knew, however. If they didn't do this, they wouldn't be able to endure this moment.」

Yet another noise of explosions rang outside the room.

It sounded much closer than before.

"…So, what's in the next room, then?"

Was it because of fatigue? Han Sooyoung had stopped [Predictive Plagiarism]'s story for now. Our gazes met and for a moment there, she raised the corner of her brow slightly.

「"You think writers enjoy writing stories all the time?"」

I could understand the meaning behind her grin now.

Even if the world was destroyed, even if the scenario barrelled towards tragedy, she'd remain as a writer, always. And that was why it was so much more painful for her. All those different pains yet to be described must still be inside her head even now.

「And that was why only him, the 'reader', could make this choice.」

"No, we'll make our stand right here."

「A choice that only the one filled with greed and obstinacy to see the desired ending could make.」

Han Sooyoung erupted in anger. "We weren't going to destroy the core??"

"If we are to reach the core, we need to go through other worldviews of large Nebulas."

"Can't we just go around or something?! Like, if we exit through that door-!"

Han Sooyoung pointed to a plain door visible in the corner of the room.

"That door will take us to <Emperor>."

"What about that one…"

"That door is connected to <Vedas>."

"Son of a…"

Han Sooyoung freaked out, and as she distanced herself from the door, she made sure to place the locks on them.

The explosion noise rang out once more. Heavy vibrations resounded out, and someone began pounding on the cabin's door. Along with the sounds of some things exploding, the cabin's walls shook about violently.

"…They are right before us, it seems," said Anna Croft.

Han Sooyoung scowled deeply and began massaging her forehead.

[Story, 'Predictive Plagiarism', has resumed its storytelling!]

In the end, she had to reactivate her Story. Plot developments she didn't want to predict were probably being drawn inside her head.

Both Anna Croft possessing [Precognition], and Yoo Joonghyuk and his ability to read the patterns after living through countless regressions, began getting ready to fight as well.

"We need to fight in this place. This is the only room where we have any hope of victory."

Every cabin within the 'Final Ark' contained the recreation of large Nebula's worldview.

「However, there was one location in this ark where no worldview had been recreated.」

And that was none other than this 'Prop storage', where items to be used in various scenarios were stored away.

[Applicable cabin isn't under the influence of any worldview.]

That was the reason why I chose this room as our battleground.

"They are here."

The moment Yoo Joonghyuk unsheathed the [Black Heavenly Demon Sword], the doors in all four sides burst open simultaneously. Constellations began flooding in through the doorways next.

[Constellation, 'Master of December 25th', is incarnating into the ark!]

[Constellation, 'One Responsible for the Universe's Rotation', is joining the battleground along with its servants!]

<Vedas>.

[Constellation, 'Master of Abydos', is incarnating in rage!]

[Constellation, 'Official in Charge of Earthquakes and Volcanoes', is waking up from its ancient slumber!]

[Constellation, 'Ruler of Inhalation and Exhalation', is waking up its Stories!]

<Papyrus>.

[Constellation, 'One-eyed Father', is fixing his grip on his spear.]

[Constellation, 'One Who Lost His Arm to the Wolf of Apocalypse', has discovered you!]

<Asgard>.

[Constellation, 'Great Mother God Who Created Man Out of Earth', is incarnating into the ark!]

[Constellation, 'Daeracheonjon', is incarnating into the ark!]

[Constellation, 'Emperor of Heavens', is sitting on his throne!]

[Constellation, 'Master of the Three-Pointed Double-Edged Spear', is taking out all of his divine weapons!]

…And even <Emperor>, too.

The moment all the doors of the storage broke down, Stories within the space collided and expanded. The 'Giant Stories' from differing worldviews were letting their voices heard loud and clear.

Han Sooyoung chuckled. "Everyone who hates us has gathered in one spot."

[Over there!]

Just as someone shouted that out, we quickly retreated to the back; along with a loud explosion, jet-black ash danced in the spot we'd been standing on a moment ago.

['Giant Stories' have discovered a new cabin!]

[Portion of Stories have begun transplanting their worldviews to the new cabin!]

We didn't have much time here.

Kwa-boooom!!

Explosions rang out as we unsheathed our individual weapons. I too had already kitted myself out from head to toe in all sorts of props from various scenarios.

With our backs pressed against each other, we faced the four cardinal directions and unleashed our Statuses towards the incoming Constellations.

Han Sooyoung fired out [Black Flame] and flung herself forward. "All of you, just die!!"

A pitch-black sphere she threw flew in the air and landed amidst the Constellations. I wondered what that was, only for a stonking flame wave to explode out from the item.

[Kuwaaaaaah!!]

I instantly recognised what that was. That was the 95th scenario's reward item called [Nightmare Flame Wave] from the 241st regression turn. It was a horrifying Story weapon containing flames dragged out from <Eden>'s hell that unleashed perpetual flames in the area of effect for the next ten or so years.

[Measly flames from a destroyed Nebula dares to…!]

Along with 'Fuuu-!' noise, Nuwa's soil created a path in the middle of the conflagration. The <Emperor>'s Constellations ran on that road and pounced on us. Some of them happened to be the same lot that fought against us back during the Journey to the West.

Han Sooyoung noisily gritted her teeth. "They managed to show up here, yet why haven't you come yet, Black Flame Dragon!"

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', shouts out that you must wait for a little bit longer!]

The number of Constellations entering through the doors easily surpassed a couple of hundreds – three hundred, four, five… every Constellation found in the worldviews were now streaming into this huge room.

And as their numbers continued to grow, the effects of the「Stage Transformation」grew stronger in the middle of them. The once-colourless floor morphed into the desolate desert and a massive pyramid suddenly rose up from there.

The 'Master of Abydos', Osiris spoke up. [I was wondering who managed to wake me up, but this…]

Right afterwards, clouds gathered in the sky above and the panoramic view of the heavenly worlds spread out.

The 'Great Mother God Who Created Man out of Earth' Nuwa spoke to us next. [It's not too late, children. I can make spots available for you all.]

[On whose authority?]

I thought I could hear the trumpeting of elephants, only to realize that it was the 'Master of December 25th' Mithra riding atop the head of a gigantic turtle speaking up.

[Only punishment fitting for those rejecting the 'celebration day for my revival' is death.]

Odin sitting on the edge of the Universe Tree's branch stared at me with the eye capable of seeing through all things in creation.

[Oh you foolish star, did you honestly believe you can fight against us all?]

A loud burst of laughter could be heard; all the stars, their Giant Stories already secured within this safe 'ark', were laughing at us.

[With a Story that hasn't even reached 'myth' level yet, how dare you…]

The 'Bird that Devours Thunder' tried to throw some third-rate utterances in our direction, but then, its mouth suddenly emitted 'Puh-shoo-shuk' noise before being cleanly penetrated from behind.

Yoo Joonghyuk had somehow appeared behind the creature's back and cut the fool's head off right there and then.

"You talk too much."

[Kill them!]

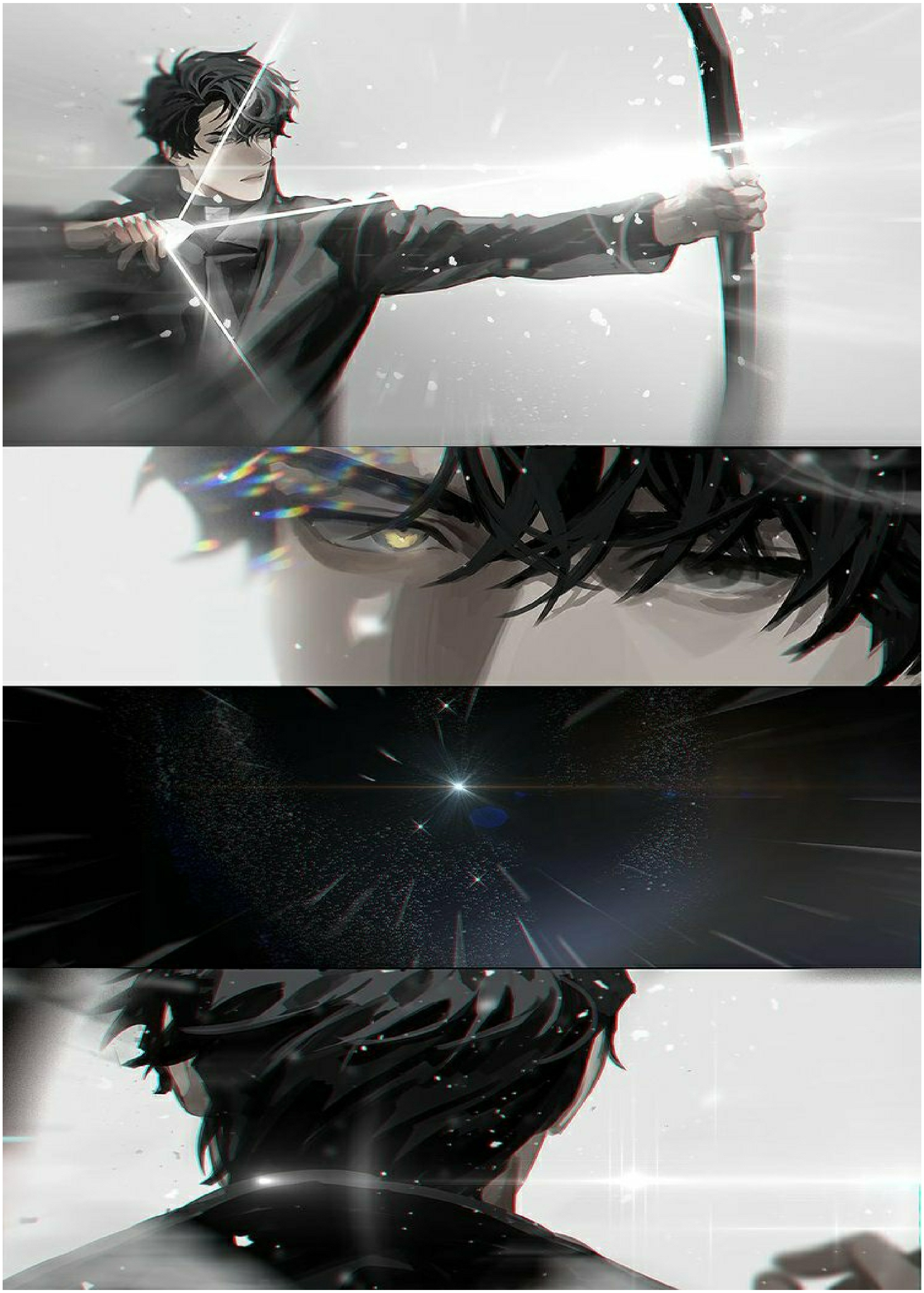
The battle commenced. We were overwhelmingly outnumbered, but we aggressively utilised the nearby props to their fullest in our fight. Story weapons we could rely on were scattered about all over the place. Especially for the weapon storage for the 60th scenario, which seemed to be designed solely with Yoo Joonghyuk in mind.

[Companion, 'Life and Death Companions', has begun its storytelling!]

[Companion, 'Hell of Eternity', has begun its storytelling!]

Yoo Joonghyuk's talents displayed earlier during the 'Demon King Selection' battles were now shining brightly.

He was the 'all-rounder'; he mastered handling every type of weapons out there while living through 1863 regression turns, and now, he was massacring Constellations with a great bow.



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[Kill him first!]

Historical-grade Constellations were sniped to death by Yoo Joonghyuk's rapid firing, and the debris falling from the dying stars created protective walls. We ran between them and continued to fight.

"Dodge to the right!"

Almost at the same time as Anna's warning rang out, a rapid attack from the Myth-grade Constellation swept by near our heels. Avoiding fatal injuries after getting struck by such attacks would be quite difficult; the stock of Lee Seolhwa's [Life and Death Pills] had almost run out by now, so we weren't able to deal with serious wounds anymore.

Lower-ranked Constellations of Asgard pounced on Anna Croft.

[How dare you betray our Nebula??]

Splat!

The head of the Constellation roaring out exploded, just like that. A lengthy tongue-like thing flew out from behind Anna Croft and burst open that Constellation's head.

[Constellation who likes changing gender is smirking.]

The backer that helped her betray the Nebula was now helping us, too.

"Kim Dokja! Holding out any further will be impossible! Yoo Joonghyuk's reached his limit, too!"

The attentions of the Myth-grade Constellations were focused on Yoo Joonghyuk; the weapon storage was burning in flames, while he was swinging a huge hammer around to ward off the Constellations, his whole body bathed in blood.

「Kim Dokja began rummaging through the Prop storage to find something.」

"…Found it."

I picked up a test tube located at the very end of the [Star Relic] category. This was written on the label stuck to the tube: [Shindansu's seed].

I unhesitantly dropped that seed on the floor. It quickly sprouted a new bud and in a blink of an eye, grew into a tree as tall as me. But it stopped there.

[Giant Story, 'Shindansu', is spreading its roots!]

[Giant Story, 'Shindansu', is perceiving your existence.]

[Giant Story, 'Shindansu', requires a Story for the sake of Gaecheon(開天)!]

The whole prop storage was now up in flames.

Yoo Joonghyuk was holding up pretty well until now; Constellations looking into his venomous eyes freaked out and yelled at each other.

[This is the 'Prop Storage'! Use items to fight him off!]

The first thing they found was an item we were quite familiar with as well – the [Absolute Throne]. The core item of the fourth scenario that granted anyone acquiring it with the Outer God's blessing.

The Historical-grade Constellations discovering the throne rushed towards it with greed-filled eyes.

I stopped Han Sooyoung from rushing there too. "Let them be."

The Historical-grade Constellations swarmed towards it.

[The throne is mine!]

The moment someone stepped on the [Absolute Throne], I clutched the [Shindansu]'s leaf. No matter how hard I pondered it, the Story that I could afford to feed this guy had to be this one.

A portion of Constellations felt something was off and hurriedly shouted at the [Absolute Throne].

[Wait!! Stop!]

Just as the Status leaking out from the [Absolute Throne] was about to flood in this direction, something buried deep inside my chest began to writhe.

[Story, 'King of a Kingless World', has begun its storytelling!]

[Giant Story, 'Shindansu', has detected the beginning of a new Story!]

「This story began by destroying that throne.」

Kwa-kwakwakwakwa!!

The [Shindansu] gobbled up the Story and acquired the explosive amount of Probability, allowing it to grow larger again.

[A new worldview is taking root in the applicable location!]

「Shindansu」. The large Nebula <Hongik>'s Giant Story.

I addressed the Constellations. "As you have said, we don't have a 'myth'. However, we have always been fighting together with a certain 'myth'."

And that Story began telling its story.

「No other myths could escape from this story.」

The [Shindansu] instantly reached up to the storage's ceiling and massive explosion noises resounded out next. The ark's ceiling began collapsing.

[Gaecheon(開天) is commencing!]

The heavens started opening up as powerful whirlwinds swirled around.

[Aged stars of an ancient Nebula are waking up from their endless slumber!]

Accompanied by the blinding rays of light, shadows of tree branches in full bloom were cast on the torn sky. Stars began appearing on the ends of the shadows like ripened fruits.

[That throne, it's been a while.]

Seven stars were now dangling on the ends of the branches. Constellations of the Big Dipper that aided me with destroying the [Absolute Throne] were there.

Countless Constellations began descending from the sky like shooting stars.

[Constellation, 'Bald General of Justice', is incarnating into the ark!]

[Constellation, 'King Heungmu', is incarnating into the ark!]

[Constellation, 'Slumbering Lady of Fine Brocade', is incarnating into the ark!]

[Constellation, 'Heaven's Wind God', is incarnating into the ark!]

Only these stars were willing to become our allies in this ark.

A sword crashed down like lightning among the descending Constellations and the [Absolute Throne] exploded into bits. The Constellation trampling on the false king above the wrecked throne looked at me and spoke.

[Good work, descendant.]

[Constellation, 'Goryeo's First Sword', is incarnating into the ark!]

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* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)

Chapter 501: Ep. 96 - Demon-like Judge of Fire, I

[You have forcefully entered the 'Final Ark'!]

Jung Heewon was greeted by the swarm of Constellations as soon as finding herself inside the ark.

[You have entered the 'Hot Naraka'!]

She couldn't make heads nor tails of what on earth was going on here.

"…Why did it have to be hell, of all places? Did I commit a lot of sin in my past life?"

There was no mistaking the fact that the enemies before her eyes were aiming for her life, though. Jung Heewon discovered the pot-bellied but emaciated 'starving ghosts' tripping over each other and rushing towards her like falling mountains, and urgently shouted out.

"Uriel!!"

There was no reply. But Uriel's blessing was still permeating within her. As white wings grew out from Jung Heewon's back, crimson corona permeated within her entire frame.

['Hour of Judgement' is activating!]

The moment she swung her sword, the swarm of starving ghosts before were completely swept away.

[Evil-leaning Constellations have picked up your scent.]

Enemies rushed in without an end. The ones found in this 「Hot Naraka」 seemed to be parasitic creatures of other worldviews.

Fortunately, she wasn't alone in this place.

"Heewon-ssi!"

Lee Hyunsung hurriedly ran up to her location from somewhere and stood back-to-back with her.

"I guess you've committed a lot of wrong yourself, Hyunsung-ssi."

[Demon King, 'Ruler of Crimson Fog', is glaring at you!]

[Demon King, 'Monstrous Armed Duke', is revealing its animosity towards you!]

[Constellation, 'Hell's Parasite', is observing you!]

[Constellation, 'Flame of Muspelheim', is patiently waiting.]

Their magical energy would eventually run out trying to fend off all these starving ghosts. Not only that, hell's Constellations and Demon Kings were waiting for an opening to strike, as well.

"Behind you!"

Before they realized it, a swarm of starving ghosts sneaked closer from her rear and pounced with their large maws wide open. However, a cannon shell aiming at these creatures flew in from somewhere and blew them away.

"Heewon eonni!"

It was from Lee Jihye's battleship. Jung Heewon's complexion brightened as she shouted out.

"Are the kids with you?"

"I think they were dropped somewhere near Sangah and Seolhwa eonni's vicinity! As for Pildu ahjussi-!"

"We don't have the time to worry about him, too!"

Gyaaaaaaahk!

More and more of hell's denizens appeared. The demon counts they fought back in the [Dark Castle], and duke-level demons they encountered back in the [Demon Realm] also began making their appearances, as well.

Every one of them had become a part of this hell, to be used as subjects for the next scenario.

"An Archangel!!"

"Kill them, and we can also acquire the positions of Demon Kings!"

Lee Jihye's bombardment towards them commenced. All the cannons in the [Turtle Dragon] spat out flames, causing the hell's terrain to transform and lava to spew out uncontrollably. Demons struck by the bits and lumps of lava all melted down, but their numbers didn't seem to decrease at all.

[Applicable worldview is a domain ruled by 'Evil'.]

Individuals thought to be dead were rising back up again a few minutes later. The spooked Lee Jihye hurriedly shouted out.

"General-nim!! Where are you?! Why aren't any Constellations showing up here??"

Unfortunately, no Constellation replied to her calling. Not even Uriel, Maritime War God, nor the 999th turn's Lee Hyunsung…

They now had to rely only on their own strength to fight.

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

It was then, sparks began dancing in the air.

[Ba-aaaht!]

A roundish portal opened up and Biyoo popped out from there.

"Biyoo!!"

She used to be no bigger than a soccer ball, but now she had grown so big that it was difficult to wrap one's arms around her.

「All Dokkaebis grow up by eating Stories.」

Biyoo yelled out 'Baaaaht!' and curled up as powerful sparks exploded out from her figure. Those dancing sparks then tore open a wall of the cabin.

Dudududududu!

Shells burst out of the automated turrets emerging from the torn-open wall.

"Are you alright!?"

Gong Pildu's 'moving castle' was there. His [Armed Fortress] now boasted a scale of a complete battle-ready castle after his Stigma had evolved once more. And on top of this fortress were Yoo Sangah, Lee Seolhwa, as well as the two kids.

"Eonni! Ahjussi! Come up this way!"

Jung Heewon and Lee Hyunsung grabbed Lee Seolhwa's offered hands and jumped up towards the top of the fortress.

Meanwhile, Lee Jihye's longsword gleamed dangerously towards the starving ghosts madly chasing after them by climbing up on the fortress's walls.

「In a world where no light from the stars could illuminate them, the members of <Kim Dokja's Company> rescued their own by themselves.」

"Let's get started."

Through the authority of the [Lotus Pedestal], Yoo Sangah began restricting the enemies' movements; in the meantime, Lee Jihye and Gong Pildu continued to fire away.

The [Chimera Dragon] sat on the far edge of the fortress and fired its Breath at the Constellations approaching from the air. As for the enemies that managed to break through this pandemonium and climb up successfully, they were greeted by Jung Heewon's falling sword strikes.

Lee Hyunsung's [Steel Transformation] protected the skins of his companions, while Lee Seolhwa treated him as he got injured instead of them.

「This combination had been dreamed up by a certain person a long time ago.」

However, there was one boy who didn't appear in the original story.

"Aaaaaaah!"

['Wall that Divides Good and Evil' is exercising its authority!]

[Constellation, 'Ruler of the Deepest Pit' is bringing its own subordinates!]

Tsu-chuchuchu…!

A pitch-black swarm of locusts rushed in and blanketed the skies of hell. These creatures latched onto the Incarnation Bodies of the demons reviving from their deaths and began tearing into them.

[Aaaaahk!!!]

Demons cried out in despair as they fell into the eternal cycle of their regenerating flesh painfully getting ripped apart and devoured repeatedly.

Jung Heewon's eyes shone in the light of hope as she observed the strengths of the starving ghosts declining gradually. The one-sidedly disadvantageous battle situation was slowly but surely turning on its head. Although destroying this 'Hot Naraka' would still be asking for too much, at the least, buying enough time seemed quite possible.

The only problem right now had to do with the Constellations that hadn't joined the battle yet.

Tsu-chuchuchu…!

It was then, the stars filling up the skies of this hellish landscape suddenly began moving towards a certain direction. Constellations pounded on the interior wall of the 'Hot Naraka' and destroyed it before streaming outside through there.

Once the lights from the Constellations disappeared, the balance of the worldview also collapsed as well. The starving ghosts could no longer recover and sunk back inside the abyss of hell itself.

The companions finally got to take a breather and stared at each other.

"…What just happened?"

Lee Seolhwa asked that question, but no one answered back.

One thing was for sure, though – an event humongous enough to make those stars lose interest in this place was happening somewhere right now.

Everyone's gaze was fixed on Gong Pildu next. He groaned loudly and began driving his [Armed Fortress].

"Fine, fine. I got it, so stop egging me on."

<Kim Dokja's Company> too followed after those stars and began moving. Constellations flooding out from all corners of the 'Final Ark' were flying towards a certain cabin as if they were being sucked in by a black hole.

「This was their first time seeing so many stars move like that.」

Even Jung Heewon, Lee Hyunsung, and Yoo Sangah, too… None could tear their eyes away from this overwhelming spectacle of every star in the sky raining down. It was at once beautiful, and rather chill-inducing, too.

「And also, sorrowful.」

By the time they abruptly woke up, they realized that all these stars were swirling around a single star in the centre. The sight of the room could be seen through the large crack in the wall.

The [Shindansu] had broken past the heavens. And with that tree as their centre, Kim Dokja's stars were engaged in a bitter struggle.

[Stop them!! This is our Hwangsanbeol!!!!]

They were the Korean Peninsula's Constellations.

Kim Yoo-Shin, having lost his arm, was shouting out, and Gyebaek was swinging his greatsword towards the Constellations.

The Bald General of Justice exterminated the enemies with his club, while Seo Ae Il Pil strengthened the allied Constellations' Statuses by writing in mid-air with his brush.

Joseon's number one sorcerer morphed into a gigantic tiger to fight against Mithra and its turtle, while the Slumbering Lady of Fine Brocade summoned all of her Hwarangs to defend against the <Emperor>'s forces.

There was an unfamiliar Constellation among them, too – a star with its eyes closed in the centre of this tree. The [Shindansu]'s Story was bubbling up with him as its core.

[Constellation, 'Virtuous Wanggeom', is gathering the Probability of the founding gods!]

It seemed that he was one of the Korean Peninsula's 'founding gods'.

His blessing enveloped Kim Dokja and the Korean Peninsula's Constellations, and protected them.

"…General-nim…?"

They could also see Constellations atop the Turtle Ship, as well.

The sight of the rolling ocean, brought to reality through「Stage Transformation」; that's where Lee Jihye's Constellation sponsor was.

[Today reminds me of that day on Noryang. It's my honour to fight alongside you, Jungyeong.]

[It is mine, as well.]

The blade of menacingly-growling Cheok Jungyeong collided with Thor's hammer. Unfortunately, the <Asgard>'s forces were simply too many for this small group to fight against.

[Constellation, 'Flame of Muspelheim', is summoning its greatsword!]

Eventually, even the Constellations coming from the same hell as Jung Heewon began joining in, as well.

No matter how excellent both Cheok Jungyeong and Lee Sun-Shin were as Constellations, it was still impossible for them to stop all of them.

But then, a light flashed from the [Shindansu], and some things began growing on the ends of its branches. The lights then descended like ripened fruits, containing people the companions were intimately familiar with.

"It's our great masters!"

Powerful auras of white lightning, as well as sword-light of Breaking the Sky, dyed the battlefield; then, Jang Hayoung and the Transcendents from 「Murim」 began roaming the battleground as well.

They were followed by Japanese Youkai Constellations rushing in; 'Tengus' grasping feathered fans, and 'Kappas' rose up from beneath the water – even the subordinates of 'Yamata no Orochi' could be seen, as well.

[You bunch of weak Incarnations dare to…!]

Fruits endlessly fell from the [Shindansu].

Among the spreading white lightning dyeing the battlefield bright, the beings from the 6th scenario began appearing next.

"For Kim Dogeza!"

They were 'small people' from [Peace Land]. Those that fought together with them against the calamity were descending to this battlefield to help them out.

[Small Constellation from the small planet is pulling out its sure-kill weapon 'Dragon Needle'.]

Every time Constellations' swords moved, the small people died in their droves.

"Ah, ah… Ahhhh…!"

None of the companions could speak at the horrifying spectacle of the cabin. And at the centre of this battlefield, the brightest star on the middle of the mountain made out of dead stars also didn't speak a word, either.

「Kim Dokja on top of the destroyed 'Absolute Throne' maintained his silence.」

Yoo Joonghyuk, Han Sooyoung, and Anna Croft were all fighting there. They were giving their all to fight against Constellations while vomiting out blood, scraping every Story they could, and squeezing out every ounce of willpower they possessed.

「The sky was rapidly changing from the collision of worldviews.」

<Asgard>'s Odin, <Papyrus>'s Osiris, <Vedas>'s Shiva, <Emperor>'s Nuwa… Not just them, but Constellations from Nebulas with unfamiliar names all joined in, causing the sky to brighten up in the deluge of blinding light show.

「What blocked light wasn't darkness, but another light.」

The companions subjected to this chokingly bright world felt as if their very existences were being denied. The starlights from the Constellations were telling them this – that the history they had compiled so far was nothing.

[Giant Story, 'Demon Realm's Spring', has begun its storytelling!]

Jung Heewon also knew. She knew that those beings couldn't be defeated even if all of her companions jumped in right now.

[Giant Story, 'Torch that Swallowed the Myth', has begun its storytelling!]

She needed an even stronger Story, one that could strike down all those blinding stars. The kind of power that could destroy all those constellations.

However, Jung Heewon didn't possess such powers. Even with [God Slaying] or [Hellfire], it was still impossible.

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is looking at her own Incarnation.]

Jung Heewon looked up at the sky. Her sponsor that had been keeping silent until then was there. She really liked her sponsor. And because of that, there were certain things she felt scared of asking for the Archangel's help.

"Kim Dokja…"

Even then, Jung Heewon had to say it.

"…Please, rescue him, Uriel."

Right away, her sponsor replied back to her.

[Alright.]

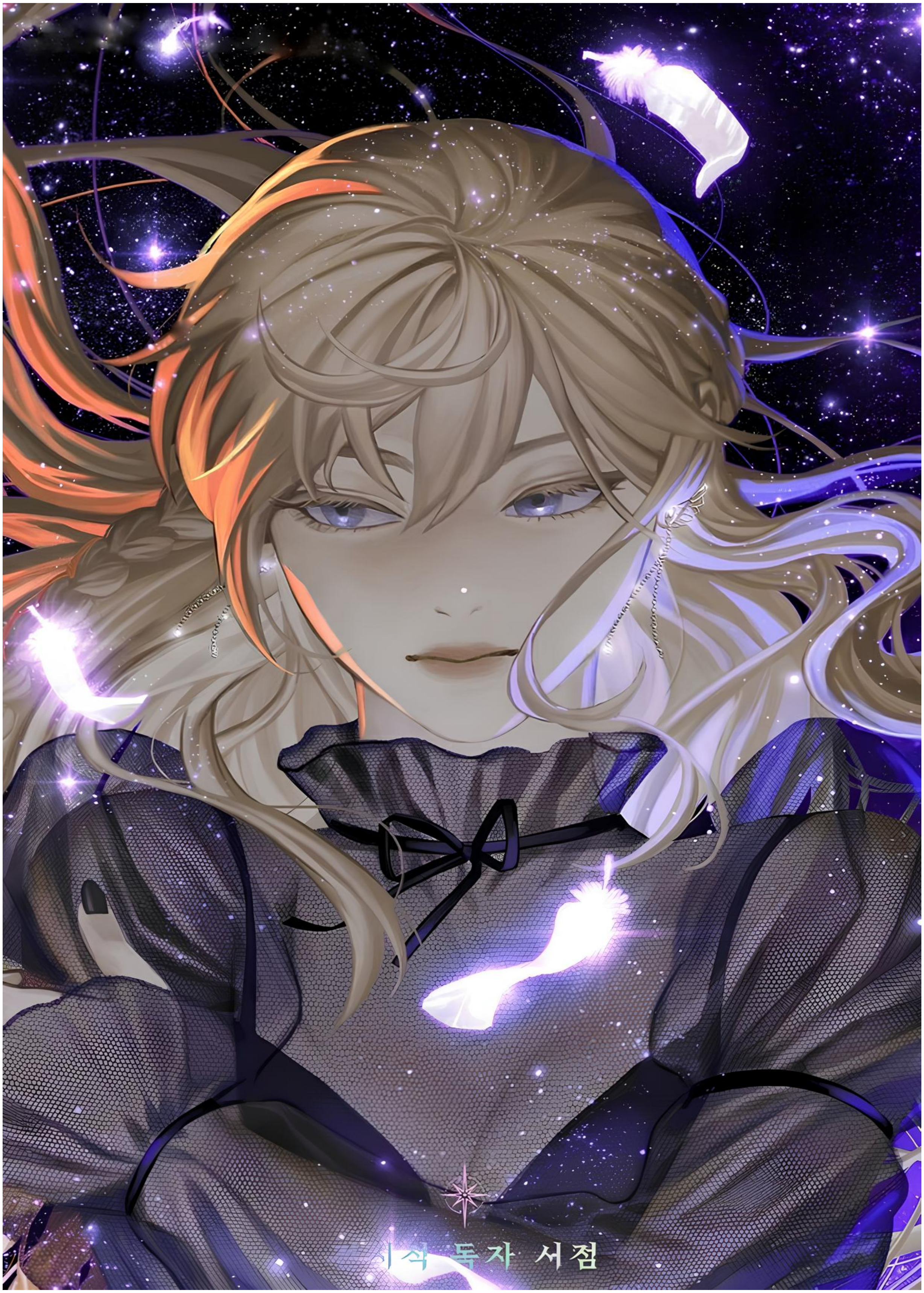
Hotly-burning flames blanketed the surroundings. She sensed Uriel standing right behind her. Without a doubt, the Archangel must've been using her uniquely noble eyes to look at the same world Jung Heewon was looking at.

Suddenly, Jung Heewon was overcome with fear.

「What if Uriel dies in this place?」

Uriel was just a 'Narrative-grade Constellation'; even if she was very powerful, she still couldn't fight and win against a Myth-grade Constellation. But then, a soft hand touched her shoulder.

[Don't worry, Heewon-ah. I'll make it happen, no matter what.]


지적 독자 시점

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The back of Uriel walking past was smaller than Jung Heewon's. The latter just couldn't tear her eyes away from that small back.

[Oldest Good has begun its storytelling!]

The white wings spread out from that small back and enveloped the whole world as Uriel's true voice resounded out.

[Oh, hear me, Eden.]

Jung Heewon felt something shake noticeably inside her.

Something similar to a fragment was wriggling inside; it was a weighty fragment that began sleeping within her ever since the conclusion of the 'Great War of Saints and Demons'.

['Wall that Divides Good and Evil' has regained its original power!]

Tsu-chuchuchut!

Right away, angels began appearing one by one. Lower- and mid-tier angels, their number swelling from ten, then to a hundred, then shooting past a thousand in an instant.

Among them were familiar faces, such as Archangel Gabriel. Not only that, the spirits of the Archangels who died during the 'Great War of Saints and Demons' could be seen among them, as well.

[Uriel.]

The 'Guardian of Youths and Travel', Raphael called out to her. The angel who always looked at the world with sleepy eyes was slowly kneeling down before her along with all the other Archangels.

[Will you be inheriting <Eden>?]

Uriel didn't reply, but looked back at her Incarnation, instead. A certain faint smile seeped into the noble expression of this Archangel. Jung Heewon called out, but her voice couldn't reach its intended target.

The moment Uriel nodded her head, Raphael loudly proclaimed.

[Uriel, from henceforth you are our 'Great Good'.]

Tsu-chuchuchuchu…!

The vast corona completely enveloped Uriel's figure.

Then, the stunningly-brilliant platinum-hued armour settled on her. All of Uriel's Status was now manifesting itself, just like back on that day she reigned as the terror of all demons after cutting off countless demon kings' heads.

The strongest star in <Eden>.

The moment the 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' grasped her sword, every kneeling angel stood right back up.

[Oh, my fellow angels, let us commence with the final 'Great War of Saints and Demons'.]

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* Promotional illustration (semi-canonical)

Chapter 502: Ep. 96 - Demon-like Judge of Fire, II

Odin from the east, Nuwa from the west, and Osiris from the south…

We were somehow maintaining a precarious balance within this cauldron of Giant Stories ceaselessly pounding on us.

[Your Incarnation Body is breaking down!]

I forgot how many times I've heard that message by now. Yoo Joonghyuk's body right next to me wasn't okay, either; he was left in tatters after taking on the combined attacks from both Odin and Nuwa meant for Han Sooyoung and me.

Our gazes met for a moment there, but he scowled at me as if to ask, "What are you looking at?" before pulling something out from his inner pocket to swallow it.

[Incarnation, 'Yoo Joonghyuk', is using 'Life and Death Pill'!]

In the end, he had consumed the very last Life and Death Pill Lee Seolhwa gave us. We didn't have any left now.

[Guwaaaaah! Endure!!]

The Korean Peninsula's Constellations roared out like untamed beasts and wielded their weapons.

Kim Yoo-Shin did, so did Gyebaek, too. Gwanchang, as well. Constellations that crossed swords once upon a time were now turning over a new leaf together in a single Story under the shade of the [Shindansu].

Cheok Jungyeong could be seen standing at the forefront cutting enemies down.

「[This is why I can't abandon this land even though I curse it so much. Only a few dying will resolve the issue, yet everyone's jumping in to die together…」

Even Pungbaek stayed by his side to raise winds and roared out like a lion. The one who was at odds with us back in the Great War of Saints and Demons, was now standing up for our sakes.

「[I can aid the descendants of <Hongik>. I don't need any compensation.」

Pungbaek's winds writhed violently, and the <Hongik>'s Constellations rode on that wind to rush forward. Lee Sun-Shin's [Ghost Fleet] kept firing their cannons, while Gyeonhwon's arrows pierced through the hearts of many stars.

However, the number of enemies didn't seem to be decreasing at all.

[Where is this Korean Peninsula even located in?]

[These measly Historical-grade bastards dare to…! You insects! Sweep them all away!]

Even then, the Korean Peninsula's Constellations were enduring well.

[Giant Story, 'Shindansu', is raising the strengths of all Constellations from the Korean Peninsula!]

If the enemies had Odin and Osiris, then we too had a Myth-grade Constellation – the Myth-grade that could greatly enhance [Shindansu]'s power, Constellation 'Virtuous Wanggeom'.

[Constellation, 'Virtuous Wanggeom', says that this is all the aid he can provide.]

Unlike other Myth-grade Constellations, his sense of presence seemed quite faint. It was probably due to the effects of this world-line; <Hongik> didn't have a whole lot to do during this world-line, after all.

And it was quite likely that <Hongik>'s Constellations couldn't get out from the ark's cabin due to the pressure exerted by other Myth-grade Constellations.

[Do not show them your backs! We shall never retreat!]

[Story, 'Burning the Boats', has begun its storytelling!]

Cheok Jungyeong raised his sword, and Lee Sun-Shin continued to command the others. These heroes from the mythical history who had never yielded to any myth, continued their battle against the actual gods from various myths.

Even though their flesh was torn apart and their entire bodies were wrecked, they never knelt down and continued to wield their blades.

「The Korean Peninsula's surface area was getting smaller and smaller.」

Jeon Woo-Chi who had morphed into a tiger to fight, finally collapsed. Seo Ae Il Pil's personal brush broke, and Lee Sun-Shin's Ghost Fleet sank one by one. Even Cheok Jungyeong's sword, capable of cutting down thousands of enemies, mountains and seas, was getting dull, as well.

I already expected this. I was supposed to harden my resolve several times over by now. The Story to be written from now on would consist of texts stained by the blood of these stars.

[<Star Stream>'s final Giant Story is sprouting new buds!]

Right next second, Thor's hammer came flying in at Cheok Jungyeong's neck. It was an attack that not even the Korean Peninsula's greatest warrior could dodge.

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is unleashing all of her Status!]

And it was Uriel that blocked the incoming attack.

"Kim Dokja! Archangels have arrived!"

Han Sooyoung shouted out.

More Archangels descended on the battlefield, accompanied by blinding rays of light. And in the centre of them was Uriel wielding the [Flames of Conflagration].

「[…It's like, me and Gabriel want to join 'Kim Dokja's Company' too, you see?]」

Uriel said that to us just before we left for the Final Scenario. She wanted to join our Nebula, and wanted to become our strength, she said.

「The Constellation who has changed the most from the 'original' Kim Dokja knew.」

I never figured out why Uriel liked our story so much.

「"Do you really wish to go that far just to help us?"」

All I could do now was to cowardly take advantage of her goodwill.

[A new 'Great Good' has appeared in <Eden>!]

Uriel's Status whipped about stylishly.

She was now no longer the 'Narrative-grade Constellation' Uriel.

Ku-gugugugu!

[…A new 'Great Good'?]

Myth-grade Constellations looked at Uriel and began freaking out.

The new Great Good of <Eden>, an existence meant to replace the Myth-grade Constellation, 'Metatron'. Uriel had become <Eden>'s leader, and chose to help us.

[All seraphim, advance!]

Along with Raphael's signal, Archangels collided against the Narrative-grade Constellations from <Papyrus> and <Vedas>.

[Oldest Good is searching for its enemy!]

[Do you really think that the likes of a destroyed Nebula can overturn this battle's outcome?]

Odin remained unflustered even then, and raised his spear to point it at Uriel. And the god spear that reputedly no one could evade, [Gungnir], flew towards her.

[Get out my sight.]

The Statuses of [Flames of Conflagration] and [Gungnir] collided.

Odin's thunderclaps tearing through the heavens, and Uriel's conflagration that incinerated hell, clashed face to face.

Two Statuses fought intensely; in the battle between two Myth-grade Constellations where neither of them would normally back down, it was surprisingly Odin who withdrew first. His left arm summoning the spear back was trembling ever so slightly.

[How pathetic, Odin. Allow me to help.]

Myth-grade Constellations were far more sensitive towards danger than any other existences.

They were the oldest stars in this world that hated unexpected variables. And that was why they would never allow any sort of danger to blossom.

Myth-grade Constellations exchanged glances in less than a blink of an eye and commenced bombardment on Uriel simultaneously.

Kwa-kwakwakwakwa!

Even if she was now <Eden>'s Great Good, she still wouldn't be able to defend against such an attack. However, she didn't back down. Even though feathers of her wings were ripped off, and crimson Story splattered on her pale cheeks, her sword didn't weaken at all.

[None of you are my greatest enemy.]

Uriel who had always been watching our Story from high up above in the sky – her eyes were now shifting in my direction.

[Nebula, <Eden>, is readying its 'Giant Story'.]

"Dokja-ssi!"

From afar, my companions including Jung Heewon were rushing towards us. Maybe she already knew the truth. Knew what Uriel was planning to do here.

Tsu-chuchuchut!

<Eden> alone couldn't fight against all of these Great Nebulas. The strengths of the Myth-grade Constellations permeating within this ark would even equal the whole of <Star Stream> itself. So, if one wanted to defeat them, one required a 'Giant Story' with truly incredible Probability.

[The 「Stage Transformation」 is activating!]

Simply put, a massive myth that could bring all the other myths to their doom was needed.

[I am the 'Demon-like Judge of Fire'.]

Uriel slowly blinked her eyes currently burning up like a real demon's.

[I wish for an 'Evil' that will validate my Modifier.]

As her words came to an end, flames erupting out from her [Flames of Conflagration] burned through the stars in the heavens. Something began writhing from the other side of hell.

「The Oldest Good called out to its enemy.」

Right then, Lee Gilyoung's eyes suddenly became white.

「And the demon curled up in hell's deepest pit answered that call.」

Something resembling the pitch-black storm clouds rolled in from beyond the burning sky.

Something that was not <Asgard>, not <Vedas>, and also not <Papyrus>, flooded in towards this side while emitting truly despicable and insidious aura.

[Constellation, 'Ruler of the Deepest Pit', is opening the Pandǣmonium!]

Demons began waking up from the skies of the burning hell.

[Oldest Evil is searching for its enemy!]

['Wall that Divides the Good and Evil' is drawing out its theme!]

The master of Pandǣmonium biding its time for an innumerable amount of time finally revealed its true strengths in place of the absent Demon Kings.

And so, the two representatives of Good and Evil began colliding with Myth-grade Constellations caught in the middle.

「And there was an ancient being observing that great battle between Good and Evil.」

The [Chimera Dragon] flapping its wings in Shin Yoosung's side suddenly began emitting light from deep within its body. It was a scene that happened in the original, too. Finally, her dragon was evolving into an 'Ancient Dragon'.

Soon, radiant golden lustre blinded everyone. The [Chimera Dragon], now enjoying the Status of a complete 'Ancient Dragon', roared out to the heavens above.

The 「Dragon Call」. The howling of a dragon that summoned its kin by sacrificing its own life.

Gu-aaaaaaaah!!

And from the other side of the darkened sky, howls of dragons could be heard. Traces of electricity and flames danced everywhere. All dragons living in this world heeded the [Chimera Dragon]'s call and were flying over here.

[The 「Stage Transformation」's degree of reproduction is rapidly rising up!]

Rather than tearing into the stars, the dragons started fighting tooth and nail against each other, instead. Even the [Gold Dragon's Heart] replacing my original heart was writhing powerfully as well.

It was a sight we all witnessed back in the 'Great War of Saints and Demons'.

「A Dragon with seven heads and ten horns will awaken from the centre of the hottest hell.」

「He is the Dragon among all Dragons. The leader of Dragons born in the centre of chaos, the oldest hatred in this world.」

The 'Dragon's Festival', the riot of dragons taking place in the hottest place in hell, had commenced.

Myth-grade Constellations belatedly realized what was going on here and cried out in sheer astonishment.

[C-could these bastards be…?!]

[Make them stop!]

Everyone here knew very well what kind of calamity would crash the party if another 'Great War of Saints and Demons' took place here.

[You, you bastards dare!!]

The Great Dokkaebis, not many remaining now after Bihyung's sacrifice, revealed themselves inside the ark. The Great Dokkaebi 'Garang' with its horn now broken off, was yelling out loudly.

[Suppress that Giant Story's Probability!]

Great Dokkaebis activated their authorities, and the Myth-grade Constellations inside the ark used up their own Coin reserves, as well.

[Constellation, 'Master of December 25th', does not want 'Great War of Saints and Demons'!]

[Constellation, 'Great Mother God Who Created Man Out of Earth', does not want 'Great War of Saints and Demons'!]

[Constellation, 'One-eyed Father', does not want 'Great War of Saints and Demons'!]

[Constellation, 'Master of Abydos', does not want 'Great War of Saints and Demons'!]

The Probability of the unfolding Stage Transformation was being suppressed as an incredible amount of Coins got injected simultaneously.

The <Star Stream>'s Probability flowed towards the direction the majority wanted to see. And at this stage, there didn't seem to be anyone out there capable of going against the will of those possessing the most amount of Coins in this world.

「With an exception of one being.」

I heard the soft hum of an engine coming from behind, followed by the familiar scent of a cigar.

"You've come."

The 'Mass Production Maker' stood on my side and spoke up. [This is the type of Story that I love the most.]

He also said something similar back then, when we first met during the 'Gourmet Association'.

He was the Constellation that loved all the Stories of this world.

He formed an unreadable expression while looking at the Story of 'Great War of Saints and Demons' writhing violently before his eyes.

He was also a Constellation that spent his life mass-producing SSS-rank items.

[It has… taken a really long time.]

"My apologies."

[Honestly speaking, I felt puzzled when I first heard what my ■■ would be. I believed that no such ■■ would ever come knocking at my door.]

"And are your thoughts different now?"

The 'Mass Production Maker' wordlessly stubbed his cigar and killed it off. He then watched the Story of the 'Great War of Saints and Demons' with me. The history of all our battles was now being recreated in that place.

The 'Mass Production Maker' laughed out. [At the very least, I think I understand one thing – why my Story coaxed me to amass such a large reserve of Coins until now.]

Coins began floating up from his fingertips. There were so many that I couldn't even dare to attempt at counting them.

[It seems that it was for the purpose of completing the 'One Single Stage'.]

Coins, along with his life itself, got sucked up into the sky. And his Coins collided with the will of the numerous Constellations. The Myth-grade

Constellations roared out in anger, and the 'Mass Production Maker' calmly opened his mouth.

The Constellation possessing this world's greatest authority replied to them.

[Oh, my dear Constellations. I apologise, but I simply must see this stage.]

And when all of his Coins were injected into the Probability in the air, its powerful storm began enveloping the entirety of the ark. Meanwhile, the Mass Production Maker's body suddenly aged at a visible rate.

[Constellation, 'Mass Production Maker's' ■■ is 'Dried up'.]

[The deficient Probability has been satisfied!]

[Giant Story, 'Season of Light and Darkness', is being completely recreated on this stage!]

Tsu-chuchuchut!

A horrifying howl exploded out from the sky. Along with that explosion, dragons fell towards the ground. I quickly pulled both Han Sooyoung and Anna Croft closer, and along with Yoo Joonghyuk, evacuated towards where our companions were.

Finally, the last verse of all the scenarios – the destruction of all Constellations – was fast approaching us.

[Do not get sucked into this measly little 'Great War of Saints and Demons'! We've won against many so-called great apocalypses time and time again, and got this far!]

The 'Giant Stories' of the Myth-grade Constellations began waking up all at the same time. Every Giant Story found in this world howled out, as if they were unwilling to be overwhelmed by the scale of the 'Great War of Saints and Demons'.

However, it was too late now.

「This Dragon will look at the heaven once, and at earth once, and will strike with its tail. Stars will fall from that single tail-flick, and a direction of the world will disappear.」

A pair of eyes began gleaming from within the darkness.

Han Sooyoung shuddered uncontrollably the moment she heard the violent howling of a dragon.

"Kim Dokja!! Could this be…!"

"It is."

"You crazy?! If you wake that thing up again now-!!"

"We aren't planning to wake that guy up."

I looked at Yoo Sangah sitting in the lotus position in the corner while focusing all of her mind on something. Sweat drops trickled down her forehead.

['Wall that Decides Samsara' is maintaining the seal on the Apocalypse Dragon.]

As long as the successor of Sakyamuni was alive, the sealed Apocalypse Dragon would never be summoned to this place.

The flustered Han Sooyoung asked me again. "T-then, what…?"

"Don't you get it?"

She looked up at the dragons falling from the sky with a dazed expression.

The 'Dragon's Festival' was a ceremony to decide the strongest dragon. And the single dragon that managed to survive until the end would become the 'Final Dragon of Revelation'.

Since when did it start? Han Sooyoung's left arm was trembling like crazy.

[The new 'Final Dragon of Revelation' has been selected!]

Ku-ooooooohhh!!!

Eventually, a massive dragon revealed itself through the destroyed ceiling of the ark. It was so huge that it'd easily tear apart your regular giant star to shreds.

Bewitching black flames were dancing on the jet-black, slick exterior that had shed its last layer of skin.

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', has incarnated into the 'Final Ark'!]

"He's the Apocalypse Dragon now."

Chapter 503: Ep. 96 - Demon-like Judge of Fire, III

The Final Dragon of Revelation.

The great calamity that decides the end of 'Great War of Saints and Demons' as well as the most horrifying apocalypse of <Star Stream> itself.

[The 「Stage Transformation」's degree of reproduction has exceeded the percentage limit!]

The lightning bolts powerfully tearing through the storm clouds now took on a different hue than before. Both <Asgard>'s Odin and <Papyrus>'s Osiris jaws dropped in sheer astonishment.

"Black Flame Dragon!!"

The Apocalypse Dragon's gaze lingered on Han Sooyoung's face for the briefest moment in time.

「It's possible that Uriel isn't the only Constellation different from the original.」

Back in the original novel, this guy was the Constellation backer of the 'Delusion Demon' Kim Namwoon. He was the leader of evil dragons that represented the 'Absolute Evil', not to mention the ruler of the Nebula <Black Cloud>.

He raised his head high up to the sky and cried out.

The entirety of <Star Stream> shuddered from the screech that announced the arrival of this world's final pages.

「[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon's' ■■ is 'Something that can't be found'.]」

I had read what his ■■ was from the original novel. His description showed up when he became Yoo Joonghyuk's ally for a little while during the 1863rd turn.

「The evil dragon suffering from the worst possible depression in this <Star Stream>.」

The reason why the 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' believed his age to be 15 was simply that he'd not be able to continue on if he didn't.

A life stretching for thousands, no, tens of thousands of years, made an originally solitary dragon into such a creature.

In order to stop itself from decaying, he chose not to age. He chose not to lose his curiosity of the world. He chose to torment Incarnations or play bizarre pranks. And for his final prank, he even chose to betray the 'Absolute Evil', too. He stood on Yoo Joonghyuk's side and while mocking the <Star Stream>, breathed his last.

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', has reached his ■■!]

What about this world-line, though?

Did he finally manage to find his ■■ within this empty universe?

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon's' ■■ is 'Pureness'!]

The 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' looked at me and smiled.

His child-like eyes were now dyeing the world in the night of apocalypse as if he was satisfied by the role he had found.

[Fully-satisfied Probability has recreated the 'Apocalypse Dragon' in the Final Scenario!]

[Giant Story, 'Season of Light and Darkness', has achieved perfect unity with the scenario!]

The Myth-grade Constellations began roaring at the top of their lungs at the reproduction of Apocalypse Dragon.

[This is impossible…!!]

Every Constellation alive was well aware of the Story of Apocalypse Dragon, the great calamity capable of destroying a section of <Star Stream> with nothing but its 'First Tail-flick'.

[Stop him! Kill him before the tail-flick commences!!]

The clearly-freaking out Myth-grade Constellations ungainly lost their composure and issued their orders.

Han Sooyoung, Yoo Joonghyuk and I all looked up at that spectacle.

「None among these Myth-grade Constellations have experienced the 'Apocalypse Dragon' before. Because their peers that did fight it had all perished back then.」

After all, these bastards had been hiding inside this 'ark', the safest place in the entire world, and watched the moment of the Apocalypse Dragon being unshackled as if it was a form of entertainment. In other words, they had absolutely no clue what this fear was like, the terror, and what it meant to risk their lives.

Yoo Joonghyuk next to me asked a question. "You… You have been preparing for this moment all along, haven't you?"

I slowly nodded my head. "That's right."

From the moment the first scenario began, I had been calculating a certain something.

「Just how much Story would I need to compile in order to massacre the Constellations in the Final Scenario?」

I couldn't get to an answer. A human's lifespan was short, but stars were eternal. Since our starting lines were different, the battle would never be fair, and most important of all, I wasn't a regressor like Yoo Joonghyuk. I couldn't live a life of 1863 regression turns and fight them afterwards.

"It was wrong to even think about compiling Stories to fight them. Whether it's a legendary or mythical Story, you can't suppress those beings in terms of pure Status no matter how many Stories you manage to amass."

"And so, this is what you came up with."

I nodded my head and stared at Kim Yoo-Shin and Gyebaek fighting together with [Shindansu] behind them.

「Kim Dokja found the answer to this battle within the 'Stage Transformation'.」

The 「Stage Transformation」; although it was imaginary, this power would grow closer to reality as Probability expanded.

I confirmed the potential of this power when defeating Surya back in the 'Demon King Selection' battles, and the first outlines of my plan formed in my head when we defeated <Olympus> back in the 'Gigantomachia'.

And I grew even more confident after we experienced the 'Great War of Saints and Demons', then won the 'Journey to the West'.

「The more they succeeded in the impossible-odds scenarios, the greater the power of reproduction their 'Giant Story' possessed.」

The air they breathed, the emotions they felt on that day – the fear humans felt while facing the apocalypse, their eyes fixed to the outpouring of the stars.

「And now, it was the turn of the Constellations to feel the fear people felt on that day.」

[Giant Story, 'Season of Light and Darkness', is continuing on with its storytelling!]

The Apocalypse Dragon's 'First Tail-flick' commenced.

Kwa-kwakwakwakwakwa!!

The Apocalypse Dragon's tail-flick was divided into three separate shockwaves. The first was 'electrical wave', the second was 'heat wave', while the true tail-flick and the third wave was the 'wave of Chaos'.

[Kuwaaaaah---! I shall block this!]

Thor, who had defended against the electrical wave with me back then, stepped forward. He must've felt confident this time too, since he had dealt with it in the past.

Unfortunately, that was a terrible misjudgement on his part.

[Thor-!!]

Thor's scorched-black figure crash-landed from the air.

The reason why he could defend against the electrical wave back then was because Dionysus, me, and my master were there to aid him. However, no one was helping him out this time.

[Uwaaaaah-!!]

Just as the fear-stricken Constellations turned around to run, all the Myth-grade Constellations unleashed their Statuses. Along with the incredible storm of aftermaths, all the stars in the sky flickered unsteadily.

And then, the exploding electrical wave blanketed entire surroundings like fine fog particles.

Once the view cleared out, one could clearly see that the Apocalypse Dragon's electrical wave had been weakened by a great deal.

[…And it only amounted to this much?]

Tsu-chuchuchut…!

The one who defended against the electrical wave was the leader of <Asgard>, Odin. His dignified beard, which was his pride and joy, was scorched black. His clothing had all melted down, too, leaving him buck-naked. He revealed his skin, horrifyingly deformed by that wave, and laughed out loudly.

[With such measly little…!]

Shu-sususususut…

Right in the next moment, <Asgard>'s Constellations manning his side began scattering away like dust. Their lives were exhausted completely while dealing with the Probability necessary to offset the shockwave.

Odin's eye grew large from shock. Grey-coloured powder spread about helplessly in the air. With that one attack alone, half of <Asgard> was wiped out.

Ku-oooooooh!!

It was a similar situation with <Vedas> and <Papyrus> as well.

[…Nuwa!!]

Osiris belatedly understood the severity of this situation and looked behind while shouting that name out. That was where he discovered Nuwa leading the forces of <Emperor> to withdraw from this cabin. She had recognised the unfavourable battle situation and prepared to retreat from very early on.

"Gong Pildu."

After I called out, Gong Pildu's castle moved. His [Armed Fortress] accurately blocked off the path leading to the Emperor's worldview, and its turrets began spitting out flames.

"You're going nowhere."

At same time, the Apocalypse Dragon's second shockwave exploded out.

The flames of the 'heat wave' boiling over from the deepest part in hell began melting down the Constellations in the air.

[Bureau!! How long are you going to sit back and watch?!]

Odin's scream prompted the Great Dokkaebi Garang to raise its hand while Story endlessly gurgled out from its mouth.

[…Fine. If you wish to use the 'Stage Transformation', then…]

Suddenly, I felt this ominous foreboding.

Tsu-chuchuchu…!

The 「Stage Transformation」's authority was now in full display. A powerful deluge of sparks caused me to hurriedly look behind, only to discover blood trickling out from Yoo Sangah's lips.

"Sangah-ssi!!"

The lotus pedestal spinning next to her suddenly developed cracks.

She vomited out a chunk of blood and spoke in an ashamed voice. "I stopped one… from coming out, but… a portion of the other has…"

There were two great beings sealed away in the 'Isle of Reincarnators' by Sakyamuni. One of them was the Apocalypse Dragon, while the other was…

['Wall that decides Samsara' is violently writhing around!]

['Wall that decides Samsara' is unveiling its theme!]

[Existence from another world is breaking past the 'Wall's' seal and has been recreated in this world!]

Tsu-chuchuchut!

Black fog was distorting the heavens as it rushed in here.

Countless eyes could be seen beyond that dark fog. It was <Star Stream>'s cleaner, the one that should've been imprisoned within the eternal darkness after Sakyamuni had sealed it away.

[■■■■■■■■! Oh, the 'Indescribable Distance'!]

I realized what the Dokkaebis were trying to do. They were trying to use the same method I used back in the 'Great War of Saints and Demons' to stop the Apocalypse Dragon.

「And so, the two calamities representing the absolute worst-case scenario of <Star Stream> collided.」

[Haha, hahaha! You shall never reach the final verse! You shall never-!]

With those final parting words, the heads of all the Great Dokkaebis exploded.

The 'Indescribable Distance' sucked in their Stories and violently writhed. And then, this Outer God that had earned the Great Dokkaebis' Stories, and the Black Flame Dragon that earned the power of apocalypse, glared at each other.

[Third shockwave is now commencing!]

The Apocalypse Dragon's tail moved. The calamity moved very slowly, its speed very measured but assured.

Nuwa grew impatient and yelled out loudly in the air.

[Just what are you all doing?! Fu Xi! Shennong! All of you damnable Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors, just for how long are you planning to enjoy the slumber of abyss?!]

Ku-gugugugu!!

Nuwa's true voice managed to wake up the <Emperor>'s ancient Constellations. The blessings from the Myth-grade Constellations that hadn't shown themselves until now completely enveloped Nuwa's Incarnation Body.

The truly explosive rise in her Status forced Going Pildu's [Armed Fortress] back.

We needed to stop her.

We couldn't afford to let them escape back to their own worldview.

[Giant Story, 'Journey to the West', has begun its storytelling!]

The Nebula <Emperor>'s Giant Story began its story; Nuwa transformed into a gigantic Imoogi and her flames began amassing within her maw.

Just before the <Emperor>'s Constellations gathered their fighting spirit and rushed towards us…

Kurururung! Rumble!

Lightning bolts struck down from the sky and Nuwa screamed loudly.

[Giant Story, 'Liberator of Forgotten Ones', has begun its storytelling!]

The sight of Tongtian spread out in an instant, and an existence draped in the golden tiger hide defended me.

Kwa-kwakwakwakwa…

He was the sole existence capable of standing up against the <Emperor>'s vast Myth-grade Constellations.

[Constellation, 'Most Ancient Liberator', has incarnated into the 'Final Ark'!]

He was also a star that became my brother.

['Meihouwang' is looking at you.]

['Bimawen' is looking at you.]

['Douzhanshengfo' is looking at you.]

All of the Sun Wukongs addressed me.

['Great Sage, Heaven's Equal' is turning his back to you.]

[Go now, maknae-yah.]

We could see the Apocalypse Dragon's tail colliding against the Indescribable Distance in the distant sky. We all knew very well the likely outcome of that collision.

「He dreamed of every star's destruction. But, did he really wish for such a result?」

I had never forgotten the final moment of the 1863rd regression turn.

The Great Sage turned around and rushed towards the <Emperor>'s Constellations.

Even before I could reach out, Yoo Joonghyuk and Han Sooyoung grabbed me and ran away.

Gong Pildu continued to shout something or rather, while Lee Seolhwa was pulling out all the recovery medicines in her possession. I couldn't tell whether Lee Hyunsung's forged steel covered us first, or the pure-white flash of light managed to blanket the world before that. It felt like my whole body was melting down from the incredible heat, only to become deathly cold as if I was exposed to a cold snap.

When I came to, we were already cast outside the cabin.

Stories leaked out indiscriminately from the gaps of the crumbling walls, painfully singing the end of the stars.

The prop storage's door hadn't been closed yet. Ash drifted out through the half-open doorway.

['The Fourth Wall' is violently trembling.]

Maybe, somehow, everyone inside that cabin was…

Shu-sut…

There was a faint presence of someone beyond it, and Han Sooyoung's voice entered my ears almost at the same time.

"…Kim Dokja?"

I crawled towards the door. My heart didn't want to stop pounding away. I barely managed to reach the rim of the doorway, and saw someone standing there.

「Torn white feathers were cascading downwards one by one.」

*

My lips bobbed up and down. I wanted to say something.

But in place of my mouth wanting to open, Uriel slowly bent down first.

[…Dokja…]

I couldn't hear her true voice properly. I tried so hard to get back up as Uriel reached out to me. And her white hand brushed past my face as if she was stroking my cheek and brows.

I saw the enemy Constellations standing back up from beyond Uriel's broken wings. Some stars somehow managed to survive even from this utterly horrifying calamity.

[The 'Stage Transformation' has concluded.]

I could no longer sense the Status of the 'Indescribable Distance'. I then saw the huge body of the 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' now lying unmoving on the floor – and the Constellations from the Great Nebulas pouncing on top of him, as well as demons tearing into the wings of Archangels.

Countless enemies were approaching Uriel.

"Urie…!"

I was about to open the door, grab my sword, and cut them down for Uriel.

「However, the door didn't open.」

Uriel held fast the doorknob from the other side and didn't let go.

Jung Heewon's cry, as desperate as a real scream, resounded out. "Uriel!! Hurry!! Hurry and get out of there-!!"

[It's okay.]

I didn't want to hear what she was about to say next. Uriel smiled at me.

[You guys, you've only seen up to this far in the story, that's all.]

The cabin's door was closed shut.

[You have accomplished a feat that no star in <Star Stream> has ever managed to accomplish!]

The story beyond the door could no longer be heard. Some of us screamed out, while some despaired. The ark seemed to tilt out of balance, before it crashed against something along with a loud boom. I rolled around on the floor ungainly. The vibration of the ark had already come to a stop by the time I lifted myself up, the wave of vicious dizziness washing over me nonstop.

I didn't have any energy left to even stand. I could only manage to raise my head and look ahead. My eyes followed after the broken partitioning walls to discover a new location.

That unknown something colliding with the ark had become connected to the vessel's interior.

[All the stars in <Star Stream> will never forget you.]

None of those stars were looking at us now. But, there was one existence remaining still looking at us.

['King of Stories' is waiting for you.]

A yellowish mineral-like object rolled down the slope of the destroyed ark. I recognised what that was. That 'gemstone' was what we had been searching for inside this ark all along, after all.

However, neither me nor my companions had any energy left to focus on that gemstone.

"…"

I left the ark and slowly scanned our surroundings.

We were greeted by a wall so vast that its ends couldn't be seen. Stories leaking out from the ark was permeating into that wall.

「And so, Kim Dokja has finally arrived at his destination.」

That wall was now talking to me.

「The end of all these stories. The 'Final Wall' was right before their eyes.」

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* Official novel illustration (canonical)

Chapter 504: Ep. 97 - The star that can't be seen, I

The smartphone inside my coat vibrated and emitted 'Woong, woong' noise.

「This whole story began the moment he read that novel.」

Texts rose above the phone. The expansive wall before me seemed uncannily similar to the screen of this device.

From Yoo Joonghyuk's 3rd regression turn all the way to the 1863's – the wall that, most likely, had recorded all the stories that I knew of.

「Kim Dokja used to think about a certain thing back when he was working for the QA team: 'What if I'm the only one who knows about this bug?'」

"You…"

I turned around and found Han Sooyoung there. She seemed to have something to say, but was unable to find the right words. The bandages imbued with the Abyssal Black Flame Dragon's grace wrapped around her left hand were slowly scattering away.

I took a close look at each of my companions. Jung Heewon was on her knees, her visibly-shaking hands pressed to the ground, while Lee Hyunsung was carrying the unconscious Lee Gilyoung. Lee Seolhwa and Gong Pildu were supporting each other while exiting from the ark.

And in the distance, I spotted Jang Hayoung who had narrowly escaped from the cabin along with our masters.

"…Ahjussi."

Shin Yoosung was looking at her hands. Rather than calling out to me, though, her voice was much closer to a murmur directed at herself. A lone piece of scale from the 'Chimera Dragon' rested in her palm.

Yoo Sangah approached her and placed a hand on the girl's shoulder. As her hand felt the soft, trembling sob, Yoo Sangah wordlessly shifted her gaze over to the exit we all escaped from.

「The stars they used to know had grown dark.」

My vision shook from the dizziness. I couldn't sense the gazes of the stars. Was it because every single one of them was extinguished?

But, that couldn't be. No, this was simply because all the Great Dokkaebis had disappeared, that's all. Every channel operated by the Bureau had received massive impact and that caused system errors. Had to be.

「He wouldn't be able to go on if he didn't believe in that.」

I staggered but still managed to find my balance. The last person I spotted was Yoo Joonghyuk. His Black Heavenly Demon Sword was currently stabbing through the corpses of Great Dokkaebies. Stories from dead Constellations dripped steadily from the edge of his blade.

He was staring at me with his usual expressionless face of his.

「Is this the conclusion you desired?」

['The Fourth Wall' is violently shaking!]

['The Fourth Wall' is activating even more strongly!]

My mouth opened slowly, only to be shut again.

[Completion of the Final Scenario is imminent.]

The ark's core I had been searching for all this time rolled around on the ground. It was a piece of mineral emitting a brilliant yellowish hue, The powers of countless 'Giant Stories' drifting around in this world-line were condensed to create this hardened essence.

The [ark's core].

It was the source of energy for the great Story weapon, 'Final Ark'. Destroying it would bring an end to this 99th scenario and conclude our battle.

[The completion of <Star Stream>'s final Story is around the corner!]

Tsu-chuchu…!

Suddenly, my steps came to a stop. Vines sprouted out from the ground and wrapped around my ankles. 'Zarathustras' appeared from seemingly out of nowhere and used restriction skills on me.

Selena Kim was avoiding my gaze as if she was apologetic about this. Soon afterwards, I could hear the prophet's voice.

"Thanks to you, our workload has been greatly lightened, Demon King of Salvation."

Anna Croft, already holding the ark's core, was looking in this direction.

「Humanity's hero that dreams of a different conclusion to Kim Dokja.」

"You shouldn't be too surprised about this. I shall be taking this core with me."

I had already heard about the world she dreamed of.

The 'Perfect Night'. She dreamed of complete freedom from the gazes of all Constellations, and that dream entailed migrating safely to a different world-line along with every Incarnation from this world.

However…

"The ark is already destroyed."

"It can be rebuilt."

Anna Croft looked back at the wrecked ark. It was broken beyond salvage, unable to be re-used ever again.

However, she didn't lose hope.

"One of the human Incarnations is proficient with crafting Story weapons. Aileen under your care is another person capable of doing that, as well. Now that there aren't any Myth-grade Constellations to hinder us, we…"

"Give me that core."

"…I see. There is still a 'Myth-grade Constellation' remaining, isn't there?"

Her eyes glowed in red.

The [Eye of Great Demon]; her power to read this world's past and future began tying me down. She had completely awakened the power of that eye, and currently, she enjoyed Status rivalling a decent Narrative-grade Constellation.

「The opponent of all the stars.」

This was the same as the original, too. Anna Croft hated all the Constellations in this world. And that was why she swore to use the power of stars to destroy the stars themselves. In order to complete her night, she'd not spare me, either.

「If this story was really the same as the original, that is.」

The tip of her blade pointing at me seemed to be hesitant over something.

"…It's not too late, Kim Dokja."

The event that had never happened before in the original.

I sensed Yoo Joonghyuk, standing not too far while holding the [Black Heavenly Demon Sword]'s grip, being faintly surprised. Anna Croft lightly sucked in her breath and began telling her story.

"I… do not know the conclusion you dream of. My [Precognition] can't read that far ahead. However, I can make an educated guess. The fact that my [Precognition] can't see your conclusion means that it's related to that [Final Wall]. However, please consider this carefully, Kim Dokja. Consider whether that is the best course of action for us all, for the rest of humanity or not."

This would be her first time speaking so many words at once.

I silently listened to her.

"Isn't this enough already? You have experienced enough tragedies by now. You've lost so much, and your most precious things have been ridiculed upon. Even then, are you still curious about this world's 'One Single Story'? Just for something like that, are you going to forsake the survival of the human race?"

Every word she spoke contained desperation. Words that emphasized her justice, while resenting mine.

And soon, that had become a Story, too. A blindingly bright Story wrapped around 'Anna Croft' and the Zarathustras. Although not as clear or flashy as a Constellation's, it nevertheless was indomitable and beautiful. Every facet of the Story they had compiled together contained their unyielding belief.

The emotion that countless stars had forgotten about a long time ago. She got this far because she hadn't forgotten her pledge.

"Kim Dokja. Please give up on your ■■."

"…"

"I ask of you. Please, let us head to my 'perfect night' together."

Those words caused the eyes of several Zarathustras to grow wider. That was understandable, however. The offer she made just now was basically the same as going against her own beliefs.

What Anna Croft said was tantamount to asking me to become the lone star that would shine in the night of the brand new world.

Although I was thankful for the offer…

[I'm a Constellation.]

…I could never accept it.

Tsu-chuchuchu…

I lightly aroused my Status and the vines restricting me all fell away. And as if to mock her goodwill, all of my Stories began telling their stories.

[Giant Story, 'Demon Realm's Spring', has begun its storytelling!]

The horn of the Demon King grew up on my head, and…

[Giant Story, 'Torch that Swallowed the Myth', is howling out!]

The Unbroken Faith that slew gods viciously cried out, and…

[Giant Story, 'Season of Light and Darkness', is looking at the world of humans.]

Wings I received by betraying the Archangel spread out next. Then…

[Giant Story, 'Liberator of the Forgotten Ones', is mocking <Star Stream>.]

The ominous and evil aura of Chaos enveloped my entire body.

Anna Croft's eyes were trembling uncontrollably. They shifted around urgently as if to find any remaining trace of humanity from my appearance.

However, there was this thing that we both knew. How could you call an existence a regular human when you had to search so hard to find his humanity?

"…In the end, you're the same, is that it? Demon King of Salvation."

Deep anguish was thickly pervading her murmurs. Rather than a calm revelation of the truth, her voice contained her determination over a certain something, instead.

"I shall kill you right here."

Stupendous Status began flooding out from Anna Croft's figure. I already knew that she had been conserving her strength while getting this far.

"Even if you're a 'Myth-grade Constellation', you can't stop me with your current physical condition. Besides, your companions don't seem to be in their right frame of minds, so I…"

Jung Heewon, Lee Hyunsung, Lee Gilyoung, and even Shin Yoosung, too. They still hadn't recovered themselves yet, it seemed. Even Han Sooyoung was wordlessly staring at me. Her eyes, the ones that always trusted in me, were shaking for the first time ever.

Perhaps it was inevitable. They had witnessed their sponsors getting slaughtered right before their own eyes, after all.

"Let's end it here."

A dozen or so Zarathustras all dashed towards Yoo Joonghyuk in an instant. And right next second, Anna Croft approached me like a streak of light, her dagger stabbing towards my neck.

I calmly watched the tip of that blade, before opening my mouth.

[Enough with your pranks, Loki.]

Along with those words, Anna Croft's movement froze up.

I lightly raised my finger and brushed her dagger aside.

Looking clearly astonished, she muttered out in sheer confusion next.

"W-what is the meaning of…??"

[Constellation that likes changing gender is cackling away.]

"Loki, you! This is not what you promi…!"

A massive amount of Status bore down on Anna Croft and the Zarathustras. The so-called Constellation that liked changing gender, the final star of <Asgard>, 'Loki' was now standing there.

Not one among the Zarathustras could resist his power. Because it was precisely him who freed them from the <Asgard>'s control.

"But, I'm doing this for humani…!"

Those were Anna Croft's last words before she passed out. The core fell out from her hand and rolled on the ground towards my feet. I bent down and picked it up.

[It's really been entertaining, Demon King of Salvation.]

I straightened my back to discover a man standing before me – a man with green hair and a mischievous smile.

[Constellation, 'One Who Changes His Existence', is looking at you.]

The One Who Changes His Existence. One of the highest-ranked Constellations in <Asgard>, Loki.

Also, a Constellation who helped us many times during our journey up to this point, someone with an agenda that we couldn't figure out before.

He had safely escaped from the Apocalypse Dragon's calamity and chased after us.

"Thanks for your help."

[The conclusion to this world is literally right before us, so I can't afford to let that go to waste because of a measly little human… Besides all that. There isn't anyone left for you to frighten here, so why don't you undo that scary appearance of yours?]

I dismissed my horn and the wings, then spoke up.

"Why don't you reveal your true self as well?"

[What do you mean?]

"I thought we both tacitly agreed to drop the pretence?"

My words caused Yoo Joonghyuk observing the situation to address me.

– Kim Dokja.

– Your suspicions are correct.

I glared at Loki.

The Constellation, 'One Who Changes His Existence'. If my thoughts were correct, then this guy was no 'Constellation'.

[Constellation, 'One Who Changes His Existence', is revealing his true identity!]

[Cons■tellation, ■ his ■ ??iden■ty??'…]

Blinding light blanketed Loki, then his silhouette began changing next. His height shrunk down a little, and creases on his face rapidly increased in number. And eventually, two large growths ballooned out with his cheeks as the middle.

「The existence capable of exploiting the <Star Stream>'s bug at will. The irreconcilable enemy of every Dokkaebi in the world, and the founder of the 'Seekers of Apocalypse'.」

I had encountered this being once before.

Back in the Journey to the West's Tongtian river, he opposed the Great Dokkabies trying to obstruct me in my stead.

His lips distorted slightly to form an insidious grin.

[That's right. You people aren't the only ones dreaming of <Star Stream>'s end.]

"…The Wenny King."

Having discovered the creature's true identity, Yoo Joonghyuk unhesitantly unsheathed the [Black Heavenly Demon Sword].

[Why don't you put that thing away. I have no thoughts of fighting you.] The Wenny King playfully waved his hands about and continued on. [What I wish to see is only one thing. The unknown 'something' found beyond this Final Wall that you've been searching for. That's all. And also…]

Go-ooooooh!

[I don't think now isn't the time for you folks to worry about me.]

The moment I looked back, someone angrily grabbed hold of my collars. Lee Jihye's face was pressing right up to mine. Stories of rage and resentment leaking out from her entire Incarnation Body was pounding down hard on my body.

"…Ahjussi. What the hell is this? Huh? Was this a part of your plan, too?"

The spirit of the ocean that used to permeate her could no longer be felt. That gentle scent of saltiness wafting in when I first met her back in the subway could no longer be picked up.

"Kim Dokja!"

Lee Jihye was crying as she shook me around. No one tried to stop her. Not Yoo Sangah, not Jung Heewon, not even Shin Yoosung. Everyone's head was lowered, their eyes fixed to the ground.

「And Kim Dokja understood their feelings.」

All of their resentment was my burden to carry.

「However, there was someone who didn't think that way.」

"Lee Jihye."

「It was Han Sooyoung.」

"Let me go!"

Lee Jihye's reaction to Han Sooyoung's hand grabbing her shoulder was vicious, to say the least. However, the latter didn't let go. Her dogged hand swept back Lee Jihye's bangs, wiped the thick teardrops away, then she continued with what she wanted to say.

"The Black Flame Dragon, Uriel, the Maritime War God, they are not dead yet."

"How, how do you know that??"

"I can sense them. It's really faint, but I can definitely feel they are still alive. Also…"

Her voice sounded cold yet caring, to the point and didn't waver once. Only Han Sooyoung could have spoken in such a voice.

"Wipe your tears away and take a good look. Look at the state of the bastard you're choking right now."

The stupefied-looking Lee Jihye had dropped her head, only to raise it back up again. And for a very long time, she hesitated and stared at me. I didn't try to avoid that gaze.

"But, why…?" Lee Jihye's voice was trembling. "Why are you crying too, ahjussi…?"

Her hands grabbing hold of my collars let go. Han Sooyoung quickly seized that opening to dig in and punched me in the face.

"Get your shit together, you idiot! Now, give us a proper explanation! You probably didn't come here without a concrete plan, right?"

If one were to flip her words around, then she was threatening to really kill me if I caused such an event without thinking too much about it.

She continued with her questioning. "There is a way to save our Sponsors, right? Right…??"

「There was no such method.」

Lights from many, many Constellations were turned off in the <Star Stream>'s pitch-black night sky. However, you'd still be able to spot a few that flickered away when taking a closer look. They were stars with lights faintly discernible only after staring at them for a very long time.

「Kim Dokja hated the Constellations. He had never forgotten that emotion, not even for a second.」

"…Right. I…"

「However, this world's scenario managed to change such a Kim Dokja.」

I looked at the [Final Wall]. The wall where all the 'Stories' were recorded on.

The wall that existed solely to record the 'One Single Story' that all the Dokkaebis longed for.

"But, it might be too late now."

All this tragedy existed to be recorded on that wall.

No, hang on. Maybe it was the opposite.

All these events happened because 'it was already recorded on that wall'.

"However, it's also possible."

Changing what happened already was impossible. It should not be possible to revive those whose souls had been extinguished, and get rid of the pain as if nothing happened. Indeed, it shouldn't be possible at all to save a world-line that had been destroyed already.

Because the damn Probability of this world wouldn't permit that. Because such a story would be the same as the 'squared circle' Han Sooyoung mentioned earlier.

「However, what if such a thing was possible…?」

「What if a 'wall' that could bring the 'squared circle' to reality existed in this world?」

I squeezed the core gripped in my hand tightly.

[Main Scenario #99 – 'Enemy of the Story' has been cleared!]

[Calculation for the completion reward has begun.]

[Currently, no Great Dokkaebis exist to take the role of calculating the reward.]

[Reward calculation is being delayed.]

…

…

…

[You have earned the qualification to meet the 'King of Stories'.]

The blinding wall opened its jaw for us.

Chapter 505: Ep. 97 - The star that can't be seen, II

[<Star Stream> wishes to name your last Story.]

[You are now given the choices of Final Story.]

[Nebula <Kim Dokja's Company>'s epic has become the final candidate for the 'One Single Story'!]

[Stars that will be born in <Star Stream> will extol your Story!]

While reading the messages popping up one after the other, we took stock of our current situation. Although they all still looked shellshocked, we simply couldn't afford to stop here. Gong Pildu suddenly raised his voice.

"…Will the main scenario end with this?"

Unlike how it usually was, no new scenario was issued even though a main scenario had come to an end. What entered our ears instead was a system message.

[<Star Stream>'s main scenario system has entered the closing sequence.]

It was a message none of us had ever heard before.

Curtains were finally closing on the vast world of scenarios. We all formed blank expressions, not knowing what to say.

"If this thing ends… what will happen to the world?"

Gong Pildu stared at the Wall with a hollow expression. Countless texts blooming on the Wall must've sensed his gaze, because they repeatedly scattered only to reform again. Some among those texts were even related to Gong Pildu himself.

「The man who lost his family at the start of the scenario.」

He seemed to be deeply fatigued, somehow. I could've been mistaken, but I thought there was something welling up in his eyes, too. I hesitated for a bit, before addressing him.

"There is one more being remaining, the one that controls all the scenarios."

"That bastard… has to be killed off, too?"

"If you're too exhausted, it's fine to remain here."

"After coming all this way?" Pure rage bubbled up on Gong Pildu's face. "I can never forgive that bastard. It won't nearly be enough for me to rip him apart into little pieces."

It felt as if I was the one being attacked the moment I peered into his eyes. At the same time, I thought I saw the Stories of regular people who died during the scenarios reflected behind his back.

「And all those Stories seemed to blame Kim Dokja.」

"That bastard took away my family and my lands. I, I must definitely…!!"

Gong Pildu spoke up to there, and keeled over as bloody foams bubbled out of his mouth. Lee Seolhwa quickly supported him and felt his pulse.

"…The damage to his Incarnation Body is extensive."

During the battle inside the cabin, Gong Pildu protected the companions along with Lee Hyunsung. His proud [Armed Fortress] was seriously damaged. The Status of his sponsor, the Defense Master, could barely be felt, too. It was quite likely that this was as far as he could go.

"I'll take him with us. He also has the right to witness the end, after all."

"Please take care of him."

Lee Seolhwa activated her unique skill [Stretcher], and placed Gong Pildu on the bed made out of magic net.

In the meantime, both Lee Jihye and Jung Heewon regained their energy and stood up from their spots.

"Let's go, Dokja-ssi. Whatever happens, we should still try to see the end, at least."

I was ashamed by the fact that Jung Heewon had to say those words. Because she must've been the one to resent me the most among our group.

She lightly tapped me on the shoulder.

"Don't think about anything unnecessary. My sponsor told you, right? We only got to see that far in that story."

"…"

"Meaning, no one knows what will happen next."

Her voice contained an icy determination. Lee Hyunsung put Lee Gilyoung on his back and nodded his head after hearing her.

"Heewon-ssi is correct."

It was the same story for both Shin Yoosung and Lee Jihye.

「Even though so many things happened, the companions still believed in Kim Dokja.」

Could my companions see that sentence?

Was it okay for someone like me to read that sentence?

Tsu-chuchuchu…!

[Will you enter the interior of the 'Final Wall'?]

A new message floated up soon afterwards.

The Probability's sparks whipped about madly above the Wall. With those sparks as the centre, the Wall seemed to retract; letters above the white surface rescinded and a small entrance we could go through was generated.

Han Sooyoung asked in a suspicious voice.

"…Do you have a plan for what's beyond here?"

Greyish fog filled up the inside of the entrance. It was a veil of fog I was familiar with – from the sentence that I had memorised after reading them over and over again.

「Finally, Yoo Joonghyuk who lost everything was looking beyond the fog.」

This passageway was the very same one that the 1863rd turn's Yoo Joonghyuk had passed by.

"…You said that what happens next isn't even mentioned in the 'Ways of Survival'."

I nodded my head.

The only remaining thing was to enter. Although, my last concern was…

"…Please go ahead. 'Zarathustras' can't go any further. We've been informed that we don't have the qualifications to enter."

Unlike Anna Croft, her subordinates 'Zarathustras' didn't possess all that many Stories connected to <Kim Dokja's Company>. They looked at me with sorrowful eyes for a little while, then silently moved out of the way and created a path.

[Incarnation, 'Selena Kim' has accepted her ■■.]

[Incarnation Selena Kim's ■■ is 'Unreachable Dream'.]

– Please, take care of Anna.

Selena Kim's voice was transmitted through voice projection. I slowly but deeply nodded my head and turned around to leave.

Footsteps belonging to my companions could be heard coming from behind me. My companions had become one constellation; my companions, who didn't emit light in the same direction as everyone else.

"Let's get going."

「Even then, everyone here all wished to confirm the conclusion.」

It was right then, a shadow suddenly appeared drifting around in the fog before us. Anna Croft's blonde hair spread in the air. However, the one controlling her body wasn't her.

Yoo Joonghyuk focused on the Wenny King's movements while tightly grasping the hilt of the [Black Heavenly Demon Sword].

"Are you thinking of trusting the Wenny King?"

He hadn't lowered his wariness since a while ago, and continued to emit intense bloodlust towards the Wenny King at every opportunity he could find.

I also didn't like the Wennys. They tried to kidnap Biyoo, and even tried to pull a fast one on me back in the Demon Realm, too.

"I don't trust him. We're just entering a temporary alliance, that's all. We made a deal in the past."

"A deal?"

I didn't offer up a detailed explanation. Because the one who could do it for me made his appearance, that's why.

[Looks like you don't trust me at all, regressor.]

Seeing the Wenny King speak through Anna Croft's mouth, I couldn't help but think that this had to be the worst combination imaginable. To think that two individuals Yoo Joonghyuk hated had been combined into one…

Yoo Joonghyuk wordlessly sent his magical energy to the [Black Heavenly Demon Sword]. He was getting ready to strike down at the slightest hint of provocation.

[I heard the story from other Wennys. It seems that you've cut off the lumps of my children.]

"And do you wish for yours to be cut off, too?"

The Wenny King cackled as if he was deeply amused.

"What's so funny?"

[I truly enjoy your unnecessary aloofness. You were the same back in the Demon Realm and in Murim. I had been spending a really long, boring time there, but things became rather entertaining all thanks to you.]

"One more word, and I shall cut off your lumps."

"Oiii, Yoo Joonghyuk."

Yoo Joonghyuk seemed to be more fired up than usual, so I quickly stopped him. Nothing good would come about by getting into a scuffle with the Wennys here.

Why did it happen, though? His unfocused aura was different from his usual self. Maybe his thoughts had gotten complicated now that the end was upon us.

The Wenny King alternated his gaze between Yoo Joonghyuk and me before opening his mouth.

[I see that you two are good friends.]

Even as the scary glare in Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes was rekindled, the Wenny King carried on.

[I too had someone like that once upon a time. He used to love the stories a lot, just like the 'Demon King of Salvation' over here.]

"I don't want to hear about your sob story."

[We carried out the scenarios together. We overcame many close shaves and fought against the absolute beings that ridiculed us. We compiled Stories to create more Stories, and after compiling Giant Stories, we even created an epic yarn, too. And with that epic, we eventually reached the 'Final Wall'.]

…The 'Wenny King' had reached this 'Final Wall' before?

This information never appeared in the 'Ways of Survival'.

[You probably never heard about it. That story doesn't even remain as a Story anymore. Maybe someone like the 'Apocalypse Dragon', who had gone insane from the repeated history, might be able to barely recall it.]

"…There was <Star Stream> even back in your day?"

[Back then, it was called a slightly different name. The name <Star Stream> was given only after we saw the end of this world.]

Here was a being that saw the 'end of the world' before us.

What was the ■■ for them back then? And just what happened back then that caused this creature to become the 'Wenny King' and drift around the scenarios?

[And that bastard is now called the 'King of the Stories'.]

The sound of something collapsing heavily could be heard from beyond the fog.

[That's why I'm looking forward to your last verses. I'm genuinely curious. Curious, on who'd end up as the final winner of this scenario…]

Tsu-chuchuchu…

The fog before us began rumbling loudly.

[Looks like it's time to go meet my old friend.]

Along with those words, all traces of the Wenny King vanished. However, his message continued to be heard.

[It'll be wise for you to start moving soon. Before you all get devoured, that is.]

…Devoured??

"Ahjussi!!"

Lee Jihye following us from behind suddenly cried out and disappeared through the floor. And then, hands-like things suddenly emerged from the floor and nearby walls to grab and yank at our arms and legs.

"Jihye-yah!!"

[Character 'Lee Jihye', has become a part of the great story.]

Jung Heewon reached out towards Lee Jihye being sucked into the floor. However, it was too late. Even Jung Heewon herself was being sucked in now.

Walls transformed into bottomless quicksand and swallowed her up.

[Character 'Jung Heewon', has become a part of the great story.]

"Heewon-ssi!"

I watched Lee Hyunsung dash towards Jung Heewon, but that only made me lose my bearing.

Did something like this happen back in the 'Ways of Survival'? Just what the hell…?!

｢Yoo Joonghyuk was the only person crossing this passage back in the 'Ways of Survival'.｣

I had overlooked that simple fact. Not even once did Yoo Joonghyuk try to cross this passage with these many people before.

"Everyone, gather around me!"

Unfortunately, it was too late by then. Lee Hyunsung, Lee Seolhwa, Gong Pildu, and even Yoo Sangah and the kids, were all snatched up by the hands of the walls and got absorbed.

[Character, 'Shin Yoosung', has become a part of the great story.]

[Character, 'Yoo Sangah', has become a part of the great story.]

My heart was racing nonstop. The word 'Character' especially got on my nerves amidst all those messages.

"Han Sooyoung! Yoo Joonghyuk!"

He was already half-sucked into the floor by now. There wasn't even enough time to resist.

"Step back!"

The sword wind Yoo Joonghyuk fired pushed me back. I barely managed to evade the texts trying to grab my ankles.

[Character 'Yoo Joonghyuk', has become a part of the great story.]

Eventually, even Yoo Joonghyuk was taken away. Han Sooyoung was the only one remaining. However, one of her arms was already being swallowed up.

"Hurry, this way…!"

I used every ounce of my strength to pull her out. The effects of the [Way of the Wind] permeated into my feet and the explosive forward momentum wrapped around me.

['Final Wall' is exposing its greed over your epic!]

['Final Wall' is looking at the individual not yet included in its story!]

Tsu-chuchuchut…!

Han Sooyoung's body was trembling as if she was having a seizure.

「The only other person who wasn't a 'Character' besides himself was Han Sooyoung.」

I ran as hard as I could. Unfortunately, the Wall's pursuit proved to be persistent. What's worse, I had no clue where exactly I was running off to. Front, back, side, up; I looked everywhere, but couldn't see a place I could escape to.

Poof.

Along with the sensation of stepping on air, the ground vanished. This was the same tactic that took away Lee Jihye and Jung Heewon. The Wall was now sucking me in, too. Han Sooyoung and I began falling as if this was an endless emptiness. The grey fog rushed in with every heavy breath I took, constricting me.

「Kim Dokja was scared of the stories he didn't know.」

Texts with incredible density interfered with my breathing. I couldn't recognise this Story due to the inordinate amount of letters. As the term implied, the 'Great' Story was crushing me.

I struggled and flailed about trying to escape from this Story somehow. However, the more I struggled, the more this vague fear dug into me. It felt like everything inside me was emptying out.

Texts were escaping from the tip of my fingers. Stories that formed the basis of me were disappearing. It was then.

「The Stories that constitute you exist through what you see, experience, and feel.」

That one sentence got stuck by my fingertip. That was the 'Story control' method Yoo Hoseong taught me back in the 'Isle of Reincarnators'.

「Let them know that you're looking at them, too.」

I grabbed hold of that sentence. When I did, the things that constituted the Story along with that sentence began popping up inside my head.

「Kim Dokja calmly controlled his breathing.」

I decided to stop my escape attempt from this vast cosmos of texts. Stories opened their maws wide as if to swallow me up in one go.

「These things wouldn't even exist if I don't look into them.」

There was no need to fear them. These were just Stories.

Tsu-chuchuchu…!

I stared into the words rushing in. I didn't even blink and glared at those texts, to let them know that I was reading them right here.

Right next second, the words scattered around like fog, before coalescing together again.

「In order to not get devoured by the Story, one had to become a 'dokja/reader'.」

As if to express their gratitude towards the one discovering them, the sentences began circling around my feet. Soon, they became footholds for me to walk on.

「A person who loves Stories yet still reads on without getting drunk in them.」

「Only then will the Stories become viable means to oppose the formless emptiness.」

My falling stopped. I lightly stepped on the sentences piling up below my feet. They were not the texts from the 'Ways of Survival'.

「"I'm Dokja."」

「I used to introduce myself to other people in this manner, but that would lead to the following misunderstanding.」

Even then, they seemed somewhat familiar to me.

While reading those sentences, I walked forward a step at a time. Some among them were stories that I already knew, some that I didn't, and some whose memories had faded now.

「When Kim Dokja was young, he began thinking about a certain thing.」

The young me was scribbling something on a notebook. It was a well-organised power balance sheet of the 'Way of Survival', as well as hidden piece locations. And also…

「What's this? I wouldn't have done it that way.」

I began cooking up my own methods of conquering the 'Ways of Survival'.

「What an idiot. You should've conquered that pitch-black place like this. The item you'll need is…」

「Getting the ampoules from the laboratory is the core of the theatre dungeon's conquest plan, and…」

「You definitely need to get the Ganpyeongui at this point in time. It's even more important than getting the Four Yin Demonic Beheading Sword.」

The sense of deja vu grew stronger as I took more steps forward.

「There's no other choice but to kill all the Constellations. There's no other way at this point.」

「To become stronger without regressing…」

「As I thought, the best route is this. The first 'Giant Story' must be earned in the Demon Realm.」

The sentences my younger self wrote now illuminated the path I was walking on. I began thinking as I tread on those words.

「To save everyone…」

Maybe, this path began long before the time I could recall?

Ttuk.

Eventually, the sentences were cut off.

And a small, white door waited for me where the words had ended.

It was the exact same door the 1863rd turn's Yoo Joonghyuk had opened.

「The [Epilogue] to the all the stories he hadn't read yet was beyond that door.」

I wordlessly stared at the doorknob.

「Just to turn this doorknob…」

The entire story that began with Yoo Joonghyuk flitted in and out of my head. And in this very moment, that one question I had from a very long time ago, but never spoken out aloud, floated back up to the fore.

「What kind of an epilogue did tls123 want to write for the 'Ways of Survival'?」

I reached out towards the door's handle, only to unwittingly look behind me. There was a path made out of vast Stories. This sight felt bizarrely alien now that I looked at it from this far.

｢I stared at that road for a long time.｣

Then, opened the door.

Chapter 506: Ep. 97 - The star that can't be seen, III

「The universe in the beginning was 'one'.」

When I regained my wits, that sentence was floating in front of my eyes. I couldn't tell whether that was just a line of text, or a memory of something taking possession of the sentence.

「The 'one' was truly omniscient and omnipotent in this world. Because the 'one' was the universe itself, and the universe was the 'one'. The 'one' was perfect. And it was perfectly alone.」

Right after that, a blinding explosion went off.

「And that's how 'one' became 'two'.」

That was the first explosion. People, later on, would call it the Big Bang.

「'One' was no longer omnipotent afterwards.」

An incredible dizziness assaulted me, and I fell down on my hands and knees.

This was inside the door, the deepest part of the 'Final Wall'. The wall didn't try to suck me in anymore. Maybe, I had already been sucked in.

I looked around to discover Han Sooyoung collapsed on the floor. I placed her unconscious figure on my back, and stood up. I raised my head to realize that Anna Croft was now standing before me.

[…Looks like you saw the First Story.] The Wenny King currently possessing her was smiling in my direction. [I made the exact same face as you when I first saw it, too.]

I didn't reply. I had no time to shoot breezes with him like this. Where did my companions disappear to?

Maybe he read my anxiousness, because he continued to speak to me.

[Aren't you curious? Why does this thing called 'Story' exist in this world?]

"…I didn't come here to discuss such things with you."

[However, it'll be impossible to go any further without talking about it first. It was the same for me.]

I could hear Han Sooyoung's breathing coming from my back. Her breaths soon became a Story and unfolded before me. The world seemed to distort, and a passage decorated with display shelf-like things appeared next.

「The universe became 'two', and the 'one' grew lonely.」

「Things that weren't necessary back when there was only 'one' began appearing.」

Figurine-like beings were engaged in combat above these display shelves. The history of 'scenario' that began in countless planets, including Earth, was on display right there.

「The 'Good and Evil' was created to differentiate the two.」

Agares and Metatron were bitterly fighting each other. That was the 'Great War of Saints and Demons', where angels and demons, even as they bled crimson-coloured Stories, never compromised on their ideals.

「The 'communication' was invented to soothe the two's loneliness.」

Citizens were battling demons within the walls of the [Industrial Complex]. And I saw Jang Hayoung trying to dissuade this battle between those walls.

「And 'Samsara', a wish to return to when it was 'one', was created.」

Next up was Sakyamuni gently stroking a certain Incarnation Body trapped within a water tank inside his chamber. It was the Incarnation Body belonging to the now-dead Tang Sanzang, who loved Sakyamuni once upon a time.

「However, 'two' could never go back to being 'one'.」

All the Stories I had been reading were displayed here.

These battles were repeating themselves within the predetermined conclusion.

Han Sooyoung must be slowly waking back up, because I could feel her tremble a little.

「The 'two' needed something to connect the divided two. An existence that would live through all the Stories, and act as a proxy to their good and evil, their communications, and their Samsara.」

My feet came to a dead stop just then.

「The 'Character'.」

I couldn't leisurely watch on anymore.

The 'Wenny King' walking next to me like a ghost spoke up. [It's such a malicious joke, don't you agree?]

He cackled before hiding within my shadow.

The number of individuals appearing on the display cabinet grew. Some were simply put on display like some plastic figurines, while there were some still trapped in the wall with only their faces exposed as if moulding hadn't been completed yet.

"…Jihye!! Yoosung-ah!!"

I recognised those faces.

I tried so hard to free them from there, but the more I struggled, the deeper their faces sunk into the wall.

I ran along the display shelf. Lee Seolhwa, Gong Pildu, Lee Gilyoung, Yoo Sangah… everyone from <Kim Dokja's Company> was here. And also…

"…Yoo Joonghyuk."

Yoo Joonghyuk's figure revealed itself from beyond the thick fog. His entire body was currently tied up with copper-coloured chains, his eyes closed and unmoving.

And a faint silhouette could be spied below him.

「That was none other than the 'King of the Stories'.」

The fog obscured his face, so I slowly walked over to him.

[You have encountered the 'King of the Stories'!]

[End of the main scenario is here!]

There never was much info on the Dokkaebi King within the pages of the 'Ways of Survival'. However, not appearing in the novel didn't mean that no information regarding him could be found elsewhere.

Because I knew of those that had met him already.

「However, none of them mentioned what the 'Dokkaebi King' looked like.」

At the end of the 'Final Fog', the 'King of the Stories' was waiting for me.

[The 'King of the Stories' is smiling at you.]

And then…

['The Fourth Wall' is intensely trembling!]

I had to doubt my own eyes next.

「This was from a very old memory.」

The head-pounding dizziness assaulted me as my vision shook greatly.

「There is no way. No, such a thing is simply impossible.」

[Finally we meet, the apostle of ■■… No, wait.]

Small bits of sparks danced before my eyes and removed the filtering altogether.

[Oh, the 'apostle of eternity and epilogue'.]

「Kim Dokja roared out like a thunderclap and rushed forward.」

I didn't even have enough time to think. I grabbed him by the scruff of his neck. I wanted to choke him to death right here, right now – but for some reason, my hands wouldn't listen to me.

「That man was tall. He always looked down on his son from high above.」

This man, he couldn't be here.

「The man with an always-flushing face. Always drunk, and because of that, the son never really met gazes with this man. No, the son prayed that their gazes would never meet each other's.」

[Dokja-yah. Kim Dokja.]

「The world would turn into a nightmare if their gazes met, that's why.」

[I really did come up with a splendid name for you, didn't I?]

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!!

I threw out a punch with all my might.

「His height that seemed so tall back then, was now about the same.」

The time seemed to be slowing down.

「Those protruding veins only served to make him look emaciated, instead.」

Tsu-chuchuchut!

「The son thought he could win now. He was not a powerless little child anymore.」

The fist I swung with all my power was stopped right before his nose.

Sparks exploding brightly illuminated the man's face. The 'Dokkaebi King', his eyes glowing bright blue, smiled like a devil at me while standing there.

[What do you think you're doing to your own father?]

I roared out. I was not cognizant of what I was saying nor even doing at that moment. [The Fourth Wall] was crumbling down.

"Kim Dokja! Get yourself together!!"

And then, a voice could be heard.

There was this warmth still pressing onto my back. Han Sooyoung's Story was being transmitted to me.

「This was the dokja/reader's Story.」

The story that protected me.

"The Fourth Wall! What are you doing! Wake up!!"

['The Fourth Wall' is strongly revitalised!]

['The Fourth Wall' is growing as thick as an impregnable fortress!]

It was then the expression on the 'Dokkaebi King' changed.

[You're obstructing me?]

It seemed that he was now looking not at me, but the thing inside me.

[The last fragment of the Final Wall, your duty is now over.]

['The Fourth Wall' is viciously growling!]

[You have safely reached the end of the entire story. Along with the successor that meets all the requirements.]

[The Fourth Wall] was speaking from inside me.

「That is for Kim Dokja to decide」

I gradually regained my calm while listening to those words.

「This creature before me was not my father.」

The memories shared with my mother became a Story and flowed right before my eyes. Her memories got swallowed up by [The Fourth Wall]. Her sentences floated up above that wall and tried to speak to me.

「He died on that day.」

"…You are not my father."

[How can you be so sure?]

"Stop with your pranks. It's impossible for you to be my father, Probability-wise."

[Probability, is it? Hahah, I've no excuses after hearing that. I thought it'd be the most natural thing to see this face at this point in time.]

The Dokkaebi King smiled even as I continued to grab him by his scruff. His face then began transforming.

[In that case, how about this face?]

He morphed into my mother's appearance, and then…

[These faces aren't too bad, either.]

And then, he even changed into Persephone and Hades.

I swung my fist one more time, but my whole body was flung away in the opposite direction as powerful sparks danced in the air.

"Show me those faces one more time and I'll kill you."

[Fufu. I guess my pranks have indeed crossed the line. My bad.]

"Change back! Show me your true appearance!"

[I'd love to, but I can't. I have already forgotten what my real appearance is like a long time ago. I lived my life as far too many different beings.]

He maintained Hades's appearance and slowly blinked his eyes. When he did, Stories began leaking out from behind him. Stories that were somewhat familiar.

「On that day, the world's most ancient demon ascended in awe.」

[I was a king of a Demon Realm once upon a time.]

「All the Archangels of <Eden> ceaselessly worshipped him.」

[I was also the messiah to the Archangels.]

Cold sweat trickled down my back.

These Stories, they were stories that I had heard before.

The vanished great Demon King, the messiah of Eden – I also sensed founding Stories of other myth-grade Nebulas from him, too. <Emperor>'s Pangu, <Olympus>'s Cronus… Hairs began standing up all over my body.

This existence before my eyes was on a completely different realm compared to every other Myth-grade Constellation I had encountered so far.

「The oldest existence in this world.」

I remained tense while gripping the Unbroken Faith even tighter.

"All of those things, they were your doing? Even <Eden>, the <Demon Realm>, all of them? Is that what you want to tell me?"

My words prompted the 'Dokkaebi King' to vigorously shake his head.

[No. In the end, everything is simply reincarnated from the old stories. We are all nothing more than a part of the massive tale reincarnating itself. You, me.]

He was now staring at the flow of <Star Stream> in the distance. The sky where stars had fallen was spreading out in emptiness. That sky resembled a huge wall.

The [Final Wall], that seemingly stretched on forever.

This world was, in the end, a story taking place within that vast, endless wall. I saw faint stars falling down like ink spilt during scribbling. So many stars had fallen by now, yet there were still some remaining up there.

Stars that couldn't be seen, unless one took a closer look. I remembered the names of those stars. And that reaffirmed what I came here to do.

"Release my companions."

[They are just the means to an end that served their purpose. What meaning is there for you if I released them?]

"…They are my everything."

The 'Dokkaebi King' slowly approached me.

Han Sooyoung used [Midday Tryst] to talk to me as she stood at my side.

– Kim Dokja.

She tightened the tattered bandages around her arm and began rousing up the last bits of her fighting spirit.

– I'll count to three. We subdue him together on the signal. One, two…

[Stop whispering amongst yourselves. I can hear you clearly.]

We stood there frozen stiff and exchanged glances.

All settings found in <Star Stream> had to go through the 'Dokkaebi King' first. In other words, there was no sentence in this world that he couldn't read.

Han Sooyoung and I gripping my hilt tightly glared at him. Now that our plan had been outed, whatever we did couldn't be called a sneak attack anymore.

The 'Dokkaebi King' stared at us as if he was greatly amused, before slowly extending his hand towards me.

[The successor of the stories. Only you have arrived here at the perfect timing.]

"…Wha? Son of a bitch, can't you see that I'm also…!"

Along with the 'Tsu-chuchuchut' noise, Han Sooyoung's voice disappeared. Trapped inside what looked like a water tank, she began pounding on the transparent walls surrounding her.

[You have cleared all the main scenarios!]

[You will be recorded in the cosmos-spanning unified <Star Stream>.]

Accompanying the system messages was a sudden rise in the Status of my existence.

[You've already shown the world such a cool Story, so how come you're still stuck in the old-school mentality? You are in possession of the noble wall's fragment, so I need to ask why you can't detach yourself from this world and watch it from afar?]

The owner of the voice seemed to be criticising me. His awe of all these stories could clearly be felt within the depths of that very voice.

He gazed at the wall near his position. No, more correctly, he seemed to be imagining a certain something beyond the wall itself.

[There is no meaning in the things you treasure. This world is simply a story dedicated to the great, noble existence. Everything in this world is nothing more than a fleeting daydream to the noble existence.]

The great, noble existence's daydream, was it?

"Is the [Final Wall] recording the dreams of that 'existence'?"

[Correct.]

I figured out who that existence was. The instigator of all these tragedies.

I recalled the 'First Story' I heard when entering this place.

「The universe in the beginning was 'one'.」

The first 'one'.

The existence who regressed Yoo Joonghyuk, and also gave birth to all the 'myths' in this world.

"Is that bastard tls123?"

Chapter 507: Ep. 97 - The star that can't be seen, IV

[tls123?]

The Dokkaebi King's expression as he murmured to himself looked rather strange. Bluish sparks were dancing on top of his lips that trembled as if he was suffering from some kind of lag.

I changed my question.

"I'm asking if that guy is the author of this world."

The Dokkaebi King tilted his head before replying.

[Rather than an author, you could say that the 'Oldest Dream' is much closer to being a reader. It's not an existence that writes stories for someone else. It's lazy and can be quite greedy.]

The 'Oldest Dream' isn't 'tls123'?

If that's true, then who had been sending me the text files? The author responsible for writing the novel I had read for over ten years, just who…

[You seem to be quite curious about the beginning of everything. However, there is no meaning in trying to guess it. Doesn't matter how this world came about, if there is no one to look at it, then it's the same thing as this world not existing in the first place.]

The 'Dokkaebi King' stared at the <Star Stream>'s universe.

Blinding fragments of Stories rode on the stream of cosmos and flowed to somewhere. Wherever his gaze stopped, the fragments repeatedly created meanings only to lose them again.

I shifted my own gaze towards Yoo Joonghyuk suspended in the air with chains wrapped around him. The empty <Star Stream>'s universe could be seen behind him.

"There are things that exist without being seen."

The darkness in the universe was simply too wide and expansive. Its vastness couldn't be crossed even with the speed of light. However, that light would eventually arrive at its destination. Unable to see it didn't mean nothing existed there. There were some things that emitted light where no one was around.

「Faint starlights could be spied within the deep darkness of the space.」

Stars that rose up among the darkness. Stars that hadn't lost themselves yet. The light from those stars became Stories – became sentences.

As those sentences were lowered on top of the Final Wall, the already-closed story's door opened up again.

「The Abyssal Black Flame Dragon raised itself up as black blood trickled out from its whole body.」

The moment I saw that sentence, I gasped out loud. The sentences soon became video footages. Not too long afterwards, I saw the Abyssal Black Flame Dragon raise its body up within the devastated battlefield.

Han Sooyoung was right; although he had lost the powers of the 'Apocalypse Dragon' after the 「Stage Transformation」 came undone, he was still none other than the Black Flame Dragon.

「The Great Sage, Heaven's Equal floating in the skies of a different world opened his tired eyes, and…」

The Great Sage was still engaged in a bitter struggle against the surviving Constellations among the thunderclaps continuously going off.

「The final 'Great Good' was forging her way towards the end of the Good and Evil.」

And Uriel, too; she was wielding her [Flames of Conflagration] to brighten the darkened night skies of <Star Stream>…

[No. They do not exist if no one is there to see them.]

Along with that declaration, the Story footage scattered away.

I unknowingly reached out towards the Story scattering in vain.

The Dokkaebi King addressed me as if to mock my actions.

[There is nothing more futile than a story continuing on when no one's reading it. Everything is created the moment they are observed. That's how this universe has been constructed. If no one observes it, that Story can't prove its existence.]

"…They definitely do exist."

[You still wish to see what happens next?]

[<Star Stream> is waiting for your decision.]

[The 'Final Wall' is waiting for your decision.]

The whole world was waiting for my answer.

"I…"

I hesitated with what to say. Han Sooyoung was still struggling within the transparent walls.

「Will I be able to see what I wanted if this Story continues on?」

The 'Dokkaebi King' chuckled as if he could understand my hesitation.

The 'Final Wall' viciously shuddered about. Sentences were flowing above the wall; as if it was providing a free service, the Story was lazily being reproduced once more.

The Great Sage, Abyssal Black Flame Dragon, and Uriel began fighting again.

「[…Hey, Flame Dragon-ah. Don't you dare to cry because your noona is no longer here!]」

「[Keke. You're too quick to give up, Archangel! I still have one arm left that I haven't used yet…!]」

「[But, it looks like that arm's been already sliced off, Black Flame Dragon.]」

「[This body of mine is perfectly fine without an arm, you dumb monkey!]」

The Good and Evil Constellations, and one that was neither, had gathered together and were participating in the final battle.

While watching that spectacle, the Dokkaebi King addressed me.

[Your Story was truly amazing. Even the greatest Giant Story <Star Stream> decided to side with you. Although many parts of your epic are still unfilled, it's more than enough to stand as the foundation for the 'beginning' of a new world.]

"I didn't continue my story just to become something like that."

Stories were shining brightly behind the Constellations.

[Giant Story, 'Torch that Swallowed the Myth', is continuing on with its storytelling!]

[Giant Story, 'Season of Light and Darkness', is continuing on with its storytelling!]

[Giant Story, 'Liberator of the Forgotten Ones', is continuing on with its storytelling!]

Those were our Giant Stories.

Stories weren't <Kim Dokja's Company>'s alone. Those that watched a certain story for a long time would eventually emit the same light as the story itself.

Constellations that had watched our story were now emitting the same light as us.

[That is the end of the story you have created.]

「The Black Flame Dragon roared out viciously as its tail was cut off.」

「Uriel's broken conflagration was scattering away like ash.」

「The Great Sage, Heaven's Equal swung his broken Ruyi Jingu Bang towards the Emperor's Constellations.」

The sentences written on the [Final Wall] were steadily losing their light. I reached out towards that light.

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

[You don't have the qualification to interfere with the 'Final Wall'.]

Pain rushed in from my fingertips. Sparks had scorched them pitch-black.

I gritted my teeth and shouted out. "I do have the right to control that story! I have already cleared the main scenario."

The reward for the last scenario was the [Final Wall].

The 'Dokkaebi King' smiled. [Indeed, you do have the right. However, you don't have the authority to change that story. Doing that will violate the 'Probability'.]

I stared at the sentences floating up on the Final Wall in real-time and unleashed my true voice.

[…Stop that story, right now.]

All the Stories I had compiled until now were screeching out.

It wasn't too late. For Uriel, Black Flame Dragon, and the Great Sage, too. They were still alive.

「[Hades, our ■■ is here.]」

It could be changed if it's right now. Those flowing sentences, they could be fixed. I could grab the ends of the unfinished sentences and write something else over them.

[Do you wish to save them?] The 'Dokkaebi King' asked. [I too was like you once upon a time.]

The world he had been living in spread out from behind his back.

A planet I wasn't familiar with appeared. The scenario was underway on that planet.

[I too had experienced horrible misfortunes. Tragedies that no single existence could ever handle alone… By the time tragedies no longer felt like tragedies to me, I found myself arriving in this place.]

Like a dam bursting open, a portion of the wall rained down on me. The enormous story held in the Final Wall's embrace began flooding in towards me.

Tsu-chuchuchuchuchuchu…!!

My mind felt like it was breaking down.

The stories that I already knew, and those that I didn't – Stories of the whole universe was accumulating within my soul.

['The Fourth Wall' is violently resisting!]

['The Fourth Wall' is protecting your crumbling mind!]

The deaths I had experienced, and the deaths I had witnessed, were overlapping with each other.

[Why did so many bad things happen to you?]

These stories that could easily be categorised as misfortunes began crushing down inside my head.

[Do not get drunk in the Stories. Because this is merely one of the countless world-lines you will create in the future, after all.]

Little by little, the emotion of sadness grew dull. Lamentation and despair, too. All these emotions of sorrow were lumped into one clay-like mass, and became something that couldn't be differentiated.

「So many misfortunes exist in this world, so is there a reason to feel sorrow for every single one of them?」

Far too many things would grow stale eventually.

[You asked me who was the author of this world. You can be that existence.] The 'Dokkaebi King' continued on. [If you wish to save them, you must acknowledge the fact that everything you love has no meaning, that the already-written Stories are simply illusions that can be changed easily, and that they are just shadows of the great, noble daydream.]

Along with the Dokkaebi King's whisper, the Giant Story's Probability began shifting.

[Become the architect of the brand new world, so that you can lead the next generation of <Star Stream>.]

It was an incredibly tempting offer. If I accepted the Dokkaebi King's suggestion and become the new architect of the <Star Stream>, then I'd be able to save everyone. I'd get to save this world-line by rewriting all these Stories.

And there was only one price to pay for that salvation.

「To give up loving that story.」

It was then, someone grabbed my hand. It was soaked in blood as if it had been hitting something for a while.

It was a hand of someone who had been writing stories for a very long time.

"…Wake up, will ya? You are not a writer."

When did she escape from the transparent walls? Han Sooyoung spoke to me while tearing the bandages with her teeth and wrapping them around her fists again.

"No, you're a reader who promised to become the first reader of my novel."

At the end of her words, Stories exploded out from her entire figure.

[Story, 'Predictive Plagiarism', has begun its storytelling!]

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

The sentences written on the [Final Wall] began growing restless.

[Incarnation, 'Han Sooyoung', is activating her attribute!]

"Even if there are lots of tragedies in the world, a sad thing is still sad, you dumbass!"

The moment Han Sooyoung slammed down on the floor, a portion of Story clinging onto the [Final Wall] tumbled down.

The Dokkaebi King's eyes grew wider. […The Wall, you dare…!]

He couldn't finish what he wanted to say.

Because someone's hand broke past the gap of the Wall where the Stories had fallen down. It was a smooth, pale-skinned hand. A hand of a certain someone who was more righteous and stronger than anyone I knew.

"She's right. Sorrow is still sorrow. Just like how happiness is still happiness."

[The 'Wall that Decides Samsara' is distorting the gap in the 'Final Wall'.]

Yoo Sangah and her refreshing smile was escaping from the wall. Shin Yoosung and Lee Gilyoung sticking close to her side could be seen, as well.

"Ahjussi!"

"Hyung!"

The rift Yoo Sangah created spread out wider and wider, and eventually, even reached the wall on the other side. And the voices of people I knew well could be heard coming from beyond that wall.

[The 'Wall of Impossible Communication' is raising the volume of the inaudible voice.]

"De-mon-King-of-Sal-va-tion!!"

It was Jang Hayoung's voice. Along with crumbling noises, something small popped out from the opposite wall's gap. It was Kyrgios.

"You pathetic fool. Did you get swallowed by a measly little Story?"

Soon afterwards, noises akin to a bulldozer flattening the ground resounded out as a man-sized hole appeared in that gap.

[The 'Wall that Decides Good and Evil' is re-establishing the boundary between Good and Evil!]

"Dokja-ssi! We came to find you!"

It was Lee Hyunsung and Jung Heewon.

The gap where my companions popped out rapidly recovered. Stories recorded on the [Final Wall] were quickly filling it up. And the stories of the stars began streaming again above the Wall.

"Dokja-ssi? Just what is…?"

"Hyunsung-ssi!! Over there!"

Jung Heewon's voice prompted all my companions to look at the [Final Wall].

Stories of the Constellations still fighting inside the closed-off cabin was being displayed there.

It was a hellish landscape where the dead easily outnumbered the living. Uriel was kneeling down, and the Abyssal Black Flame Dragon was collapsing. The Great Sage was fighting right until the very end to protect them.

「[Stand up, maknae's story hasn't ended yet.]」

Sentences continued to just stream by.

At this rate, they would all die. Uriel, Abyssal Black Flame Dragon, even the Great Sage, they would all die.

While still being subjected to intense pain, I reached out towards them. Pain severe enough to almost completely take over my soul meant I couldn't speak nor use my true voice.

「St op it」

['The Fourth Wall' is speaking in your stead.]

「Stop that story from continuing on」

Companions dashed towards the [Final Wall].

Even if I didn't say anything to them, they already knew what they needed to do. That story wasn't over yet. If only we could prevent the next sentences from being written…

Tsu-chuchuchuchu!

The violent aftermath's storm burned away at the companions. The Dokkaebi King's power was suppressing them. Despite that, they didn't stop. They endured against the blinding sparks dancing all over their bodies and walked forward a step at a time in their own paces.

[All Stories of <Kim Dokja's Company> refuse to be recorded on the 'Final Wall'!]

Stories we had created were speaking up now.

The 'Dokkaebi King' muttered as if he was replying to them. […I see. So, you still wish to carry on with the scenario, is that it?]

He then stared at me as if he was rather amused by this. The moment I met his gaze, goosebumps broke out all over my skin.

The 'Dokkaebi King' was the strongest existence in this world-line. No Myth-grade Constellation could ever contend with this creature. Everything within <Star Stream> was nothing more than some toys to him, after all.

With a single wave of his hand, the new scenario's contents floated on the [Final Wall].

[<Star Stream>'s Final Scenario is being reset!]

[<Star Stream>'s Final Scenario will be…]

CRAAACK!

The streaming sentence came to a sudden stop.

A single sword was stabbing into the spot where the sentence had been cut off. The aura containing the ominous power of Chaos was disrupting the order of the sentence.

And then, a new sentence was generated, instead.

「The sole existence who had seen the end of this world after wandering for the inordinate amount of time.」

The broken chains clanged in the empty air. Shadows from countless regression turns were overlapping on top of a certain black coat as if thousands of afterimages were gathering as one.

*

Right at that moment, I realized that my judgement was wrong.

「There is. One person, who did.」

A being who had already killed the 'Dokkaebi King' before.

[Story, 'Hell of Eternity', has begun its storytelling!]

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* Promotional illustration (semi-canonical)

Chapter 508: Ep. 98 - Have you protected all that you were supposed to protect, I

「A man named Yoo Joonghyuk was there.」

From the 0th turn all the way to 1863rd.

The history compiled by Yoo Joonghyuk overlapped with the ends of his coat and whipped about wildly. As if to speak up for his Story, his words floated up on the [Final Wall].

「"I will never forget. Not even one thing."」

[Story, 'Life and Death Companions's' special effect is currently in activation!]

The Stories of the 3rd turn's Yoo Joonghyuk and the Secretive Plotter's were resonating together.

Terrifyingly-resplendent powers of Chaos extended out from the tip of the [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] buried deeply in the wall. The entire wall seemed to grow restless from the disorderly aura of Chaos.

That was obvious, though; his story should be occupying the most important part of this wall, after all.

The protagonist of the 「Three Ways to Survive a Destroyed World」, Yoo Joonghyuk. This whole world couldn't even have gotten started without him in the first place.

The Dokkaebi King spoke up as if to ridicule him.

[Oh, the puppet of the Oldest Dream. Your film is truly lengthy and extensive.]

He sounded as if he already had predicted this appearance.

[No one could have accompanied you in your boring and unwieldy story. Even if it was the 'Oldest Dream'.]

Tsu-chuchuchut!

Yoo Joonghyuk slowly blinked, and the [Sage's Eye] was unleashed along with a radiant golden light. His eye glowed brightly as if it had absorbed every starlight existing in this world.

The owner of that eye spoke up.

【Have I come too early this time as well?】

The moment I heard the Secretive Plotter, I recalled a certain memory I saw through the [Disconnected Film Theory]. A memory from the 1863rd turn when he encountered the 'Dokkaebi King'.

「[Oh, dear unfortunate puppet. You have arrived too early. You can't complete this universe.]」

The 'Dokkaebi King' tilted his head as that memory was transmitted to him in real-time and muttered out. [Is that what happened? I see, the me of the different world-line told you such a thing.]

【Your manner of speech is different from the one I met.】

[Just like how your regression turns aren't the same, I too am different.]

The 'Dokkaebi King' shrugged his shoulders as if he found something rather amusing. Then, he yanked out Yoo Joonghyuk's [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] and threw it back. The latter caught the flying sword with his bare hand.

Only the sword scar remained on the [Final Wall] like a cursor. Soon, though, the scar was gradually forced close, and sentences appeared on the wall's surface.

「However, all these world-lines existed for the sake of treading the same path.」

The 'Dokkaebi King' addressed Yoo Joonghyuk while sounding immensely proud of this story. [The completion of the great, noble world is at hand. You shall be able to fulfil your long-cherished wish now.]

I knew very well what Yoo Joonghyuk's wish was.

[Giant Story, 'Pilgrim of the Lonely Apocalypse', has begun its storytelling!]

And that was to be freed from the chains of this horrifying curse. The 1863rd turn's Yoo Joonghyuk only lived on for that very purpose.

「However, his aim wasn't only that.」

The 'Secretive Plotter' turned his head to look at me. The meaning behind that stare was rather obvious – he was telling me not to forget the deal I made with him.

「"I shall kill the culprit of all these worlds."」

The 'Dokkaebi King' read that sentence floating above the [Final Wall] and muttered out. [Kill, is it… How amusing. Do you still believe such a thing is possible?]

【Of course, it is. And to make it possible…】

A pair of swords were now held in his hands.

The pitch-black blade of the [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] was now joined by the chillingly-pale blade of [Splitting the Sky Sword].

【…You, bastard, need to disappear first.】

Along with a loud 'Ka-boom!', sparks began pounding the entire Wall as if to break it down. An explosion of light occurred right afterwards, revealing two figures locked in combat mid-air.

I saw the sturdy barrier-like wall of the Story surrounding the 'Dokkaebi King'. He was an existence that used the oldest stories in this world as weapons.

[Giant Story, 'First Messiah', has begun its storytelling!]

The Story in possession of the master of Nebula <Eden> was now streaming out from his fingertips.

Sentences tightly coagulating scattered sacred light around. The light from a great Constellation was now raining down on all the creations on the ground. There was no doubt that anything touched by that Status would melt away without a trace.

"Dokja-ssi!!"

Lee Hyunsung freaked out and hurriedly ran towards where I was. Forged steel extending from his body spread out to protect me and the companions. However, I simply shook my head.

"There is no need, Hyunsung-ssi."

"Pardon?"

Instead of a reply, I simply pointed to the front.

Even as the pulsing migraine continued to assault me, I didn't stop looking at the view unfolding before my eyes.

Other stars were right. I too, might be nothing more than a mere Constellation. Maybe, I endured over a dozen-plus years to witness this spectacle.

[Exclusive attribute, 'Terror of the Stars', is activating!]

The brilliant radiance of the Dokkaebi King was splitting apart. A man wearing a black coat was using two swords to defend against the light of messiah capable of ending all evil in this world.

Tsu-zuzuzuzu…!

The Stories on the Wall melted down as the light touched them.

The 'Secretive Plotter', no, Yoo Joonghyuk, was walking forward step by step while scything past that light. Sweat drops formed and dripped down from the end of his chin, and the edges of [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] and [Splitting the Sky Sword] grew increasingly dull from the light, yet he didn't back away, not even once.

This caused the Dokkaebi King's expression to shift gradually.

[As expected. How about this, then?]

[Giant Story, 'First Evil', has begun its storytelling!]

The First Evil. That was the Story of 'Baal', the great Demon King who had ascended to heaven. It was the absolute power that no Good in this world could ever dare to oppose.

Now carrying the entirety of the Demon Realm on its back, the Dokkaebi King dropped a pitch-black bolt of lightning on Yoo Joonghyuk. It was the thunderclap from the corrupted heaven that no Archangel could withstand.

Lee Seolhwa cried out in the distance. "Joonghyuk-ssi!!"

Yoo Joonghyuk didn't avoid the incoming lightning bolt. No, he instead raised his sword up like a lightning rod and faced the attack head-on. That wasn't the end, however.

[The「Stage Transformation」is activating!]

Through the Stage Transformation, souls of Demon Kings were being revived. There were some that died by our hands, while some were killed off by the Apocalypse Dragon. All Demon Kings had been summoned to the battlefield once more by the 'First Evil', and they were now howling towards Yoo Joonghyuk and me.

Gu-waaaaaah!!

The weapons thrown by the Demon Kings were enveloped in the malevolent magical energy, creating a purple-coloured storm of lightning. It was so powerful that not even a Myth-grade Constellation would be able to withstand it.

As the lightning flooded in, Yoo Joonghyuk's pale face was illuminated like an evil apparition. He remained utterly calm even as the ominous storm of Status raged on.

Just like someone who had been waiting for this very moment for a long time.

【They are all bastards that I've killed before.】

[Exclusive attribute, 'Demon King Slayer', is activating!]

Yoo Joonghyuk leapt into the air and marched forward while deflecting the incoming weapons. Everywhere his swords drew arcs, Stories of evil crumbled down.

Like a monster born only to destroy, he swung his swords again and again. Every single one of his sword strikes contained the resentment of the worlds he had lived in.

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

A huge rift was opening up in the corrupted skies of the Demon Realm.

The martial prowess powerful enough to dissolve the「Stage Transformation」all by himself; the monster created by <Star Stream> was now working towards destroying <Star Stream> itself.

Guwaaaaaahk!

The blade of [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] cut off the head of the revived 'Black-mane lion' Marbas, while the [Splitting the Sky Sword]'s trajectory pierced past the heart of the 'Merciless hunter going against heaven's will', Barbatos.

No Demon King could announce themselves as a king in front of this man.

The Dokkaebi King growled and shouted out as if he too had finally acknowledged the threat. [You arrogant puppet…! You are not the protagonist of this world-line!]

At the same time, the surrounding terrain began changing again.

[Giant Story, 'Star Stream Game System', has begun its storytelling!]

[The 「Stage Transformation」 is activating!]

The Wall's appearance was changing as if pixels were breaking apart.

Yoo Joonghyuk's figure seemingly grew smaller and smaller. The path he needed to tread became a maze, as if he was now trapped within the 'maze of Daedalus'. Even a monster with a large mouth chasing after him could be seen, too. [Automated turrets] suddenly popping from here and there began firing at him, while the ground his feet landed on morphed into a deep quagmire.

It was as if he had entered a video game.

「Yoo Joonghyuk was laughing.」

[Exclusive attribute, 'Ruler of Games', is activating!]

He overcame the exceedingly-simple traps and flung himself forward like an arrow. He tore the approaching monster's head off, then proceeded to utterly destroy the maze's walls.

As if he already knew the method of clearing this world, he didn't even permit a single attack to land on him.

[Applicable 'stage' cannot deal with the target's Status!]

The maze collapsed, and Yoo Joonghyuk was already standing right before the Dokkaebi King. The latter's eyes were now dyed in the colours of fluster.

【Is that all?】

It was only obvious why the 'Secretive Plotter' would win against the 'Dokkaebi King', however.

His whole life existed solely to fight and win against <Star Stream>. He must've killed the Dokkaebi King in a similar manner during the portion of the original I didn't get to read.

The latter was hastily retreating, his eyes now shifting towards me.

「What is Yoo Joonghyuk's weakness?」

The moment I read that sentence floating above the [Final Wall], the back of my neck grew icy-cold.

The sights of a different world-line were projected onto the Dokkaebi King's irises. Memories not from this world, but another world-line was currently entering him.

He stopped looking at me as if he had found the right answer, and with a chilling smile, shifted his gaze back to Yoo Joonghyuk.

[Oh, dear puppet. Is your mind as sharp as your sword, I wonder?]

[The 'King of Stories' is forcibly reproducing your Story!]

[The 「Stage Transformation」 is activating temporarily!]

[The similarity of the surrounding terrain is greatly enhancing the level of stage's reproduction!]

Corpses of Demon Kings were strewn about everywhere. Yoo Joonghyuk and his devastated expression standing on top of dead Constellations and Demon Kings, was now slowly taking in the surroundings.

｢The final world he used to live in was now unfolding in this place.｣

There was no way he didn't recognise this 'world'. It was none other the 'Secretive Plotter' himself who had sent me to that place, after all.

｢The 1863rd regression turn. The last world of the 'Ways of Survival'.｣

The Dokkaebi King approached Yoo Joonghyuk like an encroaching shadow as the latter dazedly looked up at the sky. No, he was no longer the 'Dokkaebi King'. With every step he took, his face and his silhouette changed.

｢The pale cheeks; two eyes gleaming like stars, were now looking at him.｣

The white coat perfectly matching mine was dancing in the wind.

[Do you remember it? Back in the 33rd regression turn. What Lee Jihye said after clearing the 40th scenario?]

A voice exactly the same as mine was now speaking up.

Sparks danced in the air as Yoo Joonghyuk's body froze up stiffly.

The Dokkaebi King easily reached out and grabbed hold of Yoo Joonghyuk's collars before continuing on.

[Now, remember. You weren't always unhappy, right? In all the regression turns, there were always moments of happiness, even if they didn't last long.]

Both the [Splitting the Sky Sword] and the [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] trembled powerfully. And in the midst of the tremor, they drooped powerlessly.

｢The regression depression.｣

That was the only weakness of Yoo Joonghyuk, who had repeatedly regressed for a very long time.

[In the 173rd turn. You managed to protect Earth for a pretty long time. You got to see Lee Jihye receive her high school diploma, and you even got to see Lee Seolhwa smile with another's child in her arms.]

The light in Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes was wavering.

「It wasn't despair that could defeat Yoo Joonghyuk.」

「Small feather-like memories settled down inside his head one by one.」

The 'Dokkaebi King' was using the exact same method I relied on back then.

「The breathing got harder, and the lungs were getting tighter.」

「A man drowning in water would sink even deeper under the surface from the weight of a mere feather.」

I couldn't afford to idly watch on anymore. I shouted at Yoo Joonghyuk, telling him to wake up, and not to fall for such an illusion.

However, my voice couldn't reach them as if a non-conductive barrier was set up between us. And the 'Dokkaebi King' was smiling away, perhaps to mock this entire story.

[Yoo Joonghyuk, have you protected all that you wanted to protect?]

Slowly, Yoo Joonghyuk's knees sank down.

I roused the Status of Stories. I needed to undo that「Stage Transformation」 right now, But, how should I…

Grab.

There was a hand still tightly clutching mine. It was Han Sooyoung.

"That's not a battle you can interfere in."

"But, if he's left alone…!"

"…Even a star that can't be seen still emits light. You said that, right?"

…A star that can't be seen?

Her words made me look back at Yoo Joonghyuk once more.

His gaze being lowered had come to a stop. Blinding sparks were completely enveloping him.

Tsu-chuchuchuchu…

Something was waking up his fading consciousness.

[Giant Story, 'Ones that Remember the Apocalypse', has begun its storytelling!]

That was a Story I wasn't aware of.

As the sparks lessened gradually, several silhouettes revealed themselves. Now that I took a closer look, Yoo Joonghyuk wasn't alone. No, four others were standing beside him.

A tall man, a young man with blonde hair, a girl with a ponytail, and finally…

【He couldn't protect anyone. That's why he now stands in this place.】

…An Archangel with blindingly-pure wings.

Astonishment quickly dyed the Dokkaebi King's expression.

The Story from the destroyed 999th turn was now burning brightly like the conflagration of end times on the edges of the Archangel's blade.

【Because he believes there are still things left to protect.】

Chapter 509: Ep. 98 - Have you protected all that you were supposed to protect, II

The Dokkaebi King's brows quivered. The Stories from the 999th regression turn were now looming before him.

The Stories discarded by <Star Stream> had begun telling their stories one by one. They were waking Yoo Joonghyuk up from the depth of 'regression depression'.

The 'Dokkaebi King' frowned deeply next. [Why are you here? Did you not make a deal with me? You don't have a pretext to help him.]

Sentences began floating up above the [Final Wall].

「We made a deal with the Dokkaebi King, you see? If we destroy this world-line, he will send us back. He will get in touch with your Sponsor, the 'Oldest Dream', and…」

Those were the words of the 999th turn Lee Jihye.

The 'Dokkaebi King' spoke once more. [It was I who summoned you all to this world. Do you wish to be cast out of the world-line again? I ask you, do you wish to taste the everlasting pain while wandering the horrifying gap between dimensions without an end in sight?]

His words continued on as if to threaten them.

[This 'Yoo Joonghyuk' is the enemy you've been searching for. He's the very culprit who destroyed your world-line, the one who thrust your Stories into misery.]

There was a slight hint of agitation on the expressions of the 'Outer Gods'.

The 'Dokkaebi King' was right; just like how it was with Yoo Joonghyuk, they too came this far to settle the score from the world they used to live in.

It was then, someone opened his mouth.

【What dogshit are you yapping on about? It's you, asshole, who dropped us into this damn game, isn't it? If the scenarios didn't start in the first place, would I even be standing here doing this shit?】

The 'Monarch of the Great Abyss', 999th turn's Kim Namwoon spoke with a thuggish attitude. As if he had already finished making up his mind, truly incredible power of Chaos was being unleashed from his entire figure.

[Giant Story, 'Delusional Design', has begun its storytelling!]

【Keuh-euh, it's been so long since we fought together.】

Kim Namwoon cackled as he undid the bandages from his hands.

He was a monster that even surpassed his own sponsor, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon'. His pitch-black obsidian hand, filled to the brim with thicker, more evil aura than anything Han Sooyoung could ever produce, began sucking in the <Star Stream>'s night.

[Giant Story, 'Heart Sealing the Sorrow', has begun its storytelling!]

Right behind him, there was another man raising his huge figure up as well. It was the 999th turn's Lee Hyunsung, the 'King of the Silver Heart'.

The completed 'Story metal' armour wrapped around his entire figure.

【Dokkaebi King, I'm excluded from that deal since I have never agreed to it.】

Next up, the 'Master of the Sunken Island', 999th turn's Lee Jihye summoned her gigantic battleship up in the air.

[Giant Story, 'Wanderer of the Eternal Horizon', has begun its storytelling.]

The atmosphere of the great ocean could be felt from her Twin Dragon Sword.

【…】

She wordlessly unsheathed her sword and protected Yoo Joonghyuk's right side. With that, the kings' decision became clear.

[Exclusive skill, 'Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint', is forcibly activating!]

Their thoughts and determination were being transmitted to me in full.

They all hated the 'Secretive Plotter'. However, that hatred was born out from the deep-seated yearning they all held.

「No one treasured 'Yoo Joonghyuk' as much as them in any of the universes out there.」

It was all thanks to Yoo Joonghyuk that they got to reach this far. To make sure they would reach here, the 999th turn's Yoo Joonghyuk sacrificed everything of him.

His arm was cut off, his legs were torn off, he lost both of his eyes, and in the end, he even sacrificed his life, too.

「It was Yoo Joonghyuk who saved them, and killed them.」

They only lived for Yoo Joonghyuk; how could people like them ever forget about him?

The wrath that had to be chained within the sinking island, the sorrow that could only be endured after turning your heart into steel; the pain that could only be forgotten by throwing yourself into the abyss.

[Giant Story, 'Flame of Eternity', has begun its storytelling!]

And the ache that could only be appeased by burning oneself away. They repeatedly connected the film that threatened to be cut off at any time, and eventually reached the final pages of the story.

【Step aside, Dokkaebi King. We only want one thing.】 The 999th turn's Uriel, the 'Living Flame', spoke up. 【And that is to witness the 'end' we didn't get to confirm back in our world-line.】

At the end of her words, the [Flames of Conflagration] moved.

Kwa-kwakwakwakwa!

The [Hellflame] that utterly devastated the N'Gai's Forest was now burning the interior of the Wall. Almost at the same time, the right hand of the 999th turn's Kim Namwoon stabbed into the Dokkaebi King's thigh.

【Hahaha! Let's kill a Dokkaebi for a change!】

Kim Namwoon's madness-filled Stigma sliced past the time and space, destroyed Stories, and aimed at the Dokkaebi King's figure.

The two exchanged the exact amount of Stories during their attacks and defenses; weapons created from the delusion grew out of Kim Namwoon's right arm, while Star Relics summoned by the 'Dokkaebi King' appeared from several spots of the Wall and blocked off the former's weapons.

Tsu-chuchuchut!

The [Final Wall] was the location where the Dokkaebi King's Story could display the greatest level of power. With the stage being what it was, the direction of the battle soon flowed disadvantageously for Kim Namwoon.

「Oh, the spear that rips the oceans apart and draws the borders in the seas.」

「Oh, the arrow that shot down the eye of the sun.」

Sentences leaking out from several spots on the Wall soon became reality.

Shu-shushushuk!

The Star Relics matched the Dokkaebi King's signal and flew in, turning the entire figure of the 'Monarch of the Great Abyss' into Swiss cheese; a spear stabbed into his thigh, while the arrow pierced into his arm. However, even as the pitch-black Story dripped out from him, Kim Namwoon was grinning.

【Go! Taekwon Hyunsung!】

Along with Kim Namwoon's cry, a figure taking the spot behind him rose up.

Kwa-dudududu…

It was the 999th turn's Lee Hyunsung. His powerful, sturdy arms wrapped tightly around the Dokkaebi King, then forged steel occupying the space grew out from his entire body. As the powerful sparks exploded, the steel tightly secured the Dokkaebi King's arms and legs.

【Jihye-yah!】

At the end of the 999th turn Lee Hyunsung's signal, the 'Master of the Sunken Island', made her move.

【Load the cannon.】

A massive battleship floating in the night sky could be spied within the Wall's gap created by the impact with the ark. Along with a powerful whirlpool swirling about, something was being loaded in front of the ship. The Status emitted from there was more than enough to blow up a planet in its entirety. When taking a closer look, it was not a shell that had been loaded into the gigantic cannon.

【Fire!!】

And while issuing a huge explosion noise, a shooting star fired out from the ship. It was the 'Living Flame', descending like a star with a blindingly bright tail behind her back.

She had willingly become a bullet and now, was flying straight at the 'Dokkaebi King'. The 999th turn's Uriel shot forward in a shocking turn of speed while melting everything getting in her way. The 999th turn's Story concentrated on the tip of her sword began burning up violently.

【It's not only the Supreme King that have killed you before.】

「This was the method the 999th turn's characters used to clear the final pages.」

The incandescent sun shattered the Wall's exterior and advanced forward. Stories clinging onto the Final Wall writhed in pain from that incredible heat.

This was the attack that no one in this world-line could possibly defend against.

「Yet, the 'Dokkaebi King' was doing exactly that against such an attack.」

Creaaaaaaaaak-!!

The Dokkaebi King's eyes glowed sharply under the hellish heat.

Ah, aaaaaaah!

Countless Stigmata engraved on his body screeched out. They were texts seemingly taken from the [Final Wall]. Giant Stories began directing their exaltation towards them.

Even the Stories in my possession were getting agitated, as well.

「The Modifier 'King of the Stories' was not just for a show.」

The 'King of the Stories' that existed at the peak of <Star Stream>. His face looked noble, evil, beautiful and sorrowful all at the same time.

「Once upon a time he too was a human.」

The weapons pouring out from the [Final Wall] collided with the [Flames of Conflagration], and…

「He was a demon.」

The ash-coloured Story leaking out from the Dokkaebi King's horn stopped the approaching Uriel's movement.

「He was a saviour, and…」

The divine light emitted from white wings restored the Dokkaebi King's stamina.

「And eventually, an existence that became a Dokkaebi.」

The unending Stories began enveloping him. As if, this world couldn't end in this place.

「This place was not the 999th turn.」

I sensed the 999th turn's characters now shifting their gazes in my direction.

「Now, make your move.」

「You must be the one to finish it.」

「You haven't forgotten your promise with us, yes?」

Unfortunately, I couldn't move.

[Giant Story, 'Guardian of the World', has begun its storytelling!]

[Giant Story, 'Guardian of the World', is now looking at the next Guardian!]

Because the Dokkaebi King's Story was also looking directly at me.

[…Kim Dokja!!] The Dokkaebi King shouted in my direction. [Do not go against your predetermined destiny. You love the Stories more than anyone in this world. I too was like you. I understand the feelings you have towards this world better than anyone in this universe!]

The Story extending from his body reached out towards me.

Han Sooyoung next to me covered my ears and growled angrily. "Don't listen to him. It's not even worth it hearing him out."

Jung Heewon and Lee Hyunsung stood before me, while Yoo Sangah, Shin Yoosung, and Lee Gilyoung stood around me to protect me. And from behind my back, the howl from Lee Jihye's sword resounded out.

[All the stars in the Nebula <Kim Dokja's Company> are shining brightly!]

However, there were some things that would become more visible the harder you tried to obscure them. Some words would become clearer the more you tried to cover them up.

[Exclusive skill, 'Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint', is going out of control!]

「[Black Flame Dragon! Black Flame Dragon! Goddammit, open your eyes already!!]」

「[Kim Yoo-Shin! Wake up! Our Hwangsanbeol is not yet…]」

「[Great Sage!]」

Those were Stories streaming on the [Final Wall].

Constellations were collapsing on the battlefield where an even fiercer battle than ours was taking place. Stories were endlessly leaking out from the Great Sage's body, now tattered to resemble a torn rag. As if he had lost both of his eyes, his once-blinding 'Golden Gaze Fiery Eyes' were currently not emitting any light.

「[…I can't see my maknae all that well.]」

Uriel was supporting him. The Archangel with both of her wings torn off held his hand and stroked the nightscape.

「[He's alive. There he is, still shining.」

The Constellations still doggedly surviving until now rushed towards them from among the chaotic night sky.

The scene then changed to show Persephone embracing the fallen Hades. He was trying to say something, but she simply shook her head.

「[Do not worry, my ancient night.]」

<Olympus>'s sun was setting above her head.

All these endings became wretched sentences and rushed above the Wall. These sentences were being written only for the purpose of finishing them off.

[Do you not wish to save them?]

I felt vomit rising up from the deepest part of my body.

The 'Dokkaebi King' shouted out. [The current you can't save them. The one who loves the story can never change that very story.]

Can't change it, because you loved it.

[Only the one who overcomes the story, the one who understands the trivial nature of everything, can escape from the suppression of the Probability.]

The surrounding storm of aftermaths was growing even more vicious, accompanied by the 'Kka-gagagaghk!' noise. The power of the Stories flowing out from the 'Dokkaebi King' was gradually overwhelming the combined might of the 999th turn's characters.

The Dokkaebi King tore off Lee Hyunsung's Story metal and extended his hand in my direction.

[The 'One Single Story' you have compiled is more than enough to inherit the position of <Star Stream>. Take my hand. What you want is the same as what I want. I do not wish to see the stories of those stars be erased.]

His voice even sounded desperate, too. The light in his eyes and his Story all acted as proof of his sincerity.

The <Star Stream>'s Story glowed brightly from his figure.

「The story he had been reading for a long time had eventually become a part of him.」

He was now the <Star Stream> itself.

He genuinely didn't want this story to end.

[Continue with… this story. Become the protagonist of a new world-line, and along with the Story you have created, continue the banquet of the 'Oldest Dream'. You are the existence born solely for that purpose. You were able to reach this far, only for that purpose!]

While listening to those words, I began recalling all the lucky moments that happened to me so far.

[<Star Stream> is looking at you.]

Why was the <Star Stream>'s Probability so generous towards me?

The Dokkaebi King's Story was telling me the reason for that. The lights continued to explode before my eyes.

[Do not forget what you truly want. You're not the 'last verse'. No, you're the 'Eternity'!]

The Constellations' Stories streamed behind the Dokkaebi King.

He was right. I didn't wish for those stories to end.

「The Great Sage, Heaven's Equal watched the falling star and sensed his own approaching demise.」

I slowly turned my head around and saw Yoo Joonghyuk, now almost freed from the 'regression depression'. His seemingly-empty eyes were locked on me.

「However, there were some stories that had to end.」

Chapter 510: Ep. 98 - Have you protected all that you were supposed to protect, III

That was an old promise.

「"I'll finish your story for you."」

I couldn't keep that promise during the 1863rd turn.

[Your ■■ has begun shaking unsteadily!]

I pushed myself up while gripping the Unbroken Faith tightly. The hilt of the sword that accompanied me from beginning till now through almost all the scenarios, could be felt in my hand.

The tip of the sword touched the ground and sentences began rising up. Sentences that I had never seen before.

「He was more curious about the end of this world than anyone, and…」

「And more than anyone else, he wished for this world not to end.」

My last Story had begun.

"…Kim Dokja?"

I removed Han Sooyoung's hands covering my ears.

Her eyes were trembling. My reddened appearance was reflected in her irises. A lengthy wound was running across my cheek; wings were torn, and the Demon King's horn was broken. I was truly in a mess.

And Han Sooyoung believed in such a mess of a man until now and came this far.

[Have you made up your mind?]

The Dokkaebi King in the centre of all the exploding sparks asked me.

The beings from the 999th turn, the 'Outer God Kings', were doing whatever they could to fight back. The battle so far had been evenly matched, but judging from the direction of the storm of the Probability's aftermath blowing in, it should be the 999th side falling into a disadvantage in the end.

"That's right." I replied to the Dokkaebi King. "I shall cross the 'Final Wall'. And then, meet the one behind it."

The culprit of all these tragedies, the 'Oldest Dream'.

"I'll meet that guy, and stop all of this world's tragedies."

The 'Dokkaebi King' grinned as if he was satisfied with my decision.

[Indeed. Very good. That's eminently possible when you become my successor. Now, come this way. Hurry, and inherit the <Star Stream>'s will…]

"I never said I'll take you up on your offer."

I activated [Way of the Wind] and the [Electrification] at the same time.

This world's fastest movement technique was soon enveloped by the pure-white electrical energy, transforming my body into a single streak of light beam. With the fastest speed I could ever produce, I shot past both the Dokkaebi King and the Outer Gods.

The destination I chose was the deepest part of the [Final Wall].

[You…!!]

I heard the stunned voice of the Dokkaebi King. I also saw the sentences dashing across above the [Final Wall] in the distance.

「The place where the Abyssal Black Flame Dragon's last scale, and Uriel's last feather, had fallen.」

I roared out in panic and dashed towards that very sentence.

「The place where Persephone's last teardrop had fallen.」

I needed to stop those sentences from finishing. Even if I saw the end of this world, I must never let those words come to an end.

Perhaps he had realized my intentions, the Dokkaebi King was shouting out in sheer astonishment.

[No, stop! You are not a permitted being yet! You can't even touch that Wall, let alone cross it!]

Tsu-chuchuchut!

The moment he was finished, the storm of the Probability's aftermath suppressed my entire body. The sparks exploded with enough force to utterly crush my Incarnation Body right down its atoms, and for a moment there, the inside of my head blanked out from the pain.

[The 'Final Wall' is rejecting your approach!]

The Wall was rejecting me.

It was stopping me from touching its sentences, to change them, and even from crossing over it. As if I couldn't even be permitted to reach it at all.

In an instant, the words on the Wall widened the space, and retreated to a far-off distance.

「Those sentences weren't Kim Dokja's.」

Powerful gusts of wind knocked me off my feet. I was like some words cast out to the distant empty blankness, miserably rolling on the ground towards my rear. Then, my back collided with something while issuing a loud 'thud!'

"You idiot! You think you can achieve something by rushing out all alone??"

It was Han Sooyoung. I replied to her with a grin.

"I wasn't rushing forward alone."

The <Kim Dokja's Company>'s members were running towards us from behind.

I didn't want to lose anyone. I simply couldn't afford to lose anyone.

"Dokja-ssi! Keep running!"

Jung Heewon, her [Hour of Judgement] activated, rushed towards us while scattering the reddish glow from her eyes.

Lee Hyunsung and Lee Jihye were positioned either side of her, while Yoo Sangah and the kids were right behind them. Meanwhile, Jang Hayoung and our masters were taking up the rear of the group.

"Take this with you! It's the last Life and Death Pill!"

Lee Seolhwa couldn't come with us because of Gong Pildu, so she threw the pillbox at us, instead. I took a [Life and Death Pill] out right away and swallowed it. My wrecked Incarnation Body began recovering rapidly.

[Stop!!]

Along with the Dokkaebi King's cry, bizarre-looking creatures revealed themselves from among the contexts of the paragraphs recorded on the Wall. They were 'Outer Gods', too – beings that hadn't earned Stories worthy enough to be recorded on the Wall.

【■■■!!▪▪▪ ▪▪▪ ▪▪▪!!】

Not all Outer Gods followed their kings. There definitely existed some that chose to become the Dokkaebi King's underlings despite possessing great powers themselves, and voluntarily worked as the slaves of the scenarios.

Kwa-kwakwakwakwa!!

[Stop them! If you do, I shall record your Stories on the 'Final Wall'!]

Our martial art masters discovered tentacles rushing in from all directions and unsheathed their weapons.

"Leave this place to us."

The Breaking the Sky Saint's [Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship] and Kyrgios's [Purest Sword Force] combined into a single ray of light, and engraved their sentences over the Wall.

[Giant Story, 'The 1st Murim', has begun its storytelling!]

Two greatest experts of Murim stopped the tentacles and a desperate struggle soon ensued. Unfortunately, the time they could buy was only for a fleeting moment.

There were simply far too many 'Outer Gods' flooding out from the 'context' the Dokkaebi King had opened up.

[All Stories of <Kim Dokja's Company> are emitting bright light!]

We couldn't afford to waste the time our masters bought for us. The Wall's surface recording Uriel's and the Great Sage's Stories had already grown that far away.

There could only be one answer. We needed to approach it fast than its retreating speed. But, how could we…

It was right around then a certain paragraph floated up on the [Final Wall].

「To think that a 'Green Zone' is located on a wall… To begin with, people were responsible for attaching the concept of 'rooms' on it, weren't they.」

I abruptly looked down at the floor we were standing on.

The floor itself was another type of 'Wall', laying in a different direction. And our footprints were left engraved on the Wall we ran on. The Stories we had compiled were floating up on the footprints we left behind.

「"By the way, Dokja-ssi, what are you so focused on reading just now?"」

「It was the moment when my life's genre changed.」

「"The number of people remaining in the subway cabin is twelve. And there are only three insects inside the net."」

「One world was dying, while a new world was being born. And I was the sole reader who knew the conclusion of this world.」

It was from the first scenario. Back when we were trying to escape from the subway.

「Please select your backer. Your chosen backer will become your trusty sponsor from now on.」

「[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire' is disappointed in you.]」

「[Constellation, 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband' is amused by your choice.]」

Those were from the Sponsor Selection. Starlights were illuminating our feet.

We began running again. The Stories created the path we should be running on.

「"Is it true that you're monopolising the food?"」

「"Stand up, everyone. The scenario has just begun, after all."」

「"An arrogant tenant showed up, I see."」

「"Hyunsung-ssi, do it now. Destroy everything, please."」

Past the battles of Geumho and Chungmuro Stations, and…

「"I'm the… ninth quitter.」

「"…My apologies, but, may I inquire what your name is?"」

「"I'm Yoo Joonghyuk."」

The memories from the battles of the 'Capture the Flag' and the life-and-death struggle of the prophets were remembered next.

「"What an amusing thing this is. All this history belongs to the past, yet why have you all gathered in this place once more?"」

「"That bastard is nicknamed the tyrant king. Doesn't matter whether you're a man or woman, you'll be taken as a concubine if you're pretty enough, and if you're not, either you'll be killed off or become his slave."」

「"In that case, Dokja-ssi, you'll end up as a slave if you get caught."」

「The top dog among the Seoul's Seven Kings was, of course, the Supreme King Yoo Joonghyuk.」

We greeted the Gwanghwamun's 'Battle of the Kings', and…

「"That's why I will not sit down on the 'Absolute Throne'."」

…And, I destroyed the [Absolute Throne].

「"However, I won't permit anyone else to sit down on this throne, either."」

Every moment had been a battle against adversity. Not one scenario was easy, and we always had to risk our lives and fight the odds.

All these tragedies had become a story in the end. And we were running with that story.

Stories untangling endlessly like a ball of threads soon formed a single image. That image soon morphed into a white tiger. A white tiger sporting noble whiskers and stripes was now running beside me.

[Story, 'King of a Kingless World', is seeing you off on your journey.]

The 'King of a Kingless World' – my nativity Story was seeing me off.

The white tiger created the path we must tread on and roared out loudly, before coming to a sudden stop – as if the road from here on wasn't its to create, its yearning eyes chasing after my path.

[Story, 'One Who Opposes the Miracles', is seeing you off on your journey.]

Before long, my second Story taking on the figure of a blue hawk was flying above my head. It was the Story I earned by killing the Returnee Myung Il-Sang who descended as the 'Calamity of Questions'.

[Story, 'One Who Scorned the Storyteller', is seeing you off on your journey.]

Our every Story was enabling us to run on the [Final Wall].

The expressions of my companions also changed as their own Stories appeared. Lee Hyunsung hesitantly looked behind over and over again, while Shin Yoosung couldn't hold it anymore and broke down in tears.

「This was the road they had lived on, and the story they need to finish.」

[Story, 'One Who Hunted the King of Disasters', is seeing you off on your journey.]

The Story I earned by hunting the shadow of 'Yamato no Orochi' back in the [Peace Land]; a gigantic shadow of a snake was supporting the road we were running on.

Every single one of them was a precious story to us. We lived all those moments to their fullest and that's why all of us were here now.

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

Our Stories lost their strengths and collapsed as the storm of aftermaths grew harsher and harsher.

[Story, 'One Who Murdered the Outer God', is seeing you off on your journey.]

A Story resembling a massive squid protected us from the aftermath's storm.

[Story, 'Demon King of Salvation', has begun telling its last story.]

With every ounce of energy I could muster, I wielded the Unbroken Faith. We shook off the incoming 'Outer Gods' and dashed towards the [Final Wall].

The Stories of the Constellations were still telling their stories in the distance even now.

「The 'Flame of Conflagration' fell out from Uriel's hand. In that last moment, she looked up at a certain star shining in the night sky. And then…」

It was still not too late. Uriel, the Abyssal Black Flame Dragon, and even the Great Sage, they were all still alive.

This story could be changed.

[The 'Final Wall' is not permitting your approach!]

We only had to go a little bit further.

['Access prevention process' has been initialised.]

And then, our steps came to a halt.

Right before our eyes stood thin, transparent walls layered one after another. Each wall was made up with incredible density.

We struck it several times, but its sturdiness couldn't be broken through the powers of individual Stories.

We could now see the 'Outer Gods' ignoring our masters and rushing towards us. The Dokkaebi King seemed to be relieved now as he shouted something at us, too.

I ignored them all and looked up at the night sky.

「All the stars of the universe had dimmed, but that didn't mean every single of them did.」

A ripple-like thing spread out from a certain spot in the night sky. The first one to realize what was going on was Han Sooyoung. She rubbed her eyes hard and muttered out.

"He's way too late!"

The front section of a train could be seen dashing towards us. Surya's sun train was rushing in our direction as the ark's debris could be seen bouncing off its hull.

[Constellation, 'Supreme God of Light', is incarnating into the Final Scenario's location!]

[Apologies for my tardiness, Demon King of Salvation.]

He had finally attained the Status of a Myth-grade, and arrived in this stage by crossing the night sky.

"Not at all. You are just in time."

[Giant Story, 'Demon Realm's Spring', has begun its storytelling!]

Finally, the condition for the 'Beginning/Gi(起)' had been satisfied.

[The 'Stage Transformation' is activating!]

Chapter 511: Ep. 98 - Have you protected all that you were supposed to protect, IV

The night sky momentarily turned pure white from Surya's sunlight.

Just like how we fought together back in the 'Demon King Selection' battles as well as in the 'Gigantomachia', Surya's train was rushing towards us.

"Will pay the train fare later!"

With Han Sooyoung shouting out pompously as our lead, we got on Surya's train.

An incredible explosion of sparks occurred at the train's wheels. The vehicle did a huge doughnut once in the air while emitting loud noises, before shooting straight towards the transparent wall as sonic booms exploded out from its rear. Lee Hyunsung shouted out.

"It's breaking!"

Along with the loud 'Craaaaaaack!', the transparent walls began crumbling down.

We continued to break past the layers of walls and dashed forward. The [Final Wall] recording the Stories of the Constellations was gradually getting closer.

The Dokkaebi King's loud roar was messily intermingling with the Stories from the 999th turn.

[Constellation, 'Supreme God of Light', is unleashing all of his Status!]

Surya's entire body as he sat in the engine room glowed brightly like a white-hot incandescent sun. Stories dripped out from the wounds visible all over his body. Maybe, he too had already paid a hefty price to reach this place.

[Constellation Supreme God of Light's ■■ is 'Final Engineer'.]

Even then, his Story didn't stop. Without showing anything outwardly, he used his own body as fuel to operate the [Sun Train]. As if that was his duty as the one who lived until now as the 'Supreme God of Light'.

[Giant Story, 'Demon Realm's Spring', is seeing you off on your journey!]

[The power output still isn't enough!]

Despite his fierce will burning throughout his entire body, the train's speed was gradually slowing down. It was all because the closer we got to the centre of the [Final Wall], the thicker the density of the protective walls became.

And just before the wall seemingly made out of net of texts collided against the front of the train, Jung Heewon made her move.

"Leave it to me!"

"H-Heewon-ssi?! Eck!"

The moment she grabbed Lee Hyunsung's neck tightly, his body shrunk down rapidly and eventually transformed into a steel sword. And this weapon's blade was soon burning hotly in the flames of the [Hellfire].

[Giant Story, 'Torch that Swallowed the Myth', is seeing you off on your journey!]

'Development/Seung(承)'.

The Story that illuminated the battlefield of <Gigantomachia> was now glowing brightly to scorch the [Final Wall].

Kwa-kwakwakwakwa!

Truly a stupendous amount of flames gushed out from the front of the train, enveloping the frontal surface of the vehicle in intense heat.

Jung Heewon releasing [Hellfire] from her entire body shouted out in a voice seemingly sizzling in lava.

"Story, shmeeble! It's all going to end right here!"

Every time her sword glowed brightly, the net of texts was torn apart.

She wielded her sword over and over again. Even as the sparks from the aftermath's storm ravaged her, she didn't forget to improve further upon her way of the sword.

This was the path Jung Heewon's life had created. We were running on this path. However, it was still not enough. We needed a much stronger power than this.

The sentences on the [Final Wall] were unfolding in the distance.

「In that final moment, Uriel reached out towards the sky.」

「My Story might come to an end today, but.」

「There will be a star that shall never forget this story.」

[Giant Story, 'Season of Light and Darkness', is seeing you off on your journey!]

The Story of both Uriel and the Abyssal Black Flame Dragon crossed the Wall to be transmitted.

The Stories of Good and Evil collided energetically and protected us, and wings made out of texts sprouted from the sides of the train. Just like a roaring Apocalypse Dragon, the vehicle devoured the walls before our eyes and continued to advance forward.

[Stop!!]

The 'Dokkaebi King' began chasing after us even before we realized it. Stories flooded out from his arms and legs, and despite the 999th turn's individuals pursuing him, he still extended his arm towards us.

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

The Probability's sparks exploded out from the floor, shaking the train's central axis. The vehicle shook hard, and just as it was about to lose its balance, more sentences floated up above the [Final Wall].

「The Great Sage watched the thunder spear fly towards his neck and spoke up.」

「Don't stop, maknae-yah.」

The Great Sage, Heaven's Equal who never yielded right up until his final moments, was there. At the same time, a man wearing a black coat riding at the rear of the train stood up.

"Yoo Joonghyuk!"

The 'Secretive Plotter' possessing Yoo Joonghyuk raised his hand to the air. When he did, countless 'Outer Gods' rose up from amidst the storm of aftermaths occurring on the floor. They weren't the regular 'Nameless Ones', either.

[Giant Story, 'Liberator of the Forgotten Ones' is seeing you off on your journey!]

【Gogogogogo】

【WillhelpWillhelpWillhelpWillhelp】

【DidntforgetDidntforgetDidntforgetDidntforget】

The 'Nameless Ones' that helped us or fought against us during the 'Journey to the West' propped up the rocking train. As if this vehicle was a ship riding on the rough waters of the Tongtian River, they were carrying us towards the [Final Wall].

[You have approached the core of the 'Final Wall'.]

Eventually, all the walls protecting the [Final Wall] crumbled down. The train was damaged everywhere, and Surya must've had blacked out as he was no longer releasing his Story.

Not too far away, we could see the real [Final Wall]. A wall far thicker and expansive than any other I had ever seen.

【This is the wall that I couldn't cross.】

The 'Secretive Plotter' spoke up.

「'Is it also not doable this time too?' That was the final moment for the 58th turn's Yoo Joonghyuk.」

「'I made a mistake. But, during the next turn…' The 96th turn Yoo Joonghyuk closed his eyes in that manner.」

Countless ends for Yoo Joonghyuk streamed by above the wall. It wasn't just him, though.

「'The last hero of Hwangsanbeol' Gyebaek continued to shake his eternal rival who'd never wake up again.」

「Goryeo's number one swordsman and the Maritime War God, having lost an arm each, stood back to back and unleashed their final Statuses.」

The Wall that recorded the endings of all the Constellations. The last moments of all the Constellations that included Uriel and the Great Sage were being recorded on the Wall in real-time.

The companions and I disembarked from the unmoving train and dashed towards the wall.

「If only those sentences were erased; and if all those tragedies could be stopped.」

[You can't interfere with the 'Final Wall's' sentences.]

[Applicable paragraphs are prohibited from being overwritten.]

[Please input the cancellation code.]

The 'Secretive Plotter' spoke up. 【No regular methods will work. I've already used physical force before, but couldn't destroy this wall.】

Jung Heewon shouted out. "We came this far, so there must be…!"

【From here on, it's your job.】

He was now looking at me. Somewhere within that gaze was the 3rd turn Yoo Joonghyuk's, who had completed the scenarios alongside me.

「What exactly is the 'Conclusion' you wish to see?」

This was what I needed to do in order to answer that question.

Lee Jihye opened her mouth. "He couldn't do it even after 1863 lifetimes, so… ahjussi, can you really do it?"

It was as she said.

I was not a 'protagonist' like Yoo Joonghyuk, nor was I a 'writer' like Han Sooyoung. However, because I was neither the protagonist nor the writer, maybe there was something only I could do.

Maybe, I could remember that one thing that the protagonist couldn't see, and the writer had forgotten all about.

「The job that only him could do, him that read the 'Ways of Survival' for a very, very long time.」

I quietly stared into the 'Final Wall'. I focused all my attention and read the wall's surface again and again. Not too long after that, the wall radiated brilliantly. Just like a certain screen in the past that I had been reading over and over again.

「'Three Ways to Survive the Destroyed World'.」

Everything from that epic tale was being established within me. I hadn't yet read the final revised version of the 'Ways of Survival'. Which meant I didn't know how this story was supposed to end. However…

「[Oh, dear unfortunate puppet. You have come far too early. I'm sorry, but beyond here 'doesn't exist' yet.]」

The 1863rd turn's Dokkaebi King from the 'Secretive Plotter's' memories said that.

「But, what if all these were handed over to me without having been written yet?」

My companions and I rushed towards the wall.

「What if, someone wanted me to complete this story?」

[Exclusive skill, 'Reading Comprehension', is activating beyond the limit!]

My overheating head felt like it'd explode, but I kept my eyes wide open and continued to glare at the wall.

The Stories written on the [Final Wall]. Those Stories were connecting with each other inside my head. I saw how each Story was connected to another. I saw the cleverly-installed narrative devices within the Stories and then, the contexts surrounding them.

「Those that did appear in the novel, but had never been used until its end.」

When that happened, the previously perfect-looking story began showing gaps within it. Gaps that hadn't been filled. Things that would be collected as time passed by.

Things that were waiting for this story's 'epilogue'.

「Kim Dokja knew exactly what that was.」

[You have awakened a new attribute!]

[Attribute, 'Foreshadow Collector', is activating!]

The story's gaps that only I could have discovered, someone who watched this tale as a 'reader' from the beginning till its end. I stared at the 'five gaps' visible on the expansive wall's surface.

"Hayoung-ah."

"Leave it to me."

The first one to step up was Jang Hayoung. She accurately placed her palm on the wall's gap that I pointed out.

[The 'Wall of Impossible Communication' has discovered its intended position.]

[The 'Final Wall's' first theme has been completed!]

Along with the explosion of blinding light, the wall's fragment slotted back in its spot; and then, a single sentence leaked out from there.

「This tale was a story about an 'impossible communication'.」

"Heewon-ssi, Gilyoung-ah!"

Jung Heewon and Lee Gilyoung nodded their heads and placed their palms on their own gaps. Then, the two portions of the 'Wall that Divides the Good and

Evil' became one.

[The 'Wall that Divides the Good and Evil' has discovered its intended position.]

[The 'Final Wall's' second theme has been completed!]

「This tale was a story about indistinguishable 'Good and Evil', and…」

And now, it was Yoo Sangah's turn.

"Yoo Sangah-ssi."

She slowly walked forward, found her gap, and reached out.

[The 'Wall that Decides Samsara' has discovered its intended position.]

[The 'Final Wall's' third theme has been completed!]

「And, this tale was a story about a tragedy locked in a cycle.」

With that, four gaps had been filled, leaving the last one. I looked up at that empty spot.

The last fragment of the [Final Wall]. That was the fragment that never appeared in the original novel.

「Kim Dok ja.」

[The Fourth Wall] was addressing me.

"The Fourth Wall."

Both it and I knew exactly what we needed to do here.

A blinding fragment made up of texts floated up above my palm. Those texts were now talking to me.

「I li ke y our st ory.」

I couldn't say anything. While unable to say anything, I ran towards that last empty gap and slotted the fragment inside.

「This tale was a story of a reader who wanted to change its conclusion.」

Right next moment, an incredible shower of sparks exploded from the wall.

[The code has been lifted.]

The wall's authority was opening up towards me. The secrets of the wall that even Yoo Joonghyuk couldn't cross was now streaming into me.

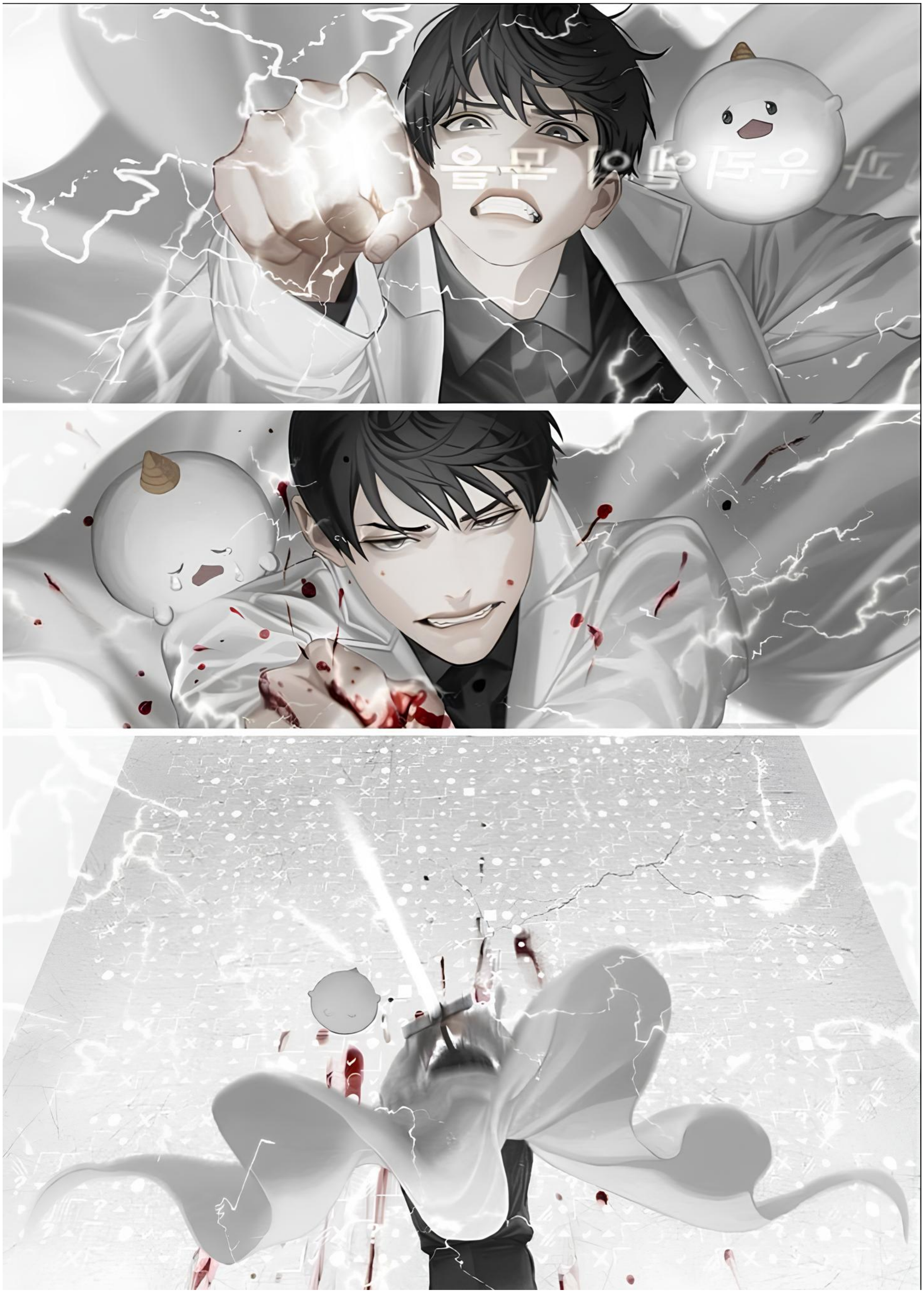
The sentence of the Constellations floated up right before my eyes. It was the last sentence of the Great Sage and Uriel that I wanted to stop so badly.

「The blades flying in at the necks of the Great Sage and Uriel…」

I powerfully grabbed that sentence.

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!!

It felt like my hand was set on fire. Stories clung onto me and stabbed into my hand like sharp blades. However, I held on. I couldn't let this sentence end like that.



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[The 'Final Wall' is puzzled by your actions.]

[The 'Final Wall' is asking you, wasn't this the story you wanted?]

I didn't want it. Who would want a conclusion like this?

[Stop! I said, stop that right now!!] The 'Dokkaebi King' persistently chased after us, Stories dripping from all over his body. Thick murderous aura was filling up his eyes. [You must not touch the Wall! You'll regret it! There is nothing beyond this Wall! Not even what you wished for, not even what you wanted to see!]

He was wrong. The 'Oldest Dream' was beyond this Wall.

"Wenny King!"

The Wenny King hiding within my shadow imprisoned the Dokkaebi King's body.

[Finally, we meet again, my old friend.]

[…The Wenny King!]

[Go on ahead, Kim Dokja. Fulfil our agreement.]

I didn't let go of the sentence still in my hand.

「The blades flying in at the necks of the Great Sage and Uriel w…」

While grabbing hold of that 'w', I prevented the next vowel from generating. Along with 'Pu-shu-shuk!' noise, my fingers were sliced off. Stories leaking out nonstop screamed out.

[You are not the 'Dokkaebi King'.]

[You cannot stop the progress of the applicable Story.]

It was then, something soft enveloped the back of my hand accompanied by the "Baat!" noise. With every ounce of her energy she could summon, Biyoo rubbed her whole body against that sentence as if she had become an eraser.

「The storyteller had sided with Dokja/the reader.」

Along with Biyoo, I smacked down on the sentence with everything I got, over and over again. I swung my fist at the unstoppable sentence, then even stabbed it with my sword. Please, please, please!

「And eventually…」

Very faintly, cracks were developing on the letters.

The already-written sentences were scattering away.

The Conclusion was changing.

「Te bades flyin in aaat te nec of Great an Ur el…」

The broken words initiated a storm of powerful sparks, before transforming into something I couldn't read at all.

「■■blade■■■■Ur■■■■Sage■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■」

【Oooooooh-!!】

Countless 'Outer Gods' howled out. Their cries even sounded reverential as if they were exalting a great god.

I held my hand that bled Stories nonstop, and witnessed the Wall's surface changing. Shin Yoosung had come closer without me realizing it to tightly hold my hand.

"Ahjussi…"

[You have acquired a new 'Giant Story'!]

[Giant Story, 'One Who Breaks the Final Wall', has been acquired.]

[Giant Story, 'One Who Breaks the Final Wall', is continuing on with its storytelling!]

[<Star Stream> is seeing you off on your journey.]

As the messages exploded inside my head, the Wall before our eyes collapsed.

The Stories written on the Wall and our own were now getting all jumbled up. Countless ■s were spinning around in sync. And that made them resemble circles.

And just beyond those pitch-black circles, I thought I could see something.

[Hahahaha!! This is it! As per our agreement, I shall be the first one to confirm what's beyond the 'Final Wall'!!]

The Wenny King shoved the 'Dokkaebi King' aside and jumped right into the black circle. And as the latter began crying in despair, the blade of [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] pierced his throat cleanly.

My companions ran up to me.

「Everything in this world was crumbling down.」

The [Final Wall], the <Star Stream>, everything was collapsing.

「The broken wall was getting jumbled up with the companions' Stories.」

「It became gradually impossible to tell apart what was a Story and what was reality.」

Something beyond the circle was looking at this side. I too stared right back at it.

「…Just what is that?」

Little by little, it became harder to breathe. Something was sucking me in. Everything I experienced, felt, and judged were now streaming above the

[Final Wall] in sloppy, broken sentences.

「Every…」

"one…!!"

I couldn't figure out whether I was saying that or the Wall was.

I was now simply a description on that Wall.

Some sentences could only be seen faintly, while some others couldn't be seen at all. Eventually, all the flowing sentences began disappearing one at the time. Slowly, so agonisingly slowly.

Just like that, every sentence above the Wall came to a stop.

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* Official novel illustration (canonical)

Chapter 512: Ep. 99 - The Oldest Dream, I

Within this faint light gently and warmly embracing his entire body, the Wenny King was curled up in a fetal position, dreaming of a certain dream.

That was a very ancient dream. A tale from well before his ■■ had been decided.

He was collapsed on the floor of a tainted forest.

– Epsilon! We only have to go a little bit further. The Demon King's castle is almost within reach!

In this tale, he was a warrior subjugating the Demon King. A warrior that had set off on the Demon King subjugation expedition to protect his world.

Unfortunately, he didn't get to fulfil his long-cherished desire. Just before the subjugation went underway, he had to close his eyes, his friend's face the last thing he saw.

– …Gilbert.

The scene changed, and now it displayed a warzone.

He was now a man from Murim, kitted out in a set of black-coloured garments of a nightly operative.

– Senior brother Kwok! The main base of the demonic cult bastards is right over there!

He saw the face of his companion filling up his view. Longing quickly filled him up. She was the person he loved the most out of all the lives he had lived.

– …It's too late for me. Junior sister, please go on ahead.

A whistling noise of an arrow flying in from somewhere later, his vision blackened once more.

His head was pounding away. As memories overflowed, the Wenny King's ego was shaking unsteadily.

Were these scenes from his own memories or stories from the 「Final Wall」?

Where did this story begin, and where would it end?

Independent of his will, the tale continued on.

He was now a young hatchling.

He was also a monstrous creature without a name.

He was an expert from Murim, and also a knight from medieval times.

And every time that happened, he was an Incarnation clearing the scenarios.

The last thing he heard in front of the [Final Wall] was the voice coming from a shadow without a name.

– My friend. Even during our next life, accompany me.

He gasped out loudly and opened his eyes, only to be greeted by the pitch-black darkness. The cold sweat soaking the nape of his neck sent deathly chills all over his body.

'I'm the Wenny King'.

That was his name. He did have a real name, but that had been forgotten a long time ago. No, he couldn't even be certain whether that was really his name or not.

'…Am I really the Wenny King?'

Within the swirling pitch-black vacuum, the Wenny King fell into deep contemplation. It was the kind of contemplation he had never entertained after surpassing the limits of mortality.

'Who am I?'

The Story acting as the foundation of his existence was now shaking unsteadily. In order to regain himself at any cost, he began ruminating over his own memories.

「In the beginning, there was a Wenny.」

「He was the first storyteller. A human that sang about Stories.」

「But one day, Dokkaebis appeared in the world, and…」

「And those Dokkaebis took away the Wenny's song.」

That was all he needed to remember.

Remember that those damned Dokkaebis took away the Wenny's song; remember the fact that they expelled him from the <Star Stream>'s scenarios by stealing away his nativity Story.

[You look confused, my old friend.]

The Wenny King was startled by that true voice and hurriedly looked behind him. The face of the Dokkaebi King was floating within the pitch-black darkness.

[Dokkaebi King!]

The former growled and unleashed his Status. However, things didn't go according to plan. Within this space where nothing existed, the Status he emitted only left behind faint sparks.

The Dokkaebi King spoke with a disinterested expression.

[You aren't allowed to fight in here. Our powers aren't valid in this place.]

[…You somehow managed to survive. I thought that you died at the blade of that puppet.]

[It's not much different from having died already. And, will die again, too.]

In the spot where the Dokkaebi King's gaze landed, they could see a circular exit of light swirling around. The soul forms of these two beings were slowly heading towards that exit.

The Wenny King shouted out. [No, hold on! My Story has just begun! I will be crossing over the 'Final Wall'! I shall encounter the lazy god that imagined everything of this world, and become the sole creature that knows the secret of this world!!]

[Are you that curious about this world's secret?]

[You speak of something obvious. There isn't a single creature not curious about the origin of their own birth.]

[And that's precisely the reason why creatures become unhappy.]

The Dokkaebi King spoke in a self-deprecating manner.

[Why do you think creatures possess the wonderful ability called 'forgetfulness'?]

The Story debris was scattering away within the darkness. Stories that had lost their contexts became just lumps of texts and slowly broke away. They were now stories that no one could read anymore.

The Dokkaebi King gently caressed them, before crushing that Story into powder.

[There are far too many unnecessary stories in this universe. A process is required in order to eliminate them and to optimise everything. That is what 'forgetfulness' is.]

[Rubbish! The universe is infinite. Just like how the end of the 'Final Wall' doesn't exist.]

[Even if there are plenty of blank margins left on the Wall, just how much of that do you think is permitted to the measly extras?]

The Dokkaebi King looked down at his own body slowly crumbling away.

[Unfortunately, the protagonist the 'Final Wall' has chosen is neither you or me.]

[I don't know what rubbish you're trying to spew here, but…!]

[Even then, you shall soon meet the one you so dearly wished to meet.]

It was then the Wenny King's shoulders flinched.

The exit of light could be seen. It was such a rapturous, resplendent light. The exit was spinning vigorously and it somewhat resembled a full stop of a certain world.

The Wenny King suddenly grew scared.

[You, have you seen what's beyond that?]

The Dokkaebi King didn't reply immediately. He had this expression of boredom as if all sentences held no meaning after the full stop itself. Still, he did add a comment in the end.

[What meaning is there, anyway?]

[What?]

[I'm saying, what meaning is there to knowing that this world was just a portion of a vast dream?]

His words contained endless futility of it all.

The Wenny King couldn't understand what was being said.

The light was getting brighter, yet the expression on the Dokkaebi King was getting blurrier. Soon, the exit of light was literally right before his nose. The worried Wenny King asked.

[…Why did you continue on with <Star Stream> until now?]

Maybe that question was unexpected? The Dokkaebi King's expression changed bizarrely. He quietly stared at the Wenny King, before making his reply.

[I wonder. I can't remember it anymore.]

In that moment, several Stories overlapped on the Dokkaebi King's face.

At once, he looked like a warrior subjugating the Demon King, an expert from the dangerous world of Murim battling the demonic sect, and a hatchling spreading its wings towards the wide-open sky. He was…

[…You-!]

[Kim Dokja has opened a door that should've never been opened. And so, this world will forever be mired in misfortune.]

At the end of those words, the world was blanketed by pure light. They had finally reached the exit. The Wenny King staggered unsteadily and set foot inside that light. He brushed past the rays of light and tread forward little by little.

The answer was here.

The 'Oldest Dream' that created this world was here.

However, the Wenny King couldn't see anything.

The noisy blaring of hooters could be heard coming from somewhere. A thick, choking smell that wetted his nose; it became harder and harder to breath. His body began burning up under the rays of light.

As if, this blank margin wasn't permitted to him.

[I told you. This story is neither yours or mine.]

Along with the Dokkaebi King's words, the Wenny King's body began melting down.

[We are simply tools of this world. That's all.]

Ah, aaaah…

Even though his legs melted away, followed by his torso, the Wenny King never shifted his gaze away from the spectacle before his eyes.

That was where the Oldest Dream was. The secret of everything in this world was there. That something he had been searching for forever was there.

The Wenny King saw it. And then, finally understood what the Dokkaebi King was saying earlier.

That, that is indeed…

The Wenny King wished to shout out so desperately. To shout out, please look this way. Please, I'm right here. Please, look at me just once.

And then, 'that' slowly shifted its head.

However, by the time its gaze reached where the Wenny King was, the latter was no longer existing in that place.

So, 'that' shifted its head away.

And, while keeping its head down, it began muttering about something once more.

Cough.

I felt something scratchy inside my mouth after coughing a bit. I spat out the stuffed-up breath, and insect-like things leaked out. I took a look and realized that they were letters.

Sensations returned and my vision brightened. I saw the letters emitting bright white light before my eyes. They were of familiar contents.

Just where is this…?

"Dokja-ssi? You might get sucked into the book if you do that."

Suddenly, the back of my neck grew cold. That was a familiar voice, and with words I had heard somewhere before. Horrifying imagination made a right old mess of my mind. I once thought that if I destroyed the [Final Wall], something like this might happen. However, to think that such a thing would really…

Then, accompanied by flapping noises, torn bits of paper danced around before my eyes. I took another closer look and discovered someone lightly shaking a book around.

"…Sangah-ssi."

Yoo Sangah was standing before my eyes.

The surrounding view gradually grew clearer. It was the view of discarded books forming small mounds, as well as bookshelves lining up with nary a space in between. All illuminated by the faint light from a lantern. This wasn't the subway.

This was the location I was quite familiar with.

Yoo Sangah grinned brightly.

"This place feels so cosy to me now."

We were inside [The Fourth Wall].

"…What happened?"

"Even if you ask me… I also woke up just now. Should we go and look for my librarian seniors?"

As Yoo Sangah shrugged her shoulders and began scanning the surroundings, I quickly organised what happened to us so far in my head.

「We had gathered all the fragments of the [Final Wall] and eventually brought it down.」

The memory of the 'square circle' spinning around was still vivid in my mind.

…And then? What happened afterwards?

What about the other companions?

「Do n't wo rry Kim Dok ja.」

A voice I thought I could never hear again entered my ears. I shouted out in happiness.

"The Fourth Wall!"

「Si len ce in the lib rary.」

This was definitely [The Fourth Wall] that I remembered, that sly playfulness included. Separate from how happy I was, though, my puzzlement only grew even bigger, instead.

Why was I inside [The Fourth Wall] right now?

"Dokja-ssi?"

More voices could be heard coming from the darkness. They were from the <Kim Dokja's Company>'s companions.

"Just where are we?"

"…I found a strange book here. It's called 「「Kim Dokja and the mysteries of sex.」」"

"You should definitely not be looking at such things, Jihye-yah."

"How about this one, then? 「「If they have their bibles, then Kim Dokja has the Ways of Survival.」」"

"You really want to read something like that?"

I thought I could hear Jung Heewon and Lee Jihye speaking to each other. And then, a pair of small heads popped out from a nearby mound of books as if they were moles.

"Ahjussi!"

"Hyung!"

It was Shin Yoosung and Lee Gilyoung. I could also see Han Sooyoung walking towards us in the darkened view.

"What a weird place this is. Is this that 'library' Yoo Sangah talked about before?"

She pulled out a book from the shelf to toss it behind her. Meanwhile, Lee Hyunsung standing behind her caught that and stuffed it inside his inner pocket.

"S-Sooyoung-ssi! You shouldn't handle books so carelessly… You don't even know what these things are!"

"Wowee, what's this! Sounds fun."

Behind them, I spotted the unconscious Gong Pildu, Jang Hayoung and Anna Croft lying on the floor. And finally, Lee Seolhwa checking for their pulses.

At the very least, all of my companions that participated in the 'Final Scenario' were gathered here.

「N ot ev ery one.」

I got this rather bad premonition after hearing [The Fourth Wall]'s voice.

I still couldn't see 'that guy' yet.

…Could it be??

「(Hahahaha! Yoo Joonghyuk! I can smell him somewhere nearby! Did he finally show up here in order to become one with me?!)」

A voice loudly reverberated out from within the deep darkness. It was obviously coming from Nirvana. And right next second, a dull impact noise rang out. The now-silent Nirvana's limp body rolled around on the floor, and then, a certain black combat boot trampled that poor sob's head.

"…What an unpleasant space this is."

"Yoo Joonghyuk."

Sparks were still faintly dancing around him as if he hadn't yet separated from the 'Secretive Plotter'. Since he's here too, who was it that couldn't come?

"…Constellations aren't here."

"What happened to everyone back on Earth?"

[The Fourth Wall] evacuating us here could only mean that some sort of a problem had occurred in the outside world.

My heart was now growing icy cold. I recalled the [The Fourth Wall], as well as the sentences above it, shattering into million pieces. What went wrong? Did the world perish because I tried to change the story?

It was then, [The Fourth Wall] said something completely unexpected.

｢Ti me not mov ing be cau se not re ading not ima gin ing｣

Even before I could ask about the meaning of that, some creatures appeared first.

｢(Have you finally broken the wall, the apostle of eternity and epilogue?)｣

｢(…Such a day has indeed arrived before us.)｣

They were the librarians 'Devourer of Dreamss' and 'Simulation'. I stared at them first before addressing [The Fourth Wall].

"Let me out of here. There's something I need to confirm."

That prompted the librarians to reply, instead.

｢(Even if it's you, you still won't survive by going outside. <Star Stream> no longer exists. Everything in that place has now come to a dead stop.)｣

Everything had stopped.

For sure, the Stories that could normally be heard over the wall couldn't be heard anymore. Instead, the noise akin to a giant spring winding up could be heard coming from somewhere. It was at once like the ticking of a watch's second hand, or even the sound of very consistent but slow, rhythmic typing of a keyboard.

"In that case, I'll go and meet the guy that'll wind the clock back."

｢(…Do you really wish to go and meet the 'Oldest Dream'?)｣

That being was at the final stop of all these stories. <Star Stream> might have been destroyed, but there was a question that needed to be answered still.

｢Why did a world like this have to exist?｣

I looked back to discover my companions making similar expressions to each other. Every one of us had their own questions they wanted answers for, and had certain ends they wanted to see. And in order to get there, there was something we definitely had to do first.

Yoo Sangah spoke up first.

"Let's go together, Dokja-ssi."

"Me too! I wanna go!"

"I'm really curious about the epilogue you wanted to see, ahjussi."

"There, there. Let's not agonise about this, shall we? Who knows, maybe a really nice Dokkaebi is waiting for us there or something. If not, we can smack him around for a bit and make him more agreeable, too."

As if to agree with that, Biyoo added her own opinion.

[Baat!]

It was around then that Yoo Joonghyuk broke the silence he had been observing.

"Before that, do you even have a way to meet him? The wall might be destroyed, but the time flow of the outside world has stopped. If time isn't moving, Stories cannot move forward. It will be the same for us."

「(There are some places where time hasn't stopped.)」

Nirvana smiled and pointed to the floor.

Right. The time inside this 'library' hadn't stopped at all.

"Could that bastard be inside this library?"

「(…That's not it. This library is also just another 'wall'. However, a new passageway has opened up after you have completed the story. Meaning, you can now cross over to the other side.)」

While saying that, Nirvana guided us somewhere. Somehow, I thought I knew where he was taking us. I recalled the cliff that spanned below the library.

「This is the end of the library. The end of all stories.」

The vast, bottomless pit. A valley laid out like the abyss itself.

It was the location I discovered back when I entered [The Fourth Wall] for the first time.

"…It's exactly that place."

I almost fell to the bottom there when I first stumbled in here. Back then, Nirvana told me that if I fell in there, I'd die for sure. He said that was 'beyond the wall'.

Nirvana asked me. 「(Kim Dokja. Do you really wish to go over there?)」

I nodded my head.

Then, Nirvana pulled at a rope hanging from the darkness. I thought something like a pulley was activating, then a small elevator-like thing slowly rose up from below.

「(Get on.)」

We all climbed aboard this elevator.

Then we were slowly lowered into the pit.

[Exclusive attribute, 'One Who Looked into the Abyss', is initialising.]

Finally, the answers I've been searching for was right before my eyes. Stories still remaining within me were getting agitated as well.

Just how long did we climb down like this? We were eventually greeted by the sounds of the pulley stopping.

I stepped foot on the darkness, only to be greeted by mouldy smell. The floor was slick and damp, too; almost like the remnants of a structure that hadn't been used for a very long time.

The light from the lantern illuminated the front to reveal a faint line made up of yellowish blocks.

"Isn't this place…"

Jung Heewon muttered to herself. And right then, we heard the noise of something rushing towards us from the darkness past the yellow blocks. As a matter of fact, the darkness itself was shaking ominously now. It was a loud, explosive noise, as if a monster was madly dashing towards us.

A short while later, a pair of faint monstrous eyes appeared from the other side of the passageway.

"…Oh, my god."

Jung Heewon muttered out, but didn't reach for her sword even after witnessing what kind of a monster it was. The rest of the companions reacted the same, as well. All because everyone knew exactly what that monster was.

「The beginning of all these stories.」

It was the subway.

Chapter 513: Ep. 99 - The Oldest Dream, II

The subway train slowed down before coming to a stop before us, and then, opened its doors.

There was no mistaking it. This was the subway we all recognised.

Jung Heewon's lips bobbed up and down before finally breaking the silence first. "Why would a subway show up here…?"

Of course, no one here could answer that question.

The first one to make his move was Lee Gilyoung. Yoo Sangah shouted out. "Gilyoung-ah! You mustn't get on that t…!"

The boy fearlessly stepped foot inside and climbed aboard the subway, and turned around to look at us. As if nothing was going on, he shrugged his shoulders.

Lee Jihye watched that spectacle, then grabbed Shin Yoosung's hand and stepped forward as well. "I don't know anymore. Let's just get in first and see what's what!"

That was the beginning; other companions still hesitating entered the subway one by one. I too followed after them.

The moment I set foot on the floor of the subway that trembled ever so slightly, I was overcome with deja vu.

「Once upon a time, this was all of Kim Dokja's world.」

No, that was wrong. This was not my world.

「This was everyone's and anyone's world.」

For Yoo Sangah, Jung Heewon, Lee Hyunsung, and Lee Jihye, too… Everyone carried their own, different expressions. Just like how I rode on this subway and lived my daily life, it should roughly be the same story with them as well.

Someone used to be an office worker, someone was a student, and someone used to be a soldier, but still…

"A subway, is it… Back then, I was really fed up of riding it, but now, I'm really happy to see it again."

Jung Heewon's words made us carefully scan the interior of the subway itself.

All the seats were brand new, while the safety bars were wiped clean, too. Not even a hint of filth could be seen on the floor.

Of course, what proved to be even more surprising than that was…

"…By the way, why isn't anyone else riding in this thing?"

Not a single presence could be felt within the subway. This was a sterile, inorganic space where nothing was alive besides us. This vehicle was permeated with such a sense of abnormality.

I looked at the librarians remaining outside the subway and asked them.

"Aren't you joining us? You wanted to witness the end of the world too, didn't you?"

「(We can't go with you.)」

"How come?"

Nirvana and the other librarians didn't answer. They exchanged somewhat saddened gazes with each other, before finally making their reply.

「(You witnessing the end will be enough for…)」

[The doors are closing.]

The rest of their words couldn't be heard; the doors shut close, and accompanied by the noises of a giant cartwheel turning, the subway began chugging forward. Its speed was neither quick nor slow. And outside the windows, we saw the view of the pitch-black darkness lazily shifting past us.

I gazed into that darkness for a long time. Just where was this train taking us?

"It's the line number three."

Han Sooyoung muttered that out. I also looked up at the subway map.

The line number three. It was the line that I used to commute every day. Strangely, though, the ends of the map were broken off. Even the names of the stations were erased, as well.

…

Meanwhile, the subway continued to chug along. Several minutes passed by since then, but it showed no signs of stopping. It seemed that this vehicle was planning to run straight to its final stop without a break.

With a 'plop!' noise, Han Sooyoung settled down on the cushion next to mine. She glared at the subway map, her long eyelashes blinking constantly.

I asked her. "What's up with that expression?"

"I don't ride on stuff like subways."

"Why not?"

Almost immediately, I realized what a dumb question that was. For sure, someone like her wouldn't have a need to ride on subways, anyway. What she said next was completely out of my expectations, though.

"I mean, there's nothing to see here. Both inside and out."

We both stared at the broken subway map. Without a doubt, a subway train would travel the exact same line every single day. It would then stop at the predetermined time. Similar things would continue to happen within these unchanging sceneries every day.

I also hated subways. I used to stare at the smartphone during commuting for a similar reason to hers, too.

"Subways don't operate for our amusement, though."

"…Oh, my? Now that's not something the Constellation 'Demon King of Salvation' would say."

I smiled bitterly.

We stared in the same direction next – at our companions. At the people who endured the apocalypse with me, cleared 99 scenarios together, and reached this place.

"…Mm. We won't suddenly go back to the first scenario or something like that, right?"

"No, that can't be! Definitely not!"

"Should I ready some grasshoppers just in case?"

The companions saw Lee Gilyoung clenching his fist with a resolute expression, and broke out in smirks.

What did it mean to find humour from the most horrifying memory they held? With what kind of thoughts were they smiling at that story?

I spoke to Han Sooyoung. "They need to go back to their old lives."

"You think they'll be happier like that?"

"All stories are supposed to end that way."

"And since when did you start enjoying that sort of development?" Han Sooyoung shot back with a retort. "Hey, you. You aren't thinking up of anything weird again, right? Are you hiding something from me again?"

"I'd like to, but I've nothing to hide anymore."

I was being honest. Even the original novel never reached this far. It was the same story for the 'Secretive Plotter' or the other individuals from the 999th turn. We were the first to ride on this subway.

I spoke up while looking at the end of the faintly-erased subway map.

"Han Sooyoung, I think…"

"Could it be that a final boss is waiting for us there? Isn't that how it normally is?"

Jung Heewon said that. She wasn't talking to me, however. It seemed that the companions were busy discussing something over there. Shin Yoosung added her opinion.

"Maybe there's a dragon this big."

"But, I don't think a Modifier like the 'Oldest Dream' would get assigned to a dragon. To get a Modifier like that, it must be…"

"Couldn't it be the 'author'?"

"The author?"

"You know, that…"

When Lee Gilyoung saying that shifted his gaze in my direction, the other companions seemed to abruptly recall 'it' too, and all turned their heads towards me.

「「Three Ways to Survive a Destroyed World」」.

They also knew about that novel now. They knew that that novel described the stories of this world, and that only I had read it to its conclusion.

"…What do you think, Dokja-ssi?"

Every novel out there couldn't become 'stories' unless a writer wrote them down first. The suspicion my companions held some weight if this world was based off on the 'Ways of Survival'.

For sure, there was a good chance that the 'Oldest Dream' was the writer. I too thought that way.

However, why do I…

"…I don't think the 'Oldest Dream' is the author of the 'Ways of Survival'."

"Why do you think that?"

"I'm not sure, but I have a hunch."

To me, the being at the end of this line didn't seem like it'd be 'tls123'. I recalled what the Dokkaebi King said back then.

「[Rather than an author, you could say that the 'Oldest Dream' is much closer to being a reader. It's not an existence that writes stories for someone else. It's lazy and can be quite greedy.]」

I even began questioning whether an 'author' was necessary in our current hypothesis. Did this world really begin because of tls123?

Maybe tls123 simply alerted me to the already-existing world, instead?

Just like how the 'Secretive Plotter' or the other individuals from the 999th turn existed even though they weren't recorded in the pages…

"Now that I think about, I'm curious. Dokja-ssi, how did you stumble across that novel in the first place?"

"Ahh, I was also curious about that."

Yoo Joonghyuk disinterestedly polishing the [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] shifted his gaze towards me when that topic was brought up. Jang Hayoung asked as her eyes sparkled.

"Was it like some kind of a fateful attraction?"

"I also know something about such a feeling! The first time I held a grenade back when I was a private, I…!"

"I just came across it while browsing the net, actually."

Companions seemed to be disappointed by my reply. But, nothing could be done about that, because it's true. Han Sooyoung then retorted back.

"What did you search for exactly, to find such a crappy novel?"

"That is…"

I couldn't remember it all that well now.

Lee Jihye shrugged her shoulders. "Oh, well. It's not that important now, right? The only thing that matters is that ahjussi did read that novel somehow."

"That's right. What would've happened if Dokja-ssi didn't read that novel?"

I looked at Yoo Sangah grinning brightly and shut my mouth tightly.

I didn't deserve to hear those words.

「In the end, stars fell and the world came to a stop.」

We were marching towards a conclusion no one in the 'Ways of Survival' managed to reach, but there was no guarantee that what I wanted was waiting at the end of the line.

I too had no knowledge of the things about to happen from now on.

「What if it was someone else who read that novel to its end?」

There were better-suited people than me here. The righteous Jung Heewon, the trusty Lee Hyunsung, the straight-shooter Yoo Sangah, they should've been the one to read the novel. If that happened, maybe the world would've ended up in a far better shape than this.

"Thank you, ahjussi. For reading that novel."

Shin Yoosung matched my eye level and was now smiling.

"That's right. I heard that novel was really boring, too. If it really wasn't for Dokja-ssi…"

"If it was me, I probably couldn't get past the first page. I really hate books, you know?"

"I tried to read a couple of books back inside the <Oz>'s military library, but… As expected, me and reading were not really a…"

While looking at Lee Hyunsung scratching his head, I somehow managed to force my mouth shut.

Because the 'Ways of Survival' existed, the people before me existed, too. And because I read that novel, I was able to save them from the dangers.

"I…"

I, someone of no redeeming quality, could be loved by the others.

"Because of the Stories you taught me, I managed to get this far, hyung."

The kids' small hands were tightly holding onto mine.

I slowly raised my head, and saw the darkness of the subway streaming by. And the Stories we lived through were passing us by within that darkness.

We silently observed those Stories. They were as beautiful as the Milky Way in the wintery night sky, yet just as futile as the fireworks going off. Stories that none among us could forget, but we'd do so eventually. Jung Heewon opened her mouth.

"…Dokja-ssi. I think it's fine to ask this now, so…"

I knew already what she wanted to ask me.

"What exactly is the 'conclusion' you want to see, Dokja-ssi?"

No Constellations were looking at us now. Even <Star Stream> that ruled over the world no longer existed. So, there was no reason to… not tell them.

"I've already… seen one of them."

I carefully peered into the faces of all my companions. No sentences floated up on their expressions. Even then, I could tell what the conclusion I wanted to see from their faces.

"And the other one is to repay my debt."

"Your debt?"

I shifted my head to discover Yoo Joonghyuk glaring at me.

Ku-gugugu…

Along with the dull vibration, the train's speed began to decrease little by little.

We slowly got up from our seats. Once-noisy companions began speaking less and less. Nervousness was filling up their expressions.

I slowly approached the exit. Jung Heewon stood to my left, while Yoo Joonghyuk was on my right.

The Stories passing by in the darkness were slowing down.

It wasn't just our story existing out there, however.

「There was the 0th turn, then the first turn.」

Also, the second, and the third turns, too.

「And that's how 1864 regression cycles have gathered, and in turn, opened up this world.」

Countless Yoo Joonghyuks lived through those turns. Although none of them lived the right way, not one could be called wrong, too.

The world was far too cruel a place to debate the ethics of life, and the volume of despair was far too great to tell the tale of hope. However, Yoo Joonghyuk remained resolute because he didn't try to justify himself.

「His sole desire to see the end of this world.」

I too carried that same desire.

That was the dream of 1865 Yoo Joonghyuks existing from the 0th to the 1864th regression turns, and the end of the world that I wanted, too.

"…It's really been long. Wasn't it?"

Yoo Joonghyuk shot back, as if to question what the hell I was even saying here. "It's only been four years, Kim Dokja. Compared to the time I experienced, it's…"

"Right."

Four years. That was how long we had been fighting together.

"Four years that felt like a lifetime."

When I said that, Jung Heewon to my left lightly poked me with her sword's hilt.

"We'll still stick together from now on too, so why do you sound so grimly determined? Don't worry. No matter what kind of a monster is waiting for us, I'll finish it off."

I gently smiled. Meanwhile, the subway was slowing down even further.

My reflection could be seen in the black window of the exit door. There was a splatter of blood on my cheek reflected on the glass. I wiped it off my face. And then, my mood cooled down.

「The blood was really on my cheek, and not on the window.」

"Doors are opening!"

Along with Lee Hyunsung's cry, everyone got ready to fight.

"…Huh?"

However, contrary to everyone's nervousness, what greeted us was a rather empty subway platform. Sure, there were a few people walking around in the surroundings, but none of them paid us much attention.

"What's this, there's no…"

Jung Heewon muttered that out, and as we stepped onto the platform, I was overcome with an ominous foreboding. There it was, the unfamiliar sense of reality touching my feet. Faint sparks, along with every single one of my Stories, were pointing in a certain direction.

「Someone was sitting on the subway's bench.」

A thick school bag filled with textbooks, as if its owner had left school not too long ago. A thin, small-statured child who might have passed off as an elementary schooler were it not for his school uniform, was sitting on that bench.

As if he was trying to memorise English words, he was busy scribbling something like a chart on his notebook.

As the pulsing migraine assaulted me, I somehow managed to lift my unmoving feet.

「Kim Dokja made a promise. To end the culprit who made this world. No matter what that existence was.」

Maybe, he was struck by someone somewhere? There was a big bruising on the kid's pale arm. A bruising that I could more or less figure out where he got it from. All strength left my legs and I couldn't move anymore.

「Time isn't moving because not reading and not imagining.」

I did think that all of this could be a dream, a lie. I even believed that this was a dream the evil <Star Stream> had created.

But now, I couldn't deny it anymore.

All of my senses were telling me the truth; they said that that child was the culprit behind all these scenarios.

「Y ou we re al rea dy ex pec ting this di dn't you Kim Dok ja.」

The Oldest Dream. The world's most omniscient yet powerless god.

['The Fourth Wall's' influence is getting weaker.]

「Kim Dok…」

['The Fourth Wall's' influence is getting extremely weak.]

I thought I heard something fall to the floor, and I saw Jung Heewon's sword rolling around on the ground.

"Ah, ah…"

She was now looking at me. She was looking at the child, then back at me. Her eyes were filling up with despair.

As if she couldn't believe this. As if she'd prefer that this whole thing turned out to be a lie.

[The promise with the 'Secretive Plotter' is activating.]

I opened my mouth only to close it several times. Maybe, this might be my punishment. It might very well be the time to pay the price for the salvation I received.

[You have promised to destroy <Star Stream>.]

[<Star Stream> will not be destroyed unless the 'Oldest Dream' is ended.]

I now stared at the child.

At the child with the exact same face as mine.

And the boy slowly raised his head to look back at me.

[Please end the 'Oldest Dream'.]

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* Official novel illustration (canonical)

Chapter 514: Ep. 99 - The Oldest Dream, III

My consciousness kept trying to blank out.

「What would it be like if the 'Ways of Survival' was real?」

Whether that was my own thoughts, or something that was recorded on the [Final Wall], or maybe even…

「If there was a world where I can fight alongside the characters from the 'Ways of Survival'…」

…The imaginations of the 'Oldest Dream', I couldn't be sure.

Countless memories rushed in like a sudden incoming wave. Imaginations that unfolded in a messy cacophony became the fuel for the stories in another world. The living reality had become the 'tragedy'.

「Wait, now that I think about it, what happens to the old world after Yoo Joonghyuk regresses? …I should ask the author-nim in the comment section.」

I always thought that I remembered the 'Ways of Survival' better than anyone else. I was proud that I had read the novel diligently, much more so than anyone else, too. So why couldn't I recall much about 'myself' that read the novel?

Maybe, I was…

[You have become the 'Character'.]

Sparks overflowed above my Incarnation Body. [The Fourth Wall]'s functions were coming to a halt. My heart was madly pounding away, and unidentifiable screams reverberated within my devastated mind. My head faltered, and I somehow managed to suck in several deep breaths.

[The Fourth Wall] was right. Maybe, I already knew.

There were simply too many hints.

「I was far too lucky in this world, and」

「Everything in this world seemed to be geared towards my convenience, and」

「At times, this world even felt sloppy.」

If all of these were the result of the 'Oldest Dream's blessing, then…

「The genesis of all the world-lines, the original world-line.」

I raised my head back up, then clenched my energyless fists slowly. [The Fourth Wall] was no longer around, but my mind was calm. No, I had to believe that I was calm.

Only I knew the conclusion of this world.

Giiiii-iiing…

The Unbroken Faith screeched out. I slowly walked forward.

The boy raised his head up from the notebook to look at me.

Tsu-chuchuchu!

"…Uh??"

The boy's eyes, that didn't know anything.

I couldn't avoid that gaze. Those were the eyes of a child who had no one to rely on in this world, somehow managing to carry on day by day.

The boy busy rubbing his eyes hard as if he saw phantoms, was looking at me.

「In order to destroy <Star Stream>, the 'Oldest Dream' must be stopped.」

I had made up my mind at the beginning of <Star Stream>, and even promised the 'Secretive Plotter'. To eliminate the culprit of all these tragedies. And finally, that opportunity had come.

['Demon King Transformation' is activating.]

Pitch-black wings spread out from the torn shoulder blades. The boy's eyes looking at me widened.

"Ah, ah…??"

A voice that felt so ancient. Right, I used to possess such a voice in the past, didn't I? I walked one step at a time towards such a child.

['Angel Transformation' is activating.]

As the child's face grew closer, I got to see so many other things. Such as the notebook the boy was scribbling on. There was a chart recording the power balance of the 'Ways of Survival'; it was the very same chart that I compiled once upon a time.

Yoo Joonghyuk, Lee Hyunsung, Shin Yoosung, Lee Jihye, Lee Seolhwa, Kim Namwoon, Anna Croft… Next to the densely packed names, their Stigmata and Skills were recorded. And finally, even the bruising on the back of the boy's hand covering up his own untidy handwriting.

I knew the history this boy had survived, and the future he'd get to live out; what would happen to this child in the future, and what sort of misery lay in wait for him.

「All of those years, just how much of a meaning was in them?」

He'd get targetted by the school gang and suffer serious bullying.

He'd get abandoned by his relatives and start living alone far too soon. And wherever he went, he'd be pursued by the reporters hunting him down.

He'd make a mistake during the university entrance exam and end up in a third-rate school.

He'd get unlucky and pull the shortest straw during the boot camp, and get assigned to the front lines.

He'd fill himself up everyday with triangular-shaped kimbap bought from the local convenience store.

And eventually, stumble into a job with some no-name company by the skin of his teeth and eke out a living that way.

During the period of ten years, he'd get to finish reading a certain novel, and after surviving by reading that novel, he'd drive everyone he loved to utter misery.

That boy would grow up to become Kim Dokja.

"M-monster…"

The child was opening his mouth while looking at me.

"That's right, I'm a monster."

My appearance was reflected on the boy's irises.

「That monster was this child's future.」

Now was the only chance to stop that monster.

Everything happened in the blink of an eye. Me, trying to rush forward with my sword raised up, and Han Sooyoung's fist striking me in the face, all of them.

"----!!"

I couldn't really hear her voice. She was shouting something at me. Her reddened eyes were filled with tears. Her fists were pounding down on my chest, before her rough hands tried to hold onto my shoulders.

"…Dokja!!"

I shoved her away. And then, took another step forward. Even though the distance was only a few metres, I couldn't easily cross it. All of my Stories were rebelling against me.

Powerful sparks enveloping my entire frame suppressed me. My feet didn't want to leave the floor, and my hands refused to move.

The child's expression as he looked at me was one of terror. His chin trembled nonstop, so did his eyes. Those eyes, trying to decipher whether this was reality or not.

[The 'Oldest Dream' is questioning your existence.]

The existence that dreamed of all these worlds. And in his dream, I too was nothing more than just another character.

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

[The 'Oldest Dream' is denying your existence.]

As if he wanted to reject reality, the child hugged his head and curled up. "I, I'm, I'm Yoo Joonghyuk… I'm…"

The chant that had been recited tens of thousands of times.

「There is a protective barrier around me.」

「Nobody can harm me.」

「Nothing can touch me.」

The thoughts he used to escape from the pain when the gangs beat him up, began leaking out. The power that rendered reality into not-reality.

And that power was now being applied in the opposite manner.

"Ahjus-!!"

This really small but absolute being was now thinking of everything before him as his own delusions. An opaque barrier was generating with the child's figure as its centre, resembling a pitch-black sphere. It was the sturdiest protective barrier that the 'Oldest Dream' could create.

I cried out like a devil and rushed towards the barrier to swing my sword. As the worlds collided, a blindingly-bright explosion of light went off.

The blade of the Unbroken Faith easily broke apart and flew in the air. I stared helplessly at the flying blade piece.

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｢I can't kill him.｣

It was impossible for a way to kill him to exist. If this story began from the dream of the younger me, then the rules of this world were thought up by him, too.

Winds powerfully blowing in from somewhere roughly flipped the pages of the child's fallen notebook. When the flipping stopped, the setting of the 'Ways of Survival' the younger me jotted down could be seen on the page.

– The Disconnected Film Theory: a theory that explains the overlapping of the world-lines in the Ways of Survival, and it…

As the sparks faintly danced about, I dazedly read the contents. I read it, and then, read it some more. I bent down to pick up the broken blade. Then, opened up all the Stories still remaining in me.

I stared at the black sphere surrounding the boy and spoke up. "…I know you better than anyone in this world."

｢Don'ttormentmeDon'ttormentmeDon'ttormentme｣

"I'm not trying to torment you."

｢I want to run away.｣

"I know.

｢But, where to?｣

The child's story was transmitted to me, while mine also was transmitted to him.

Tsu-chuchuchut!

There were less than two hand spans of broken blade remaining in the Unbroken Faith. However, that was sufficient enough to carry out my plan.

「The method to end the 'Oldest Dream'.」

[The 'Disconnected Film Theory' is activating!]

[Your existence is resonating with the 'Oldest Dream'!]

I then stabbed the blade into my neck with every ounce of my energy.

The loud 'Puh-wook!' noise resounded out. Crimson blood dripped onto the floor like teardrops.

"Kim Dokja."

The blood belonged to Yoo Joonghyuk. The blade was stopped mid-air right before my neck, unable to move an inch. Blue veins were bulging on Yoo Joonghyuk's hand holding the blade tightly.

"All of you, hold him down!!"

It wasn't just Yoo Joonghyuk, though – someone had grabbed me from behind to suppress me.

"Dokja-ssi, this is wrong!"

It was Lee Hyunsung.

Both of my arms were grabbed, too. Jung Heewon and Yoo Sangah were responsible.

"…Please, stop!"

"There must be another way. There has to be."

Lee Jihye was hugging my waist, while I could see Shin Yoosung and Lee Gilyoung holding onto each of my legs.

And then, I saw Han Sooyoung pounding on the barrier of the 'Oldest Dream' in my stead. "Open up! We didn't come here to harm you! We just want to talk to you for a bit…!"

Even then, the barrier was only getting thicker. I knew the truth; that thing would never open up.

I held the sword's hilt even harder. "This is the only way."

Jang Hayoung shouted out. "Please, please stop!! There's still time! We still have…!"

No, we didn't have time. The longer we wasted here, the harsher and heavier the sparks surrounding us became.

[The 'Oldest Dream' is denying your existence.]

The child would continue to 'deny' us. Then, he'd erase his delusions. He would turn the reality of another world into something that's not reality.

That was why, the only one who could do this was…

Ku-gugugu…

Thick fog suddenly came in from somewhere, and I picked up on the ominous power of Chaos. Yoo Joonghyuk's expression as he held the blade became weird.

"Y-you bastard…"

As he staggered about, the pitch-black Story leaked out from his mouth. That Story gurgled out and travelled down his chin, hit the floor, and finally, formed the silhouette of a person.

The blade of the [Splitting the Sky Sword] gleamed between the jet-black coat; a man who only lived for this moment was standing there now.

「The Secretive Plotter.」

The being who had even forgotten about his real name after experiencing countless regression turns. The man who lived only for the purpose of revenge was here.

He glanced in my direction, before slowly approaching the protective barrier.

The 'Secretive Plotter' ignored the dancing sparks and walked forward. In that exact moment, the 'Oldest Dream's' Story came streaming into me.

「'I wanted to become like Yoo Joonghyuk'.」

Goosebumps rose up on my arms gradually.

Why have I forgotten about the memories that ruled over my childhood?

「The protagonist stronger than anyone in this universe.」

It was obvious that the 'Secretive Plotter' wouldn't be affected by the sparks. Just how many times have I thought about this within my imaginations continuing on like some kind of obsession?

「No human can control every type of imagination.」

Just how often have I recited that name every time bruises appeared on my arms and legs, and every time my lips burst open?

「And that's why the most ideal person to end this dream had already been determined.」

My sword slowly slipped out of my grasp. From here onwards, it was no longer my job. I just couldn't get in the way of this world's most fair revenge.

"Secretive Plotter!!"

Han Sooyoung cried out and ran towards him. So did Jung Heewon, Lee Jihye, and even the kids, too. As if they had realized what the horrible thing he was about to commit would be.

Unfortunately, my companions couldn't approach him as if a transparent wall was blocking them. And only the 'Secretive Plotter' alone crossed the platform and reached the bench with the child sitting on it.

He wielded the sword loaded with the powers of [Breaking the Sky Energy] and sliced apart the pitch-black sphere. When he did, the child curling up like a new born baby curled up even further.

"I'm Yoo Joonghyuk. I'm Yoo Joonghyuk. I'm…"

The child continued to tremble under the faint rays of light.

【You are not Yoo Joonghyuk.】

The regressor who had forgotten about his name through the eternity of regressions. Such a man was now announcing his name.

"I am 'Yoo Joonghyuk'."

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* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)

Chapter 515: Ep. 99 - The Oldest Dream, IV

That was the real voice of Yoo Joonghyuk, the one that lived through 1864 lives. That voice was the evidence of the history starting from the 0th turn all the way to 1863rd. And the protagonist of that voice was saying this: he was none other than Yoo Joonghyuk, and he was none other than the protagonist of the 'Ways of Survival'.

"I, I'm, I…"

The child shuddered pitifully, yet he couldn't open his eyes. As if he already knew his entire world would crumble the moment he did.

[The 'Oldest Dream' is denying his own dream!]

「This is just an illusion just an illusion just an illusion」

"This is no illusion."

At the same time as the 'Secretive Plotter' said his piece, sentences began streaming all around the child. They were texts from the 'Ways of Survival' that the boy read, that I read together with him.

Sentences that kept me alive, and eventually would kill me, too.

And a certain man was speaking up within those sentences.

「"Lee Hyunsung. It's not over yet."」

「"Do not worry. I shall definitely end this <Star Stream>."」

「"I will never forget you, Shin Yoosung."」

Those vivid sentences soon became stories. Stories were imagined, and the imagination was recreated as reality in a different world-line.

Not knowing that such a thing was happening in another reality, the boy kept desiring the story's continuation.

「"To the next regression turn, and then, to the next one."」

To survive, the boy imagined. While being pressured by his relatives, while being bullied by the school gangs.

To not feel the pain, he thought about the next part of the story.

「"I shall survive no matter what, and witness the end of these scenarios."」

He felt solace while looking at the unyielding protagonist. And within that solace, he wished for the protagonist to not give up until the end.

「Author-nim, for how long will Yoo Joonghyuk's regression continue on?」

He wished for this regression journey to never come to an end.

Tsu-chuchu…

The 'Secretive Plotter' didn't say anything as he watched the boy's memories stream by.

「He should be remembering every one of these events.」

All those resolutions he had never forgotten from the 0th turn all the way to the 1863rd.

My companions and I also watched those. Yoo Joonghyuk had collapsed after the 'Secretive Plotter' left his body; he was groaning heavily from all the memories flooding in. Shin Yoosung was continuously shedding her tears, while Lee Jihye plopped down on the ground. Lee Hyunsung and Jung Heewon too were trying to endure while supporting each other's trembling shoulders.

Now, they all knew. They knew now that the Secretive Plotter needed to be compensated for his life.

"B-but, but, even then…"

Shin Yoosung muttered as if she was in a religious trance, and looked up at me. As if she wanted me to tell her how to overcome this situation.

"Secretive Plotter! Stop! I said, stop!!"

Only Han Sooyoung alone resisted the shower of sparks right before her face and swung her fists constantly towards the empty air. However, the 'Secretive Plotter' didn't look back.

「And so, the 'Pilgrim of the Lonely Apocalypse' had reached the end of his pilgrimage.」

The [Splitting the Sky Sword] that broke over and over again only to be patched up, was now quietly crying out.

「Finally, his Constellation backer was before his eyes.」

"It was you."

The child's shoulder trembled pitifully as if he was having a nightmare.

「This was a weak lifeform that could be killed off in an instant.」

His Splitting the Sky Sword screeched out viciously once more. This was the sword that cut down countless Constellations. Not even Poseidon, not Zeus, not Nuwa, and not even the Dokkaebi King could escape from this very blade. No star in existence could survive after daring to oppose him.

Here was the opportunity for his revenge, reached after experiencing 1864 lifetimes.

The [Splitting the Sky Sword] slowly moved.

"Secretive Plotter!! No, wait! Yoo Joonghyuk-!!"

Neither Han Sooyoung nor I could stop it. This event, it simply had to happen. Shin Yoosung tightly holding my hand was crying. Unable to close her mouth, and gasping uncontrollably.

Everything would end with this.

I would no longer need to consume someone else's story. Yoo Joonghyuk would be freed from his lengthy journey of regression.

「However, why wasn't that sword moving even now?」

The Secretive Plotter's Splitting the Sky Sword continued to wander in the air. The blade that threatened to cut the boy down at any moment was now simply brushing aside the eggshell-like protective barrier around the child, instead.

「Even though its outer shell has been shattered, this bird couldn't fly off to anywhere.」

The boy's figure trembled uncontrollably. Ominous-feeling Stories were now circling around him.

「"Hey, this guy's drawing something in his notebook again!"」

「"Tsk, tsk. He's so much like his mother…"」

「"Are you Kim Dokja? By any chance, do you know where your mother is right now? Mm… I see. Don't you resent your mother? What was your mother like in the past?"」

「"For how long are you going to keep quiet? If you don't say anything, the whole world will misunderstand you."」

Slice.

The [Heave Shaking Sword] wandering in the air accurately cut down the sentences of those memories. The boy's trembling shoulders shook a little less than before.

「But, why?」

My mind was thrown into disarray.

「How come?」

It was then that a true voice resounded out.

【…Is this boy 'him'?】

A man with a hulking physique rose up from the Secretive Plotter's shadow. It was the 999th turn's Lee Hyunsung. The Plotter nodded his head.

"Correct. This kid is my sponsor."

【Now this pisses me off. This little kid was the culprit of it all??】

Even the 999th turn's Kim Namwoon and Lee Jihye were here, too.

They were the Outer Gods that endured the 999th turn. It wasn't only Yoo Joonghyuk who wanted to destroy <Star Stream>, and end the 'Oldest Dream'.

"No."

【What was that? In that case…】

The 'Secretive Plotter' looked around at his vicinity instead of replying.

The clamour of people flooding in and out just to catch the subway could be heard coming from the platform in the distance. He looked back, and the train we rode on was already gone.

Instead, there was a Daehwa Station-bound train that would ferry passengers to their unknown destination in this normal world. And then, the crowd of people brushing past us as if they couldn't see us at all.

– This station is Daehwa…

People climbing aboard the subway even before the passengers could disembark first; people pushing and shoving each other, or hurling insults in other's directions. A granny was pushed aside by the disembarking wave of people and fell down. No one tried to aid her. The very first person to witness her plight was an old man sitting on the seats reserved for pregnant mothers.

He stared at the granny for a little while, before unfurling a newspaper he pulled out to cover up his vision. And above that newspaper, a headline of an article could be seen.

– The criminal's essay will be published.

It was an article that I knew quite intimately. Many people read that, chatted about, and then, forgot about that article.

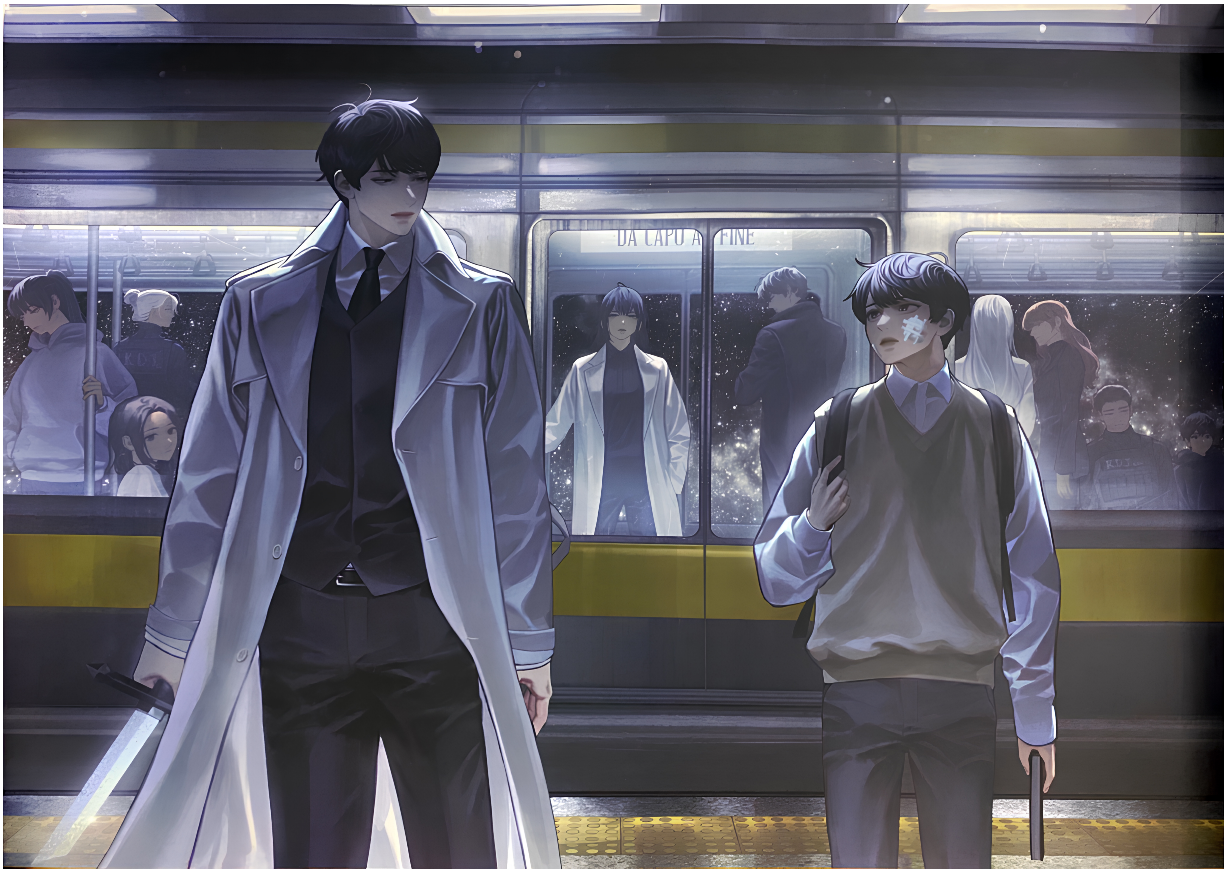
「A tragedy with nothing special about it. At most, it was a tragedy that occurred to just one life.」

The 'Secretive Plotter' and the Outer Gods were now looking at my Story. Their sorrowful eyes were looking at this tragedy that only went on for a little over a dozen or so years.

【…Oh, you sad, pitiful child.】

I shuddered almost out of pure shock from those words.

My own tragedy couldn't even compare to their pain. The sin of creating an even bigger tragedy because of my own should not be forgiven.



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【Oh, hear ye, my dear god. I have endured a truly lengthy period of time just to meet you, but…】

The 999th turn's Uriel reached out and touched the younger me's cheek.

【You are this universe's most powerless existence, aren't you.】

The child's body shuddered once more.

I staggered unsteadily back to my feet.

【…Is that why you needed us? This is a very cruel request for help, indeed.】

【You couldn't even control your own imagination, is that it?】

Something was wrong. A blade… I, I needed to find a blade.

The 999th turn's characters were exchanging glances. For a quiet moment there, they were looking into each other.

The first one to open her mouth was the 999th turn's Lee Jihye.

【It's fine with me. However, will it be okay with you? You came here just for this, didn't you?】

It was rather clear who she was talking to.

The 'Secretive Plotter' paused for a little bit before replying to her.

"It has been difficult."

This story was not something that could be wrapped up with that single line. The tragedy he had experienced must not be simplified like that.

"I wondered why it happened to me. I often wanted to give it all up. I lost count on how many times I thought about killing myself." The 'Secretive Plotter' keeping silent for a long time eventually continued on. "However, someone ensured that I could never give up."

His hatred-filled eyes were not directed at the body. No, he was glaring at the boy's Story.

Both the 999th turn's Uriel and Lee Hyunsung knelt down and gently picked the child up in an embrace. Lee Jihye and Kim Namwoon then held the boy's cold hands.

The 'Secretive Plotter' spoke up as if to proclaim to the world.

"Now, open your eyes, Kim Dokja."

The eyelashes of the child soaked in cold sweat trembled softly. His whole body shuddered uncontrollably as if he was fighting against a lengthy nightmare.

And so, how long passed by like this? The child's eyelids slowly opened up.

"Ah, ah, ah…"

The boy's eyes were now looking at the world. He was now looking at the things he once believed to be his own delusions. He was now looking at the Archangel and the Emperor of Steelsword embracing him, and at the hands of both the Delusion Demon and the Naval Admiral. And finally…

"Really… really…?"

And the protagonist of the story he had been watching for so long was right before him.

"Indeed. This is not a dream."

Inside this weighty silence where no one spoke, the sound of something shattering could be heard.

Tears trickled down from the child's eyes. I knew what those tears meant, and I also knew what the 'Secretive Plotter' and the Outer Gods had done just now, and that was why I felt so tortured inside.

「That, that couldn't have been their choice.」

A being that lived with a certain story for a very long time would eventually become unable to escape from that very story. Just like how it was for Agares, Metatron, the Apocalypse Dragon, and the Dokkaebi King, it was the same story for the 'Outer Gods', too.

Perhaps, could it be that the choice they made had already been predetermined from the beginning?

I shouted out in a crying voice.

"He's the 'Oldest Dream'! He needs to die. If he's not dead, then your tragedies won't end! Your regression, <Star Stream>, all of them-!!"

You must not get devoured by that 'story'.

I don't need your sympathy.

What I really truly want isn't a tale like this.

[Applicable individual is not a 'Character'.]

The 'Secretive Plotter' was now looking back at me with eyes that I couldn't recognise at all. From within a story that I hadn't read before, he was staring at me.

It wasn't just him, however; Uriel, Lee Jihye, Kim Namwoon, and even Lee Hyunsung, too.

[Applicable individual is not a 'Character'.]

[Applicable individual is not a 'Character'.]

[Applicable individual is not a 'Character'.]

[Applicable individual is not a 'Character'.]

I dazedly stared at the continuously-rising messages.

「The world's most righteous soldier.」

「The noblest Archangel.」

「The general who doesn't tolerate injustice.」

「The devil filled with hatred towards the world.」

「The regressor who fought against the system called <Star Stream>.」

The 'Secretive Plotter' and the 'Outer Gods' were now looking at the world of this child; the world that was filled with nearly-undetectable malice that could only be felt under the careful observation.

Kim Namwoon glared at the Story of such a world and muttered out.

【Even without <Star Stream>, the world remains the same.】

He sounded as if he finally figured out the enemy he needed to fight from now on. The Stories the 'Secretive Plotter' and the Outer Gods built up were now baring their fangs at the reality surrounding the child.

「At the end of the vast, lengthy pilgrimage, the regressor chose the world he discovered.」

The characters reaching the conclusion were finally breaking out of the tale. While embracing their god, they were now heading towards a brand new story.

I shook my head like a madman and crawled towards them.

This must not happen.

I made a promise. To end the 'Oldest Dream'. To end this tragedy.

My hand barely managing to feel around the ground discovered the broken blade.

I did it. With this, I…

【Kim Dokja.】

The 'Secretive Plotter' called out to me. When I raised my head, he continued on with what he wanted to say.

【Do you remember the first scenario?】

The first scenario, the 'proof of credentials'.

The 'Secretive Plotter' and the Constellations saw me for the first time during that scenario.

【You said this to other people back then. That the scenario's clear condition wasn't to 'kill humans'.】

I recalled the promise I made to him.

– Please finish the 'Oldest Dream'.

The world was blanketed by the blinding rays of light, and my vision grew blurry. My surprised companions quickly gathered around me.

[You have fulfilled your promise with the 'Secretive Plotter'.]

The young Kim Dokja, now embraced by the Emperor of Steelsword and the Archangel, was looking at me. Light was starting to return to the child's eyes that used to wallow in the lengthy dream.

When was the dream supposed to end? That would be…

「…When the dream was no longer a dream.」

Only then did everything start making sense.

It was the same thing as the 'Oldest Dream' ending the moment Yoo Joonghyuk of the 'Ways of Survival' reached this place.

The sounds of the next train arriving could be heard coming from the distance.

[Constellation, 'Secretive Plotter' has reached his ■■.]

At the same time as the 'Secretive Plotter' gave his signal, my companions and I got sucked into the train that arrived behind us.

"This place is the epilogue of that story."

The characters that saved my childhood were now disappearing beyond the door.

Just like the 1863rd turn's Yoo Joonghyuk who killed himself to cross over to the new world-line, they were now stepping into a world that I didn't know.

Within the rays of light, I saw Yoo Joonghyuk's faint smile.

He looked… liberated.

[The constellation 'Secretive Plotter's' ■■ is 'Oldest Dream'.]

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* Promotional illustration (semi-canonical)

전지적 독자 시점

싱숑 현대 판타지 소설

5부

MUNPIA

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Chapter 516: Ep. 99 - The Oldest Dream, V

['The Fourth Wall' is reactivating!]

The light in the world flickered on and off several times. I felt the sensation of my body being sucked into somewhere, and within this half-awake consciousness, the friction noise of the train's wheel meeting the railroad tracks filled up my head.

I couldn't accept this.

Even though I knew that this wasn't a matter requiring my acceptance, I still found it hard to swallow.

「Why did the 'Secretive Plotter' make such a decision?」

I couldn't forget his final expression.

How could he make such a face? He didn't get to complete what he truly wanted, so how come…

「What did Secretive Plotter really want, then?」

All of the memories regarding the Secretive Plotter flitted in and out of my head.

The story I got to learn through the original novel's texts – while enduring such a vast, indeterminable amount of time, what did Yoo Joonghyuk hope to see at the end of this road?

Just what was it exactly that he expected to encounter?

「【Even if it's not a conclusion you wanted… Do not think of this world as a failed regression turn.】」

Only those words remained stuck in my brain like a curse.

「Kim Dokja」

'The Fourth Wall' warned me in a stiff voice as if to punish my arrogance.

「This not a problem you can judge」

The wall was right. Even after that guy had left, I couldn't escape from being this damn 'Constellation'.

Under the brilliant radiance, the figures of 999th turn's Uriel, Lee Hyunsung, Kim Namwoon, and Lee Jihye scattered away.

Could he really become happier with this?

He made this choice himself, so was that his happiness, then?

He was a being born in the tragedy, so maybe, he wasn't aware of that choice being another tragedy?

The Stories of the younger me and the 'Secretive Plotter' were getting further away.

The man looking back in this direction for one last time was no longer Yoo Joonghyuk from the 'Ways of Survival'.

「Be ca use he's b orn in th e tra gedy ca n he fin ish th e tra gedy too」

「"This place is the epilogue of that story."」

The ancient tale I've been reading concluded, just like that.

[You have reached the ■■ of all the scenarios.]

[You have now learned of the secret of the world.]

The only remaining topic for us was on how to live the story's 'ever after'. The part of the story that the 'Ways of Survival' didn't tell me.

[The 'Oldest Dream' has ended.]

Abruptly, a certain thought popped up in my head. Something that had been forgotten after being swept up in the situation.

The Dokkaebi King told me this: that this world was a dream of the 'Oldest Dream'.

「In that case, what happens to the characters of the dream after the dream has come to an end?」

The characters from the 999th turn and the 'Secretive Plotter' had all escaped from the role of 'Characters' and were freed from the dream through their own will.

If so, what would happen to other people, then?

After the dream was over, the people from the dream would…

[Final scenario clear reward has arrived.]

The noises of a cheek being slapped around resounded out; under the flickering subway lights, Kim Dokja slowly opened his eyes.

"Hey, you. You awake now?"

He saw Han Sooyoung's face up close as she roughly held him by his collars.

"…What happened?"

"That's what I want to ask you."

Kim Dokja massaged his head as if he was suffering from migraine, and stood up from his spot.

"Where are we?"

"Inside the subway. Time for us to head back home, I guess."

Han Sooyoung saying those words seemed rather refreshed, for some reason.

The train clunked and shook around. The darkness outside the windows gently wavered about.

"Dokja-ssi, are you alright?"

His companions discovered him and walked in closer. Yoo Sangah, Lee Hyunsung, Jung Heewon, Shin Yoosung, Lee Gilyoung, Lee Jihye, Jang Hayoung… and even Yoo Joonghyuk, they were all here.

「Everyone was alright.」

Kim Dokja slowly looked around him. There was no other presence within the subway. It was likely that this train was the same one they rode in earlier.

「Are we really safe now?」

"I've treated your injuries. Once we return to [The Fourth Wall], we should entrust you to Seolhwa-ssi's care, but…"

Yoo Sangah feeling for Kim Dokja's pulse faintly smiled. His companions approached him one by one. However, even though their gazes were fixed on him, none of them managed to readily open their mouths.

Unexpectedly, the first one to do so was Yoo Joonghyuk. Rather than approaching Kim Dokja like everyone else, he leaned against the subway's seat at an angle and glared outside the window.

The universe's Story was coming undone on the outside. The once-tangled roll of thread was turning into dust and scattering away one strand at a time.

"It's the <Star Stream>."

Stories existing in countless world-lines were illuminating the space by scattering their bright lights. The <Star Stream> they had been living in was right there. The world they cursed and resented, but still couldn't forsake, was slowly disappearing while emitting the most radiant light for the last time.

As Kim Dokja dazedly stared at that spectacle, Shin Yoosung tightly squeezed his hand.

"It's over now."

Overcome by a certain emotion, Lee Hyunsung suddenly broke down in tears. The bear-like man who never showed a single drop of tears no matter what transpired began sobbing away uncontrollably. Jung Heewon watched him and bit her lower lip as her nose tip began stinging, as well. Lee Jihye raised her head, perhaps not wanting to shed her own tears.

"It… really is over."

It was indeed over. This long and expansive tale had finally come to an end.

Kim Dokja stared at the distancing meteor shower. He stared, and then, stared again.

As if she knew what he was thinking about right now, Han Sooyoung addressed him. "This isn't because you read that novel, you know? You also had no idea, right?"

Companions nodded their heads. They were also aware; they knew that this event might not end like this.

It was just that, they were quietly staring at Kim Dokja and his Story.

「The world that couldn't be lived in, unless one read it.」

The child who had to read something, anything, if he wanted to live.

They were saved many times over by such a child.

「Reading something in order to survive – that was the same story for everyone.」

"It would've been fine by just reading it, but Dokja-ssi, you tried to change the story by yourself. I think that's more than enough."

Jung Heewon said that.

The one who had never reached the end of this world, starting from the beginning of the 'Ways of Survival' all the way to its conclusion. She softly smiled and patted Kim Dokja on his shoulder.

"So, what do you think? Is this the conclusion you wanted to see?"

Kim Dokja couldn't reply to her. He was too busy wiping away the tears clouding his vision to do that.

「So that he could see with his own eyes the view of the world he established.」

Kim Dokja slowly opened his eyes, and the subway's pitch-black windows were reflected in his irises. The faces of his companions could be seen mirrored on the glass. As if, that was a group photo with the universe serving as its background.

「The conclusion of this world that he so dearly wished to see.」

"…I'm looking at it right now."

As if they were waiting for those words, Shin Yoosung and Lee Gilyoung began wiping away Kim Dokja's tears. He tightly hugged both of the kids.

It was then, someone asked this question.

"We'll be happy after this, right?"

Only the vibration of the train leaving the station resounded out within this silence like a pulse.

Maybe, this train would never go back; they would never be able to visit that station, ever again.

They would forge ahead towards a brand new terminal.

As everyone stewed within their own thoughts, quite unexpectedly it was Lee Jihye who threw out a realistic question first.

"…By the way, what will happen to the world-line we've been living in?"

When everyone gazed at her, she scratched her cheeks in embarrassment and continued on.

"You know, that thing. If the Dokkaebi King is to be believed, this world is merely a dream of the 'Oldest Dream', but if that dream is over, then…"

For sure, the time flow of the world they were living in froze after the [Final Wall] was destroyed. In that case, even if they returned to that world by riding on this train…

[It'll be fine. Our world is functioning normally.]

"Aha, I see. That's a relief… Ehng??"

Lee Jihye stared at Kim Dokja, then at Lee Hyunsung, and even at Jung Heewon and Yoo Sangah. No matter who she looked at, though, they were all making the exact same expression as her.

"Who replied just now??"

And then, everyone looked up at the air at the same time. A ball of fine fur was floating up there.

[Baat?]

The eyes of the companions narrowed down to slits.

[Eh-baat.]

Biyoo began sweating buckets in the air, but eventually, sighed out grandly and spoke up.

[You knew something was up already anyway, so why are you so surprised?]

The companions heard the explanation from Biyoo.

The contents, when simplified, were like this.

[The world-line hasn't been annihilated yet. I don't know the reason, but… the stopped time of the world is beginning to get written again. Although the worldview shook around a lot after all the large Stories crumbled at the same time, it'll still take several thousands of years for the world to die naturally.]

The sights of the world they used to live in could be seen faintly just beyond the subway's windows. The frozen time of the world was beginning to move once more.

「Uriel was slowly opening her eyes within this devastation.」

「The Black Flame Dragon was asleep, curled up into a ball. And…」

「Wrapped up tightly within the Somersault Cloud, the Great Sage Heaven's Equal was staring up at the skies above.」

The Constellations were alive, too.

Even the Maritime War God, Goryeo's First Sword… Everyone was still alive. Even though they had lost their previous lustre, they were still drawing breaths in this world-line.

Biyoo spoke up as she looked at those Constellations.

[<Star Stream> still remains. The channel system has crumbled down, and Constellations can no longer wield as much power as they used to, but still, it was such a huge Story that it'll take some time for it to completely crumble down.]

A couple of my companions sighed in relief. A sigh that they themselves couldn't really understand.

Lee Jihye asked again. "But, the dream is over, right? So how can this world continue to exist?"

[I already told you, I also don't know. Be smart enough to listen properly when someone tells you something the first time.]

"…Well, it sure is a relief, but since when did you learn to speak like this? Besides all that, look how rude you are! Ahjussi! Listen to how Biyoo talks! This creepy kid, until now…!"

Kim Dokja shifted his gaze over to Biyoo, prompting the latter to feign complete ignorance and open her mouth as if she didn't know anything.

[Ah-bah-aht?]

Everyone broke out into a helpless chuckle. Lee Jihye panted angrily and just before she could shout something, Kim Dokja reached out and wordlessly hugged Biyoo.

This bundle of fur that used to be so tiny at the beginning of the scenarios was now so big that one couldn't wrap their arms around it.

Yoo Joonghyuk watching that spectacle spoke up. "…Maybe, it's the last miracle."

A miracle, was it? That was certainly a word that didn't suit him. Because that was the one word he believed the least. Even then, his utterance loosened the expressions of the companions.

"Then really, everything has been resolved with this."

"And now, all we need to do is to buy the big house where we can live together!"

The kids spoke up, only to be shot down by Han Sooyoung.

"Our Nebula can't go on anymore. This idiot, he completely drained all of its finances in the Final Scenario, you know."

"We can always make more money later, right?! I mean, just who are we??"

Everyone broke into smiles while looking at Lee Gilyoung triumphantly shouting out. But then, someone quickly threw out another question, perhaps fearful of these smiles suddenly coming to an end.

"What do you all want to do now?"

Shin Yoosung and Lee Gilyoung looked at each other after hearing that and yelled out.

"The Han River!"

"The ocean!"

"Pizzas!"

"Fried chickens!"

As the two children began arguing, someone else piped up next.

"I'd like to go to the place that I used to live."

It was Jang Hayoung.

"The place where you used to live…"

Yoo Sangah's expression became uncertain after hearing that. It wasn't just her, though; they all knew the truth. They knew that the places they used to live no longer existed. The homes where their stories had been kept before the advent of apocalypse, had all disappeared now.

But, could this be magic? Suddenly, the view outside the windows changed. The scenery of the space seemed to scatter, and what replaced it was…

"Maybe, it really is a miracle…"

…The sight of Seoul, the one they were intimately familiar with.

And on the subway map where every name had been erased off, names of various stations began reappearing.

[Next stop is 'Hongjae' Station.]

Jang Hayoung's steps took her towards the exit. From beyond the wrecked terminal, the sight of her old suburb could be seen. The train's speed was gradually slowing down.

Jung Heewon asked her. "You still want to go, even though there might be nothing left?"

Jang Hayoung nodded her head. Jung Heewon could only reply with a wry grin. Like how it was with everyone, there were some things that had to be confirmed even if you knew the end results already.

"Okay. Let's meet again back in the Industrial Complex later."

The train's doors opened, and Jang Hayoung made her exit. She looked around with a disbelieving expression, only to turn back as if she abruptly remembered something she wanted to say.

"Kim Dok-"

However, the train started again even before her words could be heard.

The next person to speak was Lee Jihye, silently staring at the map until then. "There's a place I want to go, too."

Jung Heewon asked her, sounding as if she already knew where the younger girl wanted to go. "You want me to go with you?"

"Nah, I'll be fine alone. This is what I want to do."

Lee Jihye's grin was soft, her expression light. Jung Heewon's hand rising up sheepishly went back down.

"See you guys in a sec."

Lee Jihye disembarked. The school building she used to attend was visible in the distance.

The subway's doors closed once more. Jung Heewon asked a question. "Is there anyone else who wants to go somewhere?"

No one answered back. Most of the companions had no places they wanted to return to. However, that didn't mean they didn't have a place to return to.

Yoo Sangah then asked everyone. "We are all going to get off at the same place, yes?"

"Can't we switch trains somewhere? Looks like we'll have to hoof it from Jongro."

Han Sooyoung grumbled and scanned the subway map.

Their destination was Gwanghwamun, the location of the [Industrial Complex].

"We gotta think up of what to tell the others. It's not like we can tell them everything, right?"

[Next stop is 'Jongro 3rd street' Station.]

Everything was resolved now, but in reality, it'd be not like that. They would be facing the reality of new daily life after their return, that's why.

「The train's doors were opening up.」

Yoo Sangah holding the children's hands lightly hopped off to the station's platform with a soft "Eusha!" She looked back and saw that both Lee Hyunsung and Jung Heewon had also lightly hopped past the safety line on the ground.

"What are you doing, not getting off?"

That left only three people behind.

"Kim Dokja."

It was unknown who among Han Sooyoung and Yoo Joonghyuk called that name out first. The former asked with a questioning pair of eyes.

"We are getting off together, right?"

[Someone has activated 'Lie Detection Lv… ']

That prompted Kim Dokja to smirk softly.

"Of course. We should."

['Lie Detection' has confirmed 'Kim Dokja's' words as truth.]

"Let's go."

Kim Dokja took a step forward and lightly slapped the backs of the other two. That caused the two to stagger forward, as well. The frowning Han Sooyoung muttered something in Kim Dokja's direction, while Yoo Joonghyuk grasped the hilt of his sword, his eyes glaring nonstop.

Kim Dokja spoke to the latter. "…You do know that the scenarios are over, right? From now on, it'll be a criminal offence to carry around a sword…"

"What a foolish utterance that is. It's not over yet, Kim Dokja."

"He's right. We haven't even figured out who tls123 is, and also…"

The subway's doors were slowly closing; the story of a new world was streaming within the noisy clamour of their voices. Kim Dokja laughed in genuine happiness, and the kids continued to bicker away.

A tale of this new world continued to flow on.

But then, just as the subway's doors closed, Han Sooyoung looked behind her with a slightly unsure, hard-to-read face of someone that left something behind.

Even Yoo Joonghyuk looked back, too.

The only person who didn't was Kim Dokja.

*

Han Sooyoung and Yoo Joonghyuk's gazes ran into each other, and they began growling at the same time.

"What you looking at?!"

"I should ask you that, you basta…"

And then, the doors closed. The subway began moving again in silence. It was leaving the station that welcomed the beginning of a new story to enter the railway of infinity. Names written on the subway map began disappearing one by one.

The sight of bickering Yoo Joonghyuk and Han Sooyoung could be seen in the distance. Then, the sight of brightly smiling kids holding onto Kim Dokja's hands, as well as Yoo Sangah looking up into the sky while shielding her eyes, could be seen, too.

「And I was quietly staring at that scene.」

That prompted 'The Fourth Wall' to ask me.

「Will th is re ally be o kay?」

Right in the next second, my transparent figure emerged from the empty space. Accompanied by a slight case of dizziness, my body fully materialised and revealed itself above the subway.

[The percentage of memories you currently retain is '51%'.]

I smiled wryly. "This was the only way."

I looked up, and the messages clogging up the message log all floated up at once.

[You have cleared the 'Final Scenario'.]

[You are the only person who knows the secret of this world.]

[Currently, the 'Oldest Dream' is absent.]

[The world's time will not flow if the dream doesn't continue.]

These were the messages only visible to me.

[You have earned the qualification to take over the role of the 'Oldest Dream'.]

[Will you continue with the dream?]

If this dream was to be stopped now, then the world would forever be frozen still.

「It truly was a cruel thing; the world that barely managed to gain a chance at happiness stopping for all eternity.」

Although it started off as a tragedy, this universe was already born. Even though that was the case, there were still some that searched for happiness in this universe, and they had finally reached the terminals they always wanted to get to.

「Yoo Seung ee and Gil Yeong ee will be sad」

"I know."

「You are deceiving them」

"…At least I didn't lie to them." I looked up at the sky and carried on. "A part of me definitely exited the train with them, didn't it."

There was a certain skill I got from the 'Secretive Plotter' while returning from the 1863rd turn.

「【What will do you now for skills? I'm sure you haven't earned a new skill over there.】」

「"Indeed, I haven't earned any skills, but… Is it possible to receive this type of a reward, instead?"」

「【It is possible.】」

What I received back then was, technically speaking, not a 'skill' per se.

[Currently, 'Bookmark' skill is in activation.]

[Due to the blessing of the 'Oldest Dream', the applicable skill's activation period has been changed to infinite.]

[Currently, the sixth Bookmark is in activation.]

[The Character registered in the sixth Bookmark is 'Director of the False End'.]

The Director of the False End, the 1863rd turn's Han Sooyoung.

[Your degree of understanding on the applicable individual is very high!]

[Exclusive skill 'Avatar Lv.???' is currently in activation!]

[You have used up 49.00% of your memories to generate an avatar.]

[Due to the influence of the world-line, the connection to your avatar has been cut off.]

[The applicable avatar will possess its own free will and act accordingly.]

"…This is the right way."

I felt around the lost portion of my memories, now faint, and staggered unsteadily.

My 'other me' would continue to live on, oblivious that he was an avatar. He'd live in a huge house with the other companions.

He'd go to the ocean with Gilyoung-ie, and eat pizzas with Yoosung-ie. He'd get to see Lee Jihye admitted to a university, and then, he'd hand over the congratulatory bouquet of flowers to Lee Hyunsung and Jung Heewon.

He'd go around house hunting with Yoo Sangah, and search for tls123 with Yoo Joonghyuk.

And then, he'd get to read the novel Han Sooyoung wrote.

That would be my salvation.

From the beginning till the end, I was always the one being saved.

So, this was my small bit of atonement for their sakes.

「Y ou wi ll re gret th is you wo n t ev er me et th em ag ain」

I smiled without a sound.

"But, I can still see them, right?"

Just like how it used to be, a really long time ago.

And so, this story would continue on in that manner.

"…That's enough for me right now."

I stared at the back of the subway disappearing into the darkness. Now, the figures of my companions couldn't be seen all that well.

「And everyone lived happily ever after.」

I always hated that phrase.

However, the current me dearly wished for that phrase to become true.

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation' has reached his ■■.]

[You have become the 'Oldest Dream'.]

The disappearing lights in the distance resembled the Constellations that still remembered me.

And with that, my endless voyage got underway.

[Your ■■ is 'Eternity'.]

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* 5th original webnovel cover (canonical)
* Official novel illustration (canonical)

싱숑 장편소설

전지적 독자 시점

Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint

PART 5

02

*

Chapter 517: Epilogue 1 - The World of Zero, I

The panoramic view of the cosmos could be seen beyond the pitch-black window. I rested my forehead against the cold glass and wordlessly stared at that dark world.

I couldn't tell how long it had been. I wanted to look back; if I did, then maybe, they would still be sitting in their seats even now, so I thought.

「Kim Dokja finally stopped crying.」

"I didn't cry, you dumbass."

「He lied, too.」

"…Just for how long are you going to stay as the narrator? The story's over now."

[The Fourth Wall] cackled on. I felt slightly encouraged by that laughter and took another look beyond the window.

The ones I wanted to see were no longer reflected on the glass. The planet Earth I used to live had grown distant beyond my reach.

Of course, that didn't mean I wasn't there.

['Avatar' skill is currently active.]

[Due to the separation of the world-line, the connection to the 'Avatar' has been cut-off.]

[Your Avatar will continue to live his life with its own ego.]

The me of 49%.

[The applicable Avatar will no longer be under your control.]

That guy would never realize that he was an Avatar. He'd simply live the life of ever after along with the companions as Kim Dokja.

「Why 49%, though?」

"I was trying to divide exactly by 50% each, but it didn't work out."

「Why 49%, though?」

The exact same question again; it was impossible to hide anything from [The Fourth Wall].

"You already know why."

「Not very like you」

"No, it is exactly like me."

Something that the idiotic, immature, and selfish during the crucial moments 'Kim Dokja' would have done.

「2%.」

That number was the proof – and the lie – that I remembered my companions far better than my Avatar.

Even if no one knew of this version of me existing here, even if the companions' stories had come to an end like that… But, at the very least, I swore to myself that I'd never forget about them.

「Y ou re gre tting it?」

A soft noise came from the clunking subway. I was treated to the view of a completely empty subway interior. The handles no one held onto limply shook about.

「Don t fe el so lo nely」

"I'm not."

I slowly regulated my breathing.

I had already experienced a similar situation before. It was also like this back when I became the 'Demon King of Salvation' and fell into the story's horizon. In a way, my situation was better than back then. Well, I wasn't currently suffering from the penalty of leaving the scenario, after all.

If there was one thing different from back then, it'd be…

「I'd never be able to meet my companions.」

"…Do I have to stay inside this subway forever?"

「S t a y?」

"I'm asking if I can go outside."

[The Fourth Wall] remained silent as if to ponder what I was asking here, before making its reply.

「There is no concept of 'access' in this place」

"What do you mean?"

「This place is a sanctum. A place where the 'Oldest Dream' sleeps」

After I heard that, it began to slowly dawn on me.

Every world-line related to the 'Ways of Survival' was a dream of the 'Oldest Dream'.

「All the worlds were dreams that were given life in this place.」

Along with a 'Flash!' all the windows of the subway transformed into display screens.

At first, I mistook them for the TAS advertisement installed in the special area within the subway network. Scenes from various scenarios were streaming past the windows. Of course, there was no way that I was looking at mere advertisements.

Tsu-chuchuchu…

A vague migraine assaulted me. The sights of the world-lines scattered around the universe were now streaming by.

Only then did I gain a new appreciation of just what kind of an existence I had become.

「He was now the 'Oldest Dream'.」

My shaky steps took me closer to the window. The screen gently trembled like the surface of water, looking fragile enough to be broken at any time I wanted to.

「Kim Dokja was scared.」

I didn't need someone to tell me that to know.

Every 'story' in this world existed only because a reader read them.

「If he doesn't watch, the world will come to a stop.」

Staring at the world and dreaming endlessly…

「…This was the weight the 'Oldest Dream' had to bear.」

I slowly closed my eyes. This was what I chose. And obviously, being able to watch was far better than not being able to.

And on top of that, it was the same thing as me having become the ultimate Constellation that could peek on every world-line out there, so…

"The Fourth Wall?"

「Wh at」

"The 'Oldest Dream' acted like a Constellation, didn't he?"

Under the guise of a 'Constellation', the previous 'Oldest Dream' sent messages during the regression turn I lived in. Although it was the subconscious actions of a child who didn't know anything, there was no denying the fact that such an action nevertheless interfered with the system.

「Cor rect」

"Then, how about me connecting to the world-line I lived in as a 'Constellation'…?"

「Y ou th ink th at wi ll be pos sible?」

"It's not?"

「N ot the pro blem of pos sibil ity or n ot」

I mulled over what that could mean for a bit, before biting my lip, hard.

"…Right, I shouldn't do that. I understand."

I recalled all the hardships my companions and I had to experience to reach this conclusion. We fought to eliminate the Constellations, and to erase the <Star Stream> system. And we succeeded.

But for me to revive <Star Stream> after coming this far, now that would…

「Lu ckily y ou can't e ven if y ou wa nted to」

"Why not? I'm the 'Oldest Dream' now, aren't I? If I imagined it, it'd become reality, right?"

「Ca n't con trol eve ryth ing just be cau se y ou're the 'Oldest Dream'」

Sparks gently danced along with 'Tsu-chuchut!'

It seemed that the current 'me' couldn't fully exercise the 'Oldest Dream's' power to influence.

「Y our mast ery over the dr eam is n't en ough」

…As I thought. If it was that easy to control, then it'd not be called the 'dream' in the first place. I didn't know when it'd be possible, but at least for now, I couldn't do it.

I chewed my lips for a little while, before continuing on. "In that case… what about just watching?"

It was right then, something inside me wiggled.

The inner 'me' that I couldn't rule over – I sensed this humongous subconsciousness taking root deep within me. This subconsciousness extended its roots towards another world-line, and through these roots, began pulling up the stories of this world.

My vision darkened, then the sights of the world-line spread out like a kaleidoscope.

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「It was the view of the world he missed so much.」

I thought I saw the distant lights of the [Industrial Complex]. Then, I saw the backs of my companions headed there. Not a shade of darkness could be spied on their expressions. In the middle of the group as they walked shoulder to shoulder was another Kim Dokja, kitted out in the white coat.

I already knew.

Even though I knew…

My heart crazily pounded away, my breathing getting shallower, faster. I panted heavily and screamed out. I endured the sensation of vomit welling up, shook my head, and opened my eyes.

As I felt for the floor while swimming in dizziness, I realized that I was the only one inside the subway.

「W hat's wr ong? Do n't wan na wat ch?」

I did want to watch. Their happy faces, their expressions of finally escaping from the scenario's hell. I wanted to read the story that I so desperately longed to see. However, I couldn't.

If I did, then without a doubt, I'd want to go back.

"…I have to see it, right? If I don't, the world won't move forward, right?"

「Y ou're al rea dy wat ching」

"What?"

「Sub con sciou sness is a part of con sciou sness. Y ou are al rea dy wat ching the ma jor ity of world lines」

"In that case…"

「No ne ed to bur den y ours elf」 [The Fourth Wall] spoke as if to console me. 「Y ou d ont h ave to do an yth ing. Y ou're al rea dy wat ching sub con sciou sly an yway」

I could just close my eyes and forget everything. It'd be fine to enjoy myself within the dream just like a pure, innocent child with no guilt weighing me down. [The Fourth Wall] was telling me that there was absolutely no reason to mull over the tragedy once more and get hurt in the process.

「However, Kim Dokja wasn't a child.」

"I can't do that," said I, while wiping away the cold sweat. All these world-lines were my sin. I created them, and I destroyed them. "I must see them."

And this was the only way to atone for them.

As I slowly stood back up, the world-lines appeared on the windows.

The countless world-lines from the 'Ways of Survival'; the tragedies of someone, brought to reality because I had read them, were now being displayed there.

…Perhaps, there was something I should see first before seeing the stories of my companions.

As if it knew that already, [The Fourth Wall] addressed me. 「Wi ll be a v ery long ni ght, Kim Dok ja」

I'm sure it'll be.

I smiled back. "Don't worry. I can do this properly. This is the story that I adore the most. I know I can definitely watch it until my dying day and not get sick of it."

「But y ou mi ght gr ow to h ate the st ory you l ove the mo st one d ay」

"If that happens…" I spoke while reaching towards the scenes appearing within the screen. "That will be the price I must pay."

I slowly pressed on the glass, and my fingerprints were engraved on the display.

[The world is now receiving your gaze.]

[A world-line has received the power of life from your consciousness.]

When I reopened my eyes, my body was levitating off the floor, about a hand-span high or so. It felt like I was having an out of body experience.

I was startled by the bustling nearby and looked around to discover a crowd of people. They walked right into me and past me as if I was invisible to them.

Every one of these tired faces belonged to the office workers on their way home.

This place…

I scanned my vicinity and saw the orange colour denoting the subway's 3rd line. Surprisingly enough, I found myself floating above the subway platform.

The current time and all sorts of subway-related information were displayed on the LED screens installed on the ceiling.

[6:55 PM]

Exactly five minutes before the beginning of the scenario.

Soon enough, the Bulgwang Station-bound train arrived along with the noisy announcement.

People climbed aboard the train one by one. I'd have stopped them if only I could. However, nothing would change even if I did. The scenario would begin regardless of where you were, anyway. All I could do now was to climb aboard the train along with them and watch all these tragedies unfold.

「And a face Kim Dokja was intimately familiar with was there.」

The Bulgwang Station-bound train no.3434, the car number 3707.

A certain man absent-mindedly staring outside the subway window was there. After observing his face for a little while, I ended up smirking a little.

When I thought about it, it was pretty obvious.

In the end, all these world-lines were repeated through one man's regressions. So, it was only obvious that I'd encounter this fool at the beginning of the story.

「This world's protagonist.」

Quite obviously, Yoo Joonghyuk failed to sense my presence.

No, his disinterested gaze remained locked on the outside of the subway, his mind currently submerged in his thoughts. A face that remained calm even when knowing that the scenarios were about to begin; I had no choice but to be impressed by that.

…You're really an amazing guy, aren't you.

I had already witnessed the end of the scenarios, but my skin still trembled simply by re-entering this scene. Yet, you managed to endure these moments dozens, hundreds of times.

The stopped subway train began moving and the time flowed forward once more. That 'thing' should begin soon, if my knowledge served me correctly.

「During the 3rd turn, Yoo Joonghyuk would begin by killing everyone within this subway car.」

I recalled the beginning of the 3rd turn that I knew of. I wasn't sure which regression turn this was, but the beginning wouldn't be so different from that. I slowly scanned the surroundings and spotted a man acting suspiciously by the exit.

"Heuh, heuh-euh…"

Several people shifted their gazes over to the man after hearing his intermittent grunts. The man carrying a twisted expression sniggered and looked around himself, then suddenly, pulled out a home-made bomb and a lighter.

「On that day when the paywall began, there was a certain man riding on the same subway car no. 3707 as Yoo Joonghyuk.」

"…What's that?"

"H-hey, man!"

「The subway terrorist, Choi Han-Gyu.」

The shocked crowd screamed and retreated. People freaked out after witnessing the sparks exploding from the man's hands and stood up from their seats, causing the scene to turn chaotic.

As for Yoo Joonghyuk, he was quietly staring at that man.

Hey, what are you doing? Hurry up and snatch that away.

According to the storyline I knew, Yoo Joonghyuk should've suppressed Choi Han-Gyu the moment they climbed aboard the subway and took away the bomb. However, he hadn't done that.

Why was this? Yoo Joonghyuk's expression, the one I thought was calmness personified, was now pale-white in fright.

It was then, the interior of the train became dark along with the screeching noise. People's screams morphed into sorrowful cries as they witnessed the flame being lit up within the darkness.

Something had gone awry here.

「Why isn't Yoo Joonghyuk making his move?」

Hang on a minute, could this be…?

[7:00 PM]

And then, as the 'Tick!' noise resounded out, the world's rules changed.

[The free service period of the planetary system no. 8612 has concluded.]

[Main Scenario has begun.]

The flames lit up by the terrorist brightly illuminated Yoo Joonghyuk's face, his eyes trembling in pure fear. He stood there, unable to do anything. I too, had fallen into a bout of panic. Pages of the Ways of Survival began flipping inside my head.

…Just which regression turn was this?

Was this around the 900th, when he lost his mind? Or around the 1200th?

During which regression turn was this half-wit Yoo Joonghyuk…?

[Channel #B-7623 has opened.]

[Constellations are entering.]

"Heuh, heuh-heuh, heuh-euh…"

The crowd began running towards the next car of the train, away from the figure of the terrorist clutching the explosive as the man's eyes glared at the surroundings.

[Extremely small number of Constellations are getting interested in Incarnation 'Choi Han-Gyu'.]

And Yoo Joonghyuk was still standing in the same spot. The one I knew would never react like this. No, Yoo Joonghyuk was someone who'd resort to the perfect showmanship to suppress the situation from the get-go. But now, he was making this stupid face that I had never seen before under the terrorist's threat.

One I had never seen before… Never seen…?

It felt like a lightning bolt had gone off in my head.

So, that's what this was, this storyline.

Countless pages flipped inside my head, before the book itself was closed shut.

This was the regression turn that got treated as nothing more than a passing reminiscence back in the 'Ways of Survival'.

Some stories would actually begin from a moment that wasn't written.

"P-please, don't… don't kill me!"

"Aaaaaahk!"

「This story is the unknown beginning of the 'Ways of Survival'.」

This world-line was the one that I didn't get to read – Yoo Joonghyuk's 0th turn.

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* Official novel cover (canonical)
* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)

Chapter 518: Epilogue 1 - The World of Zero, II

Yoo Joonghyuk was reading the article of a portal site on a person's phone next to him.

– Pro gamer Yoo Joonghyuk, for how long will he stay under the radar?

Several private matters that other people didn't know, such as discord between the teammates and the tyranny caused by the director's high-handedness, brushed past his mind. However, they were stories from years ago, and he couldn't think of an answer no matter how hard he thought about them.

– We found their home address.

That text message appeared on his smartphone. It was from the detective agency he hired, letting him know that his parents had been located. This was the reason why he decided to step outside the house for the first time in a while.

Yoo Joonghyuk wished to know about his origins. To find out who gave birth to him, and who had abandoned him. To find out who left behind a little sister in his care when he was on a fast track to success.

Yoo Joonghyuk oh-so-desperately wanted to find out.

– Huh? Did people like that live here before?

– Eh-iiing, I don't know, either. It's been too long.

Even though he spent a considerable sum to hire the detective agency, the only thing he got in return was an address of an empty house. The agency told him that there was nothing more they could find out.

His parents were gone without a trace, as if they had evaporated from this world. How could such a thing happen, though?

28-year old Yoo Joonghyuk seemed to exist all alone, without being able to recall a single memory concerning his parents, or anything nostalgic from his childhood. As if he was a being crafted to be an adult from the moment he was born.

As he rode in this noisily-clunking subway of the 3rd line, Yoo Joonghyuk was facing a philosophical quandary for the first time ever in his life.

'Just who… am I?'

And that was why he didn't react in time.

"Heuh-euh…!"

"Uwaaaaah!"

He noticed the ruckus only after a short while later.

A giant of a man, with a scraggly beard on his chin; the home-made explosive device clutched in his hand, and the cogged wheel of the lighter turning with pronounced 'tick, tick!'; only after someone smacked past his shoulder did he awake to this surreal situation.

「The terror.」

The lights in the subway went away the next second. The train came to a sudden emergency stop, and the surroundings rapidly filled up with darkness.

Yoo Joonghyuk felt all the hair on his arms stand up. The inside of his head felt dizzy. Was this really an act of terror? Something that he'd only ever heard about was really happening in South Korea, too? Where should he evacuate to? Should the police be notified? Or…

[Welcome, everyone. Nice to meet you.]

Yoo Joonghyuk's dilemmas were carefully extinguished by a small CGI-like lump suddenly appearing in mid-air.

[It's getting tiring to make the same introduction over and over again, but… Anyway, this situation isn't a movie shoot nor is it a terror inciden… Huh?]

These creatures would later introduce themselves as 'Dokkaebis'.

That unknown existence floating in the air observed the situation within the train and broke out into a wide smile.

[What's this? Hahahaha! Dear Constellations, please take a look over here! The scenarios haven't even begun yet, but something entertaining is already underway!]

The Dokkaebi spoke in a languid but cruel tone of voice and laughed.

[I'm already beginning to look forward to this particular car. I pray that you'll all show us an entertaining tale.]

[Main Scenario has arrived.]

<Main Scenario #1 – Proof of Worth>

Type: Main

Difficulty: F

Clear condition: Please kill one or more lifeforms.

Time limit: 30 minutes

Reward: 300 Coins

Failure: Death

And 'hell' began from then.

ZERO

@1L9I2Aa8UCLOIGJ

*

…Bihyung, that fool. He was rather adorable back then; there used to be a moment like that in the past, didn't it?

While listening to the screams resounding out within the subway, I fell into a bit of ill-timed reminiscence.

「Are you saying you want to sign the <Stream Contract> with me?」

It felt like only yesterday that I met the guy for the first time and discussed getting into an exclusive contract with him.

Back then, I really got lucky. If I failed to sign the contract, then…

「"Kim Dokja. You and I aren't companions."」

…Then, Bihyung wouldn't have died on that day.

「"I actually wanted to witness your Story till its end, though."」

Maybe, 'Yoo Joonghyuk' trembling over there might get to feel this sentiment after going through over a thousand regressions.

"…Scenario? What is that?"

The passengers of the car no. 3707 began murmuring after receiving their very first scenario.

Desperate struggles taking place in other locations were then broadcast on the panels in the air – of the scenario where if you didn't kill, you'd be killed instead.

"A g-game… t-this is a game!" The terrorist Choi Han-Gyu was shouting out. "Hahahaha!!"

Choi Han-Gyu the terrorist. Information regarding him appeared once in the 'Ways of Survival' via Yoo Joonghyuk's reminiscence.

「If Choi Han-Gyu manages to survive, he'll evolve into 'demonic bomber' at a later stage.」

Choi Han-Gyu pulled out a hammer from his side, and proceeded to hit the back of a middle-aged man's head right next to him. The victim's knees powerlessly buckled.

"I-if I do this…"

[Incarnation 'Choi Han-Gyu' has achieved the feat of 'first murder'!]

Choi Han-Gyu began his awakening as he stared at the Coins raining down before him.

Just like how it always had been, the ones that adapted fastest to <Star Stream> were those that couldn't adapt to the real world.

"D-did you all see that? I, I, just now?"

"Uwaaah!! Murderer! He's a murderer!!"

Choi Han-Gyu watched the crowd freak out and retreat away from him, and tilted his head. "W-why are you all n-not doing anything? Y-you're all making me look like t-the strange one."

"Don't come near me!"

"M-maybe, you need t-this?"

He smirked towards the crowd, and then suddenly, chucked several tools hanging on his sides towards them. He then wielded the spanner once more and slammed down on the back of the already-dead man.

"I-it's easy. L-like this. You do it l-like this, a-and then…"

Sprays of sticky bloody rose up from the back of the man.

"…Then, e-everyone can become rich."

The timer in the air was ticking down bit by bit.

[Remaining time has decreased.]

[Remaining time: 10 minutes]

Yoo Joonghyuk wordlessly stared at the spanner that rolled towards his feet. Even then, the crowd showed no signs of movement.

Choi Han-Gyu shook his head as if he was disappointed, and stood up from his spot. "S-should I just k-kill everyone?"

But then, a man suddenly reached out and grabbed hold of a hammer that Choi Han-Gyu had thrown.

"F-fuck this… I don't know anymore!"

"Ahjussi! What are you doing??"

This man gripped tight the thrown spanner and began attacking everyone next to him indiscriminately.

「This was the car no.3707 that Yoo Joonghyuk managed to survive.」

"F-forgive me. I'm sorry…!"

"Uwaaaah!!"

As voices futilely spread out, people began waking up to the new reality. They couldn't tell what kind of a situation this was, but they were sure of one thing.

「They'll die if they don't kill each other.」

[Extremely small number of Constellations are satisfied by the sight of the applicable subway car.]

[Extremely small number of Constellations are expressing their interest in Incarnation 'Choi Han-Gyu'.]

[A Constellation who hasn't revealed their Modifier is sponsoring Incarnation 'Choi Han-Gyu' with 100 Coins.]

Choi Han-Gyu was laughing in satisfaction at the crowd. As for me, I was watching all these happenings next to this man.

「Kim Dok ja」

I slowly removed my hand from Choi Han-Gyu's neck.

'…I know already, so don't worry'.

I must not change this story.

Everything happening now was 'events that have already happened'.

I looked at Yoo Joonghyuk. He was bending down to pick up a spanner that came from Choi Han-Gyu's possession.

I could vividly feel the deep conflict he was in from his expression. It was an expression of a man who had chosen to take a life.

But, why was this? That expression was different from the Yoo Joonghyuk that I knew. The one that I knew would gnash his teeth from someone's betrayal; Yoo Joonghyuk, who didn't trust others easily nor easily made companions. Yoo Joonghyuk, who always pursued after the most optimal route, and didn't hesitate killing others ahead of time if they were going to betray him later.

「That was why the 3rd turn's Yoo Joonghyuk could slaughter the fellow passengers of the same subway.」

However, this Yoo Joonghyuk before my eyes wasn't from the 3rd turn.

Not from the 4th, not 5th, and definitely not from the 1863rd, either.

「He was the 0th turn.」

Yoo Joonghyuk of the 0th turn.

His feet broke into a sprint. His feet that couldn't use either the [Red Phoenix Shunpo] nor [Ways of the Wind] yet.

There were plenty of targets present. A trembling college student hurdled on the floor; a middle-aged man hiding next to the disabled seating; an office worker, too absorbed in assaulting the others and not having enough time to look behind.

Yoo Joonghyuk ran past all of them. And then…

「He selected the hardest opponent within this subway car as his target.」

"Euh-heuh… heuh?"

Choi Han-Gyu smiled insidiously while observing the spanner flying in. He took an agile step back to evade, then an ultra-sharp survival knife jumped out from his waist. Along with the 'Swish!' noise, Yoo Joonghyuk dodged the blade with nary a gap to spare.

「Why did Yoo Joonghyuk make this choice?」

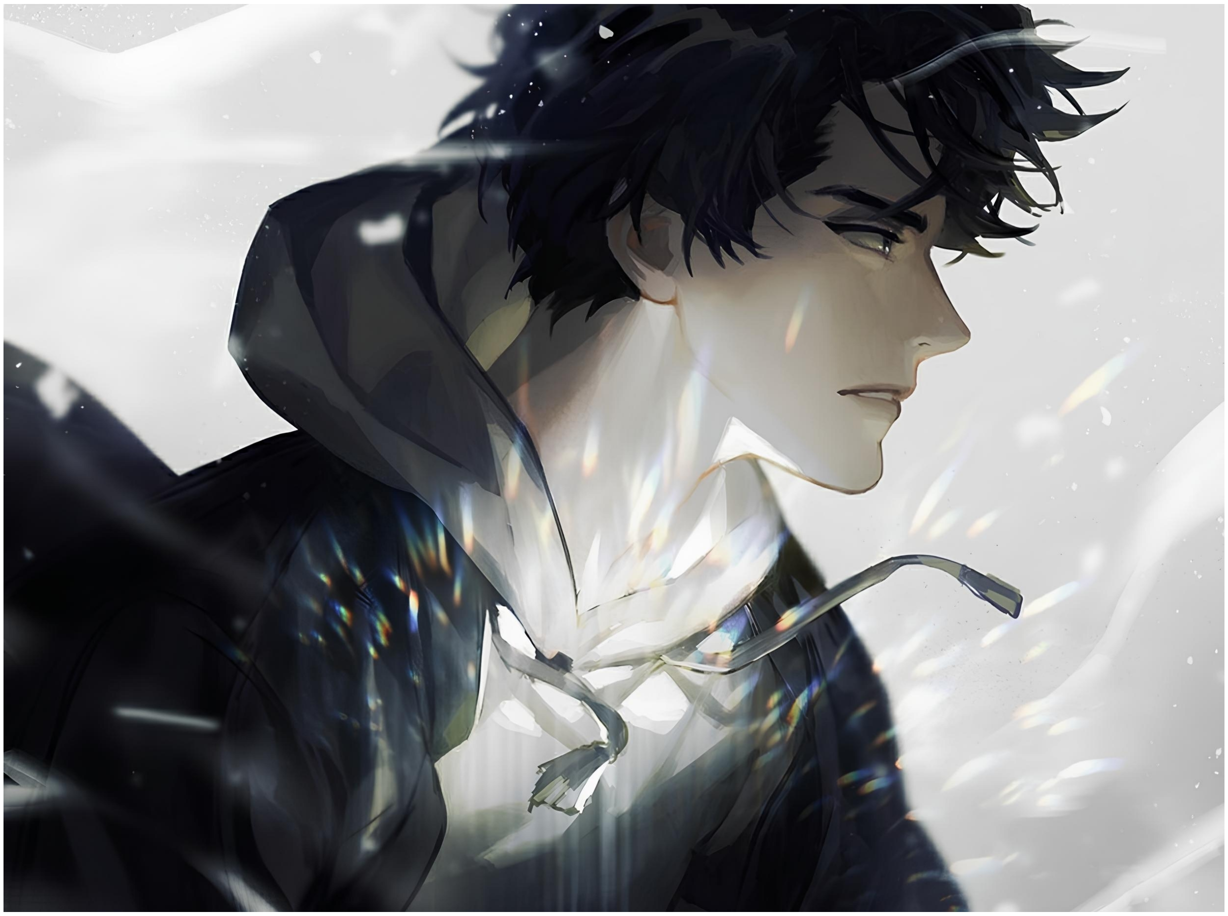
I couldn't tell. Why did this guy, frightened out of his mind, make such a choice?

Choi Han-Gyu still carried several other tools, and not only that, he was in possession of a home-made explosive, as well. On the other hand, all Yoo Joonghyuk had was a spanner as thick as a child's arm.

Even then, I wasn't worried.

Although I didn't know the finer details of the 0th turn, Yoo Joonghyuk wouldn't die in this place. Not before he got to experience all these tragedies, and not before they led him to that vast cycle of regressions, Yoo Joonghyuk… wouldn't get killed.

[Incarnation 'Yoo Joonghyuk's' attribute, 'Pro Gamer' is awakening!]



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He was awakening his exclusive attribute, the one that I was quite familiar with. It was a skill that allowed him to digitise everything in this world like a video game and analyse them. A skill to control his body, as if he was moving his game avatar.

His spanner accurately struck Choi Han-Gyu's wrist. The bomber screamed out for a moment as the home-made explosive fell out from his grasp.

Yoo Joonghyuk's spanner then accurately flew in towards the neck of flustered Choi Han-Gyu next. It was an unavoidable attack, a perfect counter that his talent had calculated.

Unfortunately, even he had failed to take into account this one thing.

[Incarnation 'Choi Han-Gyu' is investing 900 Coins to 'stamina'!]

And that was precisely the system of this new world.

"T-that, hurts."

Although a dark-red mark was left behind on Choi Han-Gyu's neck, it wasn't broken.

His muscles swelled, and he grabbed Yoo Joonghyuk by the neck. The latter's complexion paled greatly as he dangled up in the air. While grabbing hold of his victim's collars, Choi Han-Gyu's free hand picked up another hammer.

"D-die."

Right in that moment, Yoo Joonghyuk saw the fallen 'home-made bomb' on the floor. And I realized what he was thinking of.

Yoo Joonghyuk throwing the spanner in his hand, and I making my move, happened simultaneously.

The time flow slowed down greatly.

The slowly-flying spanner was accurately heading towards the centre of the home-made bomb. I quietly stared at this spectacle.

Even if that thing went off, Yoo Joonghyuk wouldn't die. That simply had to be, if what I read was correct. But, why was this?

…Why were my hands shaking so much like this?

'The Fourth Wall'. After hearing the air making the 'Tsu-chuchut' noise, I continued on. 'Does Yoo Joonghyuk's sponsor exist in this world?'

「He ex ists」

The 'Oldest Dream' existed in this world.

The being that became the 'Oldest Dream' much earlier than me – the younger version of myself. Or, something that was presumably my 'younger version'.

'If that's the case, why can't I sense anything?'

That's what's been bothering me.

I could sense everything in this world. Everything in the scenarios, including individual Incarnations all the way to the Constellations blanketing the heavens above.

However, I failed to sense just this one thing.

'Where is the Oldest Dream right now?'

[The Fourth Wall] didn't answer me.

Yoo Joonghyuk's spinning spanner flew in, and was about to reach the home-made explosive.

'Could it be…'

「How did the 'Oldest Dream' manage to form a contract with the 0th turn's Yoo Joonghyuk?」

All those questions simmering away inside my head until now were going off all at once.

「The 'Oldest Dream' dreams through the 'Ways of Survival'.」

Indeed, the younger version of me imagined this world while reading the 'Ways of Survival'.

「And the 'Ways of Survival' was a story that started off from Yoo Joonghyuk's 3rd regression turn.」

So, could he even properly imagine the Ways of Survival's 0th turn?

Was he even capable of picturing a story not mentioned in the original, a world that he hadn't read before?

「If that's the case, then just who was the 'Constellation Sponsor' that appeared during Yoo Joonghyuk's 0th turn?」

The bomb exploded. The shower of debris flying out stabbed into Choi Han-Gyu's back, then into the bodies of people busy hacking away at each other. Accompanied by a loud screeching noise, the subway's ceiling was caving in. Several pieces of debris were flying straight towards Yoo Joonghyuk's heart and neck.

Tsu-chuchuchut!

[You're the owner of the 'Final Wall'.]

[Your 'Mastery' isn't sufficient enough to interfere with the world-line.]

[The world-line's Probability is resisting you!]

I ignored the Probability and caught the flying debris. Along with the vicious heat enveloping my hand, the debris scattered into ashes in my palm.

[A deux ex machina the world-line doesn't recognise is activating!]

[The world has sensed your interference!]

「Right at that moment, Yoo Joonghyuk raised his head.」

Yoo Joonghyuk crawled out from underneath the collapsed Choi Han-Gyu and stared at me.

「Although it was for the briefest of brief moments, Yoo Joonghyuk felt that there was someone standing before him.」

"Who…?"

[Main Scenario #1 – Proof of Worth has concluded.]

[You have acquired the normal clear reward of 300 Coins.]

[100 Coins have been deducted as the channel usage fee.]

[Additional reward calculation has commenced.]

Along with the scenario calculations, the heads of the people began exploding. And as the deluge of blood rained down, I silently looked at Yoo Joonghyuk on the floor.

Bihyung's excited voice coming from the distance, as well as [The Fourth Wall]'s words of warning, could be heard next. Even the messages of Constellations suspecting the Probability streamed in, too.

In the meantime, Yoo Joonghyuk was staring at the message spreading out before him with quaking eyes.

['Sponsor selection' is commencing!]

<Sponsor Selection>

– Please select your sponsor.

– The backer you choose will become your trusty sponsor.

1. God of Wine and Ecstasy

2. Mouse that Eats Fingernails

3. Abyssal Black Flame Dragon

[A new Constellation has entered the channel!]

[A new Constellation is participating in the 'sponsor selection'!]

4. Demon King of Salvation

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* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)
* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)

Chapter 519: Epilogue 1 - The World of Zero, III

[Currently, the applicable regression turn is under the 'Overwrite restriction'.]

[Currently, the applicable world-line's copyright holder is absent.]

[As the owner of the 'Final Wall', you can act as the substitute copyright holder.]

[Will you activate 'Overwrite' to interfere with the worldview?]

The warning messages floated up one after the other in the empty air. Almost at the same time, [The Fourth Wall]'s voice entered my ears.

「Kim Dok ja」

'…I know already, so stop trying to scare me'.

I could already tell what [The Fourth Wall] was going to say. Probably, it'd be something along the line of there's no meaning in changing the predetermined past.

「…」

I sensed a certain glare squarely locking onto me from the empty air, but I tried my best to ignore that.

Although I had no clue how the original 0th turn unfolded, if the paragraph I read in passing inside [The Fourth Wall]'s library was true, then… The 0th turn's Yoo Joonghyuk shouldn't select his backer until much later.

He would lose Lee Seolhwa and Lee Jihye during this turn.

He'd lose the ones precious to him, those he barely managed to meet, and then…

…And then, he'd desperately think about this one thing as his death approached him.

「'If only I had a sponsor, what could it have been like?'」

I stared at Yoo Joonghyuk as he read the system messages with quaking eyes.

Through this turn, his cycle of regression would begin. He'd get to repeat countless regressions and thereby walk on the 'Hell of Eternity'.

「Ev en if y ou cha nge thi s turn…」

'The past that the Secretive Plotter lived through won't disappear. I know that'.

Even if I changed this world-line, the predetermined tragedies would still happen. The Yoo Joonghyuk I know would live through the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and eventually, all the way to 1863rd regression turns. He'd become the 'Secretive Plotter', and start hating me.

However, even if that was the case…

'I can't pick up any traces of the 'Oldest Dream' that isn't me in this regression turn'.

It was quite likely that the cause of this event was the younger me not knowing anything about Yoo Joonghyuk's 0th turn. Whatever the case might have been, one thing's for certain; at the very least, I could take on that role during this world-line.

I could become Yoo Joonghyuk's sponsor during this world-line.

「Will you make him regress?」

[The Fourth Wall] asked as if it was intrigued. I shook my head.

'No. I'll make sure he doesn't'.

「Even if he's changed, the future won't…」

'I know. That's why I feel even more relieved'.

The past I changed wouldn't deny the Yoo Joonghyuk I know of.

「If Yoo Joonghyuk got to experience a regression turn that wasn't tragic, even if it's just once…」

I slowly extended my hand towards the air.

['Overwrite' has commenced!]

[Interfering with the applicable worldview has begun!]

[As your mastery over the dream is insufficient, currently it's impossible to interfere too aggressively.]

As the sparks exploded with a loud 'Tsu-chuchuchut!', messages popped up one after the other.

[The 'Demon King of Salvation' is registering his temporary Constellation name.]

[You're currently participating in the 'sponsor selection' as a Constellation.]

[<Star Stream>'s system is suspicious of your eligibility.]

[Low-grade Dokkaebi 'Bihyung' finds your Modifier unfamiliar.]

[Small number of Constellations are flustered by your sudden entrance!]

I bit down on my lip while observing Yoo Joonghyuk's pale expression.

This might prove to be a bad decision. Yoo Joonghyuk might end up even more miserable because I changed this world-line.

However, if it was the me of right now…

[Ho-oh-ra, the 'Demon King of Salvation'? Well now, a new Constellation-nim has decided to enter the stage!]

If it was Kim Dokja the 'Oldest Dream' who had witnessed the end of one world and had the knowledge of the scenario's epilogues, then wouldn't it be possible to change the predetermined destiny?

[Looks like we might need to extend the time since the candidates have increased.]

Bihyung updated the message floating in mid-air.

[Sponsor selection time period has been extended by 5 minutes.]

The survivors in the near vicinity, having somehow lived through that ordeal, began opening their mouths one by one.

"…Just what is all this?"

"Sponsor selection, is it…"

I didn't find it weird since I had read the 'Ways of Survival' before, but still, I could guess how confused they must feel after facing a situation like this for the first time ever.

[Incarnation 'Yoo Joonghyuk' is activating his attribute!]

In the midst of all this, only Yoo Joonghyuk was regaining his cool. His calm eyes were proof of that.

…Well, I'm getting curious about what he's thinking here, so.

[Exclusive skill, 'Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint Lv.???', is activating!]

Although I felt a bit sorry about taking a peek inside the feeble 0th turn's head, I simply had to look this time. What if, in a one-in-a-million chance, he chose a different backer, then…

[You are the 'Oldest Dream'.]

[You can utilise 100 percent of your skill's abilities regardless of your understanding on the target!]

The inside of Yoo Joonghyuk's head spread out like an anatomy chart.

「What about Mia? What happened to her?」

「I must rescue Mia.」

「In order to do that, I must get through this selection thing before my eyes first」

「Backer selection. Sounds like I must pick my sponsor.」

I grew slightly tense.

During the original 0th turn, this guy apparently didn't choose anyone as his backer this early on, but that'd always be nothing more than a story from the original. No one could tell what might happen this time.

Unexpectedly though, it wasn't Yoo Joonghyuk displaying his interest in me, but other Constellations.

[Constellation, 'God of Wine and Ecstasy', is greeting you.]

[Constellation, 'God of Wine and Ecstasy', thinks your Modifier is a cool one.]

It seemed that Dionysus's outgoing personality was the same regardless of the regression turns. If he didn't yield to us back in the Final Ark, the ensuing battle would've been so much harder.

Just as I was about to greet him back, someone else butted in.

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon' is keeping his eyes on you.]

…Now that I thought about it, this dude was also here, wasn't he? Hey, you, aren't you supposed to be eyeing Kim Namwoon in the next subway car? Just how many bridges are you planning to straddle here?

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', thinks you are copying from his Modifier.]

I was about to ask just which part sounded the same to him, but in the end, held back. Only three minutes remained; no need to waste my energy on something completely unnecessary.

I shifted my head to discover that Yoo Joonghyuk had begun considering his choices earnestly.

I swallowed back my nervous saliva.

1. God of Wine and Ecstasy

Yoo Joonghyuk stared at that Modifier for a little while before shifting his gaze away.

「Something feels messy about that name.」

Soon after, his eyes landed on the second candidate.

2. Mouse that Eats Fingernails

I grew nervous when he stared at that Modifier for quite a long time.

Wake up, Yoo Joonghyuk. You'd be better off choosing the Abyssal Black Flame Dragon instead of this.

「Sounds weak.」

I barely managed to breathe a sigh of relief.

Damn it, man. Stop making people nervous.

Yoo Joonghyuk then stared at the third candidate afterwards.

3. Abyssal Black Flame Dragon

Although obvious, Yoo Joonghyuk would never choose the third option. He might seem drunk on his awesomeness outwardly, but in truth, he wasn't a fan of such flashy and grand-sounding words. That's why…

「That's a fairly strong-sounding name.」

…Wha? H-hang on a…

「Maybe, it might be an unexpectedly powerful sponsor.」

It's true that he's powerful, but… That guy, he makes his Incarnations recite weird summoning spells, you know?

Hey, Joonghyuk-ah, please open your eyes properly and take a closer look. The only ones that can handle this guy are Kim Namwoon or Han Sooyoung, that's it.

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', is boasting in your direction.]

[One minute remaining until the conclusion of the sponsor selection.]

And finally, Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes landed on the fourth candidate.

4. Demon King of Salvation

I barely managed to calm my mind and along with Yoo Joonghyuk, looked at the backer selection list from behind him.

The God of Wine and Ecstasy, Mouse that Eats Fingernails, Abyssal Black Flame Dragon, and the Demon King of Salvation…

'[The Fourth Wall], what do you think?'

As if it didn't get the intention behind the question, [The Fourth Wall] took its time answering back.

'What I'm asking you is, who sounds strongest to you?'

「Th at is…」

'Not including the actual combat prowess, just judging from the Modifiers alone'.

I thought that a reply should be forthcoming pretty quickly, but it seemed that [The Fourth Wall] was actually in a dilemma here.

I didn't wait and spoke up first. 'Not saying this because I'm the 「Demon King of Salvation」, but in truth, and also, objectively speaking…'

Hang on, no need to look at it objectively, either. Just think about it logically.

The God of Wine and Ecstasy? He simply sounded like a drunkard.

The Mouse that Eats Fingernails? You weren't looking for a nail clipper substitute, so what would you even need this guy for?

The Abyssal Black Flame Dragon? Just one look, and you should know not to choose this guy.

Even if the 0th turn's Yoo Joonghyuk was an idiot, he should not be making such mistakes.

The only normal-sounding Modifier was mine. And for sure, he raised his finger and pointed at the fourth option as if he was impressed by my Modifier. Then, he began thinking.

「What an arrogant-sounding name.」

'…'

「Weaklings often use names like this.」

Even before I could shout something out, Yoo Joonghyuk shot up from his spot and spoke. "I've made up my mind. I will…"

As he formed a triumphant grin, his lips slowly parted.

I silently stared at the subway's ceiling. Accompanied by the 'Tsu-chuchuchut!' noise, vicious heat burned on my hand.

[You're interfering in the world-line.]

['Overwrite' has commenced.]

[Excessive interference might cause the world-line to strongly resist…]

I used all of my strength to smack the back of Yoo Joonghyuk's head.

* * *

"Keo-heok!"

Kim Dokja woke up from the powerful impact on the back of his head.

"How long are you planning to sleep? Wake up already!"

He opened his eyes and found Han Sooyoung lightly dusting her hands. He then wiped away the drool marks on the couch and gingerly sat back up.

What's this? Why am I here? Okay, so…

"What are you doing? Hurry up and get ready already! Did you forget where we're supposed to go today?"

Yoo Joonghyuk standing in his trademark pose was standing next to Han Sooyoung, his eyes still blazing non-stop.

"You're making us wait for no reason," he said.

It wasn't just him, though; Jung Heewon's head peeked out from behind Yoo Joonghyuk, and the figure of Lee Hyunsung carrying an armful of something could be seen behind her.

"Is that pizza?"

"It's fried chicken, you dummy."

Shin Yoosung and Lee Gilyoung were swallowing their saliva as they continued to stare at Lee Hyunsung's plastic bags. And finally, Lee Jihye standing next to these two children, too.

"Hurry up and let's go! I'm starving!"

Kim Dokja saw this spectacle and finally remembered what today was.

「This world's scenario had ended.」

When he turned his head, he saw warm rays of sunlight seeping through the [Industrial Complex]'s windows.

「And today was <Kim Dokja's Company>'s first field trip.」

As they made their ways towards their destination, Han Sooyoung continued to grumble away.

"Hey, Kim Dokja."

"What now?"

"You didn't really forget what day is today, right?"

"What day is it?"

"It's December 25th. What day do you think it was?"

Kim Dokja pondered for a little bit before replying to her. "The day Mithra was born?"

"Is that supposed to be <Vedas> style humour?""

They continued walking while exchanging banter like that. Every so often, Yoo Joonghyuk let out a pained groan as if they were getting on his nerves.

It was around then that a red sports car came to a stop on the side of the road while making a loud noise.

"Sangah-ssi!"

Jung Heewon was first to recognise Yoo Sangah and quickly raised her hand. The latter, kitted out in a white long-padded coat and a pair of jeans, took off her sunglasses and replied back.

"I'm so sorry, the filming took longer than I thought."

Perhaps finding the current Yoo Sangah not to her liking, Han Sooyoung verbally tackled her down right away.

"Oh, my? You sure are a full-fledged celeb nowadays, aren't you?"

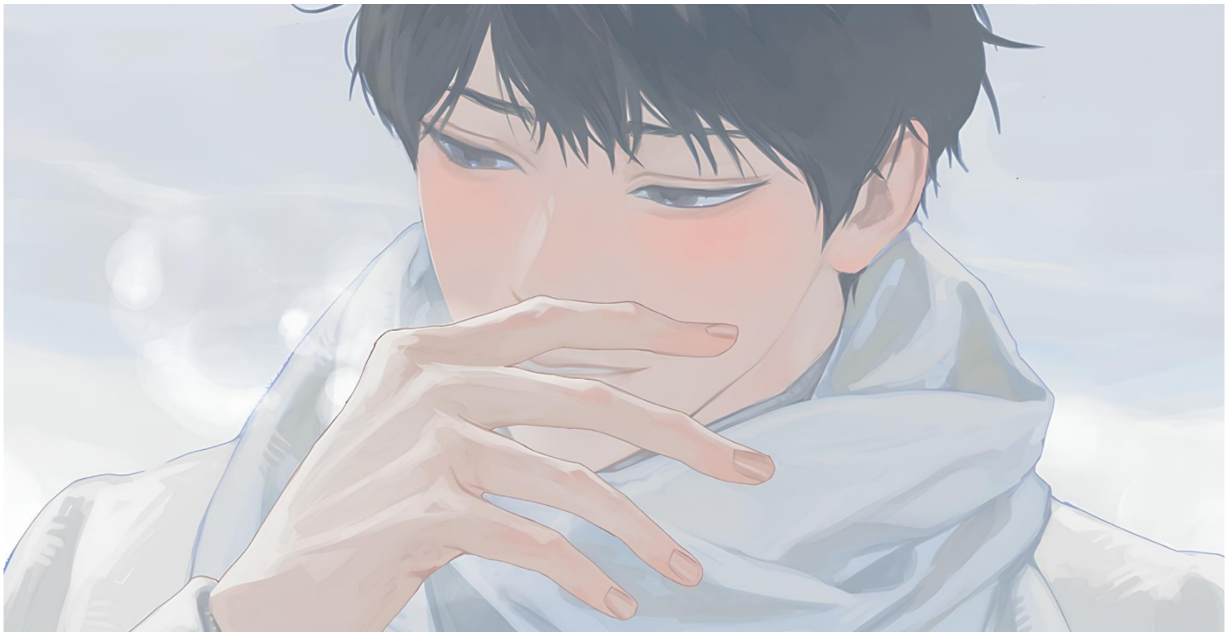
"Do we really need to eat by the Han River when it's so cold outside?"

"Is there anyone here without cold resistance? I mean, you should still have that sort of a skill remaining, right?"

"We could've just eaten back in the Complex, though. As it's Christmas, there should be quite a few people by the river, too."

"We made a promise with the kids."

While watching the two of them bickering away, Kim Dokja felt a certain corner of his heart ache for some reason.



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Why did this sight feel so nostalgic to him?

It had already been three months since the scenarios came to an end, so…

"What about Seolhwa-ssi and Pildu-ssi? I can't see the department head Han, either."

"They'll be here. Ah, there they are! Oiii! Lee Seolhwa!"

Right in front of the Yeouinaru Station, Lee Seolhwa, wearing a white fur coat, was waving both of her hands with a bright smile. And next to her was

Gong Pildu, staring in another direction with a cantankerous expression.

"You didn't want to show up for so long that we thought you forgot about us again."

Perhaps she felt guilty after hearing that, Jung Heewon quickly replied. "Eiii, there's no way that's true, though?"

"…But, you did abandon us and returned to the [Industrial Complex] first, didn't you?"

"Hmm, hmm. W-we did go back to find you later, didn't we?"

"What do you mean, find us?! We only were able to come back because the librarians let us leave! Seriously, if I look back to that time, I still…"

"What about Han Myungoh?"

"Myungoh-ssi didn't come, saying that he must spend Christmas with his family…"

"What family does that ahjussi even have? …Ah."

The companions continued to walk forward under the noisy, festive atmosphere.

Lee Gilyoung and Shin Yoosung clung onto each of Kim Dokja's arms and growled towards one another.

"Hey, you. Stop pulling him to your side."

"You too."

"By the way ahjussi, you think Santa Claus is a Constellation, too?"

The group eventually reached the Han River public park. Maybe the cold weather was to blame, as there weren't all that many people visible here. What was visible, though, were the collapsed bridges of the river, as well as the pitch-black night sky. Only an extremely few stars remained as proof of <Star Stream> existing up there once before.

「Without a doubt, everything did come to an end.」

The group laid a mat on the ground, and installed a portable stove next to the children. Yoo Joonghyuk then placed a picnic table next to the stove and proceeded to make something with Lee Jihye.

Kim Dokja asked. "…What's this, we're going to make them here?"

"Of course. There are no fried chicken takeaways or pizzeria remaining, so obviously we have to make our own, right?"

He thought about it and realized that's true. It'd been only three months since the end of the scenarios, so pizzerias or takeaways couldn't have been revived already.

Han Sooyoung carried on. "Be grateful that we have someone who can make them for us."

Chicken drumsticks dismantled in an instant flew in the air, and Yoo Joonghyuk's special sauces danced enticingly just above them. Rolled dough spun vigorously at the end of the scabbard, too. It was uncertain whether he was making a pizza or fried chicken, but without a doubt, something amazing was being created right now.

"In the end, a day like today did come," said Yoo Sangah as she sat on the mat with her knees pulled up close. Her eyes were staring at the Han River, as if she was submerged in reminiscence.

Kim Dokja addressed her. "You must be really busy nowadays."

"It's just… Yes, I am. There are lots of things to take care of, so…"

It had only been three months since the scenarios ended. The society at large hadn't regained its stability yet.

The system's influence hadn't completely disappeared yet, and the criminals retaining their skills or Stigmata continued with their crime sprees even now. Yoo Sangah was this world's hero that defeated them and protected ordinary citizens.

"They look so good together."

In a spot far away, Jung Heewon and Lee Hyunsung were standing together to look at the Han River.

Han Sooyoung pouted and spat out her words. "I bet 100 Coins that they won't last a year."

It was right then, they heard something exploding in the distance. The startled companions instinctively reached towards their individual weapons.

But when they took a closer look, the explosion noise came from the fireworks fired from a distant building.

"…Someone's using stuff like that already?"

Han Sooyoung muttered out in disbelief.

Kim Dokja stared at that spectacle with renewed interest. Fireworks, was it? He never expected to see them again in his life. Bit by bit, the aroma of their food getting ready wafted in.

"Kim Dokja."

"Huh?"

"You know, you haven't been reading that thing recently."

"What do you mean?" Kim Dokja thought about it for a second before making his reply. "Ah, that's right. I should be reading it, though."

He hurriedly switched his smartphone on. However, its battery was flat and the device refused to power on. Han Sooyoung's figure was reflected on the dark screen; it was still impossible to get a bead on her inner thoughts through the look in her eyes. She wordlessly observed Kim Dokja and muttered something to herself, before plopping down next to him with an 'Oopsie'.

"Maybe I shouldn't have bothered to come. All these useless thoughts are making my head hurt, instead."

"Huh?"

"Nah, just talking to myself. Never mind that, though – there was a part like this back in the 'Ways of Survival', wasn't it? You remember that?"

…The 'Ways of Survival'.

"You know, the third turn's Yoo Joonghyuk… everyone together, next to the Han River, chewing on the ground rat's legs…"

Kim Dokja's expression as he listened to her words distorted in a strange, vague manner. She reached out to him as he began to wobble a little.

"Hey, what's the matter? You alright? You feeling sick somewhere?"

"It's just that my head hurts without warning…"

"Did I smack you a little too hard back then? How about resting for a bit…?"

"No, it's fine. Besides all that… you're right."

"About what?"

"About the 'Ways of Survival'. I really like that scene, too. It's the scene I like the most from the third regression turn."

Han Sooyoung deeply stared into Kim Dokja's face, before forming a refreshing grin.

"Really now, you 'Ways of Survival' otaku freak."

Another round of fireworks went off in the distance, much larger in scale this time. The children let out a loud cheer as they witnessed the beautiful flames engraving the night sky. Kim Dokja began thinking; maybe this was the sight he'd been yearning to see for the longest time. For the longest…

Longest.

Han Sooyoung opened her lips again. "By the way, Kim Dokja?"

"Huh?"

Since from when was this? Her face was pushed real close to his. Her pristine, perfectly-set facial features, her pale-white cheeks, and a beauty spot just below her sparkling eyes.

Kim Dokja became flustered by the faint hint of lemony scent reaching his nose. Just before he could say something, though, Han Sooyoung approached him even closer. She brought her lips to his ear and slowly whispered in a clear voice.

"Such a scene doesn't appear in the third turn of 'Ways of Survival'."

Along with the fireworks scattering in the sky, it felt as if a powerful shower of sparks were raining down from somewhere. Kim Dokja thought that his vision was flipped around for some reason, only to realize that he was currently thrown onto the ground unceremoniously.

"Hey, you."

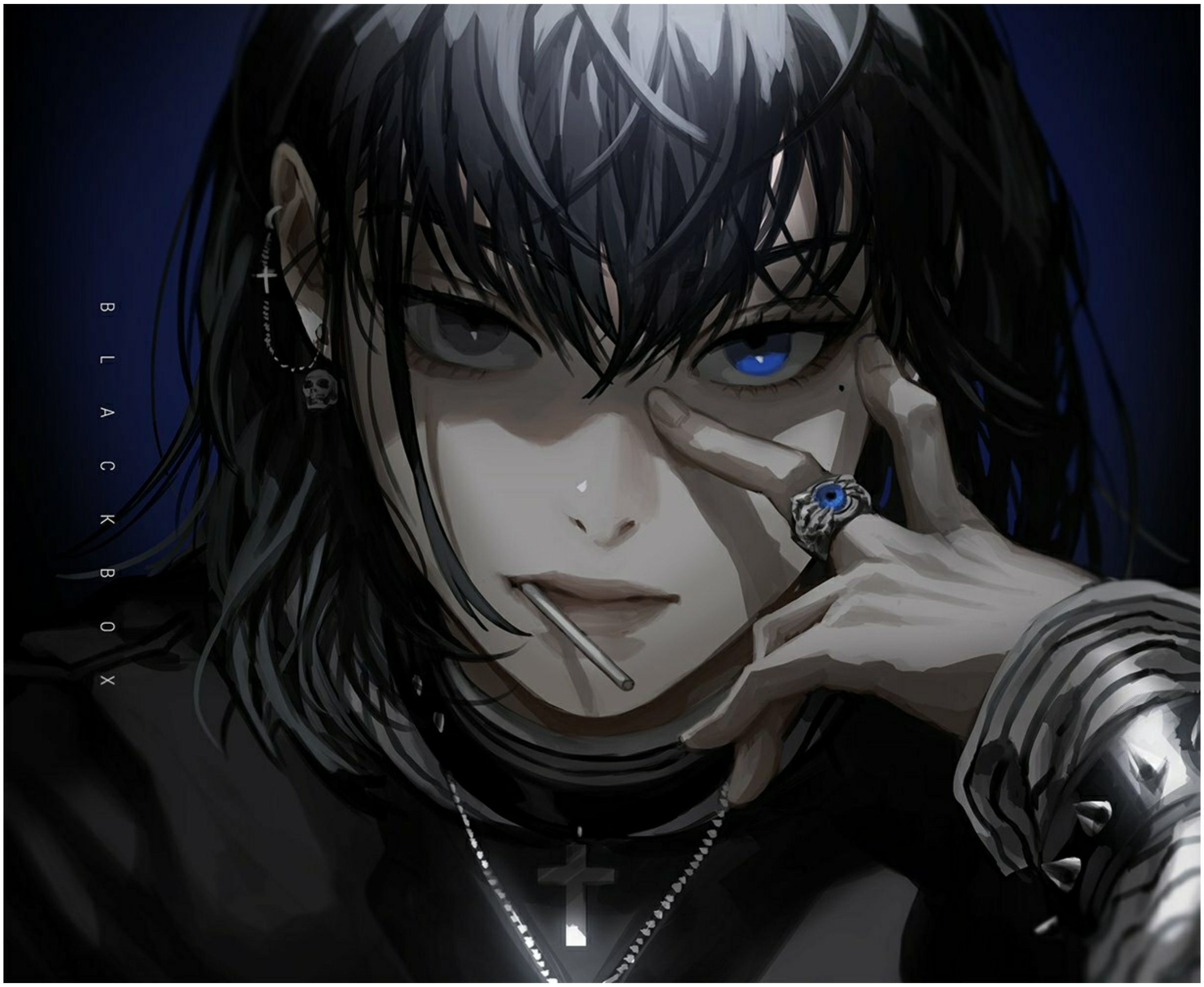
Han Sooyoung's icy-cold venomous eyes were right before him now.

「Everything was definitely over, yet…」

「Why did it feel like nothing was over somehow?」

Jung Heewon and Lee Hyunsung running over here from the distance could be seen. Then, the expressionless face of Yoo Joonghyuk; and finally, even the world where all the stories had concluded, too. Under the fireworks brightly dyeing the night sky, Han Sooyoung's chilly, sharp dagger gleamed dangerously.

"You, just who the hell are you?"



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* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)
* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)

Chapter 520: Epilogue 1 - The World of Zero, IV

Han Sooyoung continued to experience this weird feeling every single day for the last three months. It all started rather innocuously, though.

– Yoo Joonghyuk, did you know?

– Know what?

– That guy, he enjoys his tomatoes now.

At first, she dismissed it as just a trivial little change. Scenarios were over now, so the dude must be changing bit by bit too, or so she thought.

– Hey, Kim Dokja. Why are you so absent-minded lately?

– Uh? Uhm…

– By the way, are you sure that the scenarios are really over? Why isn't the system gone? You can still use your skills, right?

– Mm… It might take a little while longer for everything to go away.

The scenarios were over, but the world didn't immediately revert back to normal. As if, there was a story that hadn't ended yet. The proof of that was how people still could use their skills or Stigmata.

– To be more specific, you can't say that everything is over until we find the 'original author' of that novel first.

Han Sooyoung agreed with Yoo Joonghyuk's opinion. It was possible that this world existed because the 'Oldest Dream' read the 'Ways of Survival' in the first place.

Before all that, though, was the author who penned the novel in question. Meaning, this story would end only after they found that creature first.

– Just who is tls123? We came up with a few guesses so far, but they were all wrong, right? The most plausible candidate, 'Oldest Dream', didn't look like the author either, and… hey, Kim Dokja. What do you think?

The one with the highest likelihood of solving this quandary was Kim Dokja, the reader that managed to read through all 3149 chapters of 'Ways of Survival'.

However, his reply was this.

– Uh… I wonder. Well, I kinda wonder if that's really important, now that we've come this far…

Other people could say that, fine. However, he was none other than Kim Dokja, the sole reader who read the entirety of 'Ways of Survival' till its end.

He was Kim Dokja, the greatest reader Han Sooyoung ever knew.

"Speak. Who the hell are you?"

That's why Han Sooyoung began wondering.

「If Kim Dokja before my eyes is a fake, then…」

"Sooyoung-ssi! What are you…!"

Just as the voice of Lee Hyunsung rushing in reached here, Shin Yoosung grabbed onto Han Sooyoung's wrist.

"What do you think you're doing??"

"Noona!"

It was the same for Lee Gilyoung, as well. The boy awkwardly blocked her front and looked up at her with nervous eyes. The atmosphere of the companions changed drastically once they discovered her sharp dagger.

"Eonni, can you explain yourself?"

Lee Jihye had put down the kitchen knife and before anyone noticed it, was standing next to Han Sooyoung while gripping her Twin Dragon Sword.

Lee Seolhwa was completely taken aback, while Jung Heewon's eyes were narrowed to slits. And Yoo Sangah, calmly observing the unfolding situation unlike the others, was seen next.

Han Sooyoung thought about something for a little while, then let go of Kim Dokja's collars while spitting out a long sigh. He plopped down powerlessly and looked up at her like a guilty man.

"This guy isn't Kim Dokja. I'm not talking about anyone else but Kim Dokja here. No way he can't remember that thing."

"What are you talking about?"

"The 'Ways of Survival'."

After hearing that, the companions all simultaneously looked at Kim Dokja's face – at Kim Dokja, who used to talk non-stop about the 'Ways of Survival' every day.

As if she was a lecturer trying to explain a migraine-inducing problem, Han Sooyoung held her head and began laying out her case in a calm, logical manner. And even decided to add this at the end, too.

"What I said just now wasn't from the 'Ways of Survival', but something from my own novel. There aren't any scenes of the companions enjoying their meal by the Han River in the 'Ways of Survival'."

"How do you know that, eonni? Did you actually read that novel, too?"

"Just the early parts. At least, I know for sure that no such scenes appear during the third regression turn."

That prompted Jung Heewon to retort. "Isn't it possible to be mistaken about something like that? From the get-go, remembering every event happening in such a huge novel is…"

"It is possible if it's Kim Dokja. Did you all forget how we managed to wrangle our way through the scenarios? And you really think that Kim Dokja can't remember?" Han Sooyoung turned towards Kim Dokja and growled menacingly. "Hey, you. Tell me how many times Yoo Joonghyuk killed Asmodeus."

Her question simply caused Kim Dokja to dazedly look up at her face. She scowled deeply, but just before she could go on another tirade, his lips opened first.

"Han Sooyoung."

His voice sounded flat, monotonous. For a moment there, a certain expectation of 'maybe…' flashed past by Han Sooyoung's eyes. And then…

"My bad, but I really can't remember. I haven't been reading the 'Ways of Survival' lately, so…"

"Look, look! This punk, he's not Kim Dokja…!"

"Ahjussi."

The one to step in front of the dagger-brandishing Han Sooyoung was Shin Yoosung. As if she was trying to mould a clay pot, she held Kim Dokja's hand with both of hers and asked him. "Do you remember what I wanted to eat by the Han River?"

The hands of Yoo Joonghyuk standing not too far away and silently preparing the food came to a halt; the food wasn't finished yet.

Kim Dokja replied immediately. "It's pizza and Cola."

"Hyung! Me! What about me?"

"Gilyoung-ie? You wanted to eat chicken by the sea. My bad. We'll definitely go to the seaside next time, okay?"

Lee Gilyoung's and Shin Yoosung's tearful eyes were now glaring at Han Sooyoung.

She frowned deeply. "Hold up. Your questions are too easy. With only that, you can't…"

That prompted Jung Heewon to step forward this time. "Dokja-ssi. What's the name of my sword?"

"The Judge's Sword. I struggled so hard to get all the materials for it, too."

"Dokja-ssi, do you remember the very first item you gave me?"

"It was an aged iron shield, wasn't it?"

The companions then began their barrage of questions as if it was a competition. Even Gong Pildu got in on the act, too.

"Oii, do you remember the penalty fee you paid me during the Chungmuro scenario?"

"But, I didn't pay anything?"

"You son of a bitch. You better cough up or…!"

"Ahjussi, you told me this before, right? Jihye-yah~, to be honest, I think you're the prettiest among all the Kim-Com members."

"I never said that."

Lee Jihye muttered "Dang it," under her breath.

"…He's Dokja ahjussi, alright."

There was this vague sense of relief blooming on the expressions of the group.

Kim Dokja observing this situation spoke up. "I don't know what's suddenly gotten into you, but I'm definitely Kim Dokja. And Han Sooyoung, why are you…"

"Hey, do you even remember how many regression turns there are in the 'Ways of Survival'?"

"Sooyoung-ah." Jung Heewon couldn't let this go on any longer and stepped forward. "I don't know why you're acting like this, but we're on a rare outing together, so please do it in moderation."

"That's right, Sooyoung-ssi. There must've been some kind of a misunderstanding…"

"…Misunderstanding??" Han Sooyoung's hand gripping the dagger trembled ever so slightly. "Hey, Yoo Joonghyuk!! Don't you have anything to say?!"

Yoo Joonghyuk chopping up veggies in silence heard her call and shifted his disinterested eyes towards Han Sooyoung. Then, he shifted his gaze over to Kim Dokja, before glancing at the rest of the companions. Finally, he turned his attention back to the cutting board.

After observing that chain of events, Han Sooyoung's shoulders began trembling non-stop. "Y-you, really…"

Her head dropped, and that's how she spotted a can of beer rolling on the floor. She picked it up and popped the lid open, then drank it all in one go. She wiped her lips in anger and spoke up.

"Screw it… Fine, sure. I'm the lone weirdo among you, is that how it is?"

Maybe that one can wasn't enough, she proceeded to pop the lid on another one.

"Fine. I know it's been difficult for everyone, trying to break past the scenarios. I know full well that you're too tired to think, and now you just wanna kick back and relax. You think I don't wanna do that, too? I also wanna take it easy."

Along with the 'Puh-shushuk!' noise, beer foams bubbled up vigorously.

"But then, you idiots, you really think this Kim Dokja is the real deal?"

"Han Sooyoung."

"Shut up. Don't call me by my name."

Her cheeks were getting somewhat flushed now. Meanwhile, the Story of [Predictive Plagiarism] was creaking into gear inside her head.

「It's possible that the companions are right. She's wrong, and it's totally possible that this Kim Dokja is the real thing.」

Han Sooyoung knew – just because he failed to remember a couple of scenes from the 'Ways of Survival', could she really use that to argue this Kim Dokja wasn't really Kim Dokja?

The current her acted too hastily. She failed to be logical.

Even then, Han Sooyoung couldn't stop her emotions. Even as she herself failed to understand the reason behind her own strong reaction, she continued to mutter on.

"The 'Kim Dokja' I remember is…"

…He was a man who could patiently read a boring novel filled with a ton of exposition that lasted well over three thousand chapters.

「"In the future when all the scenarios have ended, I may want to get back to writing novels again. When that happens, read my novel, okay?"」

A man who loved stories more than anyone in this whole world.

「"Fine, fine. I'll definitely read it."」

"But, it might be over three thousand chapters?"

"That's probably right up my alley, then."

"It might be boring, too."

"It's you writing it, so that's not possible, you know."

Such Kim Dokja might forget about other things, but no way he'd forget about the 'Ways of Survival'.

Was this the fault of the alcohol? It felt as if the heat was gradually spreading even more inside her head.

「If this 'Kim Dokja' is a fake, what does that signify?」

A trickery of the original author tls123? Or…

"Han Sooyoung, why don't we stop there, and…"

A certain hypothesis popped up in her head as she looked at the expressions of her companions.

If what the Dokkaebi King said was the truth, then this world was nothing more than the delusion of the 'Oldest Dream'. Meaning, this world existed because 'he' continued to dream. But now, the 'Oldest Dream' was no more; he disappeared along with the 'Secretive Plotter,' as well as the characters from the 999th turn.

「In that case, how can this world continue to exist?」

This was a truly horrifying hunch. One that should never become reality. And perhaps, a hunch that had already become their reality.

The beer can in her hand fell and rolled around on the ground. Half-consumed liquor spilt out among the other similar-styled cans also rolling around on the floor. She stared at her can, now almost empty, and muttered out in a trance-like state.

"What if… this 'Kim Dokja' is an 'Avatar'…"

"Sooyoung-ssi! What's suddenly gotten into you, saying stuff like…!"

"You think I'm doing this for fun?!"

Her serious voice caused the expressions on several companions to change. Those that turned back all carried similar kind of looks on their faces now.

Han Sooyoung.

The only Incarnation among the group that possessed both the [Predictive Plagiarism] as well as [Avatar] skills. It was her who took on the role of the Nebula's brain whenever Kim Dokja wasn't around.

And her judgement was rarely, if ever, wrong.

Lee Hyunsung slowly turned his head to stare at Kim Dokja. Next up was Jung Heewon, followed by Lee Jihye. One by one, all the gazes were focusing on him now.

「What if Han Sooyoung's words are correct…」

A faint crack was spreading within their minds, an opening created by a very minute suspicion.

It was enough of an opening for Han Sooyoung, though. "Whether he's really an 'Avatar' or not, there is a simple way to find out."

By the time Jung Heewon felt the ominous foreboding, Han Sooyoung was already gone from her spot.

"Han Sooyoung!"

Lee Jihye unsheathed her sword as fast as a bolt of lightning and rushed forward, but by then, Han Sooyoung was already only a few steps away from

Kim Dokja. As the incredulous torrent of winds stormed in, Shin Yoosung let out an explosion of Dragon Howling; Lee Gilyoung's insects were wrapping around Han Sooyoung's ankles like chains, while Lee Hyunsung dashed in to cover Kim Dokja's figure.

Even then, Han Sooyoung didn't stop.

"The dude who'll get to read my novel…"

Strings flying out from Yoo Sangah's hand restrained Han Sooyoung's waist, and Jung Heewon belatedly making her move managed to grab hold of her target's back. But, even as all these events were going down simultaneously, Han Sooyoung's dagger had already left her hand.

"…isn't you."

Splat!

The sound of something splitting up resounded out next.

Chapter 521: Epilogue 1 - The World of Zero, V

Han Sooyoung's dagger accurately brushed past Kim Dokja's shoulder. He reflexively grasped his wound. Of course, she didn't miss that.

「An Avatar doesn't bleed.」

After the <Star Stream System> had weakened, even Constellations began to bleed real blood rather than Stories once they were wounded. So, if that Kim Dokja was the real deal, then he should start bleeding right about now.

"Have you really gone insane?! What the hell are you doing?!"

"Ahjussi!"

Shin Yoosung freaking out hurriedly approached Kim Dokja. Even Lee Hyunsung and Lee Jihye, too. And, the shoulder covered up by the wobbling Kim Dokja…

「If what Han Sooyoung said was correct, then.」

Very slowly, his palm left the wounded shoulder.

"I'm alright. Please don't worry."

No one knew who sucked in their breaths first. Nevertheless, they all clearly saw it.

「Blood was flowing. A deeply crimson blood, no less.」

Han Sooyoung too also witnessed it. However…

"…Hold up. It's not over yet! There are Avatars that can bleed, too!"

What she said was true, because she too had created such an [Avatar] before.

「An Avatar injected with lots of memories will bleed.」

She spotted Yoo Joonghyuk in the distance, still chopping his veggies. She felt utterly annoyed by how his lips didn't even bob once as if he couldn't see what's happening on this side.

Perhaps that was why she ended up saying something she shouldn't have. "We'll know once we cut off his head. An Avatar will still move without a head, after all."

"What did you just say???"

Only after she saw Jung Heewon's expression hardening to a frightening degree did she realize her own mistake. The aura of [Hellfire] danced on the [Judge's Sword]. That was Uriel's Stigma, never been activated once ever since the scenarios came to an end.

Jung Heewon spoke in an angry voice. "If you try something like that, it'll be your head flying off, instead."

Han Sooyoung stared at the [Judge's Sword] pointing at her and slowly raised the aura of the [Black Flame] as well. She knew the situation was gradually reaching the point of no return, yet she still couldn't stop herself.

Lee Seolhwa's voice trying to dissuade them was heard next. And when Han Sooyoung saw the expressions of both Shin Yoosung and Lee Gilyoung busy baring their animosity towards her, something inside her snapped.

「Maybe, it was a miracle for them to come this far together.」

She was acutely aware of her not fitting in with these people. She used to be the 'king of prophets' once upon a time, and was referred to as the 'false king', too. She was nothing more than a villain in the epic tale Kim Dokja had created.

Eating pizza and drinking Cola with everyone by the Han River? From the get-go, all of that was a conclusion ill-suited to Han Sooyoung.

Ku-gugugugu!

The tense stand-off generated by the two opposing flames continued on, only for a clear, innocent-sounding voice to break the flow.

"What are you all doing? I brought beer." Jang Hayoung holding plastic bags on both of her hands was standing there. "Wait, are you doing one of those hidden camera things because I showed up late?"

That voice filled with anxiety managed to wake the companions up. As if they finally recalled the reason why they were here in the first place.

And the man who hadn't said a single word until now also decided to say something as well. "Why don't you all give it a rest?"

The Status of a Transcendent scattered brilliantly from the [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] stabbed into the cutting board. And the murderous aura dominating over the park washed away in an instant.

"It's dinner time."

The delicious aroma wafting in stimulated everyone's hunger, instead. Seven pizzas plus fried chicken were perfectly set up on top of the plates.

Lee Jihye sighed after witnessing that spectacle. "Master is seriously…"

The rest of the group saw the uber-serious look in Yoo Joonghyuk's face and exchanged glances with each other, not knowing how to respond.

Jang Hayoung was the first one to dash towards the food, however. "What are you all doing? Aren't you gonna come?"

Gong Pildu chuckled helplessly after seeing that.

The atmosphere relaxed just a little, prompting Kim Dokja to say something. "I'm fine. I also get why Sooyoung-ie is getting suspicious, too. Honestly speaking, I know I've become strangely forgetful recently. It often feels like important parts of my memories have disappeared wholesale…"

"Dokja-ssi, this isn't something you can gloss over like tha…!"

"Let's eat first and discuss it later. I mean, it's not every day we get Yoo Joonghyuk to cook for someone, after all."

Jung Heewon frowned, but spat out a sigh nonetheless. The companions found their spots on the mat and settled down one by one. However, one person wasn't here.

In the end, Jung Heewon exploded in anger. "Really, this is…"

Han Sooyoung couldn't be seen anywhere.

The faint sounds of fireworks going off came from the distance. Han Sooyoung stared at the cold water rushing out of the tap inside the bathroom and bit down hard on her lip.

'I made a mistake'.

It wasn't like her. She couldn't figure out why she got agitated to such a degree. A thought of calming herself down and returning to explain popped up in her head, but she just didn't know from where she should start her explanation to make them accept it.

「From the get-go, was it appropriate to call an Avatar that shared the memories a 'fake'?」

The sound of vibration came from her pocket.

– Sooyoung-ssi.

It was a message from Yoo Sangah. Han Sooyoung pocketed the phone again. But the device vibrated once more.

– Han Sooyoubf.

"Gimme a break."

– Haha, that's a typo.

Just as she was about to send a reply, she sensed a presence behind her.

"Please stop sulking and let's go back."

Long, pale fingers held and gripped her shoulder tightly. Han Sooyoung slapped that hand away and looked behind her. "Forget it. I'll only sour the mood by showing up, anyway."

"That's not true. Everyone will understand."

"I said, forget…"

"Do you want me to respond like this, then?"

Yoo Sangah's gaze slowly transformed. Han Sooyoung frowned deeply.

Through the open doorway, she could see the figures of the companions in the distance. And as she watched how Yoo Sangah stood there as if to protect that scene, a strange gut feeling suddenly brushed past her brain.

"You…"

Yoo Sangah's expression back then, not even trying all that hard to stop her. Maybe, she…

"Once upon a time, Dokja-ssi asked me this. If the cause of this world was the 'Oldest Dream', then what would happen to the world if that guy was eliminated?" Yoo Sangah asked.

"What?"

"What will happen to a world that no one looks at?"

Han Sooyoung grabbed Yoo Sangah's collars and shoved her against the wall.

"You… Spit out everything you know, now."

Han Sooyoung looked into the still-calm eyes of Yoo Sangah and the truth gradually dawned on her.

「There was a time when Yoo Sangah acted as a librarian of the [The Fourth Wall].」

She was the only one among the companions to actually enter inside Kim Dokja. What exactly did she see inside that library filled with countless books?

"Spit it out! You saw something in there! That idiot, just what was he thinking about?!"

"…"

"Why didn't you try to stop me? Why, when the situation was getting…!"

"Because I don't have the right to do so."

For the first time ever, Han Sooyoung's mouth was shut tight after she heard Yoo Sangah's reply.

"…Protecting the world by dividing himself in half. One becomes the 'reader' watching over the world, while the other becomes its 'character'."

Han Sooyoung also knew.

She knew that maybe, that 'Kim Dokja' bled because of that very reason.

She knew that, on that day when everyone was freed from the scenario, maybe the other side of Kim Dokja was still riding on the subway – on that day, when she looked back, and Yoo Joonghyuk also looked back. Maybe, Kim Dokja remaining inside the train was still watching them.

"If that was the choice of a man who knew this world better than anyone, then…"

"How can you even say that?"

The pair of trembling hands were tightening around Yoo Sangah's collars even further. But she lightly raised her own hand and grabbed hold of those shaking hands belonging to her captor.

"This is the choice of a person called myself."

"You, Kim Dokja, you're all the same."

"Sooyoung-ah. Do you really believe that other companions don't know what's going on?"

Han Sooyoung felt like she got punched in the head.

"Dokja-ssi who doesn't talk about the Ways of Survival anymore… Do you really think others don't find that strange? Really?"

"I-in that case…"

"Most of the memories we share together, 'Kim Dokja-ssi' over there has it."

The companions sitting on the mat and chatting away could be seen. Figures of Jung Heewon smiling brightly, while Lee Hyunsung was pouring beer; drunk Gong Pildu was singing, while Lee Seolhwa was clapping her hands. Jang Hayoung stood up from her spot and noisily yapped on with an exaggerated voice.

– So, like, back in the Demon Realm…

The 'Kim Dokja' they remembered was different from people to people.

If Kim Dokja was a 'reader' to Han Sooyoung, then to Shin Yoosung and Lee Gilyoung, he was the 'parent'. To Lee Hyunsung, he was the 'spent cartridge', and to Yoo Sangah, the 'work colleague'. To Lee Jihye, Jung Heewon, Jang Hayoung, and also to Lee Seolhwa as well as Gong Pildu…

"That person is also Dokja-ssi. Doesn't matter how much percentage he is made out of, there's no doubt that he is Dokja-ssi. Dokja-ssi who journeyed together with us."

The festive fireworks were still going off in the distance. The children's eyes sparkled under the light. It felt as if the history they had to live through was fading away. Han Sooyoung dazedly stared at that view, at the smiling face of Kim Dokja among the companions.

Without a doubt, that was the scene he had been wishing for.

「This was where the story of <Kim Dokja's Company> came to an end.」

Yoo Sangah was right.

Kim Dokja made his choice, and the companions chose to accept his decision. They had been hurt far too many times, and none of them wanted to be hurt anymore.

And so, this was their conclusion.

Yoo Sangah asked her. "Is there any meaning in deciphering which one is really him?"

Just like how there was no meaning in assigning the tag of 'real one' among the Yoo Joonghyuks from countless regression turns, there was also no meaning in finding out which of the equally divided Kim Dokjas was the real him.

Han Sooyoung replied while letting go of Yoo Sangah's collars. "I'm not trying to find out which one's the real deal."

Yoo Sangah's eyes were trembling. And Han Sooyoung's face was reflected on those trembling irises. Then, as she was left stunned by the revelation that she too could make such an expression, as well as getting agitated by the fact that she could even say something like this, she finished what she wanted to say.

"No, what's important is that Kim Dokja is still stuck in that place."

Maybe, there might not be anyone needing that version of 'Kim Dokja'. You might not find anyone out there wanting to be with that crazy loon who only loved the 'Ways of Survival'. However, at least just one person…

– ahjussi!

It was around then that an urgent voice suddenly resounded out in the distance. There was a commotion rising up from the mat where the companions were currently sitting together. And also, a chilling scent of blood wafted in from somewhere.

Yoo Sangah and Han Sooyoung realized something had gone wrong and by the time they arrived there, Shin Yoosung was sobbing away, her hands soaked in blood.

"The, the bleeding, it doesn't want to stop."

Kim Dokja, seemingly fine only until a second ago, lost consciousness and had collapsed. Han Sooyoung's hand holding the dagger trembled ever so faintly. Could it be…

"It's not because of the wound from earlier. This…"

Lee Seolhwa felt for Kim Dokja's pulse, then her face hardened immediately. His body was shaking ominously; blood trickling out from his shoulder dyed the gauze crimson in the blink of an eye.

And right next second, the blood soaking the gauze began evaporating.

Pah-sususu…

The droplets of blood crumbled away, like how Stories would disappear. Lee Seolhwa cried out.

"Take him back to the Complex! Hurry!"

Chapter 522: Epilogue 1 - The World of Zero, VI

It had been a week since Kim Dokja lost his consciousness.

The companions took turns to nurse him as he remained in a coma. Lee Seolhwa and Aileen continued to administer medical treatment in alternating turns, and many Incarnations blessed with famed healing skills also paid visit, as well.

Unfortunately, none of them could discover the reason why Kim Dokja suddenly ended up in this state.

– His internal structure is becoming unstable. We don't know the reason yet. Maybe, it's related to the <Star Stream System>'s weakening, somehow…

A few Incarnations cautiously discussed the topic related to the [Avatar].

"Ahjussi."

Kim Dokja remained unconscious, and while staring at him, Shin Yoosung murmured as if to steel herself.

This person, he's Kim Dokja. Without a doubt, he is the Kim Dokja that I remember.

However, there was one thing that didn't change no matter how many times she told herself that.

「The power of her 'Constellation sponsor' cannot be felt from this existence before her eyes.」

The Story that warmly embraced her couldn't be felt all that well right now.

[Story, 'Saviour of the Star', is stuttering during its storytelling.]

Even the Stories that connected her to Kim Dokja were hesitating with their storytelling. As if, this existence before her wasn't suitable as the subject of their story. Shin Yoosung slowly closed her eyes.

[Currently, the connection to your Constellation sponsor is very faint.]

[Currently, the communication channel to your Constellation sponsor is disconnected.]

The 'sponsor contract' that tied her to Kim Dokja was still in effect. There it was, the starlight within the night sky, remaining in the exact same spot and watching her as always.

「If that's the case, then just whose starlight was that?」

Shin Yoosung stared at Kim Dokja's shoulder that still hadn't healed yet.

This arm always protected his companions. With that arm, he painted his world. With that arm, he ended the scenarios, and brought down the Final Wall. She slowly raised her head and looked at Kim Dokja's face. The golden headband put on top of his head during the Journey to the West scenario still remained where it should. The constrictive headband lost its powers after the Great Sage's Story weakened. Shin Yoosung reached out and brushed his dishevelled hair underneath the headband.

「"Don't worry, Yoosung-ah."」

Kim Dokja kept his promise.

「The PC Bang she wanted to go together.」

「Pizzas and Cola she wanted to enjoy by the Han River.」

Inside those fantasy-like moments, Kim Dokja was definitely there. They were gentle, tender moments that a person sacrificed all of his life to bring to reality.

She didn't want to deny this conclusion that they only managed to reach through such a long, arduous journey.

Shin Yoosung buried her face on the bed and sobbed, until the fatigue sent her into dreamland. Someone opened the quiet hospital room's door and entered inside.

"Hey, it's time to cha…"

Lee Gilyoung entering the room discovered the sleeping figure of Shin Yoosung and promptly shut his mouth. He lightly dusted the thin blanket next to the chair and covered her shoulders with it. Then, he settled down on the other side of the bed.

"Dokja hyung."

He carefully tucked Kim Dokja's hand that slipped outside the bed under the duvet. It was a hand full of scars. It was also the same hand that gave a certain boy his grasshopper once upon a time.

「There was a time when Kim Dokja was like a god to the boy.」

Lee Gilyoung stared at Kim Dokja for a long, long time before softly muttering out.

"…Hyung, you're still you, right?"

He sighed deeply and slowly stood up to open up the room's curtains.

There were truly many people walking on the streets outside. People that Kim Dokja had saved. This was the world that he had protected. Lee Gilyoung sat near the window and silently counted the number of passersby for a long while.

"…That stupid idiot. If you were going to make an Avatar, you should've done it properly."

The grumbling Han Sooyoung was walking inside the Industrial Complex.

It had been one whole week since Kim Dokja had collapsed. She had come to a conclusion in the meantime.

「I can't expect any help from the companions.」

Yoo Sangah was right – this 'Kim Dokja', and the 'Kim Dokja' she missed, were both Kim Dokja. Meaning, this was the true ending he had been wishing for, and everything would be fine if the companions decided to accept it.

However, it was possible for at least one person to have a differing opinion about it.

"Hey, shorty."

"What is it, Black Flame Dragon ahjumma?"

"Where is your oppa right now?"

"Don't feel like telling you, though?"

"You little!"

Yoo Mia quickly ran away and hid between the narrow alleyways. She was so unbelievably fast that by the time Han Sooyoung got there, that little kid was already long gone without a trace. However, Yoo Joonghyuk must've been nearby considering his little sister was around here.

And so, how long did she continue to walk afterwards? An unfamiliar noticeboard appeared before her eyes.

[Kaizenix District]

A residential area set up on the western sections of the Complex was here. The antique architectural style reminded her of the medieval fantasy setting. She only heard about this place from Lee Sookyung, but now that she had witnessed the view of this rather unexpectedly well-thought-out cityscape, Han Sooyoung couldn't help but be impressed.

Just as she began thinking that it'd not be so bad to sightsee since she was searching for that fool anyway…

"Sooyoung-ah!"

An unexpected person found her first.

"…Yuri?"

"You've been living here?"

"For a while now. I know you've been busy, but still, I'm a little sad that you only came to visit today."

"…You totally sound like a Korean, you know that?"

Han Sooyoung was really glad to see Yuri sipping tea before her eyes like this.

Yuri di Aristel.

Back in the Kaizenix Archipelago, Han Sooyoung took possession of this woman and carried out the scenario. Now that she looked back, so many things happened back in Kaizenix. She wasted decades waiting for that stinking Kim Dokja, for instance. And…

"By the way, who were you trying to find here? Was it me, perhaps?"

"I'm sorry. It's not, but…"

"Tch. In that case?"

Han Sooyoung briefly explained her situation, and Yuri clapped her hands if she understood.

"Ah, you meant your fiancé?"

"My fiancé?"

Han Sooyoung thought about something for a bit, before her expression crumpled. Now that she looked back some more, didn't she almost get married to that guy?

Yuri asked in a teasing tone. "By the way, which one do you really prefer? My personal preference is the shorter…"

"Never mind that. You know where Yoo Joonghyuk is right now?"

"Mm? Is that your preference?"

"Please just answer the question."

"If it's that idiot…"

…That idiot?

"Well, what good timing. There he is."

A huge shadow ran past the cafe's window with a whoosh. Han Sooyoung hurriedly shot up and rushed outside the cafe.

"Hey, what about the bill?!"

"Sorry! I'll get it next time!"

She spotted the figure running up ahead. It was Yoo Joonghyuk kitted out in a tracksuit, currently running through the Industrial Complex while maintaining a constant speed. She heard the Complex's residents murmuring to each other nearby.

"…He's running again, that guy."

"Why does he stupidly keep doing that, when you can just use your skills?"

"It's already been three months."

This was her first time hearing that. Han Sooyoung gave chase, and studied Yoo Joonghyuk's back while doing so. It was as the residents said; he was moving with his own muscles without using any skills whatsoever.

She lightly sucked in her breath, activated her skill, and reached next to Yoo Joonghyuk.

"What are you doing?"

The running man soaked from head to toe in sweat glanced at her before returning his gaze back to the road.

*

"Are you going to enter a marathon or something? But then again, even you would need to find a job in this new world, so…"

Her provocation failed to elicit a reply from Yoo Joonghyuk. Just as she began wondering what to say next to get a response from this stubborn fool, people they brushed by could be heard muttering to themselves.

"…Look at that, another idiot showed up."

These morons, seriously now…!

Just as Han Sooyoung was about to give them a piece of her mind, Yoo Joonghyuk opened his mouth first.

"I'm running, because I want to."

"Why? You feeling frustrated too?"

He didn't reply. Instead, a very faint shadow was cast over his expression. She couldn't fully understand the meaning behind his current expression, but it still felt like she could get it just a little.

"How much of that novel did you say you've read?"

Han Sooyoung ended up replying in a weirded-out voice from that unexpected question. She didn't think Yoo Joonghyuk would ever ask her about that. "Just a bit in the beginning part."

"What kind of a person was I originally in that world? For instance, during the 0th turn or the first turn…"

"What rubbish are you on about? Why are you asking me that, anyway?"

"For some reason, I can't seem to remember the past all that well."

That was the first time she heard this.

"You can't remember?"

"No, it's not that I can't, but they are completely fragmented."

"You've regressed for over a thousand times so, yeah, even I would end up like that."

Although she spoke in jest, Han Sooyoung got an idea as to why Yoo Joonghyuk's memories were so unclear.

Technically speaking, Yoo Joonghyuk was the protagonist of a novel called 'Ways of Survival'. Every bit of info related to him came from the author's setting, and those not told by said author were basically 'things that don't exist'.

The novel 'Ways of Survival' began from Yoo Joonghyuk's 3rd regression turn. So maybe, he shouldn't be fully recalling anything that happened between his 0th and the 2nd regression turn.

"Is that really important? What you were like back then?"

Whether this was an issue of the setting, or he really did forget… Regardless of what, the past was past. That might sound like a rather obvious thing to say, but she still wanted to tell him – that the truly important thing wasn't the past but the future about to take place.

However, Yoo Joonghyuk replied like this first. "It is important to me."

He continued to maintain a constant breathing pattern; Han Sooyoung watched him force his body to its limits without the help of any of his skills and got this feeling that she finally gained clarity on something.

「Yoo Joonghyuk is someone who can clear the 'scenario' the best in this world.」

Paradoxically, the Supreme King who could clear the scenarios far better than anyone lost his usefulness after the scenarios ended.

So, in this world where the scenarios were over, just what had become of Yoo Joonghyuk?

Han Sooyoung's lips bobbed up and down several times.

"You probably were Yoo Joonghyuk even then. Yoo Joonghyuk who'd become the regressor."

This was all she could do, returning what he said in the past back to him in full. And in order to change the topic, she quickly followed that up with something else.

"Besides that, I have something to say to you. Maybe you know this already, but this world-line's Kim Dokja is…"

"He's an Avatar. I already know."

So, he did know. Han Sooyoung was about to make a retort, but clamped her mouth shut, instead.

Getting this far wasn't the issue. No, now that she was here, her lips didn't want to part all that easily at all.

Was it okay to suggest to this 'Yoo Joonghyuk' that they should go and rescue Kim Dokja, the one that still remembered the 'Ways of Survival'?

She didn't know the answer to that, and could only swallow back the words circling around on the tip of her tongue.

Unexpectedly, it was he who opened his mouth first. "If you want to rescue him, then you need to get to the subway beyond the 'Final Wall'. The problem with that is you can never reach there through the regular methods of crossing the world-lines."

Han Sooyoung was surprised for a second there, but still managed to reply quickly enough. "…If we open the 'Final Wall' one more time, we can go there. We need to gather the 'fragments' to open the door, though. And looks like we already have one of the fragments."

「That's what Han Sooyoung said.」

Even she could more or less hear [The Fourth Wall]'s intermittent messages nowadays. These texts butted in irregularly as if to explain the world – perhaps they were sentences currently being recorded on [The Fourth Wall] that this world-line's Kim Dokja possessed.

"The issue is with the other fragments."

The 'Wall that Decides Samsara' Yoo Sangah used to possess.

The 'Wall that Divides Good and Evil' Jung Heewon and Lee Gilyoung used to possess.

And finally, the 'Wall of Impossible Communication' Jang Hayoung used to possess.

Those 'walls' were used up while opening the Final Wall. There must've been a way to get them back, but the current Han Sooyoung couldn't think of one.

"Han Sooyoung."

"What now?"

"This is the third lap."

Third lap?

Only after hearing that did she realize that the same exact scenery as earlier was laid out before her eyes. It was the sight she encountered when stepping foot in this district for the first time. They had been running in a massive loop until now.

"What did you see? I was looking at the birds on top of the tower," said Yoo Joonghyuk. "Those birds always return there during this time of the day."

"…"

"And that cafe, it's always full around this time every day."

"You…"

"Have you seen the clock tower back in Kaizenix? Faces of different people are engraved into the second, minute, and hour hands. Your face is also there."

Han Sooyoung followed after Yoo Joonghyuk's words and turned her head. The world as described by him was indeed right here. Maybe he had been staring at this scenery while looping around many, many times.

"Why are you looking at stuff like that, though? Have you finally gone insane?"

Han Sooyoung felt that him looping alone was truly a pity and could only say that as her reply.

That prompted him to say this, however.

"If you run one more time…" Yoo Joonghyuk had come to a stop even before she had noticed it, and he was now asking her. "If you get a chance to run again, do you believe you can see it better the next time?"

Han Sooyoung also came to a halt right there.

[Incarnation 'Yoo Joonghyuk's' Stigma is emitting a faint light.]

In all honesty, she already knew. From a while ago, she realized what he was trying to say. However, she wanted to pretend that she had no clue, instead.

Because she thought that method was not a good one at all.

"You…"

The way to save Kim Dokja.

The way to gather the three disappeared 'fragments' again.

The way that only Yoo Joonghyuk could resort to.

「And that was to return to the world where that 'Wall' still existed. And then, to walk on the hellish landscape once more.」

"You wanna solo that crazy thing all over again??"

Not even she and Kim Dokja wanted that.

On top of that, no matter how amazing Yoo Joonghyuk was, there was no way he could, all by himself…

"No, it's impossible alone."

His calm, collected declaration caused her eyes to blink.

"That's why I asked you. What did you see?"

The Status of Transcendence was rousing up from Yoo Joonghyuk's rippling muscles. This transcended form that surpassed Constellations was evolving once more.

[Incarnation 'Yoo Joonghyuk's' Stigma is evolving.]

Han Sooyoung looked back at the path she had run past and saw the tower's clock hands circling around. She could see the engraving of her own dumb-looking face on the diligently-moving second hand.

What would happen if she got to run on that 'time' once more? If so, would she be able to run even better than before?

Maybe, she might be able to – if she made a thorough preparation beforehand. And… if she got to work together with the companions she lived with in this world, too.

She looked back, only to discover the regressor that had run on that very distance countless times staring right back at her.

"I need your help, Han Sooyoung."

[Stigma, 'Regression', has acquired the possibility of 'Group Regression'!]

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* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)

Chapter 523: Epilogue 1 - The World of Zero, VII

It had already been two months since I started observing the 0th turn.

There was this one thing I got to learn during this time period, and it'd be the fact that regardless of which regression turn it was, Yoo Joonghyuk would always be Yoo Joonghyuk.

"I'm not selecting anyone."

[Incarnation 'Yoo Joonghyuk' has not selected his Constellation backer.]

And with that, the second sponsor selection came to a close.

If I were to include the sudden, unannounced sponsor selection that happened in the middle, then this would be the third time.

Yoo Joonghyuk didn't choose his Constellation backer during all three occasions. He couldn't choose during the first one because of me, though.

Tsu-chuchut…

My palm that smacked the back of his head still stung quite a bit. Well, I did forcibly butt in during the beginning scenario and knocked out an Incarnation about to enter an important event, so even I wouldn't be able to escape from the after-effects.

Whatever the case might have been, Yoo Joonghyuk began showing an unbelievable level of wariness during the 'sponsor selection' events afterwards.

「Constellations… They are capable of knocking me out cold without the slightest warning. I must not carelessly trust them.」

It surely was an unfortunate turn of event from my perspective. Still, others also didn't get selected, so it wasn't such a big loss either way.

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', complains by asking why he was not chosen.]

[Constellation, 'Mouse that Eats Fingernails', is drooling after Incarnation Yoo Joonghyuk's fingernails.]

[Constellation, 'Founder of Humanity', is interested in Incarnation Yoo Joonghyuk.]

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is puzzled by Incarnation Yoo Joonghyuk's action.]

Time passed and Bihyung's channel gradually grew larger, and the number of Modifiers I knew had increased somewhat in the meantime.

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation', is greeting the 'Demon-like Judge of Fire'.]

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is snorting derisively.]

Uriel…

[Constellation, 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband', is cackling.]

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation', is happily greeting the 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband'.]

[Constellation, 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband', has started picking his nose.]

Right, this was how the proper 'Ways of Survival' should be.

I was remembering the figures of the Constellations I knew and had forgotten about that fact for a moment there.

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', warns other Constellations that the 'Demon King of Salvation' is an attention seeker, so others should be wary.]

Of course, the one I found most annoying of all was this dude. Just as I was about to say something even at the cost of wasting Coins, Bihyung opened his mouth first.

[Supreme King Yoo Joonghyuk, will you really not select any Constellation backer? I advise you to think about this one more time.]

"No, I'm not choosing."

[Hmm, well, then. Dear Constellation-nims that applied to become the sponsors. Allow me to present you with a special opportunity to appeal to this particular Incarnation!]

Bihyung came to be blessed with several 'Find the Incarnation' groups all thanks to Yoo Joonghyuk, and as a result, that huge grin refused to leave his face the whole day long. He probably had figured out that this was his chance to score big.

A short while later, a new message window popped up before my eyes.

[Dokkaebi Bihyung presents – a special sponsorship opportunity!]

[Please sponsor an item to the Incarnation of your choosing.]

I was about to thoughtlessly tap on the 'Confirm' icon only to spot a very small fine print all the way at the bottom of the window.

*3500 Coins will automatically be deducted when purchasing the applicable item.

I spat out a soft sigh.

[Current Coin balance: 500 C]

「Stu pid Kim Dok ja」

As I've completely emptied the <Kim Dokja's Company>'s coffers while clearing the Final Scenario, obviously I wouldn't have any Coins left to my name now.

I pondered if I could mass-produce Coins somehow by abusing the authority of the 'Oldest Dream', but the efficiency of that was not very good with my current power level so that plan had been put on hold for now.

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', says that if you sign the contract with him, he can turn you into a really cool Black Flame Dragon…]

[Constellation, 'God of Wine and Ecstasy', says that if you sign the contract with him, the legendary brew of the Olympus will specially be…]

[Constellation, 'Slumbering Lady of Fine Brocade', says if you sign the contract with her, the mid-rank starter pack will be…]

The sponsorship messages from the Constellations rained down from the sky.

Hell, Constellations promising to shower him with early-stages special items, the kind that even I didn't get to use, were practically lining up in a queue here.

Even in the original novel, Yoo Joonghyuk from the 3rd turn didn't enjoy this level of attention. So, how did a mere 0th turn become this famous? Quite simple, actually.

[Incarnation 'Yoo Joonghyuk' is rejecting the offers of Constellations.]

"That's not enough."

That was all because the 0th turn Yoo Joonghyuk was way too full of himself.

"There are far too many willing to give me such useless things. Isn't there anyone willing to share information on hidden pieces?"

[Constellation, 'Slumbering Lady of Fine Brocade', is sweating profusely while replying that she doesn't know much about such topics.]

"Is there anyone who can show me something similar to the revelations of the future?"

[Constellation, 'Master of Sky Walk', says leaking such information is against the rules.]

"You all are worse than this Demon King of Salvation, then."

[Portion of Constellations are seriously curious about the true identity of the 'Demon King of Salvation'!]

And so, the 'Demon King of Salvation' began to enjoy an unprecedented level of popularity during the 0th turn regardless of his wishes.

– Demon King of Salvation! Leaker of the future revelations?

– <Olympus> reveals leaking predictions is impossible, Probability-wise…

– No Demon King named 'Demon King of Salvation' exists, declares Demon King Association.

– Abyssal Black Flame Dragon: Modifier 'Demon King of Salvation' is similar to the one he used to have…

By reading the information coming in through the <Star Stream Daily>, I gained new appreciation on what the life of a Constellation entailed.

So, an Incarnation becoming a Constellation, and being one already at the start of the scenarios, could be this different, is it?

[Your fame has started spreading around <Star Stream>.]

[Portion of gossipers have created a song called 'Conman Demon King of Salvation' and have begun spreading it.]

[You have acquired 5000 Coins through the rise of your popularity.]

Whatever the case might have been, it wasn't such a bad deal for me.

[Heheh. Dear 'Demon King of Salvation'-nim. Will you continue with your patronage of my channel this month as well?]

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation', replies with 'of course'.]

[All thanks to you, dear Demon King-nim, this month's revenue has shot up by a noticeable amount. If it's not too much trouble, may I enquire about your true name…? Honestly, I've never seen anyone treat Probability like ratshit as much as you, Demon King-nim. Ah, hahaha. That was a compliment, of course!]

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation', says he can't reveal his true name.]

[Is that so? How unfortunate. Honestly, I'm slightly puzzled by why someone as great as you decided to stick by this lowly one's channel. It's not like I've got an amazing backing or anything…]

Bihyung's expression showed his lack of confidence. I quietly stared at him for a bit before replying with these words.

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation', says he's simply repaying his debt.]

A book you've read once before could be read again without too much hassle. However, you could also run into a road block in unexpected places.

That's how the 0th turn felt like to me.

[Incarnation 'Yoo Joonghyuk' has not selected his Constellation backer.]

In a certain way, Yoo Joonghyuk's 0th turn was pretty similar to my own world-line. Here was a tale that had deviated greatly from the predetermined plot development.

…Now that we were this far along, it should be impossible to go back to the plot of the original 0th turn, right?

"Joonghyuk-ssi. Will it be fine to install the barricades over here?"

The Emperor of Steelsword, Lee Hyunsung.

"Oii, Captain! You promised to teach me that swordsmanship, didn't you?!"

The Delusion Demon, Kim Namwoon.

"Master. Can I go item farming for a bit after this scenario ends?"

The Naval Admiral, Lee Jihye.

And also, one more person had been added to the ranks, someone who shouldn't even be there during the 0th turn.

「When you're about to pass by the Geumho Station, you must recruit that person.」

Maybe this was me just being greedy. In this world, Yoo Sangah, Lee Gilyoung, and even I didn't exist, but…

But at least there was one person that <Kim Dokja's Company> could recruit.

"Hyunsung-ssi, it's not level over there."

The Judge that Destroys Evil, Jung Heewon.

I watched her go through the checklist of all the things her companions had missed, and fell into the reminiscence of the past.

「"I was really happy back then. When we went to the department store together to buy new clothes and visited <Eden> like a bunch of celebs."」

Although I handed over a large portion of my memories to the 49% Avatar, I still retained quite a lot. I focused myself in order to stay on the right path as the pages of memories rushed in like an incoming storm.

「"That's why, you are someone who can only do this, right?"」

The 'Jung Heewon' I remember should be alright.

Well, the story of that world came to a good end, after all. Companions in that place should be going to the Han River and to the ocean, spending their peaceful days with a version of me.

I murmured that as if hypnotise myself and tried hard to focus on the world immediately before my eyes.

「Th is isn t yo ur wor ld ei ther」

I know.

「Kim Dokja's world couldn't be found anywhere now.」

To an existence that saw all the worlds as dreams, there was no meaning to something like 'one true reality'. And to forget about that fact, I poured all my being in observing the spectacle laid out before my eyes. I found it preferable to become a thoughtless Constellation at this point. If I were to become a greedy devourer of stories that enjoyed scenarios and created situations he wanted to see, then I'd get to forget about everything else.

"Orabeoni! Your Mia has done it!"

And fortunately enough, this story happened to be the one I loved the most.

"I told you not to use such a manner of speech in front of others."

"Hiiing."

A bitter chuckle floated up on my lips while I observed Yoo Joonghyuk reprimand his little sister's manner of speech.

You should fix your own first, dude.

Even if he was supposed to be a pro gamer, he must've held normal conversations with other people before. How was it even possible for him to live in society with that crappy manner of speech?

Was it all down to his face's 'Probability'?

"The fourth scenario will soon begin. Everyone, get ready."

Through the information I conveyed, Yoo Joonghyuk grew stronger little by little.

「Manage Kim Namwoon well so that he doesn't stray. He really respects you, so if you use that, things will become easy for you. Don't forget that no one starts as an evil person.」

Information that I sent his way by sacrificing an incredible amount of Probability every single time.

「Don't get cocky in the theatre dungeon and calmly clear it. The last boss there uses mental attacks, so before you face it, get this skill first and…」

「If you tie Gong Pildu down well during the early scenarios, he'll continue to be useful later on. He's not completely irredeemable, so do your best to reform him. The hint is…」

At first, Yoo Joonghyuk didn't trust me, but after my revelations came true one by one, he began to believe me more and more.

About damn time. Just who was responsible for you coming this far, anyway? Honestly speaking, I was still a bit miffed by the fact that he hadn't chosen the 'Demon King of Salvation' as his Constellation backer yet.

"By the way, how come you know so much about the scenarios, captain?"

"…Someone is helping me out."

"Helping you out…?"

Thankfully, the 0th turn's Yoo Joonghyuk wasn't someone who'd forget all about his benefactor.

– Hand over the next revelation.

Yoo Joonghyuk spent a huge wealth amounting to over 30,000 Coins and opened up a one-on-one secret communication line. It was an obvious thing to do since I kept feeding him important information, but still, I wanted to praise him for it.

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation', is granting 'a portion of revelation' to Incarnation 'Yoo Joonghyuk'.]

「The core of the fourth scenario is the 'Absolute Throne'. Remember that you must never…」

Tsu-chuchuchuchu…

An incredible amount of Probability was being exhausted every time I handed over the information to him.

The standard denomination of this world was 'stories'. So, it was rather obvious that spoiling the future events would damage the Probability far more than smacking Yoo Joonghyuk in the back of his head.

"It's them!!"

Yoo Joonghyuk's companions all pulled out their weapons at the same time while staring at the enemies flooding in. The closing chapters of the 4th scenario should soon begin.

[The Fourth Wall] addressed me. 「Y ou kn ow what y ou ve be en d oing, ri ght?」

Along with 'Pah-sususu' noise, the ends of my hand were melting down.

I observed the figure of Yoo Joonghyuk confronting Seoul's 7 Kings. The gleaming [Splitting the Sky Sword] gripped in his hand howled out a courageous roar.

「No matter how hard you try」

The 0th turn's story had completely changed from the original. Yoo Joonghyuk of this world-line would walk on a different path compared to every other Yoo Joonghyuks.

「That guy can never see what's beyond the wall」

I knew the meaning behind [The Fourth Wall]'s words.

There was no method of acquiring [The Fourth Wall] in this world-line. Meaning, the last key to open the [Final Wall] didn't exist. Regardless of what he did, the 0th turn Yoo Joonghyuk would never be able to get his hands on that key.

However, him failing to cross the [Final Wall] didn't mean he was fated to be unfortunate. Because as long as I was the 'Oldest Dream', his world-line wouldn't be destroyed even after the scenarios came to an end.

「Certain truths would make everyone unhappy simply by their existence.」

Even though I couldn't show him the 'truth', I could show him the 'ending' perfectly suitable for this story.

[Congratulations! Incarnation 'Yoo Joonghyuk' has passed every trial of the 'Absolute Throne'!]

Eventually, Yoo Joonghyuk defeated Seoul's 7 Kings and stood before the Absolute Throne. The attention of every Constellation within the Seoul dome, as well as all the citizens gathering in the Gwanghwamun, was closely focused on his actions.

He slowly unsheathed a certain sword hidden within his inner coat. It was the [Four Yin Demonic Beheading Sword].

I substituted for the Lord of the Big Dipper constellation and lent him my powers.

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation' is looking at Incarnation 'Yoo Joonghyuk'.]

One by one, seven stars grew brighter and brighter. And the [Four Yin Demonic Beheading Sword] held in his hand emitted blinding light as it evolved into a Star Relic.

[Outer Gods are astonished by your incredible strength!]

[The Lords of the Big Dipper constellation are startled by your presence and are passing out from shock!]

[All the Constellations of the Korean Peninsula are…]

"I do not have any intentions of representing humans as disgraceful as you." Yoo Joonghyuk continued on. "I do not plan on becoming a plaything for you vulgar Constellations, and… I shall not sit on this 'Absolute Throne'."

Those were words I thought I heard before from somewhere.

Yoo Joonghyuk sword flashed next. "And I'll make sure no one else sits on this throne, either."

The [Four Yin Demonic Beheading Sword], the weapon that could cut apart the Star Relic's connection to a Constellation. Yoo Joonghyuk used this very sword to ceaselessly slam down on the [Absolute Throne]. He slammed down over and over again.

Soon enough, the loud 'Craaaack!' resounded out.

The night skies of <Star Stream> brightened as if a midnight sun suddenly materialised, and an explosion of messages flooded out. The storm of Probability's aftermath caused by the distortion of the scenario had begun.

I quietly extended my hand and blocked that overflowing storm.

[The world-line is dissatisfied by your excessive meddling!]

[The applicable 'Overwrite' is beyond your mastery level!]

[Portion of your Story will be lost!]

The current Yoo Joonghyuk was going through the 0th turn.

Since he wasn't a regressor, he had no information related to the future, and he couldn't regain the techniques he used in prior turns through [Inheritance].

From now on, the scenarios would only get tougher. He couldn't use [Bookmark] like me, and couldn't rely on [Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint], either.

「As that was the case, Kim Dokja knew very well what's necessary to fill that void.」

Yoo Joonghyuk would not have to go through the regression.

He'd not become the 'Secretive Plotter', and…

…And, he'd not become the tragic pilgrim wandering in between the world-lines.

Yoo Joonghyuk would get to see his deserved conclusion in this world.

[Incarnation, 'Yoo Joonghyuk' has acquired his first-ever Story!]

[Incarnation, 'Yoo Joonghyuk's' new Story has been created.]

He looked up at the sky. And also a Story taking on the form of a white tiger was looking up at me from behind him, too. It was none other than that very Story that protected me once upon a time.

[Story, 'King of a Kingless World', is born.]

I could see Yoo Joonghyuk's elated face through my disintegrating right thumb.

'Kim Dokja' should not exist in this particular story.

「Even then, this was the story Kim Dokja dearly wished to create.」

When I slowly closed my eyes, it felt like pages were floating up right before me. Ancient pages, with traces of someone already having doodled on them.

「In that moment, Kim Dokja made up his mind. He decided to personally write the story that didn't exist in the original.」

I began jotting something down above those pages.

One page, two pages – every time a page flipped by, time went by, too.

Fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth…

My fingers disappeared one by one every time a scenario was cleared.

They would regenerate some time later, but their size would always be smaller than before. I used those fingers to write the revelations – on the ending Yoo Joonghyuk from the original desired, the conclusion I wanted to see, the mistakes I made, and things I gained new understandings of.

All these stories gathered as one, and soon, became a Story.

And so, just how long passed by like this?

I slowly opened my eyes.

「Eventually, Yoo Joonghyuk of the 0th turn had reached the final pages of the scenarios.」

Chapter 524: Epilogue 1 - The World of Zero, VIII

Yoo Joonghyuk's [Splitting the Sky Sword] scythed through the air; it cut down the Constellations blocking his path, and sliced apart the Incarnations acting as their underlings.

Yoo Joonghyuk truly fought hard.

He was followed by the companions that broke past the scenarios together with him – Lee Jihye, Lee Hyunsung, Jung Heewon, Shin Yoosung, Kim Namwoon, Lee Seolhwa, Gong Pildu…

– System operation.

Seoul's 7 Kings were also together with them; King of Hidden Shadows Han Donghoon, King of Beauty Min Ji-Won.

– Go, Yoo Joonghyuk!

The King of Transcendents Jang Hayoung was also here, as well.

– We'll take care of this, Supreme King.

Not only them, but also Incarnations from other nations, such as Fei Hu and Ranvir Khan – and even his sworn enemy, Anna Croft helped him.

[Constellation, 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband', is cheering on Incarnation Yoo Joonghyuk!]

[Constellation, 'Demon-Like Judge of Fire', is…]

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon',…]

No other regression turn should be as complete as this one.

"Pacheonmaeng, we're moving out."

The Pacheonmaeng (破天盟). That was the name of the coalition Yoo Joonghyuk had created.

The conclusion I completed, as well as the blueprint laid out by the 1863rd turn's Han Sooyoung; Stories, the concentration of essence from all the regression turns found within the 'Ways of Survival', had begun telling their stories.

[Story, 'King of a Kingless World', is talking a big game!]

[Giant Story, 'Demon Realm's Spring', has begun its storytelling!]

[Giant Story, 'Season of Light and Darkness', has begun its storytelling!]

It was as if every story happening up to now existed solely for this moment.

[But, how…? You shouldn't be able to come here yet…!]

Eventually, they could see the astonished expression of the Dokkaebi King beyond the wreckage of the Final Ark. Yoo Joonghyuk and the members of Pacheonmang unhesitantly dashed towards him.

[Oh, you foolish Incarnations! Killing me has no meaning whatsoever. If <Star Stream> is destroyed, then you'll all disappear, too. A world-line with its events concluded will be abandoned. No one wants to look at such a world-line!]

The Dokkaebi King resisted desperately. As if to prove that his words were right, he utilised every single Story he possessed to fight back. However, it was not enough; he vomited out Stories and knelt down. Even as he fell, he continued to grin.

[It's all over. Soon, this world-line's destruction will commence. It's simply not feasible that the great one would wish for a story like this…]

However, contrary to his expectation, the destruction did not commence. The <Star Stream> was fine. The brows of Dokkaebi King shot up high.

[<Star Stream>'s Final Scenario has been concluded.]

[…Could it be…??]

During his final moments, Dokkaebi King looked behind him as if to comprehend a certain someone's gaze surely looking at him from beyond the expansive [Final Wall].

And right next moment, a line of text floated up over said wall.

「The legend of <Star Stream>, Supreme King Yoo Joonghyuk.」

The title card rose up on the screen. And along with a 'Beep-!', it was turned off. The now-darkened panel reflected the view of a classroom and that of children sitting closely together.

Their sparkling eyes were all focused on the face of a certain man getting ready to start his lecture. He slowly opened his mouth.

"I'm Yoo Joonghyuk."

"Children really loved that, Joonghyuk-ssi. As expected, you're really great at teaching kids."

"…They all seemed bored by my dull story, however."

Lee Seolhwa grinned wryly at Yoo Joonghyuk's monotone voice.

"That's not true."

He put his coat on without showing any visible changes in his expression.

「It had already been five years after the scenario of the 0th world ended.」

After the scenarios ended, Yoo Joonghyuk and his companions began rebuilding the world.

Han Donghoon got in touch with the government and created a new governing structure, while Lee Hyunsung and Jung Heewon went around suppressing the acts of terror from the criminal organisations.

Lee Jihye defended the country's borders and helped out with reaching agreements with Incarnations from other nations, while Lee Seolhwa and Shin Yoosung rescued orphaned children who lost their parents to the scenarios. The institution called [Star Counting Night] had been created for that purpose.

While leaving the institute, Yoo Joonghyuk noticed the young children looking up at him. They were orphans created by the Constellations, but these kids would grow up while counting the disappeared stars.

"By the way, ahjussi?"

One of the children grasped the ends of Yoo Joonghyuk's clothing. He looked back and the child, having swallowed the brave pill, was now pointing at the older man's head.

"Grey hair."

At around the seven-year mark after the scenario's conclusion, Yoo Joonghyuk got married. His partner was Lee Seolhwa.

Lee Jihye dabbing away her tears, Gong Pildu officiating in the ceremony, Jung Heewon catching the bouquet… Shin Yoosung sneaked out of her university class and sang the congratulatory song.

They didn't have children of their own. Both of them didn't want to have any.

– There are too many children needing parents in this world already.

They established the institution and looked after the orphans. It was a decision that fit their personalities perfectly.

「Time continued to tick by; ten years, fifteen…」

Just like pages flipping past faster and faster in order to reach the conclusion, the time flow of the 0th turn continued to march forward relentlessly. Yoo Joonghyuk grew older, just as he should.

More specifically, only he grew old – all because of an attribute he picked up while clearing the scenarios.

The legendary attribute, [Life Lived to Its Fullest].

During his one thousand-plus regression turn, Yoo Joonghyuk never once used this skill. It was an attribute that a regressor like him had no use for.

「An attribute that, at the cost of living a fixed lifespan, fully unleashes the user's latent talents.」

However, the current him was from the 0th turn. He had no experience earned through regressions to fall back on, nor did have much of a talent to speak of, either. And that was why he had to choose this attribute. Because only through this particular attribute could he be able to clear the remaining scenarios.

"Master, how old are you this year?" Lee Jihye asked.

"I've already forgotten about such things as my age."

"Mm, it's been 20 years since the scenarios ended, so… Oh my god. It's already…"

"Humans all grow old and die."

"Argh, master. Seriously…!"

As long as the <Star Stream>'s system existed, immortality wasn't an impossible dream. It wasn't uncommon to see beings that lived for hundreds, sometimes for thousands of years just like the Breaking the Sky Sword Saint or Kyrgios. Not only that, if you compiled enough Stories and became a Constellation, you could literally enjoy everlasting life. However, Yoo Joonghyuk didn't do that.

｢Stories without sacrifices do not exist.｣

The night sky where the Bureau no longer existed, and Constellations had fallen. While staring at such a sky, Yoo Joonghyuk continued to live in this world's days and nights.

｢Then, 25 years later.｣

And eventually, on a certain day after his hair had grown completely grey, he left the city.

"Captain, will you really seclude yourself in a backwater place like this??" Shin Yoosung asked.

"I don't enjoy noisy things."

"But, what about Seolhwa eonni??"

Yoo Joonghyuk wordlessly polished his [Splitting the Sky Sword].

In a world with nothing left to cut down, arduously devoting himself to the ways of the sword that had lost its purpose – that was Yoo Joonghyuk's chosen method of utilising his remaining life.

"Stuff like training in the ways of the sword can be done back in the Compl…"

Shin Yoosung couldn't finish her sentence, however. The clear surface of the [Splitting the Sky Sword]'s blade reflected Yoo Joonghyuk's face. No one would think of him as a man in his 60s. Despite that…

Yoo Joonghyuk would definitely die later. And Lee Seolhwa, left all alone, would have to carry on living a long, long life without him by her side.

Shin Yoosung's lips bobbed up and down several times, and just as she finally managed to open them fully, Kim Namwoon butted in first.

"Supreme King, you're now all decrepit and stuff! I guess I can finally win against you this year, right?"

He shouted out triumphantly and unfurled the bandages off his fist, then dashed towards Yoo Joonghyuk.

"Ku-waaaaahk!! My arm! My arrrrm! No, wait! My eyes!!"

Kim Namwoon was flung away in one hit; he moaned in pain and collapsed on the ground.

Companions snickered softly; the sounds of Jung Heewon and Lee Hyunsung holding hands and chatting away; the figures of Lee Jihye and Shin Yoosung bickering with each other…

I stared at all these scenes and at the same time, read the sentence overlapping above them.

「Maybe, I could have witnessed similar sights and sounds as this one.」

It might have been a bit different, though; <Star Stream> had been destroyed and the influence of its system was weakening in the world I used to live in, after all.

The people of my world would grow old, just like Yoo Joonghyuk here. And amidst my companions steadily growing older, I too would have grown old as well.

Yoo Joonghyuk's grey hair danced in the air as he watched his companions leave.

His back remained straight and tall even in his advanced age. His skin still retained its elasticity, and muscles on his arms were still strong.

Even then, his eyes no longer gleamed brightly like in the past.

「Kim Dok ja y ou 've be en here for too l ong」 [The Fourth Wall] addressed me. 「Wh en sta ying ins ide one dr eam for too l ong, it g e t s har der」

I understood what it was saying.

I was the 'Oldest Dream', and I had a duty to pay attention to all the worlds equally. However, I couldn't easily let go of this 0th turn. It felt to me that, if this story were to end here, then all the tragedies would begin anew, somehow.

In that case, if I continue to hold onto this story for as long as I can…

"Demon King of Salvation," Yoo Joonghyuk raised his head to look at me. "Are you still curious about my story?"

I hesitated a little before replying.

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation', replies he still is.]

"This world is no longer mired in scenarios. There are no stimulations, nor any irregularities. Yet, why do you still wish to watch this story?"

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation', replies that this is the story he wanted to see in the first place.]

"You're truly a strange creature."

Stories began rising up from behind Yoo Joonghyuk.

[Story, 'King of a Kingless World', is looking at the 'Demon King of Salvation.]

[Story, 'Demon Realm's Spring', is looking at the 'Demon King of Salvation.]

[Story, 'Season of Light and Darkness', is looking at the 'Demon King of Salvation.]

Stories were telling their stories while looking at me. The very same Stories that I earned once upon a time. Memories they had built up were now unfolding behind Yoo Joonghyuk's back.

The world that I designed, the one that Yoo Joonghyuk brought to reality. The 0th turn's story, completed in this manner.

"Sometimes, this peace feels like an illusion… And every now and then, I get the feeling that my life has been completed by someone else."

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation', is…]

"I didn't mean to say I'm unhappy."

Yoo Joonghyuk smiled faintly.

I dazedly stared at him for a moment there, having finally learned that he was capable of such a smile.

"I was always worried about how I should live my life."

While lightly wielding the sword in the air, Yoo Joonghyuk continued on. Every one of his sword swings contained his Story. The Incarnation who knew how to shrewdly apply the set rules, that was him. Yoo Joonghyuk might have spent his life fighting the system, but in all honesty, he was someone who'd shine even brighter when that very system was in play.

"A fight that can't be won holds no meaning to me."

His ability to analyse the situation faster than anyone, his quick wit allowing him to clearly calculate the gains and losses, and his talent at deciphering the advantages and disadvantages in a battle.

"However, I've grown curious lately. What would've happened to me if you didn't help? What kind of a life would I have lived if I didn't win?"

I knew better than anyone what kind of a life Yoo Joonghyuk lived after failing the 0th turn.

I knew all too well what would happen to him, what kind of a life he'd live, and the kind of ending he'd witness.

"You probably are aware of it already. I do not have much time left to live."

Chapter 525: Epilogue 1 - The World of Zero, IX

Yoo Joonghyuk planted his sword on the ground as he wobbled. His irises were becoming translucent next. His eyes, exhausted from fighting a lengthy battle, were losing their sights.

"If I choose you as my Constellation sponsor, will I get to finally meet you?"

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation', is shaking his head.]

"Just where are you exactly? All the stars in <Star Stream> have fallen, so from where are you watching over me?" Yoo Joonghyuk continued to mutter out. "No, wait. I know the truth already. You are… probably beyond that [Wall], aren't you."

I couldn't say anything. I didn't expect the 0th turn's Yoo Joonghyuk to be able to catch onto that. He continued to speak in the meantime.

"Something felt off to me about this world."

It was my first time hearing such a shrewd tone of voice coming from him.

"One day, I suddenly came into existence in this world."

A man who came to exist in this world without a warning.

"Without any memories of my childhood, I was suddenly cast into this world. I wandered around an illegal work site, and through sheer luck, got spotted by the director, and thus became a pro gamer. But then out of the blue, someone abandoned a child on my doorstep. A child, supposedly my younger sister."

A conveniently-crafted life, a series of adversities created solely to become a tragedy later.

"Once, I searched for my parents. However, no matter how hard I searched, I couldn't find them. Even the professionals that could unearth the president's hidden illegitimate child couldn't find my parents. It was as if such things didn't exist in this world, to begin with."

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation', is…]

"So I ask you, 'Demon King of Salvation'. Who am I?"

My heart was in pain. The fact that Yoo Joonghyuk had eventually reached that question was endlessly tormenting me.

I needed to say something. Anything…

"Does the secret of this world lie beyond the wall, where you are?"

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation', asks you if you're not happy currently.]

"I am happy," he replied without a shred of hesitation. "And that's why I'm even more curious about what lies beyond the wall."

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation', is…]

"I'm curious about the reason behind all the goodwill you've shown me. I'm also curious about the meaning of my life, where I was born, and why I had to come here. If I had one more chance…"

From somewhere, sounds similar to the ticking clock hands could be heard.

「Kim Dok ja」

I couldn't show Yoo Joonghyuk what's beyond the [Wall]. Even if I was the 'Oldest Dream', that was still impossible.

Yoo Joonghyuk continued on. "You told me this once upon a time. If I sign the contract with you, you will grant any one wish of mine. Back then, I didn't accept your offer because I was suspicious of you. However, if it's not too late…"

His fingers hovered in the air, searching for a log message that reached him in the distant past.

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation', wishes to become your Constellation sponsor.]

[Will you accept the offer?]

"I shall accept it now."

Dizziness rushed in and the shaking of my surroundings worsened.

I called out to [The Fourth Wall].

'The Fourth Wall'.

「Y ou c a n t」

It already knew what I was going to say.

The prerequisite condition needed for Yoo Joonghyuk to cross the [Final Wall] was to gather all the 'fragments of the Final Wall'.

However, [The Fourth Wall] had no intentions of transferring to Yoo Joonghyuk.

I gritted my teeth and sent a message out.

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation', says that wish can't be granted.]

"Why not?"

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation', says that it is a truly arduous path, that's why.]

"An arduous path?"

If I couldn't transfer [The Fourth Wall] to him, then there was only one option for him to see the conclusion.

[The constellation 'Demon King of Salvation', says that if you wish to cross the [Wall], you must 'regress' first.]

"Regress?"

Along with the 'Tsu-chuchuchut!' noise, my entire figure was dyed in the sparks of Probability.

The world-line was telling me this.

It was saying that I mustn't inform him of this. It said, this information wasn't something the current Yoo Joonghyuk should know.

Despite that, I bit down hard on my lip and shook off the world-line's opposition. Even if I had to sacrifice much more Probability, I wanted to show him the truth.

「1 8 6 4」

"1864? What's that supposed to mean?"

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation', says that is the number of times you must regress before you can witness the conclusion.]

Memories from the life I had lived became a Story and began unfolding next.

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation', says that even if you manage to live all those regression turns, the odds of you successfully seeing the conclusion will be extremely low.]

Not only that, the current Yoo Joonghyuk had broken free from the 'original world-line'.

He was no longer Yoo Joonghyuk from the original novel.

Time-lines had branched off, and the 'future' no longer existed.

Even if he did reach the 1864th turn, there was no guarantee that he'd meet 'Kim Dokja' in possession of [The Fourth Wall]…

「Th ere i s」

What?

「Er ase the me mo ries of th is t u r n」

Goosebumps broke out all over my skin.

「What if I give Yoo Joonghyuk the fragmented memories similar to the 'original' and send him to the next turn?」

If so, the world-line should think of this Yoo Joonghyuk as the 'original's Yoo Joonghyuk'.

He'd be incorporated back into the original's world-line, and live through the first and the second regression turns without any memories from this life.

「However, Yoo Joonghyuk would become miserable once more.」

「Why are y ou de ci ding th at?」

I slowly raised my head. Yoo Joonghyuk was still talking to me.

"I don't care even if the odds are low."

[Incarnation, 'Yoo Joonghyuk', has accepted your offer.]

The Story began its storytelling, and the starlights seemed to extend even further.

[Your Incarnation is waiting for you to say something.]

I remained silent for a long time. And eventually, I came to a decision.

I had no choice but to tell him.

I slowly regulated my breath and opened my mouth.

[Yoo Joonghyuk.]

Been a while since I spoke in my true voice. An incredible storm of Sparks raged on around me. I tried to suppress the incoming waves as much as possible, yet it was still this bad.

Yoo Joonghyuk opened his eyes wide and looked up at the sky. "Was that your real voice?"

[That's right.]

"…I can hear it surprisingly well."

Yoo Joonghyuk, going slowly deaf, muttered softly. A faint crease spread over the old man Yoo Joonghyuk's expression. I pretended to not see that and spoke.

[I can send you back. However, if that happens, I won't be able to help you from the next turn onwards.]

The only way to make him reject the offer was to tell him the truth.

[You'll have to use nothing but your own powers to break past the scenarios. Those scenarios will be far worse than you can ever imagine, and… And, you might end up encountering something you didn't want to at the conclusion you'd eventually reach.]

I thought back to Yoo Joonghyuk. I thought back to the sorrows of the 3rd turn, the anguish of the 4th, and the despair of the 'Secretive Plotter'.

[And if you do choose 'regression', then… You will lose the majority of your memories as you cross over.]

Those words caused the soft sounds of Yoo Joonghyuk sucking in his breath to come out. No matter how resolute his determination might be, this one should be a hard pill to swallow.

[Only the tiniest fragmented memories from the scenarios will remain in you.]

"…"

[Meaning, everything precious to you will disappear. Lee Seolhwa you remember, Lee Hyunsung, Lee Jihye, all of them will…]

"Just because I will forget about them, that doesn't mean they'll suddenly stop existing."

I shut my mouth then.

"They definitely continue to live in this world."

「They definitely continue to live in this world.」

Like branding a seal, those words slammed into a part of my head and invaded deep inside.

It felt as if a gigantic hand of fate was pouncing upon me.

「At that moment, Kim Dokja realized that this was the true completion of the 0th turn.」

The reason why there was no trace of the 'Oldest Dream' in the 0th turn. The reason why, despite that fact, Yoo Joonghyuk still managed to cross over to the first and then, to the second regression turns. Maybe it was…

[…You dumb bastard.]

I gathered my hands and used the power to manipulate the dream gathered in me.

The storm of Probability's aftermath crashing in caused my whole arm to scream in pain as if it was getting twisted and torn off from my body. I recalled all of Yoo Joonghyuk's regression turns that I knew. I gathered all the lives he had led, as well as the Stories I knew, and created a certain Stigma.

A Stigma that acted as the motive power of this world, as well as the source of all of Yoo Joonghyuk's tragedies.

[Stigma, 'Regression', has been generated!]

[Your Stigma has been transferred to your Incarnation!]

Looking satisfied, Yoo Joonghyuk accepted the Stigma.

[Stigma, 'Regression Lv.1', is getting ready to activate.]

"You said earlier that I'll lose my memories."

[…I did.]

"Will I lose everything related to you, too?"

I hesitated with my answer. Yoo Joonghyuk asked me again.

"Even all that convenient information you told me, too?"

[…Yes.]

"I see."

[If you regret it, then it's not too late to…]

"You also said you won't help me from the next regression turn onwards."

[I can't help you.]

"It's fine to help, however."

[Even if I want to, I can't.]

"I heard that the scenarios exist not just for the Incarnations, but Constellations, as well. Maybe, it was the same story for you."

[…]

"Tell me, you fool. If I continue to regress, will I ever get to meet you again?"

*

I couldn't say anything. These were utterances of someone who didn't know anything. In every sense of the word, he was the 0th turn's dumbass continuously babbling on while having no clue about his own future.

Along with the words that hadn't been said yet, Yoo Joonghyuk's ears began disappearing.

「The night sky was reflected in Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes.」

As if he was a child wondering about his origins, Yoo Joonghyuk estimated where in the sky the [Wall] might be and extended his hand towards it.

He'd become the 'Secretive Plotter' someday, and…

…And at the same time, also become the 1864th turn's Yoo Joonghyuk that I knew.

He'd grow to resent me, and eventually reach the truth of this world.

[Stigma, 'Regression Lv.1', is activating!]

[You have agreed to the activation of the Stigma.]

Yoo Joonghyuk's body began scattering away little by little. His arms, his legs, and then, his torso, too.

During the final moments, he called out to me.

"Demon King of Salvation."

With a truly strange and mystifying expression…

"I shall pray that you may continue to exist somewhere, too."

…Yoo Joonghyuk's Incarnation body scattered into silvery powder and he left this world-line.

[The influence of the applicable world-line's 'Overwrite' function does not extend towards the character 'Yoo Joonghyuk's' next regression turn.]

[Your Incarnation has forgotten your Modifier.]

[Your Incarnation has forgotten all memories related to you.]

[All information related to you are now marked as '???']

All of his memories that couldn't be recorded anywhere would now be lost forever.

In that case, where would all those memories go?

I stared at the flickering light for a very long time.

"Hey, Yoo Joonghyuk! Why aren't you saying anything?!"

Yoo Joonghyuk ended up staggering after receiving a loud impact to the back of his head.

He turned around to discover Han Sooyoung and her deep scowl.

"I said, how do we do this 'group regression' thing?"

"I can suddenly remember."

"Remember what?"

Yoo Joonghyuk stared back with a stupid face, and muttered in her direction.

"The 0th turn's memories."

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* Official novel illustration (canonical)

@1L9I2Aa8UCL0IGJ

*

Chapter 526: Epilogue 2 - Not found anywhere, I

「Hospital room, 9:12 AM」

– Gather in front of the Complex's eastern entrance 19:00 tomorrow. We'll go rescue Kim Dokja beyond the [Final Wall].

Jung Heewon received that text message last night. The sender was Han Sooyoung. As always, her text came across as rather curt.

After receiving that text, she dazedly stared outside the window for a long while.

「Jung Heewon didn't want to go back to the scenario.」

She fought harder than any other Incarnations. She wished to save Kim Dokja more than anyone, and also badly wanted to end the scenarios, too. And eventually, she reached this place.

「The Final Wall she saw at the closing pages of the scenario.」

Even now, closing her eyes brought back all those vivid memories. The memories of fighting alongside Kim Dokja after he became the 'Enemy of the Story'.

She survived the horrifying flood of Stories by cutting down many things over and over again. They destroyed the wall, and she reached her own last stop.

「However, Han Sooyoung was now telling her to get on that train one more time.」

She was telling her to go to where the [Final Wall] was once more.

She was saying that they had left something behind in the train as they disembarked.

"Heewon-ssi."

Jung Heewon only then noticed her trembling hand gripping the curtain.

"Hyunsung-ssi, did you also get it?"

"Yes."

"What do you think?"

"…Dokja-ssi we remember is right here with us."

The 'Kim Dokja' they remembered was currently asleep. His lashes that forgot all the tragedies of this world quivered a little. Jung Heewon quietly placed her hand over his eyes.

Some tragedies would end up disappearing just because they weren't seen.

「This Kim Dokja was the 'Kim Dokja' they remembered.」

Kim Dokja that survived Geumho Station, Chungmuro, Gwanghwamun, the Demon Realm, Olympus, and the Journey to the West, and even the Final Wall together with everyone, was right before her. He remembered the name of Jung Heewon's sword, and he also remembered Lee Hyunsung's trauma. He remembered the promise he made with his companions.

So, technically speaking, this was the 'Kim Dokja' they loved, and the one she wanted to protect.

One would wonder if it was fine to divide a person so conveniently like that, but this problem wasn't about the issue of 'Avatar'. From the get-go, the meaning of liking someone was that you liked certain parts of that person.

The blood staining Kim Dokja's wound emitted 'Pa-susu' noise and evaporated into smoke.

The crumbling Stories wandered in the air, before scattering outside the windows and into the sky above. Jung Heewon didn't know where those Stories were heading off to. It might be that they were extinguished forever, or perhaps they could be returning to other Kim Dokja.

「Kim Dokja who remembered the 'Ways of Survival', who always loved that one single story.」

Jung Heewon didn't know anything about such Kim Dokja.

No one could love something they didn't know much about.

"Hyunsung-ssi."

"Yes?"

"If Dokja-ssi was us, what would he have done?"

Lee Hyunsung didn't reply for a long time.

「Hospital room, 1:31 PM」

As if many people had come to visit already, lots of flowers and gifts were neatly placed on top of the hospital room's table. They were gifts prepared for the moment when Kim Dokja finally woke up.

Jang Hayoung fidgeted with the flower petal for a bit, before slowly making her way towards Kim Dokja.

"You're the Kim Dokja I remember, right? Kim Dokja who saved me back in the Demon Realm."

The clock placed near his head was ticking by.

The man who made the 73rd Demon Realm's frozen time flow forward again.

The man who made her, despairing before the wall of potential, move forward again.

The Demon King of Salvation.

"Actually, I didn't want to come back to Earth back then." Jang Hayoung smiled bitterly and spoke. "I didn't have any good memories of this place."

She was a dimension traveller.

As was the case with most dimension hoppers, the process itself was uncertain. One day, as she was working overtime deep into the night like always, she collapsed while sensing a sudden crippling pain in her heart. The moment her breathing cut out, she thought 'I've lived too hard', and if there was next life, she swore inwardly that she'd never 'work hard ever again'. And when she opened her eyes, she found herself in the Demon Realm.

Jang Hayoung watched the residents of the Complex rushing somewhere to eat their lunch and murmured. "I ended up working hard again because of you."

「Hospital room, 6:24 PM」

"Toss it. It's my turn now."

Along with Lee Gilyoung's words, Shin Yoosung flipped a 100 Won coin upwards. It spun around in the air and landed back on the back of her hand. It was heads.

"How many times did we toss this thing?" Lee Gilyoung asked.

"99."

"Then, it's 49 against 50."

Lee Gilyoung dusted his hands and stood up from his spot, prompting Lee Jihye sitting on the guardian's bed to ask. "You guys, you're still making that wager? That wager about Dokja ahjussi still being alive if it's heads or something?"

"What are you talking about? Ahjussi is alive right here, isn't he?"

"Okay, so what wager is it this time?"

The children didn't reply. Lee Jihye frowned. "You two, do you really believe that claim?"

"What do you mean?"

"That story about the existence of another Dokja ahjussi that we don't know about. About how he didn't leave the subway train…"

The two kids didn't reply again. Lee Jihye, dazedly looking at Kim Dokja, suddenly jumped up from her spot and pointed at him. "This ahjussi is the Dokja ahjussi I know of, okay?"

"…"

"He's the ahjussi who saved you and me, got that?"

"We know."

"You think that's all?"

Lee Jihye continued to mouth off why this Dokja was the real deal.

But strangely enough, she felt Kim Dokja was getting even further away from her as her arguments continued on.

"And, and also…"

Lee Jihye grasped Kim Dokja's pale hand tightly.

It just didn't feel real to her. She barely managed to grow older along with the owner of this hand. She learned of losing someone precious, and was taught the values she needed to protect. And she somehow managed to start breathing again in this messed-up world.

Kim Dokja too, must've learned all those from someone else.

Shin Yoosung muttered out. "…Ahjussi must've had a childhood too."

The founding Story for the 'Demon King of Salvation' in <Star Stream> was the 'King of a Kingless World'. However, that was the beginning of the 'Demon King of Salvation', not Kim Dokja's.

「Most likely, the human Kim Dokja's beginning wasn't as grandiose.」

In order to exist with the name of Kim Dokja, what kind of stories did Kim Dokja have to live through?

"Eonni." Shin Sooyoung asked again.

"What now?"

"Are you planning to go tomorrow?"

"We agreed not to, didn't we?"

"But, you're still going, right?"

"No, I won't. I don't want to go back to the scenarios again."

Lee Jihye looked at the heads of the children from above that had grown taller before she even realized it.

They were kids she still had to look after.

Shin Yoosung and Lee Gilyoung quietly looked up at her, before the girl extended her hand out.

"Noona, you want to try it?" Lee Gilyoung asked.

Lee Jihye wordlessly stared at the coin gripped in her hand. Then, slowly tossed it up in the air. It spun around and her palm grasped it again. However, she was unable to open her hand.

"Eonni?"

The sensation of the coin captured in her hand; she couldn't tell whether it was heads or tails, but without a doubt, the coin did exist.

"Are you alright?"

Lee Jihye felt the texture of the coin in her hand for the longest time.

「Hospital room, 10:48 PM.」

The first person to open her mouth was Yoo Sangah.

"The Story level is still dropping lower."

As if the break down of a lifeform that should've normally taken several decades was happening at once, Kim Dokja's blood continued to evaporate. Lee Sookyung asked. "Seolhwa-ssi, is there any way to…?"

"As of now…"

"Can't we go with the method used to save both of us? Such as, repairing the Stories."

Lee Seolhwa sighed softly and spoke while shifting her gaze in Yoo Sangah's direction.

"We chose the Story repair method for both Sookyung-ssi and Seolhwa-ssi because the <Star Stream>'s system was functioning properly back then."

It was a world where skills and Stigmata existed. Everything in the world acted as the components of stories. And so, the 'treatment' in such a world was all about repairing the Stories.

"Recently, the skills or Stories have stopped activating as before. Even Aileen-ssi and I are gradually losing our powers," said Lee Seolhwa

"…Is that because the <Star Stream>'s influence is disappearing?"

"With how things are like now, that's the likeliest possibility."

"The reason why Dokja-ssi's wounds aren't healing must be of a similar nature."

Kim Dokja before their eyes was an existence created out of the [Avatar] skill. And the [Avatar] was a skill belonging to <Star Stream> system.

Lee Seolhwa made her final diagnosis. "Dokja-ssi will eventually disappear if he remains in this place."

Lee Sookyung wordlessly stared at Kim Dokja.

The world he spent all of his life to establish was now killing him. As if, the world where the stories had ended no longer needed Kim Dokja.

Lee Sookyung reached out and touched the sleeping Kim Dokja's cheek with her hand. "…If I knew you'd end up like this, maybe I should've stopped you back then."

The moment her extended hand touched his cheek, a Story bloomed between the two. It was the story of two people fighting inside the [Dark Castle]. Lee Sookyung still remembered what happened back then.

His face looking back at her through [The Fourth Wall] between them; a wall always existed between the two. However, Kim Dokja knocking on that wall before she could was the first time he had ever done that.

Even if she turned back the clock, she'd still fail at stopping her son.

Lee Sookyung stared at Kim Dokja for a long time before holding her son's hand, a hand that always loved books. Most likely, the other Kim Dokja was still busily 'scrolling' with these very hands while riding on the subway.

"Maybe I shouldn't have given you the name of Dokja."

「Industrial Complex eastern entrance, 8:00 PM.」

While standing like a pair of trees with mismatching height, Han Sooyoung and Yoo Joonghyuk were waiting for their companions to arrive. Cold winter winds moistened their cheeks, and warm breath leaked out of their mouth.

Han Sooyoung shoved her hands inside the parka and grumbled. "…No one's coming."

They figured that something like this might happen. Han Sooyoung elbowed Yoo Joonghyuk on the side.

"Hey, isn't it fine with just us? If we combine my ingenious brain and your nonsensical fighting prowess, then…"

"It's impossible for us two."

"Argh, why not? You've been fine so far all alone, right? But this time, it'd be two of us, you know?"

Rather than replying, Yoo Joonghyuk quietly looked at his own hand. A transparent ring was swirling around above that very hand.

[Stigma, 'Regression' is evolving.]

The countless regression turns he lived through were writhing within that ring.

"You have no idea what it means to 'regress'," said Yoo Joonghyuk, as he slowly distorted the ring within his palm. "You don't know what happens every time I go through the regression."

Stories grasped tightly within his fist howled out in agony.

Sentences were exploding like insect eggs. Those were screams of the ones that repeatedly died many times throughout his life.

"There is no such thing as the perfect regression, just like how there can be no Story without sacrifices. If I regress again this time…"

More than likely, he'd lose someone again.

The world would sink into yet another tragedy.

The world about to be created in order to save Kim Dokja could be destroyed without managing to save anyone, instead. Han Sooyoung replied. "I know that. Also…"

She shifted her gaze over to the Complex's entrance and continued on. Since when was it? Several lengthy shadows were drawing closer to them under the cold wintery light.

"Those people also know it, too."

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* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)

Chapter 527: Epilogue 2 - Not found anywhere, II

Han Sooyoung explained the plan in clear, concise words.

One, in order to rescue Kim Dokja, they had to cross the [Final Wall].

Two, to cross the [Final Wall], they needed a total of five [fragments].

Three, the only remaining fragment in this world-line was [The Fourth Wall] Kim Dokja's Avatar possessed.

Four, to acquire the other four fragments, they were to perform 'group regression' and cross over to another world-line.

The companions stared at each other with slightly dazed expressions after hearing that very concise plan.

The first one to ask was Lee Jihye. "…Will that even be possible?"

"This guy said it is, so I'm sure it will be," replied Han Sooyoung.

After receiving her gaze, Yoo Joonghyuk nodded his head. "It's possible. However, my Stigma hasn't finished evolving yet, so it might take a little while longer. We needed time to prepare ourselves, anyway."

"…Hold on. This 'regression' you speak of, Master, just what is the principle behind it?"

"When I activate the regression, we will all return to the past, to the starting point of the scenarios."

"Then, what about our own world?"

"A brand new world-line separate from this one will be created. If you want to count the regression number, then… It'll be the 1865th turn."

The 1865th world-line.

It was such a gob-smacking number that the companions could only blink their eyes in stupefaction.

"So, you're saying we should give it another shot over there."

As if she had already expected something like this before coming here, Jung Heewon's expression as she said those words was filled with sheer determination. However, not everyone held the same view as her.

"According to my knowledge, your 'regression' this time had been a little special, wasn't it?" Yoo Sangah was the one saying these words. "I read about 'regressions' inside Dokja-ssi's library so I know a few things about it, as well. All of your regressions until now had been based on the worldview of the 'Ways of Survival'. However, this regression turn was a little bit special, wasn't it."

Other companions seemed to have finally realized, at least a little bit, what she was talking about.

The current 'world-line' was different from Yoo Joonghyuk's past regressions. It was the world-line brought to life by Yoo Joonghyuk's desire to see the 'end'.

A portion of [The Fourth Wall] caved in, and that resulted in a world where reality and fiction combined into one. Its proof was that this regression turn featured some people who weren't characters from the 'Ways of Survival'.

"Can all of us really go back together? Can you assure us that'll be the case?"

If Yoo Joonghyuk's 'regression' activated with the 'Ways of Survival' as its operational criteria, then several of the companions, such as Yoo Sangah and Lee Gilyoung, couldn't accompany him.

Yoo Joonghyuk slowly blinked his eyes and replied. "Regression will activate with the world-line that I am currently in as its operational criteria."

"That means this 'Dokja-ssi' can travel with us, too."

Yoo Sangah pointed to Kim Dokja lying on the hospital bed behind them.

The reason why this world's Kim Dokja was dying had to do with the power of the system weakening gradually. However, if they could take this Kim Dokja with them through [Group Regression], then he'd go under <Star Stream>'s system once more.

Yoo Joonghyuk lightly nodded his head. "…Probably."

"Well, it's settled, then. Anyone not agreeing to it, raise your hands."

Shin Yoosung cautiously raised her hand at Han Sooyoung's cocky tone of voice indicating that she didn't think anyone would oppose the decision.

"Argh, what do you think you are doing?" Han Sooyoung asked back.

"…I'm not sure if this is the right thing to do. Didn't ahjussi want Joonghyuk ahjussi to stop regressing?"

"That idiot never really cared about what we wanted, anyway. Even steven, I say."

"If Joonghyuk ahjussi regresses, scenarios will begin in the world again. Lots of people will die. And they'll be thrown into tragedies again. Constellations will use people as their toys… And many won't even get to clear the first scenario."

Shin Yoosung was right.

Perhaps, one could argue that she was the Incarnation who understood 'Kim Dokja's' thoughts better than anyone among the companions.

And for sure, he probably didn't want to create such misery.

However, Han Sooyoung's thoughts were different. "And so, you think 'misery' won't happen if we don't regress?"

"Excuse me?"

Han Sooyoung sighed lightly and looked up at the empty air. "Hey, you. Just for how long are you going to sit back and spectate?"

At the end of that question, a ball of fine hair suddenly popped up in the air.

[Bah-aht?]

Han Sooyoung tutted unhappily in the direction of Biyoo employing the innocent-looking puppy-eyes tactic. "You and that thing again."

That prompted Yoo Joonghyuk to say something. "Biyoo."

Biyoo dry-coughed a bit before opening her mouth. [Whether you regress or not, other world-lines will continue to be destroyed.]

Biyoo's fluent Korean caused Shin Yoosung's jaw to drop.

She already knew that the small Dokkaebi could speak. But this would be the first time since the subway that they got to converse at length.

"…How do you know that?"

[Because I'm the 'Dokkaebi King' now, that's why.]

After going 'Ahem!', Biyoo then pounded her chest with that small arm of hers.

Not only was she not a Dokkaebi affiliated with the Bureau, but she also happened to be one that inherited the Dokkaebi King's <Star Stream> in full, too.

The only reason why the <Star Stream>'s influence persisted at all was because of her, and at the same time, its gradual disappearance was the result of no Dokkaebis other than Biyoo currently existing.

[You may not be aware of this, but world-lines are being born every minute and every second.]

"…Every minute and second?"

[That's right. Whenever an existence in a world makes a decision on something, a brand new world-line will be born. Every time you flipped that coin, Yoosung-ah, a new world-line was born and got destroyed.]

The world-lines were basically like a tree's branches that got divided whenever choices were made, Biyoo explained.

[The 'regression' is simply a special method of choosing 'world-lines', that's all. It's like, you're returning to the point in time when the choice was made to start a new branch.]

It was a head-trip of a revelation.

"In that case, just how many worlds, until now…"

Biyoo opened her mouth again as if she had already read the vast, boundless despair of the gathered companions. […Only Father would know that.]

'Father'.

There could only ever be one person that Biyoo would refer to as her 'father' in all of the world-lines.

The Constellation responsible for establishing <Kim Dokja's Company>.

And the existence that ended up becoming this universe's 'Oldest Dream'.

[You can only change one world-line out of all the countless others out there.]

The companions earnestly started cooking up their plan on the following day.

Project <Capture the Squid>. Han Sooyoung came up with that title.

"What was the standard of 'lifeform' as accepted by <Star Stream>, again?"

Since they all decided to 'regress' once more, they had to come up with a truly perfect plan.

The companions often discussed the methods to thoroughly and completely conquer the scenarios, and the one topic their opinions seemed to clash far more than any other was the 'first scenario'.

"What about germs? Germs are also lifeforms, aren't they? If you spray hydrochloric acid on a hand, wouldn't you get, like, ten thousand Coins?"

"If such a thing was accepted, then a person doing nothing should've survived, too. Our bodies kill germs in real-time, you know."

"Some people survived without doing anything, though."

"We can't afford to let fate decide for us. We definitely need to kill something."

"I killed a grasshopper to survive back then. And I heard Dokja hyung even resorted to breaking grasshopper eggs to earn Coins."

Han Sooyoung quietly listening to the various opinions began jotting them down on the memo.

"So, then. Insect eggs are counted as lifeforms in <Star Stream>'s standards."

"Why don't the germs count, though?"

"I think it has something to do with you actually being able to perceive the taking of life. Should we ask Biyoo about it?"

Even the 'Team Anna' featuring Selena Kim and Iris was added to the mix, and the strategy meeting became even livelier than before.

"This route is the best one to take during here."

"…No, hang on. This one's better. According to my [Predictive Plagiarism] …"

Kim Dokja didn't exist in the next regression turn waiting for them. However, that didn't mean they knew nothing, either.

Yoo Joonghyuk was in possession of the 1863rd turn's memories he got from the 'Secretive Plotter', and…

Han Sooyoung possessed the [Predictive Plagiarism].

And Yoo Sangah had read the records within [The Fourth Wall]'s library.

「And finally, they were the only beings that managed to go beyond the [Final Wall].」

Han Sooyoung was able to breathe again after the first meeting came to an end. It had been only a week; according to Yoo Joonghyuk, the 'group regression' would only be available in a month's time from now.

The companions sometimes argued with each other over the methods of clearing scenarios.

"The 「Greatest Sacrificial Lamb」. You gotta definitely…"

"Did you forget that Dokja-ssi died back then? If you do it this way…"

They hated the scenario more than anyone out there.

Even then, even as they discussed it at length, the companions seemed excited about something, somehow.

Why was this? They regained their reality by barely surviving past the scenarios, yet how could they be so jovial when discussing a plan to return to the 'scenarios'?

「Reality didn't refer to a specific 'place'.」

Maybe this was because all of them couldn't forget about a certain someone.

Maybe, they just couldn't forget the time they spent together with that certain someone to survive the horrifying tragedy.

"I still remember everything about the [Cinema Dungeon]. Dokja-ssi did this here…"

The locations where each of the companions joined the group might have been different. The time they remembered, and the 'Kim Dokja' they remembered, were also different.

Despite all that, just like how Yoo Joonghyuk's numerous regression turns eventually gathered to become 'one person', it was a similar story for Kim Dokja, as well.

"The [Absolute Throne]. According to Dokja hyung's words…"

Parts of Kim Dokja different people liked gathered to become one Kim Dokja. And…

"…I miss it back then."

…And Kim Dokja's parts gathered in that manner caused the companions to start loving the other parts still unfamiliar to them.

Han Sooyoung slowly turned her head and her eyes caught the figure of Yoo Joonghyuk sitting in a lotus position. Golden rings were looping around his entire body as he trained hard in order to evolve his Stigma.

Han Sooyoung wordlessly observed him for a while, before asking a question. "Hey. I was curious about something."

"I'm concentrating, so stop bothering me."

"You told me earlier that you recalled the memories from the 0th turn, didn't you?"

One of the golden rings went out of the loop. As faint sparks danced around him, Yoo Joonghyuk cracked open his eyelids just a little.

Han Sooyoung grinned and asked again. "What exactly did you remember?"

He hesitated for a long time before replying. "Kim Dokja was there."

"Wha? Seriously?"

"That's why I became certain. Certain that Kim Dokja was still alive as the 'Oldest Dream'."

"What was he doing there, anyway?"

"I can't remember everything, but…" Yoo Joonghyuk scowled heavily and while looking at his [Black Heavenly Demon Sword], spoke in a seething tone of voice. "I know for certain that he hit me in the back of my head."

I opened my eyes while sensing the clunking, noisy vibration of the subway train.

「I t's ok to sl eep mo re Kim Dok ja」

"I've slept enough."

I stretched my heavy-feeling limbs, and sensed the vitality return slowly to the rest of my body.

Most of the powers I spent watching the 0th turn had been recovered. The right arm I sacrificed in order to facilitate Yoo Joonghyuk's regression had almost fully regrown by now, too.

But for some reason, it felt as if my whole body was lighter than before. Should I say that my body size had shrunken overall?

「Yoo Joonghyuk began his second life.」

Yoo Joonghyuk as he lived through the first turn was now reflected on the display panel.

I recalled his figure as he was leaving the 0th turn. Even though he had reached the most ideal conclusion that I could think of, he still chose to regress.

To find out the reason why he was born into this world.

To find the cause behind his existence in this reality.

"The Fourth Wall."

「Ng」

"If every creature was born because someone had 'read' them… You think there is an existence reading about me somewhere, too?"

[The Fourth Wall] didn't reply. Maybe, even it also had no clue about this topic.

I began imagining the 'other reader' observing me from somewhere. However, it was harder than I thought. Just like how it was with the first 'Oldest Dream', a god could very well be a helpless, powerless creature. It could even be someone that I recognised, too.

Maybe it was one of the <Kim Dokja's Company>'s members?

Could it be that I existed in this place because they were imagining about me?

「Wan na l o o k?」

I shifted my gaze towards the screen displaying Yoo Joonghyuk's 1st turn.
"Maybe later. I still have lots of other world-lines to look at, after all."

It was around then that the subway's speed began decreasing gradually.

[The train will be flying over the outskirts of the dream.]

A portion of the screens was switched off, and the panoramic view of the universe was shown outside the windows, instead.

Even before I could ask, [The Fourth Wall] spoke first.

「Uni ver se's ou ts kir ts, bor der zo nes of oth er dim en sio ns」

Faint rays of light could be spied within the universe's pitch-black night skies.

For sure, this seemed quite different from the <Star Stream>'s universe.
Because this particular universe was shaped like a warped tree.

"…What's over there? Are there universes different than mine?"

「'Star Stream' is j u s t one of ma ny wo rldv iews in the gr eater uni ver se」

[Currently, the train is flying past the outskirts of 'Tree of Illusion'.]

[Currently, the train is passing through the Dark Dimension's time axis.]

The Tree of Illusion. That seemed like the name of the tree over there.

…Was I mistaken, though? I thought I heard that name before somewhere.

"Can we go there?"

「Too dan ger ous so bet ter not」

"Is there a 'Oldest Dream' over there, too?"

「Th ere is but dif fer ent n a m e」

Numerous roots extending well below, stems created out of countless souls, and way above them all, branches assimilated into the night sky. The roots and branches circled around the vast distance of the universe to connect with each other, and something resembling a massive eye was in the middle – a lone eye, illuminating the universe with boiling, licking flames. The moment my gaze met that eye's, I was overcome with this inexplicable chill.

[A problem has occurred in the system!]

The subway's speed rapidly fell along with the loud clunking noise. Lights within the train flickered and died without warning, and a metallic screech reverberated within. This was almost the same as back when the first scenario was issued. Loud ringing exploded in my ears, soon followed by a bizarre machine-like grinding noise next.

Something was approaching the window of the subway.

「Kim Dok ja dan ger」

And then, I saw a single ray of light.

「Oth er di men sion's ab so lu te be ing」

At the end of that ray of light was a single blade. This light sliced past the Dark Stratum and flew straight in, seemingly splitting the entirety of the universe in the process. I clearly witnessed what that technique was.

That was 'Stab'.

KWA-BOOOM!!

I was thrown ungainly to the floor as the explosion went off.

I reflexively awakened my Stories and hurriedly raised my head, only to discover the sword that had already broken past the train's entrance. It was a sword with a blade darker than the darkness itself. And a naked man was standing there glaring at me, his hand gripping that very sword.

"You bastard, are you the <<Big Brother>>?"

Chapter 528: Epilogue 2 - Not found anywhere, III

I could only stare at the buck-naked man in sheer stupefaction.

This situation was proving to be really difficult to comprehend.

"I asked you whether you are the <<Big Brother>> or not."

"…No, hang on a minute. I'm the one with questions here. Just who are you? And what is this <<Big Brother>>?"

"It seems that you are not the <<Big Brother>>. But, how did you break past the Time Fall and enter here? Besides, what is this train? A subway… Is this yet another type of Tower of Nightmares? How does it even operate?"

This guy, words were obviously not getting through to him.

To think, he'd damage someone else's train and barge inside, only to start yapping on and on about his own stuff.

I activated the [Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint] right away. And then, bore witness to a message I had never seen before.

[Applicable individual is a 'Character' from a worldview you are not familiar with.]

…A 'Character' from a worldview I wasn't familiar with?

Almost at the same time, bright light suddenly shone out from the naked man's eyes.

[Someone is activating a power not registered with the system!]

Circular disks were vigorously spinning above his retinas.

[An existence of another dimension is spying on your true nature!]

[Warning! This power cannot be fully blocked by 'The Fourth Wall'!]

…Wha?

Tsu-chuchuchut!

Along with the sparks going wild in front of my eyes, all the Stories within me exploded forth as if to resist the opposition's power. The ones that reacted most viscerally were…

[Stigma 'Regression's' essence is writhing.]

[Story, 'Hell of Eternity', is baring its fangs!]

In an instant, a portion of subway's interior transformed into the view of the hellish landscape Yoo Joonghyuk had lived through. The naked man looked at the world submerged in crimson hue and formed a stunned expression.

"This 'inherent world' is… Could it be, you're a regressor?"

…Inherent world?

I was about to throw a tackle, saying that that sounded like what Kim Namwoon might say. But then, the man's black sword suddenly began quivering with hatred.

"You are a bastard that turned his back on reality. So, die."

Just as the chilling light permeating within his blade edge moved towards me…

[The train is re-entering its normal tracks.]

[The authority of the 'Oldest Dream' is activating!]

[The system is ejecting the foreign matter found within!]

Along with the 'Shu-wuwuk!' noise, the man pointing his sword at me was rapidly sucked out towards the exit.

"You dare!"

However, he stabbed his sword into the exit and held on, resolutely enduring the train's acceleration.

It was right at that moment that my body was transferred to another section of the subway.

[Emergency combat system is activating!]

[A portion of the subway used in the ejection will be discarded.]

I looked back to discover the tail section of the train that naked man was clinging onto had separated from the rest and was now drifting away into the universe. And the furious man began dashing in my direction next.

That figure of the man, with the muscles in his entire body ballooning up, gave me this sense of inexplicable terror.

"Hurry up! That bastard is coming after us!"

「Don t wo rry that g uy ca n't es cap e fr om the ti me a x is」

That man chased after the subway at a frightening turn of speed, but was unable to climb aboard again. It was as if a transparent wall existed between him and the train. He continued to diligently run on the train tracks, but from a certain moment on, he stopped his pounding steps and glared quietly in this direction.

Only after that dude's figure had grown very far away was I able to breathe a sigh of relief.

"…Just what was that?"

「But ch er of Mo nar chs Jae hwan」

…Butcher of Monarchs??

「A mon ster that tra ined for sev eral bil lion ye ars in the ti me ax is」

I momentarily doubted my own hearing.

"How many years did you say?"

「I al so don t kn ow exa ctly he exi sted be fore I was cre ated」

That guy was older than [The Fourth Wall]? I was getting goosebumps just from the mere idea of that incredible length of time.

Could a human being endure billions of years without going insane? …No, hang on a second. He didn't seem quite right in his head, actually.

"Why was he trapped in there for billions of years, though?"

「To des troy the sy stem of the uni ver se he bel ongs to」

"We are not going to run into him again, are we?"

Maybe [The Fourth Wall] was too tired, as there was no reply. It must've been busy fixing the damaged train.

I dusted my coat, the one where the sword belonging to a crazy bastard named Jae-Hwan had brushed past a moment earlier. Now that was truly a gob-smacking Stab, alright. No Constellation or Transcendent I've met so far would be able to perform such a powerful stabbing attack.

Would billions of years leave a human in that wretched state?

The restoration of the system must've been completed, as Stories from world-lines reappeared one by one on the train's windows. Yoo Joonghyuk from the 1st turn shooting a terrifying glare at the heavens was among them. I quietly glared back at him for a little while, but suddenly grew scared of something.

"The Fourth Wall."

「What」

"…How old is Yoo Joonghyuk now?"

"We depart in a week's time."

Finally, Yoo Joonghyuk's Stigma finished its evolution. People who agreed to participate in the Project <Capture the Squid> began preparing for their departure.

"Aileen-ssi, Bok-Sun-ssi, Yeong-Ran-ssi. We'll leave the Complex in your care."

"I see. So you decided to go as well."

Lee Sookyung smiled faintly as people bade them goodbye. "Yes."

However, not everyone decided to travel with them.

"We can't go."

A portion of 'Team Anna', including 'Anna Croft' herself, chose to remain in this world-line.

"The system is gradually weakening, and this world is the closest to the conclusion that I'd been thinking of. That's why we'll remain in this world. However, there is someone who wishes to travel with you among our team, so… if it's not too much trouble, can you accept her, please?" Anna Croft asked.

The sole person from Team Anna joining the <Capture the Squid> was none other than 'Selena Kim'. She smiled awkwardly and briefly explained that there was a debt she had to repay Kim Dokja no matter what.

Han Sooyoung confirmed for the last time. "Is there anyone else? Is this everyone from the Industrial Complex?"

Rather unexpectedly, the person who hesitantly raised his hand was Han Myungoh.

"What's this, ahjussi? You're obviously going, right?"

"I've raised my hand to tell you that I can't go."

"…What?"

She knew that the original relationship between Han Myungoh and Kim Dokja wasn't very amicable. However, she figured that, as they experienced the scenarios together, they would've gotten a bit friendlier, but this…

"I can't go."

Only after hearing those words did Han Sooyoung realize that he was holding the hand of a young girl.

「In this regression turn, there were some people they simply couldn't travel with.」

Han Sooyoung quietly looked into the girl's face. Outwardly, she seemed to be in her teens, but her mental age probably hadn't even reached five yet.

Children who were born after the scenarios began couldn't accompany them during the regression. Because this child at least didn't exist back at the beginning.

Han Sooyoung shifted her gaze over to Han Myungoh's aged face, before opening her mouth. "Got it. Ahjussi, you can stay."

"I'll leave Dokja-ssi in your hands."

"You worry about yourself first. And since you're going to stay behind, take care of the Complex's matters, too. You will run into a shortage of manpower after we leave. If I catch you playing video games in some dark corner somewhere, I'm gonna jump across the world-lines and kick your ass, got that?"

It was then multiple vehicles rushed in from the distance. Waves of crowd jumped out of their black sedans and hurriedly crashed in like the incoming tide.

"Representative Han Sooyoung-nim! Please grant us an interview!"

Han Sooyoung frowned deeply.

"Is it true that you're planning a mass regression along with the Regressor?"

The display panel in the plaza was broadcasting her face in real-time. The unmistakable letters 'LIVE' were stuck on the corner of the broadcast, too. Her mask was already being shown to the rest of the country without her consent.

"We know that Representative Kim Dokja-nim places importance on the current reality above all else. In that case, why did you make that kind of a decision?"

"What will happen to this world-line? Are you saying you'll abandon this world?"

Han Sooyoung chuckled bitterly at these reporters attacking her as if she was the history's worst betrayer or some such. "Abandoning this world? Are we really? You think we own this world or something?"

"Representative-nim, you have a duty to this wor…"

"Does this world still need us, anyway? When the scenarios are over and done with?"

Right in that moment, the expressions on the reporters transformed. Their camera lenses shone brightly as if they caught the scent of a scoop, and began capturing Han Sooyoung's face even closer. She confirmed her visage on the display panel and continued on.

"What will change if we stay here? You lot will simply come up with weird laws to try and control us. You think we don't know about Donghoon doing his absolute best to block the legislation from being passed in the National Assembly? You people don't need us any more. No, you fear us, instead."

"However, we don't know when the scenarios will begin again! What if Dokkaebis reappear in the world…!"

Han Sooyoung grinned refreshingly. Since things had come down to this, she figured that this was for the better. "Did you mean someone like her, right?"

Something resembling a huge hot-air balloon was floating in the location she was looking at. Reporters realizing the identity of that mysterious thing all screamed out in sheer terror.

[I am Biyoo, the Dokkaebi King of this world-line.]

She sounded so forceful, as if the scenarios were starting again, reminding them of the starting point of the terror that brought forth the destruction of this world.

Biyoo began chuckling as if she knew all about their fears.

[Those that were born will eventually be destroyed. However, this planet will be fine. As long as there is no nuclear warfare, it'll last for tens of thousands of years without a problem. Well, you'll still have to occasionally dodge a few wayward asteroids that might come flying in your way, though.]

Having heard what the Dokkaebi was saying, the eyes of the reporters all went round from stupefaction.

Unfortunately, the real thing hadn't been said yet.

[Your main scenario has indeed ended. However… I still have the authority to issue sub-scenarios.]

The complexions of the reporters grew deathly pale from the term 'sub-scenario'.

"R-run away! That Dokkaebi, it's going to-!"

And then, a message popped up before their eyes.

[A ne■w sub scen■ario has arr■ived!]

The message window wasn't clear, perhaps due to the collapse of the Bureau. Even then, it wasn't hard to read its contents.

[You aren't forced to participate in this scenario. Only those who wish to will be accepted, and only the qualified volunteers will go through the careful screening.]

[Applicable sub-scenario is for voluntary participation.]

[Because <Star Stream> has been destroyed, I don't have any rewards to give you. However, if you help out <Kim Dokja's Company>…]

Biyoo was smiling as if she was satisfied by her own appearance as seen in the display panel.

[At the very least, you'll get to relive those moments you've always regretted about.]

And another week passed by since then.

[Sub scenario, 'Capture the Squid', has a new volunteer.]

The people who managed to survive until the end of the scenarios. These people who had lost something precious to them had been gathering in Seoul one by one.

Yoo Joonghyuk stared at the incoming waves of people and frowned deeply. "…There are too many. This might get a little difficult."

"We gotta take as many as we can. That's the only way to save lots of people."

There seemed to be over five hundred volunteers even at a casual glance. The members of <Kim Dokja's Company> carefully interviewed them and through the analysis of the regression turn, they identified those with reasons for disqualification.

Yoo Joonghyuk and Han Sooyoung then specially focused on training them, and had them familiarised with all the necessary skills.

And, after a concerted effort to filter them out over and over again, the total number of remaining volunteers dwindled down to one hundred.

These one hundred were everyone they could bring along from this world-line.

"…Can we truly go back to the past?"

The one asking that question was Julius, the possessor of the attribute 'Judge of Three Generations'. He was ranked 52nd in the 'top 100 strongest humans', his nickname was 'Judge of Wrath'.

He had to lose all of his family, his friends, and companions back in his country, and had been living on with grief and anger aimed at the world.

He wasn't the only one, however.

The faces of Japan's Asuka Ren, and even China's Fei Hu and India's Ranvir Khan, could be seen among the crowd. The strongest Incarnations that managed to survive the scenarios had all gathered here.

Julius shouted out. "Please tell us the truth! We have said nothing and endured your training regime until now, didn't we?! Is it true that we can go back to the past?"

"No, it's a lie," replied Yoo Joonghyuk.

"What do you… in that case, why did you even gather us…"

"What you're about to go back to isn't the 'past'. No, it's simply a different world-line. No matter what you do, humans can never go back to their past."

"I didn't come here to listen to that obvious…!"

"What has happened will never change. People you loved are already all dead."

His level tone of voice shut down the mouths of the others.

"They won't remember you. They won't recall their own demise, nor will they remember the time they spent with you. Every time you speak to them, you will gradually come to realize that the time you lived together can never be yours again."

Deep pain was pervading in each and every word he spoke.

These words were from the only man among them who had lived on while remembering the disappeared world-lines.

"You shall become even more lonely, and in the end, you will end up all alone. No one will be able to understand your pain. And rather than understanding your pain, the world will start calling you a regressor and curse you for stealing someone else's future, instead. None of you will belong to anywhere, and slowly wither away while still alive."

This was the curse of the regression.

"Even then, will you still choose to regress?"

And this was also the final test to become a regressor.

People who came here to become exactly that began exchanging glances. Some were scared off by the intimidation and stepped back, while some others, those that had been steeling themselves to what's to come, started taking deep breaths. And then, someone slowly stepped forward.

It was Asuka Ren, the Japanese who fought together with <Kim Dokja's Company> back in the [Peace Land]. Also, someone who lost more companions than anyone here.

"I know that no matter what I do, it still won't bring back all those that I've lost. However, if I regress…" She gripped her katana tightly, raised her head, and spoke up. "At a bare minimum, I might be able to save that world-line."

And then, people began standing next to her one by one.

"I don't care if my pain is meaningless. Even if everything was an illusion."

"Just once, if I could save them just once…!"

This was their determination. Some were captured by their own passion, while some were mired in sorrow.

And every one of them was longing for their past.

Yoo Joonghyuk knew the truth.

「They will all grow to regret this moment.」

He could've said something. He could've told them what his companions from repeated regressions have told him.

「"Captain. You must live in the present. Don't get lost in the events of the past."」

「"They are all just delusions, that's all."」

His dead companions from the previous regression turns were saying those during this turn. Every time he heard them, Yoo Joonghyuk quietly polished his sword and endured.

None of them could understand.

They couldn't understand that there was someone in this world who could never live in the present.

"Please, take us with you, Supreme King."

And that was why the regressor Yoo Joonghyuk understood the people standing before his eyes. The past was the only present they could choose, and no one had the right to tell them they were wrong.

No, well, maybe a certain guy would be compelled to say that they were wrong.

「"Don't ever think that, just by discarding this turn, your next one will be better. Because just maybe, the regression turn you wish to abandon could very well be the 'one single turn' where you get to see the end of this world as a 'human being'.」

Yoo Joonghyuk slowly closed his eyes.

Could the current him reply to what Kim Dokja had said back then?

He wasn't sure.

However, he was certain of one thing.

「There was someone in this world who would go as far as to abandon his 'humanity' to see a certain story.」

Yoo Joonghyuk stood up from his spot and raised his voice.

"We are heading out. Call on the Constellations."

Chapter 529: Epilogue 2 - Not found anywhere, IV

Lee Sookyung was standing before the darkest star.

"Will you go with us?"

[Constellation, 'Queen of the Darkest Spring', is slowly opening her eyes.]

The location Persephone rested in wasn't the Underworld. That was because the passageway to her home had disappeared after <Star Stream> collapsed. She was currently staying in the special guest room in the Industrial Complex. She stayed there, staring at the night sky every day – as if to comprehend the most ancient Stories.

[The fact that I'm still alive, it must mean that my ■■ isn't in this place, at the very least.]

She slowly turned her head, her eyes still radiating some warmth. Warmth, left behind by a certain someone. Lee Sookyung knew whose Story that was.

[Story, 'Promise of the Darkest Night', is continuing on with its storytelling.]

It was from the King of the Underworld, who swore to be by her side until the end of the world. And like he promised, he died instead of Persephone at the end of the world.

[Let us go. We must save that child.]

Jung Heewon knocked on a worn-down door of the Complex's special guest room.

"Is anyone home?"

She turned the doorknob, and the door opened without resistance. What greeted her immediately afterwards a holographic figurine.

「「Kim Dokja, escaping from the water dragon!」」

It was the figurine of Kim Dokja during his escape from the water dragon. Not only that, but the line he uttered during the event also floated up below the hologram, as well.

「"Alright, then. Time to go outside."」

Jung Heewon stared at that bizarre 3D sculpture with a slightly dumbfounded face. That wasn't the only figurine, though.

「「Kim Dokja, destroying the Absolute Throne!」」

「「Kim Dokja, liberating the Demon Realm!」」

"…Not even Yoosung or Gilyoung's rooms look like this."

As if she came to sightsee, Jung Heewon studied each and every figurine. As she followed the lines of these action figures arranged by the year and the scenario number, she abruptly recalled their past. Uriel must've been looking at Kim Dokja during all of these moments.

Among these was a rear tentacle from a squid, seemingly a part of a 'special limited edition' collection.

｢｢Kim Dokja the Squid's last tentacle (made by Yangsan)｣｣

She looked at this thing with puzzled eyes, before reaching out to it. But, just as her hand touched the glass display case, a true voice could be heard.

[If you carelessly touch that, Uriel's going to get really mad.]

How long had it been? An Archangel with a rather wane complexion was sitting by the table near the display case. No, wait – not many would actually recognise her as an Archangel these days.

A woman who silently flipped the pages of a book, not even bothering to look even though she was the one who started the conversation. Jung Heewon quietly stared at this woman's long eyelashes before asking her. "Gabriel. Do you know where Uriel is?"

[Constellation, 'Lily Blooming in Aquarius', is revealing her presence.]

The power of a Story spread out like ripples from her entire figure. Perhaps this was the Archangel displaying her last vestige of pride.

[Oh, the last Incarnation of Eden.]

Gabriel closed the book gently, her eyes gleaming brightly. It seemed that she had already figured out why Jung Heewon came to visit.

[I've crossed world-lines before. And it was truly a dizzying experience, indeed. But what all of you are trying to do here exceeds that. You won't make it out alive.]

"Is that how Eden jinxes others?"

[This is your reality. You must not run away from it. You can't seriously be considering undoing this ending you earned by finally bringing down the <Star Stream>, now are you?]

The 'reality'. The weight of that word pressed down slightly on Jung Heewon's chest. Rather than replying, though, she looked around at the room's décor again, instead. The bunk bed shared by Uriel and Gabriel was located on the corner. And the word <EDEN> was stuck above it like a poster.

「The Nebula 'Eden' was finished. No one could deny that truth.」

"What makes one's reality isn't the environment nor the location."

Even though Eden was finished, someone still chose to call this very room her Eden. Because Archangels were still here.

「Even if there were only two.」

"It's a cool-looking Eden, though."

Jung Heewon turned around to find Gabriel looking at her with trembling eyes.

"Can you tell me where Uriel is?"

[…Behind you.]

Jung Heewon looked back and sure enough, Uriel was there.

She must've been coming back from her junk food shopping trip, because her small figure was holding large bundles filled with all sorts of snacks.

Her emerald-hued eyes were opened wide as if she was quite startled at the moment.

Jung Heewon stared at her Constellation sponsor for a long while.

The brilliant light of an Archangel couldn't almost be felt from Uriel. Her wings, that used to be on her back, had long disappeared. Even her clothes had changed. Instead of her favourite black dress, she was kitted out in a grey hoodie and a pair of track pants.

[Hui, Heewon-ah.]

Jung Heewon knew better than anyone why Uriel ended up looking like that.

"Uriel."

「Wouldn't Uriel be happier if she remained here, honestly speaking?」

Uriel the Archangel had carried out the scenarios far, far longer than herself. In that case, was it the right thing to do, dragging her back into the depths of hell one more time?

Rather than opening her mouth, though, Jung Heewon squeezed her fist tightly. When she did, a faint lick of flame rose up from there.

The [Hellfire].

The purest flames in this world, given to her by her Constellation sponsor.

The moment that flame was lit up, the ever-so-slightly dim darkness of the room was illuminated by yet another sculpture emitting the exact same flame. Jung Heewon turned her head towards it without thinking too much, and saw a figurine sporting the same face as hers. It wasn't only 'Kim Dokjas' in this room, as it turned out.

As if she was under a trance, Jung Heewon approached the glass display case and looked inside. There she was, wielding the [Judge's Sword] and firing pure-white [Hellfire].

「「My one and only Incarnation」」

Jung Heewon worked hard to suppress the emotions powerfully welling up inside and spoke. "Uriel."

[Heewon-ah.]

The moment she heard that warm, gentle voice, Jung Heewon realized something. Her Constellation sponsor already knew everything.

"Please, cheer me on as I live that life one more time."

She slowly turned her head and saw Uriel smiling sorrowfully. As if to ask whether this would be alright or not. And towards such Uriel, Jung Heewon knelt down.

"Please, become my Constellation sponsor one more time."

"Where did that idiot Black Flame Dragon disappear to? Flame Dragon~!"

"General-nim! Where are you, my general-nim??"

Those voices came from Han Sooyoung and Lee Jihye, currently searching for their Constellations. And in the middle of the chaotic sea of people, Yoo Joonghyuk was looking at his young sister next to him. She had this huge pout on her face, probably angry at something. He sighed deeply. "You'll be safer by remaining here."

"…"

"This world will soon stabilise. And this world will…"

"But, you aren't going to be here, oppa."

This would be Yoo Mia's first time not using honorifics.

Yoo Joonghyuk was about to reply to that, but changed what he wanted to say at the last second. "We will return."

"When?"

"After we get through to the end of the other world-line, and after we rescue Kim Dokja."

"And when will that be?"

Yoo Joonghyuk couldn't answer.

"It'll be too dangerous. I can't take you there."

"Liar."

A faint trace of the transcendental aura leaked out from Yoo Mia's figure. That was unmistakably the Status of a Transcendent.

Rather surprisingly, Yoo Mia had awakened the first stage of the Transcendent after training only for the past few months. She was the youngest Transcendent in history, which was truly a shocking level of talent.

"If you were going to say that now, why didn't you stop me from training? I received the same training as Gilyoung oppa and Yoosung eonni, didn't I?"

"…"

"Please be honest with me, oppa."

Yoo Joonghyuk looked into the girl's eyes that showed not a hint of wavering, and slowly closed his.

They came up with a plan, so that no one would be lost. And it was far more foolproof and perfect than any other.

However, variables always had a way of rearing their heads without warning. And Yoo Mia, she could potentially fall into danger. Yoo Joonghyuk lowered his gaze, got down on his knees slightly, and looked straight at Yoo Mia.

"…I'd like you to come with us."

That… was the reply she wanted to hear.

Her small hand patted him on the head.

"…As soon as you regress, our companions will rush to fetch you."

"You'd all have died without me during the 'Capture the Flag' battles, anyway."

After saying that, Yoo Mia opened her mouth wide. Yoo Joonghyuk peered deep inside her mouth, and was about to say something with a deep frown on his face. But then…

"Hey! We found them all!"

Han Sooyoung performing a deadly headlock on the Black Flame Dragon was walking over there while waving her hand. And behind her, Lee Jihye clinging onto the arms of the Maritime War God and Goryeo's number one swordsman could be seen.

Yoo Joonghyuk frowned at them instead. "And where is the monkey?"

Han Sooyoung wordlessly pointed with her chin.

[Constellation, 'Most Ancient Liberator', is currently acting self-important.]

Yoo Joonghyuk narrowed his eyes and looked up in the air. The smirking Great Sage was floating up there.

"When did you arrive?"

[Aren't your preparations just too slow? If my maknae dies because of your tardiness, I'm going to rip you apart limb from limb where you stand.]

It seemed that, even though his Status had fallen and <Star Stream> was destroyed, a Myth-grade wasn't called a 'myth' for no reason. Only the Great Sage was capable of emitting such vigour even when the 'system' had long disappeared.

Yoo Joonghyuk replied tersely. "If you get in my way, I will not hesitate to cut you down."

The Great Sage smiled, his pearly-white teeth in full display.

@1L9L2AA8UCL0IGJ

*

[Why don't we end that unfinished battle of ours during the next turn? Let's find out if you can get anywhere remotely close to the 'Secretive Plotter'…]

"Okay, okay, sure thing. Is everyone finished with their preparations?"

Han Sooyoung's voice caused tense expressions to form on the faces of the waiting Incarnations.

All the members of <Kim Dokja's Company> participating in this regression trip gathered around. Yoo Sangah, Jung Heewon, Lee Hyunsung, Shin Yoosung, Lee Gilyoung, Lee Jihye, Lee Seolhwa, and Jang Hayoung. In addition, even Lee Sookyung and Selena Kim, too.

The Industrial Complex's residents came out to bade them goodbye.

"Supreme King, please remember what I told you."

"Fei Hu, the future of the continent rests on your shoulders."

"Ranvir Khan--"

And among the crowd, a small Dokkaebi was floating in the air.

"Biyoo."

Shin Yoosung reached out even without realizing it. Biyoo, staying back along with the rest of the residents, carried a vaguely sorrowful expression.

「Biyoo couldn't go with them.」

Just like how it was with Han Myungoh's daughter, Biyoo too was an existence born after the world's destruction had begun. She couldn't become the 'storyteller' during the path they were about to walk on.

Biyoo spoke as if to console the companions. [Don't be too sad. Whichever world-line you end up, I'll always cheer you on. I'm the 'Dokkaebi King', you know. If I train a little bit harder, and if I uncover more of the inheritances the Wennys left behind, I should be able to cross the world-lines, too. In that case, we should be able to meet up again.]

"We'll wait for you. Even if it's tens of thousands of years later."

Biyoo cried out "Baat!". And firecrackers went off all over the Industrial Complex like big-scale fireworks.

"We are heading out."

[Stigma, 'Group Regression Lv.1', is activating!]

Finally, Yoo Joonghyuk commenced the regression. The moment his Stigma activated, the figures of Yoo Joonghyuk and his companions were dyed in the shower of resplendent light. It was then.

"You stinking bastards!! You didn't even come to fetch me…!!"

Gong Pildu ran in from the distance and shouted angrily, before jumping into the shower of light belonging to the regressing party.

Kwa-kwakwakwakwakwa-!!

The world began breaking down.

The companions held each other's hands tightly and stared at the disappearing world. Biyoo's bright smile was distorting away.

Could they meet again?

Pain akin to their souls shattering into tiny little pieces followed soon after. Shin Yoosung clenched her teeth tightly.

「Yoo Joonghyuk always had to endure these moments all by himself.」

Fortunately, he wasn't alone this time.

Shin Yoosung soon realized that she was travelling in the distant galaxy. The background was getting further away from her at a speed too fast to see. And different <Star Streams> from other world-lines could be seen, as well. The Outer Gods, abandoned inside the ashes of those stories were calling out to the companions.

【Aaaaaaah】

【Overhereoverhereoverhereoverhere】

Han Sooyoung gripped Shin Yoosung's hand even tighter and raised her voice. "Keep your wits about you if you don't want to get sucked in there."

Shin Yoosung repeatedly looked back to the Outer Gods growing further away from her. Kim Dokja saved 'Outer Gods' during the last regression turn. He gave names to these forgotten stories. Even then, this universe was still filled with so many other forgotten ones.

Han Sooyoung spoke again. "We're not Kim Dokja. We can't save all those worlds."

Not just Shin Yoosung, but the other companions knew that.

「The current 'them' were in too much of a hurry to save a single world before their eyes.」

…But, someday.

「Stories that couldn't see the end were all flowing towards somewhere.」

The Outer Gods in the distance all changed back to the beautiful galaxies. Every tragedy looked so captivating when viewed from afar.

Han Sooyoung shouted out. "Hey! Was this thing supposed to take this long? Are you sure we're on the right tr…"

It was right then that they were slammed by the thunderous noise of a book being ripped apart.

Riiiiiiip-!!

[World-line has detected the activation of the 'Group Regression'!]

[<Star Stream> is pointing out the Probability of the applicable Stigma!]

[Applicable Stigma is a power that exceeds the limit of the Probability!]

Something had gone wrong here.

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

Just as Han Sooyoung was about to shout something out, the view out front was swallowed up by the darkness and it simply vanished. And when she opened her eyes again, she found herself abandoned in a plain resembling a blindingly-white snowfield.

"…What the hell?! Where am I??"

Her companions were nowhere to be seen. The only one she could see was Yoo Joonghyuk carrying a stupid expression on his face.

"…The world-lines got entangled," said Yoo Joonghyuk.

"What dogshit are you talking about?! Didn't we make all the right preparations??"

Yoo Joonghyuk closed his eyes and began sensing something, before opening his mouth again. "We did prepare accordingly. And as for the rest of our companions… It seems that they reached the 1865th turn safely. Only we ended up here."

"And where is 'here'?"

"…Most likely, we're entrapped in the gap between the world-lines."

Han Sooyoung surveyed her surroundings once more.

Several massive, pitch-black structures were floating up here and there within this snow-white field.

"Wait for a moment. I shall gather more Stories and reactivate the Stigma," said Yoo Joonghyuk.

"How long will that take? Hurry up, will ya? If we get there too late, our plan or whatever will go down the drain!"

Yoo Joonghyuk seemed to be in deep concentration already, as he didn't bother to reply.

Han Sooyoung abruptly got up from her spot and extended her hand towards the nearest structure. When she did, something akin to jet-black graphite particles stained her hand.

"What the heck is…"

And right next moment, the overall shape of the structure was drawn out inside her mind.

「□」

She was sure of it. This structure, it was shaped like this. And as for that other structure just beyond her…

「ㅓ」

Slowly, so very slowly, a creeping chill ran down her spine. She began reading the structures one by one. And each one soon became a single phrase.

「The Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint」

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* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)

Chapter 530: Epilogue 2 - Not found anywhere, V

The Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint.

Han Sooyoung narrowed her eyes after seeing that phrase. "…Isn't that the name of Kim Dokja's skill?"

Why would such a thing be engraved in the gap between the world-lines?

The words continued on.

「This was inevitable, I thought. And the reason why I accepted mother's actions also had to be this, as well.」

「The reason why I inexplicably started writing an essay…」

「The reason why I had to become a son of a murderer…」

These words were moving towards a certain direction at a constant speed. These sentences were fluently stretching from the past towards the future. It was then, Han Sooyoung came to realize something.

The 'regression' was an act of branching out to a new world-line from a 'certain point onwards' while going backwards in the current world-line.

So, what would happen if they get stuck in this type of gap while going back in the world-line? If that's what really happened, then this point in time where such sentences could be read must be…

"Hey, Yoo Joonghyuk! This…!"

When she looked back, she realized that Yoo Joonghyuk too was looking at 'something else'.

Boom, ka-booom-!

The snowfield rumbled.

Someone was pounding on the gap of the world-lines they were stuck in.

「"Spit her out! I said, spit her out, now!!"」

「Kim Dokja was crying.」

This situation, could it be…?

「I began crazily pounding on the wall.」

「I was overcome with goosebumps. To think that everything would become stories. To think, every action we took and every word we spoke would become scenarios and morph into sentences above the wall.」

「"Shut up! This is how I feel!"」

She couldn't see his face. But, Han Sooyoung could tell just by reading these sentences. Kim Dokja was responsible for these words – Kim Dokja was fighting somewhere, within the past of the 3rd turn of the 'Ways of Survival'.

「Kim Dokja wanted to know. What should he do? What should he do to break this wall down? Could this be the price for reading the 'Ways of Survival'? Did my own reality become a novel because I read that novel?」

When Han Sooyoung read those sentences, she became sure of it.

"This is back then during the [Dark Castle]," said Han Sooyoung.

"…The Dark Castle?"

"This event happened right after Kim Dokja fought against the 'Devourer of Dreams'. He told me about it some time ago. He got trapped inside his own skill, and…"

Just before they reached the final scenario, Han Sooyoung got a chance to talk to Kim Dokja for the entire night. It was to discuss their plan moving forward, but also to talk about the matters of the past, as well. They thought that some stuff they didn't manage to resolve could potentially serve as clues for the future.

– Now that I think about it, something did feel off back then. Someone called out to me, but… If it weren't for that voice, I might have ended up in some serious trouble in that place.

"Hey, Kim Dokja!!"

"Han Sooyoung, stop wasting your time. This is nothing more than recorded history."

The 'gap' must exist as a gap. Only then would the rest exist not as gaps.

However, the fact that sentences could be found in a place like this, didn't that mean there were still stories they haven't read yet?

Han Sooyoung reached out towards the huge letters again. The pitch-black particles stained her hand this time as well.

*

But, they weren't the graphite particles. No, they were very small and really fine black particles made out of ones and zeroes.

Han Sooyoung gripped the word even harder than before.

If this was the recorded story, then couldn't it be possible to change the records, somehow?

[A new Story of Incarnation, 'Han Sooyoung', is waking up!]

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

An incredible shower of sparks exploded and began attacking her whole body. It was as if every sentence existing in the world was glaring at her.

Yoo Joonghyuk cried out. "You fool… Now isn't the…!"

[Story, 'Revision Specialist', has begun its storytelling!]

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

"Hey! Wake the hell up!"

When she gripped the sentence, the life contained within it was transmitted to her. It was Kim Dokja's life. His life, lived for the purpose of writing this sentence on the [Final Wall].

Han Sooyoung shouted at Kim Dokja currently wrestling against [The Fourth Wall]. "This is your skill! Don't get swallowed up by your own skill!"

As if she was trying to revise the recorded sentence, she grabbed onto the entirety of that sentence and shook it, hard. Maybe she was wrong on this one. Kim Dokja might be able to get through this danger all by himself, and her voice might never reach him.

Even then, Han Sooyoung still left behind her own sentence on top of the [Wall].

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

Because maybe, just maybe, someone beyond the wall might get to hear her.

"Han Sooyoung, the regression is starting again!"

"Shut up! Hey, you too! Hurry up and say something!"

Han Sooyoung's and Yoo Joonghyuk's figures began scattering away again under the bright rays of light. Before completely disappearing, though, the frowning Yoo Joonghyuk did say something.

"Cancel your skill, Kim Dokja."

Yoo Sangah blinked her eyes in a daze.

Faint rays of light were surrounding her. A monitor in front seemed to sway unsteadily. It currently displayed the personnel records she was browsing just now.

"…Ah."

It didn't feel real to her. She blinked again, and felt the sensations picked up by her weak, frail body. This was the body of an Incarnation, unfettered by the 'blessings' of the system that also had lost the powers of skills and Stigmata. These were the sensations of a human being.

She really did come back.

The things she needed to do popped up in her head one by one. First, confirm the starting point of her regression. Attempt communication with the other companions through the emergency contact lines. And then…

She suddenly shot up from her seat, causing many gazes to land on her next. She recalled old, familiar names one by one. Such as, deputy Kim Min-Woo, the section chief Jang Eun-Yeong, and…

"Hahah, so what do you think about the HR team? Sangah-ssi, do you like it here?"

The man walking towards her with a bit of an attitude as if to pick a fight with her – that was the executive director Kang Yeong-Hyeon. And the person subserviently following after him… the head of the finance department, Han Myungoh. The latter, cautiously reading the atmosphere until then, smiled sheepishly in her direction. He was not the 'Han Myungoh' she grew to know for the past four years. The one she knew didn't cross over to this regression turn, after all.

"Yoo Sangah-ssi, the sale you made this time was truly commen…"

Without saying a word, she began running. She brushed past the executive director Kang and rushed into the corridor. Suddenly, her sense of reality seemed to be blurring.

Did she really, truly succeed in regressing?

The view of the world that used to be so familiar went past her.

She used to come to work here at the fixed time every morning, and went home at the designated hour, too.

That was the ruleset of this world, and she diligently stuck to it.

"Hey, look here! Yoo Sangah-ssi!"

Her employee ID card was exactly the same, too. There was a time in her past life when she struggled so hard to have this around her neck. As if this little thing could act as the proof of her true worth.

When she arrived at the QA team's offices, utterly out of breath, several employees began recognising her.

"Uh? Yoo Sangah-ssi?"

Her smartphone hidden in the pocket continuously cried out – incoming messages criticising her sudden, abrupt departure. And then, loud yells ringing out from behind her.

Yoo Sangah approached a certain partition, one step at a time.

「The person she remembered, he was there.」

A man wearing a headphone and looking up at her.

The spare battery always being charged in the corner of the partition.

That was where the 'Kim Dokja' she remembered was.

Kim Dokja, before the scenarios went underway.

Without realizing it, she reached out and grasped both of his cheeks.

"Uht…??"

Kim Dokja's eyes were opened really wide. Surrounding people, startled by her sudden actions, began murmuring to themselves. However, the words she was currently listening to didn't come from them.

「"Yoo Sangah, why are you so cold-hearted? Just like how this 'Kim Dokja' is Kim Dokja, 'Kim Dokja left behind in that place' is also Kim Dokja, you know. You are…"」

Han Sooyoung's words were filling up the inside of her head.

Why did she respond so coldly back then?

"Dokja-ssi."

She now knew, though. Looking at this Kim Dokja's dumbfounded face, how could she not?

「"Sooyoung-ah. I too have memories that I treasure."」

She was not an 'author' like Han Sooyoung, nor was she the 'protagonist' like Yoo Joonghyuk.

No, she was Yoo Sangah. Yoo Sangah, who was Kim Dokja's colleague and also his friend.

For no reason whatsoever, tears welled up to obscure her vision, but she still managed to smile brightly.

「She returned here in order to protect this Kim Dokja.」

Kim Dokja's lips bobbed up and down. His murky eyes began to gain a semblance of light little by little as if he had finally recognised her. And when she witnessed the faint hints of sparks dancing within those eyes, Yoo Sangah opened her mouth.

"Let's go and find the story you've forgotten about."

Yoo Sangah led Kim Dokja and immediately left the company building. Just to make sure, she didn't forget to shout at other people too, as they dashed through the corridors.

"It's not too late now, so please leave the office and try to catch a grasshopper, at the very least!"

The duo reached the Gwanghwamun Station, and the very first one to arrive there, Jung Heewon, greeted them. She stood under the undamaged statues of King Sejong and Lee Sun-Shin, and waved her hand.

"Yoo Sangah-ssi!"

Out of the happiness at this reunion, they energetically hugged each other. It seemed that the only one to reach here so far was Jung Heewon.

"What's wrong with Dokja-ssi?"

"…The state of his memories doesn't seem to be stable at the moment. He's experiencing confusion at trying to perceive reality."

She could only guess that this state was due to him being an Avatar.

"What about Joonghyuk-ssi and Sooyoung-ssi?" Yoo Sangah asked.

"I couldn't get a hold of them yet. I don't know about Joonghyuk-ssi, but Sooyoung-ssi is the type to call everyone before doing anything else, so…"

It was already several hours since they successfully regressed.

Those two might even go as far as to borrow phones to contact the others. So, the fact that they didn't could only mean that something had possibly gone wrong somewhere.

"What about the others?"

"Gilyoung-ie is currently in the countryside, while Yoosung-ie and Jihye said they might be a little late getting here. As for Hyunsung-ssi…"

"Pant! Pant!! Heewon-ssi! Sangah-ssi!"

A huge bear was running towards them from the distance while waving both of his hands. The bear also happened to be wearing a military uniform, too.

"Ehng? But, didn't you say you can't come out because you were stuck in the base?"

"I left without permission, actually."

"…Is it okay to do that?"

"The world is about to be destroyed, so it won't matter anyway."

"There is still some time left until then to say 'about to', you know."

While saying that, Jung Heewon showed everyone her phone's screen displaying the timetable.

「D-28 until the start of the scenario.」

Lee Hyunsung formed a serious expression. "…Didn't we aim to regress to the day before the beginning of the scenarios?"

"This is for the better, I think. We got ourselves more time to prepare, so we might be able to save more people this way.

Vrrr…

People began showing up in the chat room they agreed to join before disembarking. Jung Heewon used the translation app to read the incoming messages.

– China's Fei Hu has arrived safely. Plenty of fine dust, though.

– Ranvir Khan of India, I have arrived no problem. Along with the nostalgic smell, too.

– This is Asuka Ren from Japan. I see the familiar ceiling. No problem here, so far. (`･ω･´)

The past world-line's 100 strongest Incarnations, having successfully regressed, were now gathering in one place.

The companions looking at each other nodded their heads simultaneously.

"Let's start with the operation."

「D-21」

– Arrest warrant has been issued for 'Lieutenant Lee', suspected of stealing a large cache of firearms from the military base…

– The sudden propagation of 'apocalypse theory' in the internet recently has caused some experts to…

「D-14」

– The 'apocalypse theory', expected to fizzle out as a passing fad, still shows no signs of abating after two weeks.

– The apocalyptist 'Selena Kim' urges people to prepare supplies for the sudden upheaval that will happen in two weeks' time…

– Several famous individuals from the world of finance have sympathised with the apocalypse theory, causing the public to criticise…

「D-7」

– Many ampoules containing microbes earmarked for research have been stolen from a prominent pharmaceutical company…

– Recently, the frog egg collection craze has swept across children in their teens…

「D-1」

– Finally, only one day remains until the 'day of the apocalypse' as prophesied by the apocalyptist 'Selena Kim', and…

「D-DAY」

Lee Seolhwa looked at the small ampoule gripped in her hand.

– Living insects or their eggs have been put inside the ampoules.

– To save as many people as possible, we even spread the locations of the hidden emergency ampoules in the internet, too.

– And now, time to pray for some good luck.

「4 hours before the apocalypse.」

– New Delhi, India. Preparations are complete.

– Beijing, China. Preparations are complete here, as well.

– Washington, USA. We're also ready.

「One hour before the apocalypse.」

– Seoul, South Korea. Preparations, complete.

「Ten minutes before the apocalypse.」

– Team Shin Yoosung and Lee Gilyoung. Finished with the deployment to the third subway line's location.

Currently at the Apgujeong Station's platform for the third subway line.

While listening to the sounds of subway train rumbling in closer, Shin Yoosung suddenly opened her mouth. "It's going to work, right?"

"Of course. How many frog eggs do you have on you?"

"102. What about you?"

"524."

Shin Yoosung furrowed her brows and glared at Lee Gilyoung's PET bottle.

"Hey, you! If you hog that many for yourself, what about other people…?!"

"Argh, they are all carrying ampoules with them, so it'll be fine. If I'm to become stronger than that sooty bastard, I gotta start really rich this time around! With this, I…!"

It was right then, someone snatched the PET bottle off Lee Gilyoung's hands. The boy jumped in shock and quickly looked back to spot a familiar man standing there.

"It's you, sooty bastard!"

"Joonghyuk ahjussi? When did you arrive?!"

"Just now. A problem occurred with the Stigma and that delayed us."

Yoo Joonghyuk panted heavily and wiped the sweat off his forehead while tucking the PET bottle inside his jacket.

"What about Kim Dokja?" He asked.

"Seolhwa eonni is with him because of his poor condition. Maybe because the scenario hasn't started yet, he was fine for a little while but he's unconscious again."

"And the preparations for the operation?"

"It's all finished."

Rather than starting a lengthy explanation, Shin Yoosung simply handed a spare smartphone to Yoo Joonghyuk, instead.

In the meantime, Lee Gilyoung grumbling away pulled out yet another PET bottle. "Hmph. I knew you'd steal mine, so I prepared another one earlier!"

「6:55 PM」

Another subway was approaching them from the distance. All three of them climbed aboard the train. This subway of the third line smelled exactly the same as before. A peaceful sight of not one person worrying about the impending apocalypse unfolded before their eyes.

While looking at the darkness of the tunnel streaming by them, Lee Gilyoung abruptly muttered to himself. "…By the way, will the scenarios really start?"

With a slightly unsure expression, he sneaked a glance in Yoo Joonghyuk's direction. During the past 28 days, the boy had been preparing for the apocalypse harder than anyone else. Somewhat ironically, though, he was now worried about the apocalypse not happening at all.

Yoo Joonghyuk addressed the fretting boy. "It'll begin. It did so for the past 1864 times, after all."

Those were the words coming from the man who waited for the apocalypse for a very long time. He didn't say anything else and quietly peered at his watch.

Three minutes. Two minutes. One minute. And finally…

「7:00 PM」

Along with the loud screech, the subway came to a sudden and immediate stop. The commuters all screamed in panic as a sudden bout of darkness visited them. And within this scene of utter pandemonium, only three people were carrying relieved expressions.

As if to illuminate this pitch-black darkness, Yoo Joonghyuk's voice resounded out.

"The operation, <Capture the Squid>, will now commence."

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[*] Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)

Chapter 531: Epilogue 2 - Not found anywhere, VI

｢Once more, one hour before the apocalypse.｣

"…Dammit, where the hell am I?"

Han Sooyoung held her spinning head and hurriedly scanned her surroundings. The last thing she saw was the figure of Yoo Joonghyuk disappearing within the shower of light. She quickly took a look at her own body.

It was a success.

Her much thinner arms, and muscles that lost their suppleness.

She couldn't sense any of the Stories she had compiled, the skills she trained in, nor even her Stigma.

However, that wasn't a problem. They had already thought up of what to do with such issues, when the scenario got underway again. No, the real issue was…

"Crap, I don't have much time left."

Her smartphone's battery was almost out of juice, and she couldn't confirm the wellbeings of her companions at the moment. It was a fortune among misfortunes that she somehow managed to download the locations of her companions from the chat room just now.

"…These guys, they did pretty well without me."

Just a casual browse-through was enough for her to get a bead on where they were currently with their operation. That wasn't too surprising, though, considering that she was the one in charge of the operation in the first place.

But then, Han Sooyoung's eyes scanning the map of the deployed locations began trembling.

"This idiot…"

She raised her head and looked around her.

Although it could be tight, there seemed to be enough time left still.

「30 minutes before the apocalypse.」

Lee Jihye's eyes dazedly staring at the clock was suddenly blocked by a head full of black hair.

"Hey, crybaby. You planning to stay behind for the night classes today?"

"N-no. Uh… ng."

It had already been 28 days since the regression, but she still hadn't gotten used to that nickname.

'Crybaby'.

When was the last time she heard someone call her that?

Once upon a time, she had other nicknames like that. And she had truly returned to such a time.

"Really? I was just asking, but why so suddenly?"

The other girl's eyes arched as if she was smiling.

For every single day during the past four years, Lee Jihye had never forgotten those eyes. They belonged to a pale-skinned girl somewhat smaller than her. The blouse of her school uniform was missing a button. Her worn-out name tag, where her name could still be found.

「When she opens her eyes, the bloodshot irises would be staring right back her.」

Lee Jihye's trembling right hand was clutching onto the pant leg of her gym uniform.

「"Jihye-yah, it'll be alright."」

Lee Jihye desperately grabbed her trembling hand.

「"You must live."」

"Lee Jihye?"

Her friend's hand approached from the air. Lee Jihye avoided that hand almost as if she was having a seizure.

"…Ah, sorry. Were you saying something?" She hurriedly asked.

"Are you feeling okay?"

"Yeah, I'm fine."

"You want to bounce together around seven?"

"We must not!!"

Lee Jihye shot up from her seat and shouted out even before she realized it. Her classmates sitting near her all looked in her direction immediately. She sat back down and spoke again. "We'll be high school seniors in a little while, right? So we gotta study hard for that."

"…Crybaby, you sure you're not sick somewhere?"

「20 minutes before the apocalypse.」

The bell denoting the start of the first night class period went off. Lee Jihye pulled something out from her inner pocket, a small box covered in a crinkled wrapper.

"Bo-Ri-yah. Here."

"What is it?"

Her friend saw the box and extended her hand. However, before handing over the item, Lee Jihye told her friend in no uncertain terms first.

"You mustn't open it right now. Okay? Only open it when it's ten minutes before seven. Understand?"

"You didn't, like, put insects in this thing, right? You know I've got a weak heart, don't you?"

Lee Jihye momentarily froze at those words. "…No, don't worry. I will definitely make sure you won't die."

She finished what she wanted to say and stood up abruptly from her seat. Then, she pulled out a longsword stashed behind the classroom locker. Her surprised friend was still looking in her direction.

"…Where are you going?" Her friend asked.

"Bathroom."

Lee Jihye immediately left the classroom. With good timing, the teacher in charge was walking towards her.

"Lee Jihye? What are you doing? Go back inside the class! Night classes have begun already! And what are you carrying on your ba-"

"Teacher-nim, are you on duty today?"

It was the ethics teacher wearing the horn-rimmed glasses, with a slender physique and somewhat haggard eyes.

"Teacher-nim, please don't forget to open the no.2 locker in the staff room later!"

Lee Jihye slipped past the teacher, but the latter hurriedly reached out to her shoulder.

"What? Where are you… Urgh? Why is she so strong… Hey! Lee Jihye!!"

Lee Jihye broke into a sprint. She ran down the stairs in an instant, entered the teacher's staff room and stole the keys to the broadcast studio. She then ran up to the third floor, her heart threatening to explode along the way.

「The first scenario of the 'Taepung Girls' High' location began several minutes earlier than other locations.」

That was the reason why Lee Jihye had been deployed in this very location.

While panting breathlessly, she managed to unlock the door to find the rather familiar sight of the studio. The Taepung Girls' High boasted pretty high-end broadcasting equipment. Not only that, the school was given the authority to make broadcasts to the surrounding regions in case of emergency, as well.

While listening to the voice of the teacher still looking for her coming from downstairs, Lee Jihye pulled out the emergency power source prepared earlier. She then calmly set up the broadcasting equipment.

As she connected the wiring, some memories in her mind also began to get connected, as well.

She used to work here as a crew member, and during the lunch hour, she'd play the music she liked. That was her life.

「At least, until the apocalypse came knocking.」

She realized it once more while looking at her still-alive friends. The only person to survive in the classroom on that fateful day was her and her alone.

"…Lee Jihye."

She was startled by the voice and looked back, only to find an unexpected person there.

"Sooyoung eonni?"

She must've been waiting for a while. Han Sooyoung raised her body up from the darkness and quietly studied Lee Jihye's face, before speaking up. "You don't look so good."

"I'm fine." Lee Jihye stayed silent for a little while, then spoke again. "The scenario. It's going to start, right? Otherwise, I might get suspended later, you know."

"It'll start. By the way, you don't really have start yours from here. You should hurry up and go to another location. Let me take care of this place for you."

"No. This is where I need to start." Lee Jihye smiled. "Because this is where the 'wounded sword demon' was born, after all."

She then slowly sucked in her breath.

The setting-up of the equipment was finally finished.

「Ten minutes before the apocalypse.」

And then, 'it' began.

Along with the 'Ku-gugugu' noise, the sensation of the world's 'nature' changing could be felt. Then, the sounds akin to drums being ripped apart came from an unknown location. And what came after that was…

[Oh, my. The channel here opened up sooner than scheduled. Ah, ah, can you hear me?]

Lee Jihye looked at Han Sooyoung. The moment she saw the latter's face, she knew. Somewhat humorously, they had been living only for this moment.

[There is no need to panic, everyone. Let me say this first of all. This situation, it's not a film shoot. It's not a terror incident, nor are you currently dreaming. No, everyone, you're-]

That was the voice of the Dokkaebi she hated the most.

Screams resounded out from every classroom.

[Main Scenario #1 – Proof of Worth has begun.]

That was the signal to commence with their planned operation.

– Emergency broadcast will now begin.

Lee Jihye's own voice was coming out from the speakers.

– Everyone, please listen to me. Those inside the classrooms, please open up the cabinet for the cleaning tools, while those in the staff room, please open the no.2 locker! Hurry!

Lee Jihye knew. Her companions must be making the exact same face as hers about now. Everyone should be witnessing this sight through the display panel the Dokkaebi had brought up.

– There is no need for you to kill each other. At least this time, there is no need.

Lee Jihye thought about her companions. She recalled the promises made to them before coming to this world.

「"…At least I want to choose what I kill."」

Shin Yoosung wouldn't start by killing a puppy anymore, and…

「"I'll save my aunt."」

Lee Gilyoung would get to save the person he detested.

「"Rather than going to the army again, I'll kill myself first."」

Lee Hyunsung would leave the army, and…

「"I really want to save that grandma from back then."」

Yoo Sangah would get to save the person she didn't.

「"The Probability will only allow for one opportunity. Meaning, the 'Group Regression' can't be used twice.」

And Yoo Joonghyuk would never regress again.

Finally…

「"During this turn, I won't become the 'wounded sword demon'."」

As the clamour of the school's interior gradually died down, Lee Jihye opened her mouth once more.

– Everyone, have you all found one for yourselves?

Just like Kim Dokja of the past chucking the grasshoppers to other people…

– Everyone, throw those things down to the floor with everything you got!

Along with those words, Lee Jihye broke the ampoule held tight in her hand.

[You have slaughtered a total of 133 lifeforms.]

[Slaughter breakdown: 133 frog eggs]

[Acquired coins will be halved as you have slaughtered lifeforms lacking defensive capability.]

[Total of 6650 Coins have been acquired.]

…

…

…

[Main Scenario #1 – Proof of Worth has concluded.]

「Once more, they shall create a story not found anywhere.」

The Dokkaebi in charge belatedly discovered the unfolding situation and appeared before Lee Jihye.

[What the… Look here, you! What's the meaning of this? How can you even…!]

And right next second, a powerful storm of Probability's aftermath began slamming into the entirety of the scenario. Also, the noises of massive amounts of Coins being sucked out came from an unknown direction, too.

Lee Jihye realized what was happening here.

Tsu-chuchuchuchut!

[Dear Constellation-nims!! This is a misunderstanding! Director… No, wait! This isn't my fau… The Bureau's inventory… Uwaaaah!]

Accompanied by the noises of the channel being disbanded, the low-grade Dokkaebi screamed and disappeared.

「7:00 PM」

And that was the beginning.

The night skies of Seoul were reflected on the windows of the studio.

She saw the rift opening up on the other side of the sky.

「Subway's third line.」

"Everyone, please stay calm! Grab one of these, and throw it down! Hurry!"

「Gwanghwamun.」

"Do not panic, and break the bottles you just received on the floor! Do that and you will survive!"

「The hospital.」

"Anyone who didn't get an ampoule yet??"

Throughout all the locations in Seoul, unexpected events were taking place at the same time.

The prearranged scenario was changing.

[Unbelievable achievements are occurring simultaneously in every location of the scenario!]

[A massive amount of Coins are being taken out from the Bureau!]

The whole of <Star Stream> was shivering from the explosion of Coins.

[<Star Stream> is stunned by the sudden upheaval of the scenario!]

[Dokkaebis of the Bureau are freaking out at the excessive amount of Coins being taken out, and…!]

[Many Constellations observing the Korean Peninsula are…!]

The baptism of Coins exploding in the air like fireworks – it was the sight of a world coming to an end. Lee Jihye looked to her side and found Han Sooyoung also looking up at the same skies as her.

As if, she was searching for those who should be looking at them from the night sky.

"Let's go and save ahjussi."

Their operation had just got underway.

While gasping out rough, heavy breaths, I regained my consciousness.

「It was unknown how much time had passed by.」

I slowly tried to move my body. Arms, legs, shoulders… without a doubt, the feedback I got had changed a lot from before.

「Kim Dokja you got a lot smaller」

I smiled bitterly and looked down at my shrunken hand. The digits of my fingers had shortened by at least one centimetre compared to the last time I saw them. With a slightly exhausted voice, I asked a question. "…How many regression turns have I seen so far?"

「786th turn」

I had no idea that reading something with every fibre of your being would be this difficult.

Every time Yoo Joonghyuk and his companions lived through one regression turn, I too had to live through it.

The second turn, the third, the fourth, and the fifth…

「That is the destiny of the Oldest Dream」

I read, and then read again, the Stories created by the countless choices, and I watched various world-lines spun off from them over and over again.

「Kim Dokja read the world as if he was walking along a distant beach.」

Story's waves rolled in and rolled out. And I gradually lost something of mine every time that happened. When I recalled something abruptly and looked back, I saw my own footprints left behind. Those prints were soon washed away by the incoming waves, and after staring at the disappearing traces, I'd resume my walk forward.

Whenever I recalled the fact that I was gradually forgetting things within this flood of Stories, I began thinking about the regression turn I lived in. And then, the happiness of the people who should still be living there.

If I did…

"…Uh?"

The tips of my hands were trembling.

I suddenly couldn't remember the regression turn number I lived in. I unknowingly looked behind me, but the only things remaining there were Yoo Joonghyuk's past regression turns.

「And what remains at the end, will be the desire to see the 'next story'.」

I looked down at my hands, now much smaller.

What was waiting for me at the end of this long, long journey?

「Kim Dokja recalled the 'Oldest Dream' he saw during the Final Scenario.」

Would I eventually become the 'Oldest Dream' I saw back then?

Would I lose all of my memories and become a giant mass of unconsciousness that dreamt of an infinite universe?

*

｢He didn't want to end up like that.｣

I needed to think. I needed to remember.

When I came to, my hand was clutching onto my smartphone out of an old habit. This small world protected me whenever I became too anxious and too nervous.

The black screen, its battery having lost its charge a long time ago, reflected my face.

I crafted a simple Story and used it to operate the phone. That prompted a familiar wallpaper to pop up. And that's where the novel that started all of this was.

– Three Ways to Survive in a Ruined World (final version).txt

Until now, I deliberately avoided reading this final version.

I was scared that, if I read it, something somewhere would become set in stone. I didn't want the future my companions were supposed to live in to be decided by a story written by someone else.

「However, shouldn't it be okay now?」

The <Kim Dokja's Company>'s story had ended, and my ■■ had been decided, as well.

「If I read this, wouldn't I be able to remember all those that I've forgotten?」

I still didn't know who tls123 was.

And that's why I was curious.

What did the author write on this 'final version'?

What was the conclusion the author came up with?

And this story, where and how was it supposed to end?

I slowly sucked in my breaths and extended my shrunken finger towards the text file.

Just like that day when I first began reading the 'Ways of Survival'.

「And so, that's how Kim Dokja's last reading session began.」

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* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)

@1L9I2Aa8UCL0IGJ

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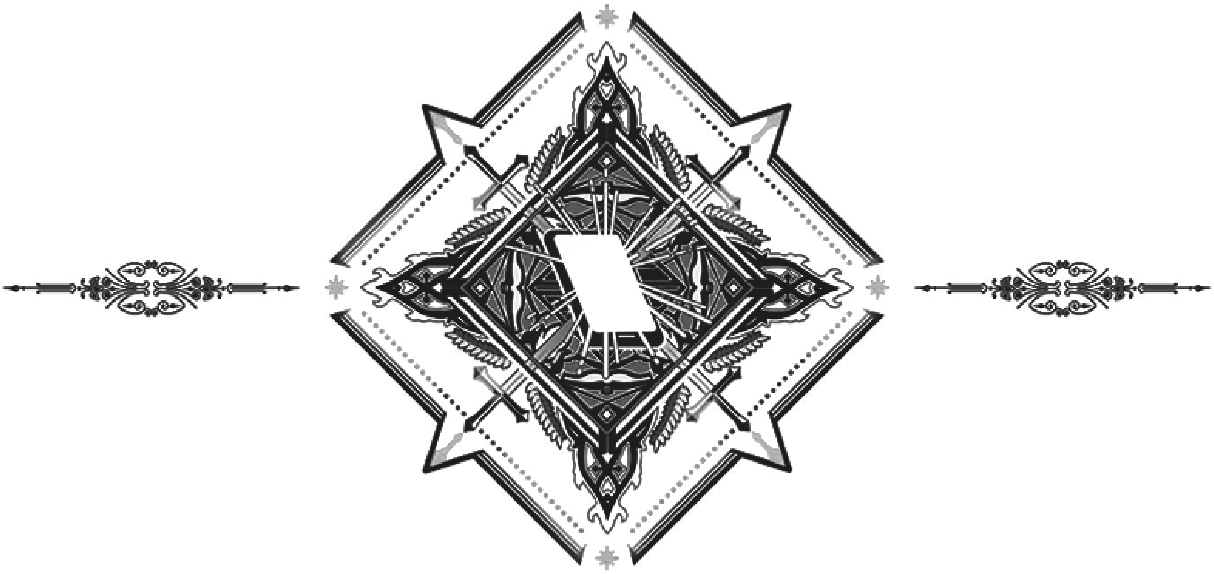

Chapter 532: Epilogue 3 - Author's words, I

My thumb slowly extended and touched the cold screen.

Right at that moment, something like a spark danced just above the display.

[A new file has been downloaded.]

– Three Ways to Survive in a Ruined World (final revised version).txt

In that short time period, the name of the file had changed.

… The 'final revised version'?

I clicked on the file almost subconsciously.

But, why was this? The file had been scrolled almost all the way down to its bottom-most section from the get-go. It felt as if the edits had been finished only a few moments ago. Without thinking too much about it, I scrolled down even further.

Did the 'epilogue' of the 'Ways of Survival' get added at the end, the one I didn't get to read?

The file continued on from the point where the original novel came to an end. It was a story that I hadn't seen before.

I unconsciously began reading it out loud.

Epilogue 3. Author's words

Each regression turn would reach their conclusion in their own terms.

It was the same story for the 1863rd turn.

[You have cleared all the scenarios of <Star Stream>.]

She did it. Countless sentences brushed past her head the moment she saw that message.

The 'Dokkaebi King' was collapsed on the ground before her eyes, and the companions from the 1863rd turn she had led were all here, too.

"Captain! We won!!"

Kim Namwoon was sobbing away nonstop. Only after spotting Lee Hyunsung walking in closer to support her did it feel real to her, that she had finally done it.

「This was the end of the 1863rd turn.」

What a long battle it had been.

From when she of the 3rd turn was suddenly summoned to the 1863rd, all the way to greeting the suitable end of this world.

She nearly gave up several times in the middle, though. Even then, the reason why she didn't was because of what 'that idiot' said back then.

「"Going to the next scenario is better than sleeping forever."」

That idiot, who also came from the same 3rd turn as her.

The man who wore the same coat and used the same weapon as her.

「"The Apocalypse Dragon being freed doesn't mean everything's over. You know it too, don't you?"」

That idiot who ruined her plan, freed the Apocalypse Dragon, and eventually, managed to even eject Yoo Joonghyuk from the scenario, too.

Even now, she could vividly recall the scenes from those moments by closing her eyes. The scene of a 'Character' breaking past his story and gaining his freedom…

"Captain, we did it. We really did it!"

Lee Hyunsung could barely hide his joy. Han Sooyoung killed the lit cigarette in her hand and addressed him. "Support everyone and return to base."

"What about you, cap…?"

"I'll be right behind you after smoking one more. So, go on ahead."

"…We can't do that!"

…This slow dude, why was he so quick on the uptake now?

Han Sooyoung glanced at the Archangel standing next to Lee Hyunsung. "Jophiel."

The Commander of the Red Cosmos, Jophiel, the Archangel that crossed to this world-line together with that idiot from the 3rd turn.

[Let's go, meat shield.]

"No, hang on a minute, captain!"

While lighting up her very last cigarette, Han Sooyoung watched on as the Archangel took her companions back to Earth. The companions from the 'Ways of Survival' were getting further away. She saw how they kept shedding tears of satisfaction derived from successfully clearing all the scenarios and could only smile wryly.

Jophiel, her wings spread out wide, glanced in Han Sooyoung's direction as she grew further away.

– Are you planning to go alone?

Instead of a reply, Han Sooyoung waved around her cigarette light.

And then, after all of her companions had disappeared, she slowly looked behind her.

「The Final Wall.」

The wall that blocked the end of this world-line, and also, recording everything found within this universe.

Han Sooyoung was aware of this wall's existence, and not only that, she knew how to open it, too. She got to take a peek at a few scenes while connected to the 3rd turn's Han Sooyoung, and more importantly, information she got from Kim Dokja paying a visit to this world-line proved to be the crucial key, as well.

[The 'Wall that Decides Samsara' has discovered its intended position.]

Han Sooyoung began slotting in the [Walls] she had gathered ahead of time into their spots.

[The 'Wall that Divides the Good and Evil' has discovered its intended position.]

[The 'Wall of Impossible Communication' has discovered its intended position.]

However, she was still short of one fragment.

Throughout the entirety of the universe, only one guy possessed this fragment – [The Fourth Wall].

Han Sooyoung silently stared at her own hand, before slowly placing it against the last open spot on the wall.

[Story, 'Predictive Plagiarism', has begun its storytelling.]

She certainly didn't possess that [Wall].

Even then, shouldn't she be able to craft a fragment similar to that, somehow?

[Story, 'Ultimate Lie' has begun its storytelling!]

Han Sooyoung began squeezing out every Story she could imagine.

She had witnessed the actual form of [The Fourth Wall], just once. She definitely saw a portion of that wall when it blocked her attempt at using the [Eye of Truth].

[Story, 'Predictive Plagiarism', is being pushed to its absolute limit!]

Her fingers moved rapidly and began writing a Story – a Story of the wall that she came up with. The one single story that might be the basis of this wall.

Tsu-chuchuchuchut…!

「"I'm Dokja."」

「Kim Dokja(金獨子). My father wanted me to become a strong man even if I was left alone so he gave me such a name.」

Right next moment, Han Sooyoung's hand submerged into the wall.

Next up was her arm, shoulder, head, and her torso… And eventually, her entire figure sank into the wall.

[The 'Final Wall's system' is surprised by your Story information and…]

[Temporary error has occurred in the system!]

Han Sooyoung fought back against the rising vomit and felt around the ground.

She did it.

She managed to infiltrate inside this stinking wall unscathed.

The first thing she saw after raising her head was a small room. There were quite a few bundles of packed luggage, and several small display panels decorating this place.

She was familiar with the Story coming out from those panels.

「Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation', has reached his ■■.」

「'Demon King of Salvation's' ■■ is 'Eternity'.」

That was the conclusion of the 3rd turn. That idiot had also cleared the scenario of his world-line to its very last, in other words. And at long last, he had decided to become this world's sole reader.

「In the world without the scenarios – filled with only the desire to see the next story… A certain child, possessing a truly horrifying power of imagination.」

He'd continue to become smaller, and eventually become this world's subconsciousness. And with that, he'd continue on with this neverending story.

The 1863rd turn's Han Sooyoung could tell. If you ask her how she knew, well, she just did.

'Even I would've chosen that conclusion, after all'.

This world existed for the story.

Even Yoo Joonghyuk's story, even Kim Dokja's – in the end, they were all simply 'stories' marching forward towards the one true completion.

Han Sooyoung stared at the subway train travelling further and further away inside the screen. For a long while, she wordlessly stared at this universe's god journeying towards the world that no one would ever remember.

And then, a few steps in front of her, there was a certain existence staring at the same screen while dabbing away its tears with a handkerchief.

[Hiii-eeek?!]

"So, then. You are the true 'Dokkaebi King' aren't you?"

[…How did you manage to enter this place?]

The Dokkaebi King her group definitely killed outside was standing completely fine before her eyes.

Han Sooyoung unsheathed the [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] and asked. "I was wondering why you were so weak. Okay, so. Why didn't you fight us seriously? And what exactly have you been doing in here?"

[Uh-uh. Hang on a second. The scenarios are already over. I don't have any thoughts of fighting you.]

It was true, she couldn't sense any fighting intentions from the Dokkaebi King as it hurriedly waved both of its hands.

Its eyes gleamed as it observed the sparks faintly dancing around Han Sooyoung's entire figure. Its irises were fixed on the [Final Wall] suffering from error.

[You repaired the 'Final Wall'…? What a shocking talent that is… Just who are you? Your soul is… it's like the amalgamation of various talents.]

"What were you planning by using such a puppet? Are you looking down on this world-line?"

[Hu-hut, what do you mean, looking down? Every world-line is precious. It's just that… This world-line has lost its meaning now. Its most important Story had come to an end just now, after all.]

While saying that, the Dokkaebi King shifted his gaze back to the panels.

Han Sooyoung quietly roused up her Stories, but the King simply snickered back at her. [What are you getting so angry for? Regardless of what, the story of you and your group has concluded safely, didn't it?]

"Don't ever mess with this world-line's conclusion."

The moment she said that, the scenes from the 1863rd turn popped up on the panels.

Lee Hyunsung and Kim Namwoon were supporting each other. The backs of her companions were captured in a wide-screen shot.

[Ah, of course, I won't. It's not even an important world-line, anyway…]

Han Sooyoung saw how the Dokkaebi King shrugged its shoulders in total disinterest, and felt this powerful sense of futility.

Was this how the story of this regression turn ends?

Was it really okay to end it in this fashion?

[And besides… the new 'Oldest Dream' would not wish to see such a thing happen, anyway.]

After hearing that, Han Sooyoung looked up at the empty air above without even realizing it.

The 'Oldest Dream'.

The 'Kim Dokja' she knew had become one such existence.

Which meant that the current him might be looking at this spectacle, somehow.

[You think he will reply to you because you looked up like that? Your world has people who believe in their chosen deities. But, did those gods ever respond each and every time their believers called out to them?]

"This and that aren't the same."

"Well… You can think of it any way you want. Anyways, this one would like to 'abscond' from here, so can I leave now?]

"Where are you planning to go?"

[Since this world-line's story has ended, I should go to another place, don't you agree? I've been working hard all this time, so… Well, there's this place I really wanted to visit since from a while ago, and…]

"Oh, so you wish to run away all the while abandoning the scenario, just like that?"

[Why didn't you get born in a world-line with an honest, hard-working Dokkaebi King, then?]

Han Sooyoung frowned deeply and emitted waves of energy once more. "Hey. I clawed and fought my way to get here… So, shouldn't you give me some kind of a clear reward or something?"

The 'Dokkaebi King' spat out a long sigh. [Well, fine. Granting one wish shouldn't be so hard.]

"…I want to meet that idiot."

Almost immediately after saying it, Han Sooyoung couldn't believe what she had done. Why did she blurt that out, of all things?

「"Because you are also there."」

「"I believe in 'you' of the 3rd turn."」

She wasn't sure what this frustration in her heart meant.

Just that, meeting that guy again might help her understand what she felt so frustrated about, or so she thought.

The Dokkaebi King tilted his head. [When you say that idiot, you…]

Han Sooyoung pointed to the panels with her chin.

The Dokkaebi King jumped up in shock and roared out. [Are you freaking blind or something?? That great one is no longer an existence the likes of me can ever meet.]

"I don't care if it's a version of him from another world-line. I also don't care even if he's a version who hasn't seen the end yet, too."

Kim Dokja couldn't be seen anymore within the panels.

"I want to meet that idiot one more time."

[There is only one of him in this universe.]

Since the Dokkaebi King was being so adamant, it could only mean that her wish was truly impossible.

But then, the creature stared at the downhearted Han Sooyoung and opened its mouth with a sly look on its face. […Well, actually. There is a way to make your wish come true.]

"What was that?"

[Now normally, that world-line is forbidden from entry, but I've memorised its coordinates while the new 'Oldest Dream' was ascending to his position… However, the 'Oldest Dream' in that place will not recognise you.]

Han Sooyoung's expression brightened as she asked. "Where is that place?"

[It's the place I wanted to visit originally. I've always longed to go there at least once when this universe's great epic came to its conclusion.]

While saying that, the Dokkaebi King raised both of its hands up high in the air. The aloof universe of <Star Stream> was unfolding up there.

The Dokkaebi King looked up at that view with a solemn expression and addressed her. [Aren't you curious? Where did this universe start from, who crafted these intricate galaxies of Stories, who created this thing called 'scenario' in this world – just who is responsible for perfecting the world of pure contradictions where the result gives birth to the cause, and the cause becomes the result??]

Han Sooyoung finally figured out the Dokkaebi King's true aim.

@1L9I2Aa8UCL0IGJ

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This guy, it was trying to head towards the world-line where this universe actually began.

「The world where the 'Three Ways to Survive in a Ruined World' began.」

"You…!"

「The universe where tls123 was.」

[I'm going there to meet my god. If you want, I'll let you tag along on my journey!]

Tsu-chuchuchchut!

Along with the deafening roar, the storm of Probability's aftermaths powerfully rampaged between her and the Dokkaebi King. As she got sucked into this wall of pain akin to her soul being ripped into tiny shreds, she briefly caught the Dokkaebi King's grin.

[Let's meet again after making through this alive, shall we?]

That was the last memory Han Sooyoung could remember of the 1863rd turn.

"Heok!"

She shot up from her bed; the time was two in the morning. Her entire back was soaked in sweat. The second hand of the clock continued tick by.

…Was it all a dream?

Han Sooyoung ungainly got up. The sensation of soft, luxurious duvet wrapped around her limbs – for some reason, this bed felt alien to her. She drank the water located on the bedside bureau, entered the adjoining bathroom and switched on the light. The orange lightbulb illuminated the darkness and her figure was reflected on the mirror.

Her neatly-trimmed hair that had grown all the way down to her shoulders. The beauty spot that seemed to get even more pronounced when she narrowed her eyes – this was undoubtedly her own face. Indeed, it really was, yet…

"…What the hell??"

Suddenly, it felt as if her heart was tightening up.

[You have entered the 'First World-line'.]

She dashed outside the bathroom. Plastic figurines were displayed on the dressing table alongside the volumes of manga. She also spotted the familiar school bag next to the bed. Eventually, the darkness within this house no longer felt foreign to her. Her trembling hands opened the school bag, only for the textbooks within to tumble out. Neatly-written words could be seen on the cover of one of those books.

– Han Sooyoung, student no.2, classroom 2, sixth year.

Han Sooyoung had become a 13-year-old girl.

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* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)
* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)

Chapter 533: Epilogue 3 - Author's words, II

She had suddenly become a sixth-year elementary school kid. How come?

For the remainder of dawn, Han Sooyoung stewed in her stupefaction. Initially, she wondered if she had regressed like Yoo Joonghyuk.

[Self-regulated activity period has concluded.]

[Next self-regulated activity period is scheduled to take place in around 14 hours.]

[The body's control has been rescinded.]

However, she got to figure out what happened to her after those messages floated up and she lost control of her own body.

[You can exercise the control only when the main body's ego has entered the sleep mode.]

She had taken possession of her own younger self.

'…Could this be a new type of scenario?'

No matter how long she waited, though, stuff like scenario messages never popped up.

She 'watched' her younger self wake up with a dishevelled face, wash up, eat breakfast, and head off to school. She couldn't do anything else besides that.

And exactly 14 hours later, the following messages popped up.

[The main body's ego has fallen asleep.]

[Self-regulated activity will now begin.]

[Control of the body has been handed over to you.]

She'd stay as a dumb little 13-year-old kid during the daytime, while during the night, her body's control would revert to her like clockwork. And then, she'd start crying out in lamentation like this next.

"…What the hell am I supposed to do here?"

Her head was in a mess. If this was really the 'First World-line', her actions of now could influence the rest of the world-lines yet to be born in the future.

After sucking in deep breaths, she decided to first check out the situation she was in.

Expensive but simple furniture filled this three-bedroom-plus-living-room house. Han Sooyoung was quite familiar with it.

The housekeeper that came to work early every morning, the lazy guard that monitored all visitors, and her parents that came to visit her on the weekends in alternating turns while being driven on new cars every time.

Her father was a National Assembly member, while mother was an actress. Han Sooyoung never thought of them as her family, though.

The world didn't know of her existence. And her so-called parents, they probably didn't want her existence to be revealed to the world, either.

"…It's really the same."

Han Sooyoung browsed through the pile of books on top of the desk belonging to her 13-year-old self. Some were books she really liked, while some, she couldn't even recognise. The faint, blurry memories must be held in possession by her other self. In any case, it was crystal clear that she had read them all judging by the hand stains left on the books.

「To each and everyone, a life that's only theirs exists.」

She saw a line drawn under some throwaway quote and felt a chill creep down her skin. Such unimpressive sentences piled up and would eventually go on to become the human Han Sooyoung. Probably.

It was then that he heard a sound of doorbell going off.

…At this late hour?

She hurriedly pressed the intercom button to confirm. At first, she wondered if it was the guard, but when she took a closer look at the intercom screen, he had been already knocked out cold. And a middle-aged man wearing a fedora was smiling in her direction and waving his hand.

– It's me, Dokkaebi King.

"Why do you look like that?"

"When I arrived here, I suddenly morphed into a human being. I'm almost fully stripped of my system authority, too… But, why have you become so much younger?"

"You made me like this, didn't you?"

"I certainly did not. The influence of the great Probability has… Actually, forgive me for this intrusion."

Han Sooyoung groaned and guided the Dokkaebi King inside the house.

"Do you live alone?" It asked her.

"I do."

"You seem to have some spare rooms."

"…I'm telling you this now, don't expect me to put you up in here."

The Dokkaebi King pouted in disappointment from that.

Han Sooyoung boiled a simple teabag and brought it out, then asked her guest. "Okay. What is your reason for bringing me to this world-line?"

"We shall go and search for the 'creator' together."

"How?"

"That's something we should think about from here on."

"You came here without any preparations or knowing anything?"

"Of course not. I do have my suspicions. For instance, that novel."

Han Sooyoung's expression hardened. As expected, it seemed that the Dokkaebi King had been aware of the existence of 'Ways of Survival'.

"The author of that novel is probably the 'god' that constructed this universe," said the Dokkaebi King.

tls123.

The author who wrote 'Three Ways to Survive in a Ruined World'.

Han Sooyoung sighed softly, and fetched her notebook PC. "I've already tried to search for it, though."

– There are no matching results.

"That novel, it hasn't been uploaded yet."

"…Hmm. Maybe something had gone wrong somewhere?"

"No, it's more like we came here too early. I'm pretty sure that the serialisation will start this year."

"How do you know that?"

"If what I heard is right, the first time Kim Dokja read this novel was when he was 15. I'm 13 right now, so he must be 15."

She recalled a certain crumpled memo pad Kim Dokja gave to her in the past. He must've been in a rush, but he still managed to write down all sorts of information on that little thing.

"That great one is 15 years old, is it… Something's rather cute…"

"I'm more curious about something else, though."

"Such as?"

"What will happen if the 'Ways of Survival' doesn't appear in this world?"

"Excuse me?" The Dokkaebi King stumbled a little from her question before speaking up. "Hmm… If that happens, then the great one won't get to read the novel."

"Since he won't get to read it, that naturally means the 'Ways of Survival' won't become reality either, right?"

"…That might be plausible. At the very least, the 'apocalypse' might not get triggered for the world-lines about to be branched off from here."

In that case, if they could prevent Kim Dokja from reading the 'Ways of Survival', then that meant they could potentially stop the apocalypse of this world-line, too.

"I think I get the general gist of your idea. Are you trying to stop the serialisation of the 'Ways of Survival'?" The Dokkaebi King asked.

"That's right."

Han Sooyoung nodded her head. As long as this tls123 was not a supernatural existence, she might be able to prevent the destruction of this world with her powers alone.

But then, the Dokkaebi King tackled her down verbally. "Yours is indeed an intriguing idea. However, you don't even know who the author is…"

"Have you ever read that novel before?"

"No, I haven't. Have you?"

"Yeah." Han Sooyoung pondered something for a little bit before continuing on. "That novel, it's really badly written."

"…"

"From the very beginning, it's filled with way too much exposition, while the chapter lengths are all over the place, and the work doesn't even try to accommodate its potential readers. Only Kim Dokja alone managed to read it from start to finish."

"Hoh. As expected of the great…"

"You think such a thing even makes sense?"

The Dokkaebi King narrowed its eyes as if to ask, what are you talking about.

Han Sooyoung continued on. "An author who doesn't read his own novel? Someone like that doesn't exist. And because of the unique traits of a webnovel platform, you can never perfectly fix anything, so you don't have a choice but to re-read your uploaded chapters several times even if to check for typos and stuff. But then… past the 100th chapter, the view count became just 'one' for the remainder of that novel."

Only then did the Dokkaebi King's eyes widened, as if it finally understood what she was saying. "Could it be…?"

"It is. The author of the 'Ways of Survival' that I think is none other than that idiot. I don't know why he's denying being the author even after writing it himself, but I'm sure about this."

One of her old habits was to leave a blank Korean word processor page displayed on her notebook. While looking at the blinking cursor, she spoke up. "We need to find Kim Dokja. Before he starts that damn 'Ways of Survival'."

* * *

The problem was with how to find that 'Kim Dokja'.

"Do you know where he lives? I no longer have the power of the system, so we need to personally locate him," said the Dokkaebi King.

"I'm sure he's somewhere around Seoul."

"…Don't you know any other distinguishing traits of his?"

"He's probably hiding somewhere, busy reading fantasy novels or something…"

"How are we even supposed to find him with such information??"

"Argh, I don't know. It's your job to come up with something. I'm only an elementary school kid, you know."

After saying that, Han Sooyoung blacked out immediately. When she came to, the Dokkaebi King must've gone somewhere, as it was nowhere to be found.

"…This was why I always dozed off back in school."

She always wondered why she felt so sleepy whenever she got to school… As it turned, her condition was due to another ego waking up and doing its own thing during the night time.

Since waiting for the Dokkaebi King proved to be rather boring, Han Sooyoung did what she could during the early hours of the morning.

Most of that was browsing through various blogs.

"That guy, I'm pretty sure he was a blogger…"

And when even that became too boring, she created a secret folder in the notebook and started writing novels. Most of them were simple 'minifictions' written solely for the purpose of keeping her writer's sense sharp. However, something truly strange happened the next day she completed them. Her 13-year-old ego active during the daytime ended up causing a big event.

"Sooyoung-ah, since when did you learn to write so well?"

The school suddenly hosted a writing contest and she won the top prize. Not only that, the content of her writing was exactly the same as the minifiction she cobbled together during the early hours, too.

"Just, you know, it came flooding out," her 13-year-old self replied.

Han Sooyoung looked back, and recalled that people began saying she had a talent for writing around the time she was 13 or so. With here as the starting point, she would earnestly walk on the path of the full-fledged writer.

And so, a month passed by like that, then yet another one.

Han Sooyoung grew rather invested in spectating her 13-year-old self living her life.

As for the 15-year-old Kim Dokja, he too must be living somewhere in this world. When she thought about that, she felt happy for some reason.

What should she first say to that unlucky idiot when they eventually get to meet each other?

Time went by pretty quickly – September flew by, and it soon became October.

Every now and then, her parents would stop by to leave behind presents she didn't want, and went away again.

Finally, it was December. It was around here that Han Sooyoung began to realize something didn't feel right.

– There are no matching results.

Why didn't tls123 start his serialisation already? Did she do something wrong and that changed the future? But, that couldn't be possible. She hadn't even met Kim Dokja yet.

…What would happen if the 'Ways of Survival' is not serialised this year?

Would this world continue to exist without the 'Ways of Survival'?

Maybe that wouldn't be such a bad world, in a way.

If the 'Ways of Survival' didn't exist, then this world wouldn't have to greet its apocalypse, either. If so…

It was then she heard the phone go off.

She figured it must've been her parents again, but when she picked up the receiver…

4
3
2
5
1
6
0
7
8
9

*

– I've found him.

"What? Where? N-no, hang on. Where are you now?"

Her heart began pounding away.

Kim Dokja had been found. Finally.

However, the next set of words was something that not even her [Predictive Plagiarism] could have predicted.

– I'm currently, well… I'm in the place called a hospital's emergency ward."

* * *

Han Sooyoung avoided the guard's eyes and climbed aboard an early-hours taxi cab. The hospital itself wasn't too far. Doctors and nurses were busily going about their businesses despite the hour being what it was. Screams of pain from the patients intermittently rang out. And empty beds were deeply permeated with the lengthy tendrils of death's scent.

Even in a world without scenarios, people continued to die.

These were very small apocalypses. This was where lives not recorded went to disappear.

Han Sooyoung, currently half in a daze, scanned all the stretchers.

"Ah…"

And that's how she found the 15-year-old Kim Dokja lying on one. His face, deeply sunken and pale. An IV needle was stuck in the boy's wrist wrapped tightly in bandages.

"I'm telling you, it's not our fault! In his school, he…!"

That came from a face not closely resembling Kim Dokja's. A married couple, seemingly cousins once removed from the unconscious boy, were shouting at a doctor in clear bouts of irritation.

Han Sooyoung stared at them, before demanding an answer from the Dokkaebi King. "How did this guy end up like this?"

"Apparently, he jumped out of the classroom window."

Han Sooyoung slowly reached out and checked Kim Dokja's current condition. Crude cast and bandages wrapped around his body. Swollen bruises all over his face. His arm where not one solid muscle could be felt lay powerlessly on the bed.

Han Sooyoung held the boy's hand.

It was as small as her own.

"Do… Do something," she muttered out.

"Please don't worry. These aren't fatal wounds. Thankfully, the classroom floor wasn't high, and he collided with a tree on his way down, so…"

"That's not what I meant!"

The married couple walking in closer from the distance could be seen. They must've discovered Han Sooyoung, since they seemed to be shouting something or rather in her direction.

However, their voices didn't register in her brain.

Just why…

「"If it weren't for that novel, I'd probably have died back then."」

She wasn't sure if this was her own memory, or the 3rd turn's.

「"You, you. You and your exaggerations."」

「"I'm telling you the truth."」

Ancient, creaky memories rushed in like tidal waves while hiding within all the ringing noises in her head. The Dokkaebi King supported her and they left the hospital. She saw the medical staff and the paramedics hurriedly moving the new patient into the emergency ward.

"We managed to find him somehow, didn't we?"

"…"

"Now that I've seen him personally, it was true all along. Did you sense that incredible aura coming out from his entire figure? And now, as soon as he opens his own world, then…"

As if it was looking forward to the apocalypse soon to visit this world-line, the Dokkaebi King continued to yap on and on.

Han Sooyoung muttered out as she stumbled ungainly. "Kim Dokja said he read that novel when he was fifteen."

"Yes. So, soon it…"

"What if he didn't get to read that novel… What will happen to him?"

"Pardon?"

If the 'Ways of Survival' didn't start, then this world would not be destroyed.

However, what would happen to Kim Dokja, instead?

"Uhm, hello?"

"…"

"Are you actually crying?"

Kim Dokja's tragedy was a rather common one. If only a small number of gazes fell upon him, if only just a tiny little bit of goodwill was shown his way, then it'd have been easily overcome. However, he couldn't exactly expect those small gazes or goodwill in the situation he found himself in.

Realistically speaking, could a 13-year-old elementary school kid be able to save anyone? One who can barely regain her self only during early hours, no less?

"But, why are you crying?"

That didn't mean she could entrust it to this Dokkaebi King, either.

Not only did it speak weirdly, but it also couldn't use the system, and its character couldn't even be trusted, so how could she expect such a bum of a Dokkaebi to…

Han Sooyoung dazedly stared at her own hands.

「"That novel saved me. So, I should pay my debt to its protagonist."」

The way to… save Kim Dokja.

"Hey, you have any money on you?"

"Pardon?"

"Give me five thousand, no, ten thousand Won."

Han Sooyoung quickly snatched the Dokkaebi King's cash and rushed towards the nearby PC Bang.

The latter screamed and chased after her. "That's all the money I have!"

She sneaked past the PC Bang's owner dozing off, stole a charge card, logged into an unused computer, and clicked on the internet browser. She typed in the address of the webnovel platform she always connected to, and searched for a certain author's name again.

– There are no matching results.

Even now, tls123 hadn't shown up yet.

The end of the year was fast approaching, yet the serialisation hadn't started yet.

Han Sooyoung quietly glared at the monitor for a little while, before clicking on the platform's [members registration] icon.

She didn't know who tls123 was. However, if tls123 was, at least, not Kim Dokja – if the author of that damn novel was someone else, then…

– The applicable username is currently not in use. Would you like to use this username?

Perhaps it didn't really matter who it was?

Her hand gripping the mouse was trembling hard.

The tragedy's button rested against the tip of her finger. If she clicked it, then… the apocalypse of countless world-lines would begin.

However, if she didn't press it…

– Yes.

…The 'small world' she witnessed would disappear.

– Dear tls123-nim. Congratulations on your registration!

Han Sooyoung confirmed the remaining time.

[Three hours remaining in the self-regulated activity period.]

[Once the main ego wakes up, your control will forcibly be rescinded.]

She opened up the word processor and began typing away immediately. As if she was unspooling a manuscript stuck inside her head for the longest time ever, her fingers continued to move in a brilliant fashion. She showed not a single error in her typing. Her exquisite sentences that seemingly carved out a world in its entirety. However, arrangements that lacked any consideration towards the potential reader, and expositions that had no immersive devices to speak of. She typed, and typed some more, of this boring story.

All the while expecting that…

…Without a doubt, one person would definitely get to read this story.

「This is a lie.」

Countless worlds were destroyed by her hands.

And countless characters died because of her.

「At least, until it can become the truth.」

All the possibilities that her [Predictive Plagiarism] could guess were overflowing inside her head. Some of them became the narrative, while some others became expositions.

And so, how long passed by like that? Han Sooyoung's fingers eventually came to a stop.

「Yoo Joonghyuk stood before the vast, endless calamity pouncing on him and spoke.」

It was not possible to figure out every facet of the story through the [Predictive Plagiarism].

「"Until I witness the end of the scenario, I shall never give up. That's why…"」

She wasn't sure whether Yoo Joonghyuk really said something like that or not. Because all of this was from her imagination, after all. Because she had created everything. That's why she wanted to write these very words. Even if by borrowing Yoo Joonghyuk's mouth, she wanted to write these words and put them in there.

「"You shouldn't give up, either."」

Han Sooyoung panted breathlessly and slowly raised her head. When she looked behind her, she discovered the Dokkaebi King staring at the computer's screen with an enraptured expression.

"Hey, Dokkaebi King?"

The creature slowly knelt down before her and waited for her next words.

"…I'm going to sleep."

[You have spent too much of your mental power during a short period of time!]

[Your ego will become subconsciousness, and…]

…

…

…

When she regained her consciousness, she was lying on her own bed.

It was midnight. It seemed that a full day's cycle went by after she blacked out.

'…Goddammit, what the hell did I do that for?'

While holding her head, Han Sooyoung got up from the bed. The blue wallpaper of the notebook PC resting on the desk caught her eye. She launched the internet browser without thinking too much about it and connected to the webnovel platform.

Several comments had already popped up on her story she uploaded last night. Most of them were crappy, toxic comments about how 'no jam' it was, or how it was too obsessed with expositions and stuff.

"I quickly wrote that in mere two hours, so obviously… Besides, I was trying my best to be as close to the 'Ways of Survival', you know??"

Among all those comments, a particular one caught her attention.

– Dear author-nim. It was a great read. May I ask about your release schedule?

Such an unparalleled naivete that made him use his real name as the username. Han Sooyoung stared at that name for a long, long time. She looked closer, and discovered another comment attached to it.

– Are you… going to release another chapter tomorrow?

She repeatedly clenched and unfurled her fists many times. Sweat was soaking her small hands.

Is it really okay for me to write this?

Even then, isn't it fine this way?

Han Sooyoung hesitated for a long time, before typing her reply.

While thinking about a certain someone, still alive beyond this screen.

While thinking about a certain boy who'd breathe, eat, shout some nonsense about 'I'm Yoo Joonghyuk', and do whatever it takes to endure his own apocalypse.

And so, the story of a regressor that reached 3149 chapters started in this manner.

– Yes. A new chapter will be published tomorrow.

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* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)

Chapter 534: Epilogue 3 - Author's words, III

Han Sooyoung continued to write.

The short period of time given to her during the wee hours was completely devoted to Kim Dokja.

"Hey, Dokkaebi King."

"Yes, my dear god."

"…I told you to stop calling me that. Anyways. The 'Ways of Survival' will be published seven in the evenings from now on. The website doesn't have the feature to schedule the chapter releases ahead of time yet, so you hold onto the manuscript and upload them on time for me. If I upload them during dawn, that kid is going to stay up late and wait. He won't get any sleep."

"I shall do as you command."

Han Sooyoung spat out a lengthy groan and shifted her gaze back to the manuscript she'd been working on.

「Yoo Joonghyuk examined the events of the previous regression turn.」

She couldn't possibly write a life that lasted for 1863rd regression turns. 3149 chapters were simply too short to contain a life lived for 1864 times. She had to omit some regression turns, while some others had to be greatly reduced in length.

She knew that life didn't really work that way. But at the same time, she had to acknowledge that some lives could only be written in such a manner. Once she came to accept that, writing those lives didn't prove to be too difficult for her.

The life of 1863rd turn Yoo Joonghyuk was given to her in its entirety, while she also possessed information from the 3rd turn Kim Dokja, as well. Most importantly, though, she was an excellent writer.

The margins she couldn't fill up, they would instead be lived out by Yoo Joonghyuk himself.

Yoo Joonghyuk, who'd take his breaths among the flowing contexts of the words, and step above the hard ground covered by the pitch-black letters.

All she could do was to deliver such Yoo Joonghyuk's story.

Every time she wrote a single chapter, Kim Dokja's life was extended by yet another day. As one sentence after another was compiled and recorded, her own time also ticked forward little by little.

The 13-year-old Han Sooyoung became 14. Then, 15 years old.

「A serialisation that would last for ten long, arduous years had begun.」

It was tough. She didn't have enough stamina, and her young body was simply too frail. Even then, Han Sooyoung endured. She thought about Kim Dokja beyond the computer screen, also getting older like her. Kim Dokja, who hadn't died, hadn't given up, and was still enduring his life.

– Dear author-nim, Today, Joonghyuk did…

Are you really enjoying a story like this?

Although half in doubt, Han Sooyoung still continued to write the story.

「"The information I gave you will come in handy later down the line. So, take a look whenever you have time."」

The story would not end as long as someone was reading it.

That's how it was with the 1863rd regression turn, once thought to be the last.

– Author-nim. I've been thinking, how about creating a new character by using this opportunity…?

She checked the comments Kim Dokja left behind every day. As she was active only around the early hours, communicating with him in real-time was difficult, but she did reply to the questions that seemingly required one.

– Should I create another main character?

– If possible, might as well as make her a pretty female character…

– Aha, you mean a beautiful young girl.

「Facial features more than enough to slap Yoo Joonghyuk's cheeks twice. A beautiful young boy with brilliant blonde locks glared at Yoo Joonghyuk and shouted out. "Hey you, dumpling man."」

– …But, author-nim??

Kim Dokja, 16 years old. 17, 18.

He'd consume this story and grow older, and eventually, become the 'Oldest Dream'. Despite knowing that fact, Han Sooyoung still enjoyed this time period. A world of a pure-white snowfield where letters were wandering around freely. Above this world existed Kim Dokja, and so did Han Sooyoung.

– Author-nim. I was wondering if Joonghyuk-ie is suffering way too much lately…

Sometimes, she'd put Yoo Joonghyuk through the wringer. It only happened because of her desire to realistically copy and paste the story she already knew. While writing the novel in this manner, she'd fall into a pit of confusion every now and then.

Did this event really happen in the past?

Couldn't it be more like, it happened because I wrote this?

Whatever the truth was, she still gave it her all. She took pride in her work. But at the same time, she had to admit that it was impossible for her to completely rule over her own work.

「With a pair of seething, boiling eyes, Yoo Joonghyuk glared up into the heavens.」

Sometime in the future, Yoo Joonghyuk created by the tips of her hands would meet that Kim Dokja for real. Just thinking about that event nearly made her go crazy from time to time.

– Unprecedented hit novel! 「「SSSSS-grade Infinite Regressor」」!

Around that time, the 'daytime ego' began working as an author in earnest, as well. Of course, she had stolen the nighttime Han Sooyoung's talents wholesale, so there was no way that her novel would fail. Not only that, the 'daytime ego' even went to the trouble of creating an anonymous account to leave behind a toxic comment on the 'Ways of Survival', too.

– I'm really worried about the life of the dear author-nim actually writing this junk.

…What was even more flabbergasting was Kim Dokja's DM.

– Author-nim! Do know about the novel called SSSSS-grade Infinite Regressor? That novel's setting is exactly the same as the Ways of…

Han Sooyoung smirked and began typing her reply. She thought, right, the dude writing a DM like this accused me of being a plagiarist during the 1863rd turn, did you?

– I'm happy that my viewcount has gone up thanks to the exposure, actually.

When she was finished typing the reply, the faint rays of the daybreak had cast onto the world outside the window. Starting from a while ago, she didn't feel refreshed even after waking up. She'd often use up all of her allotted time on writing the novel, and there were times when she couldn't endure the fatigue anymore and fall asleep despite the self-regulated activity period not having ended yet.

To make matters worse, her memories were gradually deteriorating, as well.

Information she heard from Yoo Joonghyuk, and received from Kim Dokja – she couldn't recall them well. Things that happened back in the 1863rd turn were getting blurrier. And also…

[Your Story is being consumed.]

Even the length of her self-regulated activity period was decreasing gradually.

The time continued to tick by, and Han Sooyoung continued to write almost every day.

At times, she couldn't wake up and ended up wasting an entire day. And due to the worsening fatigue, the number of days she couldn't read Kim Dokja's comments increased as well.

– Author-nim. I'll be joining the military the day after tomorrow. Looks like I'll be sent to the frontlines.

– It's Kim Dokja. I'm here at Yanggu.

– Joonghyuk-ah… I wonder, have you ever shovelled snow before?

20 years old, 21, 22…

371st turn, 621st, 972nd…

As Yoo Joonghyuk's regression turn numbers grew higher, so did Kim Dokja's age. Kim Dokja feeding on Yoo Joonghyuk's tragedy became a high school student, then a university student and eventually, a soldier.

Han Sooyoung observed the growth of such a man.

Her free time decreased even more as the 'daytime ego', now an adult herself, began staying up during the dawn as well. As the time to polish up the novel gradually dissipated, the Dokkaebi King's role also naturally grew much more substantial.

"Please don't worry. I shall fix all the errors," said the Dokkaebi King.

"Do you even know anything about grammar?"

"Yes, I do. I'm planning to earn my living that way. A publisher was looking for a part-time proofreader, so I confidently applied for the position."

This guy still came across as somewhat unreliable, but she couldn't get anyone else to help her, anyway. She definitely couldn't get the help from the 'daytime ego', for instance. A lot of her strength had been exhausted and her forgetfulness had worsened greatly in recent times so it took a lot out of her just to post a reply to Kim Dokja's comments.

「And just like that, a few more years went by like fleeting magic.」

While writing that sentence, Han Sooyoung thought that her life wasn't all that different from Yoo Joonghyuk's, in some ways.

Sometimes, a life really did get omitted like this. However, that didn't mean a life omitted as such left nothing of itself behind, either. That's what she thought while staring at the novel numbering over 3000 chapters currently compiled before her eyes.

On a certain day before the completion, Han Sooyoung opened up the platform's chat window in order to write a comment as usual.

– Please don't give up, dear reader-nim.

…Did I post a comment like this before?

Initially, she figured this was a result of her typing some random things while half-submerged in drowsiness. However, there was more than one post that she couldn't remember ever posting here.

– To answer your question…

Just when did she post such replies before? No matter how hard she thought about it, she couldn't recall. Not only that, the timestamps of the posts were weird, as well.

– Actually, rather than a mistake in the setting, it's…

Han Sooyoung summoned the Dokkaebi King right away. When she did, the creature wearing a fedora appeared from the thin air accompanied by the 'Tsu-chuchut!' noise.

She asked. "Did you write this?"

"Yes."

"On whose authority?"

"I sincerely apologise for not getting your permission beforehand. You seemed very tired lately."

Han Sooyoung quietly stared at the Dokkaebi King.

This creature came to this world searching for its 'god'. And it now knew who its creator was.

"Just what are you aiming for?"

"I am merely a 'storyteller'. And as it is with every storyteller, I love to tell a great epic. The world you have created, of course."

"There is only one reader of this story, though."

"Do you really believe so?"

She narrowed her eyes and shot back. "I already know what you're scheming, okay? You're planning to turn my novel into a 'paid service', aren't you?"

Ever since arriving in this world, she constantly thought about 'that day'.

The novel she wrote would become the 'scenario' that would go on to destroy this universe. However, who would dare to do something so horrifying like that? The answer was quite simple when she thought about it.

There was only one existence capable of doing something like that in this world-line, after all.

"You brought me here for that very purpose, didn't you?"

"I won't deny that. Even though it hadn't been long since I realized what my true role was."

Faint sparks were dancing all over the Dokkaebi King's body. That was the evidence of the system's Probability growing stronger. Also, it meant that this Dokkaebi was gradually regaining the power of the King of the storytellers.

Han Sooyoung stared at the dancing sparks before speaking up. "…So, then. The apocalypse will really begin, is that it?"

"Yes."

"Honestly, I don't get it at all. You know the chronological sequence doesn't make sense, either."

"…The chronological sequence?"

"The only reason why I can write this is because Yoo Joonghyuk will live his life in the future, and Kim Dokja had read the novel. But for me to write a novel that Kim Dokja will read, that's…"

"…The time paradox. That's what humans call this. However, there are universes that do operate on that principle. A universe where the future is written before the past, and the cause is created for the purpose of the end result. I'm sure you're already familiar with such a universe?"

Han Sooyoung frowned as if to ask, what on earth are you talking about?

The Dokkaebi King grinned and lightly tapped the computer monitor. "Aren't you currently writing one?"

The stray thoughts and fragments of letters she had thrown around could be found in there.

Countless scenes existing outside the time itself, outside the world, waiting to be connected as one. Some scenes became futures despite being written earlier, while some scenes, despite being written later, became the past. Han Sooyoung's eyes trembled. "…Are you saying this whole universe is just a novel?"

"If I am to compare it, then yes, something like that."

The letters within the screen seemed to ripple. Letters wishing to be loved by someone were flowing outside the monitor after forming pairs and groups with each other.

Sentences, that sparkled like the stars.

Some sentences willingly became the darkness for other sentences, while a certain sentence became light only through those dark words. Some sentences existed for the next sentence, while the next sentence gained its meaning because the first sentence existed.

"There is no 'before and after' in this universe. And that is precisely the reason why the 'First World-line' is being completed very last." Within this giant, endlessly connecting chain, the Dokkaebi King was smiling rapturously. "The universe was created just now, but at the same time, it has existed for the past billions of years, as well. And a certain beginning only appears after the apocalypse has commenced."

Sentences cascaded like a meteor shower.

<Star Stream> was singing towards its god.

Because Han Sooyoung wrote the Ways of Survival, Kim Dokja got to read it.

Because Kim Dokja read the Ways of Survival, Yoo Joonghyuk began his regression.

Because Yoo Joonghyuk began his regression, Han Sooyoung was able to write the 'Ways of Survival'.

She might have written them, but these words were completed only after leaving her hands.

「The story that would save someone, destroy, and help him live.」

Han Sooyoung stared at the horrifying trajectory drawn out by those words and became acutely aware of the fact that she had been thrown into this neverending cycle.

She might be the author responsible for creating this world, but she was also a powerless god. A god that couldn't even save a single reader. A god who was simply a part of this vast, boundless story.

[<Star Stream> is smiling in your direction.]

"Now, behold. Isn't this a truly perfect story?"

@1L9l2Aa8UCL0IGJ

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* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)

Chapter 535: Epilogue 3 - Author's words, IV

[<Star Stream> is looking at its creator.]

Her eyelids soaked in fatigue slowly closed. As she drifted into the languid sea of unconsciousness, Han Sooyoung listened to the Dokkaebi King's voice.

"Please, rest now and sleep, my noble god."

And on the next day, the 'Ways of Survival's' final chapter was completed.

「…Three ways to survive. I've forgotten a few. But one thing's for certain. That is…」

After she finished typing the very last sentence, Han Sooyoung kept her eyes closed for a very long time. She knew a day like this would eventually come. But now that it was finally here, it didn't feel real to her at all.

Her lengthy serialisation had finally come to an end.

When she slowly looked behind, the Dokkaebi King was standing there just as she suspected. With a pair of deeply-moved eyes, it was staring at the computer monitor.

"Hey, you," said Han Sooyoung.

"Yes, my god."

"Can't you, like, not do the paid service?"

"Dear god-nim, even if I don't, the story will commence regardless."

Han Sooyoung could only smile bitterly at the Dokkaebi King speaking like a stubborn devotee.

The daylight was breaking outside the windows. The sun would rise, and when it was time to set again, the apocalypse would come to visit this world.

「And then, Kim Dokja's story will begin.」

"…And I'm destined to disappear, right?"

Tsu-chut, chuchuchut…

Her Story, what little remained of it, wiggled slightly. There were some stories that might not seem all that excellent or special, but still required an untold sacrifice to complete. To her, the 'Ways of Survival' was one such novel.

[Your existential Story is in a precarious state.]

If the future about to unfold was correct, her ego would soon disappear into the main body's vast, boundless subconsciousness. And only after the main body learns the [Avatar] skill would she be reborn with a tiny bit of the old memories. And then, get to live the 1863rd regression turn.

「If that's indeed the case, what did my life exist for?」

Han Sooyoung dazedly approached the window. The light grew brighter beyond the pale-naked skies, and the stars were receding away.

【Everything has already been written, and at the same time, still being written.】

The 'Outer God' who sent her to the 1863rd turn said that to her. A universe of repeating cycle. And in this universe, the result birthed the cause, and the cause would eventually become the result.

In order to create a complete story, the result rejected the cause, while the cause devoured the result in order to exist. The moment she understood that vast, mysterious rule, Han Sooyoung began thinking that this world resembled a chessboard. A chessboard that pursued the highest degree of completion, ruled by a certain gigantic 'will' with an unknown origin and form.

Even if she was the creator of the apocalyptic scenario, wasn't she merely another chess piece, a 'knight', in this chessboard of the universe?

While sensing the waves of sleepiness crashing in, she slowly got up from her seat.

[Your mental power has reached its limit!]

Han Sooyoung fought against the horrifying level of tiredness, fumbled around to put on some clothes, and left her room. The hour was still very early, but the people waking up early should be getting ready to go to work round about now. The Dokkaebi King was following after her.

She addressed the King while not even bothering to look back. "You worked hard trying to edit the novel until now."

"If you go outside, you'll die."

She already knew that. Because the sun was rising.

Han Sooyoung looked up at the break of dawn and spoke. "My role's already finished, anyway. You'll take care of the rest from now on, right? It'll be the end when you hand over the text file to him on the designated time. I wrote that revised version too, the one we talked about, just in case. But… that's incomplete, so you decide what to do later."

"But…"

"It's been over ten years." Han Sooyoung glared at the Dokkaebi King several hand-spans taller than her. "Can't I do what I want at least once?"

The reason why she came to this world – it was to meet Kim Dokja she ran into back in the 1863rd turn one more time.

She leisurely warmed her muscles, and started jogging.

「Han Sooyoung imagined Kim Dokja, on his way to work at Mino Soft.」

She heard news from the Dokkaebi King every now and then, and there were also the comments Kim Dokja himself had written. And that's how she knew a lot about him.

– Author-nim! I'll be living by myself starting this year!

– I'm now living near this place. And it's really weird reading about it in a novel.

– Have you heard about Mino Soft? It'd be nice if your novel gets a game version, too. Maybe I should suggest it to the…

She knew when he became independent from his tragedy, and from where he started dealing with yet another tragedy. And also, in what shape or form this new tragedy appeared as.

[The main body's ego is trying to wake up from her dream!]

[Warning! Your self-regulated activity period has ended!]

[Further exercising of control will cause your ego to…]

Han Sooyoung ignored the messages and continued to run. She ran, and ran again until she could barely breathe. She ran hard, the words Kim Dokja wrote the only things occupying her thoughts.

– Author-nim. I don't remember how many times I've said this before, but…

Those words… she'd forget them all.

[Your actions are in serious violation of the Probability.]

She'd forget the memories of the 1863rd turn.

And she'd also forget the fact that she wrote a certain novel, as well.

[Your Story is disappearing.]

She'd forget that a story existed just for its sole reader.

However, even then, even if she forgot everything…

「Han Sooyoung's running slowly came to a halt.」

There he was. A man who existed only as texts for a long, long time ever since that day she last saw him in the hospital's emergency ward.

「In the distance, Kim Dokja was walking forward.」

That was the exact same face of Kim Dokja she remembered.

The man who came to her 1863rd regression turn. The man who she wanted to see again. The detestable man with his own brand of ass-kissing. The man who lied really easily. The man who she enjoyed being around, since they could lie about something together and snicker among themselves.

"----"

The man, who didn't remember her.

"----!!"

Her voice didn't want to come out. She couldn't tell whether it was because she was choking up, or the control of her body was slipping away from her.

Han Sooyoung staggered and walked closer to Kim Dokja. Several passersby brushing past her looked back in suspicion.

Kim Dokja was now walking down the subway's steps.

Kim Dokja, with earphones stuck in his ears and reading something on his phone while walking downstairs.

She knew what he was currently reading.

"---!!"

She barely managed to shout, but her voice still didn't come out. So, she desperately chased after him.

– Because of the story you wrote, author-nim, I was able to survive until now.

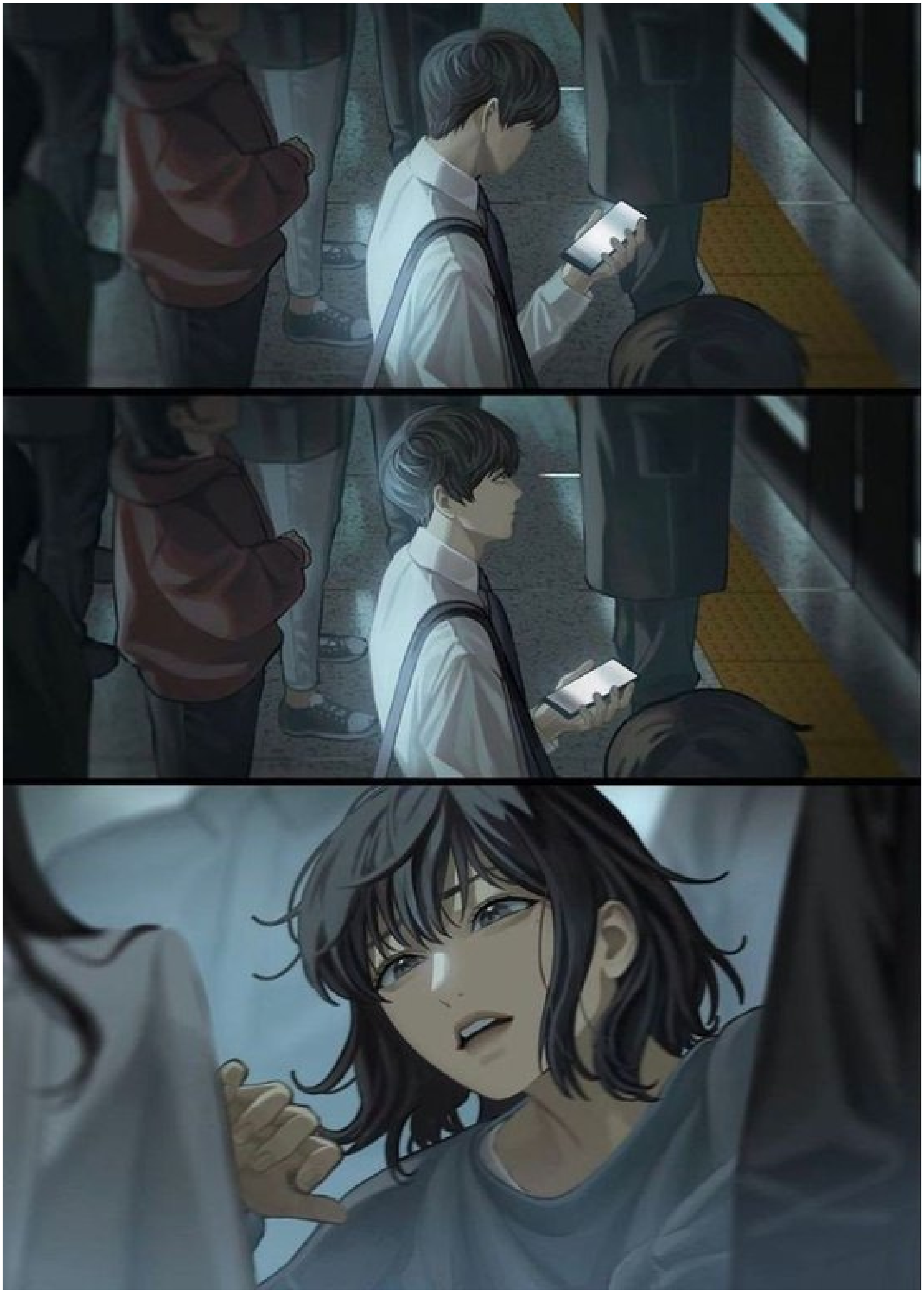
Han Sooyoung was also able to survive while reading the sole reader's words.

She managed to write the next part of Yoo Joonghyuk's life through them.

She was able to endure her boring and stuffy teen years, the days she never wanted to go back to, thanks to those words.

– This train is bound for…

She spotted Kim Dokja standing on the platform, waiting for the next train to arrive. A person hiding within the small world crafted out of letters to protect himself was standing right there.



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Kim Dokja, who didn't know anything about the apocalypse about to happen.

Kim Dokja, who'd get to live on the expansive world of the 'Ways of Survival'.

Kim Dokja, who'd get to meet the protagonist he so longed to become.

Kim Dokja, who'd become the 'Demon King of Salvation'.

Kim Dokja, who'd sacrifice himself multiple times for the sake of his companions, and as a result, came to the 1863rd turn and met her.

Kim Dokja, who was destined to become the 'Oldest Dream', the price he paid for loving a certain story too much.

[Your mental state is crumbling!]

[The main body's ego is regaining its control.]

[Your Story is being extinguished.]

Her legs grew heavy, and her arms didn't want to move anymore. Her body was gradually becoming not hers.

Even then, Han Sooyoung wanted to tell him.

「To tell him that he was definitely not at fault for this story being born. And to tell him that the things he was about to experience were not his sins.」

Because her past 13 years existed solely to say those words to him.

「To say that, though you have grown up while reading this story, there's no need for you to become it.」

She barely managed to reach out, the tips of her hand touching Kim Dokja's shoulder.

[Your ego will convert into the 'subconsciousness'.]

Kim Dokja felt that sensation of touch on his shoulder and looked behind him.

However, the incoming waves of commuters heading to work swept him up, and he got pushed into the subway, instead.

And after the crowd had left, only Han Sooyoung and her dazed expression remained on the empty subway platform.

"…What the hell? Why the hell am I standing here??"

Han Sooyoung tilted her head, before scratching her hair hard while wondering out loud, "Did my sleepwalking flare up again??"

She confirmed the time with her smartphone and exploded in irritation. "Son of a… And I haven't even finished writing today's chapter, too!"

…

…

…

…

[Story, 'Predictive Plagiarism', has plagiarised your lost memories!]

…

…

…

…

Tsu-chuchuchuchu…

"Han Sooyoung?"

Tsu-chuchu…

"Han Sooyoung!!"

She heard someone call out to her among all the terrible ringing in her ears.

"Han Sooyoung!"

And right next instance, a powerful impact landing on the back of her head helped her to regain her wits. The pain emanating from the back of the head was hellish. She already knew which fool would hit her so mercilessly like this.

"Joonghyuk-ssi!! What are you doing, hitting her so hard like that?! You could've killed her right as she's waking up!"

Han Sooyoung slowly raised her head and discovered Lee Seolhwa supporting her, as well as Yoo Joonghyuk and his massive scowl. Also, the other members of <Kim Dokja's Company>, too. Jung Heewon, Lee Hyunsung, Shin Yoosung, Lee Jihye… Companions, currently covered in dust from head to toe.

Han Sooyoung intently stared at them as if to study each and every one present. Eventually, her gaze shifted over to Yoo Joonghyuk. "…I think I now know how you felt back when you finally recalled the 0th turn."

"What rubbish are you talking about now?"

"…I remember."

Han Sooyoung looked around here and there as if it still didn't feel real to her yet. Then, she slowly looked behind her. That's where the field covered in dense fog created out of letters could be seen. That was the gateway they passed through just now, and also, the hurdle where she nearly died, as well.

Lee Jihye checking out Han Sooyoung's complexion asked. "Eonni, are you really alright? You were mumbling some incoherent stuff about going somewhere to sign a contract for a novel and stuff…"

[Story, 'Predictive Plagiarism', has stopped its storytelling.]

Han Sooyoung looked down at her own trembling hands.

Why did these memories return to her only now?

…No, hold on – were they even real, to begin with?

「Once upon a time, she wrote a certain story with these very hands.」

Faint memories that were still overflowing with vividness.

Han Sooyoung organised her thoughts in a sequential manner – why she was here, what had happened so far, and what she needed to say now.

"I'm… the 'Ways of Survival's'…"

Han Sooyoung barely managed to breathe in a couple of times, and just as she was about to open her mouth again, Yoo Joonghyuk abruptly cut her off. "Stop wasting time with unnecessary remarks, and let's head out."

She raised her head after hearing those words.

[Main Scenario has been updated!]

['Final Scenario' will now commence.]

Even as she stared at the scenario messages unfolding before her very eyes, everything still didn't feel real to her. But, she knew why those messages were floating around in her vision, though.

「The companions had broken past the 99 scenarios once more.」

"…Why are you acting so dazed like this?"

This was the tragedy that she set in motion. And the very people who faced this tragedy head-on were extending their hands towards her.

"Let's go, Sooyoung-ssi."

Yoo Sangah lightly tapped Han Sooyoung's back and took the lead.

The backs of her companions walking ahead of her were murky, cloudy.

This was impossible. This was not something you could pull off because of your desire to save someone else.

Even then, they still did it.

In the far-off distance, the wall of letters covering up the end of the world could be seen.

The 'Final Wall'.

The companions exchanged knowing glances and began pulling out their weapons one by one – and simultaneously, the roars of the Constellations came from afar.

Yoo Joonghyuk watching this scene unfold also unsheathed his [Black Heavenly Demon Sword]. "That fool is beyond that wall."

The Dokkaebis from the Bureau were blocking their path, and the Dokkaebi King's figure could be seen guarding the Final Wall itself. Han Sooyoung slowly sucked in her breaths and got up from her spot.

It truly had been a lengthy story. And finally, its ending was right before her eyes.

「They have finally reached the conclusion she had written.」

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* Official novel illustration (canonical)

Chapter 536: Epilogue 4 - The Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint, I

I remembered the first time I read that novel.

A really stuffy, boring hospital's ward. A single PC located in its lobby.

When I stood in line to have a go at it, a gentleman wearing a fedora stepped aside for me. The computer screen at the time was showing the webnovel platform that enjoyed visiting.

I dazedly stared at the screen before inputting the keywords. I might have inserted three or so words, but couldn't quite remember what I typed back then. However, I still remembered what I was thinking of back then. The mechanical pencil leads strewn about on the classroom floor, the indigo-hued skies extending far beyond outside the windows.

What I could tell for sure was that my hands, used to open the classroom window, had typed something and that lead me to discover that novel.

「Three Ways to Survive in a Ruined World」

Through that story, I survived.

「He was definitely not at fault for this story being born」

I felt sick inside. I couldn't fight against the dizziness and collapsed on the floor. The texts before my eyes were blurry and hard to see.

「Han Sooyoung was tls123.」

While panting heavily, I lay unmoving on the floor for a long time. Only the same exact question continued to swirl around in my head – the question of "But, why?"

「Why, for someone like me?」

I remained collapsed for a while. I thought I cried, too. However, no matter how I thrashed and screamed and sobbed, the already-written sentences couldn't be changed. Han Sooyoung had to spend 13 years of life just for me, and helped me live by crafting sentences literally carved out of her. And then, she was extinguished.

「Kim Dok ja」

[The Fourth Wall] was calling out to me. I quietly listened to the next words.

「Y o u sho uld r e a d」

I gingerly stood back up. My reflection on the windows was a complete mess. It'd be hard to call my body an adult's anymore. My height had decreased a lot, and my face had gotten younger, too. The coat I wore no longer fit me. I stared at that face for a long time, before taking the coat off for good.

"…How many years has it been?"

「Ear th's ti me h a s no mea ning he re」

I understood what that meant.

This subway was the location where the 'Oldest Dream' had his dreams. So, the time of other world-lines couldn't measure the 'time' flowing within this train.

In all honesty, I had completely lost all sense of time after entering this train, anyway.

"Even then, there should still be this thing called perceived time, right?"

「Ar ound 21763 y e a r s」

"It's not as long as I thought. I'm still way younger than the 'Secretive Plotter', right?"

「St ill a li ttle r un t」

I heard [The Fourth Wall] cackle away. If it wasn't for this guy's presence here, I'd have gone insane a long time ago.

Along with the 'Pah-sususu' noise, the tip of my pinky decreased a little.

Since when did this start from, I wondered. I didn't do anything, yet my body continued to grow smaller. Well, if I were to be more specific, it wasn't really 'I didn't do anything', though.

"…Will I keep getting smaller?" I stared at the crumbs of Stories drifting away outside the windows and asked. "Where are those Stories going off to, anyway?"

「To uni ver se's sub con scious ness」

"And where is that?"

「In a wor ld-li ne y o u ar en't con sci ous of」

The role of the 'Oldest Dream' was to imagine all of the world-lines. Even if I wasn't conscious of it, my subconsciousness was still continuously watching the world-lines.

「Tho se Stories wi ll be reb orn as ano ther Kim Dok ja」

"As another Kim Dokja?"

「Me ta phor ica lly spea king its li ke th at」

I thought I could understand what [The Fourth Wall] was saying.

Stories were streaming beyond the galaxies to head towards another world-line.

Those Stories were, in essence, 'me'.

Just like the 49% version of me living along with my companions somewhere in the 1864th regression turn, my fragments could very well be reborn as 'Kim Dokja' in a world-line somewhere out there.

"If it's only that little, I think it'll be a bit of a push to call that guy 'Kim Dokja'. I mean, he won't be the same as me with such a small fragment."

「Y o u mi ght be ri ght」

An existence that might have a different name and face to me. Even then, that existence would come to life and start imagining the universe. He'd be moved after reading the story, and then, stare at the world-line.

And just like that, he'd maintain this universe.

"…I see."

Somehow, I thought I could understand the principle of this universe just a little.

I pressed my crumbling fingers against the window. When I did, the rate of crumbling began accelerating.

「If y o u do th at」

"This is my way of atoning for this story."

Not just from my fingers, but the Stories began scattering away little by little from the shoulders as well as my legs, too.

The scattered Stories would fly around in the universe and become sentences that go on to support this universe from somewhere.

「To say that, though you have grown up while reading this story, there's no need for you to become it.」

That's what the author of the 'Ways of Survival', Han Sooyoung said.

I had clearly heard her. Even then, I couldn't heed her words.

How could I make any other choice when looking at such a story?

When I closed my eyes, the overview of the entire universe would get drawn inside my head.

Han Sooyoung wrote the story.

Yoo Joonghyuk lived that story.

And, I read that very story.

And that's how this world barely managed to reach its completion.

「"Dokja-ssi."」

Because this tragedy existed, I got to meet certain people.

Someone was able to get saved, too.

「Kim Dokja stared into the universe with no visible end.」

And now, I knew what my future was like. Every time I read something, I'd crumble away. My crumbling Stories would scatter to countless world-lines out there and become the 'gaze' that maintained this universe.

I would lose all of my memories, and lose everything that I hold dear. And in the end, only the desire to see the 'next story' would remain in me.

But, without that desire, this universe couldn't continue.

This universe could only continue telling its story as long as someone was looking at it.

Being stuck and unmoving in this universe meant death.

Tsu-chuchuchu…

The countless 'me' divided into particles continued to spread out to the numerous world-lines out there. The rate of the Story's scattering continued to hasten.

"If I forget about everything… I won't feel this pain anymore, right?"

「Y o u wo nt re mem ber any th ing af ter all」

To someone who even lost the traces of his loss, no such thing as 'loss' existed.

While picking up the smartphone rolling around on the floor, I spoke up. "… Will I have enough time to read it one more time, I wonder?"

I opened the file for the 'Ways of Survival', and scrolled up past the [Author's words] that I had to read with great difficulty.

「Three Ways to Survive in a Ruined World.」

I started reading this novel from the very beginning.

I read Yoo Joonghyuk's 3rd turn. Some stories, I already knew. While some others felt brand new to me.

The so-called final revised version was exactly the same as the original that I remembered.

'Kim Dokja' didn't exist in it.

Pah-susususu…

Just as my Story scattered away, the sentences from the 'Ways of Survival' filled me up inside. When I got tired, I closed my eyes for a little bit and rested, and after resting, I continued reading the novel.

Fifth turn, sixth… 64th… 129th…

672nd.

914th.

1642nd…

The page continued to scroll down, and I was overjoyed or saddened several times.

Not being able to comment did bum me out. I wanted to let Han Sooyoung know of my emotions one more time. To tell her that I could only come this far because of the story you gave me, that I loved your story more than anyone in this world.

And so, I read. I read, and then, read some more.

How long did I read this very story?

Tsu-chuchuchu…

「…」

By the time I reached the epilogue, my vision suddenly grew fuzzy.

I even wondered if I became blind after reading a novel for far too long.

[A new update has been completed.]

But then, my vision was slowly restored. What I saw weren't proper sentences, however. Sentences and paragraphs had become individual fragments.

Words that were no longer in the form of a completed novel. Even then, I could still read them somehow.

「A world had been destroyed, and a brand new one was being born.」

My heart was beating loudly.

A story I was intimately familiar with was there.

「I was the sole reader who knew the conclusion of this world.」

Within this story, I existed. And…

「"I'm Yoo Joonghyuk."」

「"Ah, it seems that I haven't introduced myself yet. My name is Han Sooyoung. I'm the assistant to Cha Sang-Gyeong-nim in the group.」

And, they were there, too.

「"What if the 'scenarios' didn't start, what would've happened to us?"」

「"Dokja-ssi, your sponsor isn't something like the 'One-eyed Fortuneteller', right?"」

「"Dokja-ssi, have you thrown a hand grenade before?"」

「"Ahjussi, do you have any particular food you like?"」

We broke past the scenarios, together.

「Hyung, are you maybe a god?」

「"Load the cannons."」

「"Everyone, fight to your hearts' content. I won't let anyone die."」

「"You stinking bastards!! Again, you didn't even come to fetch me…!!"」

「"The one I like isn't you, but the 'Demon King of Salvation'…」

「[Baat!]」

And, I lived my life together with them.

「"The next scenario is…"」

We experienced trials, and had to face off against life-threatening situations many times.

We met Constellations.

We broke past seemingly-impossible scenarios several times.

And eventually, reached the end of the hellish scenarios.

「[Your ■■ is 'Eternity'.]」

The companions returned to their everyday lives.

「Some people were rebuilding the destroyed PC Bangs. They were putting up the torn posters of the computer games once more. In the world where the apocalypse had been overcome, people would search for other forms of entertainment once more. Yoo Joonghyuk observed this spectacle, and quietly clenched his right hand that hadn't held a mouse in a long, long while.」

「Shin Yoosung and Lee Gilyoung were enrolled into a temporary school. Not an elementary, not a secondary, nor was it a high school – no, it was as the word implied, a 'temporary' school. Shin Yoosung was surprised to learn that such a place could exist in this world.」

「Lee Jihye stared at the sight of the destroyed 'Taepung Girls' High' for a long time, then started walking on the school's athletics field. She used to run on this very field with her friends once upon a time. She quietly stared at the worn-out track lines, before cautiously assuming the starting posture.」

While reading the continuing stories of my companions, I wiped my eyes several times.

This was the ending to this story.

The companions were definitely living their lives in that place. They ate, they slept, they met with each other and talked. And 'I' was there, too.

The 49% version of me. Kim Dokja that had the memories of the companions, but didn't know anything about the 'Ways of Survival'…

｢And Kim Dokja read those sentences.｣

But then…

｢"You, just who the hell are you?"｣

What was going on here?

｢"Speak. Who the hell are you?"｣

It wasn't supposed to be like this.

｢"I'm sure of it. Kim Dokja is still in that place."｣

But, how…

｢"If you get a chance to run again, do you believe you can see it better the next time?"｣

…Why?

Tsu-chuchuchuchu…

The story was continuing on. The story that should've ended didn't end.

More correctly, they chose to 'not end it'.

｢[Stigma, 'Group Regression Lv.1' is activating!]｣

I read that sentence half in despair.

This shouldn't have happened. This sentence, it should never have been written.

But the sentence uncaringly led to the next one.

「"Remember this. We have only one opportunity."」

The companions, they were fighting again.

The hellish scenarios were a place they shouldn't have gone back to, no matter what their reasons were. Even then, my companions returned to that place.

「"Hey, shorty. You aren't going to flip a coin this time?"

"It'll be the same whether I do or not, you know."

"What do you mean?"

"Even if I flip it a hundred times and it comes out only once, even if only one percent of hyung remains in that place, I'll still go there to rescue him. Because that one percent is still hyung."」

Then, the scenario commenced. And in the midst of the banquet of Coins exploding in the air, Dokkaebis of <Star Stream> were clearly freaking out.

Within the explosive level of interest shown by the Constellations, the companions were shouting out loudly.

「"Hey, Abaddon! Choose me! I'm gonna absolutely become hundreds of times stronger than that sooty bastard in the future!"」

「"General-nim! Are you there? I know you're looking at me right now!"」

「"I don't need any sponsors, so please just give me Coins, instead."」

「"…Black Flame Dragon, stop pestering me with messages while I'm still being civil, okay? I told you I won't choose you this time around."」

They had to be insane.

「"Fufufu, you sure took your sweet time getting to Chungmuro. You think you can rescue that 'Bi-sil-ie' like this? As an aside, this whole area is now this great one's territo…" (1)

"Will you just shut up and hand over the flag, Gong Pildu?"」

These people who lost their minds were clearing the scenario with insane methods.

Dangerous moments came in their direction many times, but the companions never yielded once.

「[Incarnation, 'Lee Jihye', is activating Stigma, 'Transmission Lv.1'!]」

「"You stinking sooty bastard! This is why only you got stronger, by using crap like this!"」

The [Transmission]. The regressor-specific skill that allowed one to strongly 'ruminate' over the memories from the previous life and let one regain their past skills.

「"Uriel! Great Sage! Abyssal Black Flame Dragon!"」

And with the aid from the Constellations added in, the companions got to clear the scenario at a considerable pace. It truly was an amazing marching speed.

「"We can clear this with Avatars. No one has to die."」

However, it wasn't as if they emerged as unopposed victors every single time.

「"Supreme King. My apologies, but you need to die here."」

Some of the people they regressed with turned out to be traitors.

「"Had you regained your original strength, all three of us combined wouldn't even be a match to you, but…"

"But, as it is now? It's a different story."」

I bit down on my lip.

These people joined the regression journey while harbouring impure motivation from the very beginning.

And to make matters worse, they aimed for the early part of the scenarios, when Yoo Joonghyuk was with Yoo Mia. They probably thought that he'd be at his weakest around this point in time.

「However, that was a miscalculation.」

…Wha?

「"Mia-yah."」

Almost at the same time Yoo Joonghyuk spoke up, a lengthy sword emerged from Yoo Mia's mouth.

「The Black Heavenly Demon Sword.」

The highest-grade item that could only be acquired around the middle stages of the scenarios, was now firmly gripped in Yoo Joonghyuk's hand. Chills ran down my skin. I had no idea that Yoo Mia's 'Inventory' could be used in that fashion…

While emitting truly incredible killing intent, Yoo Joonghyuk coldly declared.

「"Die."」

Sentences continued on sporadically after that.

「"The 'Demon King of Salvation' during this turn is me!"

"What the hell, we agreed that I'll be the one! That Modifier is mine, noona!"」

The companions didn't concede an inch to anyone, and…

「Majority of the Constellations are baring their animosity towards 'Kim Dokja's Company's' Incarnations!」

And, they didn't compromise once with anyone, either.

The Kim Dokja-less 'Kim Dokja's Company' continued to clear the scenarios in a pace not too slow, but not too fast, either

Certain scenes were dealt with using simple descriptions, while some others were completely omitted. The later they got in the scenarios, the worse the segmentation of each scenes became. It was as if the rough sketches of ideas had been left behind there, instead.

Companions who were at the 20th scenario were suddenly in the 15th, then they could be found in the 35th next. However, there was no doubt that the companions were there. And I could imagine them.

「They ran on the blank margins.」

They were running on the scenario's field of snow. And they were advancing forward one sentence at a time. They were gradually getting closer to me.

While looking at them, I repeated the cycle of crying and sleeping. The fuzzier my consciousness became, the stronger my desire grew. Even though I knew that I shouldn't think this way, I couldn't stop myself.

「I want to read this story for a little bit longer.」

Just like that, I read the disconnected sentences, and then, read the one after that. And I imagined what might be between those sentences, as if I was groping around in the dark.

The viewpoint that the author couldn't control, and one that no reader could predict.

And within this space between the lines not addressed by any sentences, the companions continued to complete the scenarios little by little.

「Inside this space between the lines where no one could intrude upon their lives, they remained as gods of this story.」

While reading their story, I blacked out several times. My reading speed got worse and worse, and my Story was disappearing bit by bit, as well. Meanwhile, the sentences of my companions continued to diligently pile up.

To the 98th scenario, and then, to the 99th once more. Sentences written by their own lives were accurately being compiled one by one. And eventually…

「They have finally reached the conclusion she had written.」

The very last sentence arrived at my doorstep. That was the end of the 'Ways of Survival', a story seemingly abandoned in the middle of being written. A story that didn't get completed because of that reason.

From beyond the very last sentence of the story, a certain noise came to me. A noise that sounded like someone calling out to someone else. Or perhaps, the noise of someone knocking on the door.

The smartphone went off with a 'tab!' noise, and its pitch-black screen reflected my face, now that of a child. I was crying.

「Kim Dokja slowly raised his head.」

I felt the faint vibration of the subway. Since when did it start?

Thud-!

Someone was pounding on the rear door of the train's cabin.

Chapter 537: Epilogue 4 - The Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint, II

"Run! We only have to go a little bit further!"

Han Sooyoung, along with her companions, broke through the waves of the Constellations. The Ark scattered debris as it was destroyed, and revealed the [Final Wall] in its full glory in the distance.

The grace of a Giant Story was enveloping the companions as if to protect them.

[Giant Story, 'One Who Rebels Against Fate', has begun its storytelling.]

It was a new Giant Story they got to earn during this regression turn. Without it, they would've died many times over.

They could see the figures of Constellations marching towards them from the distance. Like enraged wild beasts, Myth-grade Constellations from <Vedas> and <Papyrus> were rushing in their direction.

「Unlike their previous regression turn, they didn't have 'Outer Gods' supporting them this time.」

Their combat force was in an overwhelmingly disadvantageous situation. The only reason why they weren't pushed back even then, was because the strongest ever group in existence made out of regressors was lending them support.

The ones taking on the frontlines were the Chinese and Indian Incarnations.

When China's Fei Hu gave his signal, Incarnations from his own force, [Ah Q] yanked out their weapons simultaneously. As if he couldn't possibly lose here, India's Ranvir Khan also joined the fray. The Incarnations from [Trimurti] following after him pulled out their own spears too, and caused the sand storm to violently rage on.

Then, [Justice] led by Selena Kim and [Solzhenitsyn] led by Iris who tagged along with her took on both sides of the flanks.

Even then, their battle situation remained disadvantageous.

[Go on ahead, I shall take care of this place.]

[If you fail to rescue my disciple, then consider your lives forfeit.]

Kyrgios and the Breaking the Sky Saint, they too were part of the 100-strong regressors. Weapons of these two swept across the battlefield, and the Transcendents from Murim supported their rear and followed after the duo.

Kwa-aaaaaah!

Both Kyrgios and the Breaking the Sky Saint had grown even stronger than before through the regression; as if they were in competition against each other, their sword strikes raucously shook the entire battlefield. The screams of the Constellations being torn apart by the silver-hued storm reverberated throughout the land.

The [Wall] needed to be opened while they were buying a little bit of time.

「This wall had been opened once before.」

Han Sooyoung looked up at the massive wall they had finally succeeded in reaching and spoke up. "Jang Hayoung."

"Yes, ma'am."

As if she was waiting for it, Jang Hayoung extended her hand.

She was now the full-fledged 'King of Transcendents' after going through the scenarios one more time.

[The 'Wall of Impossible Communication' has discovered its intended position.]

The [Final Wall] began vibrating as if it was reacting to their Giant Story.

"Yoo Sangah."

Yoo Sangah nodded her head and stepped forward.

[The 'Wall that Decides Samsara' has discovered its intended position.]

「[You are… I see… You have journeyed this lengthy cycle of time and eventually made your way back here, my arhat.]」

The Story of Sakyamuni quietly entered their ears. Sakyamuni of this world-line easily accepted Yoo Sangah's existence. He had already repeated many, many cycles of samsara, allowing him to gain an understanding of this universe's rules.

"Jung Heewon, Lee Gilyoung."

The [Wall That Divides the Good and Evil] they received from 'Metatron' and 'Agares'.

Jung Heewon reached out first and placed her hand on the [Final Wall].

「[…Have you really come here, after witnessing what's beyond that wall?]」

Metatron of this world-line was deeply astonished by the companions' existence. He accepted the eventual destruction of <Eden>, and admitted that that result couldn't be changed. However, he made a slightly different decision during this regression turn. The proof of that was the <Eden>'s Archangels currently aiding the Incarnations. However, it wasn't only him who made a bizarre choice.

「[How amusing. You dare to ask me, a Demon King, to hand over the [Wall] to you.]」

The Demon Kings and the angels who fought against each other with murderous intensity back in the Great War of Saints and Demons stood as their allies this time. It was a choice based on their desire to survive, but nevertheless, it proved to be a great help to <Kim Dokja's Company>.

[The 'Wall That Divides the Good and Evil' has discovered its intended position.]

[A great number of Constellations are unleashing their Status towards <Kim Dokja's Company>!]

Of course, it wasn't as if every Constellation out there became their allies. The absolute majority of <Star Stream> still remained as their enemies, and those Constellations who chose to help were minuscule in number.

Even then, the Companions got this far safely. Although deep scars remained in various parts of their bodies, not a single one was lost along the way.

This was only because no one got greedy and the end goal was the same for everyone.

Han Sooyoung looked at Lee Hyunsung the last.

The burly man's back was carrying the pale-faced Kim Dokja. More specifically, not Kim Dokja but an Avatar he left behind.

She looked at him and spoke. "Help us, Kim Dokja."

However, this man was also definitely Kim Dokja. Just like how the 1863rd turn's Han Sooyoung was definitely 'Han Sooyoung'.

"The other me might not want this to happen. This story… it has ended back then…"

Kim Dokja stammered. He had come to accept that he was Kim Dokja's Avatar by now. Han Sooyoung quietly stared at him, before saying this.

"Why don't we ask that after meeting the other you?"

That brought a sad little smile on Kim Dokja's lips. He looked at Han Sooyoung, then looked at the faces of the companions one by one.

"If this is… the story you wanted…"

His pale hand then touched the [Final Wall].

The last fragment of the Final Wall was [The Fourth Wall]. And as he was Kim Dokja's Avatar, he too held a part of that key.

Tsu-chuchuchuchu…!

As if this world wasn't acknowledging his existence, Kim Dokja's body began shaking unsteadily.

And soon after that, a portion of the wall opened up along with loud splitting noises. Kim Dokja shaking around as if he was getting electrocuted blacked out instantly. Lee Hyunsung continued to carry him on the back.

Yoo Joonghyuk dusting the blade of his Black Heavenly Demon Sword spoke up. "Forward, at top speed."

Along with his signal, the companions began running forward.

"Everyone, stay strong! Only a little bit more to go!"

"We still have enough Life and Death Pills left, so even if you're only slightly injured, please tell me right away!"

The voices of the companions were encouraging each other. Han Sooyoung ran while listening to them. A bright-white field of snow stretched before her eyes. Letters piling up like snow could be seen here and there on this field. She stepped on those letters and leapt up.

Did the 1863rd turn's her write this story in the revised version?

Did she think about Kim Dokja's story, and the epilogue to come after?

…She couldn't tell.

No matter what she tried, she simply couldn't remember that portion.

It was then, something fell and settled on her eyelashes. She reflexively wiped it away, only for snowflake-like things to stain her hand.

「…This girl, you told me that you were a penniless book lover, didn't you?」

The white snowflakes of letters were scattering in the air. Sentences that definitely existed there, but couldn't be seen because how pure-white their colour was.

「Han Sooyoung.」

Han Sooyoung dazedly stared at that 'sentence' falling into her hand.

「Your story, it…」

This was Kim Dokja's sentence. Not just anyone, but Kim Dokja himself had written this earnest impression. She gripped the sentence tightly. Just like the starlight being pushed away by the breaking of dawn, the sentences crumbled away within her hand.

「Don't worry. I will read it. Even if it's over 3000 chapters.」

These sentences, they were something she so desperately wanted to have. Unfortunately, they weren't hers.

Memories were rushing in. Emotions that her other self had experienced.

Han Sooyoung could vividly feel them even now. The resentment that didn't know which way to go was spreading within her mind.

「Beyond this field of snow was where Kim Dokja could be found.」

Kim Dokja, who made Kim Dokja who he was. Kim Dokja, who remembered the 'Ways of Survival'. Kim Dokja, who chose the memories of the book he had written over the memories of happier days…

"Goddammit… goddammit!!"

The novel that was written by her, who was also not her. That very novel saved Kim Dokja, and also at the same time, it doomed him. And she now needed to take responsibility for the conclusion to the tragedy her other self had created.

It was around then that a faint flicker of light revealed itself from afar.

Ku-gugugugu…

She saw something busy rushing forward beyond this vast field of snow. The companions looked at each other all at once. Not a single person here didn't know what that thing was.

「It was the subway.」

"Chimera Dragon!"

The Chimera Dragon loudly howled out as it got summoned, and took flight after the companions got on its back. The creature scythed through the air and reached the rear of the subway in an instant. Only a little bit remained now. As long as they could bridge this gap, they…!

[Gyahhhhhhh!]

Suddenly, the Chimera Dragon screamed and lost its balance. The stunned Shin Yoosung quickly took a look behind only to discover some 'things' were biting onto the Dragon's tail.

【Grrrrrr…!】

Large wild dogs resembling pitch-black shadows began biting into the Dragon's tail and its wings. These creatures were appearing from a portal opening up in the air. The Chimera Dragon's torn-off flesh got scattered away within the white snowfield.

"Hounds Chasing After the Abyss??"

They had seen these creatures before. These hounds from another dimension attacked the 'Secretive Plotter' and the characters from the 999th turn. They were terrifying monsters that supposedly hunted down the wanderers of the world-lines that violated the Probability.

But, why were these hounds attacking them now?

Yoo Joonghyuk gasped and spoke. "…It seems that they judged the 'Group Regression' to be a danger to the world-line."

"Goddammit…"

The number of the hounds rushing outside the portal increased exponentially.

They even saw hounds with massive physiques, too. This level of attacking force was truly unprecedented. And accompanied by the loud howl that reverberated throughout the snowfield, the hounds kicked the air and pounced on them simultaneously.

The moment the black clouds of hounds landed on the companions…

The heavens seemed to shatter along with the loud "RUMBLE!!"

The golden-coloured lightning crashed down and hounds were viciously cast away. Yoo Sangah was the first to figure out who was behind the attack.

"Great Sage!"

The golden rims were glowing gloriously. The master of the Ruyi Jingu Bang was grinning confidently. [Leave this to me.]

[Constellation, 'Prisoner of the Golden Headband', is unleashing his Status!]

It wasn't just the Great Sage alone.

Some had followed the companions into the passageway of the [Final Wall] left wide open.

[This is my opportunity to show everyone what will happen if this great one uses both of his hands!]

[Constellation, 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon', has removed all the seals on himself!]

The noble flames of an Archangel were added to the mix and burned away at the hounds. [I may not be as strong as the 999th turn's me, but… there's no problem buying you more time.]

[Constellation, 'Demon-like Judge of Fire', is rousing up the flames of hell!]

The flames of [Hellfire] brilliantly danced upwards as pure-white wings spread out. With a faint smile, Uriel spoke. [I'll leave Kim Dokja in your hands, Heewon-ah.]

Using that fleeting opening the Constellations had created, the Chimera Dragon finally managed to bite onto the rear of the subway. However, the vehicle's hardy exterior didn't break even when the Dragon's fangs clamped down on it.

"Master! With me!"

Lee Jihye holding swords in both of her hands kicked off the Dragon's back and leapt up.

Two swords were held in her grip – the [Twin Dragon Sword] of the Maritime War God, and the [Invincible Warrior's Sword] from Goryeo's First Sword.

[Constellation, 'Goryeo's First Swordsman', is bestowing his blessing!]

[Constellation, 'Maritime War God', is cheering on his Incarnation!]

The Fourth Law.

Fourth Sword that Beheads the Emptiness.

It was the skill Cheok Jungyeong used while fighting against the 'Indescribable Distance'. Although still incomplete, Lee Jihye could use this sword strike to some degree now. This miracle only came about due to the hellish training she went through in the 'Isle of Reincarnators' as well as her stunning innate talent.

Kwa-kwakwakwakwa!

The subway's exterior that withstood a Dragon's fangs began to bend bit by bit from her continuous sword strikes. Not missing that opening, Yoo Joonghyuk's [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] also made a move.

The Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship.

Secret Technique: Inner Mystery Transmission.

Shooting Star Slash.

The trajectory of destruction the [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] drew slammed into the rear of the subway.

Once the choking dust cleared out of their view, a small hole had appeared on the train's rear.

"It's done! Everyone, get in!"

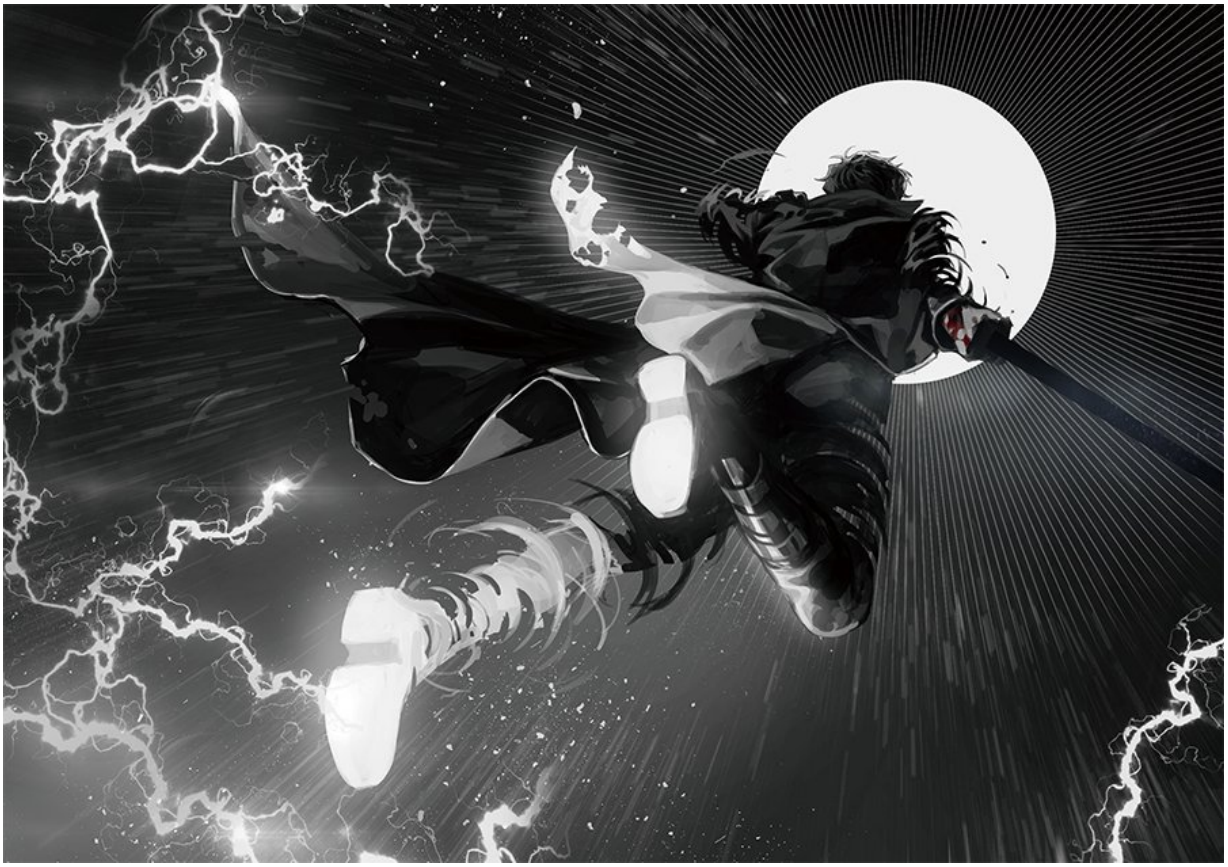
The companions rapidly infiltrated the subway's interior. More correctly, with the exception of two people.

"Yoo Joonghyuk! Behind you!!"

【Grrrrrr!!】

The hounds that the Constellations failed to block were flooding in from behind them. Yoo Joonghyuk unleashed all of his strength as a Transcendent to face them head-on. He shouted out while smacking the hounds away with the storm-like barrage of sword strikes.

"Go on ahead! I shall catch up to you soon!"



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Han Sooyoung bit her lip.

It wasn't just anyone but Yoo Joonghyuk, the strongest among their group. As he was a man who could fight evenly against a Myth-grade Constellation, he wouldn't get done in by the hounds of the abyss that easily.

"…Don't get killed, okay?"

Han Sooyoung left those words behind and hurriedly entered the subway's interior. It was as exactly the same as the interior of the third line train they all remembered.

「It was none other than that very same train, where they left Kim Dokja behind.」

Han Sooyoung quickly checked for the train cabin's information. Along with the 'Tsu-chuchut' noise, the cabin's number floated up.

She reflexively shouted out. "Kim Dokja is in the cabin number 3807! Everyone, get to the front!"

This was a similar situation to back when they earned the Giant Story, 'Demon Realm's Spring'. It seemed that the rest of the companions also realized this.

"This does resemble that time when we fought against Surya. I shall pry open the door in front of us!" Lee Hyunsung quickly rushed forward, and while expanding every muscle on his body, he let out a mighty shout. "Haaaaaaahp!"

The [Great Mountain Push] that had exceeded the skill proficiency was activated, and the thick subway's door creaked loudly while being pushed open.

[Giant Story, 'Demon Realm's Spring', has begun its storytelling!]

['Stage Transformation' has been triggered!]

This Giant Story could only be completed because everyone worked together. And the blessing of this Story was now aiding them.

When Lee Hyunsung couldn't open a door, Yoo Sangah found the button to operate it, and when a door even she couldn't do anything about appeared, Lee Gilyoung summoned his insects and wore out the internal parts to make way.

And so, they continued to open one, open two, and then, opened yet another door. As the number of doors they managed to open grew higher, the expressions of the companions were gradually getting heated up, too.

「Kim Dokja was definitely beyond there.」

Everyone in the group could feel it. The pitch-black door before them, it had to be the [Final Door].

"…Urgh. It's impossible with my Stigma."

Unfortunately, this door didn't want to open unlike before.

"I can't find the button, either."

"Even the bugs say they can't figure out its structure."

"Should I use my skill to break it?"

They resorted to Lee Jihye's sword strikes as well as Lee Hyunsung's [Great Mountain Destruction], but the door didn't budge an inch. The companions could only look at each other. How come only this door refused to open up?

It was then that Yoo Sangah opened her mouth. "Everyone, wait. I think this door is the same as the one Yoo Joonghyuk-ssi broke back in the past."

"Yoo Joonghyuk did that?"

"Yes. Back in the third regression turn, Joonghyuk-ssi broke this door and entered…"

Han Sooyoung reflexively looked behind her. But Yoo Joonghyuk didn't come with them. He was probably still fighting against the 'Hounds Chasing After the Abyss' even now at the rear of the train.

It was right then that Shin Yoosung cried out. "Hounds are here!"

Even before they had realized it, the hounds were already trying to sneak in through the gaps they had destroyed.

Han Sooyoung's mind began racing. What happened to Yoo Joonghyuk? Could it be that he got…?

"Block the rear!"

"Eonni! Hurry up!"

There was no more time to think. Lee Hyunsung ran forward like a true tanker, and started enduring against the hounds' fangs by entering [Steel Transformation], while Lee Jihye and Jung Heewon unsheathed their swords to smack away the creatures.

Jang Hayoung shouted out. "Han Sooyoung! Do something!"

Han Sooyoung approached the black door. When she placed her hand on it, faint sparks began exploding. She slowly closed her eyes.

All of the sentences were, in actual reality, written by her hands. Even if that was the 'other Han Sooyoung', that version was still undoubtedly Han Sooyoung. So, this hand should be able to open this door, too.

Tsu-chuchuchuchuchu-!

As if she was now re-writing the sentences, Han Sooyoung started messing with the wall's Story.

「"I'm Yoo Joonghyuk."」

The regressor Yoo Joonghyuk was her creation. That was why she should be able to open this door, as well.

「Unfortunately, Han Sooyoung didn't know.」

Tsu-chuchuchut!

「A story that had already left the author's hands was no longer under its creator's control.」

The universe of the 'Ways of Survival' flooded into Han Sooyoung's head. The things she did write, and those she didn't. Stories that she imagined and those she couldn't even have, crashed and churned in opposite directions inside her mind all at the same time.

"Keuk…!"

Blood trickled out from her eyes and mouth. The blood flow reversed, causing her blood to pour out onto the subway's floor.

As her vision was dyed in crimson, Han Sooyoung turned to look back at her companions. They were gradually spreading apart while fighting. And their running footsteps imprinted on the subway's corridor remained there like Stories.

[You don't have the 'Overwrite' authority!]

「An already-completed world was right before her eyes.」

The voices of her companions calling out to her seemed so distant.

「The world where the result devours the cause, and the cause devours the result. The world where all possibilities exist, and the individual possibility supports and maintains each other. A perfect, immortal epic where a story manufactures a story all on its own.」

She looked back, and the space before her began distorting along with a shower of sparks. The subway's four-sided door slowly started spinning and drew a circle. The door, now spinning viciously, became a pitch-black circle.

A perfect, complete circle that didn't permit any and all types of external intrusions.

She tottered and reached out to this circle, but Han Sooyoung couldn't even touch it. This circle now resembled a single full stop. A full stop announcing that the story was truly complete, just like this.

「t l s 1 2 3」

And this full stop was now addressing her.

「Y o u ca nn ot cha nge th is sto ry」

* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)

Chapter 538: Epilogue 4 - The Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint, III

The sentence floated up to the air. When she heard the voice that utterly ignored spelling rules or word spacing, Han Sooyoung grew deeply flustered.

"Y-you are…?"

She did hear some things about this voice from Kim Dokja in the past.

– Right, that guy can also speak.

– …A skill can talk??

– Well, I admit it kinda talks in a funny way, but you can still more or less understand it.

She had no idea that one day she'd get to hear that voice herself.

"The Fourth Wall??"

When called out, the spinning circle began to cackle.

「Y o u lot ca nn ot pa ss he re the great one do es n't wa nt it」

…'The great one'?

She had heard of that title somewhere before.

Tsu-chuchuchuchuchut!

The Probability's sparks wildly exploded and the companions all screamed out. The vicious storm of aftermath even managed to blow away the 'Hounds Chasing After the Abyss' outside the subway.

['The Final Wall' is not permitting your group's entry.]

[Your group does not have the qualifications to meet the 'Oldest Dream'.]

The pain akin to their bodies being shredded apart into tiny bits slammed into them. This was no doubt a ploy to push the companions outside the subway.

「T his is t h e fi nal stop」

One of Han Sooyoung's knees was bent in an abnormal direction. However, she didn't even scream once and simply glared at the pitch-black circle right before her eyes.

"I'll decide when and where I get off."

「The 1865th turn's Han Sooyoung didn't select the 'Abyssal Black Flame Dragon'.」

An unbelievable level of forceful aura flooded out from her entire figure.

「Han Sooyoung became a Constellation on her own.」

[Constellation, 'Architect of the False Last Act', is revealing her Status!]

It was the same Modifier that the 1863rd turn's Han Sooyoung had acquired.

She unleashed every bit of Story she had been saving up until now. Brilliantly-pure blue rays of light swirled violently from one of her irises.

[Exclusive skill, 'Eye of Truth', has been activated!]

Back during the 1863rd turn, this skill failed to penetrate past that wall. However, Han Sooyoung of this regression turn was a different being altogether.

[Story, 'Revision Specialist', has begun its storytelling!]

In this turn, she had been diligently acquiring a lot more Stories related to 'writing' than before.

Tsu-chuchuchuchu…!

Just like how the foundations of other characters were a collection of sentences, it should be the same story for [The Fourth Wall], as well. As long as this world was a novel, this wall must've been made up of words and sentences.

Even if she failed to decipher its foundation, there should still be sentences left behind somewhere that helped her make a guess.

[The Fourth Wall] cottoned on to what Han Sooyoung was planning to do and ballooned up its overall thickness.

「U s e le ss」

['The Fourth Wall' is increasing its thickness even more!]

The spinning black circle grew even more robust.

The Fourth Wall. The mind defense skill that couldn't be penetrated by the existences found within the 'Ways of Survival'.

Han Sooyoung didn't try to forcibly penetrate the wall. Instead, she quietly stared at it.

[Story, 'Guide of the Line Spacing', has begun its storytelling!]

「Some things would grow even more obvious the more you try to hide them.」

Han Sooyoung scanned the outer appearance of the wall. There were plenty of scratches and cracks visible on it. Its past history of not sparing itself when trying to protect Kim Dokja was left behind as fully-visible traces all over the wall.

「That great one must be protected.」

Why did this wall hide that sentence in the most secretive place of all?

「That is the last favour the god asked of me.」

In that very moment, Han Sooyoung's lips began trembling.

As pulsing migraine assaulted her, sentences above the wall flashed past her brain.

「"Hey."

"Yes?"

"If, by chance, something happens to me, then you…"

"Please don't say things like that."

"If you really see me as your 'god', then…"」

A middle-aged man wearing a fedora was looking up at her with a committed, loyal look on his face.

「"Protect that guy, no matter what."」

The existence that knew the 'Ways of Survival' just as well as the original author, herself.

The existence that remained even more indifferent to the tragedies of this world than her, and…

And, the existence that lived for the sole purpose of 'completing the story'.

「The existence that opened the 'scenario' in this world, and the one who connected the two world-lines as one.」

[The Fourth Wall] spoke up instead of Han Sooyoung's trembling lips.

「D on t be so su rpri sed ev en I rea lis ed it ju st now」

"What did you say?"

「I al so di dn't kn ow who I w as」

There were some existences without a fleshed-out past that had to simply 'exist' until belatedly, they were permitted to acquire their histories. Beings that didn't 'exist' until the author decided to give them a backstory.

「I be ca me com ple te be cau se of y o u」

The scenes from the moments when the 'paid service' got underway brushed past her mind. The moment when the two world-lines of reality and fiction became one, and the 1863rd turn's Dokkaebi King standing right in the middle.

「W h y I ha d to bec ome a w a l l di vid ing the wo rld」

The Dokkaebi King became the wall that divided the world.

「W h y I ha d to pro tec t Kim Dok ja」

And then, it carried out the last favour its 'god' had asked of it.

「Y o u di dn't re mem ber m e」

The existence that repeated one single story for a long, long time, and the one who became addicted to that story, constantly lusting after it.

The existence that had read the 'Ways of Survival' even before Kim Dokja did, was right before her eyes.

This world's most ancient reader.

「I too di dn't re mem ber y o u」

The Dokkaebi King filled the void left behind by Han Sooyoung and became this world's chronicler.

「This story is now mine」

And eventually, it succeeded in completing the story.

"It was I who asked you in the first place. So, stop this right now."

The existence that continued to uphold an order for a very long time had eventually become the order itself.

「You are not my god any more」

She who had lost her position as the original author was no longer the creator, as well.

Han Sooyoung stared at her own fingertips. The 'Ways of Survival' her other self had written went on to become a novel spanning 3149 chapters. That novel left her hands and reached its reader.

"You're right, this world's god is no longer me, but the reader."

That would be Kim Dokja beyond this spinning circle, slumbering and dreaming away in eternity.

"So, let's ask that god, then. Let's ask if he really wishes to remain in this place, or…!"

Han Sooyoung swallowed a Life and Death Pill and righted her broken knee. And then, she walked forward step by step before extending her hands.

"…Or, if he wants to get out of here with us."

Blinding sparks of flames exploded on the tips of her hands.

As if to reject her approach, the spinning circle's speed grew faster and faster. Blood splattered from both of her hands. Not even Stories could protect her.

However, even while suffering from the cruel pain akin to her hands being grounded into fine dust, Han Sooyoung didn't stop.

"Kim Dokja! Say something!"

There were some people who, despite wishing to be saved, couldn't bring themselves to ask others to save them.

Han Sooyoung always wanted to write certain sentences for people like that. To write sentences for those people who couldn't say or write anything.

Just like how it always had been for her, all she could do was to write 'sentences'.

But, as long as she could cross over to the other side of this circle…

As long as she could get rid of this full stop, then…

「The idiot that unquestioningly took the lemon candy offered as a joke and sucked on it.」

"Kim Dokja!"

Unfortunately, it wasn't enough.

She couldn't reach the other side of the wall with only the sentences she possessed.

It was then, yet another hand was laid on top of Han Sooyoung's.

It was Yoo Sangah.

Mandalas were unfurled on both sides of her as she began loading her Story. While wiping away the blood trickling down her nose, she smiled weakly.

"Dokja-ssi."

「The man who hid in the cabinet alone to read the 'Ways of Survival'.」

Yoo Sangah's sentences were now calling out to Kim Dokja.

As if they were grabbing at a door knob, their hands reached out and grabbed the spinning circle. However, the circle's speed didn't decrease in the slightest. They were still short on the sentences. But then, hands from two more people were laid on top of the two women's.

"I shall hold onto the inside!"

"I'm on the left!"

Jung Heewon and Lee Hyunsung letting out a loud, spirited yell began clinging onto the circle as well.

「The man who silently listened to the boring stories from the military.」

Lee Hyunsung yelling out unleashed his Story, and Jung Heewon next to him matched his timing.

「Stinking stubborn mull of a damned troublemaker.」

"Dokja-ssi! Answer us! You can hear us, right??"

And now, Lee Seolhwa and Gong Pildu added their hands next.

「The man who searched for medicinal herbs throughout the night for the sake of his companions.」

「The bastard who stole all of my lands.」

"Ahjussi!"

"Hyung!"

The two kids also rushed in. The small hands of Shin Yoosung and Lee Gilyoung were placed on Han Sooyoung's one at a time.

「The man who always lied to reassure someone else.」

「However, the man who wasn't very good at lying.」

Right behind them was Lee Jihye wielding her sword. She used her fists to slam into the circle. She hit it, then hit it again and again.

"I can't say something that cringy, anyway! So, just come out already!!"

「Squid ahjussi.」

Different memories of everyone from different time and place – all those sentences of every single moment gathered together and wished for one Kim Dokja.

However, the full stop still didn't want to budge even after the companions called out. No, only their hands ended up as a bloody mess.

Their Stories were being extinguished now. And then, a sentence floated up above the full stop.

「Maybe it's just our greed, wanting to save him?」

"Shut up!"

「Maybe, he's not an existence needing to be saved?」

The companions also knew it – knew that this action of theirs could be a meaningless one.

That was why they wanted to know.

To ask.

To reach out, and confirm.

"Kim Dokja! I know you're in there!" Jang Hayoung shouted out. "We talked about this, didn't we?! Even if we can't reach each other, even if we can't meet, we gotta keep pounding on the wall until the end, right?? Even if the wall would never open up, we agreed to keep writing something on it, didn't we?!"

Even if we can't reach each other, even if we can't meet each other, we should continue to pound away on each other's walls.

Even if that wall would never open up, keep writing something on that wall, anyway.

"When we do that, then maybe, someone might end up seeing our words someday…!"

Then maybe, just maybe, you might finally want to come out of that place.

"Please! Say something! Anything! Please-!"

And so, Jang Hayoung's palm slammed into the full stop. And in the very next moment…

['Wall of Impossible Communication' is revealing its power!]

The full stop began to shake little by little. For the first time ever, [The Fourth Wall]'s aura changed.

「Y o u da re」

Yoo Sangah didn't miss this opening and shouted out. "Dokja-ssi! We promised to meet during the next life, didn't we?!"

['Wall That Decides Samsara' is revealing its capability!]

Lee Gilyoung also shouted out as if he didn't want to lose. "Hyung, you always think you are at fault for everything!"

Jung Heewon carried on where the boy's words ended. "I don't care whether you're good or evil, Dokja-ssi! I don't plan on judging you according to the standards of this world. That's why…!"

['Wall That Divides Good and Evil' is revealing its theme!]

"…So, please open this door!"

Right next moment, a powerful rebound coming out from the door blew away the companions.

The cacophony of loud exploding noises utterly deafened them. Once the ringing in their ears went away, only the cold silence remained in the surroundings.

The injured companions got up one by one. Before Lee Hyunsung could say something, though, Han Sooyoung hurriedly placed a finger on her lips.

Just like the way faint, soft drizzle moistened the parched ground, a quiet little noise could be heard.

Knock.

That noise, it was coming from beyond the full stop.

A place beyond the completion of the story.

Han Sooyoung was the first to hear that sound.

Knock, knock…

The sound so small and so weak, yet still undoubtedly letting others know of his presence there.

「There he was.」

Shin Yoosung broke down in tears.

「Someone was knocking on the door from beyond it.」

Han Sooyoung rushed forward, followed right after by Yoo Sangah. Lee Hyunsung and Jung Heewon laid their hands on top of the two women's, again. Lee Seolhwa quickly healed the companions' wounded hands, while Gong Pildu threw his own weight behind them. To fight against the rebound, Lee Jihye stabbed her sword on the floor, while Jang Hayoung supported Han Sooyoung's body. Stories from Shin Yoosung and Lee Gilyoung then began protecting Han Sooyoung's hands.

"Focus all of your powers in one spot!"

Along with the loud 'Kwa-gagagagak!' noise, their hands were grounded to bloody dust again.

The full stop's spinning speed was slowing down. Bit by agonising bit, the worn-down surface of the full stop began developing cracks.

「Their Story was not enough.」

The full stop's size was gradually shrinking down. It continued to get smaller, as if to never permit their entry in this place. It was then, some people suddenly intruded into the subway.

[Constellation, 'Queen of the Darkest Spring', is incarnating!]

They were two members of <Kim Dokja's Company> who had not revealed themselves up until now.

[My apologies for showing up late.]

One of them was the queen of the Underworld, Persephone. And the other was…

"…Dokja-yah."

Rather than looking at the full stop, Lee Sookyung was now looking at at the other Kim Dokja plopped down on the floor. He looked back at her in a daze, but then, bit down hard on his lip and grabbed onto her hand.

Stories then began flooding out from both Lee Sookyung and Persephone.

Two Kim Dokjas existed for them.

「Kim Dokja before the start of the scenario, and Kim Dokja after the scenario got underway.」

Two beings that had observed 'Kim Dokja' longer than anyone else supported his Avatar and approached the full stop. Han Sooyoung nodded her head.

「The one who imprisoned Kim Dokja inside the wall was himself.」

"Kim Dokja."

Han Sooyoung realized something as she witnessed his eyelashes tremble weakly. No matter how deeply her novel had influenced Kim Dokja, he was not the 'Ways of Survival'. No matter how well she understood the 'Ways of Survival', it didn't automatically mean she understood Kim Dokja.

She might be able to write sentences for someone else, but she certainly couldn't read those words in their stead. No, the role of reading was left up to the god of the new world, the reader.

"…Help us."

Kim Dokja's hand touched the full stop.

Tsu-chuchuchuchu…!

['The Fourth Wall' is increasing its thickness even more!]

Hands were laid on top of hands. [The Fourth Wall] was shouting out at them.

「Y o u lot mu st fa il h ere」

「T hi s sto ry h as b een com ple ted th is way al rea dy」

Was it forbidden to change a complete story?

Was it forbidden for a single universe to even dare think about being saved just because the rest of the universes were completed in unhappiness?

Han Sooyoung wrapped Kim Dokja's hand laid on top of hers tightly and began crying. The memories from the 1863rd turn were going on a rampage.

「This story will cycle itself.」

Yet another Han Sooyoung would repeat the 1863rd turn inside this cycle.

Kim Dokja and Han Sooyoung wouldn't recognise each other and start fighting again.

Yoo Joonghyuk would continue with his regressions.

And to save them all, Kim Dokja would become the 'Oldest Dream' many, many times.

The vast, indescribable time would cycle over and over again, leading them to reach and meet one another, only to part ways again.

Enduring the innumerable lengths of time to meet, then meet again, and create stories.

And with that, this story might become truly complete.

However, if that was the case, just when would they ever be able to taste happiness?

「It's fine if the story is imperfect.」

Han Sooyoung's hands powerfully gripped onto the circle's crack.

The surface of the gripped wall began tearing apart.

「If that story can make someone happy, then…」

The companions' stories crumbled as an incredible storm exploded. Kim Dokja's coat was ripped apart, and their weapons shattered to bits and pieces. The blindingly-pure rays of light blanketed their view. Within this incredible explosion of light, Han Sooyoung thought to herself. [The Fourth Wall] was right, the 'Ways of Survival' was indeed now over. With his own hands, he brought it to its conclusion.

However, that didn't mean Kim Dokja's story had come to an end there, either.

Ku-gugugugu…

Eventually, the storm died down, revealing the messed-up hands of the companions. Hands, laid on top of each other as if they had fused into one. And these hands had destroyed the 'completed' full stop. The crack ran down on the circle's edge like a tear.

｢It now resembled a comma.｣

The door was open.

Chapter 539: Epilogue 4 - The Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint, IV

An explosion rang out on the field of snow.

Yoo Joonghyuk swung the [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] and smacked away the 'Hounds Chasing After the Abyss', before climbing on the roof of the subway train.

That explosion just now, it sounded suspicious. Did something happen inside the train?

[Dammit! There are just too many!]

The Abyssal Black Flame Dragon fighting off the Hounds blew his top in anger. There didn't seem to be an end to these black hounds rushing in at them from all sides.

The Great Sage continuously throwing down lightning bolts to scorch the hounds could only mutter on in an exhausted voice. […I don't want to admit this, but I'm still ways off from comparing against the people from 999th turn.]

Yet another explosion noise went off from inside the subway. Yoo Joonghyuk reflexively turned his head in that direction. What could those be? From the front car of the train, bits and pieces of what resembled Stories began leaking out.

It was also right then that some things were spat out of the hole on the train along with the loud 'Ku-gugugu!' noise.

Uriel freaked out and shouted at him. [Yoo Joonghyuk! Dodge it!]

Right next second, hounds being ejected from the train blanketed Yoo Joonghyuk like a black cloud.

Pah-susu…

Black bits scattered about. With the comma-shaped hole as the centre, the door before their eyes was disappearing.

Han Sooyoung pushed herself off the floor and looked to the front. Letters were strewn about near the cabin door leading to the 3807 train car.

「I also」

「With you all」

The moment she saw those words that couldn't yet become sentences, Han Sooyoung realized just what knocked on the door from the other side. They were Stories – very small fragments of Kim Dokja. Her eyes chased after the line of fallen fragments. The closer she got to the centre of the cabin, the greater the number of Story fragments fallen on the floor.

「Kim Dokja was there.」

Kim Dokja's body, now as small as a young child, was floating up in the middle of the cabin. His eyes were closed, and he seemed unconscious. Rays of entrancing light were being emitted by his figure that continued to shed blinding Story fragments. These fragments went through the subway's windows and drifted off to the destination unknown.

"Ah…?"

Kim Dokja's Avatar next to Han Sooyoung gasped out. His eyes were trembling as if he was shocked. Then, he began approaching the young Kim Dokja.

"Ah… Ah, I'm…"

The moment he said that, a powerful suction force began pulling him in. Some kind of power was summoning him back. The Avatar's body began breaking down bit by bit. Those broken bits were then sucked into the main body.

His gaze looking back met Han Sooyoung's. She reached out unbeknownst even to herself.

"Grab him!"

However, her hand couldn't touch him. The rate of the Avatar breaking down and getting sucked in grew faster. The bits of fragments from the Avatar brushed past her hand – some words were caught in Han Sooyoung's fingers.

｢I'm sorry｣

Just what was he sorry about? Kim Dokja's Avatar scattering away like an apparition emitted bright light as he got sucked into the main body. However, despite it absorbing all of the Avatar's Stories, Kim Dokja's body didn't grow back up again. No, the amount of Stories flooding out from him increased, instead.

"Kim Dokja!!"

Han Sooyoung instinctively realized it. They needed to stop that. Otherwise, they would lose him forever.

Her muscles tightly wound up released like a spring. And so, just as Han Sooyoung tried to approach Kim Dokja floating in the air…

Kwa-aaaaaaah!

「Y o u c ant go fu rth er」

Accompanied by a loud explosion noise, powerful gusts of wind suddenly blew in and something exploded out from Kim Dokja's body. His Stories were overflowing wildly. Sentences flooding out like black tides blanketed the entirety of the cabin and swallowed Han Sooyoung up.

"Everyone, be careful!"

She was forced back mercilessly along with sensations of her skin being swept away. Kim Dokja was getting further away. She urgently looked around, but there was not a thing she could grab onto. Even though she unleashed the Status of a Constellation and borrowed the powers of Giant Stories, she had no method to defend against this surging torrent.

"Kim Dokja! Sto…!"

Sentences escaping from Kim Dokja's body scratched past her entire figure. Sentences a man used to endure his life – the despair created by one person's life. The tidal waves of letters completely blanketing every direction resembled the darkest of the darkest night.

The 'Kim Dokja' she understood was merely just the tip of an iceberg. Han Sooyoung was overwhelmed in an instant and was helplessly shoved back, unable to say anything.

It was Yoo Sangah who supported her back, though. "Get yourself together!"

Kim Dokja's figure could be spied among the gaps of the letters.

Lee Jihye shouted out. "…He's a kid?! Why did ahjussi become like that?!"

"Hyung!"

"Everyone, gather around!"

To fight against the tidal wave, the companions hurdled together. Unfortunately, even that was not enough. They were kept pushed back again and again. At this rate, not only would they be forced outside the cabin, but get ejected from the train itself sooner rather than later.

It was then, someone spread open his entire figure and stood to block the exit.

"Hu-aaaaahp! I shall support you all!"

It was Lee Hyunsung.

Accompanied by "Kwa-dududuk!" noise, he activated the [Steel Transformation]. His arms and legs assimilated with the metal of the exit and caught the companions like a net. With a pained face, Lee Hyunsung watched Kim Dokja's Story brushing past his body.

「To Lee Hyunsung, Kim Dokja was too difficult.」

The act of understanding someone started off with admitting that you didn't know anything about that person. Lee Hyunsung bit down on his lip hard enough to draw blood and shouted out. "I can only hold on for a little while! Hurry!"

Gong Pildu quickly summoned his Armed Fortress and supported Lee Hyunsung from behind. He then shouted out. "If I help, we can endure for a bit longer! So, hurry up and rescue that fool!"

The companions looked at each other.

"Hold each other's hands, everyone!" Jung Heewon grabbed onto Lee Hyunsung with one hand, and extended the other. "Unleash your Stories all at once!"

That outstretched hand was held by Lee Seolhwa, then Shin Yoosung and Lee Gilyoung held on to her other hand. The hands of two children were then connected to Lee Jihye. Persephone, as well as Lee Sookyung, followed them right after.

"Kim Dokja! Wake up!!"

Jang Hayoung grabbed Lee Sookyung's hand and cried out, while Yoo Sangah caught her extended hand next.

"Sooyoung-ssi!"

The last person to grab the outstretched hand was Han Sooyoung.

"…I got you."

[Giant Story, 'One Who Rebels Against Fate', is continuing on with its storytelling!]

The Giant Story that connected the companions as one began resisting against the vicious storm.

Like a buoy in the stormy sea, Han Sooyoung's body helplessly rocked from side to side. She could hold on only because of her companions behind her.

The companions tightly held each other's hands within the crashing waves of the letters, as if they were trying to save a drowning man.

Jung Heewon shouted towards Kim Dokja, ever so faintly visible to her. "Dokja-ssi! We're here! Just hold on for a little bit longer!"

The companions holding onto each other's hands were like sturdy sentences connected as one. Han Sooyoung felt the warmth transmitted in her hand and gradually realized something.

Words existed to describe the depths of the darkness. And to console such darkness, the thing called 'story' was created.

"Kim Dokja!"

The tightly-held hands, supported by the sentences shoring up other sentences. While entrusting herself to that hand, Han Sooyoung approached Kim Dokja one step at a time. Only his face could barely be seen as the rest was covered by the darkness of the letters.

「What you are doing is meaningless」

The waves grew more and more vicious as [The Fourth Wall]'s voice resounded out.

「There is one Kim Dokja」

Han Sooyoung knew the reason – the reason why that Kim Dokja was getting smaller. The younger face of him right now resembled the 'Oldest Dream' they saw some time ago.

He'd lose the memories of the days he spent with his companions, and…

…And, he'd even lose the memories of when he read the 'Ways of Survival'.

Then, he'd become the purest child after returning to the universe's great cycle.

Later on, he'd get rescued by the 'Secretive Plotter'.

If that was the case, what would happen to the 'Kim Dokja' they remembered?

"We've managed to come this far, so this…!!"

Han Sooyoung reached out as pain of her hand burning away assaulted her.

Kim Dokja was right before her eyes.

「The one and only reader who could understand this story.」

That Kim Dokja was right over there.

There were less than four metres between them, yet to Han Sooyoung, this distance came across as an infinite margin that nothing could fill. As if an invisible wall was standing before her and Kim Dokja.

"You son of a bitch! You promised to read my novel, didn't you?!"

She wanted to tell him. Tell him that there was a world that didn't need his sacrifice to be saved. She thought that, if it was her, she should be able to do it.

Because she was most proficient at lying than anyone alive, after all.

"What the hell is this 'Ways of Survival', anyway?! I can easily create dozens, hundreds of worlds of illusions!"

Her shouting voice was gradually losing its strength.

She had written so many sentences until now, yet she was still unable to save a single person.

Within the world growing dizzier, Kim Dokja's figure was getting blurrier.

What would it have been like if only she was just a little bit stronger? Maybe, they didn't plan this out properly. Maybe, she should've learned an even stronger attribute. Maybe, she should've earned a much, much harsher Story.

She shouldn't have abandoned Kim Dokja from the get-go. She should've cottoned onto Kim Dokja's plan sooner. No, maybe…

…She shouldn't have written the 'Ways of Survival' in the first place.

She shouldn't have become an author of such a story.

…An author?

Han Sooyoung abruptly raised her head.

「Could she do it?」

It was uncertain.

「No, I can do it.」

Someone else was saying that in her stead.

Memories of the 1863rd turn became a Story and began to violently writhe around. Han Sooyoung looked down at her own fingertips. Her fingers, scorched black like charcoal.

She was not a protagonist, but a writer.

Han Sooyoung's hand, looking as if gripping a pen, began to slowly move. They created trajectories in the air; these trajectories went to become letters, and those letters soon became words.

[Your attribute is being pushed to its absolute limit!]

[Warning! You do not have the authority of 'Overwrite'!]

Han Sooyoung vomited out a mouthful of blood, but didn't stop.

From the very onset, an author really had only one way to reach her reader.

「Han Sooyoung imagined. Just like how the other her did once upon a time.」

With the most vigorous, carefully worded sentences, she began drawing out a man's hands, his arms, and his legs.

An individual created solely for the sake of one reader. An entity tougher in body and nobler in heart than any creature in this world. The man who managed to bring down all the stars in the skies to end his truly lengthy regression turns, and eventually, even succeeding in destroying the system of the world.

Tsu-chuchuchuchuchu-!!

Every character was, as a matter of fact, an incarnation of the author.

However, that didn't mean the incarnation was the author itself. The characters that left her hands wouldn't listen to her, after all.

And that was why Han Sooyoung was trying to get the help from the individual she had created.

[Constellation, 'Architect of the False Last Act', is unleashing all of her Stories!]

[Your new Stigma is blooming!]

That one term that could fill up that empty margin.

Han Sooyoung shouted out as if she was screaming. "Yoo Joonghyuk-!!"

And right next second, the letters before her eyes split apart.

The Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship.

Secret Technique: Inner Mystery Transmission.

Split the Dark Ocean.

A single sword split apart the pitch-black night ocean. The fighting spirit of a Transcendent bursting out from the entirety of his body illuminated the darkness of the letters.

[Stigma, 'Character Summon', is activating!]

The individual she had written, but she didn't know of.

[Character, 'Yoo Joonghyuk', is answering the call!]

"Hold on tight."

A man descended with the rays of light. Yoo Joonghyuk's powerful hand grabbed hers. Han Sooyoung endured against her eyes tearing up and shouted back at him.

"You hold on tight, instead!"

From Lee Hyunsung to Yoo Joonghyuk, the companions' Story began to glow brightly.

To get this far, they had lost many things.

"Joonghyuk-ssi! We leave it in your hands!"

"Master! Hurry!"

However, it wasn't as if they had been losing things only.

Yoo Joonghyuk extended his hand out.

The distance of just one person. The distance that couldn't have been bridged without the presence of just one person was finally being closed in.

Yoo Joonghyuk's hand reached out while breaking past the letters. The sentences protecting Kim Dokja fell away one by one.

The hand that experienced thousands of regressions tightly grabbed hold onto Kim Dokja's collars – as if to yank out the oldest memories from within.

"It's time to go back, Kim Dokja."

Right next second – as if the lights were turned off, the whole world was suddenly plunged in darkness.

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* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)

Chapter 540: Epilogue 4 - The Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint, V

Within the space of darkness, as if the curtains had come down on the last act.

Han Sooyoung opened her eyes within this darkness. The [Eye of Truth] expanded and began emitting faint rays of light, and gradually, she could see her surroundings better.

…Just what happened?

[You have misaligned and broke the world-line's deciding Probability!]

[Your actions have affected the 'Oldest Dream's' ■■!]

[The 'Oldest Dream's' ■■ is changing!]

Then, indecipherable messages floated up next.

But none of that mattered. What's important was rescuing Kim Dokja.

Han Sooyoung focused her sight to the presence she picked up in front of her. When she did, something sooty, darkish could be spotted.

"Yoo Joonghyuk, is that you?"

"Yes."

Han Sooyoung felt around like a blind and approached him, only to freak out and shout loudly. "Hey, you moron! What the hell are you doing, choking a little kid?!"

"This is not a little kid. It's Kim Dokja."

"It's kid-ified Kim Dokja!"

She hurriedly snatched Kim Dokja away from him and brought her finger closer to the small nose. She felt a very faint, shallow breathing.

But why was this? Something about his current state felt wrong. Just what was up with this feeling that he might shatter into pieces at any second…?

"What's wrong with him?"

"His Story has been damaged too extensively. I've already fed him the Life and Death Pill, but… It's not working."

They needed Lee Seolhwa. However, none of the presences of their companions could be felt nearby. It seemed that only Yoo Joonghyuk, Kim Dokja, and herself were trapped within this separate space.

With hostile eyes, Han Sooyoung glared at her surroundings. There was only one culprit capable of doing something like this.

"The Fourth Wall! Stop this and let us leave!"

Along with 'Tsu-chuchut' noise, a faint, blurry silhouette appeared within the darkness. A boy Dokkaebi wearing a fedora was standing there. Its face was filled with indescribable sadness and purity.

Han Sooyoung studied [The Fourth Wall] for a little while, before asking it. "…Is that your real appearance?"

「T hat s ri ght」

It no longer resembled the figure she had spied within her memories. Not a sign of a middle-aged Dokkaebi could be seen on that face. [The Fourth Wall] addressed her.

「A rea lly l o n g ti me ha s pas sed by」

Han Sooyoung thought about something. Maybe [The Fourth Wall] was in the same boat as Kim Dokja. It too could have forgotten everything and gradually turned into a child while enduring the untold length of time.

While fixing Kim Dokja's clothing, Han Sooyoung asked. "You were protecting Kim Dokja because of my order, weren't you?"

「I th ink I w as」

"You gave Kim Dokja the 'Ways of Survival' text files, right? You kept helping him out afterwards, too."

[The Fourth Wall] didn't reply. No, it just stared at Kim Dokja with vague eyes of someone digging through very old memories.

Han Sooyoung's voice now took on the subtle hint of anger. "But, why did you let Kim Dokja end up in this state?"

「…」

"Say something! What were you even thinking to let…"

「You don't know what the reader really wants.」

[The Fourth Wall] no longer stammered its words.

「You all truly, truly do not know anything.」

"…We'll be taking Kim Dokja with us. We can't sit back and watch this guy live his life as the 'Oldest Dream'."

At her attitude of willing to start a fight, [The Fourth Wall]'s brows quivered. But rather than Han Sooyoung clenching her fist in nervousness, Yoo Joonghyuk stepped forward, instead.

"If we take him with us, will the position of the 'Oldest Dream' be left vacant?"

Han Sooyoung's shoulders flinched.

It wasn't as if she had never thought about that problem.

The problem of 'after Kim Dokja is rescued, who will take over the position of the Oldest Dream?'

This world was maintained solely because the 'Oldest Dream' dreamed. In a universe operated only through someone's sacrifice, someone had to become the existence who dreamed.

Yoo Joonghyuk opened his mouth. "I shall take over."

"What the?! Hey! What bullshit are you spewing now?!"

"I'm trying to say that I will become the new 'Oldest Dream'."

"How can you pull that off when you don't even have an iota of imagination?! No, let me do it. I can do it so much better than this Kim Dokja here. That's why…"

Han Sooyoung yapped on and on, even though she didn't really understand what her mouth was saying. She simply blurted out only with the aim of stopping this crazy idiot. And fortunately enough, [The Fourth Wall] wasn't Yoo Joonghyuk's ally in this case, either.

｢Puppet of the 'Oldest Dream', you can't become the dream. Because you don't love this story.｣

"In that case, I must-"

「It's the same story for you, Han Sooyoung.」

"Then who's going to take over this guy's role? I'm telling you this right now, but we're definitely taking him with us, you hear? Even if it's you, you can't stop us."

[The Fourth Wall] stared at Han Sooyoung and Yoo Joonghyuk for a little while.

「Take him.」

"What's that?"

「You can just take him. Even if you take away 'that Kim Dokja', this universe won't be destroyed anymore.」

As she didn't expect to hear such a reply, Han Sooyoung could only blink her eyes like an idiot. She glanced to her side, and even Yoo Joonghyuk was making a similar face.

Just what was the Dokkaebi saying here? She had never thought of such an ending. Was it really okay to welcome a conclusion of this nature?

…No, that simply wasn't possible.

This <Star Stream> was never considerate towards any of them before, not even once.

Han Sooyoung's face gradually hardened and she asked back. "Why won't the universe be destroyed even after we take him away?"

「The 'Kim Dokja' you know has scattered to the rest of the universe already.」

"What was that??"

She dazedly stared at Kim Dokja currently embraced in her arms – at his frail figure, small enough for only one of her arms to wrap around.

It felt like a hammer had struck her on the back of her head. It couldn't be, the reason why Kim Dokja ended up in this state was…

"You… Just what the hell did you do?"

「This wasn't my doing. It's what he himself wanted. After all, he knew your group would do something like this.」

A subtle chill began running down her skin.

In order to save this world, someone must become the 'Oldest Dream'. If Kim Dokja was saved, then someone else must replace him.

Wouldn't he… Would someone like Kim Dokja really not know that?

「You all have done something terribly stupid. The conclusion the reader wanted was the only conclusion. Why did you try to change it?」

The expression of [The Fourth Wall] staring at her gave her the creeps. A negative emotion that was neither hatred or resentment, not even sadness, was now directed in her and Yoo Joonghyuk's direction.

「You shouldn't have been greedy. No, y o u sh oul d've be en con te nt wi th 49% Kim Dok ja」

Along with the voice gradually breaking apart, the surrounding time and space began to distort.

「D id y o u re ally thi nk y o ur gro up w as spe cial? D id yo u hon es tly bel ieve th at a pro per con clusion wo uld wa it for y o u lot wh en y o u de str oyed the laws of th is uni ver se?」

Even before she could reply, the surroundings grew brighter.

「Y o u lot ha ve me ss ed up y o ur con clu sion, and y o u wi ll no w be com e mi se ra ble」

…

…

…

When Han Sooyoung opened her eyes again, she found herself standing in Seoul – Gwanghwamun of the 1865th regression turn. The very location where her group readied for the scenario. Snow was drifting down on this landmark that had seen the last conclusion of the scenarios. She quietly looked up at the snowflakes falling one by one.

She slowly lowered her gaze and saw the small Kim Dokja, still nestled within her embrace. His breathing remained rhythmic.

"Master!"

Lee Jihye ran towards them from a distance. Even Yoo Sangah and Jung Heewon urgently running next to her could be seen, too. The rest of the companions were safe.

"Sooyoung-ssi! What about Dokja-ssi?"

Even before Han Sooyoung could say something, Jang Hayoung quickly snatched away and hugged Kim Dokja. "Kim Dokja! His hand, it's as cold as ice! Does anyone have gloves??"

The companions quickly surrounded Kim Dokja. Each of them was drunk in their own emotions.

Jung Heewon holding onto Kim Dokja's pale smooth cheeks were crying, while Lee Hyunsung and his bear-like bulk were cautiously wrapping Kim Dokja's naked feet. Even Yoo Sangah couldn't hold back her tears this time. Both Shin Yoosung and Lee Gilyoung seemed to be moments away from passing out, too.

The figure of Gong Pildu sitting on a nearby bench could be seen, busy puffing away at his cigarette as if such a spectacle was too ridiculous to even participate.

"…Is Dokja sleeping now?"

Lee Sookyung asked that, and Han Sooyoung nodded as her reply. That small movement was all she could do after squeezing out every dollop of her remaining energy.

Companions finally managed to rein in their emotions and began to talk in turns. The first one to step up while rolling up her sleeves was Jung Heewon.

"I'm really going to dangle him up this time. Right in front of the Industrial Complex, no less! I'm not joking here, so all of you, do not try to stop me!"

"Even still, the current Dokja-ssi is a child…"

"By the way, will ahjussi remain in this state forever?"

"Hyung, wake up, please! You're pretending to be asleep because of how embarrassed you are, right?"

"Did he get younger as a side effect of something?"

Lee Jihye hesitating ever so slightly suddenly shouted out in a bright voice. "Who cares if he got younger? We can just raise him, right?!"

"Does that mean I can go to the same school as hyung?"

"Hey, you think ahjussi really became a little kid like you?!"

And so, for the next couple of minutes, they bickered and bantered like this. In the meantime, Lee Seolhwa was checking out Kim Dokja's current condition throughout his body, but as she did, her expression was slowly hardening.

"When Dokja ahjussi wakes up, he's going to remember us, right? It won't be like, he's lost most of his memories or anything?"

「Han Sooyoung couldn't say a single thing to such companions.」

She kept bobbing her lips up and down many, many times.

It wasn't a certainty yet, they couldn't trust everything that stinking wall said, that's why they…

"…You two. Why have you been keeping quiet until now?"

Han Sooyoung hurriedly avoided meeting the gaze after hearing Yoo Sangah's question.

"Sooyoung-ssi?"

Soon afterwards, Yoo Sangah's gaze shifted over to Yoo Joonghyuk. And then, she got to witness a shocking scene.

"…Yoo Joonghyuk-ssi??"

Yoo Joonghyuk's expression was frozen pale-white. And as if he had lost a protective wall of his mind, he seemed to be muttering something to himself, too.

Yoo Sangah had seen such a sight before.

「Back in the 73rd Demon Realm, when Kim Dokja ceased to exist alongside the 'Outer God'.」

She quickly brushed past the companions and held Kim Dokja's wrist. It was so frail that it might break at any second. The pulse itself was faint, too. However, she wasn't a doctor so this didn't tell her much. She asked Lee Seolhwa next.

"Seolhwa-ssi, the current Dokja-ssi, what's wro…"

"…His soul has been completely damaged."

His soul was damaged.

In that moment, a similar type of shadow was cast over the companions' complexions. However, that didn't last long. Jung Heewon spoke up first.

"I'm sure there is a way, right? I mean, we cured something like that before."

Indeed, they had experienced a similar event to this in the past.

The damage to one's soul meant damage to one's Story – damage to one's 'theme'. Lee Sookyung had survived such an illness before.

Shin Yoosung hurriedly followed that up. "There really is no problem, right? It's not the same as back then! We can get help from this world's Aileen. And we also secured a lot of star fluid ahead of time too, didn't we?!"

Shin Yoosung continued to speak. She brought up all the ways she could think of without rest, over and over again. And then…

"…That's why, that's why…"

Tears formed on both of her eyes.

Shin Yoosung continued to shake her head in denial, saying this couldn't be it. Yoo Sangah cautiously wrapped her arm around the girl's shoulders and spoke.

"Please be honest with us, Seolhwa-ssi."

Lee Seolhwa dropped her head lower, and placed her hand on Kim Dokja's chest. When she did, a small piece of Story fragment floated up from his frail-looking chest. That was the last remaining Story of Kim Dokja.

[Constellation, 'Demon King of Salvation', has reached his new ■■.]

His small Story glimmered like a very tiny phrase.

[Constellation Demon King of Salvation's ■■ is 'Epilogue'.]

「And so, they had reached the epilogue no one had written.」

Chapter 541: Epilogue 4 - The Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint, VI

They immediately took Kim Dokja back to their headquarters located in Gwanghwamun.

Aileen was summoned, and they even requested aid from the Constellations with expertise in medicine, such as 'Guam Divine Doctor'.

「Their plan was perfect. With this plan, they couldn't have failed.」

They even called upon every Story expert scattered throughout the world, too.

「This plan was the one where they couldn't afford to fail.」

For the period of over a week, dozens of famed doctors were brought in to treat Kim Dokja. It was to collect the remaining Stories somehow and restore his soul form.

– There is nothing that can be done currently.

Lee Seolhwa worked throughout the night and as a result, passed out. A Russian expert subbing for her afterwards said these words.

– We can't say he's dead, but… We also can't say that he's alive, either. This child will never wake up again, that's why.

But, that couldn't be. They worked tirelessly and finally managed to come this far, so this story simply couldn't end like this. The one to stay as the pillar of support for the crumbling companions was Yoo Sangah.

"The problem is with Dokja-ssi's soul, yes?"

In that case, they only needed to restore his soul, then.

So, the companions sought out the assistance of the Constellation most well versed in everything soul-related.

[This child's soul didn't come to the 'Underworld'. No, his soul didn't go to any of the afterlives found in the other worldviews.]

The queen of the Underworld, Persephone, could only stroke Kim Dokja's forehead with a sorrowful expression.

[…This was this child's choice.]

"His choice?! Please don't make me laugh. You also saw it too, didn't you? Back in that subway, we all saw the Stories Dokja-ssi possessed, didn't we?! He, he wanted to be with us, he wanted to us to save…!"

[There are countless Stories within a person's soul. The words we saw were simply a small part of that.]

"Don't… Don't say something like that as if it means nothing."

Jung Heewon shouted out. There was no other way for her to endure except to shout.

It was his choice? This, this was Kim Dokja's choice??

「The companions didn't give up.」

Even the collecting of Stories, even the recovery of his soul, they were impossible. In that case, only one method remained.

[I was waiting for you.]

The master of the 'Isle of Reincarnators', Sakyamuni, welcomed them with a benevolent smile – as if he knew they would come here.

[It's truly lamentable, but he's not someone this one can reincarnate.]

"A portion of his soul still remains. We can divide and share the Stories we all possess. Just like how I did it back then, if we utilise the powers of samsara…"

[Ah, my dear arhat. I understand your sorrow. I do. However, he can't be reincarnated.]

Sakyamuni looked at Yoo Sangah with a regretful expression before letting a soft sigh escape from his lips.

Soon, a truly countless number of threads began floating up before his eyes that observed Kim Dokja quietly slumbering away. There were so many of these red threads that counting them all was impossible. Yoo Sangah too could see them.

The threads of fate.

The threads stretched out to the night sky and eventually, even pierced through <Star Stream> itself. Yoo Sangah stared at them, and realized why Kim Dokja couldn't be reincarnated.

"…I see."

She didn't want to acknowledge it. Even then, the truth didn't change.

"His soul, it… It has already reincarnated in another world-line."

Sakyamuni nodded his head.

[More correctly, we should say his 'souls'.]

In front of everyone, Han Sooyoung passed on the things she'd been told.

"…Kim Dokja's soul has been scattered throughout the whole universe."

The memories from the moments when she faced off against [The Fourth Wall] inside the darkened room – she didn't leave a single word out and repeated every part of that conversation to her companions. Someone fell down, some despaired.

Lee Jihye cried out. "Let's go find that guy again. [The Fourth Wall] might know a way, right?! We might be able to recover Dokja ahjussi's soul somehow!"

"If you do that, then what about Kim Dokjas reincarnating in other worlds? They must be living their own lives, won't they?"

"T-that is…" Lee Jihye panting like a bull gulped down a glass of water on the table, before carrying on. "There must be some other way. Whatever that thing was, [The Fourth Wall] or whatever, you said it knows something."

"…We don't have any methods to meet that guy again. We used up all of our fragments when opening the wall."

Another four days flew by in an instant. The companions had become utterly devastated, ravaged – some missed their meals, while some didn't even bother to sleep. How long passed by like that? Jung Heewon sought out Yoo Joonghyuk.

"Joonghyuk-ssi."

Yoo Joonghyuk polishing his [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] out of an old habit raised his head. He frowned slightly as if the sunlight stung, before shifting his gaze back to the sword. No matter how much he polished it, the dark stain on the blade didn't want to come off. The stain came from Kim Dokja's letters that he cut down. He quietly stared at the stain, before finally opening his mouth.

"Four days is quite fast for making up your mind."

"That's because we don't have any other choice."

Yoo Joonghyuk's emotionless eyes locked on to Jung Heewon. Despite experiencing so many tragedies until now, her eyes still burned vigorously. He too used to have such eyes, once upon a time.

"We can do this. We've already done it twice. That's why-!" Jung Heewon shouted.

Yoo Joonghyuk used to think that.

Their plan was like a well-constructed fantasy.

They believed that they can pull it off this time, that they should be able to see the conclusion they wanted.

「Even if this world ends in tragedy… Don't think that you've all failed.」

Did that fool feel this way back then?

Yoo Joonghyuk spoke up. "Right. We did do it."

"Please, let's try it one more time! We can definitely pull it off this time! We can definitely save Dokja-ssi…!"

"Do not think that things will turn out better than this turn just because you went back in time."

After spitting out those words reflexively, Yoo Joonghyuk stopped breathing for a little while.

"…Why are you saying such things? This turn was a definite improvement, wasn't it? We can definitely do better!"

"It's impossible."

"Why not? When we haven't even tried it…!"

Yoo Joonghyuk didn't reply. Her expression grew deeply incensed. Her hand then gripped the sword, implying that she'd not hesitate to cut him down if he didn't cooperate immediately. Even then, even under her intense threat, he didn't budge an inch. Seeing him act like this, something else slowly floated up on her expression.

"You… Can it be…?"

Yoo Joonghyuk still didn't reply. Jung Heewon began urging him in sheer disbelief.

"Is it true? Is it…??"

He finally replied while staring at his own attribute window floating before his eyes.

"I'm no longer the regressor."

The category of [Regressor] no longer existed among his attributes. His Stigmata had vanished, too – both [Regression] and [Group Regression]. He didn't possess any Stigma to turn back the clock.

Winds began blowing in from somewhere. While letting the winds hit him, Yoo Joonghyuk looked up at the clear skies of <Star Stream>.

He couldn't sense the gaze he used to feel all the time. No matter how much he sharpened his perception, he simply couldn't locate it like before.

｢He was no longer the protagonist of the story.｣

His story came to an end when the lone reader went away.

Along with his final regression, too.

"We can cross over to another world-line."

And then, someone said something like that.

"It doesn't really have to be a regression, does it? We cross the world-line, and enter the location of a different scenario. We then gather the fragments of 'Final Wall' one more time and meet [The Fourth Wall]."

It was a crazy plan.

What made it even crazier was the fact that the person suggesting it was none other than the usually-composed Yoo Sangah.

Han Sooyoung replied. "That guy might not even help us."

"Even still, we need to try. It's better than not trying, right?"

They had already done it once before. No reason not to try it again.

But why was this? Han Sooyoung didn't believe that this was the right way to go.

What would happen to them if they fail this time, too?

Wouldn't they try to skip over the world-line again?

And just like that, they would cross the world-lines again, again, and again. By continuing that, they might end up no different from the 999th turn's 'Outer Gods'. Their lives might get damaged beyond repair.

The truly wretched thing was, despite knowing the truth she couldn't fight against the temptation.

"How will you cross the world-line, anyway? We can't regress anymore, remember? And we don't even have the 'Secretive Plotter' to help us in this place, either."

"Have you forgotten? This world-line is different from the 1864th turn."

It was at that moment something, a certain thought, brushed past Han Sooyoung's mind.

「There was one more method.」

Accompanied by the thunderous "Ku-gugugu!" noise, a gigantic shadow was cast upon Gwanghwamun right then. It came from a massive flying object large enough to completely blanket the main street and then some.

[Fufufu. Long time no see, everyone.]

Bihyung was riding on that flying object.

He had become the Dokkaebi King of this world after the Bureau was completely ruined. And it seemed that this ruined world was exactly to his liking.

[Right, so you need this thing, is that it?]

That was the item only found in the 'last scenario'.

「The Final Ark.」

Han Sooyoung slowly approached the ark.

Without a doubt, using this would allow them to jump the world-line. Well, Dokkaebis and Constellations of the very last scenario were also planning to escape to another world-line using this vessel, after all.

Yoo Sangah spoke up. "However, if we use this… We'll end up being no different to Dokkaebis."

"You should've raised such points before we used the group regression, you know."

Han Sooyoung reached the ark. That prompted Bihyung to issue a warning.

[Let me make this crystal clear. This ark is a lot older than it looks, so it can be used only once.]

"Doesn't matter."

Being able to travel to another world-line implied that they could use this ark in a similar capacity as Yoo Joonghyuk's own 'regression'.

What if, they could move to another world-line's specific point in history? If they could do something like that, then they might be able to change world-lines in a far more efficient, effective manner than Yoo Joonghyuk's regression.

Han Sooyoung hurriedly shouted out. "Bihyung. The world-line we want to go to is…!"

However, even before she could finish, a message came to her first.

[It's impossible to set sail to the applicable world-line.]

Bihyung's expression became confused. [Mm? What's gotten into it? I don't think it has ever said something like this before?]

"What's wrong? Is it broken?"

[Call out a different world-line.]

Han Sooyoung spoke up again. That resulted in yet another message.

[It's impossible to set sail to the applicable world-line.]

She repeatedly mentioned other world-lines. She spoke, then spoke again. However, the message floating up remained the same.

[It's impossible to set sail to the applicable world-line.]

[It's impossible to set sail to the applicable world-line.]

…

…

[It's impossible to set sail to the applicable world-line.]

Utterly flustered now, Bihyung began muttering out. [Passageways to all those world-lines have been closed off. It means the possibilities that used to be open between the world-lines have completely shut down.]

"We can't go?!"

[Looks that way. Huh, can something like this even happen?]

All the world-lines related to the 'Ways of Survival', the ones she could remember, were blocked off.

"…Does that mean we can't go anywhere?"

[No, there is one.]

"Really? Which one?"

[But, it's a world-line with all the scenarios already concluded.]

Bihyung displayed the entered route.

Surprisingly enough, the destination was a location they all knew quite intimately.

Yoo Joonghyuk's 1864th regression turn.

The planetary system number 8612, where all the scenarios had already ended.

It was Earth. The one they left from.

Chapter 542: Epilogue 4 - The Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint, VII

The ending to the 1865th regression turn was more perfect than any other world-lines.

A month flew by after the conclusion of the 'Final Scenario'. The damages suffered from the scenarios were quickly repaired, and through the help of the regressors, various nations regained their law and order quite quickly.

Schools opened their doors again, and workers started going back to their old jobs. The streets were filled to the brim with slogans welcoming the brand new world.

Lee Jihye standing on this alien-feeling street stared at an athletics field across the fence.

"That's your friend, isn't she?"

Jung Heewon asked, and Lee Jihye nodded her head.

The latter's friend was currently running on the track. Her name was Na Bo-Ri. A friend that she had to kill with her own hands, and that very person was alive and well in this world-line. She was alive, she was breathing, and her legs were moving.

"Jihye-yah. You don't have to go back."

Lee Jihye's eyes continued to chase after Bo-Ri's back. The friend she missed so much. The friend that appeared in the nightmares she always suffered from.

She thought that rescuing Bo-Ri would bring her nightmares to an end.

Unfortunately, memories couldn't be so easily exorcised like that. No, her nightmare returned with vengeance in a far more vivid form. Within it, she'd live the same scenario many, many times over and murder the dream version of Bo-Ri. Every time that happened, she'd come to realize something – over and over again.

The one she rescued this time wasn't the dead Bo-Ri.

That the one she saved was simply another Bo-Ri from another world-line, that was all.

"Jihye-yah."

Lee Jihye stared at the athletics field for a long time before making her reply. "We made a promise with Biyoo, after all."

"…"

"We did promise that we will definitely cross the world-lines again and return home."

Jung Heewon quietly studied Lee Jihye's face while the girl said that, then placed her hand on the latter's shoulder.

"I'm sure it will get lonely once we return. Things that exist here don't on the other side, after all."

Lee Jihye smiled. She used the hand that wiped away at her eyes and pointed to her head. "I won't be lonely. Because they are all in here."

Her voice trembled as she said that.

Was it fine to say something like that?

If she could really say something like that, then why did they even bother to come to this place, to begin with?

"Let's go. This eonni will treat you to something tasty today."

"Orabeoni."

Whenever Yoo Mia used that term, there would be something she wanted to ask him for.

Yoo Joonghyuk knew that after going through many regressions. She quietly stared her hyung, before opening her mouth.

"Orabeoni, you did your very best. No one can do more or better than what you have already done."

His eyelids were solemnly lowered. Yoo Mia climbed up on a chair and placed her hand on the crown of his head.

"Let's stop and go back home."

– The scenario of tragedy they had to live through.

– The world was enveloped in the acrid smoke of the apocalypse's cannons, and they had lost their precious ones…

The lyrics of a song coming from somewhere caused Han Sooyoung to frown quite heavily.

"Is this a funeral dirge or something?"

[No, it's actually a trending song these days. A story that exalts you and your group.]

The cackling Bihyung opened the door to the ark.

The vessel, with its Story energy fully recharged, greeted them.

One by one, regressors who chose to return home climbed aboard the vessel. Not everyone chose to do so, however – some decided to remain.

Such as, Gong Pildu unable to say anything while sweating profusely. Behind him, young children could be seen. Han Sooyoung knew why he regressed in the first place.

"You should remain here. Someone needs to stay and protect this place, after all," said Han Sooyoung.

Gong Pildu didn't reply to her.

"Anyone else wanting to stay behind?" Han Sooyoung calmly raised her voice. "You should give it some serious thought, okay? If you leave, then your parents, lovers, friends, etc… You will never get to see them ever again. Will you be fine with that? So, think it over…"

Shin Yoosung then grabbed Han Sooyoung's hand tightly. "This isn't our world-line, you know? Dokja ahjussi will probably think that way, too."

The majority of <Kim Dokja's Company>'s Incarnations and Constellations chose to return. In the middle of them all was young Kim Dokja lying on the stretcher, unmoving.

[Oh, my dear Persephone, are you really planning to leave me?]

Han Sooyoung could only smile wryly after witnessing Hades, unable to mop around any longer, started his desperate song-and-dance to appeal to his dearly beloved. Was Hades's personality originally like that?

Persephone directed her troubled smile at such Hades. [I'm truly sorry, Hades. But, I'm not the 'Persephone' you used to know.]

[You're undoubtedly Persephone. The queen of the darkest spring and the Underworld.]

Persephone softly shook her head.

[If you insist on doing this, I shall go with you.]

[This is your world-line, dear. And you're also the king of the Underworld, too. Please, don't forget your dignity.]

[But my world is you, Persephone!]

Bihyung shook his head helplessly. And then, asked Han Sooyoung. [I'm sure there's no point in me asking, but… Hey, are you really leaving? If you stay, you know you will be treated like a king for the rest of your life.]

"I didn't come to this world-line for that purpose."

Han Sooyoung looked at the young Kim Dokja lying on the stretcher.

For the last few months, Han Sooyoung and her colleagues immersed themselves in scouring the entirety of <Star Stream> to find a way to revive Kim Dokja. However, they couldn't locate anything like that. The best they could do was to keep his life going like this, not dead but not alive, either.

"Bihyung. As a goodbye present, why don't you share a bit of the Bureau's Story with us?"

[…The Bureau's Story?]

"The system in our world-line is destroyed. We don't know what might happen, so give us a little bit, okay?"

Bihyung pouted with a very unhappy face, but eventually, handed down a portion of the Story to Han Sooyoung.

It was then, a man dashed towards them from afar while kicking up a storm of dust clouds. A big man with unkempt bushy beard on his face, as a matter of fact. It was Lee Hyunsung.

"Hurry and start the engines!!" He shouted out.

When they took a closer look, military vehicles could be seen angrily chasing after him.

"…Now that I think about it, he's still a wanted man, isn't he?"

Han Sooyoung wryly chuckled and gave her signal.

That prompted Yoo Joonghyuk to open his mouth. "We're departing."

At last, the 「Final Ark」 was taking to the skies.

– The heroes of <Kim Dokja's Company> are now setting off on their journey!

People were looking up at them. Helicopters from TV stations gathered around and broadcast their departure. Reporters shouted as the cameras zoomed in closer to the companions' faces.

– Why are you all crying? You have managed to save this world-line!

The view of the ground progressively grew further away. Someone among them muttered out.

"What did we come here for, I wonder."

Like an episode of a horrible nightmare, the world below was growing distant. It was becoming memories, a past that couldn't be turned back.

Han Sooyoung muttered out. "What do you mean, why…"

As the ark accelerated, the surrounding view changed. The galaxies of the world-lines streamed past them quickly. And Kim Dokja, having reincarnated, must've been living his life in a distant world-line somewhere.

When Han Sooyoung thought like that, she felt this really powerful urge. What if she tried to forcibly change the route, even if it was now? What would happen if they embarked on a journey to meet Kim Dokja's reincarnated form somewhere within those distant stars? If she did, if they could do it, then…

「However, was that what Kim Dokja really wanted?」

The ark's window reflected the faces of Yoo Joonghyuk and Yoo Sangah walking up next to her almost at the same time. They too carried the exact same expression as hers, staring at the exact same view as her. The moment she saw their faces, she realized something. She realized that they were thinking the same thing as her. And that was why that plan could never come to reality.

It was then, the ark started thumping and clonking next.

[The vessel has entered a new world-line!]

"Already? Isn't this way too…?!"

As if it was entering the atmosphere, the ark began to suddenly nosedive.

It felt as if gravity itself had disappeared for a second there, but then, the vessel's hull slammed into something with a loud explosive noise. The light within the interior went out from a moment before coming back on.

[The vessel has reached the destination.]

Han Sooyoung held her pulsing head and scanned her companions.

"Dammit, never mind being old, it's a bloody antique, this thing. Is everyone alright?"

"I'm fine! What about the others…?"

Thankfully, no one was hurt. Han Sooyoung manipulated the hull and opened up an exit. The door slowly opened, and a flight of stairs extended below it.

She cautiously walked down the steps and the moment her feet touched the ground, someone's voice resounded out.

"Who are you people?!"

What was going on here? Fully-armed soldiers were pointing their guns at her and the group. Lee Hyunsung jumping up in fright hurriedly hid behind her.

"Sooyoung-ssi! What's going on here?! Even here, they can't be trying to arrest me…?!"

"Of course, that's not possible. This is our home, after all," said Han Sooyoung. She shoved Lee Hyunsung back, and then addressed the soldiers. "Hey, don't you think your welcoming party to celebrate our return is a bit too rough? Don't you know who I am?"

The guns hurriedly took aim at her as she strode forward like a neighbourhood thug.

"I'm warning you. You pull the trigger on that thing, then all of you will…"

It was then, Han Sooyoung's eyes caught the face of a certain someone. It was a middle-aged woman's face, setting off this vague deja vu as if she could just about recognise it. The blonde locks were tumbling down to the woman's shoulders, and her crimson eye was swirling in a red vortex. The owner of that eye addressed her.

"…Han Sooyoung??"

Han Sooyoung dazedly stared at the blonde woman. That voice… Some time had passed by, but she could never forget it. The middle-aged woman issued the order to stand down with the flick of her hand.

"Han Sooyoung… Is it really you?"

When she heard that voice again, Han Sooyoung felt something welling up inside her.

While slowly descending to the ground, she kept staring back at Anna Croft. She didn't know where to start asking her questions, so she asked whatever jumped out of her mouth first.

"How many years has it been since we left?"

"…It's been 20 years."

Han Sooyoung's trembling lips swallowed those years down. She felt dizzy. Who would've believed now that the horrifying scenarios had ever taken place in this world?

The city of Seoul was no longer the place she remembered. No, this city was as complete as the one from the 1865th turn, the one she thought was pretty much perfect. The deep greenery of the trees lining the streets, and children dribbling balls around in the distant playground far away.

Twenty years.

So, that's what it was. In a world where we don't exist, you have managed to carry on.

And that's how you got to change the world to this extent.

"Han Sooyoung?"

The startled Anna Croft quickly offered support as Han Sooyoung wobbled unsteadily. This was an embrace from a person she didn't even like, yet Han Sooyoung clung onto those shoulders and broke down in tears.

At last, they had returned to the 1864th turn.

The world where they completed the scenarios for the first time.

Some managed to return, while some, couldn't.

Some things had to remain as the past that nothing could change.

She saw the sight of the [Industrial Complex] spreading out in the far distance.

Kim Dokja's fading bronze statue stood before it. Next to his figure assuming a slightly awkward pose was a massive statue of a squid.

「To commemorate Kim Dokja's return」

While looking at that bizarre monstrosity of a squid, Han Sooyoung alternated between breathless sobbing and hysterical laughter. She didn't want to admit it. If she insisted on it, then she felt that something somewhere might change, somehow. But right now, right in this moment, she simply had to admit to it.

Their plan was a failure.

And this place, it was the conclusion to the world they had found.

* * *

Two years went by since the companions' return.

Two years were a longer stretch of time than one might imagine, and perhaps fittingly, several incidents happened during then.

Such as, Lee Hyunsung and Jung Heewon leaving the Complex. Or, Shin Yoosung and Lee Gilyoung entering high school. Lee Jihye getting slapped with an 'F' during the first midterms. Etc, etc…

When all these many, many incidents were to be summarised, it'd be like the following:

<Kim Dokja's Company> had been disbanded.

Chapter 543: Epilogue 4 - The Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint, VIII

As if fulfilling a promise, the companions went on their separate ways to find their purpose.

Some set up a security agency, while someone joined the government.

Han Sooyoung didn't join anyone. Instead, she became someone who taught things.

「「Reading modern philosophy through webnovels」」

Han Sooyoung did her lectures featuring such a title from the centre.

After the last scenario ended, reality and fantasy were separated once more.

"And so, if you apply Roland Barthes' 'Mourning Diary' to this novel…"

Most of the attendees carried the look of puzzlement asking what kind of a "dipping croissant in a 'ssamjang' sauce" rubbish this was, but a few students seemed to be rather interested by the idea.

One of them raised up his hand and asked her. "Your viewpoint is quite intriguing, Professor. But I do have some objections."

Han Sooyoung nodded her head as consent to go ahead. The student continued on with a triumphant look. "Did the author really intend for such a reaction? Is applying such a grandiose theory to a novel full of poor grammar and contradictory sentences a correct way to read it? To be honest, I don't think that's what the author was aiming for. Just from looking at the overabundance of onomatopoeia and mimetic words, it…"

Han Sooyoung glanced at the novel she brought along as her teaching material. For sure, it was a work filled with far too many mistakes. The student was carrying a satisfied smile as if he had finally landed a solid body blow to her.

She pondered for a little while. She could've just explained to that student, step by step. However, she chose not to do so. She instead began saying these following words.

"You're right. Only the author will know the truth."

"But, if you say that, isn't that too irrespon…"

"What would it be like if someone starts judging you?"

"Pardon?"

"That someone might notice your not-very-well washed face, which might be a result of you rushing to get to the lectures on time. Or maybe, they notice your toenails sticking out of your slippers first. And then, they will start thinking like this. Ah, that guy, the way he looks, he must be pretty lazy. And there's no way a lazy person can be smart. So, no need to listen to the opinions of someone like that."

"W-what are you even…"

"Or maybe, that student must've studied the contents of today's lecture throughout last night. You can tell by looking at how enthusiastically he's questioning the professor like that. Sure, his outer appearance is a bit shabby, but he might not care about such things, to begin with. Yes, they could potentially think that way."

Han Sooyoung looked into the student's trembling eyes and continued on.

"Just like what you said earlier, the author of the novel probably didn't think about stuff like this. However, it is up to you to decide on what you'll get out of reading the novel. If you only find trash within, then it'll simply end as trash. But if it can impart just a tiny little bit of deeper meaning to you, then that alone will improve this work in your eyes. Again, it is up to you to decide which one it will be. But I'd really like you to choose the option where you get to 'appreciate' your time a little bit better. If you don't, enduring my lectures will become a pretty arduous slog for you."

The student closed his mouth shut and looked back at Han Sooyoung. It was unknown whether he understood her or not – however, she thought that there was no helping it even if he couldn't.

The student's eyes slowly moved this way and that, then he suddenly said something unexpected. "…By the way, Professor? Are you going to write a new novel?"

"Mm?"

"You said this before, didn't you? You're an author because you write. If you don't write, then you're not an author."

There was a subtle undertone of "I don't have to listen to someone like you who's no longer an author" in his words. Han Sooyoung didn't reply for a second or two – her unclear, murky eyes seemed to be peering into the distant space.

She then disinterestedly muttered out. "Right. I'm not an author anymore."

"Excuse me?"

"I don't have a reader who'll read my work."

Before she could finish the rest of her words, though, the clock's bell went off first. Han Sooyoung grinned and shrugged her shoulders. "Alright, then. The novel you need to read for the next class is…"

She stayed behind on the podium and bade farewell to the students leaving the lecture hall. Her eyes caught a certain text file visible on the screen of the notebook PC currently flipped open. It was a novel she began writing not too long ago as a sort of test. She accessed the file and quietly stared at the sentences she had written so far.

「It was then she sensed a presence from behind her.」

"That was an interesting lecture. It'd been nice if that person also attended it, though."

Han Sooyoung quickly turned the screen off and looked back only to discover a familiar face. The 'intruder' was using her elegantly slender fingers to carefully sift through the lecture material scattered around the lecture desk.

"Ah, this lecture sounds like fun, too. Reading modern fantasy literature starting with Pierre Bourdieu, dissection of romance fantasies with Butler…"

"Did you come here to look down on a webnovel author?"

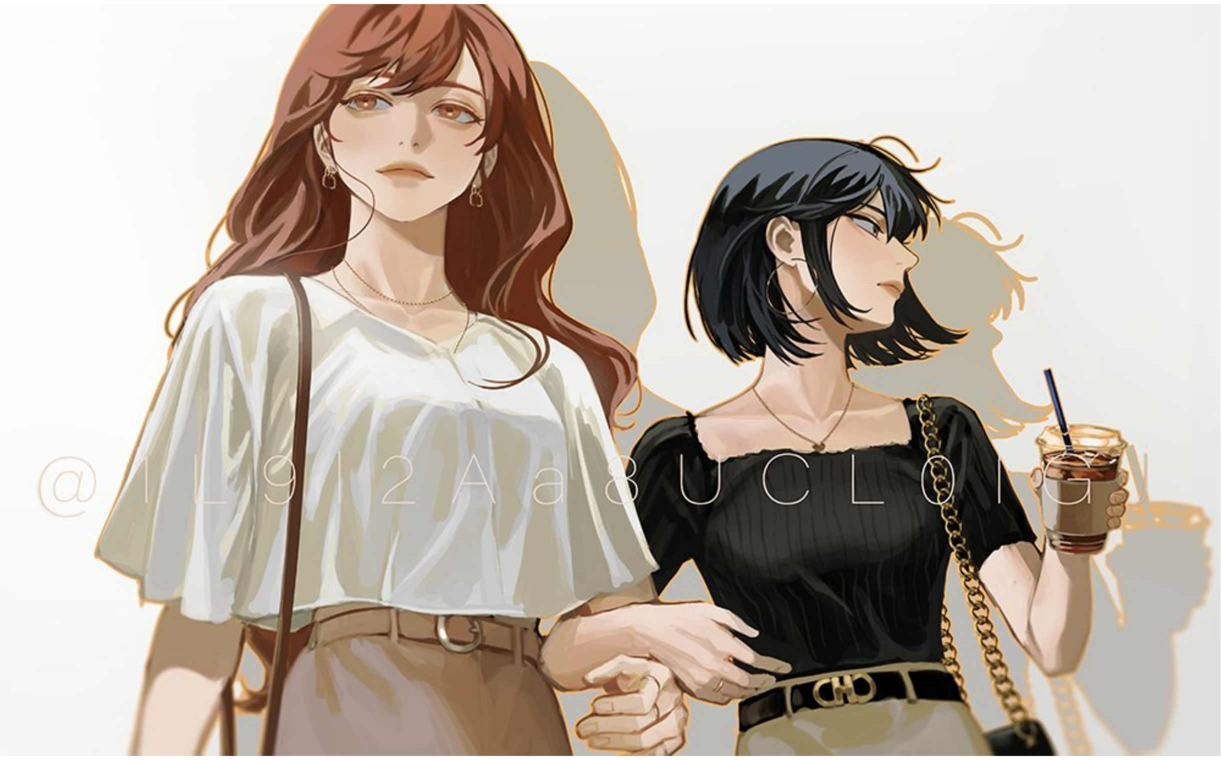
Yoo Sangah, slightly tilting her head, smiled brightly. Her smile didn't seem to have changed a bit in the last two years. She deeply peered at Han Sooyoung, before asking a question. "Why are you wearing glasses all of a sudden? Did your eyesight get worse?"

"None of your business."

"Aha, I think I understand. You looked too young and your students were ignoring you, right?"

Han Sooyoung scowled and angrily yanked the black-rimmed glasses off. Yoo Sangah teasingly followed that up.

"Shall we go? Let me buy you a drink."



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Two of them walked on the street, one sipping on the iced Americano, while the other, sucking on the peach smoothie. They maintained this awkward distance and focused only on walking forward.

Han Sooyoung asked in passing. "How's your work with the government? Is it fun?"

"I'm not doing it for fun, you know."

"Who promised to come today?"

"Hyunsung-ssi is currently in the States so it might be difficult for him, but it looks like Heewon-ssi will make it. And as you know, Seolhwa-ssi is…"

"What about the kids?"

"They are coming. They never missed it before, after all."

Not too long afterwards, the familiar street of Gwanghwamun greeted them. They entered a side street, walked for a bit longer, and eventually, found the diner they were looking for. Its name was <<Mark & Selena>>. Han Sooyoung unhesitantly pushed the door open.

"Welcome to… Wow, look who it is!"

The one welcoming them with fluent Korean was Selena Kim. Mark expertly spinning pizza dough in the kitchen whistled loudly. She spoke while guiding them inside. "Please wait for a little bit. Your order will arrive very soon."

"What about the others who arrived before us?"

Selena Kim pointed to the corner of the bar as if to say, see for yourself.

Three familiar backs of the heads were gathered there. Han Sooyoung did her best to hold back this certain impatient streak and cautiously sneaked behind the trio. And when she was right behind them, swiftly wielded her hands and pounded on the three heads in a row.

"Ouuuch?! Which dumb asshole…?!"

"Hey, our dear shorties, you've all grown a lot, haven't you?"

"Ah, Sooyoung eonni! Sangah eonni!"

Since this was their first reunion in almost a year, they shared short impressions on how each other looked. And it really didn't take long before their food arrived, too.

"What did you order, exactly? What's the name of this dish?"

"The Desolate Cabin's Demonic Intestines Stir-fry."

Mark bringing out the dish grinned. Han Sooyoung formed a suspicious expression, before stabbing at the dish shaped like the Korean squid sausage with a fork.

"What the hell? It tastes great."

As expected of its name, the dish was amazing. Her other companions loosened up and began enjoying the food. How long had it been since they got to sit around and enjoy their meal in leisure like this? Even though two years had passed since they crossed the world-line and returned home, everything still felt like a lie to Han Sooyoung.

– Oh, ohhh. Wuh-woo wuh-woo, wuh…!

A TV panel installed above the bar was broadcasting scenes from a live concert. A pretty popular idol group was currently performing there. One of them was a monkey, the other was a dragon, and the last one was an Archangel. The Great Sage wielding the mic delivered an impassioned vibrato-filled roar, which was promptly followed up by the shower of colourful spotlights focusing on the rear of the stage as Uriel made her entrance.

@1L9L2AA8UCLOIGJ

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Yoo Sangah elegantly chewing on the intestines muttered out. "They are really popular these days."

"I joined their fan club yesterday. The Uriel Force is seriously…!"

When Lee Jihye piped up, Lee Gilyoung sent in a quick tackle.

"I can't bear to look at their performance anymore after seeing the one Dionysus has put on, you know? Especially the dude over there…"

"You mean, Abyssal Black Flame Dragon? What's wrong? Isn't he cute?"

Shin Yoosung asked, and Lee Gilyoung narrowed his eyes before replying while chewing on his fork.

"That's cute to you??"

The panel was now playing the Constellations' new track. Abyssal Black Flame Dragon sporting an eye patch performed a breakdance routine before exploding into a fiery rapid-fire rap monologue.

– This is the oldest Story! Myth sung by the scenario! One man's evolution, fading with time!

"…What the hell is he even singing about?"

While the Black Flame Dragon's rapid rap bars continued to land, a couple more people opened the diner's door and entered inside. Their faces seemed a bit flushed as if they had already knocked back a few cold ones somewhere else. They were Jang Hayoung and Jung Heewon.

"What's this? Everyone was here already?"

Jang Hayoung quickly rushed in and caught Han Sooyoung in a headlock.

"How have you been?"

Jung Heewon lightly high-fived Yoo Sangah's offered hand before shifting her gaze over to the panel to say something. "Argh, that rapping is really getting on my nerves."

"It's good to see everyone after such a long time."

"Is this everyone for today?"

"Looks that way."

Jung Heewon began boasting about the new house she recently moved into. Her story generally involved how inconvenient the new place could sometimes be as it was not within the area of train stations, and also how easy it was to get some exercise since a park was nearby, etc.

She no longer lived in Gwanghwamun. She didn't even live anywhere near the third subway line, too.

Han Sooyoung asked her. "Okay, so. You two still together?"

Those words caused the companions' attention to gather here. Jung Heewon smiled bitterly and shook around her alcohol cup. "No, not anymore."

"How come?"

"If we're together, we get reminded of things."

"…What things?"

Lee Jihye and her sparkling eyes were urging Jung Heewon on. However, the latter didn't seem to be in much of a mirthful mood. She simply shook around her drink in silence. Lee Jihye eventually closed her wide-open mouth.

The panel began playing the prelude to the next song.

– The Nameless Salvation (feat. Bald General of Justice) – JUS

Han Sooyoung listened to the song coming from the panel and murmured something as a follow-up a little bit later. "I see. I guess you're right."

With that, they stopped chatting altogether. The silence wrapped around their ankles like a quagmire.

This was the reason why they didn't meet often.

– This was the story no one remembered. However, this story definitely did exist.

Was two years enough time for that 'time period' to become a story?

Han Sooyoung wanted to know.

"Still no news about Biyoo?"

"I asked Miss Anna, but she says there hasn't been any communication so far."

Before the companions made their way back, Biyoo went to the [Dark Stratum] to train. Because of that, they hadn't heard any news regarding her whereabouts for the past two years.

"What about Gong Pildu?"

"Probably drinking alone in Chungmuro. Again. I think the shock of separating from his family was too great."

"That guy, I definitely told him to stay behind in the 1865th turn, so why did he stubbornly come back with us…"

"How about Myungoh ahjussi? He's living in the Complex, so you must be clued up on his news, right? Han Sooyoung?"

"That guy? He's the same as always."

"What about the sooty bastard, though? I heard that he tried to get back to the pro gaming scene before quitting recently."

No one replied.

Jang Hayoung abruptly raised her cocktail glass. "Eiii, I don't know anymore. Let's just get drunk!"

"But, you look pretty drunk already?"

"Don't stooop me! I'm gonna go all out today!"

"Me too. Please give me a shot, too."

"Yoosung-ah, you're still underage."

"If you count my age from before the regression, I'm definitely an adult now, you know?"

While the pouting Shin Yoosung started pestering the adults, Lee Jihye poured herself a stiff shot of soju and without any side snacks, emptied it in one go.

"Sooyoung eonni, can you write my report for me? Please?" She then asked desperately.

"If you ask me that again, Imma kill you."

Two years. Around 730 days, if divided daily.

Their current conversations could only take place because they had been desperately living their lives during these past 730 days. They went to school, they went to work, they moved house; to get away from that day, one step at a time, the companions tried to live their lives to the fullest.

However, someone actually got closer to that day, in order to get away from it.

「Kim Dokja survived through a story called 'Ways of Survival'. In that case, which story allowed us to survive?」

Jung Heewon watched Han Sooyoung jotting down something on her memo pad, before asking the latter. "What are you busy jotting down there?"

"Just a force of old habit."

"Are you still writing these days?"

Her fingers writing down on the memo came to a stop. Yoo Sangah replied in her stead.

"I thought you were? Judging from what I saw earlier."

"Really? What are you writing? Is it a novel?"

Lee Jihye chewing on a mouthful of newly-brought out snacks quickly asked.

"…Nah, I'm just writing to get back in the groove."

"Really? Are you planning to publish a new novel?"

Just as Han Sooyoung began pondering how she should reply, she heard a rustling noise coming from her side.

"Maybe it's in here?"

Lee Gilyoung had left the meal saying he needed to use the john, but even before anyone had noticed it, he was already back and holding Han Sooyoung's notebook PC while giggling away. He had prior form of playing computer games on her device without permission, so he naturally knew the password and could log in without any issues. Shin Yoosung shot him an angry glare, telling him to stop this rude act right now.

"Lee Gilyoung."

"Argh, what now?"

His cheeks were flushed red as if he had been sneaking in a couple of sips of the booze. Shin Yoosung grew nervous and cautiously studied Han Sooyoung's moods, but what was going on here? Now normally, the latter would have blown her top by now and smacked the back of Lee Gilyoung's head. But now, she was wordlessly sipping on her cocktail. As if, she didn't care if he read it or not.

Lee Gilyoung took that as a sign of consent so he quickly opened the file. A short while later, Han Sooyoung put her glass down and asked him.

"Hey, kid."

"…"

"You sure you have the guts to read it?"

Lee Gilyoung's complexion grew paler and paler. Even then, he didn't tear his eyes away from the screen. He continued to read, as if he'd get sucked into the screen at any moment now. Despite furrowing his brows in obvious torment, he continued to read and read. And a few minutes later, he raised his head, tears just about ready to flood out from his eyes.

"…How many chapters have you written so far, noona?"

"Not that many. It's about, say, less than two books' worth."

"Can I… read a bit more?"

"Sure."

Realizing that Lee Gilyoung's status was somewhat strange, the companions stood up from their chairs.

"What's going on? What is its content about to make you react like this?"

"I'm also kind of curious, since it's Sooyoung-ssi's latest work…"

"I'll pass. I'm gonna wait until it comes out as a book."

With the exception of Lee Jihye saying that while pouring herself another drink, everyone else gathered behind Lee Gilyoung.

Han Sooyoung quietly stared at them.

One by one, their gazes were being sucked into the notebook's screen.

It shouldn't simply be because the story was too entertaining. No, it was that kind of a story, to begin with. Because this story was…

"Han Sooyoung, you…"

While listening to Jung Heewon's trembling voice, Han Sooyoung recalled the sentences she had already recorded.

「"Nothing can be changed through regression. It took me a very long time to realize that."」

That's right. Not a single thing could be changed through the act of regressing. Just like how it was with them back on that day.

"But, why, such a story…"

Even if that was true, however – that didn't mean their regression didn't leave anything behind, either.

「Kim Dokja survived through a story called 'Ways of Survival'. In that case, which story allowed us to survive?」

Actually, Han Sooyoung already knew the answer to that question.

"It's a story I wanted to show to that idiot."

A story still remained for them.

A story of a person they all loved.

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* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)
* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)
* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)

Chapter 544: Epilogue 4 - The Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint, IX

"…I just wrote something, hoping to leave it as records of our past. Kim Dokja might wake up someday, you know. When that happens, he'd most likely have forgotten everything about us, anyway."

The companions read Han Sooyoung's novel.

Shin Yoosung, her eyes reddened from tears, angrily rebuked Lee Gilyoung, telling him to slow down with the scrolling, while the boy sniffling away continued to click on the mouse. Yoo Sangah, Jung Heewon, and Jang Hayoung copied the file and read the novel on their own phones.

Yoo Sangah read the scene where she was making an appearance and smiled faintly. "…I did say something like that, didn't I?"

Perhaps she was missing those days, because she stroked the sentences on the phone's display. As if doing that might let her really touch Kim Dokja.

Lee Jihye sucking out the last drops from the booze bottle unsteadily got up from her seat. "What the hell. Is it really that fun?"

"Ah?! Noona!"

Lee Jihye going on a drunken rant shoved Lee Gilyoung off the chair and took over the notebook PC. She then slapped her cheeks and tried to focus her blurry, half-closed eyes on the screen.

How long went by like that?

"Sob, sooob, waaah! This novel is too sad, you know?!"

"…You've only read the first chapter, so what the…"

Lee Jihye blew her nose noisily and chucked the soiled tissue in Lee Gilyoung's direction. She remained utterly unperturbed regardless of whether the angry boy was yelling at her or not. Even more so when she scrolled down and read the scene where she made her appearance in Chungmuro – her excitement seemed to reach its peak.

"A girl wielding a lengthy sword stood in the exit as the faint rays of light shone through. While looking at Lee Jihye's hair dancing in the winds intermittently blowing in… Keuh-euuh, I'm sooo uber-cool, aren't I??"

"Argh, seriously now?! Go back up already!"

Despite Lee Gilyoung scolding her, Lee Jihye continued on yap on.

"Like, what happens afterwards? What happens to Kim Dokja…"

In the end, she couldn't win against the booze in her system and before long, her nose kissed the tabletop. Shin Yoosung snatched the notebook PC away, and asked a question while taking over the scrolling duty. "…Do I make an entrance later on, too?"

"Everyone makes their appearance. Although, each person's specific importance will be a bit different," said Han Sooyoung.

"B-but, I really did my best, you know."

"Yes, I know. Don't worry, your story will show up lots of time later on."

They already knew the ending to this story. What would happen to Kim Dokja, and what experiences the companions would go through as the result. How the dream they dreamed crumbled away. They all knew too well.

Despite knowing, however, Shin Yoosung continued to read the story.

They strode forward one sentence at a time towards the predetermined end. The story they couldn't change was right here. Shin Yoosung used every ounce of her energy to read it as if each and every sentence disappearing behind was too lamentable, too sad, to her.

"…How wonderful would it have been if Dokja ahjussi was able to read this."

"Should we go to hyung and read it for him?"

Han Sooyoung thought about the slumbering Kim Dokja inside Lee Seolhwa's hospital. This novel was written for that guy, yet she didn't think he'd be reading it anytime soon.

「Could it be that, just maybe, this was this story's completion?」

The completed ending of those who had lost something – could that be this novel's true purpose? Could these people be the true readers of this story?

"Do you think that ahjussi in the other world-line will like reading, too?"

The companions wouldn't be saved with just this measly little story. But at the very least, they should be able to endure their lives while reading and thinking about it. Just like how Kim Dokja reading the 'Ways of Survival' did.

"I wonder. Maybe."

"Ahjussi is probably ahjussi in that place, too. Definitely."

"Who knows, he might have ended up as a bug."

"Keep talking like that if you want to die, Lee Gilyoung."

"I'd have raised him up if he was reborn as an insect, you know? And read books to him every day, too."

A couple of adults heard the boy's mindless babble and broke out into chuckles.

Yoo Sangah spoke up next. "Regardless of where he's born and what's he born as, Dokja-ssi will always be Dokja-ssi."

Han Sooyoung nodded her head. Kim Dokja should be living a new life in a world out there somewhere. Kim Dokja living his life while reading a story written by someone else and feeling happy or sad, or even moved.

The people of this world would reminisce about such Kim Dokja's tale and live their lives.

Praying that Kim Dokja of that world would not be miserable.

Praying that he'd get to live in as much happiness as his companions were remembering him in this world.

Shin Yoosung repeatedly reading the early parts spoke up, her voice sounding like a soft sigh. "I can't read it anymore, because I'm scared it'll end too soon."

"It won't end that soon," replied Han Sooyoung.

"Are you going to write the next chapter, too?"

"Yeah."

"It would've been so wonderful if we could send this novel to the other world, too. It's a shame that only we get to read it."

…The other world?

Han Sooyoung became momentarily dazed at that unexpected idea.

She had never even thought about it. It wasn't a possibility to start with, too. She pondered this for a bit longer, but before she could say something, a piece of breaking news came out of the TV screen.

– Breaking news just in. A terrorist has attacked the 'Scenario Museum' located in Gwanghwanmun…

"Terrorists? In this day and age?"

Jang Hayoung shook her head. Most of the system's influence had already disappeared from this world, so possessing Star Relics didn't automatically mean you'd be able to do something with them. It was right then that Jung Heewon's phone started ringing.

"Hello, this is Jung Heewon, the representative of Iron Caps, the trusted security organisation protecting your… Excuse me? Where? Who showed up??"

The clearly-flustered Jung Heewon raised her head and looked at the TV panel. The news broadcast's ticker-tape continued to move along.

– Identity of the terrorist is now known to be a Transcendent formerly known as the 'Supreme King'…

…The 'Supreme King'?

A short while later, the terrorist's face showed up on the screen.

– The terrorist, Supreme King Yoo Joonghyuk. (33, unemployed)

"Stop him!"

The riot police arriving on the scene blocked off the museum's access and stood before the approaching man. However, he used fleet-footed movements to evade their truncheons. The jet-black coat danced in the air as the man's hands went to work, and the riot police rushing in were scattered away like the breaking waves.

"Uwaaahk!"

"He's using the system's powers! Hurry up and call the security company! And get the government-affiliated Constellations, too-!"

Yoo Joonghyuk's [Red Phoenix Shunpo] spat out reddish-yellow licks of flames as he dashed forward. Each step taken emitted truly stupendous heatwave and the members of riot police had to back away in fear. Before long, he had reached the front of the [Scenario Museum]'s doorstep.

The place where Star Relics from the age of apocalypse were stored. This was where the important artefacts not open to public had been gathered. The riot police chasing after Yoo Joonghyuk shouted out.

"He's just a Transcendent from the old generation! The battle array formation the Constellation-nims of the North Stars worked together to create near the museum will…"

['North Star Five March Formation' has been triggered!]

Yoo Joonghyuk analysed the inner workings of the array formation blocking him. It was a Murim-style battle array formation that followed the laws of the North Star and five elements of the universe to create a remarkable unison of the 'life gate' and 'death gate'. His eyes emitted golden rays of light as his [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] accurately stabbed into seven separate points.

Kuu-rurururung!

"Crazy son of a… How could he…?!"

These young riot police members who didn't know much about the age of apocalypse could only look on with their jaws hitting the floor. Even they had heard of the stories, of course.

– Twenty years ago, a man who dared to stare arrogantly at the stars of the heavens existed.

It was only a story to them, however. A man who could evenly match up to the Constellations? They believed that no such man could have ever existed. Too bad for them, the living proof was now standing before their eyes.

Yoo Joonghyuk stepped within the crumbling array formation. No one could stop him now.

It was also then someone appeared among the rising dust clouds.

– Supreme King, what do you think you're doing? Surely, someone like you don't have a reason to steal items such as the Star Relics?

It was Han Donghoon, an Incarnation affiliated with the government. He was famed for sending messages to the opposition's eyes rather than addressing them directly.

Yoo Joonghyuk quietly stared at the message, before pointing at the steeple of the museum. A small ship hung up there like some kind of a symbol. "I need that ship."

– That's just a replica. It can't even fly.

"We'll see once I activate it."

– I know that you've been roaming the world without reporting periodically to the world government. Despite knowing that, the world government decided to turn a blind eye. Because they respect your achievements from the age of apocalypse.

"…"

– However, that ends today. If you insist on behaving like this, then we won't have any choice but to use force.

Almost at the same time as those words arrived, powerful fighting spirit exploded out from Han Donghoon's entire body.

He, too, was a survivor from the era of scenarios, a powerful figure who came to be known as the 'King of Shadows' by the time scenarios were drawing to a close.

"You wish to stop me?"

Yoo Joonghyuk took a single step forward. At the same time, humans of the surroundings knelt down simultaneously. Han Donghoon's expression stiffened, and he quickly performed hand signs.

– All personnel, get ready to…!

Even before the message could be finished, shadows hiding on the museum's rooftop began falling like dead cicadas.

Tumble, drop…

The fallen agents writhed around like worms. Traces of their pressure-points being depressed could be seen throughout their bodies. Surprisingly, over thirty Incarnations were dispatched to this place together with Han Donghoon, yet all these elite warriors were taken care of even before anyone had noticed it.

"Get out of my way."

Han Donghoon's shoulders trembled imperceptibly. For the past 20 years after the scenarios ended, the strongest Incarnation he knew of was the prophet Anna Croft, the only surviving Incarnation that could compare to the Constellations. However, even if she came, could she stop this monster?

– Han Donghoon, respond… Han Donghoon?

If he didn't escape from here, he'd get killed. Han Donghoon knew this, yet he couldn't even lift his feet. An incredible amount of killing intent had tightened around him like a noose. Just who would be able to stop this Transcendent? The Murim world's Transcendents residing on another planet? Or, Constellations currently on a world tour? No, even they might find it too much.

The monster before his eyes was an existence that had reached the highest realm even among the Transcendents. Post-destruction of <Star Stream>, Constellations could no longer exercise the power levels of their past selves. That's why…

"Captain Han Donghoon! Evade it!!"

Yoo Joonghyuk's sword moving, and Han Donghoon squeezing his eyes shut, as well as an ear-splitting noise exploding, all happened at the same time. Scary waves of magical force shoved Han Donghoon's body away. It had been really long time since he last saw a clash heavy enough to cause the storm of Probability's aftermath.

Tsu-chuchuchuchu…

He held onto the crack on the ground and endured the storm of aftermath, only to be greeted by an unbelievable spectacle.

"F*ck, man. Trying to use my powers in such a long time is killing me."

Someone was blocking the Supreme King's sword.

[Constellation, 'Architect of the False Last Act', is unleashing her power!]

[Story fragments of the 'Bureau' is supporting the 'Architect of the False Last Act'!]

She was one of only a handful of the truly strong who could stop that monster, Yoo Joonghyuk.

The purple-hued magical energy oozing out from her entire figure was dyeing the surroundings in a foreboding manner.

"Yoo Joonghyuk, what kinda stupidity is this?" said the Empress of Black Flames, Han Sooyoung.

"This isn't a matter you should concern yourself with."

"Why shouldn't I?? Our former Regressor friend suddenly decided to become a terrorist for free, so how can I not?"

"…"

"The companion of the past has lost his way and became corrupted, so it's the duty of the superhero to take up on the responsibility of rehabi…"

Kwaaa-boooom!

"Goddammit, what gives?? Why are you going mental here, man??"

"Get out of the way. I don't plan to exchange sophistries with you."

"No, you better start talking. That's always been your damn problem. You've been behaving nicely for the past two years, so why the hell…"

Swiiiiiish-!

She pulled out a dagger from her inner pocket, gritted her teeth, and defended against Yoo Joonghyuk's attack. The overabundant bombardment of the sword energy began forcing her body back bit by bit. Han Sooyoung glanced in the direction she was being pushed back.

…The Scenario Museum.

No matter how hard she thought about it, it made no sense. Yoo Joonghyuk had no reason to target that place. He wouldn't get any stronger than he already was by possessing a couple more Star Relics at this point. Besides, a Star Relic someone like him might find desirable wouldn't even be in this pla…

It was then, her eyes caught the sight of a certain something.

"Hey, you. It can't be…"

Her hair strands slowly began floating up. Creeping, ominous waves of energy spread out everywhere. Cold rage was filling up Han Sooyoung's voice.

"…Is it because of that?"

Yoo Joonghyuk's eyes were seething, and his irises were reflecting the hull of the replica [Final Ark] located on top of the steeple.

Chapter 545: Epilogue 4 - The Omniscient Reader's Viewpoint, X

Han Sooyoung yelled out.

"You stupid bastard! Did you forget already?? This world-line's ark has already-!"

Yoo Joonghyuk's sword thrust dug into her opening. The moment she gasped out, her dagger was already flying away. Blood spluttered from the cut wound.

His sword was now pointing straight at her neck.

"Joonghyuk-ssi! Please stop!"

"H-hold on, master! Are you mad!! What's gotten into you!?"

The companions arriving belatedly approached them to stop the fighting.

However, Yoo Joonghyuk didn't even look behind at them as he swung his sword. The gob-smacking level of magical energy wave shot out from the

[Black Heavenly Demon Sword] and drew a line of roiling flames one step in front of the companions.

"No one crosses that line. If you do, I will cut y…"

Smack!

Han Sooyoung's left foot rising up in the blink of an eye accurately kicked his wrist. The [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] gripped in his hand flung away, drew circles in the air, before stabbing into the ground.

Han Sooyoung growled at him. "Yoo Joonghyuk. I'm sure you already know this, but… I really, really hate to see a rotten apple spoiling the whole barrel."

"…"

"You know, I was feeling pretty good up until a few minutes ago. Specifically, before you started doing this crap, that is… I guess the peace of the past two years have been too sweet for me, seeing how I've completely forgotten about what kind of a bastard you are."

It was hard to tell just who her boiling rage was directed at.

Han Sooyoung recalled the faces of her companions reading her novel. The faces that grew at ease as they read the story.

The companions, everyone else, even herself… they were about to feel brave enough to finally take that one step forward, away from 'that day'. Yet…

Han Sooyoung stopped both Jung Heewon and Yoo Sangah about to cross the burning line. "You two, stay back. Looks like today is finally the day I pound some sense into this guy."

As soon as those words ended, both the figures of Han Sooyoung and Yoo Joonghyuk vanished. The place they met again was in the air dozens of metres off the ground. The thunderclap-like explosions rang out and their fists collided against one another.

Ruuuumble, kururururung!!

The blade of Han Sooyoung's hand slammed hard into Yoo Joonghyuk's waist, while his right kick landed on her solar plexus. The exchange of attacks and defenses that even Constellations' eyesights found hard to keep up continued on. Blood trickled down her lips, while large, bloody bruises formed on his arms raised up to guard him.

Lee Jihye watching the fight unfold couldn't hold back and reached for her own sword. It was Yoo Sangah who stopped her.

"Eonni? But why?"

"Let them be for the time being."

Perhaps she had predicted something, because while stopping the companions, she spread out her lotus pedestals, as well. She was planning to protect the civilians from the storm of aftermaths soon to visit them.

Right next second, the atmosphere up in the sky began to change.

[Giant Story, 'Torch that Swallowed the Myth', has started its stammered attempt at storytelling.]

[Giant Story, 'Liberator of the Forgotten Ones', is waking up from the darkness.]

The clash of these two managed to awaken the old Stories. Han Sooyoung summoned all of her strength to broke through Yoo Joonghyuk's fist and shouted out.

"Speak up! Why today, of all days? Why have you been staying quiet for the last two years only to start this crap today?!"

"None of your business."

"Aha, is that so."

She didn't plan on going this far. However, looking at the expressionless face of Yoo Joonghyuk acting like a damn stubborn mule, she simply couldn't rein in her boiling anger anymore.

"I always hated you. And regretted it, too. Why did I write the story of someone like you with my own hands?"

She'd never have said these words in any other times. Even then, she continued to spit out everything anyway.

"I cursed my other self. If this story didn't exist, none of these things would've happened. No one would've died. And Kim Dokja might have…!"

Yoo Joonghyuk's fist finding that brief window of opening cut her words short. He kept his mouth resolutely shut and continued to fight. Though she hadn't heard a proper answer yet, Han Sooyoung knew why he was trying to get a hold of the [Final Ark].

"We already failed. Since we came home with our tails between our legs, you should've quietly accepted it and moved on. Have you really forgotten everything [The Fourth Wall] said to us?"

She knew the truth, and that was why she just couldn't stand it anymore.

「You shouldn't have been greedy. No, y o u sh oul d've be en con te nt wi th 49% Kim Dok ja」

[The Fourth Wall]'s voice from that day, the one she had never forgotten until now.

Yoo Joonghyuk finally opened his mouth. "Spoken like a true loser. You simply gave up, that's all."

Every time their fists collided, the worn-out Stories scattered in the air. The fragments emitting faint rays of light settled down on his cheeks.

It was only then did she spot his messed-up appearance. The unkempt, stiffened hair, and his rather unsightly-looking unwashed face.

Han Sooyoung sucked in her breath and took a step back in that instant. Some memories brushed past her head just then – Yoo Mia, showing up one day while crying her eyes out and saying that her oppa had just disappeared, and

Yoo Joonghyuk, walking away from the pro gamer job he barely managed to earn back, and vanishing into thin air.

｢Should I have started off with how he had been doing all this time?｣

Golden aura was focusing on his right hand. That was the beginning of the [Breaking the Sky Force Punch]. He was being deadly serious here. Han Sooyoung hurriedly unfurled her right hand.

[Stigma, 'Character Summon', is activating!]

At the bare minimum, if she used this skill to fling him far away, then…

[Applicable individual is no longer a 'Character'.]

She belatedly realized it – the 'Yoo Joonghyuk' standing before her eyes was not the character from the 'Ways of Survival' she had written.

After Kim Dokja's final act had arrived, and after the 'Ways of Survival's story came to an end, Yoo Joonghyuk had completely broken free of the position of the 'Character'.

A punch wrapped in pure golden light scythed the air and flew in. She activated every single evasion skill she could.

The attack brushed past her shoulder with the thinnest margin imaginable. The storm of aftermath from that improbably powerful punch pricked her painfully.

Yoo Joonghyuk muttered out. "…Your skills have barely lost any of their original powers. Is this due to the system's grace?"

The only reason why Han Sooyoung's skills could still exhibit such power was because she received the Bureau's Story from the 1865th turn's Bihyung.

Yoo Joonghyuk asked her with an emotionless voice. "This world no longer needs the system. Yet, why did you receive that Story from him?"

"Obviously to maintain Kim Dokja's life."

They went through with the [Group Regression] because Kim Dokja's Avatar was increasingly getting weaker. And she received the Bureau's Story just in case something similar happens to Kim Dokja.

"Why did you do something like that? You should know this. That fool cannot wake up again," said Yoo Joonghyuk.

"Kim Dokja isn't dead y-!"

"If you really believe that, then why are you stopping me?"

For a moment there, she became speechless.

Yoo Joonghyuk then flashed right behind her, and slammed down on her back. Han Sooyoung crash-landed on the ground. She coughed out thick dust and stood back up, then shouted at him while tottering unsteadily.

"…Yoo Joonghyuk, wake the hell up! You think this is what Kim Dokja really wants? He told you, didn't he? He told you not to abandon this world. And you also agreed!"

"That's right. I agreed not to regress."

"Don't make me laugh! You can't regress anymore, that's what. If you still could do it, you'd probably have gone back!!"

"I may have."

Yoo Joonghyuk's golden eye began to glow brightly within the thick dust cloud. And that eye was now questioning Han Sooyoung.

"Are you any different?"

She couldn't answer back. But in her stead, Kim Dokja's Stories still remaining within her grasp replied.

[Story, 'One Who Opposes Miracles', is lamenting in sorrow.]

These were words that she just couldn't let go. She wrote them down somewhere sometimes to endure her life. Telling herself not to regress, to live in the present. She continued to reflect on those obvious-sounding words of the past, and continued to endure moment by every moment. That was her past two years.

"It seems that you too couldn't forget anything."

"Shut up."

Han Sooyoung dashed forward in an instant and punched him squarely in the face. Every time their fists flew out, the Stories they shared and compiled together writhed violently.

[Story, 'King of Kaizenix', is being agitated.]

She believed that she worked hard to endure. She believed that a lot of time had passed by now, as much as all the sentences she had written down. She breathed, she ate, and she slumbered – Han Sooyoung survived in that manner.

｢You are not a regressor because you regress.｣

However, could she really say she had been living a life that way?

｢Some people would live their entire lives inside the already-ended past.｣

Every time bones in her fists were crushed, Stories scattered away little by little – Stories, the raw memories preserved as was without any revisions. Han Sooyoung reflexively began retrieving these scattering Stories.

She didn't want to let go of any one of them. She didn't want to forget about a single thing.

｢For the past two years, she hadn't been able to take a single step forward.｣

Han Sooyoung panted breathlessly and spoke up. "What do you think will change if you do this now?"

"…"

"Even if you leave, you won't find Kim Dokja. And you can't even go anywhere."

"…"

"Besides, this world-line's [Ark] is already destroyed. Did you forget what happened back during the final battle? That isn't an ark. And we can't leave this world-line even if we wanted to!"

The powers of the two people collided once more. Accompanied by the loud "Ku-dududu!!" noise, the storm was generated from their magical energy. Yoo Joonghyuk standing in the centre of the storm then replied.

"I've compiled so many Stories up until now, but I still do not know what my ■■ is."

The vigorous, ferocious Story exploded within the air. He didn't pay any heed to the precious Stories being damaged and simply swung his fists.

"You wrote my story. In that case, you should also know where my story is supposed to end."

At that moment, sentences began streaming past Han Sooyoung's head.

「Did Yoo Joonghyuk really come here to acquire the [Final Ark]?」

The belated realization flooded in.

The regressor weary of the scenarios could only carry on because the scenarios existed.

Yoo Joonghyuk then began gathering all of his remaining Stories. All these Stories belonging to a man who had finally escaped from the curse of regression bared their collective fangs at Han Sooyoung.

"Hit me with everything you've got, Han Sooyoung."

「This was Yoo Joonghyuk's last stand.」

Every cell in her body was ringing alarm bells.

The regressor who had repeated lengthy lifetimes.

A certain emotion floated upon those eyes that had been described dozens, hundreds of times before. Han Sooyoung knew very well what that emotion was.

Yoo Joonghyuk wished to die in this place.

Not by the hands of anyone, but by the existence who had written his very first sentence.

"Screw you!! You've never, ever done what I wanted from you, so what the hell!!"

Kwa-aaaaaaah-!!

Yoo Joonghyuk unleashing all of his might swung his fist again – one attack that focused all of his great Stories. The climax of the fight was about to be reached. Han Sooyoung too unleashed all of her Stories. And then…

An explosion akin to a star blowing up rocked the world.

Everything hurt as if her entire body had been pounded on. Every bone in her right fist thrust forward was broken. Her companions cried out, while other spectators screamed. Han Sooyoung endured the force of impact while stuck in this ringing pain harsh enough to tear out her eardrums. Her whole body was now left in tatters.

Yoo Joonghyuk was collapsed on the ground, unmoving.

Her heart began pounding away.

"Yoo Joonghyuk?"

The tips of his hand trembled ever so faintly. He slowly opened his eyes and looked up at her. She panted heavily and barely managed to force out some words.

"…This is a little different from back then in the Dark Castle, right?"

The moment she finished saying that, both of her legs gave way. When did she get hit? All the bones in her knees had been completely crushed.

"Doesn't look that way," muttered Yoo Joonghyuk.

"You son of a…"

Two of them collapsed face-first into the ground. Han Sooyoung crawled towards Yoo Joonghyuk. Her anger didn't seem like it'd abate soon unless she smacked him just one more time, somehow.

Her hand shaking precariously was about to slap him in the back of his head, but unfortunately, his own right hand shaking pitifully grabbed onto her wrist first. And so, the arms of two people started a contest of what little strengths they had left in mid-air, only for them miss each other and sag down weakly. They truly had not one drop of energy left to continue.

The torn scars left behind in the skies by the collision of their Stories could be seen. And the view of the distant <Star Stream> could be spied within the horribly-torn sky. The few remaining stars of the night sky sparkled and sent their faint rays of light on the two people.

Yoo Joonghyuk staring at that spectacle for a long while spoke in passing. "…Kim Dokja is supposed to be scattered to the rest of the universe."

*

Kim Dokja's soul, scattered away into fine little pieces. How much of him truly remained within those tiny fragments? Even Han Sooyoung couldn't be sure.

Except that, she was sure of the tiny 'Kim Dokjas' being born as some things in the mouths of the worlds she hadn't even thought of. He might be reborn as a human. Maybe the place was similar to Earth. Maybe this time, he'd be born in another continent, not in the Korean Peninsula.

"Do you think that that fool has become happier now?"

The moment she heard him, Han Sooyoung felt that something had finally come to an end.

The mouth of her heart ached really painfully. She could clearly hear the sounds of something breaking – the sounds of a story coming to an end. The sounds of their truly long mourning finally drawing to a close. That was the sound of someone only living in their past finally letting go of that very past. Right at that moment, Han Sooyoung was overcome by the bizarre guilt of corruption, of betrayal.

"Kim Dokja, he…"

「Was it possible that he didn't want us to give up?」

Could it be that even if everyone else let go of their long, agonising sorrow, he wished for just one person to continue on with the acts of sheer stupidity at the cost of ruining their life?

She heard Yoo Joonghyuk coughing away painfully and muttered out what she needed to say. "I'm sure he's doing well. He's a tough guy, after all."

"…"

"He's probably living a life of his own out there, and living it happily, too. Who knows, he might be reading some other weird book in the meantime, too."

"Even if we find him, the fool probably won't remember anything."

This was the end of their mourning.

There was no meaning in crossing the world-line anymore. Even if they did find that 'Kim Dokja', what could they possibly do? They couldn't certainly impose the past on someone who didn't remember. The reincarnated Kim Dokja wasn't the 'Kim Dokja'. The one they knew no longer existed in this universe, no matter where they looked.

Even then, Han Sooyoung still blurted out something strange.

"We don't know that. If the 'Ways of Survival' also exists in the place where he's reincarnated into, then…"

Right away, she felt puzzled by why she said something like that.

"As I said, the Ways of Survival…"

Her mouth continued to mutter out, perhaps to reject her own will.

「Kim Dokja, the 'Oldest Dream', has been scattered throughout the universe.」

Her mind began spitting out disorienting sentences one after the other.

「This universe is maintained by the imagination of the 'Oldest Dream'.」

「In that case, what is the 'Oldest Dream' dreaming about right now?」

Creeping goosebumps crawled up her arms. She didn't even want to think about it, yet…

「"Ahjussi from another world-line probably likes books, too. Right?"」

This was truly a nonsensical delusion.

Even then, despite knowing that, Han Sooyoung couldn't stop her thought process.

Kim Dokja, reading someone's novel while carrying an expression she couldn't imagine on the other side of the distant universe.

"That guy, he… Is he still curious about the conclusion to this story, I wonder?" Han Sooyoung asked.

"…What are you talking about?"

"What if… What if the countless 'Kim Dokjas' scattered to the rest of universe read a certain story all at the same time…"

「Why did Constellations try to spread their own stories as far and as wide as possible?」

「How come the foundation of this world was 'stories'?」

"What if all those Kim Dokjas who had forgotten that he is the 'Oldest Dream', dreams of the same story?"

The way to rediscover Kim Dokja, without ruining the lives of the reincarnated Kim Dokjas living in other world-lines.

Han Sooyoung's hazy, indistinct sounding voice continued on.

"What if the story he's dreaming of… is the same as the story we all wish for…?"

Her chain of thought was broken only after a pitch-black shadow was cast over her head.

"This area was earmarked to be renovated as a public park, but thanks to you two, it's complete chaos here."

Since when was it? Anna Croft was standing there.

"Are you planning to cross the world-line again?"

Han Sooyoung belatedly regained her wits after seeing that woman's face. She then remembered the delusion she'd been cooking up just now and felt ashamed by it.

From the get-go, that idea was nonsense. To make Kim Dokjas of other world-lines dream of the novel she had written. What a crazy and empty talk that was.

More importantly, there was no way to cross to other world-lines in this world, anyway.

But then, Anna Croft's expression was somewhat strange. "I thought that a day like this might come sooner or later."

Her eye was emitting the crimson glow. Her gaze was now directed at the steeple of the museum.

At the replica of the [Final Ark].

Han Sooyoung's heart began beating faster and faster. Such a thing was not possible. It shouldn't be possible, but… How?

Ku-gugugu…

Slowly, so very slowly, the so-called replica began floating up from the top of the museum.

Yoo Joonghyuk and his brows shot up high was already sitting up as he stared at the airborne object.

The ark – its size might have been very small, but without a doubt, it was still an ark.

"I collected some parts and had it fixed for the past 20 years, just in case. If none of you had returned, then I was planning to go and visit you. Although not many parts could be salvaged and the vessel has not been repaired completely…"

The ark slowly floating up opened like a capsule and revealed its interior. This was a very small [Final Ark] where only one person could barely fit inside.

"It can be used. Except, only one person can ride it."

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* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)

Chapter 546: Epilogue 5 - The Eternity and Epilogue, I

Han Sooyoung and Yoo Joonghyuk were taken away in stretchers to the hospital where Kim Dokja was staying.

While listening to the round of Lee Seolhwa's non-stop nagging, Han Sooyoung calmly organised the plan of action she came up with. And exactly one hour later, she told the companions of her idea by using the most concise words she could think of, while leaving nothing out in the process.

However, you speaking concisely and precisely didn't automatically mean your audience would concisely and precisely understand you. The companions' reactions were like this:

"…What do you want to do, again??"

Jung Heewon asked back, while both Shin Yoosung and Lee Gilyoung dropped the jaws ever so slightly.

Han Sooyoung replied. "Okay, so, if I put it in a simpler perspective…"

"You are aware of what you've been saying until now, right?"

"…Uh? So you did understand me?"

"We can't do that thing again. Did you already forget about the memories from two years ago? What happened to us after the group regression…?"

"I'm not saying we should regress."

"This and that are the same! If we cross the world-lines again…!"

"I'm also not saying we should distort the other world-line's future, either. You did hear what I said, right? I just want to send a single novel to that side, that's all."

Lee Jihye silently listening to the conversation finally opened her mouth. "Okay, what you're saying is, you want to show the novel written on this side to Dokja ahjussi in the other world-line. Did I hear you right?"

"You did."

"What meaning doing that will have?"

Han Sooyoung started her explanation in a composed voice. "The 'Oldest Dream' is Kim Dokja. And that Kim Dokja was broken down into many pieces and scattered around to the rest of the world-lines before reincarnating into different existences. You with me so far?"

"…You think I'm a dummy because I got an F last time?? Okay, so what's next?"

"The important part starts from there. The newly-reincarnated Kim Dokja might not be 'Kim Dokja' anymore. However, that doesn't mean he isn't the 'Oldest Dream', either. They themselves might not be aware of it, but all those souls are the 'Oldest Dream' that maintains this universe."

Back when they escaped from the [Final Wall] for the last time, no one was left behind in the subway. Yet the universe's time didn't stop. Meaning, the 'Oldest Dream' hadn't disappeared.

The souls that used to be Kim Dokja had scattered to the rest of the universe and reincarnated, and unbeknownst to even themselves, they were dreaming of the different universes.

Yoo Sangah nodded her head as if she understood it. "So, you meant to use their power of imaginations."

"The imagination of the Oldest Dream is reality, after all."

"Making the reincarnated Dokja-ssi dream of the conclusion we all want…"

"That's right. It'll be like we're presenting him with the source of imagination. So that they can dream about this world's conclusion." Han Sooyoung studied the faces of her companions one at a time and continued on. "No one will get hurt this way. No one born in other world-lines will get harmed. All we have to do is to make those guys read a certain story, that's it."

Countless Kim Dokjas scattered throughout many world-lines would all be imagining it. Those born with various appearances, living in various environments.

There was no meaning in meeting them or bringing them here. The only thing the companions could hope for in this situation was a miracle.

A miracle that could bring back Kim Dokja they all remembered.

It was fine even if it was all a delusion, a lie – if only he could imagine their happiness…

If only all those countless 'Kim Dokjas' imagined the one single universe…

A short bout of silence descended on the room. A similar sort of expression was floating up on the faces of everyone.

They knew full well such a plan had zero chance of becoming reality. In order to make this plan work, several impossible hurdles had to be cleared first.

The one who spoke up as the representative of the companions was Lee Hyunsung, who returned to the country only about 30 minutes ago.

"Sooyoung-ssi."

He had returned in a hurry after hearing about Yoo Joonghyuk and Han Sooyoung's news. His eyes always burning with righteousness and will to fight were now obscured by heavy shadows.

"We're all too tired. We're too afraid of hoping."

What made a person truly exhausted was not despair. No, it was 'hope' that seemingly was on the cusp of coming true but would never become reality.

Han Sooyoung also knew that. She slowly squeezed her fist tightly. "I know that. That's why I'm asking all of you for a favour."

Lee Hyunsung's eyes trembled the moment he heard the word 'favour'.

Han Sooyoung had never, ever used that sort of expression before.

"I'm aware that it has a very low chance of becoming true. That's why this is merely… a type of ceremony, if you will. Something that must be done, to put the finishing touch on the past and to live the remainder of my life properly."

Jung Heewon asked her. "…What can we help you with?"

Rather than a verbal reply, Han Sooyoung placed her notebook PC on the hospital room's desk and accessed a certain text file, one that they were intimately familiar with.

A novel with its title still left as "no subject".

Han Sooyoung slowly, so very slowly, began typing the title of the novel.

From that day on, Han Sooyoung poured her entire being on writing the novel along with assistance from her companions. Even if it was her, she didn't retain every bit of memories in perfect order, so to complete the story, she had to borrow her companions' own memories.

"So, we'll make Dokja ahjussi read this novel… But, how will we do that?"

"We somehow need to make him come across it naturally, without him feeling any disharmony. To the extent that he doesn't even realize he's currently imagining this world."

"Meaning, we gotta write a seriously entertaining story."

"Dokja hyung read a boring novel till its end, so won't he read it even if we write it like, whatever?"

Han Sooyoung looked at the glib-sounding Lee Gilyoung and shook her head. "We don't know what might happen, so we gotta do our best. Kim Dokja of other world-line might not be as patient as ours, after all."

"Let me help!"

"Me too! Noona, you don't know the lingo the teens use nowadays, right?"

The novel was compiled in Kim Dokja's hospital room most of the time. After ending her lectures, Han Sooyoung would come to visit him in his ward. Other companions also took turns to pay him a visit.

"Sorry, I'm late. I had an announcement to make tomorrow, so…" said Lee Jihye.

"It would've been still fine to come after you were finished," replied Han Sooyoung.

"No can do. Today's the scene of my awakening, right?" Lee Jihye's voice was filled with so much excitement. She scanned the manuscript Han Sooyoung had written and continued to yap on. "Wow. This place… Hah, I really almost died back then."

"…"

"Keuh-heuh. Reading this part again still gives me the goosebumps. Eonni, you don't mind me asking you when I'm supposed to show up ag…"

"If you're planning to bother me, just get out."

"Ah? Why are you being so cold? I even found a mistake in the setting, you know."

"A mistake? Where?"

"I never said anything like this!"

Lee Jihye pointed at the screen. Han Sooyoung glanced at the younger girl's phone, and spoke up. A closer look revealed that the scene in question came from when Lee Jihye was saying her piece during the theatre dungeon.

Han Sooyoung explained. "Some creative licence is unavoidable, so some parts might be a little different from what happened in reality. But that part…"

「"Why do you think you're alone? We're here together, aren't we! No, hang on a sec… I'm always by your side, aren't I?! So, don't lose hope! Think about our kid…!」

"…I wrote that according to what Uriel told me, though?"

One day. Two days. Three. Sentences were diligently compiled.

When she couldn't recall the past properly, she'd even start pinching the sleeping Kim Dokja's cheeks. And when her resentment flared up for no reason whatsoever, she'd even write some weird things in the novel, as well.

「"Find the ugly king!"」

Well, it probably didn't matter, anyway. He'd not even realize that this was his own story, after all.

The companions came to visit the hospital room in alternating turns as if they were entering confessional booths.

"Actually, Dokja-ssi was cursing a little bit during here…"

"Ah, don't write what I just said. Understand? …Hey, I told you to omit the part, so why?"

They all seemed quite surprised by the fact that they still remembered so much of the story, and…

"N-no, wait! Noona! I do respect hyung, but… But, what are you doing, portraying me as some sort of a religious fanatic??"

…And, they seemed to be finding peace with the fact that they still remembered this story, too.

They sometimes cried, or read the memos containing story beats that would soon form the part of the story in the future.

Shin Yoosung asked. "By the way, why did you portray regression so negatively like this?"

"Well, even in that world, Kim Dokja should only have one life, that's why. He might get badly influenced by reading this, right? I mean, he could still be a young kid there."

At her reply, a shadow drew upon Shin Yoosung's complexion. "But, we regressed, didn't we? In that case, will it be fine to write this part differently from reality?"

"Nah. I'm just going to write it as is."

"Pardon? But why?"

"Doesn't matter who, every human is a regressor."

There was a certain sentence she thought of while fighting against Yoo Joonghyuk. In all honesty, she didn't expect Shin Yoosung to get what she was saying, anyway.

The younger girl stared at the sentences for a little while, before shifting her gaze to the outside of the window. "Our regression couldn't influence this world-line at all. When I think about it sometimes, it feels like the last night's passing dream. What is the difference between the past that couldn't change the present, and a delusion that can't change anything?"

Han Sooyoung was somewhat taken aback from that, and her lips bobbed up and down in a pout, only for Shin Yoosung to shrug her shoulders and smile back at her. "What if we write it too hard to understand and Dokja ahjussi doesn't get it?"

"…Kim Dokja will definitely get it."

"You really do believe in him, don't you?"

"If you're going to bother me like this, just get out."

"No, wait! I've organised everything that happened in the past, you know! Even the 'Disaster of Flood' you asked me about, I have…"

Not everyone was as helpful as Shin Yoosung, though. No, actually, the majority of them simply interfered with her writing, instead. For instance, in Jang Hayoung's case:

"Hey, you!! You said I'm the second part's protagonist! What are you basing that on?! You making fun of me??"

"That's just a figure of speech. You're not the real protagonist, right?" Han Sooyoung replied.

"Even then!"

"I'll write side stories about you. In huge chapters, no less."

"Cool."

Lee Seolhwa passing by while pushing a stretcher past the room also said something. "Normally, healers in a story like this are portrayed as heal shuttles, aren't they?"

"…Fine. Lee Seolhwa, you get a side story, too."

On top of this, Lee Gilyoung completely skipping his school to come to the hospital, and Lee Hyunsung, throwing a big tantrum as if he had been wronged by something.

"You just omitted all the events I had to go through after signing the contract with Abaddon! And also, I've lots of skills so why is it always cockroaches this and cockroaches that?!"

"You've completely revised my military life! But, haven't I earnestly described everything that happened since my days as a private…!"

"Both of you, will you just put a lid on it?! Kim Dokja is the main character of this story! I'm telling you, this isn't your story!" Han Sooyoung yelled at them.

Even Constellations came to visit one by one after hearing about the news.

For instance, Uriel carrying huge piles of unidentifiable documents while kitted out in a disguise of sunglasses and a face mask.

[You should've called me right away if you were planning to write something like this! And I have this much extensive data on the subject matter, too!]

"…Can any of this data even be trusted? I mean, what you said differed quite a lot from what Lee Jihye told me, you know?"

[N-no, well, it can be a tiiiiny bit different, but, but! This universe is truly vast and countless Kim Dokjas are living out there in countless world-lines, so…]

After that, the Great Sage, Heaven's Equal.

[If you're going to write about my Story, you should've at least read the fully translated Journey to the West. Have you?]

"I read it as manga."

[In that case, you should know by now who the real protagonist of the Journey to the West is.]

"I thought it was Tang Sanzang?"

Then, the Abyssal Black Flame Dragon.

[How disappointing. Have you really forgotten about my true name? It's already the second part, so how come my true name hasn't been-]

"You never told me in the first place. And you know what, you don't have to tell me, either."

And so – around the time the first draft of the manuscript with about 250 chapters was completed, Han Sooyoung became almost completed wasted from all the fatigue building up inside her. It'd be her first time writing a novel so arduously like this. So many parts of it weren't to her liking, and too many portions needed lots of revising. But right now, the 'quantity' was her priority. Because…

– Han Sooyoung. It'll be this week, Saturday.

…Because there wasn't a lot of time left, that's why.

Chapter 547: Epilogue 5 - The Eternity and Epilogue, II

Now normally, you'd need around two years at most to complete the first draft of a manuscript. However, there was no such leeway in this world-line.

– The system is losing its powers too quickly. If we miss this week, then I fear that we won't have enough persuasive power to launch the ark.

In the end, Han Sooyoung decided to start the first wave of transmission after finishing up the second part of the manuscript.

The companions grew excited after hearing about the news of the manuscript's dispatch.

Yoo Sangah asked. "How will you transport the file? In a USB?"

"We'll prepare for various contingencies, but… Fundamentally, it needs to be taken in the form of a Story," replied Han Sooyoung.

"Who will deliver it, though?"

"Obviously me."

"No can do. If Sooyoung-ssi leaves, who will look after Dokja-ssi of this place if something happens to him?"

Even if he was only a shell, he was still Kim Dokja. If something strange happened to him and Han Sooyoung possessing the Bureau's Story wasn't around, his main body might crumble away.

Yoo Sangah continued on. "Let me go. I know the exact coordinates of the world-line where Dokja-ssi has reincarnated."

But that only prompted Jung Heewon to try to dissuade her. "Sangah-ssi, you need to defend this world, you know! Let me go. Give me the coordinates."

"No way! I'll go and meet hyung!"

"I'm ahjussi's Incarnation, so obviously I should go!"

"That's not right. I'm the foremost expert on all things related to the 'Demon King of Salvation', so it should be me…!"

Lee Gilyoung, Shin Yoosung and even Jang Hayoung joined the fray, turning the inside of the hall into pure chaos. Constellations and Incarnations were arguing with each other, saying they should be the one to make the trip.

Yoo Sangah sighed while looking at them. "It's not as easy as you all think. Everyone here is aware of how dangerous it is to cross a world-line, yes?"

"Well, yeah…"

"If the coordinate I traced is correct, then the world-line in question is right at the outer-most edge of the universe."

"Outer-most edge?"

"Meaning, it's a world where 'scenarios' might not even exist."

No one knew what the world Kim Dokja had reincarnated into was like. It could be fundamentally different from their Earth.

"The system's grace could get much weaker when you reach there. Which means, the powers of both skills and Stigmata will naturally weaken, as well. The length of the voyage will be quite an ask, too."

Anna Croft listening to the explanation nodded her head in agreement. She then looked up at the ark currently performing a test flight up in the sky. "As the vessel has been cobbled together as a single-seater, the equipment installed on board isn't the greatest. Especially when you're crossing the Dark Stratum, enduring the storm of aftermath will prove to be a massive challenge. Only the person possessing a very powerful mind is qualified. One mistake, and you may even end up as an 'Outer God', that's why."

The 'Outer God' – that term cast a dark shadow on the expressions of a handful of the companions. They had recalled the sight of 'Hounds Chasing After the Abyss' doggedly pursuing them, that's why.

Unfortunately, Anna Croft wasn't done with her explanation. "And there are far too many world-lines where his soul has scattered to, as well. At the bare minimum, you'll have to cross hundreds of thousands, maybe even millions, of world-lines… Are you prepared for that eventuality?"

Hundreds of thousands. Even if you were to cross one world-line per day, the trip might end up lasting for hundreds of years with that estimate. Even if it was for Kim Dokja, could anyone be able to last that lengthy period of time without losing their sanity?

"None of you are capable."

The man who could survive even when receiving the absolute minimum grace of the system.

The man who would not lose himself even when swimming against the boundless torrents of time.

And that's why, the man with the highest odds of succeeding in this mission among the companions.

"I'll be the one to head out."

The ark's passenger had already been decided.

Eventually, the ark's date of departure had arrived.

Han Sooyoung observed Yoo Joonghyuk currently getting ready to disembark from some distance away.

"I'm not putting on that thing."

"Supreme King, you must wear it. Don't forget that you're no longer the same as your past self."

Now, this was a spectacle she would've liked to show to Kim Dokja of five years ago. If he heard about how the prophet was trying to ensure the safety of the regressor, just what would be the thoughts entering his mind?

"You're really becoming a bother."

"You might be saying that now, but this will definitely come in handy later on. Being a Transcendent does not mean you're completely free from the system's influences. Transcendents are existences validated only through their opposition to the system. If the latter disappears, then the former's powers will, of course, grow progressively weaker in turn."

Yoo Joonghyuk glared at Anna Croft with disapproving eyes, before putting on the offered equipment one by one.

"This is a cumbersome attire for combat."

"You are not going there to fight, so it'll be fine."

Yoo Joonghyuk's new bloated appearance after putting on the spacesuit was truly a sight to behold. Han Sooyoung began teasing him.

"That look really suits you."

"…You're being noisy."

"You should think this over. You really wanna do this?"

Even as the departure time crept ever closer, Han Sooyoung still didn't feel confident at all.

「Honestly speaking, maybe there was no reason to go this far.」

The voyage about to take place this time was completely different from the regression or jumping between the world-lines. They weren't trying to change the past, nor were they trying to steal the right 'materials' to open the [Final Wall] of the other world-line.

This voyage, in some ways, was much closer to a pilgrimage. One where he was trying to commemorate that one person they had been searching for all this time.

"Hand over the manuscript."

"Your manner of speech hasn't changed even though you stopped being a regressor."

Han Sooyoung sighed and opened her right hand. The power of a Stigma she had been developing until now was circling around the tip of her hand.

[Stigma, 'Cloud System', is on stand-by.]

This was a similar method to how [The Fourth Wall] handed the text files over to Kim Dokja in the past.

The Stigma itself was evolved from her [Predictive Plagiarism] capable of sending obtuse messages across the world-lines.

"It's possible for those possessing this Stigma to share the manuscript. Coming back to Earth several times for the new versions will be too difficult even for you, so I'll just keep sending you the manuscripts through the cloud."

"Are you telling me to learn your unique Stigma? We don't have the time to…"

"Right, we don't have the time. But there is a way to learn it super fast. You don't have a Constellation backer anymore, do you?"

Right away, Yoo Joonghyuk realized what Han Sooyoung was saying. "You fool, are you really…"

"You think I'm enjoying the idea myself?"

While furrowing his brows, he accessed his attribute window. When his Stigma [Regression] vanished, his Constellation sponsor had disappeared as well.

Sponsor: None

He was a completely free man.

"Are you suggesting that I take on someone weaker than me as my backer?"

"But I won against you the last time."

"I don't understand the rubbish you're spewing."

"What, you wanna have another go?"

Even though they didn't concede an inch and continued to bicker, they still finished signing the [Sponsor Contract]. Both of them knew this was the most optimum method available, that's why.

[Constellation, 'Architect of the False Last Act', has become Incarnation 'Yoo Joonghyuk's Constellation backer!]

[Incarnation, 'Yoo Joonghyuk', has inherited the Stigma, 'Cloud System'.]

[Two beings' imaginary cloud network have been connected!]

"I've never imagined that I'd live long enough to see the day like this one. I wish I could tell that idiot Kim Dokja about this somehow," muttered Han

Sooyoung.

"Once I make my way back, I'll kill you first and cancel this ridiculous contract."

"Try it if you can."

After their exchange came to an end there, they stared at each other for a little while.

"Don't forget. You must not destroy the other world-line. You just have to spread this story there. So that Kim Dokja of that world will get to read it," said Han Sooyoung.

"I know."

"Don't die."

"I'll be back soon."

He might never come back. Both of them knew that, but no one deliberately tried to bring that point up. With the exception of one person, that was.

"Oppa." The tearful Yoo Mia held onto Yoo Joonghyuk's spacesuit. "You're lying! You aren't going to come back! You can't, even if you wanted to!"

"I won't abandon you and die."

As Yoo Mia continued to shed her tears, Han Sooyoung tightly held her shoulders. Yoo Joonghyuk slowly lowered himself and matched his little sister's eye line, then spoke in a gentle, loving tone of voice.

"I give you my word. I will definitely return."

As he turned around to leave, he sent Han Sooyoung a message.

– Look after Mia for me.

He didn't look behind once and climbed aboard the [Final Ark]. And when Anna Croft gave her signal, the vessel's ignition was turned on.

The companions belatedly hearing about the news soon arrived and watched everything unfold.

The ark slowly rose up to the sky. The voices of the companions wouldn't have been able to enter the vessel's tightly-enclosed cockpit.

Lee Jihye breathlessly running over here looked up at the departing ark.

"Aren't you going to say goodbye?" Han Sooyoung asked her.

"If I do, I feel like it's going to be the last time I see him."

Despite saying that, Lee Jihye's eyes were brimming full of tears. Other companions also looked up at the ark without saying anything.

Yoo Sangah broke the silence first. "Everything we wanted to say are in the novel, anyway. I'm sure Joonghyuk-ssi will read it later on."

"What's the point of him reading it? Hyung reading it, that's all that matters."

Lee Gilyoung, Shin Yoosung, Jung Heewon, Lee Hyunsung, Jang Hayoung, Yoo Sangah, Lee Seolhwa, Lee Sookyung, Gong Pildu. And then, the Constellations, too. Everyone stood there and watched the ark leave.

Shin Yoosung asked. "Will Dokja ahjussi really read our story?"

That was uncertain. No one in existence would know that. This mission had high odds of failure, and the odds of Yoo Joonghyuk coming back home empty-handed were also very high.

And their story could disappear as mere cosmic dust in some distant universe.

The departing Yoo Joonghyuk should know about that, as well. Even then, he chose to leave. He left, for his own sake. Maybe, also for other companions, too.

"If it's Kim Dokja, he'll read it," replied Han Sooyoung.

At the very least, the people of this world would be able to carry on with their lives while waiting for his news – waiting for Yoo Joonghyuk's return.

"He made a promise with me."

The ark's flames lit up as it reached towards the distant galaxy. The companions endlessly looked on at the ark getting further away as if it was an expedition ship sailing towards another world. A story written through their lives was disappearing to a place forever out of their reach.

[The 'Ark' is entering the atmosphere.]

[Waiting for the user Yoo Joonghyuk's destination input.]

Yoo Joonghyuk inputted the coordinates of the world-line Yoo Sangah told him. Even the coordinates of the next nearest world-line to it was incredibly far away. Just as she said, that place might not have <Star Stream> there.

[The dimensional acceleration will commence.]

[Portion of necessary energy will be substituted by the Coins.]

Coins amassed in the other world-line were injected as the energy source of the vessel. They had lost their value with the weakening of the system, but still, they used to be the strongest Story in the world once upon a time. Before long, the planet Earth could no longer be seen.

[Entering the Dark Stratum to escape from the world-line.]

Yoo Joonghyuk recalled what Yoo Sangah said.

– The world-line Dokja-ssi has reincarnated into is located very far away. Meaning, I don't know how long it will take to get there if you leave the world-line through the conventional means.

The world Kim Dokja had reincarnated into existed outside the 'Ways of Survival' – a place that had completely escaped from this world-line's influence.

– More than likely, you'll have to go through the 'doorway' that allows you to leave this world-line.

How long passed by like this? Things resembling bubbles began appearing far ahead of him. These bubbles of various hues expanded and contracted repeatedly within the ominous currents. He even sensed this faint feeling of foreboding, too. Yoo Joonghyuk knew what caused this feeling.

Tsu-chuchuchu…

The 'vice-king' of the 'Outer Gods', as well as the master of the dimensional doorway between the world-lines. And the existence that opened the path to the 1863rd turn for Kim Dokja once upon a time. Yoo Joonghyuk unknowingly swallowed back his own saliva. This thing before him possessed more than enough power to make him nervous, the man who managed to clear the scenarios.

【You are… not the Plotter.】

A massive eye could be seen within the sea of foams. Yoo Joonghyuk increased the speed of the ark, not even trying to dodge that eye. In order to get to the world-line at the furthest edge of the universe, he simply had to go through this path.

【That is outside the story】

"Doesn't matter. Step away, or I'll cut you down."

Yoo Joonghyuk aroused every bit of his Stories and pushed the ark forward. The vice-king didn't try to stop him. However, it only spoke in a pitying, empty-sounding tone of voice.

【Oh, the one dreaming of the dream's outside, your dream cannot be fulfilled.】

The moment he collided with the doorway, the view before his eyes completely distorted. He gritted his teeth and fought back against the storm pouncing on him.

A violent storm of sparks began ravaging and devouring his entire body. He endured the urge to scream as horrifying pain akin to his whole body breaking apart took him over.

– There's one last thing I wanted to ask you about.

Han Sooyoung's voice trickled past inside his disoriented head.

– Why are you going so far to save Kim Dokja? You've lost many companions by now already.

– Having lost many companions before doesn't mean you become accustomed to the pain of loss. And also…

Explosions began going off inside the ark. Debris from the broken instruments began floating away in the universe.

– …I have something I need to ask that fool.

Yet another explosion resounded out, and an object pierced into Yoo Joonghyuk's torso.

[Failed to read the world-line's coordinates!]

[Warning! An error has occurred in the coordinate recognition device!]

[An error has occurred in the interior temperature modulation device!]

…

…

[An error has occurred in the ship's navigation system!]

Sparks exploding abruptly dominated Yoo Joonghyuk's entire body. His vision was dyed in pure white, and his consciousness faded away.

By the time he managed to open his eyes, he was already lost in space.

Chapter 548: Epilogue 5 - The Eternity and Epilogue, III

「4th day of drifting.」

Yoo Joonghyuk barely managed to regain his consciousness and discovered a sharp piece of debris stabbing him in his abdomen. He calmly got rid of the debris and checked the status of the vessel's hull.

「6th day of drifting.」

He realized that the ark had completely lost all its functions. The navigation system was unresponsive, and he couldn't see a single thing nearby. As a matter of fact, he couldn't even see a single planet nearby.

「11th day of drifting.」

With several of the safety systems installed within the ark destroyed, abnormality began manifesting in Yoo Joonghyuk's body.

[System's homeostasis is currently broken!]

[Power of chaos is eroding your entire body.]

[Your Story is crumbling away little by little.]

Some kind of a problem must've occurred somewhere, because all the abilities realized through the system had become completely paralysed. Yoo Joonghyuk remained calm as he inspected the Stories currently with him. Thankfully, his Stories were all safe.

[Story, 'Hell of Eternity', is enveloping you.]

The flames of hell protected him from the bitter coldness.

「21st day of drifting.」

The spacesuit Anna Croft made him wear really did come in handy. If it weren't for the built-in protective functionality of the suit, the rate of his body crumbling away would've been so much faster.

Yoo Joonghyuk did whatever he could to repair the ark's power source. Although the job performed wasn't of professional quality, the vessel still started moving again. Unfortunately, the collision caused the fuel tank reserved for a rainy day to blow up, and the ark needed his Story energy to operate.

He failed to repair the self-navigation system and the auto-pilot, though. Meaning, he had to pilot the craft personally.

「34th day of drifting.」

He needed to somehow find his original route.

「42nd day of drifting.」

As the days of his Story needing to be exhausted increased, fatigue began accumulating in his body. Instances of him briefly losing his consciousness happened more and more frequently. The darkness was eating away at his mind.

…Why did I come this far?

There were moments when his purpose would become blurry, uncertain. He came this far to carry out his mission. To deliver a 'story' to the reincarnated Kim Dokja. To revive the 'Kim Dokja' his companions remembered.

Why, though? He still had something he simply had to ask Kim Dokja, that's why.

…But what was the question?

「58th day of drifting.」

The moment he saw a wane face reflected on the ark's window, Yoo Joonghyuk recalled the forgotten question.

– In a world where the scenarios have come to an end, what should he do to continue living on?

That's right. That's what he wanted to ask Kim Dokja. Because that guy knew everything.

Kim Dokja, always thinking about the end. The man who planned for everything, and didn't hesitate to sacrifice his own life to see the conclusion of a certain story.

A fool like that should know, he thought.

If it was Kim Dokja, then he should know more about Yoo Joonghyuk than Yoo Joonghyuk knew about himself. That's what the latter thought.

The regressor who stopped regressing – just what would become of him?

Lee Jihye said that she suffered from nightmares every night.

But for him, his life had been a constant nightmare for the longest time. The only reason why he managed to endure until now was because he still had a goal, an aim, which he hadn't achieved yet. However, that goal was now no more, and the scenario had ended, as well.

The regressor Yoo Joonghyuk was free.

But as he stood before the hard-earned freedom, he couldn't figure out what exactly he had finally earned.

「83rd day of drifting.」

As his directionless drifting went on and on, the Stories covering his skin decreased precipitously. The amount of Story scattering into space gradually increased.

His voyage continued on, but he didn't even know where he was heading to.

「102rd day of drifting.」

Yoo Joonghyuk began reading Han Sooyoung's novel.

He thought that by reading it, he'd be able to endure against time, somehow.

「111th day of drifting.」

While reading about Kim Dokja's story, he began to harbour this faint hint of anticipation.

He thought that the Kim Dokja from this story should be able to answer his question.

From the first episode onwards, he studiously read about Kim Dokja's life.

Some events he already knew, while some others were unfamiliar to him. He'd stop reading when he reached certain sentences, too.

「That feeling of being left alone past the full stop of the story, right after the protagonist and the side characters all stepped into the sentence of 'Everyone lived happily ever after'. Struck by the sense of emptiness and betrayal, the young me couldn't fight against the loneliness and writhed around in pain.」

What was 'happiness'? That term felt so very alien to Yoo Joonghyuk. He thought he might have felt such an emotion from somewhere within the memories of the 0th turn that he managed to steal a glance earlier. However, that was no longer his life.

「128th day of drifting.」

To him, the figure of Kim Dokja relying on nothing else besides the 'Ways of Survival' to survive came across as alien. He read many times, yet he just couldn't understand it very well.

How could a mere story like this be able to support a life?

「154th day of drifting.」

Little by little, Yoo Joonghyuk grew accustomed to reading the novel.

He even found some passages that he liked reading over and over again.

「I grabbed the hind leg rich in the perfect amount of fat and bit into the flesh. The gravy gently oozing out from the meat… I closed my eyes, having even forgotten to chew. As I thought, reading about it and actually tasting it are two different things.」

It was a scene that happened early on, when Kim Dokja and the companions had recently entered the scenarios – when they roasted the meat from the mole rats. Yoo Joonghyuk pulled out a slice of dried meat from inside his coat underneath the spacesuit and began chewing on it while reading that passage again. He slowly closed his eyes and chewed, and it almost felt as if he was with the companions within the damp darkness of the subway.

「155th day of drifting.」

But when he opened his eyes, he was still all alone.

Yoo Joonghyuk dazedly sitting there began reading the novel again.

「211th day of drifting.」

He continued to read this story all by himself, and…

「258th day of drifting.」

…And, read the story again.

「279th day of drifting.」

He finally understood Kim Dokja just a little.

「316th day of drifting.」

[Your Stories have absorbed your emotions.]

Every time he read Han Sooyoung's novel, the consumed Stories would regain their vitality for fleeting moments. Although it couldn't match the speed of consumption, he wouldn't have been able to hold on until now if he didn't read the story.

However, he couldn't simply hold on forever.

Kim Dokja within the novel was saying this.

「"That's why you should've read it until the end, you know."」

What did it mean to read a story to its end?

Although he couldn't fully understand it, Yoo Joonghyuk still chose to heed that advice.

「333th day of drifting.」

Abruptly, he realized the reason why his failure was inevitable.

「"Even if you manage to save the world, you still won't be saved. The moment you save the world, the worlds you have cast away would pounce on you. Even if you do save one world, every other world you have forsaken will drag you down to hell."」

Yoo Joonghyuk stared at the distant universe and thought to himself.

What could've it been like if this was the first, or the second, regression turn? What if he had completely forgotten about the memories from his previous lives? If he had no clue whatsoever of the lives from his previous regressions, then maybe, just maybe, couldn't he have found his answer already, instead of wandering aimlessly like this? Maybe, he wouldn't have to suffer like this?

Could he have finally understood what the 'happy ending' of other stories was like?

Could he have moved forward, in order to not die?

Ku-gugugugu…

The ark's hull began vibrating. Wondering what was going on, he enhanced his perception to sweep over the surroundings, only to discover a huge horde dyeing the universe ash-grey. They were existences he was quite familiar with.

【OhOhOhOhOhOhOh…!】

Existences that were discarded from the world-lines, and ejected from the scenarios.

The enormous waves of 'Outer Gods' were flooding in his direction. A faint scent of fear could be picked up coming from them. They were being chased by some things.

Kwa-du-duk!

One of the 'Nameless Ones' escaping at the rear of the pack was pierced by something. Soon, he spotted the 'Hounds Chasing After the Abyss' easily numbering thousands chasing down the 'Outer Gods' like wolves corralling the flock of sheep.

Every time a 'Nameless One' was hunted down, an incredible explosion of sparks occurred in between the flood. The storm of energy was gradually growing larger and larger. At this rate, his vessel would get swept up much sooner than later.

【SavemeSavemeSavemeSaveme】

Eventually, the front pack of the flood overtook the ark. The 'Nameless Ones' desperately ran. The eyes of the creatures resembling cephalopods glanced in Yoo Joonghyuk's direction.

Craaack!

A monster's body was pierced through without resistance by the hound's fangs. The pitch-black lump of Story spewing out by the dying monster splattered onto the cockpit's window like paint. The cephalopod monster was staring at him in resentment as it fell.

Yoo Joonghyuk had seen those eyes before, once upon a time.

「"If so, what about the people who are different from me? What about Jihye eonni, Hyunsung oppa, and Seolhwa eonni? Those who fought only for your sake, just who were they to you??"」

Right at that moment, Yoo Joonghyuk thought he could finally understand what his ■■ was.

He understood how a regressor finished with his regressions should carry on living.

He understood the true conclusion he was supposed to reach.

From the very beginning, such a thing could never be determined by his own will alone.

[The Ark's cockpit is opening.]

The moment he opened the cockpit, the hounds began rushing in his direction.

Yoo Joonghyuk gripped the [Black Heavenly Demon Sword] in reverse and cut the head off of a hound. The waves from the other world splitting apart, brushed past while clawing at him.

【WhatWhatWhatWhatWhat】

【YouareYouareYouareYouareYouare】

He watched the 'Nameless Ones' flood past him and recalled the story he had been reading not too long ago.

Maybe, Han Sooyoung knew about it already.

「"You wrote my story. In that case, you should also know where my story is supposed to end."」

She probably knew the truth that this story would never reach the reincarnated Kim Dokjas.

That was why, he must never return to Earth.

He must never let his companions know of his survival.

His absence must become their eternal hope.

And maybe that was the fitting final verse to the regressor who had destroyed countless worlds.

【Grrrrrr…!】

As he continued to smack away the pouncing hounds, Yoo Joonghyuk thought about the disappearing story.

"Be gone!!"

His lion-like roar using magical energy as the foundation caused the hounds hiding in between the 'Outer Gods' to raise their heads. These hounds then formed lines and attacked Yoo Joonghyuk simultaneously. His arms were punctured, and the protective equipment worn over his legs were torn off from him. Stories began leaking out from the ripped-open gaps of the tattered spacesuit. Bit by bit, he was losing his strength.

His lengthy regression journey.

Yoo Joonghyuk instinctively realized that this was his conclusion.

'This is the end I wished to see'.

It could've been a slightly more excellent conclusion.

If he had made a different choice back then, or maybe, if he chose to go down the better direction, then… Yoo Joonghyuk smiled bitterly.

In the end, he remained a regressor even until his final moment.

He knew it. He knew there was no better conclusion than this. He knew that, regardless of what choices he might have made in different moments of his life, he'd still end up regretting something about them.

Even then, he'd regret and eventually, repeat the result of all his regretting.

【YouYouYouYouYouYou】

【WhoWhoWhoWhoWho】

That was the summary of his life.

"I'm Yoo Joonghyuk."

At least a handful of people would be saved by his life.

Kwa-aaaaaah-!

Thousands upon thousands of hounds pounced in his direction. As if he was atoning for his sins, Yoo Joonghyuk wielded his sword and wielded it some more. With each and every one of his attacks, those 'Nameless Ones' with forgotten names received their salvation.

Coldness began circulating in his entire body. The amount of Story leaking out from the tattered spacesuit continued to increase. He felt dizzy and his vision flickered. Yoo Joonghyuk squeezed out every last drop of magical energy.

Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship.

Destruction Technique.

Breaking the Sky Meteor Strike.

The vicious, violent fragments of the sword fell like a meteor shower and penetrated the hounds. However, some hounds managed to evade the sword strike and continued to run towards him.

【Krrrrrng!!】

Right next second, something collided with his head and the helmet protecting his face broke into pieces.

[Warning! Your Story is scattering away. Return to the ark immediately!]

[Your Story is…]

Adrift droplets of blood were freezing up. Hounds were tearing into his entire body. And the story Han Sooyoung had written were breaking apart among the torn, ripped Story fragments scattering away.

'…Mia-yah'.

Stories kept scattering away like stardust. Yoo Joonghyuk watched that spectacle and quietly thought about the lonely space no one would ever imagine. The 'Nameless Ones' were witnessing his final moments with their empty eyes.

This story they had compiled would be forgotten sooner or later.

It'd become a story no one would read.

Yoo Joonghyuk summoned the last vestiges of his strength and gripped the hilt of the sword tightly. He stabbed the neck of the hound biting his thigh, and cut apart its body.

A regressor might only know how to regret, but he'd never give up.

「"Maybe this regression turn you are about to abandon could be the 'one single turn' where you might get to witness the end of this world as a 'human being', you know."」

The one and only way for him to live on as a human being.

And that was to never give up on this story.

Kwa-duduk!

Something bit his neck, and his vision was dyed crimson in colour.

His eyes slowly closed. This really was his final moments.

Tsu-chuchu…

However, he saw the darkness before his eyes distort as his vision gradually blurred.

Was he hallucinating? Something was standing over there. The ends of the black coat were seemingly dancing within the pure-white Story fragments.

【What a pitiful sight this is, the third turn.】

Someone was talking to him from there.

【This will be my last time helping you.】

Chapter 549: Epilogue 5 - The Eternity and Epilogue, IV

Yoo Joonghyuk dreamed a particular dream. It was about the time he participated in the 'Journey to the West scenario' with the rest of the <Kim Dokja's Company> members. In the dream, he was running on top of the Tongtian River's surface. He could see the figures of Jung Heewon, Yoo Sangah, Lee Hyunsung and Shin Yoosung running next to him.

【Notnotnotnotnotnotnot】

Yogoes were screaming out their death throes repeatedly.

His memories grew clearer and clearer. Right, they were participating in the Journey to the West in order to rescue Kim Dokja.

But then… where was Kim Dokja?

Tsu-chuchuchu…

【…What a pathetic sight this is. With only this much, you actually dared to come out to the 'outside of the story'?】

A voice could be heard coming from somewhere.

【I was wondering why dangerous Story ripples could be detected in the vicinity, but… He was the cause, then.】

【What are we going to do, captain?】

【We decided not to interfere anymore, right? Are you really going to help him?】

Voices that were familiar, yet also quite foreign to him.

Was this a part of his memories? Who could have said those words?

Suddenly, the front of his eyes seemed to get darker, only to reveal a pitch-black shadow standing there and blocking the light. An Outer God stood in the middle of the dim shadows. Even without consciously realizing it, Yoo Joonghyuk began emitting fighting intent.

Right. He did fight against this bastard back then, too. The other him who had witnessed the world's end after living through 1863 regressions – the 'Secretive Plotter'.

Even before Yoo Joonghyuk could use a skill, though – the 'Secretive Plotter' spoke up first.

【Did you really think the end of a regressor will be that easy?】

The Tongtian River was upturned. Yogoes rising up from every corner of the river's surface pounced on Yoo Joonghyuk. The discarded stories clung onto his body all at the same time. The forgotten Stories were being sucked into his mouth and nose. He gradually sank beneath the water as the head-wrecking pain swallowed him up.

【Do not forget. We aren't even permitted the luxury of death.】

With that true voice as the signal, his view was flipped around. Yoo Joonghyuk woke up heavily panting as if he was vomiting out the river's water. Yogoes that clung onto him in the dream were nowhere to be seen now, having disappeared to somewhere unknown. However, someone else's presence could be felt, instead.

[Whew. You really shocked me there, making me think you were dead and all.]

A clear, gentle voice greeted him. Yoo Joonghyuk shook his still-dizzy head. A blurry figure was before his eyes. A warm, caring aura emitted from this silhouette gently wrapped around his entire body.

…Was he still dreaming?

His vision recovered gradually, and the face of the blurry figure could finally be seen. Yoo Joonghyuk hurriedly rubbed his eyes without even realizing it. Was he hallucinating, instead? This young girl's external appearance resembled Kim Dokja's, somehow. Her eyes sparkling like stars were quietly observing him.

[I didn't expect to see you here, captain. You probably can understand now how I felt while wandering around the world-lines. Right?]

This child, she…

[You don't have to worry. I've already repaired most of your scattered Story. And just in case, I've even started a sub scenario so you should be fine for the time being.]

Could she be…

[That's so disappointing. Do I have to speak like this for you to recognise me?]

As the girl smiled mischievously, a small horn suddenly grew out of her head. Her lips parted a little, and a familiar cry he'd been missing for so long jumped out.

[Baat.]

"Has master got in touch yet?"

"Nope. I'm sure he's taking good care of things," replied Han Sooyoung.

It had already been three months since Yoo Joonghyuk left on his voyage. The work on the manuscript continued on without a hitch, and the updates were continuously being sent through the Cloud System.

[Number of file downloads: 0]

However, Yoo Joonghyuk had not logged in once to the Cloud System using the Stigma during the past three months.

'Yoo Joonghyuk, that idiot. Just what is he doing?'

The ominous foreboding slowly mushroomed in Han Sooyoung's heart. She even began thinking that maybe she should've been the one to head out.

Yoo Mia was next to her, sweating profusely while performing a series of press-ups.

"I'll become strong enough to break both of my oppa's legs."

Han Sooyoung looked at Yoo Mia and the girl's blazing eyes, and could only nod her head as a sign of encouragement.

And how long did she tap on the keyboard afterwards? Suddenly, a message entered her head.

[Your Incarnation has logged into the 'Cloud System'.]

After Biyoo heard about the general gist of the situation, she responded in the following manner.

[…Okay, so. You'll spread the story you receive via Han Sooyoung's Stigma to other world-lines. That's the core of the plan, right?]

"Correct."

[And you're hoping that the reincarnated versions of Dokja ahjussi will read that story.]

"Also correct."

[Not bad. To think that you'd come up with a plan to take advantage of the 'Oldest Dream's nature like this…]

"I also thought it's not a bad-sounding p…"

[…Did you really think I'd be impressed by that plan? How did you even cook up such a hair-brained scheme, seriously?!]

…Was Biyoo's personality originally like this?

[But then again, captain, you're completely capable of doing something this crazy without batting an eyelid.]

Yoo Joonghyuk frowned deeply at that somewhat mocking tone of voice. The more he heard her talk, the more she began sounding like Kim Dokja for some reason.

[The odds of success are not very good, you know.]

"I know."

[The 'Oldest Dream' of that world-line might not even read the story. And the more advanced a civilisation is, the less important the contents made up purely of letters becomes. So you may not even get a chance to approach such a world, too.]

"Before that, crossing the world-lines is the biggest problem."

Yoo Joonghyuk stared at the half-destroyed ark. Although he got lucky with Biyoo's help and managed to survive, it was impossible to visit other world-lines without the vessel.

Biyoo thought about something for a while then spoke what's in her mind. [Why can't you go? What are the coordinates? Give to me.]

With a slightly unconvinced face, Yoo Joonghyuk handed over the list of coordinates Yoo Sangah gave him earlier. Biyoo confirmed all the world-lines on it and smiled refreshingly.

[You do know who I am, right? I'm none other than the 'Dokkaebi King', you know.]

It was right then, Yoo Joonghyuk recalled an obvious fact.

The [Final Ark] was an item belonging to the Bureau. And the top representative of the Bureau was precisely the 'Dokkaebi King'.

[Can you guess what I had been doing in the 'Dark Stratum'? While you and other companions went to the 1865th turn, I too had been working my butt off somewhere, that's what.]

The deep, boundless wisdom could be sensed behind Biyoo's eyes drawing a smiling arc.

The Dark Stratum. A place where the time's density was far greater than any other spacetime.

Just how long had Biyoo been staying in such a space?

She pulled out a Wenny pouch from her inner pocket and continued on.

[I've got my hands on the dead Wenny King's dimensional doorway so jumping to the nearest world-line isn't going to be a problem at all. As for those in the far-flung distance… Well, it should be doable after repairing the ark a bit, I think. The problem is with the energy to be used as the fuel…]

Yoo Joonghyuk looked down at his own Incarnation body. Thanks to Biyoo saving his life, most of his injuries had been healed, but the majority of his Stories were left badly mangled after they protected him for over 300 days of adrift at space, as well as during the battle against the hounds.

[I guess that's also been sorted out now, too.]

"…Mm?"

He wasn't sure how it happened, but his inside was overflowing with Stories. A truly extraordinary amount of Stories were writhing around within him, getting ready to be unleashed.

[Just where did you acquire the Stories of the 'Nameless Ones'? Not only that, such a humongous amount, too…]

Stories that had been discarded by the scenario was now trying to speak to him.

[Stories with unknown names from 'Outer Gods' wish to accompany you.]

Stories from the 'Nameless Ones' he had run across in the final scenario once upon a time. Existences born in a place no stars paid attention to, and who had to die in a place no one was looking at.

They were currently talking to Yoo Joonghyuk.

[Stories with unknown names are picking up the scent of an ancient dream from you.]

[Now that I think about it, something felt a bit off when I was picking you up. The 'Nameless Ones' that didn't possess any ego were busy protecting you, you know?]

Yoo Joonghyuk recalled the dream he had not too long ago – the Journey to the West scenario, the voices of the 'Secretive Plotter' as well as the 999th turn's individuals.

…But, it couldn't be.

He hurriedly enhanced his perception, but couldn't detect anything. While listening to Biyoo's voice, Yoo Joonghyuk quietly observed the view of the space spreading out like an endless ocean.

[By using those Stories as our fuel, we shouldn't have any problems travelling long distances. Okay, let's get a move on, then. The hounds' territory is nearby, so if we take our time lounging around here, things might get dicey again.]

Since Yoo Joonghyuk had no thoughts of encountering those hounds again, he quickly nodded his head as well.

[It's a bit cramped inside for two people, so… Baat!]

Pure-white and abundant fur sprouted from Biyoo's body, then she suddenly shrunk down to the size of a single fist.

[Dokkaebi King 'Biyoo' has started the ark's voyage!]

Along with that message, the ark's main engine came to life. The vessel left behind the blue-hued Story traces and disappeared from there in the blink of an eye.

…

…

…

A short while later, five shadows appeared near where the ark used to be.

【Do you think he'll succeed?】

【That's uncertain. However, this is as far as we can help him.】

【Let's hurry up and return, shall we? Today's the parent's day at school, after all. By the way, who agreed to go with Dokja?】

【Me, me, me, me!!】

【You idiot obviously aren't qualified.】

The 'Secretive Plotter' watched the ark disappearing beyond the distant galaxy and murmured out.

【I pray that we don't have to run into each other again, Yoo Joonghyuk.】

*

Jang Hayoung working on the revision of the second act yawned grandly in boredom and asked a question. "By the way, Han Sooyoung? Can I ask you something?"

"No."

"What did you tell Yoo Joonghyuk regarding the method of delivering the manuscript?" Jang Hayoung spoke in a tone of voice indicating her distrust of the man in question. "I took a look, and well, besides him knowing how to play games, he didn't seem to know his way around a computer, you know? Would he even know how to upload novels to a website?"

"He can't personally serialise the novel. That would mean he'd be stuck in a world-line for too long."

"What then?"

Han Sooyoung thought about it for a second, then muttered out. "The most ideal way would be to find someone who can serialise it for us…"

「The planetary system Z865123. In the year 2020 of the imperial calendar…」

On that day, a webnovel writer named Lee Hak-Hyeon was busy writing up his manuscript inside a one-room flat for students, only to get into a verbal tussle with his editor over the phone.

– Author-nim, just what are you planning to write this time? What's the title of the novel?

"…It's the Me-sword Master."

– The Me-sword Master? What is it about?

"Okay, so… The protagonist is a method actor in a fantasy world, and he eventually masters his acting skills and also becomes a swordmaster…"

– Ah, I see. That's enough. By the way, didn't I tell you many times before to never start with the line 'imperial calendar' this and that?

Lee Hak-Hyeon listened to the editor's voice continuing on for a long while afterwards, and his expression became gloomier and gloomier.

– Have you forgotten what happened with your previous novel? Author-nim, please think about this carefully. I beg of you…

Lee Hak-Hyeon recalled his previous outputs.

His debut work, 「「Orc Philosopher」」, completely tanked with a pathetically embarrassing score – this novel's paywalled chapters were bought only by his best friend and no one else besides – and the follow-up he wrote with much fanfare, 「「How to Become a Famous Author」」 also tanked pretty hard because well, he was not a famous author, to begin with. And just like that, this was his third try.

"Those who will succeed, will succeed. While those who won't, won't. I'm the latter, I guess."

He was three months behind on his rent, and with what little money he had on him, it'd be difficult to even buy tonight's dinner.

Lee Hak-Hyeon stared at the empty Korean word processor page, before rushing up to the rooftop of the building. The ground as seen from the fifth floor looked pretty far enough.

"…Nah. Even then, this is… Hah-ah… Huh?"

Lee Hak-Hyeon rubbed his eyes. Was he hallucinating? Something was wavering before his eyes.

"What's going on? My tears?"

A man was standing there. Not just any man, but an incredibly handsome dude wearing a black coat, no less. And a figurine with fluffy fur was sitting on this man's shoulder. Even a blind could see that this guy was someone extraordinary.

He'd be pretty much perfect as a protagonist from a novel, in a way…

"You over there. You seem to be a webnovel author."

The black coat-wearing man's powerful aura caused Lee Hak-Hyeon's legs to tremble even unbeknownst to himself. The latter managed to eke out a reply. "Y-yes, I am."

"In that case, you should know how to serialise a novel, then."

"Well, that…"

It was at that moment that a realization dawned on Lee Hak-Hyeon. He'd heard about this weird rumour from someone, somewhere – a legendary tale of those authors who mysteriously vanished from the world, only to triumphantly return with stunning epics in tow. The tale of incredible luck that only a select handful of writers are blessed with.

Lee Hak-Hyeon realized what kind of a situation this was, and his shoulders began trembling.

'I-i-is this the chosen author cliché??'

If all the webnovels he had read so far had some dose of reality in them, then that black coat-wearing man should take Lee Hak-Hyeon into the world of a novel. And then, he'd ask the latter to fix the conclusion written by another writer. The latter would utilise his brain honed by clichés to its fullest extent and go on to perform truly fantastical feats.

"Yes, yes! I know how to do it! I shall change your world's future!"

"…??"

"Please, hurry and take me with you! I may look like this, but I'm a pro webnovel author with prior experience in paid serialisation…"

A dull thud rang out as something hit the back of Lee Hak-Hyeon's head. He blacked out immediately.

[Wait a minute, captain!! What are you doing, knocking the guy out!!]

Biyoo cried out sharply.

They were currently in the planetary system Z865123. They had to go through no less than 17 layers of [Dark Stratum] from Earth they had been living in to barely reach this world-line.

"It couldn't be helped. He was too talkative."

[…Now what are we going to do?]

Yoo Joonghyuk began pulling out several instruments from his inner pocket. "From now on, we need to forcibly insert the novel Han Sooyoung has written into this man's brain."

[What are you talking about?! Do you even know how long that will take?! Are you going to brainwash people like this every time you enter a new world-line??]

"That is…"

When he thought about it, he realized that this method could only take them so far. They couldn't stick around and keep their eyes on this man forever, and the brainwashing could stop working after Yoo Joonghyuk had left this world-line.

[You said that Han Sooyoung hadn't finished writing the novel yet, right? We don't have the time to visit this world again later. At this rate, even if we hand over the novel, the serialisation might stop in the middle, you know!]

"Han Sooyoung, that fool…"

[Stop blaming someone else, and activate that thing called Cloud System or something. Hurry.]

Since she sounded as if she had a plan here, Yoo Joonghyuk didn't argue and did as he was told.

[Sync your display with mine.]

Biyoo then began browsing and poking at the [Cloud System]'s files floating up before her eyes. Soon, her hands stopped moving before a specific file.

[Dokkaebi King 'Biyoo' is trying to approach the Cloud System using the authority of the Bureau.]

[Will you allow the access to the portion of the files?]

Yoo Joonghyuk clicked on the confirmation icon. When he did, a transparent thread extended out from the file and got connected to the head of the unconscious webnovel writer.

[Dokkaebi King 'Biyoo' has exercised her authority and altered the 'Cloud System'.]

[The system's influence is minimal in this worldview. Additional Probability will be consumed!]

[The set-up, 'Inspiration Sharing', has been created!]

Biyoo wiped away the strands of sweat from her forehead and spoke. [I've synchronised the cloud's files with this guy's subconsciousness. From now on, the stories Han Sooyoung writes in the future will be updated automatically to this guy's subconscious mind.]

Now that was a truly stunning Story manipulation ability. Even Han Sooyoung needed quite a lot of time to create a single Stigma, so this…

Yoo Joonghyuk asked her. "Is this method safe? What if this fool unnecessarily starts suspecting something…?"

[Suspect? Not very likely. No, he's gonna love the change, actually. I mean, he's being showered by inspirations, so which writer wouldn't welcome that with open arms? He'll definitely believe that he's the one writing this story.]

Biyoo smirked and looked down at the still-unconscious man. Yoo Joonghyuk alternated his gaze between such Biyoo and the unmoving webnovel writer as a strange little thought crept into his mind. Could it be that a 'novel', any novel, was written like this, to begin with?

Biyoo lightly knocked on the head of the unconscious writer and spoke.

[He will probably think that a muse came to bless him or something.]

* * *

When Lee Hak-Hyeon opened his eyes again, he found himself slumped over his own desk.

"…Was I dreaming? Urgh…"

He slowly got up and wiped his mouth, then began massaging his temples.

That was one strangely vivid dream. A dream where he was being threatened by a man wearing a black coat. And then, there was a figuring floating in the air, seemingly made out of a lump of wool… It seemed rather likely that, him secluding himself in this small room for too long while attempting to write something, had finally pushed him over the edge.

Lee Hak-Hyeon spat out a long, long groan and switched on the once-empty notebook screen. But on it was…

「There are three ways to survive in a ruined world.」

…A sentence he didn't remember typing was there.

On top of this, his hands were actually moving on their own to continue typing away.

「My ancient smartphone displaying the webnovel platform struggled to move through the screen. I scrolled down, then up. How many times did I do that, I wondered.

"Really? Is that really the end??"」

"…Oh?"

Lee Hak-Hyeon looked at his hands typing away at a frightening turn of speed and began wondering if he had finally lost his mind. Hell, he thought that he could even hear some sort of a voice coming from within his mind, too.

…You tanked badly the last time by making the author the protagonist. How about making the reader the protagonist this time around?

｢Kim Dokja(金獨子). My father wanted me to become a tough man even if I was left alone so he gave me such a name.｣

When he typed one sentence, another one would pop up in his head, and when he finished typing that one, yet another would appear in his mind. Inspirations surged in him like a powerful waterfall.

By the time he regained his wits, he had already completed the prologue as well as the first chapter.

｢This was the moment when my life's genre had changed.｣

Lee Hak-Hyeon dazedly stared at the screen for a long time, before calling the editor on the phone.

"Uhm, editor-nim? It looks like I might become successful, after all…"

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* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)

Chapter 550: Epilogue 5 - The Eternity and Epilogue, V

It had been one year and two months since Yoo Joonghyuk had left on his journey.

The speed of the manuscript being updated started slowing down around the time the third part was nearing completion. Even though the manuscript was still being compiled diligently, there were just too many voids yet to be filled up.

As the chapter number got higher and higher, stories Han Sooyoung didn't know of seemed to also increase in number, as well.

"This might prove to be helpful, at least by a little bit," said Aileen.

If she didn't extract Story fragments from the sleeping Kim Dokja, the work on the manuscript would've slowed down even further.

[Story fragment, 'Great adventure in the Dark Castle', has been successfully extracted.]

[Story fragment, 'Memories of 1863rd regression turn', has been successfully extracted.]

[Story fragment, 'Gourmet Association Story', has been successfully extracted.]

These fragments were stories too small to become Stories. Han Sooyoung read these fragments and filled in the previously-lacking inside of Kim Dokja. Even then, far too many parts remained empty. She didn't try to forcibly fill those voids, however.

[Your Incarnation has logged into the 'Cloud System'.]

Yoo Sangah asked. "It looks like Joonghyuk-ssi is doing well."

"Well, he's probably busy scaring the living daylights out of the poor webnovel authors," replied Ham Sooyoung.

"I'm curious about what other authors are like. Surely, not everyone is like you, Sooyoung-ssi?"

"Well, no, not everyone's like… Hey, did you come here just to grind my gears?"

"The author in question may not even be a person when I think about it. It could be a highly-developed AI, or…"

Han Sooyoung reluctantly nodded her head. Indeed, the universe was vast and lots of writers existed out there. And also, writers who got a beating from Yoo Joonghyuk should be plenty, too.

In any case – judging from how timely the revised manuscript was being downloaded, that dude must've been doing his job properly so far.

But then…

[Your Incarnation is revising the manuscript you have written.]

"…What??"

[…Captain, what are you doing??]

"I'm fixing the incorrect portion."

Yoo Joonghyuk was in the midst of revising the updated file in real-time while logging into the [Cloud System]. Originally, it was impossible for an Incarnation like him to revise a file updated to the [Cloud System], but…

[Your attribute's effects are activating.]

[You can now revise the 'Cloud System's' manuscript.]

[Revision of the already recorded contents requires a great amount of Probability!]

But, it became possible to do so from some time ago. He couldn't quite remember just when it started, but it might have been when the attribute related to writing sleeping inside him began manifesting its powers. Maybe it had bloomed into life after acquiring the Stories of the 'Outer Gods'.

[…Won't Han Sooyoung get really angry?]

"Even if it's her, she wouldn't have known every story there is. Some parts especially were in a total mess."

While saying that, Yoo Joonghyuk tapped away on the holographic keyboard. Biyoo seemed rather impressed by this scene and spoke up.

[Oh… Captain, your grammar is better than I thought! Since you liked swinging swords around every single day, I figured you wouldn't even know the difference between a knight and a night but this…]

It was right at that moment that Yoo Joonghyuk's cursor suddenly began jumping around all on its own.

[Constellation, 'Architect of the False Last Act', has revised the latest file.]

Strange words were suddenly typed over the space where Yoo Joonghyuk's cursor had been just now.

「Hey, you just messed with my manuscript, didn't you?! Do you really want to die that badly??」

…So, there was such a way to communicate with her, then.

Yoo Joonghyuk calmly typed the following sentence.

「This is because you failed to store the manuscript properly.」

「What bulldust are you spewing now??」

「There were incorrect parts in the manuscript. I've left my opinions on the file, so confirm them yourself.」

After typing that, Yoo Joonghyuk took another look at the parts he had changed.

「Lee Gilyoung wearing the black coat looked down arrogantly at the world with his star-like sparkling eyes and spoke up. "Hey, you sooty bastard. You're so weak." – Do you really think this part even makes any sense?」

「Lee Jihye emitting noble ripples of energy like rushing torrents of a massive river began swinging her sword. "Water the Sky Sword Door, True Body Deep Righteousness Slash Technique, Water the Sky Destroy the Emperor Slash!!" – There is no such sword technique in the Breaking the Sky Swordsmanship. Also, all the Hanja letters are incorrect.」

Han Sooyoung was silent for a moment there.

「…What the hell, I don't remember ever typing these sentences before? Wait, these haven't been published yet, right?」

「There are still some time left until the update, so fix them quickly.」

Yoo Joonghyuk could pretty much figure out what happened here.

「Seriously, those two… With my notebook PC…」

Undoubtedly, Lee Gilyoung and Lee Jihye must've changed the scheduled update file without Han Sooyoung's knowledge.

Biyoo observed the sentences hurriedly being revised before their very eyes and spoke up. [Looks like you two have become quite close.]

"We're merely communicating like this for the purpose of the mission."

Judging from how the revised version continued to be updated, Han Sooyoung must've been hard at work trying to reconstruct Kim Dokja's story in the most preserved, complete state.

This novel would become divorced from the reality they had to live through when more and more parts of it were filled up via dramatisation or imagination. As their goal was to recover Kim Dokja, this story had to reflect the reality they had lived in.

[As long as this is a story, it's impossible to perfectly recreate something. Every story would be distorted by the narrator, after all.]

"I'm aware of that. It'd be the same even if Kim Dokja himself personally wrote it."

Yoo Joonghyuk thought about something related to that for a moment or two. If it was impossible to restore the complete 'Kim Dokja' no matter which story you wrote, then just what was the existence called 'Kim Dokja', in the first place?

Yoo Joonghyuk shook his head.

Back then or even now, no one could know that. Well, no one in this world knew who they were exactly, after all.

He looked at Han Sooyoung's manuscript. Those who had forgotten about themselves were probably reading her work right about now. They should be reading this sentence over here, then afterwards, read the one over there next.

What Yoo Joonghyuk and Han Sooyoung wished from them was just one thing – wishing for a 'happy ending' that they didn't know to become real within someone's imagination.

Wishing for the world they had never witnessed before to safely exist somewhere out there in this universe.

[Constellation, 'Architect of the False Last Act', has revised the latest file.]

「By the way, Yoo Joonghyuk? Just how many years have you been wandering…」

[Error has occurred in the 'Cloud System' due to incorrect usage!]

[Due to the storm of Probability's aftermath, the Stigma will temporarily shut down.]

It seemed that using the manuscript in this fashion was pushing it a little too far.

Yoo Joonghyuk slowly raised his head and looked at his face reflected on the ark's window. He could see subtle little premature grey hair spots here and there on his head.

[Captain, it's not even 100 years yet.]

"I'm aware."

[The time moves really slowly, doesn't it?]

Her voice passing them by indifferently caused Yoo Joonghyuk to falter just a little. Biyoo still in the form of little furball was staring at the passing scenery of the Dark Stratum outside with an unreadable expression on her face. Suddenly, he became conscious of her being Shin Yoosung in her previous life once more.

「"Did you know, captain? Did you know that I had to endure incredibly difficult years so that I can grant your request?"」

She was an existence who had to wander the world-lines as a lost, forgotten being for thousands of years just to pass on the information to the past regression.

Yoo Joonghyuk's lips parted and closed several times. He eventually managed to squeeze some words out. "…It must've been difficult."

[Right. It was really tough. I resented you a lot too, captain.]

The disaster of flood, Shin Yoosung. The Dokkaebi King Biyoo used to have such a name once upon a time.

[Still, these days I feel relieved to have reincarnated. Because I got to keep the promise I made with you back then.]

"The promise?"

[Back when I was still Shin Yoosung, you promised me this, captain. You said, we'd go on a trip together after the scenario comes to an end.]

While listening to Biyoo's voice continue on, he began digging through 41st turn's memories. Maybe it was due to the memories given to him by the Secretive Plotter, he could just about barely recall some things about that day. Shin Yoosung, talking to him about what she wanted to do after the scenario had ended.

The 41st turn's Yoo Joonghyuk couldn't keep that promise.

「"Shin Yoosung, you're the last one."」

His companions died one by one, and during the final moments, he sent Shin Yoosung away to the outside of the world-line.

The memories from that day – just where did the moments from that day disappear to?

He didn't know. They could have become the 'Nameless Ones'.

"I…"

[Let me say this right now. Don't apologise. The person who should apologise, and the person that apology is intended for, they don't exist in this world anymore.]

She was right. In a way, the person saying it and the person listening right now weren't exactly the right people. Yoo Joonghyuk had lost the 41st turn's life, and he had forgotten most of the memories from that period of history ever since Biyoo reincarnated. It was now just an old story that connected them. They thought about that story for a little while.

[Shall we get going, then?]

"Alright."

All they could do for now was to complete this lengthy journey, and also, to find the suitable intermediary who could deliver their story.

"This time, the married couple writers over there look to be good candidates."

More than likely, this trip would last for much longer.

But Yoo Joonghyuk didn't feel that was such a bad thing.

As the serialisation grew longer and longer in length, the number of episodes that couldn't be filled up only through Kim Dokja's Story fragments or interviewing the companions, happened more frequently.

Lee Gilyoung grumbled unhappily. "Can't we, like, just gloss over it like the last time?"

"Since when did I ever gloss over anything? Lee Seolhwa, that thing I asked you about, get it ready!"

The moment Han Sooyoung finished saying that, Lee Seolhwa wheeled in a strange device with multiple suction cups connected to it into the hospital room.

Yoo Sangah spoke up. "…Isn't that the Story fragment extractor?"

Lee Seolhwa nodded her head. "Yes. And from now on, we'll start extracting Story fragments from everyone."

"Our Stories?"

"It's possible that you aren't remembering everything, and some could be hidden below your subconsciousness, as well. I'm sure you're all aware of it by now, but the majority of a Story is usually accumulated within one's subconsciousness."

"Ah, but, it's kinda embarrassing… What if weird Stories suddenly pop out?"

As if she was obviously hoping for that, Han Sooyoung cut in with an evil-sounding voice. "Hey, Lee Gilyoung, Lee Jihye. You two go first."

That caused the duo being called out to back away while hesitating somewhat.

"Argh, why should I? We already told you everything we know, you know? Right, noona?"

"Of course, of course!"

Completely disregarding whether they did that or not, Han Sooyoung grabbed and shoved them down on some chairs, before placing the suction cups on the duo's heads.

Lee Gilyoung freaked out. "Ahhh? That feels super weird, you know! Feels like you're putting a plunger on my head!"

Tsu-chuchuchu!

"Euh-hihiheek?!"

['Lee Gilyoung's' complete Story has been extracted!]

[Story, 'Demon King Fanatic', has started singing.]

「"Oh, oh~ Dokja hyung said this~ back then…"」

"I knew it. Even the name of the Story has 'Fanatic' in it."

Lee Gilyoung didn't say anything as he slumped on the seat. Han Sooyoung narrowed her eyes and glared at the boy, before shifting her glare over to Lee Jihye next. With excellent timing, that girl's Story had just been extracted, as well.

['Lee Jihye's' Story fragment has been extracted!]

[Story fragment, 'Natural-born Bender of Facts', has begun its storytelling!]

"Oh, my? Hey, why don't you write the novel instead of me?"

Lee Jihye avoided meeting Han Sooyoung's glare and whistled nervously.

"You two, touch my manuscript again, and Imma kill you dead. You hear me?"

"…We won't."

"Fine. As for the others…"

Han Sooyoung shook her head grandly and while holding a suction cup, she turned around – only for Jung Heewon carrying a mischievous expression to plonk a suction cup on the former's head first.

"Ah?! What the hell! Take it off! Right now!"

['Han Sooyoung's' Story fragment has been extracted!]

[Story fragment, 'Memories of a Lemon Candy', has begun its storytelling.]

「"By the way, I've been sucking on that, you know?"

"Okay. So?"

"…You can be so boring sometimes. You know that?"」

Jung Heewon spoke up in a teasing tone of voice. "Oh-hoh, would you look at that? Our dear author-nim, why did she omit such a delicious scene from the main story, I wonder?"

"…"

"Sangah-ssi, let's try it out ourselves. We need to extract ours quickly so that our dear author-nim can finish her manuscript."

While Han Sooyoung was angrily gnashing her teeth, the rest of the companions put the suction cups on and started with their Story fragment extraction.

['Yoo Sangah's' Story fragment has been extracted!]

[Story fragment, 'Hard work, sincerity, patience', has been extracted.]

"…What the?? Was that your family motto?"

"Everyone should learn from Yoo Sangah-ssi's example."

[Additional Story fragment has been extracted from 'Yoo Sangah'.]

[Story fragment, 'Memories of their first sharp, cold hand-holding', has been extracted!]

Eyes of Jung Heewon confirming that Story gleamed a little. It was a Story she also knew, that's why. However, there were some people here who didn't know what it was about.

Han Sooyoung asked. "What's this? You held Kim Dokja's hand before?"

"Mm~. I've completely forgotten about it. There was something like that, wasn't there."

@1L9I2Aa8UCL0IGJ

*

"Why did you hold his hand?"

"Are you curious?"

"I need to write the novel, so hurry up and spit it out!"

Next to the duo, Jung Heewon wearing the suction cup on her head smiled at them. "Hey, Han Sooyoung. It's not that strange for close companions to hold each other's hands, right? Why do you react so…"

['Jung Heewon's' Story fragment has been extracted!]

[Story fragment, 'I've seen the Demon King of Salvation's Black Flame Dragon', has been extracted.]

Han Sooyoung narrowed her eyes. "Oh, so really close companions can show each other stuff like that too?"

"Hahaha… Well, I think this device has developed some kind of an error."

['Lee Hyunsung's' Story fragment has been extracted!]

[Story fragment, 'I've seen the Demon King of Salvation's Black Flame Dragon', has been extracted!]

Jung Heewon asked, utterly taken back. "Hyunsung-ssi? Why do you also have that Story?"

"Heewon-ssi, have you forgotten? We saw it together, didn't we?"

"What is it, what is it? What did you two see together??"

When Jang Hayoung began her nagging, Jung Heewon faltered a bit and started mumbling away about some random stuff in a clearly troubled tone of voice.

While the intense scrutiny was focused elsewhere, Han Sooyoung sneakily left her spot and approached the Story extractor. For some reason, she seemed deeply anxious. She alternated her gaze between the companions and the extractor with a complicated expression, before cautiously extending her finger towards the device's power button.

Jung Heewon belatedly discovered that sight and cried out. "Han Sooyoung, what are you doing?! You better listen well now so you don't get things mixed up la…"

[Analysis on the additional Story fragment of 'Han Sooyoung' has been completed.]

[Story fragment, 'I burst Demon King's Black Flame Dragon by mista…]

Almost at the same time, Han Sooyoung switched the device off.

「"Okay, so. The attack from Jeon Woo-Chi flew into… my 'that place', is that it?"」

While belatedly typing up the additional contents for the first part, Han Sooyoung softly grumbled to herself. "Dammit, what a weird event that was."

Her strange-sounding Story almost got discovered by the companions.

In any case, she got to write the manuscript largely trouble-free all thanks to extracting Story fragments from the companions.

Here was a novel she wrote while using the definite information as her foundation while omitting those parts she didn't know of. At this point, she wasn't even sure whether to call this a novel or an essay.

"Fuu…"

As the work inched closer to the latter half, the shades of pain began creeping up on the companions' expressions. The memories of their happier times would eventually end up as the conclusion they had to face.

An ending where all of their effort had turned into nothing more than bubbles, and Kim Dokja failing to return to their side.

Lee Gilyoung asked. "…What meaning is there in writing a tragedy like this?"

"There is some."

They might have failed in changing anything, but that didn't mean they had given up.

That fact alone was enough to console someone. Even if that someone happened to be themselves.

And so, around the time when another eight months had gone by, Han Sooyoung managed to write her way past the fourth and fifth part to reach the epilogue. And as the feelings of liberation and heightened excitement enveloped her, she began to work on the final part of the manuscript.

[The applicable world-line's system has reached the limits of its senescence.]

It was also then that something no one could have foreseen happened.

[Every system in the applicable world-line is entering the extinction phase.]

"…What?!"

[Stigma, 'Cloud System', has ceased to function.]

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* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)

Chapter 551: Epilogue 5 - The Eternity and Epilogue (Complete)

…Can't upload the file to the cloud?

Han Sooyoung hurriedly checked her Stigma several times at that sudden message.

However, it showed no signs of activating. It was as if the system's blessings had disappeared. And for sure, her body started to feel different from a little while ago. Her body that felt like it could fly to anywhere was now getting gradually heavier and heavier.

…Could it be? No, hang on a second.

She figured that a day like this would come eventually, but it happened far quicker than she bargained for.

[The 'Bureau's Story' in your possession has stopped its storytelling.]

Han Sooyoung hadn't even written the novel's final episode yet, either.

Besides, if the Cloud System was no more, even if she did finish writing the manuscript, transmitting it would still be impossible.

"Goddammit…"

Right then, someone hurriedly shoved open the hospital room's door and rushed inside.

"Han Sooyoung!"

It seemed that her companions had also realized the severity of the situation.

"There's no way whatsoever? Seriously?"

"…For the time being, yes."

Devices that operated through magical energy were grinding to a halt one by one. Thanks to that, Lee Seolhwa's hospital was urgently swapping out the power source for the various medical equipment at the moment.

"What about Kim Dokja's condition?"

"Thankfully, there don't seem to be any complications so far."

Although the power of the system had vanished, the sleeping Kim Dokja was still the same. A boy quietly slumbering away, neither alive nor dead. And this very boy's other reincarnated souls living in various parts of the world-lines should be reading the manuscript she had written.

"I couldn't update the last bit of the manuscript. At this rate…" Han Sooyoung muttered out.

"The 'Oldest Dreams' might not get to read the last part of the story, then."

Yoo Sangah's observation caused Lee Jihye and Jang Hayoung to cry out one after the other.

"What will happen now? Wasn't the last part of the manuscript the most important bit?"

"What about my side story?!"

"That's not really important, is it?"

They didn't know how many world-lines Yoo Joonghyuk had paid pilgrimage to so far, but still, quite a large number of worlds should've seen the publication of the novel to the latest chapter by now.

"Argh, the one thing I hate so much in this world is a novel that gets dropped in the middle…"

The final part of the novel, its epilogue, was all about the 'thing that hasn't happened yet' to the 'Oldest Dream'.

Quite obviously, there was simply no way that all of them could perfectly imagine a story that hadn't happened yet.

"What should we do? You said that the last episode is the most crucial one."

"We still have one more method." Han Sooyoung chewing on her fingers looked up to the heavens and spoke. "There is one more person who can fix the manuscript beside me. And we don't have a choice but to believe in him."

"…The manuscript stopped updating."

The manuscript was updated roughly once a day without fail. But for the last month or so, the updates had completely stopped coming. At first, he thought this was an error arising from him travelling between the world-lines far too frequently, but when he took a closer look, even the log-in history itself was gone.

[Captain, I think something has gone wrong somewhere.]

He had two theories. One, Han Sooyoung found herself in a situation where she couldn't write the manuscript anymore, or two, Earth's system had finally ground to a halt.

Whatever the case might be, this was not a good situation.

[Files are being automatically transmitted to the connected world-lines.]

The manuscript's latest chapter had been transmitted to other world-lines already. In the world where the serialisation started first, the notice for postponement had been issued already – what happened was that the author panicked when he suddenly couldn't think of the story and hastily announced the postponement.

The situation was not good. At this rate, authors losing their composure might start cooking up their own take on the part Han Sooyoung had failed to write and upload.

[…Captain, there isn't much time.]

Yoo Joonghyuk looked down at both of his hands. He then slowly clenched his fists before unfurling them.

It wasn't as if there were no other options available. If Han Sooyoung was not in a situation to finish the manuscript, then… The person who could, had to complete it.

[Attribute's effect has been activated!]

[You can now edit the manuscript in the Cloud System.]

[A lot of Probability is required for the editing of the manuscript.]

Yoo Joonghyuk slowly closed his eyes, before opening them again.

*

Two months passed by after the system had entered the dissolution sequence.

The system that started crumbling away didn't show any signs of mending itself. The number of people who could hear the messages gradually decreased. Also, skills and Stigmata started disappearing one by one. Even the voices of the Stories couldn't be heard anymore.

– An airliner operating on magic energy engines has crashed in the East Sea…

Artefacts from the bygone world that hadn't been replaced yet began causing problems as well.

"Argh, that's why I told them to replace all of that stuff!"

Jung Heewon watching the news on the screen finally blew her top.

Han Sooyoung asked her. "Who went over there?"

"Jihye and the kids. Although pretty weak, they can still activate their Stigmata, so…"

The two of them watched the live broadcast of the rescue attempt. The screen now displayed the figures of Lee Jihye, Lee Gilyoung, and Shin Yoosung – as well as their turtle ship and Chimera Dragon, both of which were a lot smaller than before.

"The waves are too strong."

Survivors were continuously extracted and rescued one at a time, but the incoming waves were getting rougher by the second as well. The Chimera Dragon and the turtle ship tottered precariously. The rescue operation continued on despite the rough, inclement weather, but the situation didn't seem optimistic at the moment.

Han Sooyoung, unable to look on anymore, stood up from her seat. "Call Yoo Sangah right now and get a helicopter ready. It's gonna be impossible for those three alone."

"I already did, but due to the storm…"

Han Sooyoung quietly spat out, "Dammit," and began packing her stuff.

– Breaking news, just in. An unidentified flying object has broken into the East Sea's atmosphere and entered the…

Inside the screen, they could now see an object flying in through the pitch-black storm clouds. Accompanied by a massive explosion noise, a distant spot in the ocean was enveloped in bright light. Drones broke past the winds and waves to fly there, and continued to transmit real-time footage from the nearby ocean.

Soon, the exterior of the flying object was revealed among the pulsating grey foams. It was a capsule-shaped ark, and someone was standing up from within it.

"…Yoo Joonghyuk??"

After confirming the news, Han Sooyoung and the rest of the companions all rushed to the East Sea.

– All of the injured survivors have been safely rescued with help from the alien being…

– The alien in question has been identified as the terror suspect who had left Earth two years ago…

Breaking news continued to inundate the airwaves.

How long did they wait by the docks? Finally, the rescue ships approaching the port could be seen in the distance – Lee Jihye's turtle ship occupying the central position in the formation. She and the kids were waving their hands.

And right behind them was a man looking at the dock and at his companions.

"You…!"

It was an unfamiliar sight. Although his face hadn't changed a lot, his dishevelled hair sported several grey spots now.

"Been a while," said Yoo Joonghyuk.

Han Sooyoung paused, not knowing what to say – before shooting back reflexively at him. "What about the mission? Why have you come back so soon?"

She knew full well she shouldn't have said that. The length of time Yoo Joonghyuk must've endured should not be simplified with such words.

Yoo Joonghyuk replied. "I had no choice but to return."

"Oppa!"

Yoo Mia ran in from behind the group and jumped into his embrace. He gently held her as she sobbed nonstop.

Han Sooyoung quietly observed the scene before asking him. "Who's the girl you brought with you?"

That prompted the girl behind Yoo Joonghyuk to peek her head out and say something. "Seriously, you too…? No one recognises me." The girl grandly sighed out and muttered as if she was tired of doing this. "Bah-aht."

Yoo Sangah personally went to fetch the companions with her limousine. During the transit, as Lee Seolhwa performed the medical check-up on him, Yoo Joonghyuk began recounting all the events that had happened to him.

From the moment of leaving Earth, lost and drifting between the world-lines, receiving help from the Outer Gods, meeting Biyoo in the Dark Stratum, and to eventually completing his trip around the world-lines.

"…You had no choice but to return because you ran out of Story energy?"

"That's right."

It seemed that the dissolution of the system had affected Yoo Joonghyuk in outer space, as well. In other words, this was the worst possible situation that could happen.

"Just how long were you out there in space?"

"Are you curious?"

A faint smile-like expression floated up on Yoo Joonghyuk's lips before vanishing completely. As that was a rather un-Yoo Joonghyuk-like behaviour, Han Sooyoung ended up frowning deeply.

"…You actually smiled?"

"Rest easy. I've already visited all the world-lines that I could have gone to. With Biyoo's help, a link that updates in real-time has been established, so the authors of those world-lines should be uploading the novel in the correct sequence."

The companions eavesdropping all breathed a sigh of relief at Yoo Joonghyuk's words.

However, one important point still remained.

"Did you transmit everything? What about the last part of the manuscript? What did you do with the final episode?" Han Sooyoung asked.

"Are you talking about the part you didn't send to me?"

"That's right! The last part of the manuscript that you could have fixed!" Han Sooyoung finally exploded in impatient anger. "You also have a writer's attribute, right? If you've been reading my novel from the start, you should at least be able to guess how the conclusion is supposed to unfold, right? Huh? So, did you write it? You did write it instead of me, right??"

Yoo Joonghyuk wordlessly stared at Han Sooyoung. How long passed by like this? He quietly shifted his gaze outside the window.

Han Sooyoung's voice began trembling. "You… You couldn't have…"

"Do you believe that I should've written it?"

"What dogshit are you talking about, you bastard?! Obviously you…!"

"Do you believe that it's reasonable to write our wish that didn't come true as the novel's conclusion?" He looked at Han Sooyoung's expression hardening up in an instant and continued on. "Han Sooyoung. No matter how hard we try, this story is different from the lives we had lived."

"…You, you think I don't know that…"

Indeed, she also knew. Rather, she knew it better than anyone out there.

She kept feeling this sense of separation with every sentence being written. No matter how precise the words she wrote were, no matter how painstakingly considered each expression she came up with was – it was still impossible to fully capture the history they remembered and to fully reproduce Kim Dokja who used to live in this world within the story's pages.

"It's not as if I didn't give it a shot. I utilised the Story that I still remembered and tried to write the final episode, just like how you did. However…"

In order to recreate Kim Dokja, the Stories of the companions had gathered. One piece, two pieces… The sentences they remembered were piled up to become the imaginary 'Kim Dokja'.

「…You wish to hear what my boy was like when he was young?」

「The 'Dokja' ahjussi that I remember was…」

「I'm telling you, hyung really did that! For real!」

One percent of Kim Dokja, then two percent…

Many people still remembered him, and Kim Dokja as gathered in that manner could potentially have ended up as the 99 percent.

"Even if Kim Dokja came back to us alive through the story we have crafted, do you truly believe that he will be the real Kim Dokja?"

That remaining one percent of Kim Dokja they couldn't remember.

That Kim Dokja none of them could remember, where would he be left behind in this universe, then?

"Even before his soul scattered, Kim Dokja was the 'Oldest Dream'. Haven't you ever thought about how strange it was? Why didn't that fool ever dream of his own happiness?"

Han Sooyoung shot back in near hysteria. "…Even if he is the 'Oldest Dream', you can't just imagine a world the way you want. Most of the dreaming itself is done subconsciously!!"

"In that case, Kim Dokja's subconsciousness must've thought that this conclusion is the right one."

An existence who had never imagined his own happiness. The 'Kim Dokja' they knew was such a person.

"I also know that! I knew that Kim Dokja was such a person… Why do you think I started writing this story in the first place? Why, why I have…"

Drops of something wet were falling onto the backs of her feet. She wanted to say something, anything. To shout out, to grab hold onto Yoo Joonghyuk's neck and choke him, shake him around. However, she couldn't.

A voice mixed with indescribable fatigue entered her ears.

"In order to save someone…"

Han Sooyoung raised her head at Yoo Joonghyuk's voice fleeting past.

"Because of your story, I was able to survive until now."

She glared at him with her reddened, tearful eyes. "That's not something I wanted to hear from a bastard like you."

The distant view of the Industrial Complex could be seen.

That was their home. A place where every member of <Kim Dokja's Company> used to live. A place created by someone's seemingly impossible dream.

Everyone now looked at it.

Yoo Sangah holding the steering wheel spoke. "…So, that's what happened. Thank you for telling us the story, Joonghyuk-ssi."

No one was crying. No one criticised Yoo Joonghyuk for his choice. This wasn't because their sorrow had been watered down. No, perhaps they had grown that much stronger.

It wasn't just Yoo Joonghyuk alone.

The companions regained enough strength to carry on with their remaining time by writing the story, then reading what had been written all the while praying for a certain someone to read this story with them. The courage not to crumble even when the miracle they dreamed about evaporated right before their eyes.

Now, they could carry on knowing that some people were reading their story in the distant, far-flung other side of the universe.

Lee Jihye asked. "…By the way, that novel? Was it popular?"

"It wasn't bad."

"You think Dokja ahjussis were enjoying it?"

"Hey, you sooty bastard! Have you seen the reincarnated Dokja-hyung? How was he?"

As if they wanted to ask about everything they were dying to know until now, questions from the companions bombarded Yoo Joonghyuk next.

He calmly replied. "I haven't seen any reincarnated Kim Dokja. However…" He looked at Kim Dokja's statue brushing past the vehicle's window and continued on. "…That fool definitely has read the story. I have a hunch."

"Dokja ahjussi must be really irritated about now. Not being able to see the conclusion again…"

How would the Kim Dokjas of other world-lines remember this story's conclusion? Han Sooyoung had no way of knowing. Coming up with a good conclusion was as difficult as making your ex accept the reason why you were breaking up with them.

"…Wait, Dokja-ssis from other world-lines aren't going to invade this place, are they?"

That question prompted someone to whisper softly.

"That might be nice."

At the end of those words, deep silence descended on the companions. With great timing, Yoo Sangah turned on the music right then. Notes from the instruments cascaded like falling raindrops. No one tried to look at each other's faces. That was the only courtesy they could exercise, at least for this moment.

Within this weighty tenderness of the moment, Han Sooyoung's thoughts drifted towards her novel still stored inside her notebook PC.

The story without the last chapter.

And now, no one would get to read about this novel's conclusion.

But perhaps, this world sometimes needed a story like that, she mused.

"How about we… start living in one house again?"

Everyone raised their heads at someone's suggestion.

A realization was gradually dawning on Han Sooyoung.

「This was the story that Kim Dokja had given to them.」

The companions had regained their daily lives, and Yoo Joonghyuk came home, too.

This was the end of <Kim Dokja's Company>'s adventures. The conclusion that the person they all loved wished to see had finally been completed.

Han Sooyoung abruptly shifted her gaze over to Yoo Joonghyuk. "…Okay, so. Did you get to find out what your ■■ was?"

"Not yet. However, at this point, I think it no longer matters whether I get to learn it or…"

It was right at that moment a strange sensation suddenly assaulted him.

The sounds of 'Tsu-chuchuchut' could be heard coming from somewhere.

「…」

A noise wavered within their ears like a faint, distant song. The moment Yoo Sangah turned the music off, Biyoo's appearance as she sat in the front passenger seat suddenly changed.

[…Bah-aht??]

Biyoo had morphed back into the figure of a large furball. But that couldn't be possible. Before climbing into the car, she clearly said that the dissolution of the system had paralysed her ability to shapeshift.

"Uh??"

The voices coming from the empty air grew clearer and clearer. This was definitely sounds of Stories busy telling their stories.

"…What's going on? The system should still be broken, though?"

Han Sooyoung stared at Yoo Joonghyuk, but he was looking back at her with the exact same eyes as hers.

[Story, 'King of a Kingless World', has begun its storytelling once more.]

Groups of blinding letters were streaming past in the skies outside the vehicle's windows. They were from a Story the companions knew intimately.

"Yoo Sangah!!"

Yoo Sangah hurriedly stepped on the accelerator. Meanwhile, Han Sooyoung answered her phone loudly ringing inside her pocket. The call was from Aileen.

– Sooyoung-ssi!! Right now, it…!

Her voice couldn't be heard properly because of all the noises coming from the surroundings.

[Story, 'Predictive Plagiarism', has begun its storytelling once more.]

Stories that had vanished without a trace along with the system's dissolution were now streaming towards somewhere while following after one another. Every single one of them were stories that had come to an end a long time ago.

「Is the story really over when the author stops writing it?」

Han Sooyoung looked up at the letters floating around in the skies.

The letters that didn't hold any meaning when existing independently of each other were beginning to find their mates and groups one by one.

"…Disconnected film theory?!"

The companions soon drove into the Complex and hurriedly jumped out of the limousine. Then, they began running. The Stories they had acquired until now, the Stories they had been telling until now, were brushing past their sides.

No one knew what the conclusion to this story was.

No matter how hard they tried, 'Kim Dokja' would never come back. Even if they did recreate the '99% Kim Dokja', that missing one percent would always be there.

But then, what if there was one existence in this entire world that could fill the last void of one percent? One existence, who used to possess the letters subconsciously scattered to the distant universe?

"Sooyoung-ssi! Over there!"

They could see Lee Seolhwa's hospital in the distance. Stories leisurely streaming there guided them. Stories were gathering towards the hospital ward they were all intimately familiar with.

[Giant Story, 'Demon Realm's Spring', has begun its storytelling once more.]

Han Sooyoung thought to herself.

If an author didn't write it, then a story's conclusion couldn't be created.

[Giant Story, 'Torch that Swallowed the Myth', has begun its storytelling once more.]

Even if that was true, however, did that mean those reading the story couldn't imagine the conclusion on their own way? Han Sooyoung powerfully bit her lip. This story was created by her own hands. But another story she didn't know of was continuing on from the end of her story.

「What will happen if the moment of someone's imagination overtaking the author's sentences, comes?」

As skills and Stigma hadn't returned in full yet, Han Sooyoung ran out of breath rather quickly. Yoo Joonghyuk supported her and kept running. Shin Yoosung rushing up the stairs tripped and fell. Other companions reached out and helped her up.

[Giant Story, 'Season of Light and Darkness', has begun its storytelling once more.]

[Giant Story, 'Liberator of the Forgotten Ones', has begun its storytelling once more.]

The Giant Stories they had acquired together were returning to them one by one. Even the unnamed last Story of <Kim Dokja's Company> began singing about the emotion that no one dared to name.

This desire, a wish, of those who went their separate ways a long time ago to become one once more.

To grieve for someone else, to celebrate, to get angry, and to despair. And eventually, wishing to become that someone else.

Someone was sympathising with their story. As her breathing grew heavier and heavier, Han Sooyoung kept thinking to herself over and over again.

「If this story can really save you…」

If you regained just a little of your memories and remember us just one more time…

"Over there!"

…Then I'll keep writing the epilogue for you until the end of the time, for eternity.

She reached before the hospital room's door, completely out of breath. Han Sooyoung was now standing before the very room that she came to visit every single day for the past four years.

The rest of the companions running up the staircase one step behind were now looking at her. She looked back, and began recalling the very last paragraph to the conclusion she didn't get to write.

「There are three ways to survive in a ruined world.」

She then heard Jung Heewon shouting out.

"Han Sooyoung!"

The other companions who heard the news belatedly – companions who didn't accompany them to the East Sea, could be seen running over here through the building's window.

「I've forgotten a few by now. However, one thing's for certain.」

Han Sooyoung's trembling hand grasped the door's handle.

She was scared. What if there was nothing beyond this door?

What if all this was nothing more than a sweet lie?

She looked to her side, and saw Yoo Joonghyuk nodding his head.

「And that is, the you reading these words will get to survive.」

No matter what was waiting for them beyond this door, they were now ready to witness it. The door creaked noisily as it opened. Faint rays of sunlight entered through the wide-open window. The pages of the manuscript she spent the whole night revising scattered around in the wind. Letters scattered in a blinding fashion. The story she didn't get to complete, it was right there.

The sentences she really wanted to write sometime, even if it was not now. While thinking about those sentences, Han Sooyoung grinned like an idiot.

「This story is for just that one reader.」

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* Unofficial fan illustration (non-canonical)
* Official novel illustration (canonical)